

## Speaker's bid to form govt in Manipur faces setback

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IMPHAL, MAY 30

MANIPUR'S political circus reached a new high with the Manipur State Congress Party (Chaoba) pulling out the Progressive Democratic Alliance, in which it had 10 legislators.

This in the wake of last ditch efforts by Assembly Speaker Sapam Dhananjay himself, who claimed stake to form a government in the puzzling power gambling, going on in the state for a fortnight now.

With this recent development, the PDA now has only six legislators with the Federal Party of Manipur's two MLAs, Nationalist Congress Party's (NCP) two, Janata Dal (Loken)'s one, besides the Speaker who was elected on a MSCP ticket. In the meanwhile, Manipur's Speaker Sapam Dhananjay, who was the most recent to stake his claim to form a government in Manipur, was told by the Governor, Ved Prakash Marwah to resign from his post as there was a constitutional problem in his claim to form a ministry in the state, a release from the Raj Bhavan said.

Dhananjay called on the Governor this evening and sought one more day to submit the list of his supporters, which he claimed was 32 in number, since some of the MLAs were still outside Manipur.

The Governor on his part, explained to Dhananjay that as per the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, the Speaker exercised quasi-judicial powers, and it would be against the spirit of the Constitution for the speaker to take over the leadership of a group of MLAs. He said most of the MSCP (C) MLAs including former Deputy Chief Minister Chandramani Singh, K Govindas, Hangkhalian and H Lokhon Singh were with him though MSCP(C) President, Chaoba Singh announced that MSCP(C) had withdrawn from Progressive Democratic Alliance.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2001

## MANIPUR CONUNDRUM

THE LEADERS OF the BJP and the Samata party may have agreed to "forget" the Manipur developments and decided to "stay out" of any exercise leading towards the formation of a new Government in the State. The "agreement" may have put an end to the crisis that was haunting the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre. It is another matter that the BJP as a party had ended up denying to itself the prospect of "power" in another State. Meanwhile, the party's high command will only have to prepare itself for a split in its Manipur unit and the prospect of a large number of its legislators proceeding to form a Government of their own. In the event of such a development, the BJP leaders will have only themselves to blame. After all, the 26-strong BJP legislature party in Manipur consists of at least 20 MLAs who joined the BJP after the February 2000 polls to the Assembly. The BJP had won in only six constituencies. And Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam was the lone Samata Party MLA at that time. Mr. Kojiam was sworn in Chief Minister (with five more MLAs joining the party after the polls) with the support of the 26 MLAs who came to constitute the BJP legislature party in the State. Instability, in this sense, was built into the Kojiam Ministry from the start.

This being the ground reality in Manipur, the sequence of events leading to the fall of the Kojiam Ministry (after the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers lost the confidence vote in the 60-member Legislative Assembly) could not have caused such ripples in the normal course. The ranks of the BJP legislature party in Manipur could not have swelled, from six to 26, without Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh working hard towards becoming Chief Minister. And the BJP high command did nothing all these days to dissuade Mr. Singh (a leader of the Congress-I for several years) from trying to dislodge Mr. Kojiam. And if

Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy and his aides are now seeking to distance themselves from Mr. Singh and others in Manipur, it is only because they have been forced by the Samata Party, an important constituent in the NDA, to do so. Indeed, the Samata Party leaders too cannot be under any illusion about what could be the fate of the writ by the BJP high command. There are reports of a good number of the BJP MLAs having "elected" a new leader (in place of Mr. Dorendra Singh) and preparing to parade before the Manipur Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, and stake claim to form the Government. The Samata Party and the BJP leaders in Delhi cannot wish away the political culture that they themselves contributed to create in the State. Shifting of loyalties by MLAs has indeed been the rule rather than the exception in the region over the years. And parties cutting across the spectrum have encouraged this in the past to their own "advantage".

Be that as it may, there are reports of the NDA's political leadership looking forward to the crisis in Manipur dragging on for some more time and then placing the State under Central rule. Such a course will not only be improper (for after all this will only be another instance of abuse of Article 356 of the Constitution) but will also contribute to the further weakening of the party system in the Northeast. It may be true that such a step will serve as a face-saver for the Samata Party. But then, one would expect Mr. George Fernandes and his colleagues in the Samata Party to desist from looking for such "immediate" gains. It is important that they realise, at least now, that the root cause for the crisis in Manipur (and in other States in the region) has been the urge among the "leaders" from Delhi to interfere in the affairs of governance in the region, denying to the political platforms in the region even a semblance of autonomous space.

THE

# Gogoi to play development card to stamp out insurgency

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From P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 29 MAY

**S**TRESSING THE link between economic development and curbing of militancy, Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi told state government officials to give utmost priority to removal of insurgency in the state.

In a meeting with district commissioners (DCs) and superintendents of police (SPs) of the state, Mr Gogoi emphasised the importance of quality intelligence and urged security officials to improve the network of intelligence gathering.

Addressing newsmen after the meeting, Mr Gogoi said: "The menace of terrorism has to be dealt with firmly and the possibility of any ethnic and communal trouble has to be kept under absolute check."

Mr Gogoi said his government will give top priority to development as without improving the



Gogoi: Terror firma

economy it is not possible to tackle the insurgency problem.

He said he was worried by the economic disparities between different regions of the state and added his government will work hard to develop the tribal areas.

Mr Gogoi said the crime graph in the state has gone up while at the same time the number of convictions has come down. He said

the economic policies should be directed at the poor, to restore their faith on the administration.

Meanwhile, on the flood problem in the state, the state finance and revenue minister Devanand Konwar said there will be a continuous survey of existing embankments of the vulnerable areas to prevent last-minute disasters. He said 19 of the 23 districts were effected by the floods, covering 3,474 villages. The floods had hit 36.08 lakh people with 32 people losing their lives.

Mr Konwar said Rs 4.79 lakh was spent for providing relief, while Rs 1.57 crore was sanctioned for rehabilitation grants. He said during the current financial year the corpus under Calamity Relief Fund has been fixed at Rs 106.56 crore, which is not adequate to rebuild the various roads and bridges damaged by recent floods, unless additional allocation is made by the Centre.

# NSCN factions unite over 'Nagalim'

FROM PULLOCK DUTTA

Jorhat, June 29: Bitter rivals in every sense of the term, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) and the Khaplang faction have struck a rare note of unanimity on the issue of carving out a "Greater Nagalim".

An NSCN(K) spokesman told **The Telegraph** that his outfit did not want an inch of the land belonging to the Meiteis, the Assamese and the Arunachalees.

He said the NSCN(K) would, however, not give up the land that "historically belongs to the Nagas".

The statement is in consonance with the Isak-Muivah faction's views on the issue.

The NSCN(K) spokesman, who

requested anonymity, said "Naga territory" extended to parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and even Myanmar. "We cannot settle for anything less than this," he said.

NSCN(I-M) "general secretary" Th. Muivah made a similar statement after the Centre extended its ceasefire with the outfit to all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas of the Northeast. "We do not have a Greater Nagalim or a smaller Nagalim. We only have the land that belongs to the Nagas," he said.

The map of "Nagalim", as envisioned by the NSCN(I-M), includes 14,000 square km of land in 11 districts of Assam.

Nagalim has an area of 16,579 square km, while the proposed

"Greater Nagalim" encompasses an area of nearly two lakh square km.

The Centre recently extended the Naga ceasefire "without territorial limits", triggering violent protests in Manipur.

The people of Manipur perceive the Centre's move as an acknowledgement of the Isak-Muivah and Khaplang factions' claims on parts of their territory.

The process of a dialogue between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) was initiated on August 1997. The Centre, however, declared a ceasefire with the NSCN(K) only last month.

"We expect to begin a dialogue with the Centre soon," the NSCN(K) spokesman said.

With the Isak-Muivah and

Khaplang factions airing similar views on the "Nagalim" issue, both Manipur and Assam are becoming increasingly jittery.

"The people of Manipur and, to a lesser extent, Assam, were alarmed by the Centre's surrender to the NSCN(I-M).

"Now that the NSCN(K) is backing its rival faction's demand for a Greater Nagalim, they must be feeling doubly threatened," an observer said.

According to a 1991 survey, Nagas have encroached upon 16,287 hectares of land in three forest reserves in Jorhat district alone.

The survey report mentions the existence of 13 Naga villages, 12 primary schools, two middle English schools, a high school,

three churches and a water-supply project in parts of the Desoi Valley forest reserve.

Both factions of the NSCN have staked claim to parts of Sivasagar, Golaghat and Jorhat districts of Assam, Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and the hill districts of Manipur.

Official sources, however, said the territorial extension of the Naga ceasefire did not imply that the Centre would accede to the NSCN(I-M)'s demand for a "sovereign" state.

The Tarun Gogoi government has opposed the Centre's move and warned of law and order problems if Naga rebels are given the "freedom" to move about freely in Assam.

# Nagas join anti-truce protest

Imphal, June 26

THOUSANDS OF people, including Nagas took out a procession defying prohibitory orders on Tuesday as women continued sit-in protests at several parts of Manipur Valley against the extension of the ceasefire, official sources said.

Thousands of people gathered at Pangei area in Imphal East district before marching in a huge procession through the area in protest against the ceasefire.

Hundreds of Nagas, particularly those belonging to Tangkhul community to which NSCN (I-M) general secretary, Thuingaleng Muivah, belongs, also joined the procession carrying placards with messages like "We oppose ceasefire extension to Manipur".

Angry youths shouting "We sacrifice for protection of Manipur territory", "Withdraw ceasefire", "Wwe say no to ceasefire".

Several youths had messages like "We fight NSCN(I-M)", "Save Manipur", "Know history of Manipur" written on their chests.

Hardly any police or paramilitary personnel were deployed along the route of the procession nor was anyone picked up for defying the prohibitory orders, the sources said.

They said, participation of the Nagas showed that the ceasefire extension was opposed by all sections of the people of Manipur, which has a 2000 year-old written



HT PHOTO

Manipuri Nagas are the latest to join the pan-regional protests against the extension of the Naga ceasefire area outside Nagaland. This photograph shows students in Assam protesting against the truce extension.

history.

Reports said sit-in protests by women were reported from several parts of Manipur Valley including Yumnam Huidrom, Malom, Nambol, Kongba and other places in Imphal East and

West districts where prohibitory orders are in place.

At Irengbam in Imphal West district, several youths shaved their head as a mark of protest against the ceasefire extension, reports from Bishenpur said.

The reports said security has been intensified along NH 53 Imphal-Jiribam-Silchar following frequent roadblocks at different places there to protest against the ceasefire.

PTI

# Manipur MLAs meet President

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 26. A delegation of MPs and MLAs from Manipur today called on the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, and urged him to put pressure on the Centre to withdraw the extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) to their State.

The 42-member delegation, which included the Union Minister, Mr. Chaoba Singh, submitted to Mr. Narayanan a copy of the memorandum which they had given to the Prime Minister earlier. The team spent nearly an hour explaining the prevailing situation and their stand on the issue.

Talking to reporters, the leaders of the delegation said Mr. Narayanan had expressed the hope that peace would be restored and that they would be able to allay the fears of the people.

The delegation also called on the NCP general secretary and former Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. P.A. Sangma. In a statement, Mr. Sangma suggested that like in the case of Kashmir, the Government should appoint an "experienced and credible" political interlocutor for issues relating to the northeast, including the Naga ceasefire.

Mr. Sangma urged the Centre to take necessary steps and not to "open the Pandora's box" of "territory" even unwittingly. "The earlier the Naga ceasefire is divested by the Government, de facto, of its extra territorial implications and dimensions the better."

He said the Prime Minister and the Home Minister were reported to have assured that the issues



Manipur MLAs addressing presspersons after meeting the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, at Rashtrapathi Bhavan in New Delhi on Tuesday. — Photo: S. Arneja

arising out of the ceasefire would be reviewed and that the territorial integrity of Manipur and other northeastern States would be maintained. "Nonetheless, an environment of suspicion, apprehension and resentment has been spreading in the northeast beyond Manipur as well. The approach of the Government is seen as one of drift."

## 'Muivah statement unfortunate'

PTI, UNI report:

In Guwahati, the Samata Party leader, Mr. George Fernandes, termed the NSCN(I-M) supremo, Mr. T. Muivah's latest statement on the ceasefire as "unfortunate".

Talking to presspersons here, Mr. Fernandes urged the people of Manipur to repose trust on the repeated assurances of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on the ceasefire. He said there was no easy way out of the crisis.

The NDA partners would dis-

cuss the fallout of the Centre's decision before the next session of Parliament.

## Compensation refused

The bereaved families of the 14 people, killed in Manipur violence today decided not to accept any compensation offered by the Governor, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah. The representatives of the bereaved families held a meeting here and decided not to accept the offer till the extension of ceasefire is revoked, a spokesman of the newly-formed committee on martyrs of the territorial integrity of Manipur told reporters.

## National Games boycott

The National Games champion, Manipur, has decided not to participate in the sixth National Games to be held in Punjab in September. The Manipur Olympic Association (MOA) announced that if the Centre failed to revoke the extension of the ceasefire before the commencement of the sixth National Games, Manipur would not participate.

THE HINDU

# Merge Manipur areas with Nagaland, says Naga leader

By Nirmalya Banerjee

The Times of India News Service

SENAPATI (Manipur): The district hospital here boasts of an operation theatre, but one that cannot function because there are no surgeons or anaesthetists, the X-ray machine is just another piece of furniture in the absence of X-ray plates and blood groupings cannot be done as reagents are not supplied regularly.

This and deprivation of other kinds are adding to the sense of alienation among the Nagas living in the hill areas of Manipur, says United Naga Council president K.S. Paul Leo. "It is one reason why we want the Naga-dominated areas of Manipur to be a part of Nagaland. If we have to beg for every necessity of life, it is better that we do so from our own brothers."

Lack of healthcare, education and employment facilities are some of the main problems faced by Nagas in Manipur. "Discrimination in employment is a major problem. Job reservations are not implemented properly. When the village folk fall sick, they have to be carried on backs of people to Senapati as there are neither hospitals nor roads in the villages. Teachers from the valley are supposed to come and teach mathematics, science and Hindi in schools, but as they avoid coming, the schools have to go without teachers. For college education, we have to send our children to distant places."

In fact, the approach to the district hospital is through a narrow footpath that turns muddy during the monsoon. Tuberculosis is a major health hazard and, according to Dr K.H. Yule, a laboratory for sputum examination had been set up under the revised national tuberculosis control programme, but all that the laboratory is equipped with is an empty room. There is a microscope, but it does not work, says hospital superintendent Dr O. Lorho Mao.

Senapati district is inhabited by seven Naga tribes — Poumai, Mao, Maram, Thangal, Zeliang, Chiru and Kharam — and, according to Mr Leo, its residents welcome the

extension of the ceasefire to the Naga-dominated areas of Manipur. They also dream of having all the Naga-inhabited areas under one administrative unit. "Nagas want to live together," he says. Mr Leo agrees, however, that it is not a practical idea to try to integrate all the Naga-inhabited areas of Myanmar in a similar way. "That can be the second phase," he says.

Mr Leo also agrees that some Nagas living in the Imphal valley do not like the idea of extension of the ceasefire as this may lead to their shifting from places where they have been living for generations. "Problems will be there, but for that the national interest cannot be compromised," he says. "The integration cannot be shelved because of the presence of a few Nagas in the Imphal valley."

In any case, the extension of the ceasefire issue has been "blown out of proportion", he says. "It is to facilitate discussions. Talks cannot go on without a ceasefire." According to Mr Leo, there have been a few skirmishes between the security forces and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muiivah) in Manipur and Assam even after the signing of the ceasefire between the two in August, 1997, as the ceasefire was effective only in Nagaland.

# Sulfa wracked by bickering in the ranks

Utpal Parashar  
Guwahati, June 25

AT A time when members of the over 7,000-strong contingent of surrendered Ulfa (Sulfa) are faced with threat to their lives, the group ridden with factionalism is slowly disintegrating when unity among the ranks is most essential.

Thursday's massacre at Moran in Upper Assam in which 12 Sulfa members were shot by sus-

pected Ulfa militants has created a rift among Sulfa members and have brought to the fore undercurrents of long-standing rivalry among some senior leaders.

Barely 24 hours after the massacre, Jayanta Hazarika, a senior Sulfa leader from Sibsagar sought Ulfa's apology for the operations that he along with other surrendered militants had carried out against the banned outfit. "We have committed several blunders in the past. We

appeal, the public and the Ulfa leadership to pardon us and enable us to lead normal lives," said Hazarika.

The two-year-old Asom Jatiya Mohasabha (AJM), the umbrella organisation of all Sulfa members, which had recently decided to float a political party, is also on the verge of collapse. Several senior leaders have dissociated themselves from the organisation to start new ones.

Former Ulfa publicity secre-

tary-Sunil Nath, who had recently severed his ties with AJM has started the Kamrup District former Ulfa Workers' Coordination Committee. Another leader Jugal Kishore Mahanta plans to revive the Asom Vikas Manch, an organisation started two years ago. Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Nath had claimed AJM's split and cited differences of opinion among members as the main reason behind the split.



# Ceasefire protest finds echo in Bangladesh

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, June 25

SEVERAL MANIPURI organisations in Bangladesh have taken strong exception to statements by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Union Home Minister L K Advani on reviewing the extension of NSCN (IM) ceasefire outside Nagaland. Naga organisations in Manipur too have pressed Central leaders against taking the move.

On the other hand, opposing the extension of NSCN (IM)-Government of India ceasefire to areas beyond Nagaland, particularly in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, various

## SECURITY FORCES WARN NSCN (I-M)

SECURITY FORCES have charged NSCN (I-M) with violating the ceasefire ground rules despite their assurance to abide by it to ensure continuance of an effective ceasefire. Citing the latest violation, a defence release in Kohima on Monday alleged, on June 23, a group of NSCN cadres in uniform numbering 100 led by three self-styled officer entered Nagaland from Manipur via Tenning and Peren by hijacking two vehicles at gun point. Security forces stopped the vehicles for a routine check but the NSCN activities did not pay any heed. Security forces warned them to abide by the ground rules of the ceasefire and refrain from any action detrimental to peace else security forces would take necessary action to ensure that ground rules were not violated, the release added.

PTI

organisations in Bangladesh said that unless the decision was reviewed soon it would lead to Manipur's disintegration. These organisations have also strongly

condemned the CRPF firing at Imphal on June 18 that left 14 persons dead and scores injured.

According to a press release faxed to several newspaper

offices here, the Integrated Manipur Association (IMA), Bangladesh had organised a joint meeting of various organisations at the office of the Manipur Sampradail Kalyan Prishad (MSKP) in Sylhet, Bangladesh today. At the meeting, the June 18 killings were condemned and those killed mourned. M Uttam Singh Rata, general secretary of the Integrated Manipur Association (IMA), Bangladesh had signed the fax. It was also said that the extension was part of a conspiracy to disintegrate the State. The meeting adopted a resolution saying that the State's territorial integrity must not be disturbed.

# Manipur Nagas allege prolonged negligence

**Jaideep Mazumdar**  
*Senapati Bazar (Manipur),*  
June 25

A RAMSHACKLE wodge structure houses the only medical facility in this small township that doubles up as the headquarters of Manipur's Senapati district. There's no operation theatre, not even a functional X-Ray machine and to top it all, there are no toilets at the hospital. The 5000-odd population gets piped water for only 30 minutes a day and all roads at this district headquarter, save the potholed National Highway 39 from Kohima to Imphal that slices through it unmetalled.

The lack of infrastructure and

**WV 6**  
appalling neglect is common to all the naga-dominated hill districts of the State. "All facilities and funds are concentrated in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley. We have been neglected, discriminated against and subjugated for too long by the Meiteis," said president of the United Naga Council (UNC) KS Paul Leo. The council is the apex body of all Nagas residing in Manipur.

"We are fed up with continuous harassment and neglect. The time has come now to allow the Nagas to decide their own destiny. We feel we cannot be part of Manipur any longer. The Meiteis should accept the reality," Leo adds for good measure.

"Our paths are separate. If the

Meiteis display maturity, rationality and understanding. We can part as friends and avoid any more animosity. If they want to stop us from achieving our objective, we'll fight back and the consequences will be bad for the Meiteis," said Dr Gima Shangkhram, president of the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM).

S Kho John, president of the All Naga Students' Association of Manipur (Ansam) admitted that the whole situation in Manipur is reaching a flashpoint and that the Meiteis and Nagas are on a collision course. "It's up to the Meiteis now to bridge the divide by accepting the ceasefire extension," he added.

The UNC, NWUM and the Ansam on Saturday faxed a five-page memorandum to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee stating that "nothing short of complete integration into Nagaland State will be acceptable to the Nagas".

The memorandum hailed the ceasefire extension to all adjacent Naga-inhabited areas outside Nagaland.

The Naga leaders pointed out that the term Nagaland implies all Naga areas partitioned by the British between India and Myanmar without the consent of the Nagas. In post-independent India, the Naga areas were left in the four States of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal

Pradesh.  
The Naga outfits contend that the organisations spearheading the movement against the ceasefire extension do not represent the entire State.

"The June 18 violence at Imphal was part of a conspiracy to sabotage the peace process between the NSCN's collective leadership and the Indian Government," said Paul Leo.

"The Nagas have been denied a voice in Manipur by the Meiteis. Our areas in the hills are neglected. We are always sidelined. The Meiteis corner all the privileges. How can they claim that we are their brothers?" wondered John.

Paul Leo rejected the Meiteis'

contention that before 1949, the Meitei kings used to rule over much more than what is present day Manipur.

He also spoke about how the Meiteis treated the Nagas as untouchables. "But we are a mature people. We still want the Meiteis to sit with us and discuss matters."

The Naga outfits have called for a people's convention at Senapati Bazar on July 28 to discuss the situation in Manipur. The convention is expected to pass a resolution reiterating the demand for 'greater Nagaland'. And this demand being the 'red rag' for the Meiteis, the Naga-Meitei relations can only sour further.

# Setting brother against brother

FORGET who it was that said the kingdom of the Almighty runs on justice but the kingdoms of the earth run on the writ of man or the lack of it. This makes sense when one considers that the jurisdiction of the ceasefire in Nagaland continues to be mired in controversy nearly four years after it came into force. Rebel leaders Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah have time and again said they agreed to a ceasefire only after the Centre assured them their demand for the unification of Naga-inhabited areas would be met.

Why, then, did they agree to the truce's renewal despite the Centre's reneging on its assurance? And why their sudden rigid stand now? Is it meant to show their disapproval of the Centre's formalising the ceasefire in March with the rival faction led by SS Khapleng? It is no secret that the NSCN-IM refuses to recognise the Khapleng outfit.

By periodically accusing the Centre of not being sincere in solving the issue, the NSCN-IM may have been looking for an excuse to pull out of the ceasefire and lay the blame on Delhi. Had IK Gujral, who as Prime Minister brokered the truce in July 1997 with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (rechristened Nagalim in 1998 to include all Naga-inhabited areas), spelt out the terms and conditions of the truce, there would have been no confusion. He told Parliament, "This House is aware of the history of insurgency in Nagaland. The fratricidal confrontations among the various Naga groups and the state authorities have led to a loss of lives, seriously disturbed the public order and thwarted the economic development of the state."

The people are fed up with the violence and yearn for peace. Soon after assuming office I had visited Nagaland and other states in the North-east. I had offered unconditional talks with the underground elements for securing a peaceful resolution. In recent talks with the Isak-Muivah group of the NSCN it has been mutually agreed to suspend operations for three months with effect from 1 August and embark

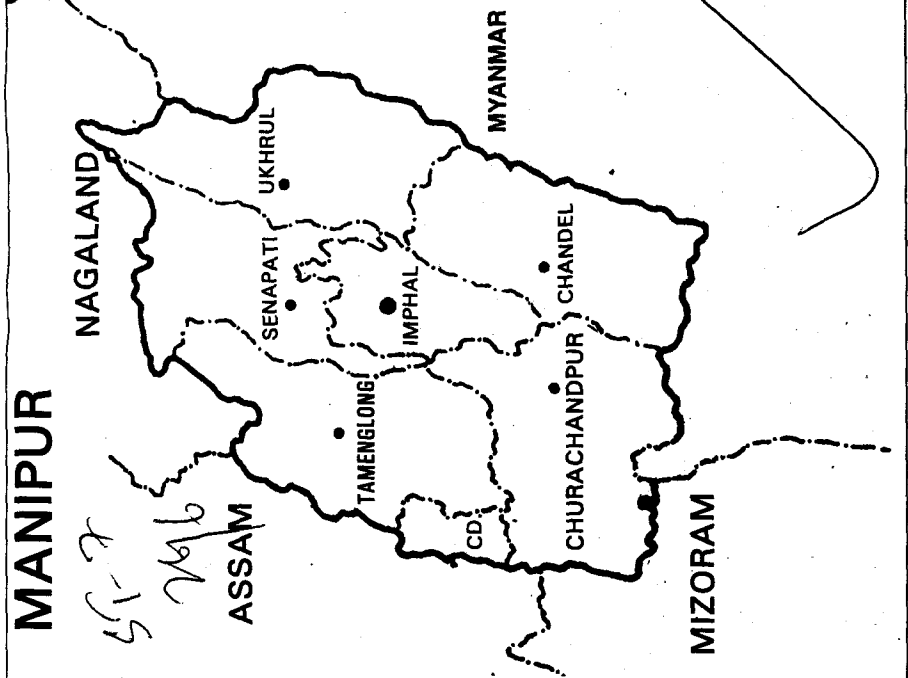
prestige for New Delhi. Obviously, the lesson of 1997 was clean forgotten. Atal Behari Vajpayee said the violence in Manipur was the result of misunderstanding. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister himself weakened Delhi's stand. Immediately after meeting Mr Vajpayee in Paris in September 1998, the Naga leaders claimed "the meeting had not discussed the area covered because we had already received a clear assurance in this regard". This was amply corroborated later by Mr Vajpayee's chief negotiator, Swaraj Kaushal, who resigned allegedly because the Prime Minister had gone back on his word.

Because the peace talks are shrouded in mystery, it is difficult to discern fact from fiction. The NSCN-IM leaders maintain there can be no compromise on sovereignty. The Meiteis resent coming under the ambit of the ceasefire. The Prime Minister has promised to even amend the Constitution if this brings peace to Nagaland. But in the absence of transparency, the situation in Manipur is capable of fast getting out of hand.

The outcome of the all-party meeting last Saturday that Delhi would review the issues arising from the truce extension has failed to satisfy the Meiteis who want the status quo maintained. Since BJP president Jana Krishna murthy has taken the stand that there is nothing wrong in reviewing the situation but "review does not necessarily mean revision of ceasefire", the Centre is not likely to revise its decision. The tenuous ceasefire has failed to create the desired conducive atmosphere for peace talks. Extortion notices continue to fly around and even chief minister SC Jamir came under a murderous attack.

Delhi's decision is likely to stoke the embers of the Naga-Kuki ethnic feud and, more importantly, sour age-old Naga-Meitei ties. Manipur is home to more than 30 different communities and 2,000 years of congeniality should not so easily be wished away.

(The author is a veteran journalist who recently retired from The Statesman)



Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong are to come under the Nagaland ceasefire.

**Naga leaders insist there can be no compromise on sovereignty. The Meiteis resent coming under the ambit of the ceasefire. The Prime Minister has promised to even amend the Constitution if it brings peace in Nagaland. But because the peace talks are shrouded in mystery, it is difficult to discern fact from fiction, says JB LAMA**

paper said, "The Centre has accepted in principle the need to unify Naga-inhabited areas of Nagaland's neighbouring states under a single administrative unit, claims the NSCN Chairman. This statement is entirely baseless; it is a total invention, the truth is that Mr Isak, chairman NSCN has not met in Geneva any press people belonging to *The Statesman* newspaper, nor has he ever made such a statement anywhere. It is a bolt from the blue, pure and simple.

"This evil motivated statement is the work of the Meiteis themselves. The National United Liberation Front of Meghna Sanayaima and their circle are respon-

sible. It is an act out of desperation to make the fool of their people. This statement is motivated, in the first place, to cover up their helplessness. In the second place, to provoke the Meiteis; and lastly to disturb the peace process' by creating pretext for the Central Govt of India. But one should never forget the fact that hatred does not hold things together. This is our unquestionable principle and aim."

Today, the fear in Manipur is that once the ceasefire is extended to three of its districts, the Nagas will claim the areas as their own to include these in the Southern Nagaland concept. It is not without significance that such a concept was first

TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 2001

## NAGA CEASEFIRE: CLEARING THE AIR

49-10

AFTER HAVING ANNOUNCED, unilaterally, the decision to enlarge the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) rebels to parts of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the Union Home Ministry is now talking of a review. The shift, in the first place, is bound to put the peace talks with the NSCN(I-M) in a spot. After all, the Naga rebel outfit had placed this — that the Naga-dominated areas outside Nagaland too be included in the ceasefire agreement — as a condition to continue the negotiations that began some four years ago. The problem with the NSCN factions and the larger crisis involving the initiation of a political process in Nagaland (as well as in the other States in the Northeast) were even otherwise a complex mix. And the inability of the successive Governments in New Delhi to break the impasse had led to the present crisis. The manner in which the June 14 decision (arrived at after the Centre's emissary, Mr. K. Padmanabaiah's discussion with Mr. T. Muivah) was announced had only broadened the crisis rather than helped move closer to a resolution.

Add to this the "reiteration" now by Mr. Muivah that the demand for a "greater Nagaland" remains on the agenda as far as the NSCN (I-M) is concerned. That the Union Home Ministry and its emissary did not care to even get Mr. Muivah to put this demand on hold while negotiating the terms of the fresh ceasefire is indeed a matter for concern. The Union Home Ministry and its officials engaged in the negotiations with the NSCN could have secured this — a commitment from Mr. Muivah and his men that they will not press for "greater Nagaland" — in return for enlarging the area of the ceasefire. This they did not do and even after the violence that rocked Imphal, all that one heard were statements (for the record) that the ceasefire agreement need not be seen by anyone as paving the way for affecting the territorial integrity of any of the States in the region. Neither the Home Min-

ister, Mr. L. K. Advani, nor even the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee (after he entered the scene and talked to the leaders from Manipur), had ruled out the idea of a "greater Nagaland" outright. And without a categorical assurance, the new sense of insecurity among the people of Manipur and such other States as Assam and Arunachal Pradesh (where too there are Naga-dominated pockets and the ceasefire agreement applies) was only to be expected.

Be that as it may, having assured the members of the delegation from Manipur that a review of the ceasefire agreement is already on and that the process will now be expedited, the imperative for Mr. Vajpayee and those in the Union Home Ministry will be to involve a cross section of the political groups in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the review process. And it is necessary, at least at this stage, to impress upon the NSCN(I-M) the need to suspend the demand for a "greater Nagaland". This will be needed in addition to a categorical statement by the Union Government against the idea apart from ensuring that the peace talks with the NSCN rebels are carried out with a definite time frame. The Home Ministry will also have to spell out, at least to representatives of the national political parties, the progress of the talks with the NSCN ever since the process was initiated. Apart from this, the events in Imphal during the past week have revealed that the All Manipur Students Union is in the forefront of the agitation and most parties in the State are being held captive by the group. This needs to be corrected. Any move that could lead to a vacuum in the political space (in the event of the parties and their leaders being pushed to the margins) will only lead to further complications in the region. One would expect Mr. Vajpayee and his colleagues in the Union Cabinet to learn from the past when student and youth leaders were allowed to take over the political process.

# Parliamentary guarantee for N-E States likely

110-1  
26/6  
By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 25.** Even as leaders of Manipur's political parties met this evening at the residence of the Samata Party leader, Mr. George Fernandes, who said he would pursue the "core issue of withdrawal of ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M)", it was indicated that the Government may be willing, if necessary, to give the stamp of parliamentary approval to its commitment to protect the territorial integrity of the northeastern States, including Assam and Manipur.

It seemed the Government was willing to consider any step, short of withdrawal of the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN (I-M), to address fears that the agreement has somehow furthered the NSCN agenda of a greater Nagaland. But any concrete decision would have to await a second round of discussions at a Manipur parties' meeting scheduled for July 8 after the return of the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani.

Government sources indicated that the issue figured at the meeting between Manipur leaders and MLAs and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, yesterday. In fact, the Prime Minister assured them that the Government was so firmly committed to protecting the States' territorial integrity that had Parliament been in session it could have considered adopting a resolution stating this if representatives of parties in Manipur were to make such a suggestion.

The meaning of this was that the Government was not about to back out, that it could go to the extent of binding itself through a parliamentary resolution to satisfy those who were fearing that the

ceasefire was a first step towards the creation of a greater Nagaland.

At today's meeting of party leaders from Manipur — this was attended by parties across the political spectrum in the State — the mood was that the ceasefire must be withdrawn, at least it should not be applicable in Manipur's territory. Mr. Fernandes, who seems to have decided to take the issue up personally, in a statement promised to "pursue" the matter "at all levels." He also appealed to student leaders, NGOs and other organisations in the State to observe restraint and eschew violence.

The MLAs have given the Government time till July 31 to respond, the next all-party meeting on Manipur is scheduled on July 8, and the monsoon session of Parliament is to begin on July 23. The issue of a resolution could come up at the July 8 meeting.

Since all parties cutting across the political spectrum are against disturbing the boundaries of States in the northeast, and the

opposition to the ceasefire agreement is restricted to this point, this suggestion could get the approval of all parties. Even the Samata Party leaders today said privately they would support such a resolution. After all, it would bind not only the Vajpayee Government but all future governments as well not to arrive at any political settlement with the Naga outfits on the basis of a greater Nagaland comprising areas beyond the existing boundaries of the State.

There is also the suggestion by the Bharatiya Janata Party and some others that the words "without territorial limits" mentioned in the agreement should be removed and replaced with words less likely to cause apprehensions.

While political parties are now somewhat muted in their criticism of the Government's move, organisations such as the All-Manipur Students' Union are demanding nothing less than the withdrawal of the ceasefire agreement.

## Curfew reimposed in Manipur

**IMPHAL, JUNE 25.** Indefinite curfew was reimposed in Manipur's Imphal east and west districts this afternoon after an eight-hour relaxation in view of the tense situation in the State, according to official sources. The Government has closed all educational institutions in the State for one week from today in view of the tense situation.

The Assam Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd) S.K. Sinha said in New Delhi today that the recent violence and protests in Manipur and other northeastern States was a fallout of the Centre's "initial mistake" in agreeing to geographical limits for the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M).

The influx of people from across the border (Bangladesh) was primarily responsible for insurgency "at least in Tripura and Assam," Mr. Sinha said at a seminar on "addressing conflicts in India's north-east" organised by the Institute for Conflict Management. — PTI

# Assam governor didn't initially agree with ceasefire extension

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

AA 2 26/6  
New Delhi, June 25: Assam governor Lieutenant General (Retired) S.K. Sinha said on Monday that the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muiivah)'s threats to pull out of the ceasefire with India if it is not extended to other areas is "more brinkmanship than anything else."

Commenting on the ceasefire, Lt. Gen. Sinha said, "Initially, I did not agree to the extension of ceasefire. You cannot be at war with a person in one room and at peace in the next room. The mistake was made in 1997 when the ceasefire agreement was geographically restricted to the state of Nagaland. The present agreement does not extend the ceasefire to other territories. It applies to the NSCN (I-M) as an organisation." He said this is not appreciated by those who think that the ceasefire has been extended to the territories of other states.

The governor was speaking at a seminar on "Addressing Conflicts in India's Northeast" organised by the Institute for Conflict Management headed by former Punjab police chief K.P.S. Gill.

Lt. Gen. Sinha said Assam is the "mother state, not just one of the seven states in the northeast" and if there is insurgency in Assam, it affects the entire region. He described the projection that Assam was not historically a part of India but became one only under British rule as a "canard."

Presenting a paper, a senior media person from the Manipur Pradip Phanjoubam said the reasons for the current violence in the state have more to do with the "official arrogance" and the gap left by it between an official vision and the ground reality.

In his address, Mr Gill said, "Decision making in Delhi with regard to this region has often been wrong and has repeatedly led to enormous problems there. This must change, and if the problems of this region are to be resolved, then one must consider the ground realities and opinion of the Northeast people."

Former deputy Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General (Retired) S.K. Pillai said when a state becomes "a willing or unwilling collusive partner with terrorist and secessionist groups, it begets a stable anarchy." It is this condition of "stable anarchy" that currently prevails in many areas of the Northeast.

THE ASSAM...

# Review of Naga ceasefire to be expedited: PM

107  
25/6  
By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 24.** The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today assured an all-party delegation from Manipur that a review of the ceasefire with the militant Naga outfit, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isac-Muivah), "is under way" and the "process would be expedited". He reiterated that the territorial integrity of Manipur would be preserved.

At a meeting that lasted over two hours, the delegation emphasised that it would not be satisfied with anything less than withdrawal of the ceasefire agreement in relation to the territory of Manipur. Mr. Vajpayee told the delegation that another all-party meeting would be called on July 8

after the return of the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, from his visit to Germany and Turkey. Before that the Government would hold discussions with NDA allies as well as the Opposition parties to arrive at some consensus.

The discussion at the Prime Minister's residence today covered the details of the situation in Manipur. The State leaders apprised Mr. Vajpayee of the apprehensions of the people — which they said were justified — that the ceasefire agreement would open the door to a more insistent demand by the Naga militant groups for the creation of a "greater Nagaland".

The MLAs made it clear that unless the Centre did something quickly to remove suspicion in the minds of the people, they

might have to resign from the Assembly. Later, the spokesperson of the delegation, Mr. Chandramani Singh, said a "solution must be found by July 31, otherwise we may be compelled to take some hard decisions". He was perhaps referring to the people's pressure on the MLAs to resign.

The situation certainly does not suit the BJP, which has acquired 26 MLAs (20 of them through defection), and was all set to form a government in the State after toppling the Samata Government of Mr. Radhabinod Koijam. But the ceasefire caught the party unawares. And it has been fumbling to explain how a Government led by it at the Centre failed to keep Manipur's interests in mind when arriving at an agreement with the NSCN(I-M). Naturally, the party is

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in danger of losing whatever support it had in the State.

To make matters worse, the chief of the NSCN(I-M), Mr. Isaac Muivah, reiterated today that his group had been demanding the creation of a Naga homeland, which included Naga-inhabited areas of other States, and that it had not given up this demand.

On Saturday, at the meeting chaired by Mr. Advani, leaders of all political parties pointed out in a memorandum that the people would not tolerate any attempt to play with the territorial integrity of the State. They made it clear that they saw the extension of the ceasefire to parts of Manipur as a "springboard for the disintegration of Manipur and a death knell for its territorial integrity". A similar memorandum was given by the delegation to the Prime Minister today.

The Government has come under criticism on the issue not only from the Opposition parties but also from within. The Bharatiya Janata Party politely suggested that the agreement be amended to include a clause making it clear that the extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland's boundaries in no way cleared the ground for the creation of a greater Nagaland and that the territorial boundaries of northeastern States would not be altered.

Mr. Chaoba Singh, a Minister of State in the Union Council of Ministers, has also voiced his opposition to the Government's move. In fact, after meeting Mr. Vajpayee today, the Manipur leaders addressed the press at his residence. Mr. Singh's opposition shows that the Government has not been able to convince even its Ministers, and that the only Minister from Manipur was opposing it.

Muivah's stand: Page 13



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, with Manipur MLAs at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday. To his right is the Minister of State for Home, Mr. I.D. Swamy. The Minister of State for Food Processing, Mr. Chaoba Singh, is at extreme left. — Photo: V. Sudershan

# Centre offers review without Naga ceasefire rollback

HT Correspondent/PTI  
New Delhi/Imphal, June 23

DEMONSTRATING ITS reluctance to roll back the Naga peace pact as demanded by Manipur political leaders, the Centre today tried to assuage their feelings by committing itself to "review issues arising out of the cease-fire extension". The all-party meeting of Manipur leaders with Home Minister L K Advani, called to find a solution to the cease-fire crisis, was held amidst reports from Imphal that a section of the MLAs had boycotted it.

The Manipur side was represented by Union Minister Chaoba Singh, H Haokip and W Angou Singh, former Chief Ministers Radhabinod Kojiam (Samata Party), Reishang Keishing (Congress), R K Dorendra Singh (BJP), State Assembly Speaker S Dhananjay Singh, I Chandramani Singh (MSCP) and O Joy Singh (MPP).

Advani later read out a "brief formulation": "The joint representation given by Manipur leaders will be considered by the Government and various issues arising out of the ceasefire will be reviewed."

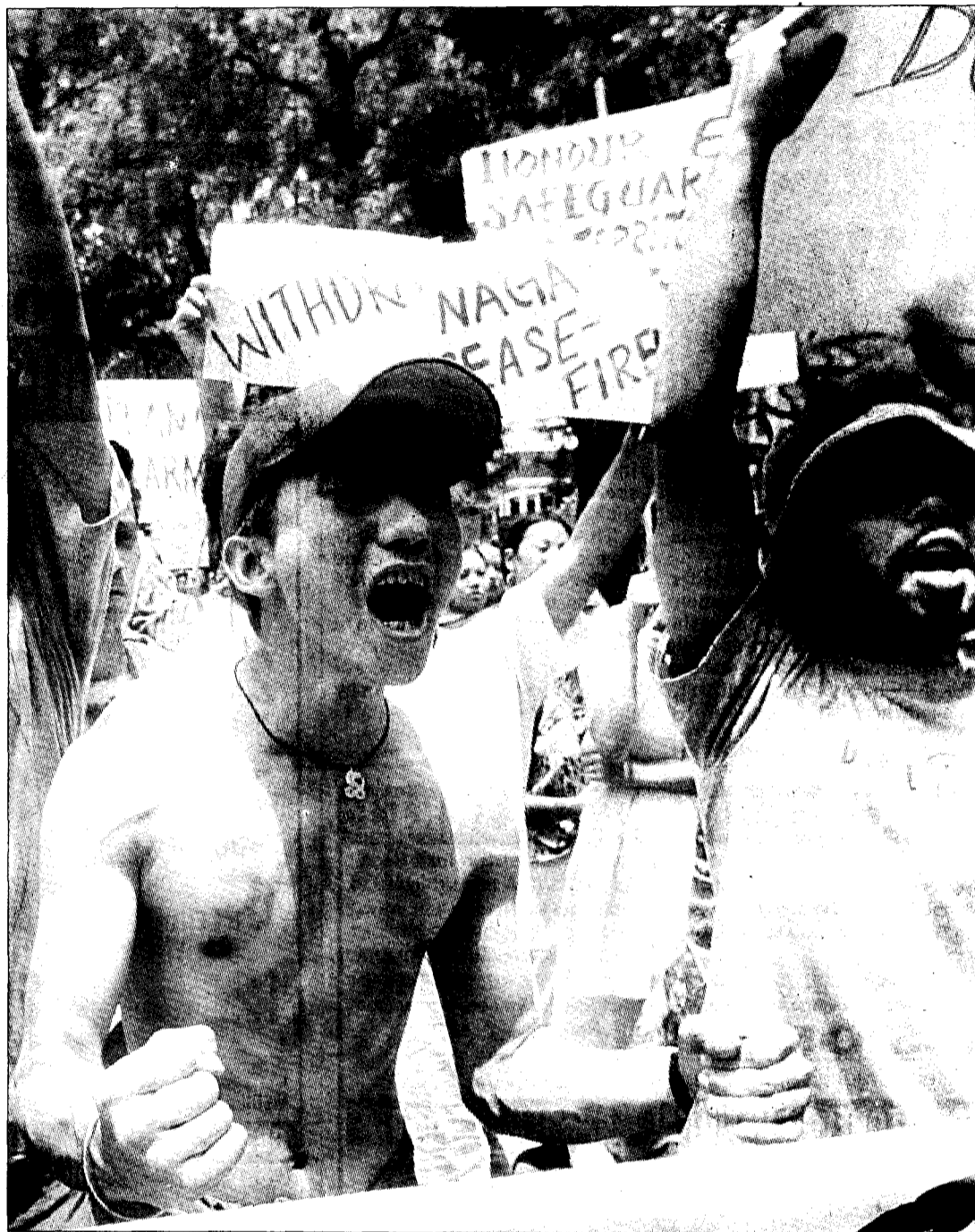
Former Deputy C M L Chandramani Singh submitted a memorandum on behalf of the Manipur leaders, demanding a "review" of the ceasefire agreement. It also sought immediate withdrawal of the ceasefire agreement's clause relating to "extension of cease-fire without territorial limits".

Advani told newsmen that the question of territorial integrity of States other than Nagaland was one of the main issues arising out of the ceasefire pact. The Government has offered to look into the points raised by the Manipur leaders at today's meeting, he said, reiterating the Centre's resolve to preserve geographical boundaries of the north-eastern States.

The Home Minister described the meeting as "extremely fruitful" wherein the State leaders expressed their views in a "free and frank" manner. "Although they gave vent to their feelings, their suggestions were invariably constructive," he claimed.

Meanwhile, senior Manipur State Congress Party (N) leader and former Chief Minister W Nipamacha Singh, who boycotted the meeting, said the Centre's proposed review of the ceasefire was "not clear". He said the review could mean "anything like withdrawing ceasefire from Naga-settled areas in valley and imposition in hill districts".

"The people of the State want immediate withdrawal of the



Activists from Manipur shout anti-Government slogans near Parliament on Saturday.

AFP PHOTO

ceasefire from Manipur and it must be withdrawn before the situation worsens," Singh said.

The 'negligent attitude' of central leaders about Manipur could be understood, he said from the fact that no leader had visited the State after the death of 14 persons in the police firing on Monday.

The State leaders have, meanwhile, asked the Centre to open talks with various students' organisations and political parties that have no representation in the Legislative Assembly. "Efforts will be made to have further dialogue with the agitating groups, in Delhi as well as through the Centre's representa-

tives in Imphal," a Home Ministry statement said.

There was no official comment by the Centre on Governor Ved Marwah's report. Marwah had reportedly suggested the appointment of an interlocutor for Manipur.

Ministers of State for Home I D Swamy and Vidyasagar Rao, Home Secretary Kamal Pande, Centre's interlocutor for Naga talks K Padmanabhaiah and Additional Secretary Home P D Shenoy also attended the meeting.

**Govt should have consulted parties, says RSS:** The RSS today said the BJP-led Government ought to have consulted all

parties concerned before expanding the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) and asserted its opposition to disturbing the territorial integrity of any State.

"The Government should have consulted the Governor, the political parties, the Government in Assam and others," RSS spokesman M G Vaidya told newsmen here.

Vaidya said he hoped the agitation in Manipur would subside "now after the Centre has explained its position".

"We do not want the territorial integrity of any State to be disturbed. We are opposed to the demand for greater Nagaland," he said.

## 12 Amsu leaders held for riots

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, June 23

THE POLICE arrested 12 leaders of the All Manipur Students' Union (Amsu) on charges of setting several office buildings, the secretariat and 54 vehicles on fire during the recent protest rally at Imphal.

The Amsu members were produced before chief judicial magistrate on Saturday and remanded to judicial custody, police said.

Protesting against the arrests, the Amsu announced that a series of agitations would be

launched unless the arrested leaders and members were released soon. After the arrest of the Amsu president and secretary general, new office-in-charges were appointed in an emergency meeting held on Saturday.

Vice-president Ingo became the president while joint secretary Md Gufar is the secretary general in-charge, an Amsu release said.

The Amsu president Oinam Shyamchand, and secretary general CS Khongsai are charged in over 30 cases. After the police

crackdown started from Thursday several student leaders have gone underground fearing arrest.

The Amsu spearheaded the agitation protesting the extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland and called for a 24-hour statewide bandh on June 18. During the bandh a massive protest rally was organised which led to burning of several office buildings and vehicles.

The Union condemned the Members of Parliament from the State and MLAs on the ground that they had let the public down.



# The spark that lit the powder keg

Imphal has been curfew-bound for a week now...

The people of Manipur are angry with the Centre and have lost faith in their politicians. **Barun Das Gupta** on the fallout of the territorial extension of the ceasefire with Naga militants.

**P**EOPLE'S ANGER at the extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) to all Naga-dominated areas in the Northeast erupted in Imphal last Monday on a scale that was unprecedented even for a State like Manipur that has seen insurgency-related violence for decades.

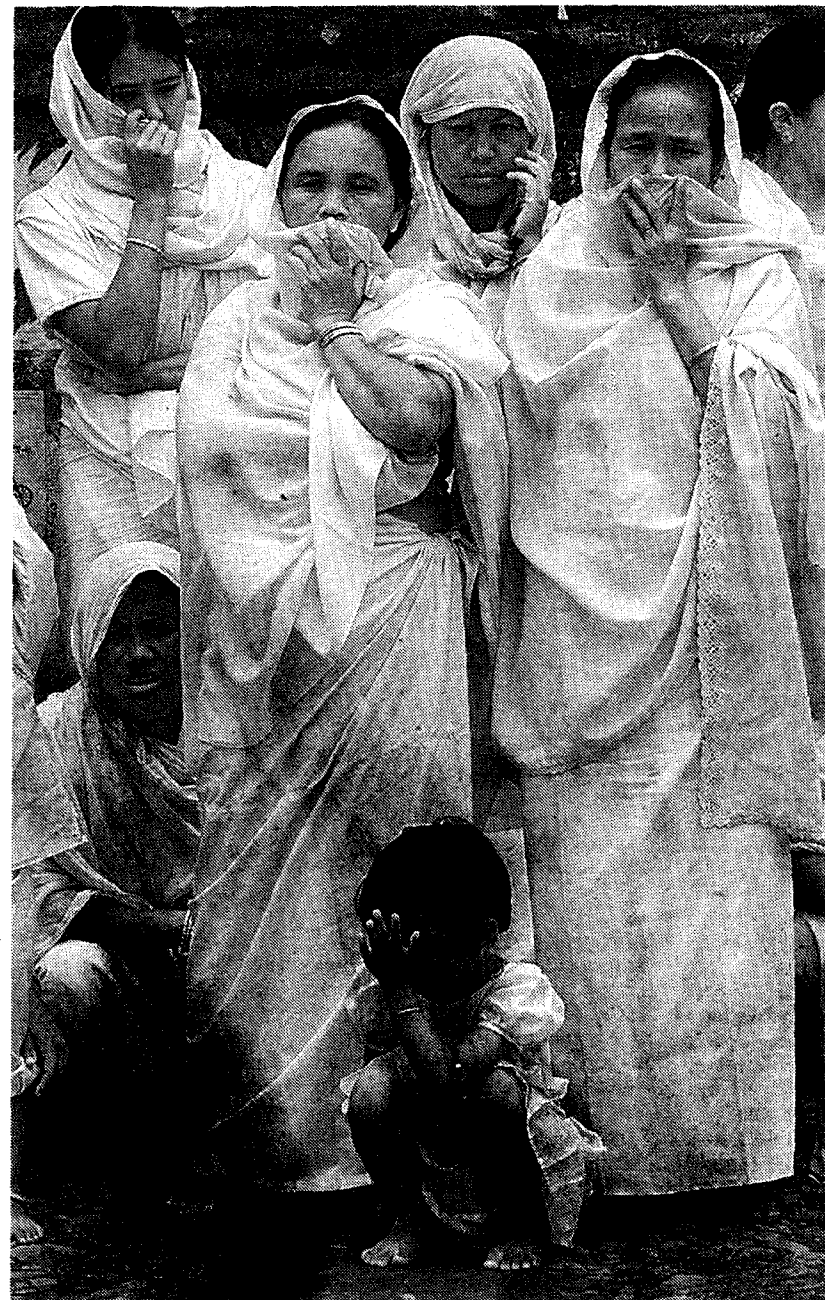
Thousands of angry people burnt down the Assembly building, the Speaker's bungalow, the Chief Minister's secretariat and offices of the Congress(I), the MSCP, and the MPP. They were about to torch the Chief Minister's official residence when the security forces opened fire. Thirteen persons including five teenagers were killed. Among the dead was Yumnam Rishikanta, 32-year-old former president of the All-Manipur Students' Union (AMSU).

The State administration, now directly under the Centre, seemed to have been quite unprepared although the signs of what was building up were very clear. On June 14, the ceasefire was extended by another year from August 1, 2001, and to Naga-inhabited areas outside Nagaland, that is, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

The very next day, June 15, 83 voluntary organisations of Manipur gave a call for a 66-hour general strike beginning midnight. This was followed by the AMSU and three other bodies calling a 24-hour general strike beginning midnight of June 17.

The Manipur Students' Federation (MSF) asked all NDA partners including the BJP, the Samata Party and the MSCP, to "give an unqualified assurance" that they would get the ceasefire extension agreement revoked by June 30. Or else, these parties "will be extinguished from the soil of Manipur". Later, the MLAs were asked to resign. Most of them went into hiding.

While the strike paralysed the State, hundreds of effigies of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, the NSCN(I-M) leader, Mr. Thuingelang Muivah, and the Centre's interlocutor, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, were burnt all over the State.



Mourning their dead in Imphal.

In Imphal, angry mobs burnt piles of tyres and wood in the middle of the major roads, spread shards of glass and oil to prevent the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. The rampage began around 11 a.m. on Monday and continued for two hours till 1 p.m. Senior police officials were busy in a meeting. The CRPF did not have orders to open fire. Molotov cocktails were thrown on the CRPF men. Attempts were even made to snatch their weapons. But the CRPF waited; it had no orders to act. The State police were plainly unable to cope with the situation.

It was around 1 p.m. when the Chief Minister's residence was about to be torched that the orders came. Immediately, firing started and the crowd fled,

leaving the dead and the injured behind. Since then, Imphal has remained curfew-bound, with two hours of relaxation in the morning. Stocks of essentials have been depleted and prices have soared. The price of potatoes has jumped from Rs. 8 to Rs. 15 a kg, onions from Rs. 9 to Rs. 15, and tomatoes from Rs. 5 to Rs. 40.

Manipuris have a deep-rooted fear that in any political settlement with the NSCN, they will have to cede territory to a "Greater Nagaland", now called "Greater Nagalim". (There are four Naga-inhabited districts in Manipur: Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong and Senapati.)

Four years ago, when a section of the media reported that the Centre might



The Manipur Assembly building was one of the targets of public ire.

agree to cede certain areas of Manipur as part of a settlement with the NSCN, a protest rally was organised by the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO) at the Polo Ground in Imphal on August 4, 1997. The rally, attended by half a million people, was the biggest Manipur has witnessed.

It demanded a "categorical assurance" from the Centre that Manipur's territorial integrity would not be compromised as a result of a settlement with the NSCN(I-M). That rally seems to have been forgotten by the Centre; Mr. Advani's recent assurance on Manipur's territorial integrity has failed to allay the fears.

Mr. Muivah's statement that the NSCN was not interested in "other people's territory" but wanted only the lands inhabited by the Nagas to be integrated into one State, and that there was no question of a "smaller or greater" Nagaland, has only confirmed the Manipuris' fears.

Significantly, the Congress(I) Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. S. C. Jamir, has also said that he stands by the resolutions passed three times by the Nagaland Assembly for the integration of Naga-dominated areas into one administrative unit, provided, he added, the Nagas of those areas were willing.

The people of Manipur, it appears, have no faith in their politicians. They distrust them. The current movement against the ceasefire extension is being spearheaded by non-political organisations such as AMUCO, AMSU, AMKIL, NIPCO, IPSA and UPF. They are asking

the MLAs to resign.

Thirty-six MLAs from the BJP, the Samata Party, the Congress(I), the MPP and two factions of the MSCP met at the Circuit House in Imphal on Thursday and "decided to resign" only if the Centre did not agree to change the decision on territorial extension of the ceasefire.

The next day, most leaders left for New Delhi to attend the meeting convened by Mr. Advani on Saturday to discuss the Manipur situation. Mr. O. Joy Singh, MPP president, said they would "convey the sentiments and message of the people" to the Centre and ask it to review the ceasefire decision.

Should the Centre fail to honour these sentiments, he feared, the "worst possible situation" would arise and it would be solely responsible. In such a situation, he said, all MLAs might resign. No wonder, an Army officer said: "There is two thousand per cent possibility of another flare up".

Even a senior BJP leader like Mr. Bhuban Singh, MLA, a retired colonel, says bluntly: "We cannot trust the Union Government, which failed us repeatedly. Why was there an 'undeclared ceasefire' between the Army (III Corps) and the NSCN in the hill districts of Manipur? We do not trust words and promises but only actions."

Mr. Singh, whose name is being mentioned as a possible "compromise Chief Minister" when the Assembly is revived and a new Government installed, puts forward some suggestions

for "whoever becomes the Chief Minister" to follow:

"Instead of sending all-party delegations to New Delhi, the Prime Minister or the Union Home Minister must come to Imphal for talks; no officials from Delhi should be welcomed, if they come they can stay in hotels or go by taxis, not Government cars; and the next Chief Minister must not allow setting up of 'designated camps' of the NSCN in Manipur."

Mr. Advani's statement that the question of Naga ceasefire extension was discussed at a Chief Ministers' conference and that those from the northeastern States had consented to it, has already been contradicted by Mr. Tarun Gogoi and Mr. Mukut Mithi, Chief Ministers of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Even the Chief Secretary of Manipur, now under Central rule, has denied that he agreed to the decision.

These repudiations have certainly not enhanced Mr. Advani's credibility or standing. The talks with the NSCN leaders, Mr. Isak Chisi Swu and Mr. Muivah, have all along been kept under wraps. Above all, the Centre has not explained why, having insisted all along that the ceasefire will not be extended beyond Nagaland, it suddenly reversed that decision. Without this explanation, assurances by Mr. Vajpayee or Mr. Advani that settlement of the Nagas' problem will not be at the cost of other States' territory would fail to reassure the people.

## On the wrong foot

New Delhi was clearly caught off guard by the reaction to the ceasefire extension, says **Vinay Kumar.**

**N**EW DELHI was clearly caught off guard by the angry reaction in Manipur to the extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN to other areas in the Northeast, apart from Nagaland.

As Manipur burnt and protesters took to the streets, New Delhi began to realise that the situation may not have worsened to this extent had there been no political vacuum. The absence of a popular Government in Manipur was felt. Also, the Home Ministry took note of the Samata Party's role in stoking public apprehension.

The former Manipur Chief Minister, Mr. Radhabinod Koijam, had forcefully informed the Centre that while the people were all for peace in the region they were apprehensive of the ongoing ceasefire affecting the territorial integrity of Manipur.

Though the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, stressed the Government's commitment to protect the territorial integrity of all Northeastern States, the articulation came after violence had broken out in Imphal.

This highlighted New Delhi's insensitivity in failing to embark upon political interaction and confidence-building measures with the States concerned before the agreement in Bangkok. The accord also failed to reject the "Greater Nagaland" demand of the NSCN (I-M).

Reacting to the protests in Manipur, the NSCN said the demand for a larger State and extension of ceasefire were two separate issues. After a ceasefire agreement was clinched with the NSCN (I-M) in August 1997, there was opposition to it in Manipur and the then United Front leaders had reiterated that the ceasefire was limited to Nagaland. Its extension now to all-Naga inhabited areas has touched a raw nerve in Manipur where political instability, insurgency and economic slowdown have also contributed to making the situation volatile.

The Centre's interlocutor with the NSCN, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, has emphasised that the basic intention of the ceasefire was to ensure negotiations took place in a peaceful atmosphere.

## ADVANI MEETS MANIPUR LEADERS

# Centre ready to review Naga ceasefire issues

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 23.** The Centre will review the issues arising out of the ongoing ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) which was extended on June 14 beyond Nagaland "without territorial limits" in the northeastern region.

Announcing the Government response after a three-hour meeting with political leaders from Manipur at the North Block here today, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, said the brief formulation of "review of various issues arising out of the ceasefire" was agreed upon by the leaders who attended today's meeting.

Mr. Advani said the leaders exchanged "free and frank views" with the Government. "Everyone spoke and gave vent to his feelings and also gave his assessment of the situation in Manipur in a candid manner. All of them invariably gave constructive suggestions," he said. The meeting was convened at the initiative of the Home Minister as many of the legislators who had earlier met the State Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, on June 21 at Imphal also wanted to be heard in New Delhi.

The thrust of today's meeting was decided last night at a high-level meeting, presided over by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee. It was felt that the Centre would not go back on the central thrust of the ceasefire extension. Describing today's meeting as being "extremely fruitful", Mr. Advani said some of the suggestions included interaction with student bodies and political parties which did not have repre-



The Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, presiding over an all-party meeting at the North Block in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

sentation in Parliament and State Assembly. "All such suggestions have been taken note of and will be acted upon." The joint representation given by the leaders from Manipur would be considered, he added.

"There is urgent need to remove the misgivings in the minds of people and assure them of the Government's determination of not disturbing the geographical boundaries of northeastern States," he told the leaders.

Later, the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, told reporters that the situation in Manipur during the past few days was also discussed and the need to normalise the situation was stressed. He said Mr. Advani stressed the desirability of a holistic approach to the situation as any conclusion would have an effect in other neighbouring States apart from Manipur.

He said Mr. Advani appreciated the constructive and balanced ap-

proach of the participants despite immense pressure on them.

Efforts would be made to have further dialogue with the agitating groups. On behalf of the political leaders, Dr. L. Chandramani Singh, leader of the MSCP and former Deputy Chief Minister, submitted a joint memorandum to the Home Minister, seeking a review of the "Ceasefire Agreement" and withdrawal of the clause "without territorial limits."

Today's meeting was attended by Mr. Th. Chaoba Singh, Minister of State for Food Processing, Mr. Holkhomang Haokip, Lok Sabha member, Mr. W. Angou Singh, Rajya Sabha member, Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam and Mr. Rishang Keishing, both former Chief Ministers, Dr. L. Chandramani Singh, Dr. K.H.L. Singh, Mr. O. Joy Singh, Mr. S. Dhananjay Singh and Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, all MLAs.

More reports on Page 8

# BJP for amending ceasefire pact

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 22.** Ahead of the Manipur all-party meeting tomorrow, there are indications that the Centre may be getting ready to concede that perhaps the ceasefire agreement with the Naga outfit, the NSCN(IM), may need to be amended to address the apprehensions of the people of the northeastern States that it was a forerunner of the creation of a greater Nagaland, root cause for the disturbances witnessed in Manipur and elsewhere. At least the Bharatiya Janata Party thinks so.

Even as the Congress today warned the Centre "not to fish in the troubled waters of Manipur," the BJP suggested to the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, that the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(IM) be "amended" to include a clause stating that the ceasefire would not affect the territorial integrity of the northeastern States in any way.

Mr. Padmanabha Acharya, BJP

national secretary in-charge of the northeast, met Mr. Advani for 45 minutes in his North Block office to discuss the Manipur situation. He said the violence in the State was "not a law and order problem" but the result of "genuine apprehensions" of the peace loving and patriotic people of Manipur. Later he told reporters that his view was that these fears could be addressed by including a clause in the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(IM) that there would be no change in the geographical boundaries of the northeastern States. He had suggested this to Mr. Advani.

It is also being conceded now that although the Centre had consulted the Chief Ministers of the affected States in February-March, the fact was that by the time the agreement was signed there was a new government in Assam and in Manipur the Kojiam Government had been voted out and President's rule imposed. Perhaps under these circumstances, the Centre could have

consulted those in power in the northeastern States at the time of signing of the agreement.

The BJP also suggested that the monitoring committee set up to oversee the ceasefire agreement should include "democratically minded well respected citizens". This would also boost the confidence of the people. It was noted that neither political parties nor the people were opposed to a ceasefire arrangement with the Nagas, everybody was in favour of establishing peace, and the protests were the result of fears that the agreement was a step towards granting a greater Nagaland, to which they were strongly opposed.

Political parties were today getting ready to make their points at the meeting of all parties in Manipur called by Mr. Advani here tomorrow. Today, the Congress said it was willing to cooperate with the Government in restoring peace, "not politicking."

Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, Congress spokesperson, made it clear it

would be "inadvisable" for the Government to try and install a government in Manipur (some noises have been made from certain political quarters that perhaps a remedy for the violence in Manipur would be the installation of a popular government).

Any such attempt made now — after all it was the BJP which brought down the Samata Party government of Mr. Kojiam — "would amount to fishing in troubled waters," Mr. Reddy warned.

The Congress view was that without thinking through the possible repercussions, the Centre "imposed" a certain agreement on the States of the northeast without consulting the Chief Ministers of affected States.

This was most improper as the matter concerned maintenance of law and order which was a state subject. In fact, this is one of the points being emphasised by Mr. Tarun Gogoi, Congress Chief Minister of Assam.

## Gogoi questions ceasefire motive

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 22.** While expressing sentiments in favour of peace in the North-East, the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, today openly questioned the "motive" behind extending the ambit of the ceasefire beyond Nagaland. Describing the Centre's decision to extend the truce with the NSCN (I-M) to all Naga-inhabited areas of the North-East as "wrong and unwise", Mr. Gogoi felt that the agreement was done in haste and lacked transparency.

Speaking to newsmen here, Mr. Gogoi insisted that he was not informed about the ceasefire extension. Asked if his predecessor, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, had agreed to the extension, Mr. Go-

goi said he did not know about it and Mr. Mahanta had not made anything clear. "The Centre has shown that it was not acquainted with the ground realities. Such a sensitive issue was not tackled wisely. I will not allow the NSCN to establish camps in my State and create disturbances," he said.

The border areas of Assam and the districts of North Cachar and Karbi Anglong were already tense. "I am concerned only about my State. If the extension of ceasefire leads to disturbances in Assam, obviously I will be concerned. My duty is to protest and I am doing that to ensure that Assam is involved in such decision-making process in the future," he added.

Referring to his recent meeting with the Union Home Minister,

Mr. L.K. Advani, he said the Home Minister had given him assurance on protecting the territorial integrity of Assam and other North-Eastern States. Mr. Gogoi said he favoured declaration of ceasefire with all insurgent groups operating in the North-East. "There should be a similar approach to other areas also so that a peaceful atmosphere prevails."

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister met the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant, and finalised the annual plan for Assam for 2001-2002. On the basis of identifiable resources, the core plan for the State was agreed at Rs. 1710 crores, marking an increase of 12.5 per cent over the plan allocation for the previous year.

## One more held in U.S. embassy case

By Our Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 22.** In a further breakthrough in the conspiracy by the Osama bin Laden outfit to carry out a blast at the U.S. Embassy here, officers of the Special Cell of the Delhi Police have arrested a person, who had allegedly been assigned the task of driving a bomb-laden car to near the visa section of the mission.

Mohammad Arshad, a resident of Patna, was arrested by a team of the Special Cell at Naya Tola in Patna on Thursday. He would be brought to Delhi on a transit remand. With the arrest of Arshad, the total number of arrests in the case has gone up to four.

**Seven gunned down in Bihar**

THE HINDU

# 'We have to now try and bring peace in the state'

**Q:** Mr Kojiam, why was the reaction to this Naga peace accord so violent in Manipur?

**A:** The people of Manipur have been suspicious and wary of the Nagas for a long time. For many years, from the time Swaraj Kaushal was the interlocutor of the Prime Minister, people have been objecting to the extension of ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM into the territory of Manipur. On August 4, 1997, there was a big rally where lakhs of people turned up — ladies, girls, young men, old men, intellectuals, professionals, business people, people from every walk of life — protesting against the extension of the ceasefire in Manipur, to protect the territorial integrity of the state. Again in September last year, there was another rally in which lakhs of people turned up. Then, repeatedly in the state Assembly, unanimous resolutions were passed that territorial integrity of Manipur should not be compromised. The ceasefire should not be extended to Manipur. Even this year in March in the budget session when I was the chief minister, a decision of this effect was taken again. This was the fourth one. From the time when I.K. Gujral was the Prime Minister, delegations of all political parties have come so many times. Then when Advani was the president of the BJP, he assured us that the ceasefire would not be extended to Manipur and its territorial integrity would not be affected. Then we met Harkishan Singh Surjeet, A.B. Bardhan and the then home minister Indrajit Gupta, and it was assured that the ceasefire will not be extended to Manipur. Therefore, the people are sentimentally and emotionally very hurt.

**Q:** But do not you agree that the government should be talking to the militant groups and working towards bringing peace in Northeast?

**A:** It is not the question of my agreeing. It was the appeal I was making to the Prime Minister and the home minister, when I met them on 2nd of March this year. I appealed to the Prime Minister that a complete, permanent and comprehensive peace in the Northeast was necessary. I said, please invite all the militant outfits, operating in the region, for the negotiations. Don't talk only to one group, that is, the NSCN-

## Q&A:

When Manipur exploded in reaction to the Government of India decision to extend the agreement of ceasefire with the National Social Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), Union home minister L.K. Advani claimed that he had consulted the chief ministers from North-east and had felt that there was general consensus on allowing the extension of

IM Naga group, but please invite all other groups. In Manipur, we have many groups, so they should all be invited for the negotiations. And why not declare a unilateral ceasefire for all the groups, as we have done in Kashmir? At that time in March, I had declared one month's ceasefire in the state from the state government's side. I appealed to the Prime Minister and the home minister that they declare ceasefire for the militants of Northeast just as the ceasefire was declared in Kashmir. That would bring complete peace to the Northeast. But if you talk to only one group, which represents only one community, it would not give you complete peace, rather it would create more turmoil. That is what I say. Also, I opposed to the fact that if you are going to talk to only this one group, then please do not extend the ceasefire in the territory of Manipur. Given this background, I have said that people are emotionally completely against this, the resolution in the Assembly, the political delegations and the rallies. I had mentioned this to them in the meeting.

**Q:** Which means you had forewarned the home minister?

**A:** I had, yes. I had and on the 13th of this month, there was a state level political conference of the Samata Party at Imphal, in the heart of the town. There, we also took political and economic resolutions. In our political resolutions, we said that Government of India should not succumb to the pressure of NSCN-IM to extend the cease-

## RADHABINOD KOIJAM

the ceasefire agreement to the rest of Northeast states. This has already been challenged by Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi. Former Manipur chief minister Radhabinod Kojiam was in the capital soon after the volatile reaction in Manipur and told FARAZ AHMAD why the people of Manipur reacted so violently to the Naga accord.



Radhabinod Kojiam

fire in the Naga inhabited areas in the Northeast, particularly in Manipur. It would be a Himalayan blunder and its ramifications would be too serious. This was our political resolution.

**Q:** But why should there be any anxiety in the minds of the people of Manipur when the home minister has said that, under the NDA agenda the government is committed to the territorial integrity of all seven sisters of north-eastern states?

**A:** The question is that, they have been giving these assurances for the last many years and people feel that the Government of India, or the leadership here, are not keeping their word because they also gave me the assurance that the ceasefire would not be extended beyond the territory of Nagaland before they had examined the demands of NSCN-IM, of integration in Naga inhabited areas. But as you see by the PTI report, after the signing of the agreement by Muivah with Padmanabhaiah in Bangkok, it says that we don't want greater Nagaland, we

don't want smaller Nagaland, we want only our Nagaland, which has one lakh, twenty thousand square kilometres of landmass. Today, the present state of Nagaland, created under the Constitution of India, has only 16,579 square kilometres. Muivah is demanding 1,80,000 square kilometres, that means about three times the present area of Nagaland. Where will you get this? Only by integrating the Naga inhabited areas in Manipur, Assam, Arunachal, Tripura and even Burma. Have you seen their map? That is a greater Nagaland map. Almost two-thirds of Manipur is included in their Nagaland. Only the valley portion is left.

**Q:** Mr Advani has also said that the government had taken an undertaking from the NSCN that (a) they will not attack civilians, (b) that they will not harbour any militants from neighbouring states and (c) that they will not indulge in any extortion. Where is the cause for concern against this agreement then?

**A:** Have they been following this on the ground? In Nagaland, the ceasefire has been there for the past four years and they have been extorting a lot of money. I have been in Nagaland for the last 13-14 years. My wife comes from there. I have property there. I know all my tenants have run away. They have been extorting money, killing and they have been recruiting people there. Do you only want to believe what Muivah says? Muivah says there should be a ceasefire. We don't know what will happen there if the Naga people want to join their

**In Nagaland the ceasefire has been there for the past four years and they have been extorting a lot of money. I have been in Nagaland for the last 13-14 years. My wife comes from there. I have properties there. I know all my tenants have run away. They have been extorting money, been killing and they have been recruiting people there. Do you only want to believe what Muivah says? Muivah says there should be a ceasefire. We don't know what will happen there if the Naga people want to join their brothers. They are welcome to. But people are not worried for today, people are worried for the future and what future Manipur has**

brothers. They are welcome to. But people are not worried for today, people are worried for the future and what future Manipur has, whether Manipur will be balkanised, disintegrated or fragmented. They are worried whether Manipur would remain or not. This is their concern. Manipur was an independent princely state. It was merged into the Indian Union in 1949. After merging it, you want to break up into pieces? What will we do? All these Nagas were there. All these hill areas were there in that princely state. Now Muivah talks as if they have been independent throughout their lives, from immemorable past, for centuries. He says that Nagas have come from Thailand and this and that. Of course we are Mongoloid. It is not only true for Nagas, all of the north-eastern people are Mongoloid and have migrated from somewhere. That is a different matter. And he says that we were never descendants of this area. Nagaland was formed by taking areas from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. And much before this, it was all a part of NEFA. But now they talk as if all along they had been independent and we were subjects of the Indian government.

**Q:** Do you think this sudden outburst also had something to do with your government being removed in Manipur?

**A:** I think we should not talk now of these things because the situation is very grave. We have to stand together across the party lines. We have to now try and bring peace in the state. We should not allow this violence, this rampaging to take place there. So, my appeal will be that, as I also said earlier, all should get together across the party lines and we should appeal to the people to shun violence. Then, we should raise our point of view in a non-violent and democratic manner. We can talk to the leadership here. We can make them see how we feel. When Vajpayeeji made his statement on the issue on television, it was soothing and I expect that it will have some impact on the people of Manipur. Some of the groups are demanding our resignations. But as I have said in my statement, we should not do anything that would divide the people on ethnic or communal lines. For my advantage, for my interest, I don't want to jeopardise any peace process.

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2001

## VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR <sup>22/6-10</sup>

THE VIOLENT INCIDENTS that rocked Imphal in the wake of the Union Government announcing extension of its ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(I-M) to all Naga-dominated areas in the Northeastern region have sent shock waves across the country. It may be true that protests were expected in Manipur and in Assam after the agreement was announced. And anti-Government protests have hardly been free from violence in the region. But then, the scale of violence with protesters braving the might of the security forces, including the Army, as it was witnessed in Imphal was indeed unprecedented. And the fact that the protesters chose their targets — the State Assembly, the Chief Minister's secretariat and the residences of the elected representatives in the capital — with such impunity must shake the political class in Manipur and also in New Delhi out of its slumber. The events establish, beyond any doubt, how much the political class is alienated from the people in Manipur. And this is what causes concern. Visuals showing the protesters did reveal the participation of a cross section, including women and youth, in the mobs that went about setting fire to all buildings that housed one or another department of the state machinery in Imphal. And there seemed to be a certain spontaneity to the agitation and that is what must cause concern.

It appears now that the crisis that was witnessed in the coalition in Manipur leading to the proclamation of Central rule in the State was also an outcome of the ceasefire agreement that was there in the making. It is a fact that Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam as Chief Minister was opposed to the idea of extending the ceasefire to areas within Manipur too. And those at the helm in New Delhi were waiting for a change there. But then, now that the Union Government is directly responsible for the administration in Manipur, it is imperative for those in the Home Ministry and the Centre's emissary to the NSCN(I-M), Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, in particular to get their act to-

gether and take influential sections of public opinion within Manipur (and this must involve sections outside the mainstream political parties) into confidence. A concerted effort is needed towards reassuring the students and the youth leaders who seem to have taken over the leadership of the agitation now that the ceasefire agreement being expanded to three districts in Manipur (Ukhrul, Tamenlong and Chandel) will in no way lead to "legitimising" the greater-Nagaland demand. The sooner this exercise is begun the better. Any delay will pave the way for further chaos.

It is in this context that one finds the attitude of those at the helm in the Union Home Ministry somewhat disturbing. It may be true that the officials in the Ministry have been ruling out (for the record) any design to affect the territorial integrity of any of the States in the Northeast. But then, there has hardly been any effort to communicate with the representatives of the people in Manipur all these days. And when the protesters turned violent, the approach seemed to be restricted to perceiving the violence as merely a law and order issue. It is this attitude or policy framework that needs a radical change. The trouble in most parts of the Northeastern States is indeed a fallout of such insensitivity to the genuine demands and aspirations of the people there, the youth in particular. It is in this sense that one would expect the Union Government to seize the opportunity now and convert the crisis into an advantage. Any further delay in this cannot but lead to further alienation of the people there from the democratic process; and insofar as the Naga ceasefire extension and the consequent trouble in Manipur are concerned, the need now is to carry out the talks within a definite time frame and also seek a commitment from the NSCN(I-M) that the agreement reached now is only about cessation of armed strikes and counter-strikes and will have nothing to do with the idea of a "greater-Nagaland."

# Mixed reaction in Manipur to Roy Burman's intervention

By Nirmalya Banerjee  
The Times of India News Service

IMPHAL: The suggestion by Naga Ho-Ho council president M. Vero that the expert in North-East affairs, R. K. Roy Burman, should be invited to Manipur to find a solution to the Naga aspirations in Manipur has generated a controversy in Imphal. Representatives of the All Manipur Students Union and the All Manipur United Clubs Organization (AMUCO) have welcomed the proposal. "We are open to discussions from all sides," AMUCO advisor R. K. Anand said. "We want to sort out the problem. If anyone comes out with a solution, we are ready to discuss it."

But, a source close to a senior minister in the former Rishang Keishang cabinet, a Kabui Naga himself, reacted sharply to Mr Roy Burman's formula for resolving the Manipur crisis which was in the lines of a special institutional arrangement like the Sami tribes in the Scandinavian countries had. "This is the basic difference between the NSCN (I-M) and the Ho-Ho," he said. "The Ho-Ho is happy with apex councils looking after the problem of Nagas spread in different states, but the NSCN (I-M) wants nothing short of sovereignty." He thought Mr Roy Burman's mediation might not work.

Rishang Kelshing gave a tongue-in-cheek reply. "When I was chief minister, Roy Burman was chairman of the chief minister's social policy cell. I have high regards for him and his intervention may be useful. In any case, some special formula is needed for the Nagas of Manipur." Talking to TOINS, Mr Rishang questioned, however, the Naga Ho-Ho's action of extending the invitation to Mr Roy Burman. "If the Ho-Ho is speaking on behalf of some underground group, then the people may not accept the formula offered," he said.

In any case, different sections of the Nagas living in Imphal as well as the Meiteis were happy that the violence which had taken place in the town on Monday did not degenerate into attacks on any particular community. "We are conscious of the need to maintain communal amity," Mr Anand said. Even then, the authorities took no chance and stepped up security in the Naga-dominated areas in the town.

Different Naga tribes living in and around Imphal were not unanimous in their opinion on the advisability of extending the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) and the future of the Nagas in Manipur. "We want to live in peace. There has been no trouble so far, but we don't see any reason why there is any need to extend the ceasefire to Manipur," James Goldman, a resident of the Thangalbazar area, said. "We are staying here since the time of our forefathers," he added. Another resident of the locality said if they had to migrate to the hill areas of Manipur—dominated by Nagas—they would be treated like refugees.

But, a resident of Dewlahland, a non-government organisation activist, who refused to be identified, was ready to quit the plains of Manipur. "We will say goodbye and go if the situation becomes too difficult," he said. In fact, some people, living in rented houses and students, had already left, he said. But, he welcomed the possibility of Mr Roy Burman's intervention, if it could bring a lasting solution to the Naga problem. "Above all, we want peace," he said.

The NGO activist thought one of the reasons why the Nagas felt alienated in Manipur was the lack of development in the Naga-dominated areas. "The developmental efforts stop in the valley," he said. "In the hills, there is a shortage of schools, hospitals and roads. When 20 teachers are needed in a school, there are only five."

# PM reviews Naga ceasefire

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today reviewed the developments since the extension of the Naga ceasefire.

At a high-level meeting, the Prime Minister heard the nature of apprehensions that have gripped the northeastern States since the announcement that the Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire would be extended to all Naga-inhabited areas.

However, the overall view was that the Centre could not go back on the central thrust of the ceasefire extension.

The meeting took place on the eve of the all-party meeting scheduled tomorrow.

This evening's high-level

meeting was attended, among others, by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Mr. K.P. Singh, and the Centre's negotiator, Mr. K. Padamanabhaiah.

The Prime Minister is said to have agreed that Mr. Advani should make an attempt to convince the political leaders from Manipur of the Centre's sincerity and to assure the other northeastern States that the ceasefire extension in no way was an endorsement of the "greater Nagaland" concept.

The meeting also decided that the law and order aspect be firmly handled and that trouble-makers dealt with firmly.

# Gogoi: Make Naga pact details public

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 22. - The Centre must make public the details of its pact with the NSCN (IM) which led to the declaration of cease-fire, the Assam chief minister, Mr Tarun Gogoi, said today.

Reiterating his opposition to the extension of the cease-fire beyond the Nagaland borders and into the Assam territory, the chief minister said he feared a deeper motive behind the whole deal.

"I want to know what is the intention behind this deal. I fear some secret motive behind this decision to extend cease-fire beyond the Nagaland borders", he said at a press conference.

When asked whether the Union home ministry "is possibly inclined to the NSCN (IM) demand for Greater Nagaland", Mr Gogoi said: "It could be. But that was why I asked for the details of the deal. I also demand a categorical assurance from the Centre that the cease-fire will not affect the territorial integrity of Assam."

He also said that he was never consulted by the Union home ministry before the decision was taken. "In fact when I met Mr Advani I had opposed any such move," he added.

The Assam chief minister indicated that his government can't be held responsible if the former earlier Mahanta government had given its consent for this kind of cease-fire. "Even Mr Mahanta appears to be ambiguous on the issue. Whatever his government's stand on the issue could have been, my government has clearly stated the opposition to the cease-fire decision."

Even while promising to take steps to ensure law and order, Mr Gogoi asked the Centre to review the decision. He also feared that the decision has the potential to create law and order situation in Assam. "Already there are protests in many parts

2386  
MLAS FACE HOSTILE WELCOME

NEW DELHI, June 22. - If some of the Manipur MLAs who reached here thought the national capital could be a safe sanctuary for them against the heat of "Quit Manipur" agitation back home by students demanding their resignations, they are sadly miscalculated. On the other hand, these MLAs found a group of Manipuri students blocking their entry into the Manipur House here, forcing them check in elsewhere, almost in a secret manner.

By evening it was clear that most of these MLAs including some BJP ones are staying at the guest house of Andaman and Nicobar Islands here. When contacted by The Statesman over the telephone, one of the MLAs, who identified himself as Mr Alpom Singh, did come on the line but was extremely reluctant to talk. He was also unwilling to say how many of his colleagues are staying with him.

All that Mr Singh would say was that he and his colleagues are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their leader Mr Dorendra Singh either late tonight or tomorrow morning to find a solution with the Union home minister. - SNS

of the state against the Centre's decision. It is certainly worrisome," Mr Gogoi said.

**Manipur peace panel:** The Manipur government has formed a 17-member committee on restoration of peace and harmony today, adds PTI from Imphal.

The divisional commissioner, Ch Birendra Singh, has been appointed as its convener, officials said. At its first meeting this afternoon, the committee discussed modalities to restore peace and communal harmony in the state.

## BJP seeks 'safety-clause' in Naga pact

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 22. - The BJP central leadership under pressure from its Manipur unit today sought to incorporate certain provisions in the Centre-NSCN (IM) peace accord, assuring the territorial integrity of the North-east states.

The BJP national secretary in-charge of the North-east, Mr P V Acharya, today met the Union home minister to seek this assurance. The meeting follows the Manipur BJP MLAs' visit here to register their protest with the central leadership and the government against extending the cease-fire beyond the borders of Nagaland.

After his 45-minute meeting with Mr L K Advani, Mr Acharya told reporters that he told the home minister to incorporate a clear commitment in the accord that the pact won't at any stage compromise the territorial integrity of other North-eastern states including Manipur.

This written assurance is a must even though there have been verbal assurances to this effect from many central leaders.

Mr Acharya also wanted the Centre to include representatives of various political parties in the proposed cease-fire monitoring committee, which originally comprised only defence and civil (administrative and personal) representatives.

Mr Acharya's efforts are seen as part of the central BJP leadership's effort to pacify its state unit which is demanding the review of the cease-fire decision. Besides, the central leadership is hoping that these assurances from the home ministry would provide a face-saver for both the state and central party leaders.

The Manipur BJP chief, Mr Dorendra Singh, is slated to meet Mr Advani tomorrow to discuss the issue.

Meanwhile, the former state minister and the BJP kisan morchha president, Mr H Kangjama Singh, sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister urging him to withdraw the cease-fire from the Manipuri areas.

THE STATESMAN



# Naga outfit hand likely in Sulfa killings: report

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, June 22. — The Assam government's apprehension that extension of ceasefire area with the NSCN to Assam may worsen the law and order situation further may not be entirely without substance with reports of preliminary investigation into yesterday's killing of 12 Sulfa men suggesting that Naga and Ulfa militants were involved.

The minister of home for state, Mr Prodyut Bordoloi, who visited the site of the massacre in Dibrugarh district today, said that some of the attackers spoke Nagamese, which is the language spoken by Nagas particularly when interacting with Assamese-speaking people.

"Both Ulfa and Naga militants were probably involved in the incident," Mr Bordoloi said.

The car, which had brought the militants to the Moran Polo Club where the incident took place, later fled towards Sonari with its occupants. Sonari borders Mon district of Nagaland

where the Khaplang faction of the NSCN has bases.

The Ulfa has been known to be in league with the NSCN-K.

The recent ceasefire area extension into Assam was according to agreement with the NSCN(I-M) but it would also be applicable for the truce with the NSCN-K, too.

The Assam chief minister even today demanded in Delhi that the ceasefire area be not extended to the state as that would create a serious law and order problem.

Mr Bordoloi held a meeting with senior police and civil officials to take a stock of the law and order situation and assured that the culprits of yesterday's carnage would be brought to book. He also visited the families of some of those who were killed yesterday.

**Sulfa body plea:** The Asom Jatiya Mahasabha, which is a statewide platform for Sulfa has asked its members to exercise utmost restraint in the wake of the killing of 12 of them.

The Sulfa men were gunned down when they gathered for a

meeting to form an NGO at the Moran Polo Club yesterday morning. While initial reports said six others were injured, it later transpired that the number of injured were actually 10. They are undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dibrugarh and adjoining Sibsagar district.

The AJM publicity secretary, Mr Sasanka Sharma, told **The Statesman** today that members have been asked to contact the central office here in case of any emergency. "But they should not in any way aggravate the situation, there must be no retaliation" he said.

Mr Sharma said the Ulfa must stop the violence because they were not likely to gain independence through such acts. "Such incidents only lead to harassment of the people," he said.

**Ulfa denies charge:** Denying his outfit's hand in the killing, the Ulfa commander-in-chief, Mr Paresh Barua, is reported to have told some local newspapers over the telephone that yesterday's incident was a fallout of rivalry between two groups of the Sulfa.

## 12 Sulfa men gunned down

HT Correspondent

Guwahati, June 21

IN THE second such attack in a week, Ulfa militants this afternoon killed 12 Sulfa men and injured 20 others at Moran in Dibrugarh district.

Additional inspector-general of police Ramani Barua said, "Suspected Ulfa militants attacked the surrendered cadres when they were coming to attend a meeting."

The surrendered cadres had gathered at Moran Polo Club to discuss floating an NGO when the militants opened fire on them from automatic weapons around 12.30 p.m., police said. Five militants, who had come in a Maruti Zen, attacked only their former colleagues but spared civilians and the security men attached to the Sulfa men, they added.

The operation was aimed at killing off the surrendered militants. The securitymen could only watch on as masked militants picked and killed the Sulfa men one by one. The killers were speaking in Nagamese, the police said. Speaking to the *Hindustan Times*, former Ulfa publicity secretary Sunil Nath described the attack as an act of terrorism.

The dead were identified as Jintu Sarma, Ajit Changmai, Gasiruddin Barua, Mohim Chetia, Muhi Barua, Haresh Gohain, Parag Rajkhowa, Manoj Agarwala, Khirod Gogoi, Biren Gogoi, Angseng Siam and Paresh Bharali.

See also report on Page 6

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

## Naga MLAs in Delhi over ceasefire

no untoward incident was reported, the situation was very tense despite indefinite curfew in Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal districts. Curfew was relaxed for two hours this morning and would be again for several hours tomorrow.

The AMSU and other organisations threatened to intensify its agitation if the extension of ceasefire with the NSCN (IM) to Manipur was not withdrawn, and announced boycott of the MLAs and MPs as they had 'ignored the sentiments of the people' and should leave the state immediately.

The organisations had on Tuesday asked the legislators to resign within 24 hours, but 36 of them in a meeting decided to wait till August one. Twentyfour others could not attend the meeting.

Leaders of the social organisations said they would soon launch a series of agitations including non-cooperation movement and mass sit-in protests throughout the state. They, however, condemned the burning of the national flag during violence on Monday.

Meanwhile 19 MLAs, led by BJP legislature wing leader R K Dorendra Singh, today left for New Delhi to urge the Centre to reconsider the ceasefire decision.

Home Minister L K Advani has convened a meeting of political parties of Manipur in Delhi on Saturday following a discussion with Governor Ved Prakash Marwah.

Former Chief Minister W Nipamacha Singh today described 'totally wrong' a news report attributing to Union Home ministry sources that he had given consent

to the extension of Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire to Manipur.

Meanwhile, NSCN (K) today welcomed the expansion of the ceasefire beyond Nagaland as a "good turning point" of the Naga political struggle, but took strong exception to opposition by neighbouring states against the truce extension.

Nagas did not disrespect the integrity of others. In the same manner "we will not allow anybody to disrespect our identity", NSCN(K) said in its first public statement after the Centre-NSCN(I-M) ceasefire area coverage agreement.

Stating that it would not compromise on the "territory" of Nagas, it said the extension of ceasefire to entire Naga inhabited areas has been NSCN(K)'s demand also.

Political parties in Nagaland also urged the people of Manipur and other North-Eastern states to remain calm following the Centre and NSCN(I-M)'S clarifications on the extension of ceasefire and their territorial integrity.

Nagaland People's Council (NPC), Nagaland Democratic Party (NDP) and the state unit of BJP in separate statements appealed to the people of neighbouring states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to extend help and co-operation in resolving the protracted Naga political problem. Normal life continued to be affected for the second day today in North Cachar Hill district of Assam where a 48-hour bandh is on to protest against the extension of ceasefire to Assam, official sources said.

## Naga MLAs in Delhi on truce

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
IMPHAL, JUNE 21

MANIPUR continued to remain very tense with the indefinite curfew in three districts entering the fourth day today as 19 legislators left for Delhi to urge Central leaders to reconsider the ceasefire issue.

Official sources said although  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

# Ulfa-Sulfa renew blood feud

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, June 21

THURSDAY MORNING'S massacre at Moran where at least a dozen Surrendered Ulfa (Sulfa) militants were shot dead and five others injured by their former colleagues is a continuation of the violence between the two groups.

Over the years, rivalry between the two groups has resulted in a number of killings where relatives and friends of the Ulfa militants and their surrendered former colleagues have also been targeted. Thursday's incident is, however, the most violent one till date. One of the initial attacks against the relatives of the Ulfa militants took place in August

1988 when four relatives of former Ulfa publicity secretary Mithinga Daimary were shot dead at their residence. Six masked youths shot dead Mithinga's elder brother Dharanidhar Das, his pregnant wife Rupjyoti, mother Phuleswari and his sister Latika. The last major outburst of Sulfa-Ulfa violence was witnessed between December and January. Nearly 20 people were killed as a result of the fratricidal feud, which was stated to be the outcome of some recent attacks on relatives of Ulfa members, including the parents of Ulfa chief Paresh Baruah.

Two days later, Deepak, brother of Sasha Choudhury, 'foreign secretary' of Ulfa, was killed by unidentified assailants in the Nal-

bari district. On December 23, unidentified assassins blew up the house of dreaded Ulfa militant Sashi Phukan at Baihata in Kamrup district with two powerful hand grenades. No one was injured as the house was abandoned at that time.

Soon, three former Ulfa militants were shot dead and two others injured in the Nalbari district by members of the banned outfit. This was followed by an attack on another Sulfa member and one of his associates by a suspected Ulfa militant at Mangaldai in Darrang district. Following huge public outcry against these and later killings, the Government was forced to launch an offensive against the Sulfa members.

## Meghalaya FM pleads for 'Plan holiday'

AN ACUTE shortage of non-Plan funds has forced Meghalaya Finance Minister A H Scott Lyngdoh to plead for a year of "Plan holiday" so that all available resources could be utilised in maintaining the infrastructure of the previous Plans. Lyngdoh admitted in the Assembly on Thursday that the austerity measures laid down by the Centre were a major handicap in maintaining the infrastructure of the previous Plans. He accepted Opposition charges that funds were spent quite indiscriminately during the fag end of the fiscal leading to much wastage. He stressed the need of radical measures to overhaul the trend.

HTC, Shillong

# Will Manipuris finally fall back on the crown?

**Jaideep Mazumdar**  
Imphal, June 21

TILL FIVE decades ago, Sana Konung — the Golden Palace — was the seat of power in Manipur. This seat may have shifted 1.5 km west to the State Secretariat from 1949, but the present residents of the crumbling palace still harbour dreams of providing leadership to Manipur's distressed people.

Sanajaoba Leisimba, the 'king' of Manipur, is disturbed and anguished by the sufferings of his 'subjects' at the hands of an "insensitive" New Delhi to which his grandfather, Maharaj Bodhachandra, handed over power in 1949.

The 31-year-old student of law plans to become a lawmaker "to restore dignity and self respect" of his people. He has his grandmother, Sangai Kamalabati, to back him to the hilt.

"People want me to join politics to provide good leadership to them and guide Manipur through the troubled times," Sanajaoba said.

Maintaining a diplomatic

silence on the failure of politicians to protect the interests of Manipur, the young 'king' backed the popular demand that the MLAs and MPs tender their resignations.

The 84-year-old 'Queen Mother' and widow of Maharaj Bodhachandra says the day her husband was "forced" to sign the Instrument of Accession was the "saddest day for Manipur and its people."

"I remember those days clearly. The Maharaja was summoned by the Governor of Assam to Shillong. Some Congress leaders were pressuring him to accede to India. He resisted the pressure for as long as he could. But ultimately, he was forced to sign on the dotted line. He was not allowed to even consult the people, who did not want to become part of India," Sangai Kamalabati said.

Seated on a canopied bed — the only piece of furniture in the stark room with cracked floors and fissured walls — the 'Queen Mother' said: "Monarchy was much better. Manipur's troubles began after it became part of

India. Ever since, there has been mismanagement, suffering and bloodshed. Not a year passes by without lives being lost."

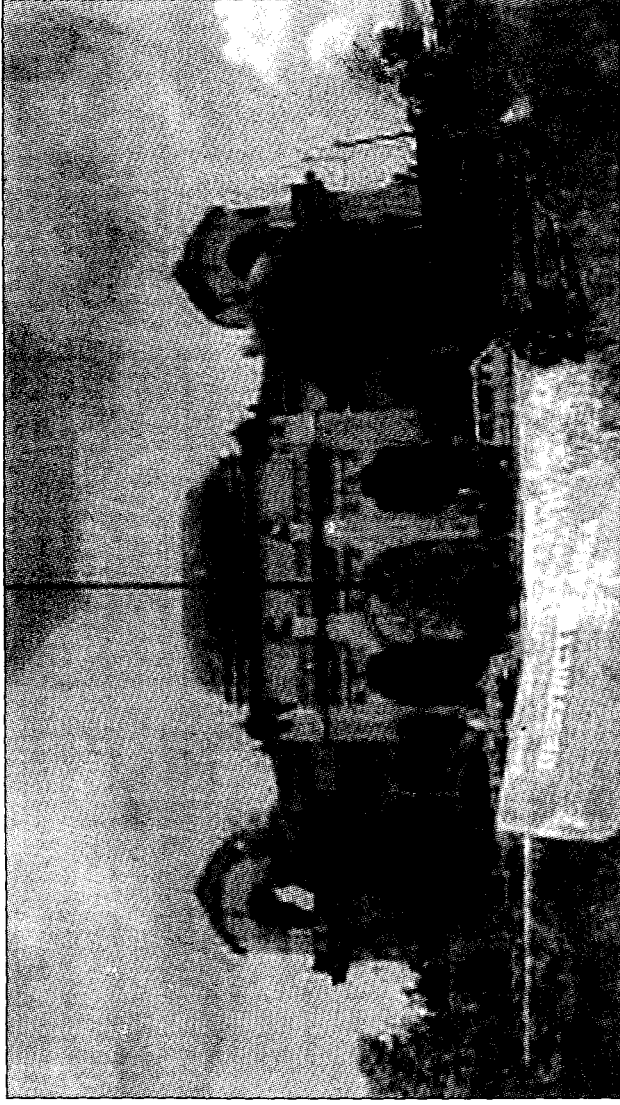
The 'Queen Mother' feels the people of Manipur still respect and look up to the royal family. "My descendants should not shy away from politics. They have it in them to provide the leadership that my husband and his forefathers provided to the people. They led battles to protect Manipur from the invaders. My grandson can lead this battle once again, but now it has to be within the democratic framework and within the parameters of the Indian Constitution," she said.

Sangai Kamalabati had two sons, the elder being 'Maharaja' Okendrajeet who passed away in August 1996. Okendrajeet's widow, MG Tamphasana, looks after her ailing mother-in-law (the 'Queen Mother'). Okendrajeet fathered five children, of whom Sanajaoba Leisimba is the eldest and the inheritor of the title of 'Maharaja'. Sanajaoba is married to H Anamika and has a two-year-old son, Tholibisana. "The exten-

sion of the ceasefire to Manipur is dangerous for this State. If the Centre does not revoke this extension, the consequences will be too grim to even ponder over," he said. Sanajaoba feels the Centre did not receive proper inputs from Manipur before deciding to extend the ceasefire agreement.

Sanajaoba says the need of the hour is peace. "Let us restore peace and we will all join hands to make the Union Government change its mind. After all, we are an inalienable part of India and our wishes have to be respected," he said.

The 10 members of the royal family, including Sanajaoba's youngest sibling M K Abungsana (18), live an ordinary, middle-class existence. Ever since privy purses were abolished in 1971, the family with a retinue of eight housekeepers and a 'comptroller', have been depending on offerings at the resplendent Govindaji temple built by Maharaja Bodhachandra and a few other businesses. Sanajaoba plans to get a Maruti car dealership in New Delhi to supplement the family income.



Sitting on the front steps leading to the ornate 'durbar' hall that still hosts the Chingtin Pot Lana-ba every October where 'subjects' offer gifts as a show of allegiance

to the 'king', Sanajaoba feels Manipur may see more troubled times ahead. He glances at the red and gold royal flag that flutters atop a mast at the centre of a driveway overgrown with weeds and grass — a reminder of Manipur's glorious past and hopes to regain some of that lost glory that the present flag-bearer offers.

# Manipur Governor appeals for peace

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, June 21

MANIPUR GOVERNOR Ved Prakash Marwah who has come under severe criticism following the killing of 13 persons in CRPF firing at Imphal, appealed to the people of the State not to do anything that will inflame the already charged atmosphere in the State.

He termed the June 18 incident

HT-6  
killing of 13 persons as one of the saddest day of his life. The Governor acknowledged the feelings of the Manipuris over the prevailing situation in this volatile border State, the Governor said in a communique issued by the Raj Bhavan on Thursday.

He deeply bemoaned the loss of previous lives and injuries to many persons during the riot, the letter said, adding that any

further violence will only escalate and complicate the already difficult situation.

He assured the people of Manipur that he would convey their grievances to the Central Government. "We together must find out ways to calm their fears of the extension of ceasefire outside Nagaland without any territorial limit as well as the territorial integrity of Manipur," the

22/6  
communique added. Manipur CPM unit has demanded resignation of the Manipur Governor Ved Prakash Marwah for his failure to maintain peace in this sensitive border State.

**Naga appeal:** Manipur-based Naga organisations expressed their grief on the killing of 13 persons in the firing on June 18 and appealed to the people of the State to maintain peace.

# Lawmakers served 'Quit Manipur' notice

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Imphal, June 21

AGITATING STUDENTS and social organisations here have served "Quit Manipur" notices on the State's 60 MLAs and three MPs, with a punch line call for a social boycott of the lawmakers.

Representatives of eight organisations, including the All Manipur Students' Union and the All Manipur United Clubs Organisation, told reporters this morning that they had also called for a non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement. They renewed their demand for immediate revocation of the extended truce.

With no sign of an early end to the standoff, 19 MLAs led by BJP legislature wing leader RK Dorendra Singh left for New Delhi today to demand rollback of the truce area coverage.

Some departing MLAs said their colleagues too would be in Delhi soon. The administration today attempted a cautious return to order, relaxing curfew for two hours in the morning. The curfew may be lifted for three hours tomorrow. "There was no incident in the valley today. We are constantly monitoring the situation and intend to relax curfew restrictions between 6 am and 9 am tomorrow. But there is a strong undercurrent of anger. In fact, it is growing with each passing day. We can't afford to lower our guard," DGP A A Siddiqui said.

Governor Ved Marwah convened a meeting of his two advisors K Kipgen and EN Rammo-



AFP PHOTO

All that remains of the Assembly.

han, DGP Siddiqui, chief secretary Rakesh, IGP (intelligence) MK Das and other senior officers at Raj Bhawan this afternoon to review the situation

"The ultras are active and fuelling resentment among the people. We are hamstrung because our information sources have dried up on account of the curfew. That's why we are so very cautious," Siddiqui said, even as the administration liaised with the Army and police stepped up vigil on the streets.

The Centre today decided to convene a meeting in Delhi on Saturday to discuss the situation with leaders from Manipur.

Related reports on Page 6

# Big Two pitch for popular government

MLAs cut  
brave front,  
pass buck  
to Delhi

FROM SAUMITRA BANERJEE

Imphal, June 22: From winning hearts to losing homes, Manipur's MLAs have travelled a long way in the brief span of a few days since the Centre decided to extend the Naga ceasefire to the state.

Driven from their homes which were burnt to ashes, beaten and kicked by angry mobs and now facing the prospect of a social boycott, legislators here are charting a new course to keep their political prospects alive.

On the surface, it is bluff and bluster. "We couldn't care less," said state BJP legislator Bhutbon Singh, a day after the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) and The All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) — the outfits spearheading the anti-ceasefire extension agitation — threatened to virtually banish them from the state.

"We are answerable only to the people. Who are the AMSU and the AMUCO to boycott us?" echoed another legislator, Gangmumei Kamei of the Federal Party of Manipur.

Ask any of them what they feel about the charge that they have "let down the people", and fingers are promptly pointed at the Centre.

"For many years we have been giving resolutions to Delhi, saying that the ceasefire should not be extended, but it is the Centre that finally let Manipur down," said Kamei, expressing a view widely shared by almost all legislators. "Burning down the Assembly building and attacking us is grossly unconstitutional. It is the Centre that should be facing the fire." But there is a fear lurking

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, June 22: As Manipur limped towards normality, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani met this evening to take stock of the situation in the strife-torn state.

Restoration of a popular government was the "only means" of bringing it back on the rails, they concluded. Home ministry sources said the Centre's top two felt "no state would like to be indefinitely governed by the Centre".

Sources also said that Advani, who has convened a meeting of the Manipur political parties tomorrow, will use the occasion to "test the political waters" and assess the prospect of a "credible and stable" government to "restore the people's faith in the political system".

BJP sources, however, said their reading was that time is "not yet ripe" for a government to come into place in Manipur after the charade which saw successive dispensations overthrown, legislators switching sides by the minute and NDA constituents settling their own scores.

In fact, the party national secretary in charge of Northeast, Padmanabha Acharya, conveyed to Advani in a one-to-one meeting at North Block today that the Centre's first priority should be "restoration of peace and order rather than swearing in a government". BJP sources said the suggestion was based on the feedback from the Manipur legislators who had come to Delhi.

However, the perception shared by government sources was that with so much public ire vented against Governor Ved Marwah as well as Vajpayee and Advani — whose effigies were burnt on Imphal's streets — the Centre must be "seen to recede in the background".

More so when the ceasefire extension was there to stay and unlikely to be revoked. Bringing back a popular government was seen as the only way of "diluting" the "negative impact" of the Bangkok accord and "reestablishing the Centre's credibility and le-

gitimacy", said sources.

The BJP suggested to Advani that the Bangkok accord between the Centre and the NSCN (Isak Muivah) should be amended to insert a clause stating that the ceasefire extension in Manipur had "nothing to do with the territorial integrity of any state".

Such a clause will go a long way in allaying the doubts and fears that had crept into the minds of the Manipuris about the Centre's "suspect motives" and the BJP's "hidden agenda", the party felt.

Acharya told reporters later the amendment that he suggested was: "Let the integrity of the states not be eroded in any way or affected by the extension of peace talks outside Nagaland."

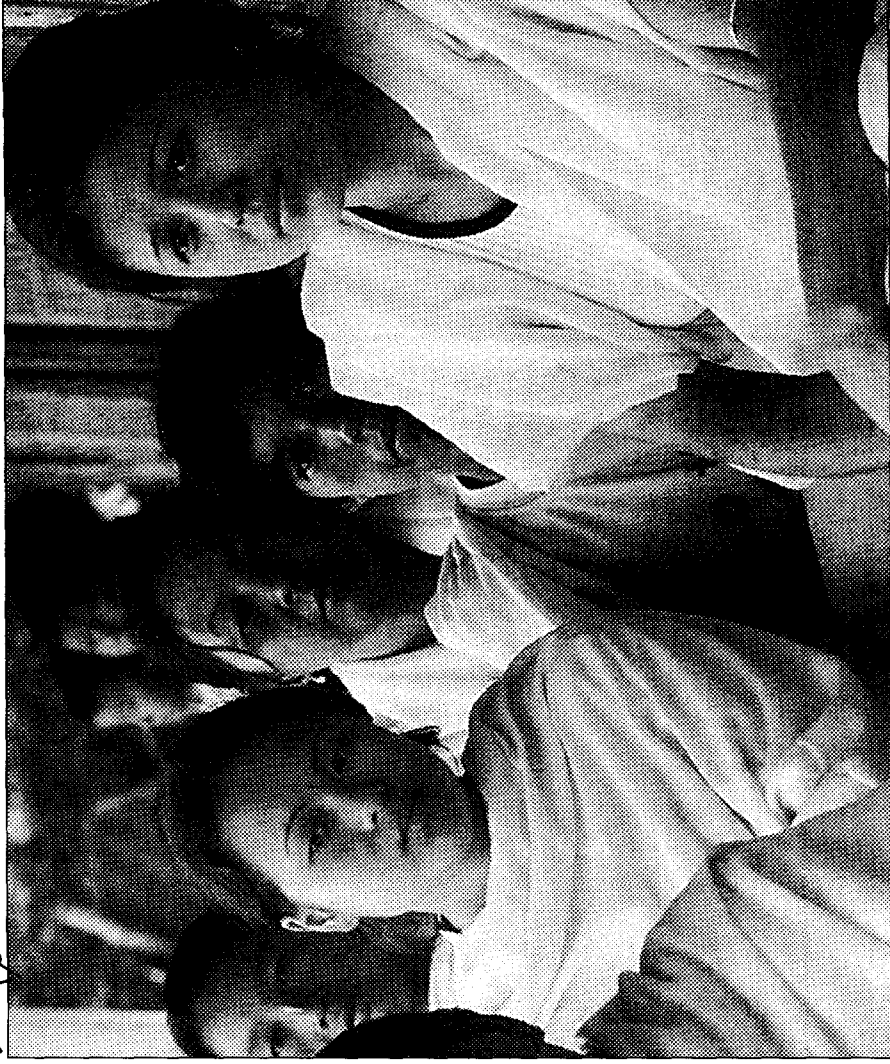
Acharya indicated the Centre may convene another meeting of the chief ministers of the states where the ceasefire is operative, namely Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Advani had convened such a meeting on March 3. Acharya said a fresh one was necessitated by the "sea-change" in the political scenario of Manipur and the change of government in Assam.

Acharya also proposed broad-basing the composition of the ground rules for the Peace Monitoring Committee, constituted by the home ministry, specially for Nagaland. At present, the committee only comprises bureaucrats and army men.

The BJP secretary has requested Advani to include "well-minded civilians" from groups like the Naga Ho-Ho and Mothers' Organisation.

The committee was to oversee the ceasefire in a state like Manipur, home to several insurgent groups apart from the NSCN (I-M) — the People's Liberation Army, Manipur National Liberation Front — and had a mixed population. "In between the two Nagaland dominated areas of Ukhrul and Chandel there are Meithei-majority areas where the NSCN (I-M) doesn't exist but other militant groups may. The ceasefire would not be operative in such areas and the non-NSCN (I-M) outfits will not be bound by its rules," explained Acharya.



A protest meeting in Imphal. Picture by Amit Datta

among the MLAs today. Having turned down the demand for their resignation by the agitationists, they know they have to act fast to regain the political initiative.

No one, for even a moment, believes that tomorrow's meeting in Delhi with Union home minister L.K. Advani is going to lead to a rollback of the Centre's decision. "Even if we do not achieve anything, we are compelled to convey the message of the people here to the Union government," admitted Manipur People's Party chief O. Joy Singh before leaving for the capital this morning.

"We will tell the home minister that the decision should be reviewed or else there will be more problems here. But I have to say that we don't know what to expect."

Neither can the MLAs brush off the charge that while they kept

tions will get further restricted. "It is a catch-22 situation," admitted an MLA.

"If after the deadline there is nothing positive happening for the state and we still do not resign, then most of us are bound to lose the next elections. On the other hand, by giving in to the agitationists' demand, we, in effect, are accepting blame for what has happened and end up prolonging President's rule in Manipur."

While curfew came to their rescue in the days following Monday's conflagration, the MLAs are now hoping that the five weeks left for their deadline throws up some answers for their survival.

## Amsu arrests

More than 10 Amsu activists, including Amsu president O. Shyamchand, have been arrested this evening.



# Assam alert over truce extension

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, June 20. — Assam has sounded an alert apprehending a Manipur-like situation in the state following the Centre's decision to extend the area of ceasefire with the NSCN "without territorial limits."

"There may be a serious law and order situation in the state," the chief minister, Mr Tarun Gogoi, said. "Already a 48-hour bandh has been called in the North Cachar Hills district," he said.

The bandh began at 5 this morning. The NSCN has been running a virtually parallel administration in the district, collecting taxes from individuals, government officials and departments and business houses at will.

The chief minister said that deputy commissioners and superintendents of police of the districts have been alerted to deal firmly with any violation of law and order.

Addressing his first press conference after ascending to the hot seat a little over a month ago, Mr Gogoi demanded that the Centre revoke its decision forthwith. "There is no justification in extending the ceasefire area to Assam because the NSCN's activities are confined to Nagaland," he said.

He said he had apprised the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, about the state's concerns and the latter assured him that there would be no trouble in Assam because of extension of the ceasefire to Assam and other places. The

home minister, however, could not explain how extending the ceasefire area beyond Nagaland could help. "He only said that it would help in restoring peace," the chief minister said.

Despite its "strong" opposition, there appears to be a contradiction in the government's stand.

For instance, when asked if the police would arrest any NSCN militant even if he was unarmed and did not violate laws, Mr Gogoi replied in the negative. "As long as they don't violate the ground rules of the ceasefire they are free to move around," he said. On the other hand, he said, the police could arrest an Ulfa militant even if he did not break the law. In other words, the state government accepts application of the NSCN-Centre ceasefire ground rules in Assam but is opposed to extension of the truce area to the state. However, the state government is clear about not allowing even designated camps of the NSCN on Assam territory.

Mr Gogoi also said that the Congress was unanimous about its opposition to the NSCN demand for 'greater Nagaland' comprising parts of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam besides the present state of Nagaland. But the Congress chief minister of Nagaland, Mr S C Jamir, reminded only the other day that he stood for integration of all Naga-inhabited areas under a single administrative umbrella. The Nagaland Assembly had adopted three resolutions in the past in this regard.

THE STATESMAN

20.6.68

# Vajpayee assures Chaoba of acceptable solution

## MLAs condemn arson, seek judicial probe into firing

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE AND UNI

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI, June 20. - At least 40 Manipur MLAs tonight condemned the burning of the Manipur Assembly hall and other buildings by anti-ceasefire extension protesters on Monday. They demanded a probe by a High Court judge into the police firing that claimed 13 lives.

The meeting, presided over by the Speaker, Mr S Dhananjay, criticised the administration for failing to protect life and property.

The MLAs, who had been given a 24-hour deadline to resign by the All Manipur Students' Union, decided to rush to New Delhi to convince Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr LK Advani and other Central leaders to revoke the ceasefire from the territorial boundary of Manipur.

Dr Loken Singh (JD-L) announced that he would resign if the Centre did not withdraw the ceasefire from the Manipur territory by 31 July.

The Manipur State Congress leader, Mr Chaoba Singh, said the Prime Minister had assured

him that the Centre would try and find an acceptable solution to the crisis.

Mr Singh, who met Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee this afternoon, denied rumours that he had resigned from the government and his party had withdrawn from the NDA on the ceasefire issue. He is the only Central minister from Manipur.

Though his party was yet to decide on this issue, there was confusion because the MSCP-N had announced its exit from the NDA.

In a memorandum submitted to Mr Vajpayee, Mr Singh said it was impossible to convince the people that ceasefire extension and respect for the state's territorial integrity were separate issues.

Passions were running high and in future, the people would not buy the Centre's arguments.

The former Manipur chief minister, Mr Radhabinod Kojiam, started informal talks with the leaders of various parties in the state to form a united front to oppose the ceasefire. While he welcomed the Centre's assurance that

■ See MANIPUR: page 8

### MANIPUR

(Continued from page 1)

ceasefire extension beyond Nagaland would not undermine the territorial integrity of neighbouring states, he said because of fears about NSCN-IM's stand on the issue, a united political front would soon take shape after talks with more party leaders in Imphal.

**Victims cremated:** The bodies of the 13 victims of Monday's police firing were given a mass cremation at Kerupat on the banks of the Imphal river today. Indefinite curfew in three districts continued.

The bodies were taken in trucks for cremation from the morgue of the Regional Institute of Medical Science Hospital, with Army and security forces guarding the four-km route, officials said.

Journalists were barred from the funeral, where only family members of the victims and Amsu and Amuco representatives were allowed. Sources said Army helicopters took to the skies after reports that people were congregating in curfew-bound areas, while Army and paramilitary forces staged a flag march in Imphal and greater Imphal.

The condition of the former Manipur general administration minister, Mr N Bihari Singh, injured in Monday's violence, remained "very serious".

**Website:** Manipuris living across the world have launched a website, [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com), to mobilise an international signature campaign against the ceasefire extension beyond Nagaland.

THE STATESMAN

# Funeral under shadow of gun



Mass cremation of the Imphal riot victims. (AFP)

FROM SAUMITRA BANERJEE

Imphal, June 20: It was to be an undercover operation. Quietly, one by one, the administrators had planned to cremate the bodies of those killed in Monday's massive protest.

Sitting on a powder keg, it seemed the only way to prevent a further conflagration. But, once again, the people prevailed.

Today, the bodies of the 13 people who had fallen to police bullets protesting the extension of the Naga ceasefire to Manipur were placed on pyres at Kekru-Pat on the banks of Imphal river in a mass cremation and the last rites performed.

Only it was a cremation under siege. Ferried from their

homes in police jeeps, under the watchful eyes of the army in a city under curfew, relatives of the dead were first taken to the morgue and then rushed to the cremation ground.

Amidst the walls of the bereaved and the smoke rising from the pyres, a solitary banner fluttered, capturing the sentiments of the people. It dedicated the place to "the martyrs who laid down their lives to save the territorial integrity of the state".

Fear stalks the majority Meitei population here. Outnumbered in four districts by the Nagas, for them the Centre's ceasefire has only signalled an endorsement of the Naga claim for a "greater Nagalim".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

## Funeral under gun shadow

▶ FROM PAGE 1

It is this apprehension of a partition of Manipur that brought 80,000 people out of their homes on Monday in a display of solidarity and anger that led to a carnage which could only be quelled by a rush of police bullets.

The surface is calm in Imphal today, but the air is thick with tension. "It would only need a match to ignite the city once again," conceded Manipur's inspector-general of police (law and order) R. Baral, who was personally supervising security at the cremation site this afternoon.

It is precisely a measure of this tension that barely had the banner dedicated to the "martyrs" been put up than an Assam Rifles jawan pulled it down before the eyes of the grief-stricken relatives.

The mass cremation today is not what the administration had wanted. "A mass outpouring of sorrow and anger at such a sight is

a fatal cocktail for us given the situation in Imphal today," said an official.

Through the last two days, in fact, the All Manipur Students' Union (Amsu) and the All Manipur United Clubs Organisation, the two outfits which have been spearheading the agitation, had been locked in hectic parleys with the government on the funeral.

Reportedly, after repeated deadlocks on the matter, this morning the government gave the go-ahead for the mass cremation on the ground that only a few relatives would be present and it would be out of bounds for all agitation activists.

The administration ensured that. The heavily barricaded roads, manned mostly by the army, were closed to all, including the media. In fact, it was only on the intervention of senior police officials that newsmen and photographers were escorted to a place at a "safe distance" for a close

er look at the proceedings.

It was at the end of the day, when the funeral had passed off peacefully and the relatives escorted back to their homes, that the administration seemed to relax, if only for a while. "We are only thinking a day at a time when it comes to ensuring peace here," an official said. "For we don't know what tomorrow might bring. If it isn't the people's agitation, there are always the militants to reckon with."

For, watching from the sidelines are Manipur's militant outfits, the United National Liberation Front and the People's Liberation Army, which have their own agenda of an independent Manipur. They are now measuring the impact of the Centre's announcement on their own turf.

The question uppermost on their minds should be: what happens to Meitei insurgency with the Naga militants now having a free run in Manipur?

# After the rampage, politicians run for cover

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Imphal, June 19

MANIPUR'S FEUDING and power-hungry politicians are on the run. Right now, they are hiding from the very people whose interests they claim to represent.

Stung by the frontal offensive launched against them by their constituents, the netas have sought shelter in anonymous guest houses or have fled to the relatively calm hills that buffet this burning valley. Many of them have taken the help of the police to conceal themselves in "safe houses".

The charred remains of the Speaker's residence on Kangla Park Road, just a stone's throw from the Governor's house, would justify their fears. All that is now of the expansive one-storey structure are twisted corrugated sheets, charred wooden

furniture and a heap of rubble. But what really provides an insight into the people's overwhelming hatred for politicians is perhaps the number of imported liquor bottles - all broken - that one comes across in what was till Tuesday the private quarters of the Speaker of a State where prohibition is in force and, of course, the charred chassis of 10 vehicles - six Maruti Gypsies, one Ambassador and three scooters - that adorn the parking lot inside the fortress-like house.

"All the vehicles belong to the Speaker's family. Can any honest politician have so many vehicles?" wondered a senior bureaucrat. "Anger has been building up ever since the politicians went for each others' throats to grab power last month. That led to the imposition of Central rule, a development no one here has welcomed. The proverbial last straw

FRESH PROTESTS against extension of Nagaland truce on Tuesday rocked the interior areas of Manipur valley district as Army and paramilitary personnel staged flag march in the State Capital and its outskirts. Angry demonstrators protested against extension of the ceasefire to Manipur and burnt effigies of Central and NSCN (I-M) leaders at Moirang in interior Bishenpur district where indefinite curfew had not been imposed so far. The police and security forces dispersed the violent crowd and no casualty was reported, sources said adding setting afire of effigies was reported also from Thoubal district where indefinite curfew was relaxed for two hours from 3 pm.

HTC, Imphal

was the politicians' utter lack of courage to stand up to the Union Government's machinations. Since no politician protested the extension of the Naga truce to Manipur, they were seen as the villains of the piece trying to bend over backwards to please New Delhi and make a renewed bid for power. "We are a proud

people and will not forgive those who betray our trust," said a retired bureaucrat. Betrayal of their trust is what actually led the people to unleash fury on the politicians yesterday. They selectively rampaged through the Speaker's house, the Chief Minister's official residence, offices of some political

parties and what they saw as the murkiest playground of the politicians - the Assembly building. Speaker S Dhananjay Singh, admitted the DGP, is holed up at a Government guesthouse. "But I cannot disclose his exact whereabouts. I am also not at liberty to reveal the current addresses of any other politician," said A A Siddiqui, DGP.

Incidentally, the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) had asked all the 60 legislators and the three Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs from the State to resign to prove their credentials as people of Manipur. The deadline came and went without any politician taking the plunge. "They will have to come out of hiding some day. We will confront them at that time," said an AMSU leader.

Manipur in Turmoil: Page 9

## Mr. Verma's Fire from ceasefire

**E**VEN BEFORE Manipur could recover from the unprincipled antics of its politicians, it has plunged into a kind of lawlessness which may not be easy to quell because of the ethnic sub-text. The earlier political shenanigans and the latest disturbances are not unrelated. There has been speculation that the Samata Party, unhappy over the loss of its ministry in the state because of the local BJP's ambitions, contributed to the outbreak. In any event, that there was an inadequacy of communication between the Centre and Manipur was evident from what George Fernandes and the Union home ministry officials have said. While the former maintained that all chief ministers of the region, including his party's Radhabinod Koijam, the former chief minister of Manipur, had reservations about the extension of the ceasefire with the Naga rebels to states outside Nagaland, the home ministry's clarification left scope for doubt. For instance, the latter merely said that all the chief ministers were consulted not once, but twice, without clarifying whether they gave their assent.

It is only now that L.K. Advani has underlined the government's determination to maintain the "territorial integrity" of the North-eastern states. But this assurance should have accompanied or perhaps even preceded the announcement of the ceasefire

instead of being articulated after violence had broken out. The lapse is not inexplicable. Since all governments like to function in secrecy, especially when striking deals with insurgents, the authorities in New Delhi may have considered it prudent to keep the terms of the agreement as far under wraps as possible. To an extent, there was nothing exceptional about the fact that the ceasefire was to apply to areas outside Nagaland. After all, as NSCN (I-M) leader T. Muivah has said, "the ceasefire is a ceasefire". However, his caveat that although "at the moment it has nothing to do with territory.. if Nagas (in other states) would like to join their brothers, there is nothing wrong", may add fuel to fire.

In this context, the call for restraint issued by M. Vero, chief of Nagaland's apex tribal council, has much to commend it. Mr Vero has said that nothing should be done to impair the "age-old bond and fraternity" that exist between different communities in Manipur. His hope that all apprehensions can be eliminated if the Nagas and Meiteis cooperate with one another will be widely echoed. Peace in Nagaland is a prime need because, as has been pointed out, the rebellion there is the "mother of all insurgencies" in the North-east. The hope of ending the insurrection should not be blighted by the creation of new problems elsewhere in the region.

## ROBBING PETER

Manipur violence a foregone conclusion

IN trying to placate Nagas by sacrificing the territorial integrity of Manipur, the Centre has compounded the worst fears of the Meiteis. The Union Home Ministry must blame itself for the outbreak of violence in Imphal which claimed 13 lives and saw property worth crores destroyed. It apparently failed to foresee the consequences of its decision to extend the ceasefire to the contiguous Naga-inhabited Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel districts of Manipur. Interestingly, National Socialist Council of Nagalim general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah, who is fighting for an independent Nagaland, comes from Ukhrul and draws most of his cadres from these three areas. The lesson of August 1997 was apparently lost on the ministry. As then reported exclusively in this newspaper (and subsequently denied), NSCN chairman Isak Swu's claim that the Centre had accepted the Naga demand (extension) triggered a wave of protests in Manipur, driving a wedge between Nagas and Meiteis. The ceasefire's extension after its term expired on 31 July was in serious doubt following the NSCN-IM leaders threat to pull out if the Centre did not meet their demand. A demand they have repeated ever since the truce came into effect on 1 August 1997 but, curiously, never followed up seriously. The bargaining point came after March when the Centre formalised the ceasefire with the rival SS Khaplang faction. New Delhi's biggest mistake was to keep the terms of the truce under wraps. This gives credence to the NSCN-IM's assertion that the Centre had "agreed in principle" to extend the ceasefire at the time of its signing. Little wonder that Swaraj Kaushal, then negotiating with the Nagas, resigned alleging that Atal Behari Vajpayee did not keep his promise to extend the truce.

It is not too late to redeem the situation by extricating a promise from the rebel leaders that the truce's extension to the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur will not entitle them to claim these areas to fulfil dreams of a Greater Nagaland or Southern Nagaland. Although Muivah did not say it in so many words, one cannot ignore his recent statement that Nagaland comprised 12,00,000 sq km, whereas its actual area is 16,579 sq km. Sure, there is a provision in the Nine-point Agreement of June 1947 to "bring under a unified administrative unit, as far as possible, all Nagas" and also in the 16-Point Agreement of 1960, but this was to be done only with the consent of the states concerned. If the Nagaland assembly adopted a resolution demanding integration of these areas in the '90s, the Manipur assembly, too, also passed one to preserve the state's territorial integrity. Rishang Keishing, chief minister in the '90s when the Pan-Nagaland concept was sweeping Manipur, is perhaps right in saying that Nagaland has only Nagas but Manipur is inhabited by more than 30 different communities. Any attempt to balkanise the state will have serious ramifications as Manipur's rebel outfits are yet to reconcile with what they describe as the "forcible" integration of the princely state in October 1949 with the Indian Union.

THE STATESMAN

# Assam boils on Manipur fire

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, June 19

THE FIRE in Manipur threatens to spread to Assam, with students' bodies warming up for an anti-Naga truce area extension movement.

The All Assam Students Union (Aasu) has asked the Centre to retract the decision of extending the Naga truce or "face the consequences". Aasu president Prabin Boro said the students' body welcomed any move to bring lasting peace in Nagaland, but was "strongly against any territorial compromise".

The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad, one of the spearheads of the 1979 Assam agitation, has also adopted a confrontationist attitude. In a letter to Home Minister L K Advani, it has threatened to launch a mass movement on the lines of Manipur.

Meanwhile, reports from Jorhat and Golaghat districts bordering Nagaland said local bodies had prevented vehicles from going into that hill State. Vehicles bearing Nagaland regis-

## ULFA OPPOSES CEASEFIRE

THE ULFA, once trained by the NSCN, has strongly protested against the territorial extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland into Assam. The militant outfit's clandestine mouthpiece 'Freedom' says the issue of ceasefire expansion has been vigorously opposed by all sections of the two States. "The ceasefire should be confined to Nagaland only. The Ulfa and the people of Assam will negotiate in no condition terms on the present territorial boundary of Assam. The North Cachar area, to where the ceasefire has been extended, is the ancestral homeland of the Dimacha Kachari people and is an integral part of Assam." **HTC, Guwahati**

tration numbers are also not being allowed to lift essentials from markets in Assam.

The district authorities neither confirmed nor denied these reports.

Following the curfew in Manipur, bus services to Imphal have also been affected. Private vehicles were off the roads as

Manipur is accessible via Nagaland and the situation in Manipur is deemed too risky for road communication.

Apprehending trouble from across the inter-State border with Nagaland following the territorial ceasefire extension, 'neutral forces' comprising CRPF have been deployed in border areas of Assam's Golaghat district.

Golaghat Additional DC SN Rahman said: "We cannot take any chance. The neutral forces as well as the State police have been deployed along the border with Nagaland from Dhansiri subdivision to Golaghat." He said the border outposts were being manned by CRPF personnel.

A high-level situation review is scheduled for tomorrow at Golaghat, which will be attended by the IGP (Border) and the CRPF commandant, Rahman said.

He said the NSCN had not set up any camp in the district as reported in the media. "We have sent our teams to verify the reports, but didn't find any."

## Bandh in the hills

AT LEAST four organisations, including a political party, have called a 48-hour bandh in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills beginning Wednesday morning, in protest against the extension of the truce with NSCN to areas beyond Nagaland.

According to reports reaching here, the Jayanta Rongpi faction of the Autonomous State Demand Committee or ASDC-Progressive, has taken the lead in the bandh programme. The Dimasa Students' Union, North Cachar Hills Students' Federation and Dimasa Women's Society have supported the move.

Parts of Karbi Anglong and NC Hills districts, which have a sizeable Naga population, fall in the Greater Nagalim map of the NSCN. Already, Naga tribes occupy over 2,500 hectares of land in these districts bordering Nagaland. The Karbis and Dimasas, the dominant tribes of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts, are strongly opposed to the Greater Nagalim theory.

**HTC, Guwahati**

# Imphal smoulders on Day 2

**Jaideep Mazumdar**  
Imphal, June 19

THIS CAPITAL town of strife torn Manipur still sports the remnants of Tuesday's orgy of violence and mayhem. Remnants that the enraged Meities and a cautious state administration say may provide an indication of the trouble times ahead.

A deathly calm prevailed in Imphal today, punctuated by the drone of patrolling Army and Air Force helicopters. On the streets littered with charred remains of Government vehicles, burnt tires, shards of glass, stones and chopped trees, police and paramilitary troops in armoured personnel carriers posted success in keeping the lid on popular discontent and anger.

The mowing down of 13 young men by security forces yesterday has given the Meities a strong rallying point.

"How long can the administrators taking orders from Delhi keep us silent? We will avenge the death of our boys. We have taught the politicians here a lesson they won't forget in a hurry. It's time now to teach the politicians in Delhi a much bigger lesson," said a government college lecturer of political science. Such sentiments are expressed in private by even ranking police officers who are Meities. "I can-

## NO SHIFT FROM STATUS QUO; PM

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today said that the Naga accord would not redefine the borders of Manipur in any way. "There will be absolute status quo with regard to Manipur and other States," he said.

In a clear attempt to defuse tension in the Manipur, he stressed that the accord would have no impact on the interests of Manipur and neighbouring States in the region. "Manipur is a jumble of issues but violence is not the answer to these problems," he said.

He said his Government would "look for ways to remove misconceptions in the minds" of Manipuris the accord had created. "I have appealed to the people of Manipur to stop violence and sit down across the table with us to discuss the issues troubling them," he added. Vajpayee said he was "confident" that Manipuri youths would heed his appeal and not resort to violence.

HTC, Mumbai

not rule out more violence. The firing on the crowds that left 13 dead and many injured was not a happy thing. Local sentiments have been hurt and we have to be very careful now," DGP A A Siddiqui told *Hindustan Times* this evening.

The State administration has vetoed plans by some organisations for a joint cremation of the 13. "That's out of the question. Only separate cremations to be attended by a handful of close family members will be allowed," said Siddiqui. But many powerful local organisations, including the All Manipur Student's Union have vowed to defy the administration.

Yesterday's incidents, feel locals, was a spontaneous outpouring of anger against what the believe is New Delhi's plans to balkanise Manipur. "The NSCN (I-M) is a Naga insurgent group. There is no logic behind extending the ceasefire with this group to our state. It's a nasty plan. We will not part with an inch of our land," declared an AMSU leader.

Pious protestations by New Delhi that Manipur's territorial integrity would be respected hold no meaning for the people here. "The politicians in New Delhi cannot be trusted. They have betrayed us in the past. If they are serious about restoring

peace, let them withdraw the extension of the ceasefire," said a senior state government officer.

The state administration is planning to relax curfew for a couple of hours tomorrow afternoon in selected pockets of East and West Imphal districts. "That is only if the cremations pass off peacefully," said Siddiqui. But his lieutenants concede that it might not go off as planned. "We may take any number of measures to maintain law and order. But if people are angry, will pumping in more troops bring about lasting peace?" wondered a senior police officer. He pointed out that the solution to the current problem would have to come from the Centre. "There is only one way to restore peace - withdrawal of the ceasefire extension from Manipur. Nothing short of that will calm the valley," he added.

But with the Union Government firmly rejecting any such possibility, the chances of peace returning to this valley are abysmal.

"Perhaps the Governor and his advisers feel that with time, sentiments would cool down. All they have to do is read the history of Meitei warriors. Passage of time only aggravates matters here, warned a senior academic - a warning that the Governor and North Block would do well to heed.

## Why Manipur went up in flames

**H Khogen Singh**  
New Delhi, June 19

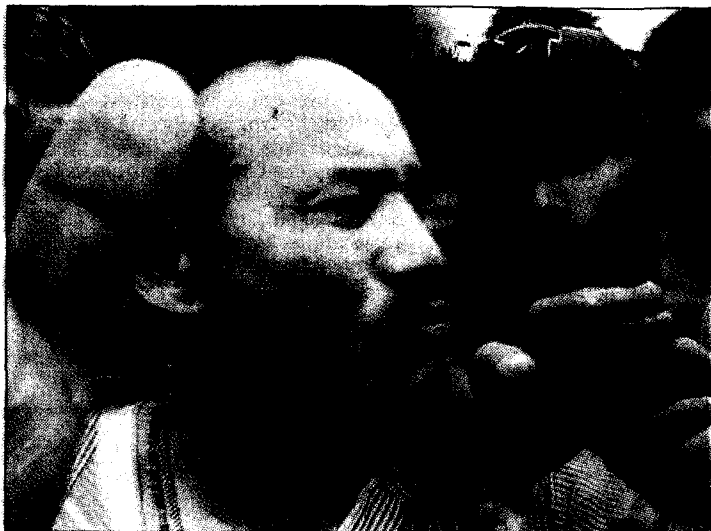
THE ANGER in Manipur stems largely from the fear that the Central Government, having conceded the NSCN(I-M)'s demand to extend the ceasefire beyond Nagaland, will in the future grant a Greater Nagaland as sought by the Naga outfit.

The widespread fear is that having got an inch, the NSCN will now extract a mile. But is the apprehension justified?

If the past is any guide, then the fears of the people of Manipur may not be misplaced. The Centre has on several occasions in the past courted the Nagas while ignoring the popular sentiment in Manipur and other States, perhaps in the hope that it would help resolve the Naga insurgency. The Centre's appeasement of the Nagas, to the detriment of other States, became clear when Nagaland was created in 1963 out of the Naga Hills district of what was then undivided Assam. The Naga Hills district comprised only about 8,000 sq kms of area. But when Nagaland was carved out, it had more than double that area and the new State extended well beyond the Naga Hills district.

Areas such as Dimapur and Rangapara were included in Nagaland even though these towns had scant Naga population. Even Arunachal Pradesh (then known as the North-East Frontier Area) was dismembered and Tuensang and Mon districts were given to the new State.

The grant of statehood to the Nagas rankled the people of



Manipur Speaker Dhananjay Singh is surrounded by students on Monday.

Manipur as they felt that their demand for the same had been ignored. Manipur was at that time a Union Territory and its people had been seeking statehood since the early fifties, holding peaceful demonstrations and rallies. But their voice was heeded only in 1972.

A sense of raw deal surfaced again after the signing of the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN in 1997. Though the agreement did not specify the area over which the ceasefire would be enforced, Swaraj Kaushal's (the then Centre's negotiator with the NSCN) reported statement that the truce was applicable anywhere in the world, including New Delhi, sparked fears of a division of Manipur. The then

Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, L.K. Advani (BJP), Sitaram Kesri (the Congress chief), H.S. Surjeet (CPI-M) and A.B. Bardhan (CPI) - all assured the team that the ceasefire would apply only to Nagaland. This position was reiterated when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Manipur in 1999.

But two years down the line, the Centre's volte-face is seen as a betrayal. Notwithstanding assurances that the territorial integrity of Manipur will not be disturbed, the fear is that the Centre will renege on its promise and continue its courtship of the Nagas by granting the NSCN a Greater Nagaland. Yesterday's violence was a manifestation of that fear.

## MLAs put up with police, Assam Rifles

FOLLOWING THE mob violence at State Assembly on Monday, about 10 MLAs have put up in the residential quarters of Imphal west district police since late last evening while many others have left Imphal, along with their families, for private houses in their respective constituencies, official sources said on Tuesday. Sources said some senior Government officials were also staying in the Assam Rifles complex in the heart of Imphal town.

PTI, Imphal

## Chief secy denial

MANIPUR CHIEF Secretary Rakesh has denied media reports that he had been consulted by the Centre on the extension of Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire to Manipur. An official statement said here on Sunday the Chief Secretary had no authority for giving any commitment on this nor was he invited for any consultation on the issue. The statement termed the report published in a Delhi-based paper quoting Union Home Ministry sources as "totally wrong, incorrect and baseless."

PTI, Imphal

## Ultras kill constable

A POLICE constable was killed by suspected valley insurgents in an ambush at Singjamei Mayeng Leikai on Monday night. Khaidem Gojen, (38), of Singjamei police station, was hit when the jeep he was riding in along with other commandos was fired upon at around 9.30 pm. He died on the way to hospital. No underground outfit, so far, has claimed responsibility for the killing.

PTI, Imphal



# It home secy had warned of Manipur violence

SANJAY SINGH  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 19. - The deaths in yesterday's firing and the damage caused by the riotous mob in Imphal was far too much to justify the anger against the extension of territorial limits of the Naga ceasefire.

It was the state administrative machinery's ineffectiveness that compounded the extent of damages.

A report prepared in November 2000 by Mr GK Pillai, then joint secretary, ministry of home affairs (north-east), after he visited the area says: "The writ of the underground seems to be more effective than that of the administration. Deterioration in administration has taken place with the active connivance of the political leadership." The report called for urgent remedial steps.

The anti-establishment feelings, including those against the Centre, had been allowed to gain ground in Manipur for long. And the situation arising out of the Naga ceasefire extension was used to the hilt by people, including leaders who fanned public passion, saying the Centre's decision was an attempt to dismember the state.

The report reveals the extent to which the state administration has surrendered to various underground outfits and the lack of political will to fight back. Senior officials visit their camps close to Imphal when called and agree to pay money to militant groups. These outfits have hijacked the public distribution system to boost their image among the public. Money meant for development work is siphoned off to them through NGOs and other means.

In his report, Mr Pillai says that when he pointed these out to the then chief minister, ministers and senior officials they didn't react. The officials who try to resist these groups are killed - two such cases involving IAS officers have been cited in the report.

■ See MANIPUR: page 10

## MANIPUR:

(Continued from page 1)

SP-10  
20/6  
The state didn't do anything to nab the culprits and restore confidence among the upright officials.

"The state political leadership does not want advise on any issue so long as they are permitted to siphon off money from state exchequer for their own ends and to extremist elements."

But the situation was exactly opposite when ultras are killed. The underground groups banned the screening of Hindi films and programmes on all video channels for more than six months after one of their men was killed.

They 'seized' video cassettes and burnt them in public. Police didn't do anything to stop them from doing so.

The policing is worse. Manipur Rifles, for instance, has nine battalions of which eight are on static duty, mainly to protect ministers, MLAs and senior police and civil officials. The rest are used for normal law and order duties and there's hardly any force left for counter-insurgency operations. Only 18 out of the state's 57 police stations are functional.

"There appears to be a deliberate attempt to make police force ineffective" says the report.

"The Intelligence was extremely poor and not systematic. A few officers are in (the) know of things and others completely ignorant. Of the total 368 personnel in (the) special branch, only 11 are performing Intelligence duties and rest are doing PSO and other security duties."

THE STATESMAN

# Truce ricochets on NDA government

## Manipur party withdraws support; Samata blames Centre

The Times of India News Service

IMPHAL: In the first political fallout of the crisis set off by the extension of the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) to Manipur, the Manipur State Congress Party (N) on Tuesday decided to withdraw its support to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre.

MSCP (N) vice-president G. Joykumar Sharma said the decision to withdraw support was taken at an emergency meeting of the party presided over by former chief minister W. Nipamacha Singh. He said the decision to extend the ceasefire to Manipur had totally shattered the people of the state.

Meanwhile, the Samata Party has blamed the Centre for "mishandling" the ceasefire and said that it must secure a clarification on the territorial issue from the NSCN (I-M).

Refuting claims that its chief minister had agreed to the ceasefire extension, senior party leader Jaya Jaitly said mere assurances from



An injured protester is helped up after police opened fire on a mob which torched several government buildings in Imphal on Monday.

the Union government were not enough. She said the Samata Party had consistently opposed the possibility of an extension of the ceasefire area and had stated that such a step would be a Himalayan blunder.

Meanwhile, an eerie calm prevailed in Manipur on Tuesday as the indefinite curfew clamped in three districts on Monday continued. Violence had claimed 13 lives on Monday.

Heavily-armed paramilitary forces patrolled the streets of Imphal, where the situation was reported to be "tense but under control". Security forces were deployed in full strength in the disturbed Imphal West, Imphal East and Thoubal districts. However, there have been no major incidents of violence since the imposition of curfew on Monday afternoon. The Manipur government has ordered a magisterial inquiry into Monday's violence.

Meanwhile, a bandh has been called in Assam on Wednesday to protest against the deal with the Naga rebels.

# Advani's secrecy led to N-E panic

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

New Delhi, June 19: Union home minister L.K. Advani, who has been maintaining complete secrecy over the negotiations with the NSCN (I-M), ignored warnings of possible violence in the Northeast region from Manipur governor Ved Marwah and Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi.

Mr Marwah and Mr Gogoi had both warned Mr Advani that they feared trouble over the decision to extend the ceasefire beyond the territorial limits of Nagaland. Mr Advani, who has been guided completely in this matter by his chief negotiator with the Naga

insurgents, Mr K. Padmanabhaiah, merely insisted that there was no ground for the apprehension, not taking on board the possibility of large-scale violence in Manipur.

The complete secrecy surrounding the negotiations between the home ministry and the NSCN (I-M) has created panic in the Northeast, which has now manifested itself in violence, arson and deaths. Mr Advani, who is still adamant that the territorial limits of the adjoining states will not be transgressed has, however, taken care not to impose the stated limitation on the home ministry order extending the ceasefire, leading

to widespread speculation of a "deal" in favour of a greater Nagaland.

Mr Tarun Gogi met Mr Advani recently and urged him to take cognisance of the fallout which he was afraid would hit Assam as well. Mr Ved Marwah telephoned the home minister to warn him about the brewing resentment in Manipur. The Opposition parties have hotly contested the home minister's statement that he consulted the chief ministers before extending the ceasefire with the CPI(M), stating categorically, "Contrary to the claim of Shri Advani, the chief ministers of all the north-eastern states were neither con-

sulted, nor was the issue discussed with them."

Former chief minister of Manipur Radhabinod Koijam made it very clear on Tuesday that in March itself, when he was still the chief minister, he had told Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr Advani that the extension of the ceasefire would create trouble in Manipur. He said he had made it clear that the ceasefire should not be extended to Manipur unless the Union government was willing to invite all the insurgent outfits in the region for negotiations.

Reports from Manipur suggest that Mr Advani's repeated asse-

Turn to Page 2

## Advani secrecy

Continued from Page 1

rtions are not having a salutary effect on the people as these are not being believed. The CPI's D. Raja said, "If he means it then why does he not apply it to the order?" The CPI has also blamed the Union government, the BJP and the Samata Party for the situation in the Northeast. It has described the decision as an "ill-advised, undemocratic and unilateral step taken in a clandestine manner."

Opposition parties are demanding a review of the decision, which has been virtually rejected by the home ministry. Mr Padmanabhaiah has been avoiding the media although he is the point person to have negotiated the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M), which has been consistent in its demand for a greater Nagaland. The home ministry has failed to convincingly explain why the territorial limits of the ceasefire have not been specified. The argument being offered by officials to justify the announcement is that the NSCN (I-M) has agreed not to target civilians, harbour militants or move from one camp to another.

Mr Advani, repeatedly advised by senior political leaders of the Northeast region against taking a step that was bound to create suspicion and panic in the region, has preferred to ignore all the warnings. A shroud of secrecy surrounded the dialogue which was held in Bangkok. Parliament was not taken into confidence and the Opposition kept out of the loop with the first indication of a possible deal coming through the ceasefire extension.

Mr Raja compared the Padmanabhaiah-Muivah dialogue with the Strobe Talbott-Jaswant Singh talks carried out over several months in different parts of the world. "We did not know, we still do not know what agreement Talbott and Singh came to, we were never informed despite asking for the details, and now this dialogue between the home ministry and the NSCN leader has also been kept totally secret. Where is the transparency, where is the accountability," he asked.

THE ASIAN AGE

## 7/10 Accord Discord W/b

Any accord that is secretive and clinched in an unseemly hurry is by definition suspect. The agreement that extends the ceasefire between the Centre and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muviah) to adjoining states would be suspect on both grounds. When this happens in the backdrop of simmering political unrest in one of the affected states, which is itself a victim of prolonged and continuing neglect and insurgency, the result can be explosive as Manipur has so graphically demonstrated. There are two aspects to the violence that brutally targeted politicians and official buildings in Manipur. At one level, the outrage is against a central government seen as bartering away the state's rights. At another, it is extreme anger expressed against Manipur's own political establishment. The track record of successive governments has been dismal to say the least with all-pervasive corruption and open collusion between elected representatives and insurgents pushing the state to the edge of the precipice. It has not helped matters that the recent elections threw up one more crisis — the fall of the Samata Party-led People's Front ministry, heavy horse-trading, and finally, the imposition of central rule. The Manipur assembly has passed as many as four resolutions opposing the extension of the Naga ceasefire to areas in Manipur. For all that, the state today is helpless because it is administered by a governor.

9 W 5/4-  
Though the timing of the ceasefire came as a surprise, its extension to areas outside Nagaland has been on the cards for a while now. The NSCN(I-M) had not just pressed for the extension, it had threatened to walk out of the ceasefire agreement. That at least one of the adjoining states, Manipur, was under central rule came in handy to New Delhi, particularly because Manipur, rather than Assam or Arunachal, was widely expected to react adversely to the extension of the ceasefire. As it turns out, the Centre gambled badly in underestimating the extent of disaffection in Manipur. Admittedly, most mob violence has been directed against local politicians. But it is obvious that the people of Manipur see the ceasefire extension as a mere step towards the formation of Greater Nagaland. As for the NSCN(I-M), it is in the happy position of having a free run of the hill areas of Manipur; it has also emerged in a stronger bargaining position on the question of a greater Nagaland — or Nagalim as they call it. Indeed, reports have confirmed that the NSCN(I-M) has not committed itself to the revocation of the Greater Nagaland demand. It is nobody's case that the issues in question are easy to tackle. If Manipur explodes at the mention of Greater Nagaland, there is support for the latter in Nagaland. But the minimum any central government could have done in the context was to appear even-handed. Whatever the case for Greater Nagaland, it cannot be brought about without the support of the states which have necessarily to contribute to its formation. New Delhi cannot ride roughshod over the people of an entire state.

# Centre bypassed Manipur govt, say Naga students

By Nirmalya Banerjee  
The Times of India News Service

KOLKATA: Surprising though it may sound, some Naga students in Kolkata actually sympathise with the grievances of the people of Manipur against the extension of the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) to a large part of Manipur. "It is my personal feeling, but I think the Manipuris are justified in their grievance," president of Naga Students Union Imsupongen told this newspaper on Tuesday. The union is an affiliate of the Kohima-based influential Naga Students Federation.

He thought the Centre had bypassed the Manipur government

while taking the decision on extension of the ceasefire. "Every state government has the right to have its say on affairs within its territorial jurisdiction."

In fact, the echo of the violent incidents in Manipur in the past two days was heard in the city during the day as a group of Manipuri students, belonging to the city unit of the All-Manipur Students Union, held a dharna outside the Manipur Bhawan, in protest against the police firing on agitators in Imphal and the killing of 13 people.

The extension of the ceasefire to Nagaland would encourage the NSCN(I-M) to demand a greater Nagaland, AMSU Kolkata unit president Muhindro Singh said. "It is now only a matter of time." Ac-

ording to him, the 'power hungry' politicians of the state had done nothing to stop this.

"The Centre has neglected us from the very beginning. Nothing has been done for the economic development of Manipur. People have no income other than government jobs. To get a job, they have to pay money. To recover that, they turn corrupt," said computer student John Huidrong. He feared that unless the decision to extend the ceasefire outside Nagaland was rolled back, Manipur would see a 'bloodbath'.

For H. Biju Singh, studying chemical engineering at Jadavpur University, the ignorance of people elsewhere in India about Manipur was what pained him the most. "I

am often asked if one needs a passport to go to Manipur," he said. "I think today's outburst of anger is the result of many such accumulated grievances."

Naga students in the city thought the extension of the ceasefire would help in the extension of the influence of the NSCN(I-M) in Manipur. They thought the greater Nagaland demand had not crystallised much because of differences between different Naga tribes. "We often don't see eye to eye," NSU general secretary Neiba Angami said.

Because of the 66-hour bandh in Manipur followed by an indefinite curfew and the disruption in flights many Imphal-bound people are now stranded in the city.

# Review ceasefire agreement: Cong.

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 18.** As Manipur burnt and its capital Imphal was put under curfew, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) found itself isolated in defending the Centre's move of extending the ceasefire with the NSCN(IM), the main outfit of Naga insurgents, to all northeastern States. All leading Opposition parties as well as NDA allies demanded a review of the ceasefire agreement.

The main complaint was that notwithstanding the BJP's assertion that it had "no hidden agenda" of creating a "greater Nagaland", it had not been able to address apprehensions on this score. Added to this is the fact that recently in Manipur the BJP and the Samata Party fell apart after the former pulled down the Samata Government. And there is suspicion that some of the cur-

rent trouble has its roots in that standoff.

The BJP spokesperson, Mr. Sunil Shastri, blamed "some parties" for spreading disinformation on the Naga accord. While he did not name the Samata Party, he also did not give it a clean chit. He just said the BJP was committed to protecting the territorial integrity of all the States in the northeast. An improper understanding of the accord by the people and political parties had led to the violence in Manipur.

The Congress demanded a review of the ceasefire agreement since this had given rise to apprehension among the people of Assam and Manipur that the move was aimed at the creation of a greater Nagaland. The Centre had created "avoidable doubts", the Congress party spokesperson, Mr. Jaipal Reddy, said, adding that the

handling of the problem was yet another illustration of the "lack of political experience in dealing with a sensitive area such as the northeast".

The party had earlier charged the NDA Government with not consulting the Assam Government, where the Congress regained power after the recent Assembly elections.

While reiterating that the party welcomed the extension of the four-year old ceasefire, Mr. Reddy said it was against expanding the area of operations beyond the territorial limits of Nagaland. The party stood for maintaining territorial integrity of all States in the northeast.

The Janata Dal (United), a constituent of the NDA, also joined the Congress in expressing concern. The only difference was that it tempered its demand for a re-

view by adding that this should be done "if possible."

Appealing to the people of Manipur, especially the students, to remain peaceful, the JD(U) spokesman, Mr. Mohan Prakash, regretted the situation in the State. He felt the situation would not have turned so violent had the Centre taken appropriate steps in time. "The Government should have clarified on what the terms of agreement meant as it would not have given rise to the rage being expressed by the people."

The JD(U) said the Centre should ensure that NSCN(IM) cadres did not attack other tribal groups. If they did so, the security forces should be instructed to take action.

It also disapproved of the Samata Party speaking against the ceasefire extension the day the agreement was signed.

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# Manipur burns in truce backlash

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Imphal, June 18: Ignited by fear for its territorial integrity, Manipur burned today as protesters demonstrating against extension of the Naga ceasefire poured their wrath on the Centre and politicians.

In a spontaneous and devastating outpouring of anger that took the administration of Governor Ved Marwah completely by surprise, mobs torched the Assembly building, the chief minister's office and the Speaker's residence. Rough estimates suggest that nearly 80,000 people were out on the streets of capital Imphal. By some silent consensus, they had decided to target only the seats of government — the Governor who is in charge by virtue of President's rule — and politicians.

Today was the third day of protest against the Centre's decision to extend the ceasefire agreed with the militant National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) to areas in Manipur. Manipuris see the move as the beginning of an attempt to slice territories out of their state to be handed over to Nagaland as part of the demands of the NSCN(I-M) for a Greater Nagalim.

Thirteen people were killed when the security forces, vastly outnumbered, opened fire. Over 30 were injured. Four MLAs and Speaker Sapam Dhananjay, who was in his residence when it was set afire, were injured when protesters attacked them. Two legislators were trapped in the blazing Assembly building and would have been burnt alive had fire service men not rescued them in time. The Speaker finally took shelter at Raj Bhavan.

Twelve bungalows belonging to legislators and former ministers as well as offices of many political parties were razed.

"Everywhere it is burning, burning, burning in Imphal," a local resident told Reuters.

Indefinite curfew has been clamped on Imphal and Greater

## ASSEMBLY TORCHED, 13 PROTESTERS KILLED IN POLICE FIRING



The blazing Manipur Assembly building in Imphal. Picture by Eastern Projections

Imphal as the Governor summoned top security officers and asked them to take measures to restore order. A.A. Siddiqui, director-general of police, said: "Curfew has been imposed in the three districts of Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal. Security personnel have been told to shoot at anyone trying to create trouble."

Trouble erupted today when thousands of people marched towards Raj Bhavan from different directions carrying effigies of several Central leaders and NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah.

When the protesters entered Imphal's VIP security zone and started burning the effigies, the tension escalated. The police first fired in the air to disperse the protesters without success. The mob — anywhere between 10,000 and 20,000 — chased the security personnel away and reached the gates

### FURORE FACTS

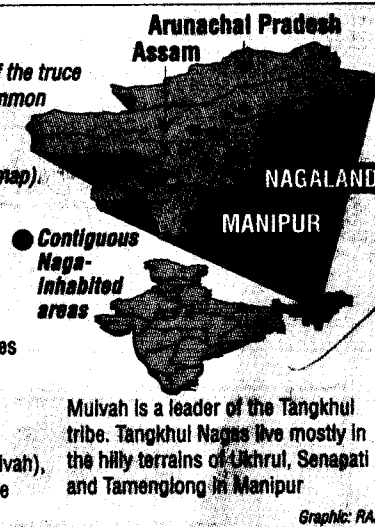
Manipuris fear that the extension of the truce will legitimise the demand for a common administrative umbrella for all Naga-dominated contiguous areas, some of which lie in Manipur (see map).

### THE ROOT OF THE SUSPICION

The late Naga leader, Vamuzo, had moved a private resolution in 1993 on the common umbrella plan. No Naga politician opposed it. The Nagaland Assembly had in the Sixties adopted a similar resolution

### THE MUIVAH CONNECTION

The cause of Greater Nagalim was championed by the NSCN (Isak-Muivah), with which the Centre has sealed the truce pact now.



Muivah is a leader of the Tangkhul tribe. Tangkhul Nagas live mostly in the hilly terrains of Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong in Manipur

Graphic: RAJ

of Raj Bhavan at 11.30 am, demanding an audience with the Governor.

At noon, the protesters turned violent and first burned down the

office of the Manipur State Congress Party. After that, they targeted offices of other political parties and ministers' residences. The offices of the Congress and the Ma-

nipur People's Party were also set ablaze. The office of the BJP was dismantled. The CPI and Samata offices were damaged.

At 1 pm, the Assembly was attacked. In minutes, the building, which also houses the Assembly secretariat, was up in flames. Four MLAs, who were on the premises, were beaten up.

Two — N. Bihari Singh and K. Tomba of the BJP, who had got trapped inside — were admitted to hospital with serious burn injuries.

The security forces first fired on protesters when they attacked the chief minister's office and the residence of the Governor's adviser, K. Kipgen. Some other protesters had already set upon the official residences of MLAs and former ministers at Babupara VIP colony, adjacent to the chief minister's office and the state police headquarters.

The official residence of the

Union minister of state for food processing, Thonoujam Chaoba Singh, was gutted.

Although security forces opened fire, they could not stop the mob from burning down houses of MLAs and former ministers. While three protesters died on the spot, 10 others succumbed to injuries in hospitals.

The house of a Manipuri CRPF officer was damaged by protesters who accused him of issuing orders to open fire. The officer was in charge of the CRPF company which was guarding the chief minister's office and residence.

In Bangkok, Muivah said the ceasefire agreement with New Delhi had nothing to do with the demand for a Greater Nagalim comprising all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas, PTI adds. "The ceasefire is a ceasefire" and "at the moment it has nothing to do with territories", he said.

■ More reports on Page 6

## Direct-rule Delhi snores

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 18: The Centre was caught napping while Manipur burnt and had little to say on why it could not prevent the uprising in a state which is under Delhi's direct rule.

The Manipur Assembly is in suspended animation after the Centre clamped President's rule following the impasse over government formation.

Delhi rushed additional "companies" of paramilitary forces but a home ministry spokesman said the "exact number" could not be disclosed for "security reasons", a statement later echoed by minister L.K. Advani.

Advani repeatedly said he "will not comment" on the situation. "I am in constant touch with the (Manipur) Governor (Ved Marwah). The situation is under control but tense," was all he was willing to say. Advani also would not comment on whether the "protest" was engineered by militants.

But the spokesman said it was "a civilian protest" and the government was, therefore, tackling the situation "cautiously" because any drastic action could result in "civilian casualties".

While the spokesman refused to be drawn to the ceasefire agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), the extension of which to neighbouring areas dominated by Nagas triggered the unrest, Advani said there would not be any "review" of the decision. "Review aise thodi hota hai (reviews are not done just like that)," he said.

The spokesman said a civilian mob, protesting against the extension of the ceasefire, laid siege to

Raj Bhavan and tried to set the Manipur Assembly building on fire. "The Speaker and four legislators were injured and five deaths have so far been reported," he said before the official toll rose.

Asked if the chief ministers of other north-eastern states were consulted on the decision, especially because Assam's Tarun Gogoi is against it, Advani said: "It is the decision by the Union government and the NSCN(I-M)... however, there was a discussion chaired by the Prime Minister and the other chief ministers agreed. In the meantime, there is a new chief minister in Assam, but the decision was made earlier (with the consent of Gogoi's predecessor Prafulla Kumar Mahanta)."

As Advani held a series of meetings with home secretary Kamal Pande and later with additional secretary in charge of Northeast affairs P.D. Shenoy and special secretary M.B. Kaushal, speculation raged that Marwah — the home minister's hand-picked man — had invited his wrath.

"Marwah could have gauged the mood a day in advance and, of course, there could have been intelligence failure as well," a source said, adding that the "repercussions" of the decision were not properly assessed before announcing the ceasefire extension.

The flare-up has put the BJP in yet another spot as the Samata Party — which has a stake in Manipur, where its government lost majority because the state BJP refused to back it — is unhappy with the Centre for extending the ceasefire. The Centre hopes to restore "normality" within a day or two and could even restart a political dialogue of sorts with the Samata Party, said the source.

5 MLAs injured; CM, Speaker houses torched ■ Indefinite curfew clamped

# Manipur Assembly set on fire, 13 killed in firing

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & AGENCIES

IMPHAL, June 18. — Thirteen people were killed and about 50 injured here today when police fired on a mob that turned violent while protesting against the extension of the Centre-NSCN(IM) ceasefire beyond the Nagaland borders.

Unofficial reports put the toll at 32.

The mob set on fire the Assembly building when several MLAs, including the Speaker, Mr Sapam Dhananjoy, were inside. Five MLAs, including the Speaker, was injured, two of them critically. Mr N Bihari received 75 per cent burns.

The MLAs were taken to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences. Mr Dhananjoy was released after treatment.

The state secretariat building and the houses of the chief minister, Speaker, Union food processing minister (Mr Th Chaboba), former deputy chief minister (Dr Chandramani Singh) and several MLAs have been reduced to ashes. The chief minister's office too was not spared.

Offices of the Congress, MSCP, MPP and the Samata met the same fate. The office and the car of the Governor's advisor, Mr Kipgen, has been burnt too.

Army has been called out and indefinite curfew clamped on three districts in the Imphal valley. At least six protesters were shot when a mob torched the chief minister's bungalow. There were shot dead in front of the The Statesman's office.

Police burst tear gas shells and fired in the air to control crowds that were approaching towards the heart of the city from various directions.

The protesters, however, succeeded in reaching the city centre and then proceeded to set on fire party offices and the Assembly secretariat.

Scuffle broke out on Keishampat bridge where crowds assembled from three directions



Firemen try to douse the flames in the Manipur Assembly building on Monday after anti-Naga ceasefire extension protesters set it on fire — AP/PTI

and were surging towards the Raj Bhavan. Paramilitary forces, called out to assist police, started firing and killed a boy. Two others were shot when they tried to pick up the body.

The curfew was clamped at 1 p.m. and two cable TV channels that were telecasting the protests have been closed.

Manipur remains cut off from the rest of the country as all flights to Imphal have been cancelled. Buses too have not been running because of the 66-hour bandh that entered its third and final day today.

The All Manipur Students' Union has threatened to declare Manipur independent if the Centre didn't revoke the ceasefire extension decision.

Former chief minister, Mr Rishang Keishing, blamed the Centre for the violence.

The Governor could not be contacted. He had discussed the situation with Mr LK Advani.

**Central force:** The Centre has dispatched additional paramilitary forces to Manipur. "Situation is now tense but under control," the Union home minister said.

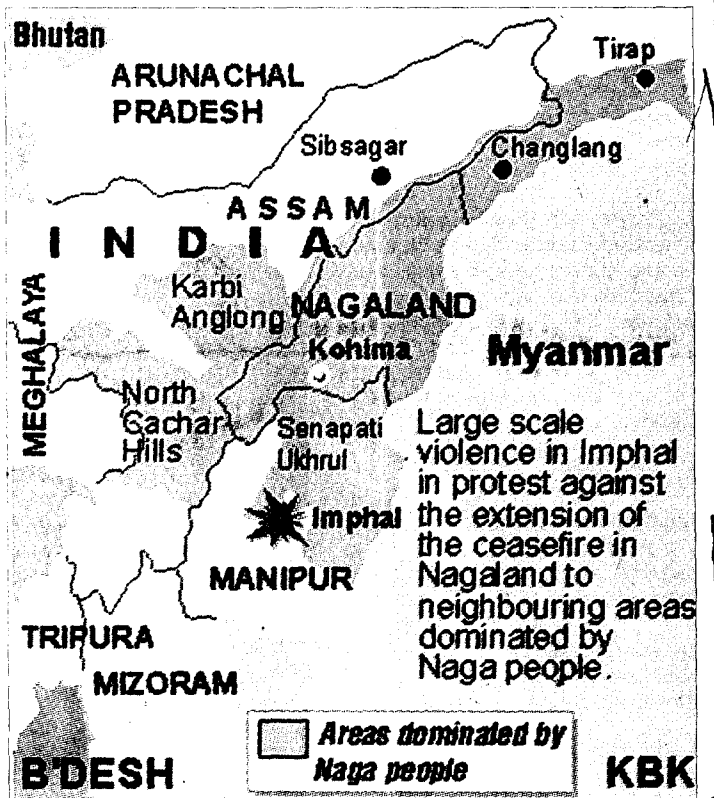
He refused to say whether the Centre would reconsider the decision on the ceasefire extension. "Such decisions can't be reviewed in a huff."

Were the governments of N-E states consulted before taking the decision? Mr Advani said the Prime Minister had convened a meeting of all N-E chief ministers and they had broadly agreed to the proposal. "There has been a change in the chief minister of Assam later."

**Cong reaction:** The Congress has expressed concern over the violence and urged the Centre to review the decision on ceasefire. "We had opposed the truce expansion because we knew it would create avoidable doubts..." the party said.

On page 8

- NDA in trouble over N-E ceasefire
- Naga Hoho calls for dialogue





# Manipur is burning

Address the problem of alienation in the Northeast

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**W**HAT is happening in Manipur is blood-curdling. The state is literally burning. Flames have engulfed, the Assembly building, the Speaker's residential quarters have been reduced to ashes while Speaker Sapam Dhananjoy Singh himself and four other MLAs have suffered severe burn injuries. Macabre events have been occurring in the state since Friday last when the Central government announced the ceasefire agreement it had reached with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Mui-vah). Copies of the Indian Constitution and effigies of the prime minister and the home minister have been burnt. Innumerable incidents of arson and looting have been reported during the 66-hour all-Manipur bandh which concluded on Monday evening. There is little doubt that the organisers of the bandh have been able to whip up anger among the people. What's surprising is that all this has happened over a trivial issue — extension of ceasefire in Nagaland to Naga-dominated areas in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. They behaved as if the heavens have fallen. The manner in which the violence was orchestrated gives the impression that it was all well-planned.

That Manipur is now under President's rule cannot be overlooked. Most political parties in the state are aware that sooner rather than later the Assembly is likely to be dissolved and fresh elections held. Small wonder that they found the ceasefire an ideal ruse to whip up passions and try to regain the confidence of the voters. In any case, having lost all goodwill because of their misdeeds of corruption and frequent defection, Manipur's MLAs have been

indulging in competitive populism to regain the voters' support. Their task became easier as the Manipur governor found himself unequal to the task of beefing up security and meeting the threat posed by lumpen elements masquerading as political workers and students. Had a popular government been in power in Imphal, probably this kind of violence would not have occurred. But that does not mean that those who engineered the unprecedented violence should get away with it. Equally, had there been more transparency on the part of the Central government, the situation would not have degenerated to such a degree.

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Had it been brought home to the Manipuris that the extension of the ceasefire to Naga areas did not mean conceding the demand of the NSCN for a 'Greater Nagaland', the agitation would not have elicited any public support. Intelligence agencies have clearly failed to warn the Central leadership about the kind of response the signing of the accord with the NSCN would elicit in Manipur. It is, indeed, doubtful whether the Centre has a clue about the social dynamics in the Northeast. The incidents are a pointer to the chasm that exists between the Nagas and Meitis who do not see eye to eye on any issue. In other words, the Northeast is as divided as it is united in fighting the Centre's neglect of the region. The root problem is the alienation of the people. The factors that impel the youth to take up arms have not been tackled. The massive investments the Centre has been making have only lined the pockets of contractors, bureaucrats, politicians. It is against this backdrop that a small spark is sufficient to cause violence of the kind Manipur witnesses now.

INDIAN EXPRESS

ARMY CALLED OUT IN MANIPUR; 13 KILLED IN POLICE FIRING

# Assembly, CM Secretariat buildings set on fire

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**IMPHAL, JUNE 18.** Manipur today went up in flames with 13 persons killed and over 50 wounded in police firing as demonstrators protesting the extension of the Naga ceasefire set ablaze the Assembly and the Chief Minister's Secretariat and Government buildings, leading to the imposition of an indefinite curfew in three districts on the last day of the 66-hour State bandh. The Army was called out and shoot-at-sight orders were issued in three districts.

Official sources said 10 of the 13 persons

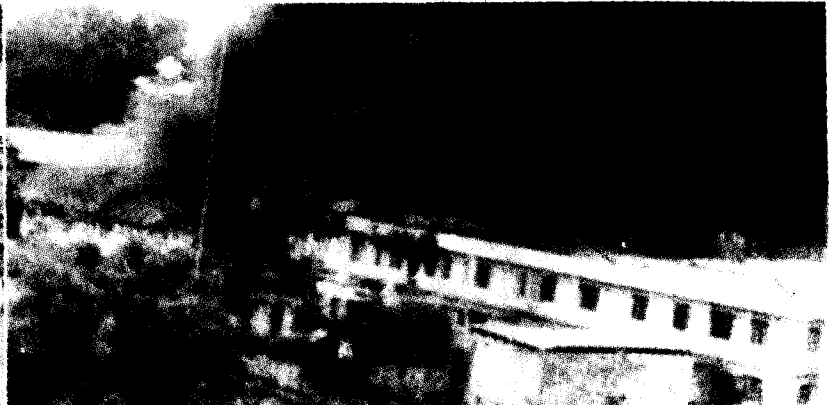
political party offices and destroyed over a hundred vehicles, mostly Government ones.

Important documents of the State Assembly as also property worth crores of rupees in several other places were destroyed in the fire, the sources said. Thousands of demonstrators, including women, raising slogans "Do not break up Manipur", "No to ceasefire" and "We will die for Manipur", laid siege to the Raj Bhavan, demanding an audience with the Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, but were stopped by the security forces.

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the Congress, the Manipur People's Party and the Manipur State Congress were set afire. The Press Trust of India office here could be saved as demonstrators, who torched the building next door, were dissuaded from setting it on fire.

Trouble began this morning after hundreds of demonstrators from Wangkhei, Pureiromba, Khurai, Thangmeiband, Keisampat, Sagolband and Chingmeirong areas came out on the streets defying prohibitory orders and burnt the effigies of the Prime Minister, Mr.



Protesters on the streets of Imphal even as the Manipur Assembly and the State Secretariat buildings are afire. — PTI

were killed on the campus of the Chief Minister's Secretariat, which was torched and razed. The Speaker, Mr. Sapam Dhananjay, was roughed up and seriously injured. Four legislators, including Mr. N. Bihari Singh, Mr. L. Tomba Singh and Mr. P. Achou Singh, were also injured.

An indefinite curfew was imposed in Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal districts. The Army staged flag marches in the three districts and additional paramilitary forces, including commandos, were rushed to the State.

Police opened fire when supporters of the bandh, called to protest the extension of the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muivah) to the State, went on the rampage. They torched the Assembly and the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the Speaker's bungalow, 15 official residences of legislators,

Personnel of the CRPF and the Assam Rifles were deployed at the Raj Bhavan, where senior police officials led by the DGP, Mr. A.A. Siddiqui, tried to pacify the angry demonstrators.

At some points, hundreds of demonstrators were moving freely in front of police and other security forces, who remained silent spectators. The demonstrators burnt copies of the Constitution in some areas.

Several MLAs and former Ministers left their official residences in Babupara and headed for their constituencies after angry protesters broke in. The protesters torched the residences of the Union Minister of State for Food Processing, Mr. Chaoba Singh, and the former Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. L. Chandramani Singh.

## Party offices destroyed

The agitators also destroyed the offices of the BJP and the Samata Party while those of

A.B. Vajpayee, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Centre's emissary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, and the NSCN(I-M) leaders, Mr. Issac Chisi Swu and Mr. Thingaleng Muivah.

## Appeal for peace

The apex tribal council, Naga Hoho, favoured a dialogue between the Meiteis and Nagas in Manipur and urged them to exercise restraint.

The Naga Hoho president, Mr. M. Vero, said in a statement in Kohima that the ongoing protests and bandh in Manipur, spearheaded by the All-Manipur United Clubs Organisation and the All-Manipur Students Union, were against the "wishes of the Nagas and disregarded the sufferings and struggle for more than 50 years" — PTI, UNI

'Review ceasefire': Page 11

MONDAY, JUNE 18, 2001

## THE CEASEFIRE AND THE RIPPLES

BY DECIDING TO extend the ceasefire between the security forces and the armed militants of the NSCN(I-M) for another year and enlarging the area to all the Naga inhabited areas in the North-Eastern region, the Union Government has indeed taken a calculated gamble. And the strong reaction to this decision from the administration in Manipur (now under Central rule) and the Assam Government was only expected. The impact of this, after all, could lead to fresh troubles for the civil administration in the two States. The decision not to engage the Naga militants even outside Nagaland could give an impetus to the demand for separatism in Ukhrul district of Manipur where the Nagas outnumber the other tribes as well as in the North Cachar hills district in Assam. There is also the possibility of the NSCN groups intensifying their activity in Tamenglong and Chandel districts in Manipur and in parts of Karbi Anglong in Assam. Given these factors, the concern expressed by the Manipur Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, and the Assam Government was only to be expected. The least that the Union Home Ministry could have done would have been to take the dispensation in these two States into confidence before announcing the decision. Be that as it may, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, will now have to ensure that his assurance to the Manipur Governor that the Centre would do nothing that could lead to the territorial disintegration of any of the North-Eastern States is backed on the ground.

The ceasefire agreement, particularly the decision to enlarge the area, was indeed inevitable. The peace talks with the Naga rebels that were on even earlier were derailed after the four-year-old ceasefire that came into operation (during the I. K. Gujral Government) had expired. And the NSCN groups engaged in the talks at various levels were insisting that those districts in the other

North-Eastern States with a substantial Naga population too be brought under the agreement. With the enlargement of the area having become a condition for furtherance of the peace talks, the Union Home Ministry could not have decided otherwise. But then, the decision is bound to give a leverage to the NSCN(I-M) to press for the "greater-Nagaland" demand. It is in this context that one would expect the Union Government to impress upon its emissaries who have been engaged in the talks with the rebel leaders to ensure that the decision to enlarge the area will not be taken by them as a basis to add more demands during the peace talks. It will make sense for the Union Government to make it clear, at this stage, that nothing that will amount to redrawing the State boundaries will be entertained in the course of the peace talks. The issues here are not just the idea of a "greater Nagaland" but any such debate, even if raised as merely an academic exercise, could give impetus to similar demands for a separate State for the Khukis in the North-East.

Meanwhile, it is also important for the Government and its emissaries to ensure that all the factions of the Naga rebels are involved in the exercise. This is all the more important given the dynamics of such rebel groups — their propensity to split, with new groups emerging against the established leaders every time a solution is round the corner — and this has happened with the NSCN too. Apart from this, the Union Government will help the cause of finding a political solution to the trouble in Nagaland as well as in other North-Eastern States by ensuring that all its decisions pertaining to the region are announced after the governments in the States are taken into confidence so that such fears as have now been expressed by the Manipur Governor and the State Government in Assam do not arise.

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## VOICES OF DISSENT IN NORTHEAST

# Centre firm on Naga truce

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 16.** Notwithstanding the reservations voiced in Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, the Centre is firm on going ahead with the June 14 ceasefire extension agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muivah). It does not share the apprehensions being voiced in the neighboring States.

This was the message that the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, heard when he met the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, and Home Ministry officials. Mr. Gogoi was given a patient hearing but was told that most of his apprehensions were misplaced and that the Centre was sufficiently alert and adequately equipped to see to it that the ceasefire extension did not become a source of mischief.

Mr. Gogoi was also told that nowhere in the June 14 "agreement" should be read any promise or endorsement of the idea of a "greater Nagaland" that the NSCN(I-M) had been demanding. The Advani-Gogoi interaction has probably sensitised the Centre to the apprehension entertained in the other northeastern States on this count. However, Mr. Gogoi's was not the only voice of dissent. Another visitor, a ministerial colleague of Mr. Advani, Mr. Chaoba Singh, Minister of State for Food Processing Industries, handed over to the Home Minister a letter demanding the withdrawal "of extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) in Manipur and in other areas of the northeast".

In an unusual note of dissent, Mr. Singh told Mr. Advani that the NDA's common minimum programme had made a commitment to the territorial integrity of Manipur and the other northeastern States. This promise, according to Mr. Singh, stands negated by the ceasefire extension. "The NSCN(I-M) could be the sole beneficiary who may build up their

organisation, utilising the time of ceasefire, in the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur. All the districts, including the four valley districts, in Manipur are inhabited by Nagas. This may subsequently lead to the demand for a greater Nagaland and territorial division of Manipur," writes Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh, who is also the president of the Manipur State Congress Party (C), has written to the NDA convener, Mr. George Fernandes, demanding an urgent meeting of the alliance to discuss the extension of the ceasefire and its ramifications.

At the same time, the Home

Ministry judgment is that much of the protest against the June 14 agreement is inspired by political considerations. In Manipur, the truce has been denounced by all political outfits and individuals who felt outwitted by the Centre's decision to impose President's rule in the State.

Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura feel that they have been bypassed by the Centre in a decision that affects them. This line of argument appeals to political parties as well. For instance, the central committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said that "it is most unfortunate that the

Vajpayee Government has decided to extend the four year-old ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) for another year, extending it to the entire northeast without consulting the State Governments in the region".

The Centre also knows that the implementation of the ceasefire in the entire northeast would be a problematic exercise, especially if the State Governments were less than enthusiastic about the truce. Nonetheless, there is a strong feeling that an artificial "crisis" is sought to be created, and the Centre has no option but to stand firm.

## Total bandh in Manipur

By Our Correspondent

**IMPHAL, JUNE 16.** All towns in the State wore a deserted look today and normal life came to a standstill in response to the 72-hour general strike called by students' unions and women's organisations to protest the extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN(IM) to Manipur.

Effigies of the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Government representative, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, were burnt in Imphal by activists of the All-Manipur Students' Union (AM-SU). A meeting was held at the office of the All-Manipur United Clubs Organisation, which was attended by representatives of 83 organisations and elders of all tribes and communities. The participants decided to launch protests and court arrest and called upon all MLAs to tender their resignations.

All shops pulled down their shutters and educational institutions and Government and private officers remained closed. Imphal-bound trucks and buses were stranded on the State border. The Governor, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah, reviewed the law and order situation with top police officials. Army and paramilitary personnel have been deployed in the areas inhabited by tribals.

A group of MLAs, led by the Speaker, Mr. Sapam Dhananjay, today called on Mr. Marwah. They told Mr. Marwah that though the people welcomed the peace initiatives with the Nagaland-based NSCN(IM), they were against the extension of the ceasefire to Manipur since it was a

separate State and also because the Government was never consulted. While assuring the MLAs that their views would be conveyed to the Centre, Mr. Marwah pointed out that the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, had given him an assurance that the extension of the ceasefire would not affect the territorial integrity of Manipur.

A section of the MLAs pointed out that right from Mr. I.K. Gujral onwards, all Prime Ministers had been assuring the Government and the people that the ceasefire would not be extended to Manipur. The resolutions of the Assembly objecting to any move to extend the ceasefire had been ignored, they said.

PTI reports:

The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) opposed the move and blamed the NDA Government for creating problems in the region. The MPCC chief, Mr. Okram Ibobi Singh, said the party would take up the issue with the high command to exert pressure on the Centre to retract its decision. The CPI State council secretary, Mr. Parijat Singh, said that by extending the ceasefire to Manipur and other northeastern States, the Centre had recognised and legitimised the NSCN (I-M) demand for a "greater Nagaland".

Volunteers of the Manipur Students Federation (MSF) locked the offices of the BJP, the Samata Party, the Congress and the Manipur People's Party on Friday. MSF sources said they would prevent activities of all political parties if they failed to put pressure on the Centre to retract its move.

THE HINDU

119-12  
16/6

## Samata, CPI against enlarging Naga ceasefire

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 15.** The Central Government's decision to extend the area of ceasefire with the Nationalist Social Council of Nagaland (I-M) to all Naga-inhabited areas in the entire northeast has come under sharp attack from the Samata Party, a constituent of the ruling NDA and the Opposition Communist Party of India.

The Samata Party said the move would cast a long shadow over the entire northeast and expressed concern that the Centre had not paid heed to the caution of Manipur representatives and Government, who were upset with the new agreement with the NSCN (I-M).

Addressing a press conference, the Samata Party general secretary, Dr. Shambu Shrivastwa, and the former Manipur Chief Minister, Mr. Radha Binod Koijam, said today that the

Centre had not consulted State Government when it was in power.

Mr. Koijam, whose Government was voted out of office last month, said the decision to enlarge the ceasefire area was a 'Himalayan blunder' and ignored the resolutions of the Manipur State Assembly. The people of the State had already begun expressing themselves against it.

The State unit of the Samata Party at its political conference on Wednesday, which was attended by the senior leader and former Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, had adopted a resolution warning of the dangers of extension of the ceasefire to Manipur. The Samata Party demanded that the Vajpayee Government call an all-party meeting to find a way out and said the issue would be raised during the monsoon session of Parliament.

The CPI said the extension of area

"amounts to conniving with the NSCN(I-M) on its demand for a Greater Nagaland."

The move would give the outfit a free-hand to extend its activities to the Naga population in the entire northeast, especially Manipur and Assam.

It said the by NSCN(I-M)'s assurances not to help other insurgent outfits such as the ULFA had no validity and could not be enforced in the context of the ceasefire.

The CPI shared the Samata's perception that the move would adversely affect Manipur's integrity as well that of other States in the northeast.

The CPI (ML-Liberation) echoed similar views and demanded that the Centre pull out of the talks and instead come out with a comprehensive package of solutions to the long-standing problems of the entire northeast.

THE HINDU

JUN 20 2001

# Red alert in Manipur on 66-hr bandh eve

HT Correspondent and PTI  
Imphal, June 15

A 66-HOUR Manipur bandh begins from the midnight of Friday to protest the extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland. Effigies of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his emissary Padmanabhiiah were burnt at the crowded Shamumakhong market in Imphal today to protest the extension of the ceasefire between the Union government of India and NSCN (IM) in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Leaders of All-Manipur Students Union, All-Manipur United Clubs Organisations, All Manipur Women's Social Reformation and Development Samaj and various voluntary organisations unanimously called for the sixty-six hour Statewide bandh to protest the extension of the ceasefire.

Meanwhile, a red alert was sounded in Manipur as prohibitory orders remained in force in the entire valley in view of large-scale opposition to the extension of the ceasefire

between the Centre and the NSCN (IM) to Naga inhabited areas, official sources said here on Friday.

The police and security forces stepped up patrolling in Naga-settled areas in the valley, besides keeping vigil at all vulnerable places throughout the valley districts. Prohibitory orders imposed yesterday for an indefinite period in four valley districts, Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur, continue to remain in force.

Local dailies prominently carried the ceasefire agreement signed yesterday in Bangkok and the reactions from various quarters on its extension to Manipur.

Senior leaders of the All-Manipur United Clubs Organisation (Amuco) and well-known human rights activists Khaidem Mani and R K Anand told reporters late last night that the ceasefire extension to Manipur was a "misadventure and political blunder" by the Centre and appealed to the Union Government to immediately 'retract' its decision. They said if the Centre

could "succumb to pressure" from a particular underground group, it "posed a threat to territorial integrity" of Manipur.

The Amuco, which had been fighting against any move to extend the ceasefire to Manipur for the past four years, said the extension was an attempt to "compromise Manipur territory while settling the NSCN (IM) issue". The All-Manipur Students Union also strongly opposed the extension of ceasefire to Manipur territory.

In a release, Union Home Minister L K Advani has assured Ved Marwah, the Manipur Governor, of the Centre's commitment to maintain the territorial integrity of Manipur and other North-eastern States, allaying apprehensions in the wake of extension of ceasefire to Naga inhabited areas in the region.

The release quoted the Union Home Minister assuring the Governor that there was 'no question of agreeing to anything that would in any way threaten the territorial integrity of Manipur.'

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JUN 2001

As a professor of Persian who had done his post-graduation from the prestigious Aligarh Muslim University, Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat used to engage small groups in various colleges of Jammu and Kashmir.

Now, while spearheading a separatist movement and heading the All Party Hurriyat Conference — a conglomerate of 23 separatists' organisation of J&K — he believes he is engaging a much bigger class in the larger interests of life, which is politics. So, there is little difference between what he is doing now and the 22 years of his life that he spent teaching students.

Born in a small village of Botengoo, about 10 km from Sopore on the Bandipore-Sopore Road in north Kashmir, Prof. Bhat — known for his pro-Pakistan stance — was dismissed from his service as a professor in 1986 by the then Chief Minister G P Shah as "he constituted a threat to the security of the state."

*Ironically, the chief minister who dismissed this*

articulate man who plays with words so deftly, was himself ousted within a week. From then onwards, the professor became actively involved in Kashmir politics.

Prof. Bhat who is also the president of the Muslim Conference, has been heading the APHC for about two years. Over the past few months, the Hurriyat has come into sharp focus after the unilateral ceasefire announced by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. However, the umbrella group's decision to boycott KC Pant's Kashmir visit and the demand to meet Pakistan's Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf has again brought the Hurriyat into the limelight.

Prof Bhat, in an interview with KAVITA SURI, discusses the Kashmir dispute and the relevance of the forthcoming summit between Mr Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf.

*Excerpts from the interview:*

**There is much confusion over your statement about the suspension of your activities in view of the forthcoming Indo-Pak summit. What is the true picture?**

This is in itself a confusing question because I always expect journalism to be honest, to be fair. But I was amused to hear the news on Radio Kashmir and the comments that followed.

It did not take into account the contents of the statement that we made. The journalists should have gone through the statement in details and read it with reference to developments in Charar-e-Sharif (the explosion that occurred there on 8 June) and the forthcoming summit. Unfortunately, they chose to do their own bit, that is, to damage any prospects for a congenial atmosphere to generate peace in south Asia.

We never said, we will never say and we could not say that we will suspend our political activities.

We will continue with it till, of course, we make sure that the dispute is resolved.

Journalists should have taken into account the difference in meaning of the words suspension and deferment while making news. Suspension is always conditional.

Deferment means I can do it tomorrow, the day after or even after a week's time. This would not mean suspension for a definite period of time.

This was not an act of suspension but a decision to defer the call for a hartal against the atrocities in Charar on a particular day. But that does not mean we will suspend our political activities. Not at all.

**Then what should we believe?**

As I told you, we believe that incidents like those that took place in Charar-e-Sharif, Batmaloo and Aishpora are state terrorism. We thought of starting an organised protest campaign against this form of terrorism.

How we do it is for us to decide. But as Mr Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf are about to meet, we decided not to take it up at this stage.

**But otherwise, you will continue with what you have been doing?**

Absolutely. There is not a shade of doubt about it. The only thing is that when you do not apply your brain, you are caught up in a confusing situation.

That is exactly what happened. I can understand the rationale behind it as far as mischief-makers are concerned. They do not want a proper political climate to evolve.

They do not want the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir to be addressed; they do not want the APHC to play its role as effectively as it can and, probably, they also do not want relations between India and Pakistan to improve. And the two countries' relations mainly revolve around the Kashmir issue.

Therefore, the idea is to create problems, of one form or the other, for one purpose or the other, problems for one set of people or the other.

# 'Peace can never happen in a vacuum'



All Party Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Gani Bhat.

**But the Hurriyat has also come under sharp criticism for not meeting Mr Pant (the government's negotiator for the Kashmiri groups) on his visit to Kashmir. You could have met him like Shabir Shah did and raised your questions! Why did you choose to stay away from him in Kashmir?**

The people of the state, who want a permanent settlement of the problem, will never pose such a question to me because they want to address the root cause of the Kashmir dispute. You want to talk about law and order. You talk in terms of peace on an internal track. We refuse to be involved on an internal track.

The reason being, Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi did undertake an exercise on an internal track but could not solve the problem.

Those days, people fought with stones, now they fight with bullets. Mr Pant came here against the backdrop of a statement issued by the

Indian government. The APHC executive council discussed it threabare and decided not to meet him.

If you want to discuss law and order, go to the chief minister and talk to him. We are not ready to talk about law and order.

You seem to be concerned about peace. It can never happen in a vacuum. You have to establish peace on the ground. You can never do it unless you recognise the sombre political realities on the ground.

**But how could you judge, may be the talks with Mr Pant would have resulted in some positive development?**

We know. We are the products of history. We cannot

ignore historical evidences with regard to the political manoeuvrability on the part of certain people in New Delhi.

So, we say we will not talk to people like Mr Pant. It is not that we do not respect him. We do. But we choose to differ with not only the purpose of his visit but also the method he followed.

I had said and I quote: "We would never want to board a crowded bus to nowhere". You have had talks to leaders from Kashmir in the past. But the dispute was never addressed and resolved. There have been three wars between India and Pakistan.

We are now fighting another war on the soil of Jammu and Kashmir. Isn't it? Therefore, if you are really interested in peace, you have to address the issue which constitutes a threat to Jammu and Kashmir.

I would like to add that this does not mean that we are against a process to address the issue and the process to eventually resolve it in the

interest of peace and stability in the region. So, we had proposed that when Gen. Musharraf visits Delhi, if a meeting between him and the APHC leadership takes place, the doors of understanding and communication will open and we will be talking to India's Prime Minister, too.

**But that demand of yours has been rejected?**

Well, the Indian government's refusal to hold talks with the Hurriyat leadership is like putting the cart before the horse. Who else would they want to talk to? We have taken a position commensurate with the historical perspective of the dispute that there are three parties to the dispute.

That is what the UN resolution enunciates. It states that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are the final arbiters of their fate. It is we the people of Jammu and Kashmir who will have to deliver the judgment. It is we the people who are the principal party.

India and Pakistan are the parties in history. We did give them a role. Yes, the historian has assigned them a role. But why shouldn't they give us the role we are entitled to? The Indian government has refused to talk to us. Who else will they talk to, Kakkar Parrey (leader of a counter-militant group called the Ikhwan), and find a solution? After all, we represent the Kashmiri people.

**This question has been asked time and again. How can you claim that only the Hurriyat is the true representative of the Kashmiri people?**

Yes, of course, we are the representatives of the majority. We represent the sentiments of the majority of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Every where, it is on the principle of majority that issues are taken up and decisions made. You accept the principle of majority in East Timor but you do not in Kashmir.

You do it in Junagarh but you do not do it here.

Representing people's sentiments is a different proposition and representing pieces of paper thrown into the ballot boxes by the Army is another. Yes, we represent the blood of the youth — the future of Kashmir. Who else represents the Kashmiris?

It is often alleged that you (the Hurriyat) are nothing but pawns in the hands of Pakistan? Besides, in Kashmir, blood was not shed for autonomy. The people did enjoy some kind of autonomy since Sheikh Saheb's time but where did it go?

Autonomy is not the answer. People had not laid down their lives for autonomy. We want a permanent settlement of the Kashmir dispute. There are other alternatives also available to us.

**What other alternatives?**

I cannot tell you right now. But there are.

**You won't talk about these alternatives?**

Well, you are not my customer. There are only two customers.

**India and Pakistan?**

No, not India and Pakistan but Gen. Musharraf and Mr Vajpayee. We do have alternative solutions but let us sit across the table first with India and Pakistan.

**How would you comment on the recent Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen threats to Gen. Musharraf?**

I do not think there is any threat to Gen. Musharraf or that he feels threatened. But I do think this is one factor that makes the participation of the Hurriyat imperative for talks. They (the militant groups) will neither listen to Gen. Musharraf nor to Mr Vajpayee. They will listen to us — the APHC. Hurriyat's participation is unavoidable in Indo-Pak talks on Kashmir.

**Can you influence the militant groups?**

Had we gone to Pakistan, things would have been better. We would have been able to break the ice but the Indian government did not allow us. We could have gone a mile ahead. Yes, I think we would have been successful in influencing the Mujahideen. It is wrong to say they are militants. They are freedom fighters. Our goal is similar, they are fighting it with guns while we are doing it with arguments. We would have asked them to give peace a chance.

We could have asked them not to throw their guns into the Arabian Sea but keep them for a while. We could have let them know about the progress in talks. Ultimately, we are the people who matter.

*(The author is based in Jammu and contributes regularly to The Statesman.)*

# Truce extension draws flak

By Vinay Kumar

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 15.** The extension of the four-year-old ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) for another year without territorial limits in Naga inhabited areas in the northeast has evoked sharp criticism from political parties in Assam and Manipur, which have blamed the Centre for rushing through it without consulting them.

So sharp was the reaction in Manipur, now under President's rule, that the Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, spoke to the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, this morning and conveyed to him the "strong feelings of the people of Manipur and their fears".

## Advani's assurance

Mr. Advani assured the Governor that there was no question of agreeing to anything that would in any way threaten Manipur's territorial integrity. He also told the Governor that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), as laid down in its Common Minimum Programme, was committed to maintaining Manipur's territorial integrity and other northeastern States and it would honour that commitment.

Reiterating the Government's policy to welcome the insurgent groups to cease violent activities and come to the negotiating table for a peaceful and just solution to all their problems and aspirations, Mr. Marwah appealed to the insurgent groups operating in Manipur to eschew violence and join the process of dialogue.

The Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, yesterday wrote to the Chief Secretary of Manipur. "Though, this time, the ceasefire is without any territorial limits and not limited to Nagaland, I wish to assure you that this deci-

sion would not, in any way, affect the territorial integrity of any of the northeastern States," Mr. Pande said.

Analysts pointed out that the north-eastern States are dreading that the NSCN(I-M) would someday rake up the demand for a "Greater Nagaland" and might use the ceasefire expansion beyond Nagaland to lend an air of legitimacy to their demand.

The agreement, reached between the Government's representative, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah and the NSCN(I-M) leadership, Mr. T. Muivah and Mr. Isaak Chisi Swu, at Bangkok after parleys on June 13-14, talks of the agreement between "two entities", without mentioning any territory.

The extension without territorial limits is being seen as a major concession which the NSCN (I-M) has been able to derive from the Centre. Northeast watchers feel that it would give a better bargaining power to the outfit as it

would be able to project itself as almost the sole player in Nagaland before talks on substantive political issues begin.

Home Ministry sources said that the Naga-inhabited areas in Assam were North Cachar and Karbi Anglong; in Arunachal Pradesh, the Naga population was concentrated in Tirap and Changlang districts and, in Manipur, in Ukhrul and Senapati. The Government extracted an assurance from the NSCN(I-M) leadership that the outfit would not support other insurgent groups in the region such as the ULFA.

As the next round of talks is scheduled in the first week of August, the Centre would literally be walking on the razor's edge to build opinion in favour of the extension of the truce with the NSCN(I-M). The reasoning would be that it makes little sense to observe the ceasefire only in Nagaland and keep fighting in the other States.

## Red alert in Manipur

By Our Correspondent

**IMPHAL, JUNE 15.** Security measures have been beefed up on an unprecedented scale in all parts of Manipur to ensure that there is no untoward incident in the aftermath of the extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) to the Naga-populated areas in northeastern States.

Prohibitory orders were imposed under Section 144 of the Cr.P.C. in all trouble-prone areas. An official report said security personnel were patrolling in Naga-dominated areas. Terming the extension as a "step-motherly treatment", the State Assembly Speaker, Mr. S. Dhananjoy Singh, said though the Assembly had been kept under suspended animation, the Centre should have consulted all the 60 MLAs.

At a meeting organised in the Assembly complex today, Mr. Dhananjoy announced that all the MLAs were prepared to resign *en masse* in protest against the ceasefire extension. According to the PTI, the effigies of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and his emissary Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, were today set afire by volunteers of the All-Manipur Students Union, at the Samumakhong area in the heart of Imphal town, in protest against the extension of ceasefire, official sources said.



## Samata attacks NE truce extension

HT Correspondent *H(r)*  
New Delhi, June 15

18/6  
THE NAGA ceasefire accord drew sharp criticism today from the Samata Party, which opposed the move to extend the truce to the entire North East.

Calling it a hasty and myopic move the party attacked the Government for not consulting it and demanded an all-party meet to discuss the issue.

Samata spokesman and general secretary Shambhu Shrivastav said the agreement was based on inadequate knowledge of the ground situation. The extension of the ceasefire's scope to Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur, Tripura, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh would result in increased insurgency and set the entire North-East on fire, he warned.

"Extending the ceasefire to other areas will also give legitimacy to the demand for a greater Nagaland comprising parts of other States," Shrivastav stressed along with party leader and former Manipur Chief Minister Radhabinod Koijam.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JUN 1986

# Nagaland parties welcome truce area extension

HT Correspondent  
Dimapur, June 15

IGNORING THE oppositions by some State Governments and various organisations of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the decision to extend the ongoing ceasefire between NSCN (IM) and Government of India and covering all the Naga-inhabited areas, was hailed by all political parties in Nagaland.

There was also a strong consensus among political parties in the State for an immediate political dialogue between the two parties. Chief Minister of Nagaland and president of the State Congress (I), S C Jamir, welcomed the one-year extension of the ceasefire. On the expansion of the territorial jurisdiction of the truce, he said, "Let the respective State Governments react to it".

The State Home Minister, Neiphi-U Rio, welcomed the extension of the ceasefire for one more year and lauded the expansion of the territorial jurisdiction beyond Nagaland.

Rio also called upon the Centre and the NSCN (IM) to begin serious negotiation. He said four years have been spent in wrangling over the ceasefire jurisdiction and said that the extension was a step in the right direction. He hoped that the new extension would bear fruit.

Naga Peoples' Council (NPC) president, Huska Sumi, while welcoming the ceasefire hoped that the NDA Government at the Centre would ditch its 'delaying tactics' and get into serious political dialogue.

Chief minister and president of the Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM), K L Chishi, said that it was time now that political negotiation should begin earnestly saying that mere ceasefire for the past four years had failed to yield any results on the Indo-Naga political issue.

Chishi said when the accord has been mutually agreed between the Union Government and NSCN (IM), the States should have no say on this.

## LOOSE TRUCE <sup>sr. b</sup> For Manipur, a year of anxiety <sup>16/6</sup>

**E**XTENSION of the ceasefire in Nagaland by yet another year beginning 31 July is evidence that both Delhi and the Isak-Muivah faction of the NSCN are keen on a solution to the 53-year-old Naga problem. Significantly, the understanding was reached only after the Centre accepted the demand that the truce cover the contiguous Naga-inhabited areas of Arunachal, Assam and Manipur. Though emissary K Padmanabhiiah gives the impression that the "area of the ceasefire has nothing to do with and has no bearing on any territorial issues", the Centre's capitulation confirms the rebel leaders' repeated assertion that Delhi had "agreed in principle" at the time of signing the ceasefire accord. This aspect had to be underlined because the NSCN had claimed these areas be included in their "Greater Nagaland" concept, which provoked strenuous protests in Manipur four years ago. Meities were not wrong after all in believing that the BJP pulled down the Samata Party-led Kojiam government to pave the way for extension of the truce, a proposal opposed by the Manipur government.

That the truce has been extended since August 1997 despite several allegations of violation by both sides is the only positive development so far. What needs to be tackled on a priority basis is the large-scale extortion that has vitiated the atmosphere. Regrettably no decision was taken on this important matter following what Padmanabhiiah called "a difference of opinion" on the magnitude of the menace. The impression sought to be created is that extortion is the handiwork of imposters but it is no secret that the "notices" come in the rebel outfit's name. Peace will remain a far cry unless the NSCN-IM relents, sits with rival factions and changes its attitude on sovereignty.

THE STRAITS

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# NSCN truce extended for a year, beyond Nagaland

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, June 14

THE UNION Government and the NSCN(I-M) have agreed to extend the ceasefire for a year, and to Naga-dominated areas in the North-east. So far confined to Nagaland, the truce would have expired on July 31.

The logjam over the extension of ceasefire was broken during talks in Bangkok between the Centre's emissary K Padmanabhaiah and the insurgent outfit's general secretary, T Muivah. The stalemate had its roots in the NSCN(I-M)'s refusal to delink its demand for Greater Nagaland from the extension of the truce to areas outside Nagaland.

Home Secretary Kamal Pande told reporters here that the four-year truce will now have no territorial limits in the North-east. He clarified that the new arrangement would in no way compromise the territorial integrity of any State in the region.

But the Assam Chief Minister was unhappy with the decision, and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart said his Government would oppose the truce if Delhi did not make clear ground rules to regulate movement of NSCN ultras in the State.

These States fear that the truce extension would give NSCN a licence to kill and loot. But the Nagaland Chief Minister welcomed the extension.

At least one NDA ally would be unhappy with the decision. The alliance convener, George Fernandes, said in Imphal today that the Samata Party would never allow the ceasefire to be extended beyond Nagaland.

In Delhi, Kamal Pande said the Centre had discussed the issue with Chief Ministers in the North-east, more than once. They were "more or less" convinced about the rationale behind expanding the geographical spread of the ceasefire.

**NSCN pledge:** The NSCN(I-M) has agreed "not to support other insurgent groups" in the region. Muiva said the new peace initiative was a "big step forward for peace".

## CrPC amendment to plug witness loophole

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, June 14

THE CENTRE has decided to amend the Criminal Procedure Code to prevent witnesses from turning hostile during trial. The move has been prompted by recent instances of rich and influential persons seeking to circumvent the law by manipulating key witnesses.

Based on the Law Commission's suggestion, the Centre has decided to incorporate in the CrPC a provision empowering Courts to admit witnesses' statements to the police.

The Home Ministry has accepted the amendment forwarded by the Law Ministry. A Bill for altering the existing provisions of the CrPC is expected to be introduced in Parliament during the Monsoon Session, slated to begin in July.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15/6

# President's Rule in Manipur

By Rajeev Dhavan

*The BJP and the Samata Party want time to resolve their problems. Nothing can be more unconstitutional than parties which can form Governments refusing to do so.*

140-12  
1576

**I**N THE farthest Northeast of India lies the State of Manipur. On June 2, 2001, President's Rule was imposed on that State. On that day, democratic governance in that State died. The power to impose President's Rule on a State through Article 356 of the Constitution is an awesome and arbitrary power. With its use, local democracy disappears. Federalism is collapsed. The State becomes a political fiefdom of the Union. Between 1950 and 2001 President's Rule has been imposed on various States and Union Territories on around 100 occasions — mostly for opportunistic reasons. The imposition of President's Rule on Manipur is one of the worst examples of such an imposition. Yet, over the years, our constitutional senses have become numb. We regard the use of Article 356 as a normal incidence of governance — leaving it to our politicians to do what they like to democracy and federalism.

Manipur's history belongs to the folklore of India. Created as a full-fledged State in 1971, it has known troubled times. Even before its formation, Manipur had been under President's Rule as a Union Territory in 1967-68 and again from 1969. No sooner was it born, it was placed under President's Rule from January 21 to March 20, 1972. One year later, President's Rule was imposed on March 28, 1973, even though, as the Sarkaria Commission (1988) put it, the Opposition had a "tenuous majority". Those were the heady days when Indira Gandhi's Government ruthlessly invoked President's Rule to destroy Governments of her opponents. In 1977, President's Rule was imposed because Congress(I) legislators joined the new Janata Party; and it appeared that no one was prepared to form a Government. In 1977, President's Rule was imposed on 10 States and one Union territory, with judicial immunity from the Supreme Court in the somewhat equivocal, even confusing, judgment of the Supreme Court in the Rajasthan case (1977). Manipur was not to be spared. In 1979-80, Manipur was again placed under President's Rule and its Assembly dissolved. No sooner was this over, President's Rule was again imposed in 1981, when the Assembly was placed under suspended animation to permit political machinations.

The same game was played in January 1992; and again, on December 31, 1993.

The technique of keeping Assemblies in suspended animation received judicial approval in the Bommai case (1993) on the basis that a 'suspended' Assembly was better than a dead one — even though the Court followed a Pakistan decision that even a dissolved Assembly could be revived by a Court order if the imposition of President's Rule and consequent dissolution was unconstitutional. This is unexceptional. But suspending Assemblies invites suspicions. It opens a can of worms. Legislators are bought, sold and traded, with promises that they will be appointed Ministers. Albeit, the best of 'second best' alternatives, suspended Assemblies are full of political tricks and conspiracies.

There is no doubt that Manipur's politics has been full of conspiracies, crises, disloyalties and defections. In 1977, the Shaija Ministry was created out of defections from the Congress(I). Mr. Shaija was deposed by Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh in 1980. From 1980 to 1985, Mr. Rishang Keishang completed a full Ministerial term; but was deposed on his return to power by Mr. R. K. Jaichandra Singh who in turn was deposed by Mr. Dorendra Singh in 1992. President's Rule followed. A suspended Assembly enabled Mr. Keishang to return to power in 1994, to win again at the polls in 1995. But, wholly violating the neutrality of the Speaker, Mr. W. Nipamacha Singh, became Chief Minister by inducing the defections of 24 of the 39 Congress(I) MLAs. He was also returned to power by weaning away Opposition politicians to form the Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) and Government.

Between November 2000 and February 2001, the Congress(I) was crippled by defections. A new Samata Party-led Government was born under Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam. But in May 2001, the new Speaker forced a further defection to form the

Progressive MSCP. Then, Mr. Dorendra Singh entered the fray to enable 18 MSCP legislators to join the existing BJP members to create a powerful block called the Progressive Democratic Alliance. The fate of Mr. Kojiam's Ministry was sealed. Oddly enough, this was at the hands of its own BJP allies who voted him out of power on May 21, 2001, by 39 votes to 17 in a 60-member Assembly, with one seat vacant. The Samata Party's only State Ministry was thrown out by its own Union Government ally. Naturally, the Samata Party was furious. But, Mr. George Fernandes was not prepared to forgo his comfortable links with the BJP.

There was no reason to impose President's Rule in Manipur. After the Kojiam Ministry fell, the BJP and the Samata Party came to a cozy political arrangement even though the latter had been stabbed in the back by the former in Manipur. Now comes the baffling bit. Although the BJP-Samata Party combine is in a position to form a Government, it simply refuses to do so. Their game plan is to create and continue the crisis so that further horse-trading takes place and potential claimants are humiliated. This is precisely what happened when the Speaker, Mr. Dhananjoy Singh, claimed the right to form, at least, a minority Government which the Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah declined. The BJP and the Samata Party want time to resolve their problems. Nothing can be more unconstitutional than parties which can form Governments refusing to do so. This is abdicating one's constitutional duty to abandon the Constitution itself.

Using President's Rule to resolve internal party political problems is reprehensible. The was done in Punjab in 1951 and 1966, Haryana in 1967, Andhra Pradesh in 1973, Uttar Pradesh in 1973 and 1975, Orissa in 1976, and Karnataka in 1977-78. There are many examples where an adequate chance was not given to create an alternative Ministry including Pepsu

(1953), Andhra Pradesh (1954), Travancore-Cochin (1956), Kerala (1965, 1973), Rajasthan (1967), Uttar Pradesh (1968, 1970), Bihar (1969, 1972), Orissa (1971, 1973) Manipur and Assam (1981), Kashmir (1986), and Sikkim (1979) amongst others. Indeed, it has always been the BJP's stance at the Centre that formation of even a minority Government must be allowed. Now, the BJP and the Samata Party have a majority but refuse to honor their constitutional obligations to do so through the Governor, they have also prevented others from doing so. Instead, they have chosen to invoke President's Rule, and suspended the Assembly until they are ready and rule Manipur directly from the Centre.

The time has come to consider whether the President's Rule provisions should be amended out of the Constitution completely. First, President's Rule is not needed to deal with internal disturbance or external threat. India's Constitution provides enough federal power to deal with this through democratic governance in the State. Second, President's Rule is not needed to nurture good democratic parliamentary traditions. It is the easy and sinister way out. Parliamentary democracy survives on the continuance of democratic governance. If the Union Government has to find solutions without President's Rule, the State Government can, and must, also do so. Third, President's Rule is anti-federal. It is a travesty to suggest that democracy survives because a State under President's Rule is run by the Union Government responsible to a democratic Union Parliament.

Unfortunately, impositions of President's Rule evade democratic accountability. Even after the Bommai case (1993), the Judiciary is uncertain about its role. The President intervened in Bihar in 1998, but cannot enlarge his veto power. Parliament is led by majorities and invariably blesses these draconian provisions. But, this time Parliament should protest. The imposition of President's Rule is anti-democracy, and anti-federal. It has been made for wholly party political reasons. It is a blot on Indian democracy. Our politicians cannot be trusted with the President's Rule empowerment which should be deleted from the Constitution.

THE HINDU

15 JUL 2001

# Centre extends truce with NSCN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, June 14. — The Centre and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muviah) today extended the four-year-old ceasefire by one year and expanded it to cover Naga-inhabited areas in the region.

The NSCN(I-M) also agreed "not to support any other insurgent group" in the North-east and abide by the terms and conditions of the agreed ground rules for ceasefire, home secretary, Mr Kamal Pande said.

The accord was signed in Bangkok after two days of talks between the Centre's emissary, Mr K Padmanabhaiah, and NSCN(I-M) leader, Mr Thuingaleng Muviah. Top NSCN(I-M) leader, Mr Isak Chishi Swu,

also participated in the talks.

The two sides, in a joint statement, said they had agreed to extend the ceasefire by one year with effect from 1 August and to abide by the ground rules, as revised on January 13, in "letter and spirit". "The ceasefire agreement is between the Government of India and the NSCN as two entities without territorial limits" the statement said.

The ceasefire will now cover Naga-inhabited areas in adjoining states including Manipur and Assam, where the outfit has bases. "Both sides expressed hope that the talks on more substantive issues would move ahead at a faster pace,"

Mr Pande said, adding the next round of talks were scheduled in July-end or August beginning.

After signing the accord, Mr Padmanabhaiah said it had been "agreed that the area of the ceasefire has nothing to do with and has no bearing on any territorial issues". "The purpose of the ceasefire is to usher in peace, a peaceful atmosphere is necessary for the dialogue to proceed smoothly and to succeed", he said.

"The ground rules have been made more stringent and the NSCN(I-M) has accepted them. The rules include those on the movement of insurgents, carrying of arms by them, issue of

identity cards by the government to selected people, extortion and highway hold-ups," Mr Pande said. The agreement would not have any bearing on the territorial integrity of the states in the North-east, he said. "This will not in any way impinge upon the territorial integrity of the states".

Asked if the concerned states were consulted and their views considered while taking a decision, Mr Pande replied in the affirmative. "We met the chief ministers and the officials and also considered the ground situation." He hoped some more progress would be made at the next round of talks.

On the expansion of the cease-

fire's area coverage, the home secretary said, "As it is, we have not been attacking the NSCN(I-M) activists in other areas in the past. There has already been an informal understanding."

Regarding ceasefire with the other NSCN (Khaplang) faction led by, he said similar ground rules applied to this faction too. While the talks with Khaplang faction were primarily on the ceasefire, the parleys with NSCN(I-M) were "now leading to more substantive issues".

The talks "are not a victory to NSCN but a big step forward for peace," Mr Muviah said. He praised Mr Padmanabhaiah for the outcome and said "his ef-

orts have ensured that the situation is safe...he is smart and has proved himself."

Another issue which figured in the talks was extortion. "There is difference of opinion about the extent and severity of extortions," Mr Padmanabhaiah said. A lot of attention was required to control extortions, he added.

According to Mr Muviah, "the question of claiming a greater Nagaland" did not exist. "Nagaland belongs to Nagas, we don't have greater Nagaland or smaller Nagaland, we have just 1,20,00,00 sq km of land that belongs to us." The talks were a "success both for Indians and ourselves," Mr Muviah said.

The NSCN leader is facing trial in Bangkok for entering Thailand on forged passport.

THE STATESMAN

13

# Gogoi, Mithi differ over wider truce

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, June 14

THE ASSAM Government reacted with anger to the extension of the ceasefire. Nagaland welcomed it and Arunachal Pradesh came up with a guarded reaction.

Extension of the ceasefire with NSCN (I-M) "without territorial limits" in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur translates into Naga-inhabited areas in the three States.

The NSCN, which had entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Centre with effect from 1 August 1977, had been threatening to pull out of the truce if these areas were not included.

Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi felt the extension of the truce would compound the problems of the security forces battling insurgent outfits of Assam. He was also sore because his Government had not been consulted and said it would lodge a strong protest.

"We are against any territorial compromise," he said, echoing what his predecessor Prafulla Kumar Mahanta had maintained.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Mukut Mithi, now in New Delhi, saw no reason to oppose the Centre's decision, "which must have been taken with everlasting peace in mind". But he was quick to add that his Government combat the truce area extension if the ground rules were not made clear by New Delhi to regulate the movement of NSCN militants within Arunachal Pradesh.

Like Gogoi, Mithi was also sore that the Centre did not consult his Government before taking this crucial decision.

Gogoi's party felt the decision was confrontationalist. "The NDA Government bowed down to the NSCN conveniently after the fall of the Samata Party-led government in Manipur.

With Manipur gone and Congress in power in both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, it had no hesitation in pandering to Muivah's demands," a senior Congress leader said.

The All Manipur Students' Union also objected. Representatives of the All Manipur United Club's Organisation, who met the former Defence Minister in Imphal today, expressed



anguish over the extension of the ceasefire.

The organisation is the apex body of all clubs and organisations in Manipur

Nagaland Chief Minister SC Jamir, who had called the ceasefire with NSCN meaningless in October last year, welcomed the decision.

His stand on the ceasefire with NSCN changed after the Centre declared truce with the outfit's rival Khaplang faction in April this year. Jamir is said to be close to the Khaplang faction.

The Greater Nagalim dream pursued by NSCN, encompassing all Naga-inhabited areas in the North-east, is the main reason why the Governments in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur are opposed to the truce extension.

These three states also fear that doing away with the territorial limit of the ceasefire would give the NSCN the licence to kill, kidnap, extort and collect illegal taxes beyond Nagaland.

But what they dread most is Greater Nagalim.

The NSCN's map of Greater Nagalim includes Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh, Ukhrul and Tamenglong districts of Manipur and parts of eastern and south-eastern Assam com-

prising Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts. The Arunachal Pradesh districts claimed by NSCN are inhabited mostly by the Konyak Nagas, the Manipur districts by Tankhuls and the Assam areas by Konyaks, Semas and Zemis.

The Greater Nagalim idea is believed to be a softer version of the NSCN's eventual goal of an independent Nagaland.

Security forces engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Assam view the truce extension as an added problem.

"We have been dealing with erring NSCN activists within our territory sternly.

The truce area extension from August 1 would give immunity to them, and we will be reduced to mere spectators if they carry on extortion here," a senior Assam Police officer said.

The police's fears were compounded by the ambush of an Assam Rifles patrol near Margherita on Wednesday. The ambush was believed to have been carried out by the Ulfa, hand in glove with the NSCN.

# ULFA begins extortion drive in full swing

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 13

**F**IVEN as the new Congress government in Assam began reshuffling officials in the state police, ordering transfers of a number of senior officers, the outlawed ULFA is back in action, launching a massive extortion drive.

Confirming this, intelligence and police sources said here today that several businessmen and companies in the state had been already served with extortion notes, with the amount ranging from Rs 1 to 50 lakh.

Intelligence reports, issued last week, had stated that several batches of ULFA cadres had sneaked into the state from Nagaland and Bhutan immediately after Tarun Gogoi took over as Chief Minister last month. The militants seem to have utilised the period of transition in the state administration to the fullest, issuing extortion notes to many business houses and individu-

als. The police have managed to get hold of some notes, but, as yet, no ULFA militant has been held. A senior police officer put part of the blame on the reluctance of those who received the notes to come out and inform the authorities.

The police first got a wind of the fresh extortion drive when it recovered extortion notes from three ULFA cadres killed in an encounter at Titabor in Jorhat district 10 days ago.

Titabor, an Assembly constituency which has elected Chief Minister Gogoi's younger brother, is situated on the Assam-Nagaland border. According to Intelligence reports, security forces busted the hide-out of a batch of militants who had sneaked into a village there from Nagaland.

The rebels have set a target of extorting Rs 3 crore from just four firms situated in one of the three Upper Assam districts, three of them being middle-level tea companies, reports said.

The firms were warned not to report to the police

## Tear gas shells for hit-and-run

**JORHAT:** ULFA has acquired a huge arsenal of tear gas which they plan to use during "hit-and-run" operations, police said on Wednesday. After recent launches and mobile bunkers, the ULFA has now in its arsenal tear gas shells and this has come to light during interrogation of two ULFA militants who were arrested at "hot seat week", Jorhat Superintendent of Police G P Singh told reporters.

He said ULFA planned to use the tear gas during hit and run operation as it would give them enough time to flee from the attack site.

"This latest tactics of the ULFA would give the police a difficult time as the banned outfit is reportedly using trucks with built-in bunkers to carry out the hit and run operations", he said.

and "deposit the sum donated for the revolutionary cause within the stipulated period".

Several doctors, government engineers and contractors are understood to have received such notes asking for a "donation". After delivering the notes through "special messengers", the rebels were following up by calls over the phone, reminding the recipients not to delay the payments, Intelligence sources said.

Last week, *The Indian Express* had reported that a meeting of the Unified Command — constituted in 1997 to carry out counter-insurgency operations — had reviewed the situation in the wake of the extortion threats and reports of recruitment by the ULFA. It had decided to chalk out a people-friendly approach to tackle the situation.

Recruitment was mostly being carried on in Nalbari in lower Assam and the districts of Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur and Dhemaji in upper Assam, earlier reports had said.



# Naga ceasefire may be extended

HD-1  
14/6

9  
N B SR

By Vinay Kumar

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 13.** The four-year-old ceasefire in Nagaland may get yet another extension for a year. Highly-placed sources in the Government indicated that the ceasefire with the powerful insurgent group, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), could be extended to cover all Naga people in the North-East.

The two-fold "agreement" is likely to be clinched during the visit of Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, designated representative of the Prime Minister for the peace talks, to Bangkok. He left for the Thai capital on Tuesday night and will hold consultations with the NSCN(I-M) general secretary, Mr. T. Muivah, and the chairman, Mr. Isaak Chisi Swu.

Mr. Padmanabhaiah, former Union Home Secretary, held consultations with the NSCN(I-M) leadership last month when the

outfit insisted that the ceasefire be extended to all Naga-inhabited areas in the North-East. Mr. Padmanabhaiah returned here to seek clarifications from the Centre as it meant consultations with States such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur where the NSCN(I-M) has bases.

Though extending the ceasefire to other States has been a ticklish issue as the Chief Ministers of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh could not arrive at a consensus on the arrangement during a meeting with the Prime Minister, the Centre seems to have decided to give peace a free run in the region's Naga-inhabited areas.

PTI reports from Bangkok:

Meanwhile, Mr. Padmanabhaiah met Mr. Muivah this evening on extending the coverage area of the ceasefire. They will meet again tomorrow morning.

THE HINDU

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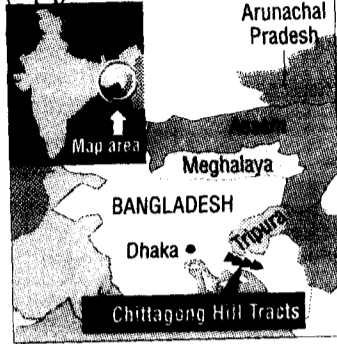
# Revealed: Bangla covert camps

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

New Delhi, June 13: India has routinely pointed out the existence in Bangladesh of camps run by North-east insurgent outfits. And Bangladesh has routinely denied their existence, but promised to look into the matter.

For the first time, The Telegraph has obtained the complete list of training camps which these insurgent outfits have been running from deep within Bangladesh territory. The United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) run the maximum number of camps in several districts in Bangladesh close to Assam. Separatist organisations from Tripura also have a large presence.

The National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), which about a year-and-a-half back had abducted four RSS workers from Tripura before taking them to Bangladesh, has 18 camps, mostly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Khagrachari and Moulvibazar districts of Bang-



adesh. Following are some of the NLFT camps:

- Harigopalpara (Kanungopara), 2 km north of Panchari police station in Khagrachari district in the Chittagong Hill Tracts
- Porabari, 6 km east of Taidung market, Khagrachari district
- Sudhilapara (Ranjan headman para), north-east of Taidung market
- Lolu Kalu: main camp situated between Zoupui, Jamtali and Thangnang under Khagrachari police station
- Ranger Regiment, in Taglokantai near Somai river and about 40 km from Simanapur Indo-Bangla border
- Khagrasuri, Kadamtola, Selchai, Lunting and

Thangnag in the Sejak ranges

- Kalabagan area under Srimangal police station in Moulvibazar district; and House no. 160, Sugandha Housing Estate, Muradpur, Chittagong.

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## Rebel camps

FROM PAGE 1

The three main camps run by the All-Tripura Tiger Force are:

- Subhadhan headman camp, on the western bank of the Logang river under Panchari police station in Khagrachari district
- Moramachya Chora camp, in the dense forest at Goladham Kabari under Logang union under Panchari police station
- Jogesh Chandrapara and Khasia Mangal in Satchhari under Chunarughat police station in Habiganj district.

There are some more camps in Bandarban and Rangamati districts.

The camps of Ulfa, NDFB and the Achin National Volunteer Council, which operates in certain parts of Meghalaya, have been identified in the following areas of Bangladesh: Bishumerpur village under Tahirpur police station in Sunamganj district, Madhupur Reserve Forest in Tangail district, Tarimission in Sherpur district, Panihata in Sherpur district, Srimangal in Moulvibazar district, Mahastangarh in Rajshahi district, Maheshkhali in the coastal district of Cox's Bazar, Mymensingh Krishi Farm in Mymensingh district, Haluaghat in Mymensingh district, Jamalpur (a recruiting camp) in Netrokona district, Adampur under Kamalganj police station in Moul-

vibazar, Barakugach under Kamalganj police station in Moulvibazar, Chhota Dhamai under Barlekha police station in Moulvibazar, Amberkhana in Sylhet district, house of Nilu Babu Singh, Dewan Singh and Lalwani Singh at Chhota Dhamai under Borlekha police station in Moulvibazar.

The Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council, which, along with the Achin National Volunteer Council, was banned by the Meghalaya government as well as the Centre early this year, operates from camps located at Jaintiapur in Sylhet district. The outfit also has a transit camp at a place called Ramgarh in Tangail district.

### Assam ambush

Nine Assam Rifles personnel and three Ulfa militants were today killed in separate incidents in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district.

Violence rocked central Assam, too, with suspected NDFB militants killing one person and injuring 10 at the Rangapara daily market in Sonitpur district.

The day's major incident was, however, the one at Namdang under Margherita police station. Suspected Ulfa militants ambushed a group of 10 jawans of the 28th Assam Rifles Battalion, stationed at Changlang in Arunachal Pradesh, just after the mini-truck carrying them crossed the interstate border.

THE TELEGRAPH

1916

# Bhriugu joins NCP, enters national polity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 12

BHRIGU Kumar Phukan, one of the founders of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and a signatory to the 1985 Assam Accord, has formally joined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and bid a "goodbye to regionalism".

"Regionalism in Assam is finished. Though I hold Prafulla Kumar Mahanta responsible for destroying the AGP, I admit even I am to be blamed for it," Phukan told *The Indian Express* on Monday, a day after joining the NCP.

Phukan said regionalism was no longer possible with Mahanta remaining the "main obstacle".

"The country needs value-based politics, and I feel the NCP can provide the people an alternative in the long run," he said.

He also described as "useless" the efforts by former AGP leaders to launch new regional groups. "These leaders are individuals with no followers," he said, without naming former AGP general secretary Atul Bora who failed to make any impact in the recent elections.

Phukan was the general secretary of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) from 1979 to 1985 with Mahanta as its president. When the AGP was formed in October 1985, he became its most important general secretary.

When the party was elected to power the same year, Phukan became Home minister in the government headed by Mahanta, and continued to play an important role in shaping regional politics in the state.

The former AGP leader charged Mahanta with "selfish politics" to keep control over the party. He said Mahanta had sidelined the right-thinking leaders to further his personal interests.



NCP general secretary P A Sangma presents a copy of the party constitution to former Assam home minister Bhriugu Phukan in Guwahati on Sunday — PTI

"I am a victim of Mahanta's politics. So are several others. Though we tried our best to bring the AGP back to shape, Mahanta continued with his dictatorial style, ousting one leader after the other to ensure he remained in power," Phukan said.

Phukan had several serious disputes with

Phukan,

Phukan said. "The Congress cannot do anything for the state. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has no record of performing despite being a Lok Sabha member thrice and a Union minister. He is a gentleman but the same old corrupt leaders have been made ministers," Phukan said.

Mahanta during the AGP's first term in power, prompting him to resign from the party and government more than once.

In 1991, he walked out with Dinesh Goswami, Bijoya Chakravarty (now in the BJP) and former Speaker Pulakesh Barua to form the Natun Asom Gana Parishad (NAGP).

The NAGP was dissolved as Phukan returned to the parent party within a year. Mahanta and Phukan campaigned together in the 1996 elections, but the two soon fell out.

Phukan launched another outfit in 1998, the Asom Jatiya Sanmilani. "I tried my best to reorganise the AGP after the 1996 elections, but Mahanta would simply not listen. He became obsessed with projecting his wife as a leader, and not only made her a Rajya Sabha member but also a party vice-presi-

## Naga deadlock

Less than a fortnight after a special envoy of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee returned empty-handed, attempts to bring the effective leadership of one of the factions of the Nagas now cooped up in Bangkok, Delhi and North Block seem inclined towards trying their luck with the rebels once again. The Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN had made it clear to former Union home secretary Padmanabhaiah, that they would like to be accorded the status of being the sole intermediary on part of the Nagas if any solution is tried to bring to an end the longest insurgency in post-Independent India. There is the Khaplang faction too, which wants similar status at the negotiating table, but their claims have been ignored by Delhi for the time being. The Khaplang faction is refusing to take the denial and fresh cases of violence and clashes have followed. The Bangkok-based rebels also wanted that all the developmental aid meant for the region be routed through it. In the perception of the Union home ministry, no real progress can be made till the time the Isaak-Muivah faction is involved, and that has led to a rather piquant situation where no progress on the ground has taken place because of the factional dispute. Arguably, the Bangkok-based rebels may claim to have majority support among the Nagas, but there is little or no empirical basis to supplement the assertion, thereby leading to an impasse which has only provided an opportunity to those who would like to continue with the insurgency. With neither of the factions prepared to test their claims democratically (through an election, for example), North Block seems somewhat clueless in dealing with the situation. The dominant feeling in the region is that any elections, if held under Indian supervision, may not be free and fair. The proposition to involve an international party in the affair is obviously not acceptable to the Indian government. Thus, the stalemate continues, as well as instances of sporadic violence. If Delhi is keen on a solution, it must insist that elections be held to determine who stands where in Nagaland. If that happens, only then can any real negotiations take place. Delhi has also been insisting that the solution to the insurgency must be found within the confines of the Indian Constitution, and that is not acceptable to either of the rebel factions right now. In the context, if a new emissary has to talk with the Naga rebels based in Bangkok, the minimum that they should ask is to make them agreeable to work within the Indian Constitutional framework. Contentious issues like the extent of autonomy and its content can only follow such an understanding, which seems to be elusive thus far. When the talks were last held, the beginning was promising; but the subsequent inclusion of the demand for third party intervention to clear the logjam, faced somewhat understandable opposition from the Indian government, which obviously wants an urgent end to the factional feud so that a united leadership of the Nagas can be involved in a negotiated dialogue, designed to produce a blueprint to resolve a crisis situation. Otherwise, the tenuous situation could soon degenerate into more intractable forms of violence. An element of give and take, with all sides to the dispute, ready to jettison hard positions, seems to be one sensible option. But it is that very option which seems to be absent for the moment.

THE ASIAN AGE

1. 1991

# Reang autonomy heat on Mizoram govt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, June 9. — With the authorities in Aizawl showing reluctance in arranging for the early repatriation of tribal evacuees, Reang insurgents are becoming increasingly active along the Tripura-Mizoram border.

The Bru National Liberation Front, a Reang outfit, is ostensibly preparing to step up pressure on the Mizoram government for granting autonomy to the minority Reang tribesmen in the state.

The BNLFF leaders have sent a memorandum to the Mizoram chief minister, Mr Zoramthanga, demanding demarcation of an autonomous region for the minority Reangs in the state and setting up an autonomous council to implement developmental schemes for Mizoram's Reang-dominated areas.

The process of an ethnic polarisation, mainly on religious lines, seems to have become

complete in Mizoram with Reang politicians and organisations exerting pressure on the Centre to protect human rights of Reang tribesmen in the state.

A Union home ministry report recently said the governments of Mizoram and Tripura had reasons to worry if the Reang problem was not solved by the authorities in Aizawl. MPs from Tripura had recently expressed their concern in Parliament over Mizoram's reluctance in taking back the Reang refugees, now huddled in six camps in North Tripura.

After the Reang and BNLFF leaders repeated their demand for Reang autonomy in Mizoram, the authorities in Aizawl made one thing clear, though indirectly, that the proposal for repatriation of Reang evacuees would not make any headway until the Reang insurgents surrendered their arms and created a conducive atmosphere for peace in the state.

The chief minister, Mr Zor-

amthanga, had earlier rejected the demand for an autonomous hill council for the Reangs and reservation of seats in the state Assembly for the Reang minorities. The demand for autonomy made the dominant Mizo community sceptical about the stance of the non-Christian Reang minorities which had apparently resulted in attacks on the minority tribesmen in Mizoram's Reang villages.

Reang tribals had started crossing over to North Tripura in October 1997 after ethnic disturbances in their Mizoram villages. At one stage, the population in the camps rose to over 40,000. Many of the inmates have now crossed over to the Chittagong hills and some have mingled with the local tribal population. Over 30,000 are still in the camps.

Mr LK Advani had, on 7 August 2000, held a meeting with the chief ministers of Tripura and Mizoram, Mr Manik Sarkar and Mr Zoramthanga, in New Delhi to re-

view the situation.

Mr Zoramthanga had then agreed to take back 16,000 evacuees before 30 October last year. He had also assured that the rest of the refugees would be repatriated within 31 December 2000. The meeting decided that tripartite meetings would be held with senior officials of the Union government, the Mizoram government and Reang leaders from time to time.

But the Mizoram government went back on its assurance given to Mr Advani. The authorities in Aizawl later informed the Tripura government that only about 10,000 camp inmates were genuine citizens of Mizoram and the rest were infiltrators from Tripura and the Chittagong hills.

The Tripura government lodged a strong protest against Mizoram's stance and urged the Centre to apply adequate pressure on the state government to arrange for early repatriation of the refugees.

119-12

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 2001

## AN INEVITABLE STEP 6/6

THE IMPOSITION OF President's rule in Manipur, ending over 10 days of political stalemate following the collapse of the Samata Party-led People's Front Ministry headed by Mr. Radhabinod Koijam, has a substantive element of inevitability about it. First, with the high commands of the BJP and the Samata Party, which together account for nearly two-thirds of legislators in the 60-member Assembly, jointly deciding not to participate in or support any government formation exercise, the prospect of what looked like an arithmetically sustainable combination under the BJP's Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh assuming office got scuttled. For the BJP, the decision was an act of 'renunciation' dictated by the overriding political imperative of having to humour one of its most trusted partners in the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre, the Samata Party, which felt deeply hurt and 'betrayed' by its big brother because of its role in voting out the three-month-old Koijam Ministry and whose estrangement might well have had its own after-shocks in the coalition, vehement protestations notwithstanding; opting not to stake claim to power is obviously the least the BJP leadership could do to 'atone' for its perceived 'betrayal'.

In a State like Manipur where party labels are mere stocks in trade for legislators and Governments are formed or pulled down in an incredibly whimsical fashion, it is indeed too much to expect the fiats from the central party leadership to be honoured by its MLAs. Given that the Samata Party and the BJP have been the beneficiaries of such unprincipled and presumably induced defections from the Opposition ranks, it was no surprise that the neo-converts were only too willing to change their party badges and be a part of any viable arrangement, provided they got the right 'compensation package'. If, in spite of this culture of freewheeling political mobility, no credible coalition could be cobbled up this time around, it is certainly not for want of

trying. In fact, the Speaker, Mr. Sapam Dhananjoy Singh, did at one stage stake his claim to form government but could not sustain it after the Governor, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah, asked him, as a matter of parliamentary propriety, to step down from the Speaker's office before putting forth his plea. At one level, Mr. Dhananjoy Singh's backtracking could be because his continuance as Speaker was a critical component of his gameplan to win over an adequate number of legislators. At another level, he and his prospective key partners in the power game could not perhaps strike a 'fair deal' among themselves.

With the Assembly kept in suspended animation, pending parliamentary approval of the President's proclamation under Article 356, there is still the possibility of the various political players and groups, with or without the national party tags, finding an agreed 'formula' for sharing power and this of course lends itself to the contemptible practice of 'horse trading'. The ruling establishment in Manipur, as in many other States in the Northeast, has been prone to turning its political antenna towards the powers that be at the Centre, and the parties running the Government at New Delhi, for their part, have been only too ready to 'adopt' the MLAs and join the power play at the State level; the consuming expansionist urge displayed by the BJP and the Samata Party was of a piece with this perceived tendency. Even if some coalition arrangement with a requisite majority support is put in place, its durability will still be open to question, if the track record of legislators in the State over the past two decades is anything to go by. For now, however, the people would be looking forward to the Governor acting on his declared resolve to get the slew of corruption charges against politicians and bureaucrats investigated by the CBI and to bring about systemic changes to ensure better governance, not to speak of pulling the State's finances from the brink of disaster.

# Bodo ultras kill 10 Adivasi woodcutters

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, June 5

BODO MILITANTS mowed down 10 Adivasi woodcutters in Assam's Kokrajhar district on Sunday night, breaking the deceptive calm that lasted for a month in this trouble-torn State.

Police say the killings might be the result of woodcutters breaking the ban on timber felling imposed by the ultras.

The incident took place at Lungchung forest, 40 km from the nearest police station, Basugaon.

"Police officials were able to reach the spot on Tuesday after a long trek. As per our information, ten people have been killed in indiscriminate firing, but as woodcutters here move in separate groups, there might be more bodies lying in the forest," said a police official from Basugaon.

Police say a group of 25 woodcutters had gone to the Lungchung forest on the Indo-Bhutan border to gather wood on Sunday.

A group of suspected National Democratic Front of Bodoland ultras attacked them, killing ten and injuring four.

The police came to know about the incident late Monday evening when a survivor managed to reach the Runikhata police outpost to report the incident.

"The inaccessibility of the area was the main reason why the report came in very late," the official said. The police lodged the FIR on Tuesday.

Senior police officials and bureaucrats from Kokrajhar and Guwahati rushed to the area to take stock of the killings.

This is first major incident of terrorist violence in the State after the new Congress Government led by Tarun Gogoi

assumed office last month.

Additional security forces have been deployed in the area to nab the militants responsible for Sunday's attack.

The killings are the latest among numerous such strikes by the NDFB to forcibly impose the ban on timber felling in Bodo dominated areas.

"Some people are trying to give communal colour to the killings that the woodcutters were targetted because they were 'adivasis', but earlier incidents suggest that the NDFB has attacked even Bodo people who had tried to cut trees in the area," the official said.

Meanwhile, in another incident, three Ulfa militants were gunned down by the police in an encounter in Jorhat district in Upper Assam on Monday. The ultras were on an extortion drive in the district when they were challenged, police said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 6 2011

# Central rule for Manipur

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 2: The Union Cabinet today unanimously recommended the imposition of President's rule in Manipur and said the Assembly should be kept in "suspended animation".

Briefing newsmen after a meeting of the Cabinet at Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 7 Race Course Road residence, external affairs and defence minister Jaswant Singh said: "The Cabinet granted its approval and recommended to the President imposition of President's rule in Manipur. The Assembly would be kept in suspended animation."

For the past two weeks, Manipur was in the throes of political uncertainty after the defeat of the Samata Party-led People's Front ministry of Radhabinod Kotjam on the floor of the House. All the BJP MLAs who voted that day opposed the motion of confidence brought by the chief minister had sought.

The BJP and the Samata Party are partners in the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre. In Manipur, BJP was propping up

the Samata-led government.

After its government fell, Samata had insisted on either reinstatement of Kojiam with BJP support or imposition of President's rule.

However, 26 BJP legislators formed a new political outfit, Progressive Democratic Alliance (PDA), and claimed they would form an alternative government with the support of 41 MLAs. But this did not find favour with the BJP central leadership.

The PDA broke up after the Manipur State Congress Party pulled out of the alliance.

Speaker Sapam Dhananjoy Singh staked claim to form the government. However, he withdrew when the BJP made it clear that the party would have nothing to do with government formation.

With various political parties unable to provide a viable alternative in Imphal, Governor Ved Prakash Marwah sent his report to President K.R. Narayanan, with copies to the Prime Minister and home minister L.K. Advani, recommending President's rule.

Marwah cited "political uncertainty" in the state as the reason behind his recommendation to the President.

THE HINDU



# Manipur brought under President's rule

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, June 2. — Manipur was tonight brought under President's rule after Mr KR Narayan-Union Cabinet's recommendation, which was made earlier this evening, officials said.

The options to explore possible formation of a popular government in near future, however, has been kept open as the Assembly would be in suspended animation and dissolved as was being demanded by some political parties.

The Governor, Mr Ved Prakash Marwah had on Thursday recommended President's rule in the state following a constitutional

crisis after fall of Samata Party led Radhabinod Kojiam government.

External affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said the Cabinet has recommended that the Assembly should be kept in suspended animation. Replying to a question whether the government had consulted the Opposition before taking the decision, he said all the parties in the state, including the Congress and other Opposition parties, were in favour of President's rule. Some parties in the state were, however, demanding dissolution of the House as no political party or group had been able to muster majority after Kojiam government was defeated in a

trust vote on the floor of the House ten days ago.

The Samata Party termed it a "deceit" by the BJP and demanded either imposition of President's rule or reinstatement of Kojiam government in the state.

The Manipur State Congress legislature party leader, Mr M Hemanta Singh, and Speaker, Mr S Dhanjoy Singh, had staked claim to form the government, which they later withdrew. Their claim was based on hypothetical support of 41-member Progressive Democratic Alliance which included 26 BJP MLAs. Mr Singh also made a technical error by staking claim while still being the Speaker of the House and was asked by

the Governor to first quit from the post.

The PDA elected BJP MLA, Mr RK Dorendra Singh, as their leader and tried to mobilise support of BJP and NDA leaders while campaigning in Delhi.

The Prime Minister in his bid to secure continued support of former defence minister and Samata Party leader, Mr George Fernandes, made it clear that the BJP would not stake claim for formation of government despite having a majority in the House.

A formal statement by the BJP president, Mr Jena Krishnamurthy, that both BJP and Samata party would stay away from the process of formation of a new gov-

ernment led towards a constitution crisis in the state.

**Samata doesn't favour polls**

The Samata Party today said it wasn't in favour of holding fresh elections in Manipur, adds PTI.

The party's former president Mrs Jaya Jaitly said that Manipur had faced polls only a year ago and the party, therefore, didn't want elections "right now."

Samata Party, she said, would hold a meeting at Imphal on 12 June to discuss the political scene in Manipur, which she and Mr George Fernandes would attend.

Asked if Samata Party would give another try at government

formation after the President's rule, she said once the administrative "comes back to normal, political parties can become active."

She said BJP, Samata Party's NDA ally, had taken a "wise decision" by keeping out of government formation and added that its central leadership had understood the situation, thereby helping the problem between them to be solved.

However, she added, "the ideal situation" would have been to allow the Kojiam government to rule.

Mrs Jaitly said the Samata Party had never threatened to walkout of NDA on the Manipur issue. "We did not want to weaken the NDA."

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# Marwah for Central rule

By Our Special Correspondent <sup>HD-1</sup>

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 1.** The Manipur Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, has recommended that the State be brought under President's rule and the State Assembly be kept under suspended animation. Mr. Marwah sent his report on the prolonged political uncertainty on Thursday to the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, with copies to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani.

The Centre has yet to take a considered view of the Governor's recommendation. Mr. Advani is in Leh on "Sindhu darshan", and is scheduled to return here tomorrow. Even if the Prime Minister and the Home Minister are able to discuss the contents of the report tomorrow, it is doubtful whether a Cabinet meeting can be called the same day before a recommendation can be made to the President that the Governor's advice be accepted.

On the other hand, Mr. Vajpayee himself is scheduled to be away in Gujarat on Sunday and till Monday afternoon. The Cabinet, therefore, would have to meet some time before the Prime Minister leaves for Mumbai on June 6 for his knee-surgery.

However, there seems to near-certainty that the Governor's advice would be accepted by the political leadership in New Delhi, and that a short spell of President's rule (without dissolution of the Assembly) would suit almost everyone's interest. In particular, the Samata Party leadership, which has kicked up a major controversy over the defeat of its Ministry headed by Mr. Radhabinod Kojam

should be propitiated that the "defectors" would be denied the satisfaction of forming a government. <sup>J-N B St</sup>

The Governor's recommendation has acquired a semblance of reasonableness as the Speaker, Mr. S. Dhananjay Singh, could not furnish a new list of supporters to sustain his contention that he would be able to form a government; nor did he respond to the Governor's advice that he should resign as Speaker before staking claim to form a government. Since no other claimant came forward, the Governor found himself confronted with a constitutional vacuum.

In his report to the President, Mr. Marwah is believed to have given a detailed account of the recent uncertainty in the State, and expressed serious reservations about the viability of a stable government. Hence, the recommendation that a short spell of President's rule may have a sobering effect on the legislators who appear unwilling to submit themselves to any kind of party discipline.

However, given the fact that the ruling National Democratic Alliance does not enjoy a majority in the Rajya Sabha and given that the relationship between the Vajpayee Government and the Congress are rather acrimonious, it is doubtful whether the Government would be able to get the parliamentary ratification for any presidential proclamation in Manipur. Under the circumstances, President's rule can sustain itself, without a parliamentary ratification, for eight weeks after the monsoon session begins on July 23.

THE HINDU

1997

# President's rule stares Manipur in the face

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 28. The formulation that neither the Bharatiya Janata Party nor the Samata Party would participate in any manner in government formation, was decided at a meeting between the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, and the Samata leader, Mr. George Fernandes, ahead of another meeting in the afternoon in which several leaders from both the parties participated.

A terse joint statement was issued stating that both the parties "will remain outside the process of government formation in Manipur... and will inform the Governor accordingly."

The statement was signed by some of those present at the meeting — Mr. Krishnamurthi, Mr. Padmanabha Acharya, in-charge of the BJP's political affairs in the north east, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, leader of the BJP's State Legislature party and the Chief Minister aspirant, and

the State unit president, Mr. M. Borot Singh.

From the Samata, there were Mr. Fernandes, the acting party president, Mr. V.V. Krishna Rao, the former president, Ms. Jaya Jaitly, the general secretary in-charge of the north east, Dr. Shambhu Shrivastawa, the ousted Chief Minister, Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam, and the State unit president, Mr. O. Lohrii.

If the present strength of the two parties — BJP 26 and Samata 13 — remain outside the process of government formation in a 60-member House, then President's rule looks inevitable.

But afterwards, Mr. Acharya said he did not expect all his 26 BJP MLAs to remain with the party, "some would certainly defect," and he explained: "at least 18 MLAs had recently joined the BJP with the specific hope and purpose of forming a government, and they are disappointed."

He said he would not be sur-

prised if the Samata were to split, and a new formation with a majority could, or rather would, emerge. He made it clear that the so-called "crisis" in Manipur was not caused by the BJP. After all, it was not the BJP's responsibility to ensure that the Samata Government there did not fall, as there was "no NDA in Manipur."

But finally, it was conceded that the only factor that prevented the BJP from forming a government in Manipur was the dark shadow that these events would cast over the Vajpayee Government. "We could not have Manipur and let go of Delhi," Mr. Acharya said, adding "without Delhi there would be no Manipur either."

The BJP did not favour President's Rule in Manipur because frequent defections, resulting in political instability, were a problem all over the north east. "That is the political culture there. If some group wants to marry another and then divorce, what can we do?" Some other NDA leaders, Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan (Lok Janshakti) and Mr. Sharad Yadav (JD-U) — not Mr. Sharad Pawar of the NCP as inadvertently mentioned yesterday — are both opposed to President's Rule.

All that the BJP is now hoping for is that the six MLAs who were "originally" elected on the BJP symbol would remain loyal to the party.

Mr. Dorendra Singh, the party's Legislature wing leader and the Chief Minister in waiting, seemed to be reconciled to the fact that it was not his chance this time — he has resigned as convenor of the 41-member five party Progressive Democratic Alliance which had been waiting to stake claim to form a government.

## More claims

NEW DELHI, MAY 28. The Manipur Assembly Speaker, Mr. Sapam Dhananjay Singh, today staked claim to form the Government after the BJP and the Samata Party decided not to press their claims. However, he lost support of some of the Manipur State Congress Party (Chauba) legislators, taking the State closer to President's rule.

After the BJP-Samata meeting, Mr. Singh rushed to Raj Bhavan and submitted a list of 40 members supporting him. The Governor, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah, told UNI that he would take a decision on the new ministry in the next two days.

In a statement, Mr. Kh Devabrata, spokesperson of an MSCP(C) group, said his faction would oppose Mr. Dhananjay Singh's claim. "He should have resigned as Speaker before staking claim to uphold the sanctity of the House." Mr. Hemanta Singh, leader of the MSCP legislature party, which has a strength of 10 members in the 60-member House, also made a similar claim. Given the Assembly arithmetic, no constituent of the PDA can form a ministry without the BJP's support. — UNI, PTI

# Speaker joins Manipur race

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, May 28

MANIPUR'S SEARCH for an alternative Government moved in a new direction today with Speaker Sapam Dhananjoy and Manipur State Congress Party (Chaoba) leader M Hemanta Singh staking parallel claims to form the next ministry in the State.

Dhananjoy claimed he had been elected the new leader of the PDA and should be allowed form the next ministry in the State. The development came within hours of a BJP-Samata joint announcement in Delhi that both parties would stay out of the race for power in Manipur.

Dhananjoy, fresh from a meeting with national leaders of the NDA in Delhi, called on Governor Ved Prakash Marwah, saying he had the support of 39 legislators. He said he had been elected

the new leader of the PDA at a meeting of alliance MLAs at Manipur Bhavan in New Delhi yesterday. He would again meet the Governor tomorrow to press his claim, Dhananjoy told the 'Hindustan Times'.

Dhananjoy, who has not resigned as Speaker, said a stable Government was the State's need of the hour and only the PDA under his leadership was in a position to provide it. He was elected on the MSCP ticket, but is neither in the Chaoba nor in the Nipamacha faction of the MSCP.

But he has a contender for power. The MSCP (Chaoba) group led by Moirangthem Hemanta Singh, too, has staked claim to form the next Government in Manipur. Singh met Governor Marwah at the Raj Bhavan for a second time today, after meeting him earlier at 6 pm, to stake his claim.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 MAY 2001

# MSCP stakes claim as foes meet in Delhi

## Koijam plays wait-and-watch game

HT Correspondents  
Imphal/New Delhi, May 27

THE MANIPUR State Congress Party (Chaoba), the second largest constituent of the PDA, staked its claim today to form an MSCP-led PDA Government in the State, even as arch rivals Radhabinod Koijam and BJP leader R K Dorendra Singh warmed up to face each other at a high-level BJP-Samata Party meet in Delhi tomorrow to resolve the political crisis.

Koijam's Ministry fell last week after he lost to dissidents in a vote of confidence. "I have to play the wait-and-watch game," Koijam told the *Hindustan Times* in Imphal before catching his flight for New Delhi. He said he would abide by the Central leaders' prescription to end the stand off between the PDA and his People's Front.

The other PF members, who left for Delhi, included Samata Party State president O Lohrii, the party's legislator and spokesman Dr Nimaichand Luwang, and Okram Joy Singh, convenor of the People's Front core committee.

A 32-member PDA team led by Rajkumar Dorendra Singh is already in New Delhi since Thursday for tomorrow's meeting. Incidentally, the PDA team left for Delhi with Speaker Dr Sapam Dhananjoy Singh.

The Speaker has been in close touch with the PDA since the dissidents began revolting against Koijam. The PDA camp is still functioning from his offi-

cial residence.

The MSCP(C)'s bid for power followed an emergency meeting of its central executive committee chaired by party president L Amujao Singh. The MSCP (C) instructed its working president V Hangkhalian, now in New Delhi, to convince the BJP and other PDA MLAs that the MSCP(C) had the moral obligation to form an alternative Government.

The MSCP(C) initiative is an indirect fallout of the BJP's decision to bar its State Legislative Party from forming a BJP-led PDA Government in Manipur. The BJP has told its State unit that none of its MLAs would be allowed to become minister in any Council of Ministers.

Both BJP and Samata sources in the Capital believe the outcome of tomorrow's meeting could influence future ties between the two parties. Koijam and R K Dorendra Singh, leaders of the Samata and the BJP Legislature Parties respectively, will have a chance to present their cases against each other in Central BJP and Samata Party leaders' presence. BJP chief K Jana Krishnamurthi, the party's North-East in-charge Padmanabha Acharya and Samata Party leader George Fernandes and his party's Manipur head will take part in the meeting.

None of the 40-odd MLAs, including Manipur Speaker Dhananjoy Singh, has been invited to the meeting.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 MAY 2001

SAMATA, BJP TO THRASH IT OUT TODAY

# 41 MLAs swear by Dorendra Singh

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MAY 27. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led 41-member five-party Progressive Democratic Alliance in Manipur today demonstrated its resolve to form a government in the State with the presidents of the MSCP, NCP, JD(L) and the Federal Party of Manipur — all constituents of the PDA — writing separate letters to the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, expressing "full support" to their chosen leader, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, the BJP's State Legislature Party leader.

This move is being seen as a pressure tactic ahead of the crucial meeting tomorrow of central and State leaders of the BJP and the Samata Party to resolve the crisis that has not only engulfed Manipur — where the Samata Party-led Government of Mr. Radhabinod Koijam was voted out on May 21 — but has led to bitterness between the BJP and the Samata, casting a shadow on the NDA Government.

Publicly, both the BJP and Samata Party leaders maintained silence today, saying a decision would be taken at the meeting tomorrow scheduled to be held at 4 p.m. at the BJP headquarters here. The BJP team will be led by Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, while the Samata will be represented possibly by Mr. George Fernandes or Ms. Jaya Jaitly or both.

Joining the discussions will be Mr. Padmanabha Acharya, Northeast in-charge, and Mr. Pyarelal Khandelwal on the BJP side, and Mr. Shambhu Shrivastawa, Northeast in-charge and Mr. V.V. Krishna Rao from the Samata. Senior State party leaders from both the parties, including the ousted Chief Minister, Mr. Koijam, and the man who wants to occupy that position, Mr. Dorendra Singh, will also be present.

The Manipur crisis has in fact become a crisis of confidence between the two NDA coalition partners. The Samata is badly looking for a "face-saving formula" and privately its party leaders are alleging that the BJP was playing a double game — maintaining that it is not interested in forming a government in Manipur while encouraging its State MLAs to do exactly the opposite.

The Samata Party is also bitter that its "second option" of President's rule, after a demand that the

Koijam Government be restored, is also being sabotaged. The BJP's Manipur MLAs and their supporting constituents have successfully lobbied with other NDA leaders such as Mr. Sharad Pawar (NCP) and Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan (Lok Jan Shakti) against an "unconstitutional move" for President's rule when Mr. Dorendra Singh enjoys a majority and is more than willing to form a government.

"Our demand for President's rule has been made untenable by these tactics," a Samata leader told *The Hindu*, adding he suspected the BJP's hand in this. Apparently, three days ago at a meeting between the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, and Mr. Fernandes, it was "almost agreed that President's rule was the best option," he added. But nothing happened.

If a solution that is satisfactory to the Samata is not worked out tomorrow, the relations between the two parties would have become more bitter and this would impact on the NDA, the Samata Party feels, irrespective of whether or not the party chooses to immediately make any public noise to voice its protest. "If not tomorrow its impact on the NDA will be felt the day after," a Samata leader said.

Other NDA constituents are also beginning to see a real danger to the Vajpayee Government from this standoff between the BJP and the Samata, and this may be the only reason that the BJP may, after all, tread carefully on the Manipur issue.

The group of 41 MLAs led by Mr. Dorendra Singh is making preparations to go ahead and stake claim to forming a government even if the BJP refuses to give permission to do so. As even BJP leaders admit, in Manipur where MLAs change their parties and labels as often as some change a shirt, it is not unimaginable that the group will simply take on a new name and a label and form a government.

So far, the BJP has refrained from spelling out what disciplinary action, if any, the party will take if its MLAs defy the party's public posture of not trying to form a government in Manipur. Naturally, this has encouraged the efforts of State party leaders to try and form a government, and some in the Samata Party are convinced that all this is part of a well thought-out BJP plan.

THE HINDU

28 MAY 2

# BJP, Samata buy peace in Manipur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 28. — The BJP in its bid to buy peace with Samata Party sacrificed a chance to form a popular government in Manipur. The BJP officially negated the two demands of the Samata — reinstallation of Radhabinod Kojam government and imposition of President's rule in the state — on the plea that this would amount to "subversion of popular mandate".

The agreement reached by the senior leaders of the two parties has, however, increased the possibility of a split in both the BJP and Samata Party, who might join hands with the People's Democratic Alliance to form an alternate government. The Manipur State Congress Party leader in the Assembly, Mr. M. Hemanta Singh, and the Speaker, Mr. S. Dhananjay Singh, today met the Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, separately and staked claim to claim form a government. Both claimed to represent the newly formed 41-member PDA.

(Speaking to the press soon after he gave in the paper, Mr. Dhananjay Singh said he was unanimously elected as the PDA's leader yesterday in a meeting chaired by the BJP Legislative Party leader,

■ See MANIPUR: page 8

## MANIPUR:

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. RK Dorendro Singh, at Manipur Bhavan here).

He said that there is no chance of President's rule as they had the majority and have staked claim to form the government.

Mr. Dhananjay Singh denied that his decision had anything to do with the result of the talks between BJP and Samata leadership in the Centre which was being held today at New Delhi. "We had already decided this before, he said.

However, he seems to have been waiting for a signal from the Centre. He held a closed door meeting minutes after a long distance call came and left for the Raj Bhavan.)

The PDA spokesman, Mr. Gangmumei Kamei, said if there was objection to the 26-member BJP staking claim to power, then the MSCP could chip in. "MSCP is the second biggest constituent of PDA. That is also good because if BJP does not stake claim, then somebody has to do it (from within the alliance)."

The BJP obviously put top priority on retaining cordial terms with its ally at the Centre than listening to the 25 party MLAs who along with other PDA legislators were camping in Delhi for past few days.

BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, and the Samata Party president, Mr. VV Krishna Rao, issued a joint statement today saying "the central and state leaders of BJP and Samata Party unanimously resolved that both would remain outside the process of government formation in Manipur in wake of recent developments."

"The governor would accordingly be informed. Other parties have also decided to put

unfortunate developments of the last few weeks behind them and to act together to create conditions to end the perpetual state of uncertainty in Manipur's politics."

The statement was signed in presence of Samata party leader and NDA convenor, Mr. George Fernandes.

Samata Party general secretary and spokesman, Dr. Sambhu Sharan Srivastava was, however, still hopeful that President's rule could be imposed if the BJP and Samata parties with their present strength of 25 and 13, respectively in a House of 60 MLAs, stayed out of the process. Some BJP leaders maintained that the government could be formed without them.

The bargain, it seemed was not liked by the BJP leaders. Mr. Krishnamurthy on his part refused to say how many MLAs were with his party in Manipur. "You will soon come to know," he said.

The BJP's secretary in-charge for Manipur, Mr. Padmanabha Acharya, did not rule out the possibility of 20 of the 26 MLAs leaving the party, but he appeared confident that the six MLAs who won on BJP tickets would not leave the party. The BJP could do nothing if the 18 member MSCP, which joined the BJP left the party and formed a separate group, he said.

He rebutted the Samata Party's charge of betrayal and said: "Everybody in the state knows who betrayed whom. The state unit has done everything to ensure that the Prime Minister's words were honoured. There is no constitutional crisis in the state and the people's verdict should not be subverted."

He said: "I met Mr. George Fernandes and begged him to set things right. But he said his party had only one government." The ground realities were ignored, he alleged.

# Manipur: Cong active behind the scene

CL MANOJ  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 26. — The Congress, a potential player in the Manipur drama, is wearing a mask of indifference while being engaged in back-room manoeuvring.

There's no word from the AICC on the crisis, but it's learnt that a group of PDA MLAs had held talks with some Congress leaders including, AICC general secretary Mrs Ambika Soni, to "explore the options of a home-coming".

Most of the 41 MLAs, now trying to instal RK Dorendra Singh-led ministry, were once in the Congress. Many

of them are apparently ready to return to the Congress provided the high command gives them the go ahead to instal a government of their choice. The MLAs have become impatient after having failed to get a "positive assurance" from the BJP.

The Congress high command is reportedly not keen at this stage to betray its eagerness to have the MLAs back, though a Congress government in Manipur could deliver yet another blow to the NDA.

The Congress apparently doesn't want to jump the gun before the BJP-Samata meeting scheduled on Monday. Some leaders feel it's better to prolong the crisis on the NDA front.

The party is also keen to keep the Vajpayee government on the tenterhooks on the issue of President's rule.

The NDA lacks the political will to impose Central rule in Manipur unless it's sure of Congress' support, especially in the Rajya Sabha.

**Keishing in Delhi:** Former chief minister and Congress leader, Mr Rishan Keishing, reached Delhi today and met Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mrs Ambika Soni, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyer and Mr LK Advani.

He told **The Statesman**: "I think there're little options except going for Central rule and order fresh polls. No-body can depend on these PDA MLAs because they are habitual defectors. I

said this to Mrs Gandhi, Mrs Soni and also Mr Advani. But this is my personal view. I also told Mr Advani that the Centre should not expect the Congress to spell out it's stand on the President's rule before the government makes it's move".

Mr Keishing, however, sees the possibility of the Congress taking back "a few, trustworthy MLAs".

Sources said Mr Keishing's tough posturing has much to do with his disliking for the Congress-turned BJP leader, Mr Dorendra Singh. If the Congress opens the door to its former MLAs, there will probably be another round of tussle for leadership between Mr Singh and Mr Keishing.

THE STATESMAN

MAY 2001



# Gogoi rejects PM's work permit offer

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UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, May 26. - The Assam chief minister, Mr Tarun Gogoi today rejected Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's proposal to issue work permits to Bangladeshi migrants, saying it would aggravate the problem of infiltration in the state.

At his first press conference after becoming chief minister, Mr Gogoi said he had expressed his opposition to the proposed move during his meeting with the Prime Minister. "Instead of solving the problem, work permits would encourage Bangladeshi infiltration into Assam," he said.

Mr Vajpayee had announced this proposal regarding work permits to migrants at a election rally in Assam. The work permits, he had said, could be issued till the actual status of all migrants is ascertained.

On the issue of the illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal Act, Mr Gogoi said the Congress was always in favour of the detection of foreigners through judicial process and the IMDT act was in line with his party's policy. "The judicial process in this context is essential to protect the interests of the linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities in the state."

## MANMOHAN'S RS CANDIDATURE

NEW DELHI, May 26. - The Assam chief minister, Mr Tarun Gogoi, today confirmed that former finance minister, Mr Manmohan Singh would be a party candidate for the two Rajya Sabha seats from the state for which elections are due. Mr Singh has been representing Assam in the Upper House during his last two terms which ended recently.

On whether the Congress, which has 27 surplus votes after the minimum first preference vote required to ensure the victory of its first candidate, would field a candidate for the second, Mr Gogoi said: "Quite possible. We are considering the possibility of a second candidate too".

There have been reports about a prominent businessman, Mr Mahavir Jain, with the supposed backing of an influential section of the central leadership, lobbying for the second candidature. There are also indications that the chief minister's camp may push the case of a tribal leader for the slot.

- SNS

# Tripura rebels kill police hero

HT Correspondent  
Agartala, May 26

POLICEMAN of the year 2000 Monoranjan Debbarma was shot dead in an exchange of fire with armed rebels in west Tripura on Saturday. Two rebels were killed in the incident and two AK-56 rifles recovered from their possession. A paramilitary TSR jawan was critically wounded.

A CRPF jawan was shot dead in another incident in Ganddachara of Dhalai district on Friday. The rebels snatched his rifle. Elsewhere four more rebels surrendered and three were arrested. Debbarma, acclaimed as a dare devil police officer, was killed while he was trying to

track down a group of ATTF rebels and a splinter group of NLFT in a pre dawn swoop in Jirania.

Debbarma was leading a strong group of paramilitary troops and they came under two attacks during the operation. At Ghagrachara the troops came under final round of ambush. The troops retaliated and a fierce exchange of fire followed.

"He was in the extreme front taking on the rebels with his assault rifle," said one of the troops. Sources said the officer did not wear his bulletproof kit and at one point of time bullets hit his chest. He even fought in an injured state. But he could not sustain for long and his end

came. Before he died his troops killed two hardcore rebels. Two AK-56 rifles were found in their possession. The rebels have not been identified so far. A Tripura State Rifles Constable Sudhir Saha was seriously wounded.

Debbarma has been on top of the NLFT's hit list. He escaped few attempts on his life during his service as a SDPO of Ganddachara. He was recently transferred here from Ganddachara.

The officer led many successful operations in Ganddachara and a number of rebels killed. He also staged some surrenders there. As a mark of recognition he was chosen as the "policeman of the year" last year. State's DGP BL Vohra said he would rec-

ommend the President's police medal posthumously for the slain officer.

Governor Lieutenant General (Retd) KM Seth, Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, ministers, politicians, DGP, senior police officers and subordinates placed wreath on the body at the morgue.

Debbarma's body was cremated with full state honours.

Meanwhile, a CRPF jawan was shot dead in an exchange of fire in Ganddachara. Police said Lance Naik Suhan Singh killed in an ambush at Ravanmani para in the subdivision yesterday. His rifle was lost in the incident.

Four more rebels surrendered and deposited an AK-47, one SLR and live ammunitions.

THE HINDUSTAN

27 MAY 2001

## BJP LEADERSHIP SHUNS MANIPUR MLAs

# PDA vows to stake claim

By K. V. Prasad

ND-1 26/5  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 25.** The newly-formed five-party People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) in Manipur comprising 41 MLAs today asserted that it would stake claim to form a Government and began an exercise to garner support among the National Democratic Alliance against imposition of President's rule.

Thirtythree of the 41 PDA legislators, who are here, insisted that the group had a majority in the 60-member State Assembly but would await the outcome of the May 28 meeting between leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samata Party before moving ahead.

Legislators of the BJP, single largest group in the PDA, were prevented by the party's central leadership from staking claim or associating themselves with the process of forming a government.

The PDA MLAs, who arrived here last night from Imphal, today met the BJP vice-presidents, Mr. Madan Lal Khurana and Mr. Pyare Lal Khandelwal, the general secretary, Mr. Narendra Modi, the Water Resources Minister, Mrs. Bijoya Chakravarty, the Law Minister, Mr. Arun Jaitley, and the Civil Aviation Minister, Mr. Sharad Yadav, to emphasise that the group enjoyed majority and explained the reasons which led them to revolt against Samata-led People's Front Government of Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam.

However, the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, did not grant an audience to the MLAs when they

reached the party headquarters while Mr. Modi met representatives of the respective parties. The Agriculture Minister, Mr. Nitish Kumar, also declined to meet the PDA team. Talking to the press at residence of Mr. Sharad Yadav, the Federal Party's Mr. Gangmumei Kamei, PDA spokesman, said the Samata should not insist on restoration of the Kojiam Government which had lost the trust vote.

"There is no breakdown of the constitutional machinery. The PDA will stake claim (to form a government) after May 28," Mr. Kamei said after introducing the MLAs to Mr. Yadav. The PDA leader and BJP member, Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh, who reached here today, was conspicuous by his absence while the Speaker of the Manipur Assembly, Mr. S. Dhananjoy Singh, met Mr. Yadav separately.

Mr. Yadav, Janata Dal (United) president, was inclined to support the "majority" rather than go with the Samata's demand for the imposition of President's rule as a way out of the deadlock.

While preferring to keep his counsel, Mr. Yadav said he was hopeful that the May 28 meeting between the BJP and Samata leaders would strengthen the NDA. Before making a final decision the leaders should consider factors such as "majority" and conditions in the sensitive State.

The PDA consists of the BJP - 26 MLAs, Manipur State Congress Party (C) - 10, Federal Party of Manipur and Nationalist Congress Party - two each and one Janata Dal (Loken) legislator.

THE STATESMAN

26 MAY 2001

# Gogoi to review Mahanta MoU on reforms

## Business recipe for new Assam CM

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, May 23

Rahul Karmakar  
Guwahati, May 23

24/5  
The Tarun Gogoi Government will review the MoU signed by Prafulla Mahanta with the Centre for fiscal reforms in Assam. It is also contemplating a massive resource mobilisation drive by reviving the plywood and timber-based industries and redistribution of the superfluous workforce to bail the State out of bankruptcy.

Talking to Hindustan Times before leaving for New Delhi on Wednesday, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said besides containing insurgency, the issue topmost on his Government's agenda was fiscal discipline. "There are only two options before us: mobilise our resources, banking on forest wealth, or seek more Central aid," he said.

The Chief Minister, however, ruled out making an issue of aid with the Centre. "This is a courtesy call. We are for a good Centre-State relationship, and would try to avoid approaching New Delhi with a begging bowl."

The Chief Minister said the MoU signed by Mahanta would be implemented if it had any legal binding. "We would certainly favour reviewing it, and if necessary, work on it towards fiscal reforms in the State," he said.

Assam was among several states that signed the MoU with the Centre in 1999 following the recommendation of the Hyderabad-based Administrative Staff College of India. The MoU



entailed that no vacancy created by retirement would be filled up and that there would be no creation of new jobs. It also sought downsizing of the public sector undertakings.

Unlike the other states, Assam could not implement the steps outlined by the MoU as the "State offers very few opportunities of employment other than Government service".

"Assam has for long depended on forest-based industries, hence we shall look for ways to revive them to generate employment," Gogoi said. "We are working on boosting the agriculture sector. We are also working on an industrial policy where we will do away with all formalities. If a party is interested in setting up shop here, we have no objections whatsoever."

The Chief Minister castigated the AGP-led Government for failing to utilise the Central funds. For instance, the State could utilise only 66 per cent of the funds allotted by the Tenth Finance Commission. This year, nearly Rs 80 crore was returned owing to non-utilisation.

On whether the Government would honour the Manoharan Committee report seeking abolition of the posts of 5,000 out of the 8,000 teachers appointed illegally, Gogoi said it was a tough proposition. "It's not easy to take away jobs. Besides, there's a court ruling that if a person is in a job for three-four years, there should be every effort to retain him," he said.

ONE OF the most important tasks before the new Congress Government in Assam is the rebuilding of the economy of the State as soon as possible. The Federation of Industries and Commerce of North Eastern Region has submitted an agenda to the new Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi to help the Government formulate its policies on economic matters.

Finer officials say Tarun Gogoi has evinced keen interest in the agenda and assured Government assistance in reviving the State from the regression that has set in.

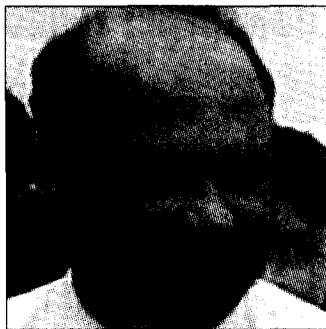
"There cannot be a miracle to turn around the economy within a short span, but if implemented in a proper way, the proposals would help in setting a trend for the better," said S K Jain, President of Finer.

The agenda recommends the setting up of an Economic Development Council and the appointment of a Chief Economic Advisor to monitor the financial affairs of the State. Reduction of revenue deficit and non-plan expenditure, introduction of zero-based budgeting and administrative reforms in revenue departments are other proposals on the agenda.

"The complete implementation of uniform taxation in all the states of the region and privatisation of sick public sector units should also be given due importance. Elimination of wasteful expenditure would also help in improving the situation," he said.

Administrative reforms including frequent changes in posting and transfer of departmental heads should be stopped, the agenda says. It also advocates the setting up of a monitoring agency to oversee the progress of various projects and fiscal discipline in Government departments.

"The Government should announce an agricultural policy, develop a network for preservation of agricultural produce, spread multi-cropping culture throughout the State and set up agricultural universities and institutes to boost the agricultural sector."



# Nepal hub for Northeast militants

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

**Siliguri, May 23:** The arrest of three top Bodo militant leaders from a Siliguri hotel has again raised speculations that the region is being used as a transit point by Northeast rebels operating from Nepal.

National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) leaders Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah had been regularly visiting Kathmandu since 1992, intelligence sources said.

The Naga group, they said, had been sending its recruits for training at an institute near Lalitpur. "The NSCN(I-M) also has a close nexus with local political outfits, especially ultra-Left ones like the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists)."

They claimed David Ward, a Britisher, has "volunteered" to work for an organisation called Naga Vigil and visits Kathmandu regularly to raise funds. "Ward is known for his liaisoning with Pakistani officials in Islamabad and in eastern and Northeastern India," an intelligence official said.

According to a recent army intelligence ac-

count, a group of 17 Naga insurgents crossed over to Nepal from India at Panitanki-Kakarbhatta border near Siliguri last year. "The group, on reaching Kathmandu with Bangladeshi passports, reportedly checked into a popular hotel and then headed towards China."

The army believes the on-going anti-national activities in southern Bhutan have forced many Bhutanese to flee and take shelter in a camp in eastern Nepal. "This has provided a golden opportunity to United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) and other Northeast groups to mingle with the Bhutanese and take shelter in refugee camps," said a Siliguri-based army intelligence official.

Last month, the Bhutan Army deployed more than 3,000 soldiers along the kingdom's southern border with Assam. "Ten new camps have been set up along the 250-km border to neutralise the intrusion of rebel groups from Assam into southern Bhutan," a Bhutan Army source said.

The Indian Army, too, has set up several camps along the Bengal-Assam-Bhutan border tri-junction near Sankosh tea estate.

"Taking advantage of the situation on the eastern border of Nepal — some places along the border are under the control of Maoist rebels — Ulfa has set up its transit camps at Illam, Jhapa, Tapelgunj and Panchtar in Nepal. Ulfa and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) rebels have also been procuring arms and ammunition from this Nepal corridor," an intelligence official said.

Army sources claim most insurgent groups have the backing of Pakistani mercenaries in Kathmandu.

They say seizure of a huge quantity of explosives from Pakistani diplomat Mohammad Arshad Cheema's residence at Kathmandu earlier this year is just the "tip of the iceberg" of Islamabad's espionage, subversion and psychological warfare against India mounted from Nepalese soil.

"In the eighties, the ISI started making moves and President Zia-ul-Haq launched his long-term anti-India scheme — Operation Topac. Given the acute poverty in the Himalayan kingdom, the ISI did not find it difficult to get a secure foothold in the place once it opened its purse wide," sources said.

THE TELEGRAPH

24 MAY 2001

# Defiant Manipur MLAs in Delhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

IMPHAL/ NEW DELHI, May 24. — Thirty-two MLAs of Manipur's Progressive Democratic Alliance, including 23 of the BJP, arrived in New Delhi tonight to mount pressure on the Central leadership to let the party form a government. Sharp differences between Samata and JD(U) surfaced on the imposition of President's Rule.

"We have come here to meet top BJP and JD(U) leaders and may also meet the President, Mr KR Narayanan," the Manipur Assembly Speaker, Mr S Dhananjoy Singh, who led the revolt against the Samata-led ministry of Mr Radhabinod Kojiam, said.

The BJP, however, said it

won't stake claim to form an alternative government.

Three other MLAs will leave for Manipur tomorrow.

The PDA party spokesman, Mr Narendra Modi, said the BJP leader, Mr Dorendra Singh, was leaving for New Delhi. He said things would become clear after the meeting on 28 May.

To prevent it from affecting the NDA coalition at the Centre (dependent on Samata Party's 12 Lok Sabha members, and the Jharkhand state government led by the BJP where Samata has five MLAs) the BJP central leadership said the party will not stake claim in Manipur.

However, the party's Manipur unit demands that the Samata Party must replace its chief

ministerial candidate as Mr Kojiam had become arbitrary and hurt many senior state leaders.

The Progressive Democratic Alliance spokesman, Mr Gangmumei Kamei, said that by tomorrow eight more MLAs belonging to the Alliance, including the PDA convenor, Mr RK Dorendra Singh, would reach here tomorrow for consultations to "fill up the political vacuum in Manipur".

As the BJP-led PDA mounted pressure for the installation of an alternative government, Mr George Fernandes said in Mumbai that imposition of President's Rule could be an option to end the crisis.

But differing sharply with Samata Party, the JD(U)

general secretary, Mr Mohan Prakash, said: "President's Rule is no solution. Leaders of NDA constituents should sit together and resolve the crisis amicably".

Claiming that the PDA enjoyed a "comfortable majority" of over 40 MLAs in the 60-member Manipur Assembly, Mr Kamei said during their stay in Delhi, they would put across their points of view to the Central leadership that the political vacuum in the state could be removed by installing a popular ministry.

He alleged that because of "pressure" from Samata party leadership, Mr Dorendra Singh had been asked not to stake a claim to form a new government.

THE STATESMAN

25 MAY 2001

# Area dispute stalls Naga truce talks

HT Correspondent/Agencies  
Guwahati/Bangkok, May 24

THE JOINT secretary in charge of North-East in the Union Home Ministry GK Pillai today said the meeting between the Government's chief interlocutor K Padmanabhaiah and the NSCN leaders in Bangkok failed to be conclusive. "We hope something concrete will emerge from our next meeting with the NSCN in Bangkok three weeks from now," he said.

The talks failed as 'substantive' differences emerged on the issue of extending coverage of the ceasefire beyond Nagaland. "We gave them a draft, and they gave us a draft... We wanted to reconcile both drafts but there are substantive differences and the issue cannot be sorted out today," Padmanabhaiah said. The two sides decided not to meet today though after two days of talks yesterday, both parties had indicated a short round of talks this morning.

Officials said the Government could extend the ceasefire provided the NSCN agreed to drop its demand for Greater Nagaland and identify all its camps in the region to facilitate their shifting to designated areas in Nagaland.

The NDA Government is

caught between an adamant NSCN and equally unyielding Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur regarding the extension of the truce to the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur. NSCN chairman Isak Chishi Swu and general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah want extension.

These three States have been arguing that extension of ceasefire would give the NSCN the license to kill, kidnap, extort and collect illegal taxes in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal. What they dread most is that the NSCN could take advantage of the truce to pursue its goal of 'Greater Nagaland' comprising Naga-inhabited areas of these three States.

The NSCN's map for Greater Nagaland includes Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal which have a sizeable population of Konyaks; Ukhul and Tamenglong districts of Manipur populated mostly by Tankhuls, the tribe that runs the NSCN; and parts of eastern and southern Assam comprising Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts.

"The ceasefire cannot be extended without taking the concerned states into account,"

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister said. "If the Centre feels extending the truce can bring everlasting peace to the region, there's no reason to oppose the decision. But the ground rules must be clear, and the movement and activities of the NSCN militants must be strictly regulated. If the Vajpayee Government fails on this count, we are against extension." Assam CM Tarun Gogoi aired the same concerns. "We support the Centre's as well as the NSCN's peace moves, but we are against any kind of territorial compromise. We also do not want the Naga rebels to run riot in our State," he said.

Prior to its fall Monday last, the Kojiam Government's stand was also anti-truce extension.

**Khaplang for pan-Naga talks:** NSCN (K) has advocated involvement of all Naga groups in political talks with the Centre for a lasting solution to the decades old Naga problem saying, "there cannot be a meaningful dialogue with the Centre unless the entire Naga community comes under one umbrella," a report from Kohima adds.

NSCN (K) yesterday said. "This is the problem of all Nagas, not of any particular organisation."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MAY 24

# Fresh Delhi bid after Naga flop show

## OUR BUREAU

**May 24:** A harried Centre today hinted at another round of talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) two weeks from now to salvage the Naga peace process, which took a beating when the militant outfit yesterday called off negotiations with special emissary K. Padmanabhaiah.

G. K. Pillai, joint secretary (Northeast) in the Union home ministry, said over phone from New Delhi that the Bangkok parleys had failed, but the Centre was hopeful of holding another round of talks "after two weeks".

Pillai disclosed that both sides tabled fresh proposals during the two-day negotiations in the Thai capital. "Both sides will discuss these proposals when they return to the negotiation table, possibly after two weeks," he added.

However, the home ministry official refused to divulge the proposals, saying "it will not be appropriate at the moment".

Padmanabhaiah flew out of

Bangkok today without succeeding in his mission. The NSCN(I-M) accused the Centre of reneging on its promise to extend the Naga ceasefire to all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

("We gave them a draft, and they gave us a draft...we wanted to reconcile both drafts, but there are substantive differences and the issue could not be sorted out today," a wire service quoted Padmanabhaiah as saying).

The NSCN(I-M) has threatened to pull out of the four-year-old ceasefire, set to expire on July 31, if the Centre does not extend the truce beyond Nagaland.

Padmanabhaiah was expected to meet NSCN(I-M) general secretary Th. Muivah this morning, but both decided against it in view of the "substantive differences" on



Thuingaleng Muivah (left) and Isak Chisi Swu

the issue of extending the ceasefire, a home ministry official said.

Reports received here quoted Muivah as saying that the NSCN(I-M) would not change its stand under any circumstances. He also warned of far-reaching repercussions if the Centre did not accept his outfit's views.

The militant leader said it would be "meaningless" to hold talks unless the ceasefire issue

was resolved. Toeing the NSCN(I-M)'s line, two major Naga organisations today urged Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to extend the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas of the region. They said the "core issues" should be viewed by the Centre in the "correct perspective".

In a joint memorandum to Vajpayee, the Naga Hoho and the Council of Naga Baptist Churches (CNBC) said, "Ceasefire and

peace are the twin aspirations of the Naga people and the NSCN(I-M)'s demand for extension of the ceasefire is a positive move. Therefore, we recommend that the ceasefire be extended to all Naga-inhabited areas in the spirit of the past ceasefire agreement of 1964."

Naga Hoho president N. Vero and CNBC general secretary V. K. Nuh submitted the memorandum

to Brajesh Mishra, principal secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

While the Naga Hoho and the CNBC backed the NSCN(I-M)'s demand for extension of the ceasefire, the Khaplang faction advocated involvement of all Naga groups in political talks with the Centre.

"There cannot be a meaningful dialogue with the Centre unless the entire Naga community comes under one umbrella," it said in a statement yesterday.

"Unquestionably, this political cause (solution to the Naga problem) is for the Nagas and not for any particular organisation; so the involvement of all groups, including the Naga National Council (Federal), is compulsory," it added.

The outfit said it could begin a dialogue with the Centre only after getting the people's mandate through a referendum. "We will start a dialogue with the government of India only when the mandate of the Nagas is assured," it said.



# Manipur: The Italy of the North-east

Rahul Karmakar  
Guwahati, May 22

NEVER HAD a small, remote State like Manipur mattered so much for the National Democratic Alliance. But then, the fall of the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) Government led by Radhabinod Kojiam on Monday was not unexpected, given the tradition of horse-trading and defections in that north-eastern State for the past 15 years.

The politics of 'aaya Ram, gaya Ram' might have been pioneered by Haryana, but no State has perfected this flip-flop art like Manipur, except may be for Meghalaya. This 'Land of Gems' has produced an assembly line of political 'jewels' who ensure that no Government lasts its full term.

The Congress Government headed by RK Dorendra Singh (who later on joined the BJP)

was the last to have survived a full term from 1984 to 1990. But it wasn't smooth sailing for the Dorendra Government.

Defections have been the bane of Manipur politics ever since it attained Statehood in 1972. The State has seen eight Chief Ministers changing 16 times, the last being Kojiam, who lasted for only three months. There have been six spells of President's Rule while the 60-member Assembly had to be kept in suspended animation on five occasions.

The political instability in Manipur came to the fore after the 1984 polls. Despite enjoying a simple majority, the Congress was forced to seek the help of independents to form the Government. Then in 1977, a group of ministers and legislators led by W Nipamacha Singh broke away from the Congress to float the Manipur State Congress Party.

The formation of MSCP led to the ouster of

the Rishang Keishing Government as Nipamacha Singh replaced him as the Chief Minister. The MSCP 'bought' nine legislators from the Opposition, mainly Manipur Peoples Party (MPP) and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), to form the Government.

Nipamacha Singh formed the Government again with his coalition partner Federal Party of Manipur (FPM). But trouble cropped up last November with a section of MSCP and FPM legislators revolting against Nipamacha. Finally on February 13, Nipamacha resigned and paved the way for a new coalition Government led by Kojiam, a former lawyer. After submitting his resignation, Nipamacha and 22 MSCP MLAs extended their support to Kojiam. The list of supporters Kojiam submitted to Governor Ved Mahwah had the names of 12 Samata Party MLAs, 23 MSCP men of the Nipamacha faction and

four of the FPM, and duly formed the UDA. The list was expanded later to include eight BJP legislators led by Dorendra Singh.

Early this month, Kojiam got a taste of his own pudding when 18 MSCP MLAs camped at the residence of Speaker Dhananjay Singh along with 16 others. These MSCP men formed the Progressive MSCP, and it was not long before the Speaker recognised it. Days later, Dorendra Singh took these 18 legislators to New Delhi to induct them into the BJP.

Dorendra met the Governor, who asked Kojiam to prove his strength on the floor of the House. The outcome has put the NDA Government in a spot with Samata feeling betrayed by the BJP. The formation of a new Government in Manipur by the BJP is likely to strain the party's relation with the Samata Party, which has been "propping up" the BJP at the Centre and in Jharkhand".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAY 2001

# Gogoi for political dialogue with ultras

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Guwahati, May 22

ASSAM CHIEF Minister Tarun Gogoi on Tuesday said his Government wanted a "political dialogue" with extremists to solve the State's long-standing insurgency problem and urged the press to play a major role in this regard.

Exchanging views with local newsmen and representatives of PTI and UNI, Gogoi observed that though insurgency has been curbed considerably in the State and life has become much easier for the people, the Ultras continue to strike.

He emphasised the press has a major role to play in the talks between the Government and the Ultras and said, "the media has to create a congenial atmosphere by convincing the militants that their subversive activities do not benefit anybody."

On his blueprint for tackling the insurgency problem, the new chief minister who led the Congress to a landslide victory in the Assembly elections, which concluded recently, said people from all walks of life would be roped in to persuade the Ultras to come to the table.



TARUN GOGOI

Stress would also be laid on economic development, the chief minister said as increased avenues of employment would keep youths from taking up illegal arms for monetary gains. Agro-based industries such as agriculture, horticulture, dairy, fishery, piggery, handicrafts and handloom would be stressed upon, Gogoi said.

To make investment easy in Assam customary licence, permission, rules, fees, etc. would be done away with, he assured.

Education is top on the Government's priority list, the chief

minister said. He said an expert committee would be constituted to redesign academic courses in keeping with the latest trends and needs.

Describing the fiscal situation of the State as 'dismal', the chief minister said, "I won't be able to give salary to the employees, leave aside taking up development works if the Centre does not help with funds". "However, my priority is to pay Government employees their salaries this month," he said.

Leakages in tax collection would be sealed, to increase the State's revenue collection, Gogoi said.

The new chief minister supported privatisation of the loss making transport sector with the Government taking a percentage from the operators and ensuring the present employees were not retrenched in the process.

Assuring his Government was committed to safeguard the identity of the Assamese people, he said the Assamese community includes all linguistic and ethnic communities who had made Assam their home and adopted its language.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAY 2001

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2/3

## Manipur gets the bug

**M**ANIPUR CAN be said to have revealed in all its crudeness the kind of permissive politics which is followed elsewhere in India.

Originating in Haryana with the tell-tale nomenclature of *ayaram* and *gayaram*, the malady of party-hopping is now quite commonplace. So is the opportunistic manner in which alliances are formed for a slice of power. Few of the governments, whether at the Centre or in the states, are immune from this virus. If Manipur is now in the lime-light, it is because the legislators there have taken their practice of defections to the next logical step — that of ignoring the directives of the central leaders. There is nothing surprising about their defiance. If, for the sake of power, it is all right to switch party loyalties, it follows that with the same objective in view, it will be fine to turn a deaf ear to any plea for discipline from far away Delhi.

Once the BJP and the Samata Party acquiesced in the dramatic increase in the number of their MLAs from eight to 26 and from one to 13 because of defections, there was no way that the central leaders of these two parties could stop the ambitious from aiming for the prize post of chief minister. Organisational loyalty cannot be ignored where floor-crossing is concerned and enforced in the matter of securing the top

post. It was only to be expected, therefore, that the directives from the BJP's central leaders to its MLAs in Manipur not to press with the no-confidence motion against chief minister Radhabinod Koijam would not be respected. Besides, in Manipur and elsewhere in that region, the labels — BJP and Samata — are misnomers because the parties there have quite a different political and cultural background from what their counterparts have in the Hindi belt. As a result, the bonds holding an outfit together are even more fragile than in the other states.

Irrespective of how the BJP and the Samata Party resolve the current mess in Manipur, the fragility of their organisations there will ensure that politics of the state will remain in a state of uncertainty in the foreseeable future. In the pre-coalition age, such unsettled conditions did not matter much where the other parts of the country were concerned. But with rickety alliances now in power at the Centre and in the states, the slightest tremor in the North-east (or elsewhere) will now have a much wider impact. In an earlier period, changes in Manipur would not have endangered a government at the Centre or in a state. Since this is happening now, it can be said that the country is more closely integrated than before, although the reasons for it are decidedly murky.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAY 2001

# Samata fails to carry out quit-govt threat Kojiam voted out; George to decide on NDA ties

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE &  
AGENCIES

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI, May 21. — The Manipur chief minister, Mr Radhabinod Kojiam, resigned today after his People's Front ministry was voted out of power, thanks to the "betrayal" of 24 BJP MLAs.

Only one MLA of the 26-member BJP group supported the trust motion. The BJP legislature party leader, Mr RK Dorendro Singh, abstained from voting.

The BJP's state unit president, Mr M Bhorot Singh, admitted the central leadership had issued a whip asking the MLAs to support the Samata Party-led government. "We received the whip around 9.30 a.m. today, but couldn't distribute it to our party MLAs except a few...They were under high security and could not be contacted."

The BJP central leadership, however, gave a different reason for the MLAs' defiance. After the NDA meeting, the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said the whip couldn't be implemented because of "extreme factionalism" in the party's state unit.

Though Mr Bhorot Singh ruled out any action against the MLAs for defying the whip, Mr Jaswant Singh said the erring legislators would be dealt with sternly. The minister also said no BJP MLA would stake claim for the chief minister's post. He hinted at imposition of President's rule in the state.

He denied that the Manipur developments would affect the stability of the NDA government at the Centre and in Jharkhand.

The rumblings of Manipur were soon to be felt in Delhi where the former Samata president, Mrs Jaya Jaitley,

announced her party would not attend tonight's NDA meeting.

The Samata, however, failed to carry out its threat of quitting the NDA government. The party's national executive instead authorised Mr George Fernandes to decide on the issue.

The Samata spokesman, Mr Shambhu Srivastava, said after the meeting: "...keeping in view the seriousness of the issue involved, the national executive felt no decision should be taken in a hurry."

What might have prompted the party to soften its stand was the Prime Minister's assurance that the BJP would not form government in Manipur.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee sent two emissaries, Mr Vijay Goel and Mr Sudhindra Kulkarni, to Mr Fernandes while the national executive meeting was on to convey him of the BJP's stand.

Mr Fernandes, however, didn't talk to them, saying he would meet Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee after the meeting was over.

The BJP, however, feels the Samata would not withdraw support to the NDA government because it wouldn't gain anything by doing so.

During their Sunday's luncheon meeting, Mr Vajpayee had reportedly apprised Mr Fernandes of the central leadership's inability to impose decisions on Manipur MLAs, most of whom are defectors.

After the Assembly session ended, Mr Dorendro Singh called on the Governor, Mr Ved Marwah, to apprise him of the political situation. He submitted a list of 39 supporters to the Governor but didn't stake claim to form the government, BJP sources said. "We'll stake claim to form the next BJP-led ministry after a directive from the party's central leadership,"

a BJP leader said.

Mr Singh later told **The Statesman** that a new Front was being formed and would take office in a day or two.

During the debate on the trust motion, Mr Kojiam said the real issue was not his trust but that of the BJP which had assured umpteenth times that it would not topple his government.

He later said the only reason why his ministry was voted out was that he had come down heavily on ministers who had nexus with ultras. "Now that all of them are in the BJP, let's see how the party handles the issue."

He said that during his three-month tenure, he had tried to improve the state's fiscal and law and order situations.

Later, in an exclusive interview to **The Statesman**, Mr Kojiam blamed the BJP central leadership for his government's fall. As for the party's MLAs, he said they were "looking for opportunity".

Besides the BJP MLAs, those who opposed the motion were two MLAs each of the NCP and Federal Party of Manipur, 10 Manipur State Congress Party MLAs and the lone JD-L member.

Mr Kojiam's detractors issued a letter on 16 May, accusing the chief minister of 'flagrantly violating' the agenda set at the time of formation of the People's Front government.

It said rising militancy, deteriorating law and order situation, rapidly sinking economy and rampant corruption had plunged the state into a severe socio-economic crisis.

The MLAs alleged the government had no transparency and Mr Kojiam's style of functioning was autocratic.

■ Another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN

# Jaswant hints at President's rule

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MAY 21. The National Democratic Alliance leaders met at the Prime Minister's residence this evening to take stock of the political situation in the aftermath of the disastrous Assembly election results even as yet another crisis in the NDA stared them in the face in the form of the Bharatiya Janata Party-Samata Party stand off triggered by the Manipur developments.

The immediate result of that was the absence of Mr. George Fernandes, NDA convenor, at the meeting. Instead, he sent a cryptic message to the Prime Minister saying he would meet him separately after his party's national executive committee meeting, which also took place today, was over. On Sunday, Mr. Fernandes had a luncheon meeting with the

Prime Minister to discuss Manipur-related developments and the anger in the Samata Party over what has been termed as the BJP's betrayal.

Briefing presspersons later, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said the meeting "did not discuss the Manipur developments." He categorically stated that the problems between the BJP and the Samata could be sorted out, that none of the BJP MLAs in Manipur would be candidates for the Chief Minister's post. He said "President's rule could be considered for Manipur." Later, as an afterthought, he added that he was "neither ruling out or ruling in the possibility of imposition of President's rule in Manipur."

The meeting discussed three subjects — the political scenario after the Assembly elections, the question of Jammu and Kashmir

in relation to the peace process and continued militancy, and the developmental issues related to the States.

Although the NDA leaders were consulted on the Kashmir issue, Mr. Singh said the decision on extension of the ceasefire, which comes to an end later this month, would be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs. "We shared with the NDA leaders the experiences of the recent visit to Kashmir by Mr. L.K. Advani, Home Minister, and myself," Mr. Singh said, adding "we sought the advice of the NDA partners on the peace process". But apparently, the NDA leaders neither recommended extension of ceasefire nor opposed it.

The Prime Minister made it clear that members were free to discuss the election results. The general view that emerged was

that "they were in accordance with expectations" and that "except in Tamil Nadu" no major NDA coalition partner was in the electoral battle. Therefore, the results "were not a commentary on the NDA," a view which has already been articulated by the BJP.

Mr. Singh said the exit of the Trinamool Congress leader, Ms. Mamata Bannerjee, from the NDA was a fact "in black and white" and there was "no grey there." He said that Mr. Om Prakash Chautala, INLD president and Haryana Chief Minister, who was present, did not raise the issue of the possibility of Mr. Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal joining the NDA and his opposition to it.

The NDA will meet again before the monsoon session of Parliament starts, Mr Singh indicated. But no date has as yet been fixed.

'Internal matter': Page 11

THE HINDU

MAY 21 1997

# Gogoi keeps key portfolios

Guwahati, May 21

THE ASSAM Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi, has allotted portfolios to his Cabinet colleagues keeping home, education, industry, general administration, administrative reform, among others.

Secretary to the Chief Minister, PP Verma, said the Chief Minister also kept personnel, tourism, political, planning and development, information and public relations to himself.

Former Chief Minister, Dr Bhumidhar Barman, has been given health, panchayat and rural development.

Cabinet Ministers Sarat Borkotoky has been allotted public works, panchayat and rural development, Debananda Konwar finance, revenue and power, Dr Ardhendu Dey food and civil supplies, Bharat Narah flood control and cooperation, parlia-



NSUI workers felicitate Tarun Gogoi on Monday in Guwahati.

mentary affairs, Rameswar Dhanowar labour and employment.

Other Cabinet ministers are:

Gautam Roy (social welfare, sports and youth welfare), GC Langthasa (hill development, forestry, mines and mineral, wel-

fare of tribes and backward classes), Hemprakash Narayan (Assam Accord and animal welfare), Ismail Hussain (Char area development, public enterprise) and Dinesh Prasad Gola (public health engineering).

Dr Hemoprova Saikia, Minister for the first time and widow of Hiteswar Saikia, has been put in charge of handloom, textiles, fishery culture and sericulture.

The lone Minister of State with independent charge, Anjan Dutta, has been allotted the transport, municipal administration and Guwahati development departments. The three freshers appointed Ministers of State are Pradyut Bordoloi (home, finance, industry, information and public relations, science, technology and environment), Rupam Kurmi (handloom and textile) and Nazibul Umar (power, agriculture and fishery).

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 MAY 2001

# BJP-Samata standoff on Manipur continues

By K. V. Prasad

**NEW DELHI, MAY 20.** The stand-off between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samata Party, its NDA ally, continued today with the latter expressing dissatisfaction over the BJP's promise to support the Radha Binod Kojiam Government in Manipur, which faces a trust vote tomorrow.

The Samata Party leader and NDA convener, Mr. George Fernandes, met the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, here after the BJP chief, Mr. K. Jana Krishnamurthi, promised to continue support to the Samata-led People's Front coalition government in Manipur. The BJP president, who is attending a party meeting in Mussoorie, is reported to have said that the party would not form a government in Imphal. Yet, in the absence of a whip, the Samata fears the 26 BJP MLAs in the 60-member House may not go with the high command's directive. The Samata has 13 MLAs.

The Samata has convened an emergency meeting of its national executive tomorrow on continuing in the Vajpayee government in the absence of trust between the coalition partners, which could result in the country's only Samata-led government losing power.

Last week, Mr. Krishnamurthi assured Mr. Fernandes and others of the BJP's desire not to disturb the present arrangement. The Samata insists that if the BJP does not back its word to Mr. Fernandes through a whip to its MLAs in Imphal, the end result would be different. This would also violate the

coalition dharma of not poaching on each other's territory. In addition, the Samata could strike back by removing the props which keep the Babulal Marandi-led BJP government in Jharkhand going.

The Samata general secretary, Dr. Shambhu Shrivastava, maintained that until the BJP issued a three-line whip to support the vote of confidence, Mr. Kojiam is seeking tomorrow, the assurances sounded empty.

The Samata apprehension was also based on the charge that near-

## Speaker denies charge: Page 7

ly 34 MLAs were being held by the Speaker, Mr. S. Dhananjay Singh, whose replacement the dissidents claimed was being engineered by Mr. Kojiam. Reports reaching here suggest that a section of the 26 BJP MLAs, 18 of whom had recently crossed over from the MSCP, were not willing to go by the party directive and insist on showing Mr. Kojiam the door.

PTI, UNI report:

Meanwhile, the Samata president, Ms. Jaya Jaitly, said, "we had written to them (BJP) yesterday to issue the whip. But they are refusing to do so... we will take the decision in this regard at tomorrow's (national executive) meeting."

The Samata Party, tonight announced that it had rescheduled its national executive committee meeting from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. tomorrow to have time to watch the proceedings in the State Legislature.

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## NEW GOVERNMENT IN ASSAM

THE CONGRESS(I)'S VICTORY in Assam was indeed expected this time. The ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) that came to power in the State (for the second time after a gap of five years) in 1996 had failed to deliver. And after the BJP clinched a poll-eve alliance with Mr. Prafulla Mahanta and his "boys," the Congress(I) leaders in the State did not have to look back at all. The anger against the AGP was indeed there and if proof was needed, it came in the crushing defeat suffered by Mr. Mahanta himself in one of the two constituencies he contested this time. In this sense, the change in Assam is indeed a reflection of the anger the voters had against the AGP; a reversal of the 1996 verdict when the Congress(I) lost to the AGP. That the Congress(I) at that time was rendered leaderless — after the death of Hiteshwar Saikia several important persons in the party's State unit were trying to take his place — was just another factor that influenced the results. The situation this time was no different. The party was not in a position to project its candidate for the post of Chief Minister. And yet it managed to win a majority in the Assembly only because the political scene in Assam witnessed total polarisation between Ms. Sonia Gandhi's party and that of Mr. Mahanta.

Be that as it may, the Congress(I) seems to be caught in its own problems this time too. It may be true that the choice of Mr. Tarun Gogoi as Chief Minister was managed by the party high command in a "smooth" fashion. But then, the fact that the high command's emissary — Mr. Kamalnath — had to invoke the "authority" of Ms. Sonia Gandhi to push Mr. Gogoi's case for the Chief Minister's post cannot but be a pointer to the trouble within the party's State unit. Mr. Gogoi's claims were challenged, at one stage, by Mr. Bhubaneshwar Kalita, former chief of the party's student wing, and there were reports of his supporters turning violent in Guwahati in the process. The "revolt" was put down only after

Mr. Kamalnath conferred with Mr. Kalita and invoked the "authority" of the high command. It is in this context (and also the track record of the Congress(I) in the various States) that one cannot but remain apprehensive over how long Mr. Gogoi would be allowed to focus his energy on governance. It may be true that there is a distinct change in the ways in those States where the Congress(I) has managed to wrest power in the past few years. The Sonia Gandhi era in the party has indeed been a shade different in that the high command has hardly done anything to encourage dissidents against such Chief Ministers as Mr. Digvijai Singh, Mr. Ashok Gehlot or Mr. S. M. Krishna. The high command has given them more room to breathe than was the case with others in the past.

21/5  
It is indeed an imperative for the Congress(I) high command to follow this new culture in Assam too and ensure that Mr. Gogoi is not forced to rush to Delhi every now and then to save himself from the dissidents in his own party. Apart from the fact that such a culture is bound to lead to the decimation of the Congress(I) as a party in the State, the agenda for governance is bound to take a beating in such situations. The new Government has a difficult road ahead in that it will have to deal with the violence unleashed by the ULFA and also the various groups that are now active in Upper Assam. Add to these the gun-wielding youth across the North Eastern States and the influx of refugees from across the Bangladesh borders. The civil administration in Assam will need the active support of the political leadership at this stage. And this indeed is what is expected of Mr. Tarun Gogoi and his team that has been sworn in. Anything that distracts their attention will affect not just the prospects of the Congress(I) as a party but also the society in Assam that is even otherwise fragmented so sharply.

THE HINDU

21 MAY 2001



**KOIJAM JITTERY**

# Manipur Speaker under fire for housing dissidents

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, May 20

UNION MINISTER of State for Food Processing Thounaojam Chaoba charged the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of being responsible for the present political turmoil in the State by putting up tainted dissident ministers at his official residence.

Speaker Dr Sapam Dhananjoy Singh has come under heavy fire on the eve of the special session of the 7th Manipur Legislative Assembly where the Koijam ministry is to prove its majority.

Thounaojam Chaoba, president of the regional Manipur State Congress Party (Chaoba), which is a constituent of the NDA Government at the Centre and People's Front ministry in Manipur said the only alternative to the Koijam ministry was President's rule in Manipur.

The strength of the MSCP has been reduced to 13 in the 60-member Manipur Legislative Assembly since splitting of 18 MSCP legislators subsequent to merging with the BJP State unit.

Thounaojam Chaoba is the first political leader in the State to openly criticise the speaker who is playing host to dissidents of the Koijam ministry at his official residence since May 5.

Soon after the central executive committee meeting of his faction, the Union Minister said his party would extend support to the Chief Minister during the vote of confidence. He, however,

said the Chief Minister and dissidents' leader R K Dorendra Singh would reach a settlement as instructed by the NDA high command.

Manipur Chief Minister RB Koijam expressed unhappiness over the one-sided efforts of the Speaker and said he had sent a complaint letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker Balayogi to take prompt action against the Manipur Speaker for his support to the dissidents.

Meanwhile, Speaker Dr Sapam Dhananjoy has sought the co-operation of all the members of the State Assembly to hold the special session peacefully. Elected on an MSCP ticket he said he had intimated to all the NDA partners to depute central observers to come and take stock of the prevailing political situation in the State.

The speaker said Vivek Raj Wangkhem of the Samata Party, who recently won the Kshetrigao Assembly by-election would be sworn in as an MLA of the seventh Manipur Assembly by Speaker at 10.30 am.

The special session of the Assembly will be held from 11 am and voting on the confidence motion of the People's Front ministry to be moved by the Chief Minister on the floor of the House.

The House will pass an obituary reference on the demise of (late) N Tombi, ex-MP and former Manipur education minister before the vote of confidence.

# Bodo top guns in net after Siliguri hotel raid

OUR BUREAU

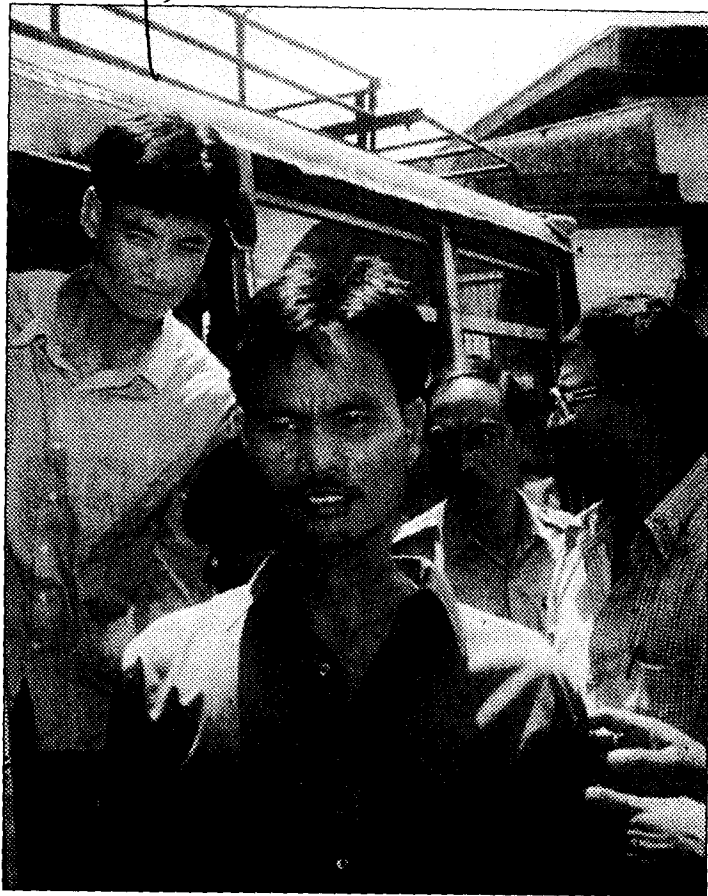
May 19: Three militants of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) were arrested from a hotel in Siliguri last night, confirming fears that the North-east rebels are using the commercial town as the main transit point for procuring arms from neighbouring Nepal.

Inspector-general of police (intelligence branch), north Bengal, P.N. Saha said a team, made up of officials from the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling police, raided a hotel in the town last night following a tip-off that an arms deal would be struck between a gun-runner and three top NDFB militants. The officials swooped down and arrested the militants, who gave their names as Raju Moachari, Janardhan Basumataray and Shivram Basumataray. However, no arms were recovered from the trio. A linkman, Shiman Iswari, too, was arrested.

"The three rebels have been arrested in connection with an arms conspiracy case registered against them at the Matigara police station on the outskirts of Siliguri," Saha said, but refused to elaborate on what the conspiracy was.

Revealing that the militants had come to Siliguri to procure arms through a "linkman", he said: "Though we did not recover any arms from the militants, we recovered Rs 1.93 lakh from them. We believe the money was part of the advance payment to be made to arms dealers. The militants have, however, maintained they had come here to buy computers."

Assam IGP (special branch) Khagen Sarmah said in Guwahati that the state's officials were in touch with their Bengal counterparts and a team will leave for Siliguri soon "to bring them back to stand trial". A team is expected to leave on Monday. Asked if the Assam police database had any information on the names provided



Two of the arrested militants being produced in court.

Picture by Raju Bhattacharya

by the Bengal police, Sarmah said: "They are definitely NDFB militants."

An intelligence source in Guwahati said the Bodo outfit had a "very well-stocked arsenal" which the rebels replenish frequently. Of late, the banned outfit has been under pressure following the liquidation of many of its cadre by security forces. Prior to the Assembly elections, intelligence agencies had warned of joint strikes by the Ulfa and the NDFB to disrupt the polls.

Intelligence sources in Siliguri said the arrests confirmed that Siliguri is increasingly being used

as a transit point by these militants. "The Siliguri-Naxalbari-Kakarvitta stretch along the Indo-Nepal border is being used as the main transit route by northeastern militant outfits for travelling to either China or Pakistan from Kathmandu. This apart, Siliguri has over the years become a key centre for arms deals. Sophisticated arms are smuggled into Siliguri from Nepal and Bihar. From here, the arms are re-routed to Northeast outfits by a network of international arms dealers in coordination with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence," a source said.

THE TELEGRAPH

5 MAY 1986

# 17-member Gogoi Ministry sworn in

By Barun Das Gupta

**GUWAHATI, MAY 18.** A 17-member Council of Ministers, headed by the Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, was sworn in today by the Governor, Lt. Gen.(retd) S.K. Sinha, at a simple ceremony at the Raj Bhavan here. The portfolios would be announced later.

Twelve of the Ministers were given Cabinet rank and four Ministers of State. Prominent among the Cabinet ministers are the former Chief Minister, Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, and Dr. Hemarova Saikia, widow of the former Chief Minister, Hiteswar Saikia. Ms. Rupam Kurmi was the other woman who was made a Minister of State.

Some likely entrants to the Cabinet were left out. The AICC general secretary in-charge of Assam, Mr. Kamal Nath, told *The Hindu* that no first-time MLA was made a Minister. They will be inducted later when the Cabinet is expanded.

Later, addressing mediapersons, Mr. Gogoi said one of the priorities of his Government would be to bring about a peaceful solution to the insurgency problem.



**The Assam Governor, Lt. Gen.(retd.) S.K. Sinha, administering the oath of office to the Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, at the Raj Bhavan in Guwahati on Friday. — Photo: Ritu Raj Konwar**

He, however, said he was not contemplating either to call off Army operations against militants or to wind up the Unified Command Structure, set up in January 1997.

Top priority would also be given to put the State's shattered economy back on the rails, so that the five lakh government employees got their monthly wages in

time and development got a fillip.

Mr. Gogoi said the task facing his Government was Herculean and that he had no magic formula to solve the plethora of problems overnight. "I would seek the cooperation of the people in general and of the government employees in particular".

The entire Opposition, consisting of the AGP, BJP, ABSU and the

ASDC(U), were conspicuous by their absence.

**Many unhappy** PTI reports:

Senior leader and former MP, Mr. Bhubaneswar Kalita, who was a surprise omission from the Minister's list, did not attend the function.

Mr. Kalita had earlier said he was a contender for the Chief Minister's post but took back his candidature following the decision of party president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, in favour of Mr. Gogoi.

The former Finance Minister and Speaker, Mr. Jiba Kanta Gogoi, talking to reporters here after the swearing in ceremony, said he was surprised that his name was not included in the list of Ministers as the people of the State expected him to be in the Council of Ministers. "I am not disappointed and have no expectations, but my constituency people and also the people of Assam expected me to have been included," he said.

The list of the Council of Ministers was kept a closely guarded secret with even the ministers who were sworn in not informed about their possible inclusion.

THE HINDU

MAY 19 1997

# Blow to Kojiam before trust vote

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, May 17

THE RADHABINOD Kojiam Ministry in Manipur today announced that it would seek a vote of confidence in the Assembly on May 21, even as 30 MLAs of the ruling Peoples' Front and four others demanded the immediate resignation of the Chief Minister, saying they had lost confidence in him.

The 34 rebels of the three-month-old RB Kojiam Ministry have written to Kojiam, "We have lost confidence in your leader-

ship. As you have ceased to command majority even in the House, we urge you to resign and pave the way for change of leadership for upholding the best tradition of democracy."

PTI adds that Kojiam is confident that he would win the trust vote. Kojiam said the BJP was a "disciplined party" and hoped that its legislators would support him, "especially after BJP national president Jana Krishnamurthy had given an assurance that his Samata Party-led Peoples Front Ministry would not be disturbed. Meanwhile, the BJP Manipur

unit president Meinam Bhorot and Manipur Speaker Dr Sapam Dhananjay rushed to New Delhi on Thursday to submit to the National BJP leaders, the lists of the 34 legislators.

Laishram Jatra Singh, Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Board resigned from his post on Thursday and joined the bandwagon of the dissidents camp at the official residence of the Manipur speaker, Dr. Sapam Dhananjay Singh. Manipur Higher Education Minister Col. Haobam Bhuban (retd) of the BJP has not put his signature in

the list, which was submitted to the Chief Minister.

The Speaker before his leaving for New Delhi, withdrew the disqualification case of L Jatra Singh saying Jatra would be "treated as an MLA of the regional Manipur State Congress Party".

Claiming that the Chief Minister had "frankly violated all agenda of governance set out at the time of formation of the People's Front", the letter states that "heightened militant activities" and "deteriorating law and order", coupled with the "fast

sinking financial position due to lopsided handling and mismanagement" had plunged the State into a very sorry state of affairs.

The rebels claim a "complete lack of transparency" and the "Kojiam's absolute authoritarian style of functioning" had alienated the people of Manipur.

The Manipur Chief Minister, in the meantime, is girding up his political loins for the final political showdown on the floor of the House on May 23.

In the 60-member House the PF has a strength of 55, including 13 MLAs of the Samata Party.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 MAY 2000

17  
1975

# PM takes stock of Nagaland situation

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 17.** The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today presided over a high-level meeting to take stock of the situation in Nagaland, particularly in the wake of the threat by the NSCN(I-M) to pull out of the four-year-old ceasefire.

The dominant insurgent group in the State, NSCN (Isaac-Muivah), is peeved at the Centre's move to enter into a similar agreement with its rival NSCN faction led by Mr. S. S. Khaplang. The I-M group's threat can trigger a serious setback to the peace process.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's residence was attended by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, the Centre's negotiator for the Naga talks, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, and other senior officials.

Informed sources said no decision was taken, but a general, all-encompassing review of the situation in Nagaland was made. Several

factors crucial to the peace process in the State were also considered.

The NSCN (I-M) has been demanding extension of the ceasefire to all Naga inhabited areas in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. The meeting also took into consideration the change of government in Assam.

The Prime Minister had recently called a meeting of the three Chief Ministers to ascertain their views on the

expansion of the ceasefire to their States. With the Congress taking over in Assam, it was felt that a fresh round of discussion with the new State Government would have to be held.

The NSCN (I-M) had, in a statement on May 7, demanded that "the ceasefire needs to be reviewed in two weeks" and decried the Centre's agreement with the Khaplang faction, saying the outfit was supported and funded by the Nagaland Government.

## Retaliation threat

**BANGKOK, MAY 17.** The top leader of NSCN(I-M), Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah, today warned of retaliation, charging New Delhi with not honouring its commitment to extend the ceasefire area.

Mr. Muivah, who is here facing trial in a local court, also announced that the outfit had declared "an indefinite emergency" across Nagaland from today and said his men "have already gone into the

jungles and will retaliate if they are provoked or attacked".

He told PTI on phone that "the reason behind this decision is that the Government never honoured its commitments, ceasefire agreements and had committed acts of torture and kidnapping of NSCN(I-M) men".

Mr. Muivah said the decision was taken today at a meeting in Oking (the outfit's mobile headquarters).

THE HINDU

18 MAY 2001

# Mahanta accuses Ulfa of terror campaign against AGP workers

P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 15 MAY

AGP CHIEF and outgoing chief minister P.K. Mahanta, on Tuesday, blamed the Ulfa for unleashing a reign of terror against the AGP supporters prior to the Assembly elections.

Mr Mahanta told reporters that the militants had succeeded in terrorising the AGP workers and their supporters since there were no security forces to keep them in check. He added that deployment of forces only a couple of days before the elections did not serve the purpose since by then the damage had already been done.

When asked if this was the only reason for his party's poor performance, Mr Mahanta said: "This is not the only reason, but certainly one of the main reasons. If the Election Commission had agreed to our request for a three-phased election, things would have been different."

State agriculture minister C.M. Patowari's poll debacle came as a big blow. Mr Patowari, who was also present at the press meet, said the announcement made by the additional chief electoral officer a day before the polls that there would be no mixing of ballot boxes during counting, effected him adversely.

He said following this announcement, Ulfa militants threatened villagers in some areas with dire consequences saying that



**PARTING SHOT: Former Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta with AGP leaders in Guwahati on Tuesday.** — Caroline Singh

since the ballot papers were not being mixed it would be easy for them to find out which area had voted for the AGP.

Mr Mahanta said since four of his ministers have a "Z Security" cover, the onus to protect them lies with the state government. He insisted they be given the same level of security cover as at present.

AGP spokesman and former Union minister Birendra Prasad Baishya said they found ballot papers signed by the presiding officers with stamps on the Congress symbol, which is a clear indication of the party having been involved

in rigging.

Meanwhile, Mr Mahanta, conceding defeat, said: "Victory or defeat is part of a democratic process and we respect the wishes of the people, but we also condemn the role of some militant organisations in disturbing this process."

Meanwhile, AICC observer for Assam Kamal Nath arrived here on Tuesday and held discussions with the elected party legislators at a city hotel. He is reported to have apprised the new members of the high command's decision to elect Tarun Gogoi as their leader at the meeting scheduled for Wednesday morning.

*The Economic Times*

18 MAY 2001

# How the tide turned

The dismal performance of the AGP government, particularly of Mahanta himself, is behind the Congress victory in Assam, writes Naren Deka

The eagerly-awaited results of the Assam assembly elections held on May 10 have been declared. And the electorate has rejected the Asom Gana Parishad. Elections were held in 125 legislative assembly constituencies. The election in the Dibrugarh constituency was countermanded because of the death of Jayanta Dutta, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate for this constituency. The results indicate that the Congress has secured 71 seats, an overwhelming majority. Tarun Gogoi, projected as the chief ministerial candidate of the Congress, is likely to be sworn in in the next few days.

The miserable failure of the AGP at the hustings also points to the complete failure on the part of the party leadership to gauge or anticipate the mood of the people who were fed up with the "misdeeds" of the party.

The AGP was born in Golaghat more than 15 years ago at a convention attended by representatives of the Assam agitation who had spearheaded the movement for the identification and deportation of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. The issue of the large-scale influx of Bangladeshis came to light at Mangaldoi after the death of Hiralal Patowary, who represented the Mangaldoi parliamentary seat. Re-elections were ordered within six months of Patowary's death and it was observed that there was a rise of about 60,000 voters within the preceding six months. It became clear that the abnormal increase in the size of the electorate was due to immigration. There could not have been such an unbelievable natural growth.

The issue became the focal point of a massive people's movement against foreigners all over the state. The 1983 elections were boycotted by major political parties and the people overwhelmingly responded to the boycott call. The elections were regarded as a farce. Hiteswar Saikia, who became the chief minister, was seen to be heading an illegal government.

At that time, Congressmen had to suffer a lot. Social boycott and threat to life and property were only a few of the humiliations they had to suffer. There were frequent strikes and arson as well. The All Assam Students' Union, of which Mahanta was the president and Bhriku Kumar Phukan the general secretary, took the lead in opposing the government. It became almost impossible for Saikia's Congress government to run the administration.

The government of India meanwhile woke up and took cognizance of the reasons behind the agitation. Negotiations took place and the Assam accord was ultimately signed on August 15, 1983. In keeping with the terms of the accord, the Saikia government resigned and fresh elections were held.

The AGP, riding the popular wave, came to power and the Congress was totally routed. Mahanta became the chief minister of the state and earned the distinction of becoming the youngest chief minister of the country. The people were jubilant, and the swearing-in ceremony of the ministry was held

The author is a columnist and former editor, Assam Tribune



Man who will be king

at the Nehru stadium in Guwahati. It was attended by several lakhs of people. On that day almost all the houses in Assam remained illuminated.

So what happened to that illumination? Why has the second term of the AGP been so disenchanting? It appears that the AGP has become the most unpopular party in the state. The dismal performance of the party during its term has totally disillusioned the people.

Several factors are responsible for the party's fall from grace, the principal one being corruption. Also, there was practically no tangible economic development during AGP rule. Unemployment rose alarmingly. The state government's understanding with the Centre that there would be a total ban on new appointments frustrated many. And all this while some jobs were being sold like commodities in the market.

The frustrated young people who once participated in the agitation found that while some of the fellow agitationists had become ministers and occupied lucrative posts, they had been left by the wayside. Some of them took to arms. Terror started its reign and lawlessness became the order of the day. The then chief minister, however, succeeded in persuading a section of the militants, including the United Liberation Front of Asom, to surrender arms and abjure

violence.

The anti-incumbency current in this election was so strong that it has swept Mahanta and his colleagues away. It was only just before the polls that the AGP leadership realized that it could not possibly fight the elections alone. So it hitched its wagon with the BJP. Despite strong opposition from the state BJP leadership and some sections within the AGP, the two parties entered into a pre-poll alliance.

There was strong resentment against the alliance in several parts of the state. In Guwahati, the state BJP headquarters was ransacked by hostile partymen. Although the resentment apparently subsided, the AGP-BJP poll alliance proved to be a suicidal pact for both parties. Workers at the grassroots were both unhappy and confused. Senior BJP leader, Haryana Bhattacharyya, resigned from the party to form the Asom BJP. The pact thus benefited neither. The AGP could capture only 20 seats while the BJP could manage to win only eight.

The AGP-BJP pact also alienated the religious minorities in the state. They panicked and voted for the Congress in a big way. The AGP gave about 45 seats to the BJP and there were friendly contests between them in about 10 constituencies. The seriousness or sincerity of the candidates/parties in these "friendly" contests were seen to be

completely lacking. Candidates of both the parties were thus doomed to failure.

Again, the wave was not so much against the AGP than against Mahanta. His family-oriented politics took its toll at the hustings. His wife, Jayashree Goswami Mahanta, who contested the Nagaon parliamentary seat in the last polls, was sent to the Rajya Sabha.

With the AGP joining the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre, ugly rumours began doing the rounds. Mahanta, it was alleged, was trying to make his wife a minister in the Union cabinet. This greatly angered the common people and agitated senior party leaders. It was also this anger that was reflected in the poll results. People's dislike for Mahanta was manifested in the results of the prestigious Dispur constituency, where he suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of his arch rival, Atul Bora, and the relatively unknown Robin Bordoloi, son of the revered Gopinath Bordoloi.

The AGP had also shied away from holding the long-due *panchayat* elections despite warnings from the Centre that it would withhold Central assistance. The party simply did not have the courage to face the people. This lack of courage proved to be its nemesis. It totally lost touch with the grassroots. Its organizational network eroded. Naturally, the AGP miscalculated its electoral prospects.

The AGP is a regional party which rode to power on the emotions of the people regarding their identity in their land. It is ironic that during AGP rule the number of migrants increased manifold. There were no identifications, no deportations. The people of Assam quite obviously found this very difficult to accept.

The Congress on the other hand is a national party with a mass base and has always appealed to many people. But the return of the Congress this time is largely due to the misdeeds and failure of the AGP government on all fronts. The low-profile and unassuming image of Gogoi, who has held several important posts in the Congress and is a former Union minister, also contributed to the Congress's appeal. Gogoi is backed by a band of trusted and experienced politicians. The Congress also took care that its differences did not reflect on the polls. On the other hand, the AGP's internal differences were quite evident to the people.

The disenchantment of government employees who did not receive their salaries also contributed to the downfall of the AGP government. Worse, the way the agitation of the government employees was handled by the government disenchanting a large, influential section of the electorate.

On the eve of the elections, a number of killings took place. There were widespread rumours about government involvement in these acts. Moreover, although there was a ban on appointments, several appointments were clandestinely made in several departments, including the Assam public service commission.

Tarun Gogoi, leader of the Congress legislature party is poised to take over the reins at Dispur. As for his election to the assembly, it remains a mere formality.

**Why has the second term of the AGP been so disenchanting? It seems that the AGP is now the most unpopular party in the state**

17 MAY 2001 THE TELEGRAPH

9-11-2001

# AGP BOWS OUT

51-8  
1975

## Alliance with BJP helps Congress

VOTERS in Assam did precisely what they have always done since the 1977 Assembly elections — not allowed the same party to rule for two consecutive terms. The Asom Gana Parishad yields to the Congress. Not only did Prafulla Mahanta's party perform miserably—managing just 18 seats — several heavyweights bit the dust in what was evidently a strong anti-establishment wave. Mahanta won the Berhampore seat by a margin of 5,000 votes but he will not be able to live down the humiliation of finishing third in the prestigious Dispur constituency, behind the winner, Congress's Robin Bordoloi, considered an underdog, and Trinamool Gana Parishad candidate Atul Bora, his one-time trusted lieutenant. The BJP's many efforts to humour Mahanta failed, as they deserved to do. Had they contested separately, they may have reduced the harvest of 71 seats reaped by the Congress. The BJP grassroots local units proved entirely right in their assessment that the alliance would harm the party's prospects. The BJP won seven seats compared to four in 1996 but brings no cheer. In the last Lok Sabha elections, they established themselves as a party to reckon with by garnering as much as 33 per cent of the vote. This time it dropped to a mere eight per cent. The alliance apparently weaned away Bengali Hindu voters.

The AGP cannot blame the Congress-Ulfa nexus or the reign of terror let loose by militants. The turnout of 70 per cent was to their advantage. The Ulfa did not target the AGP alone, there were many Congress supporters among those killed. The Congress victory is not so much because of Tarun Gogoi's untiring efforts as people voting for peace and security, requirements that were sadly absent during the AGP's five-year regime. But for the discontent over the distribution of tickets, the Congress would have done even better.

THE STATESMAN

17 MAY 2001



# Sonia CM stamp on Gogoi

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, May 16: The newly-elected Congress legislators today unanimously elected PCC chief Tarun Gogoi as the head of the Congress Legislature Party after AICC chief Sonia Gandhi recommended his name for the post of chief minister.

However, without directly proposing Gogoi's name, PCC vice-president Hemoprova Saikia said the AICC high command should be authorised to take the "final decision" on selecting the leader. The proposal was seconded by none other than Bhubaneswar Kalita, MLA from Rangiya and a contender for the post of chief minister, besides former chief minister Bhumidhar Barman and senior party leader Debananda Konwar.

The unanimous decision was communicated to the Congress high command by AICC general secretary Kamal Nath and observer R.K. Dhawan over telephone.

Party spokesman and MLA from Gohpur, Ripun Bora said Sonia Gandhi had recommended Gogoi's name as the CLP leader. Her recommendation was placed before the legislators and was accepted by all the 69 MLAs present in the meeting.

The CLP met at the New MLA Hostel complex here this morning. Speaking to newsmen after the meeting, Kamal Nath said Gogoi would take oath of office on Friday. Incidentally, lone



Tarun Gogoi with Hemoprova Saikia after the PCC chief was elected the Congress Legislature Party leader in Guwahati on Wednesday. Picture by Utpal Baruah

Trinamul Congress MLA from Badarpur Jamalludin Ahmed was also present in the CLP meeting, indicating that he had switched allegiance to the Congress.

Immediately after the meeting, Gogoi left for New Delhi along with Nath and Dhawan. Party insiders said Gogoi would call on the Congress high command to finalise the list of MLAs to be inducted into his ministry.

Before leaving for the national

capital, Gogoi said his top priority would be the state's economic development. Replying to a query, Dhawan said the people of Assam had rejected the "baseless" allegation about the Congress' alleged links with the Ufa.

"People of Assam have reposed faith in Gogoi's leadership as they feel their life and property will be secure under a Gogoi-led Congress government," he added.

According to party insiders,

those likely to be inducted into the ministry in the first phase include Bhumidhar Barman, Hemoprova Saikia, Bhubaneswar Kalita, Sarat Barkataki, Ardhendu Dey, Ismail Khan, Bharat Narah, Debananda Konwar and Pankaj Bora. The sources said though Gogoi planned to have not more than six Cabinet ministers in the first phase, he might have to go for 10 to keep the different "power centres" within the party happy.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 MAY 1975

# NSCN(IM)'s pullout threat a setback to Naga peace

Manvendra Singh

**THE ANNOUNCEMENT** by the NSCN(IM) leadership threatening to call off the ceasefire agreement within two weeks owing to the Government of India's decision to promulgate a similar pact with NSCN(K) is sad, serious, and a setback to the efforts to bring peace to Nagaland.

It is sad since the days of curfews and violence could well return to beautiful Nagaland. It is serious because the NSCN(IM) represents some of the most active among the Naga underground today, and their return to the ways of the gun would be a setback to the peace moves.

The NSCN(IM) could well be regarded the most effective, efficient and important Naga group. And any alienation of the NSCN(IM) is then necessarily an arresting of the moves toward peace. But all of these are still not reasons enough to compromise on principles before the threat held out by Thuingalang Muivah and Issak Chisi Swu.

Under no circumstances can the Governments of India and Nagaland call off the ceasefire accord with NSCN(K), and more importantly under no condition should the demand that the ceasefire with NSCN(IM) be extended to areas of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh adjoining Nagaland.

The Chief Ministers of these two States must be supported in their efforts, for the principle that they are holding on to is the very one that Muivah and Issak Chisi Swu are violating.

They put forth the argument that the Khaplang group must not be brought into the negotiations since its leader, their former ally, is Burmese by birth. This allegation of extra-territoriality placed on Khaplang may well be true, but the fact is that the group is active in Nagaland and has been responsible for the deaths of soldiers and civilians.

On the other hand, this same logic extended to the argument of extending the ceasefire to areas

outside Nagaland would then fall flat.

How could, then, the Nagaland ceasefire be extended to Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh simply because there is a Naga presence in these States? And who may or may not be supportive of the NSCN(IM)? It is a bit like declaring a ceasefire in the areas of Himachal Pradesh bordering Jammu & Kashmir simply because there have been some activities in the past. This logic gains for NSCN(IM) an extra-territoriality that it seeks to deny the Khaplang group. Both efforts must be resisted, and they must also be understood.

It has been the NSCN(IM)'s

aim to be crowned the sole representative of the Naga society, a la the LTTE. And the result of the latter's growth has been painfully evident to India in a number of ways. The divisions between the NSCN(IM) and Khaplang are territorial and tribal. Each is strong and weak in areas largely determined by the presence or absence of supporting tribes, very unlike the Hizbul-Mujahideen with its presence in every district of Jammu & Kashmir. This is the reality that must be understood by the decision makers.

The Nagaland ceasefire has affected the NSCN(IM) in a negative way, and with its ears to the

ground it must be in a position to sense the changes under way.

Every militancy reaches the 'y' junction of decision. While one turn takes the road to peaceful negotiations since continuing violence extracts a terrible price from the social base on which the militancy is founded, the other turn returns to the direction of destruction. This decision is not taken simply because the group is unmindful of the social costs (which in some cases may well be true), but because the life of militancy has become a habit that is difficult to give up.

The easy resort to violence, extortion and the 'fast life' is a bug that some are unable to give

up. The social outcasts find it difficult to cope with the changes, as is the case with Jammu & Kashmir and the proliferation of Pakistan's violently inclined. For, with peace comes the rule of law, and the inability to raise monies for a lifestyle that has become an addiction.

At the end of the day it is what the people want that determines how the society is going to adapt. And in Nagaland, the decision of the Tribal Councils in declaring zones of peace still stands. They have declared that no militant is to carry weapons in their areas, no clashes and no multiplicity of taxes. This should determine the States' policy, not some threats.

HD-1  
22/5

## Koijam Ministry voted out

By Our Correspondent

IMPHAL, MAY 21. The three-month-old Samata Party-led People's Front Ministry in Manipur headed by Mr. R.B. Koijam was defeated in a vote of confidence in the Assembly today.

In the 60-member House, 17 members voted for the one-line vote of confidence moved by the Public Health Minister, Mr. O. Joy, while 39 against it. The

BJP leader, Mr. R.K. Dorendra, and Opposition member, Mr. Rishang Keishing, abstained. One member, Mr. Thangminlien Kipgen, was disqualified.

The Samata Party, with a strength of 13, needed the support of the 26-member BJP which said today that it had issued a whip to its MLAs to support the Government.

During the discussion, Mr. Koijam highlighted his Government's achievements, and said moves had been made to usher in peace by declaring a month-long unilateral ceasefire. He said the vote of confidence was a test for the BJP's honesty which had emerged as the single largest party. Posterity would not "pardon the 60 elected members" if they



"fell for the hidden agenda".

Mr. K. Nipamacha, former Chief Minister and leader of the Manipur State Congress Party (Nipamacha), who voted for the motion, expressed the fear that the Central leaders may be planning to impose President's rule so that the ceasefire with the NSCN(IM) could be extended to the Naga pockets in Manipur. All Ministries have been opposing the demand to extend it.

That the Koijam Ministry would fall became clear when the strength of the MLAs opposing Mr. Koijam increased to 41 this morning.

They came to the Assembly complex from the Speaker's residence, where they have been camping since May 6, but none of them spoke during the discussion from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Earlier, Mr. Vivek Raj Wangkhem, the newly-elected Samata Party MLA, was sworn in.

### Koijam resigns

PTI reports:

Later, Mr. Koijam submitted the resignation of his Ministry and his own from Chief Ministership. The Governor accepted the resignations with immediate effect and asked him to continue till alternative arrangements were made.

Mr. Dorendra Singh today said a BJP-led front headed by him would stake claim to form a Government in Manipur tomorrow. After meeting the Governor, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah, he said he had apprised him of the latest developments.

THE HINDU

# Cong romps home in Assam, Mahanta submits resignation

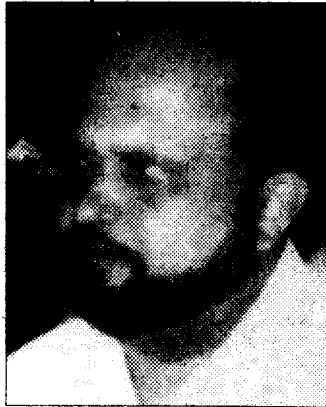
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
GUWAHATI, MAY 14

**T**HE Congress today romped home with an absolute majority in Assam while Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta tendered his resignation with his party Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) suffering a humiliating defeat.

Congress has so far won 68 seats and was expected to finish with more than 70, while the AGP was routed, winning only 18 seats, while its ally the BJP could manage only seven. The Congress, which contested all the seats on its own, has made a triumphant comeback and is all set to assume the reins of government under the leadership of Assam Pradesh Congress president Tarun Gogoi.

Chief Minister Mahanta today tendered his resignation to Governor Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha who asked him to continue till the formation of the new government.

The elections witnessed the downfall of several Cabinet colleagues of Mahanta, including



Mahanta...end of the road

Speaker Ganesh Kutum and Deputy Speaker Rajkhowa.

Among the Congress heavyweights who failed to make it to the House are the Leader of Opposition Silvius Condpan, former chief minister Anowara Taimur and former minister Amiya Gogoi.

Among the other prominent losers are Holiram Terang of ASDC(U), Hiranya Bhattacharya of Asom BJP, CPI's politburo member Promode Gogoi and CPI(M)'s state general secretary

Hemen Das.

Chief Minister Mahanta said he was surprised at the defeat of his government, but would respect the people's verdict.

Mahanta told reporters that though his party was defeated, "we are not going to sit back but will analyse what went wrong".

He pointed out that the pre-poll violence unleashed in the state had created fear psychosis in the minds of people. When it was pointed out to him that voters turnout was still large, Mahanta alleged the ULFA had threatened large-scale post-poll violence if the Congress was not voted to power in several constituencies.

Mahanta, who has been asked to continue till the next government is formed, said that the new government should continue with the fight against violence which his government had been following.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Minister Chandramohan Patowary, who lost from Dharampur, said he lost only because the ULFA had threatened voters to support the Congress candidate.

NDIAN EXPRESS

15 MAY 2001

## MANIPUR SPLIT

### Struggle between Samata Party and BJP

**L**IKE the polo played the year round in Manipur, the place of its origin, the toppling game remains the politicians' favourite pastime. No government is stable, even if it enjoys a majority. For instance, the Samata Party-led People's Front coalition government includes the BJP and has the support of 58 members in the 60-member House, but chief minister Radhabinod Kojam does not feel secure. There was enough indication of this when he was sworn in nearly four months ago. Kojam has only 12 members of his own and depended heavily on the 31 member Manipur State Congress Party. A breakaway Congress group, the MSCP ruled the state from December 1997 to January this year and divided at the organisational level, with one group led by former chief minister Nipamacha Singh and another by union minister of state for food processing Th Chaoba Singh. But they both supported Kojam and were given pride of place in the ministry. The formal split this week was not unexpected.

Who is behind all this is not difficult to guess. Kojam's fears stem from the fact that former chief minister RK Dorendro, a master of the toppling game, is now in the BJP and is capable of inciting disaffection in other smaller parties. The BJP has already increased its tally to eight by merging the two-member breakaway Democratic Federal Party of Manipur with the blessings of the central leadership. So it is only a matter of time before Dorendro teams up with the newly-formed 18-member Progressive Manipur State Congress Party which has made no secret of installing a BJP-led government.

THE STATESMAN

12 MAY 2001

## TRUCE IN DANGER

Isak-Muivah in the driver's seat

IT is surprising that almost four years after the ceasefire in Nagaland, its jurisdiction continues to be mired in controversy. Chairman Isak Swu and general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim have persistently accused the Centre of distorting the ceasefire accord by not covering the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. They are on record as having said that the Centre has "agreed in principle" on the need to unify the contiguous areas. There must be some substance in this. Even former chief negotiator Swaraj Kaushal resigned his post, alleging that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee reneged on his word to extend the ceasefire. The Centre has, however, been on the defensive and is not able to answer these charges. Arguably, it would have made some sense if the NSCN-IM had in protest backed out earlier and its threat to now call off the ceasefire is significant, coming as this does within days of New Delhi's formalisation of the truce with the rival NSCN faction headed by SS Khaplang. The NSCN-IM had all along asserted that they recognise no other group as representative of the Nagas. Since the people in the three states concerned have been kept guessing and the controversy threatens to put paid to the accord, the Centre should come out with a clarification as to what was the understanding, written or verbal, between it and the NSCN-IM.

The truce with the Khaplang faction was the result of the Centre's belated realisation of allowing the NSCN-IM prominence and was in response to the wishes of various organisations. It is only a matter of time before the other group, the Naga National Council, is roped in. The rebel leaders say it is ultimately the people who will decide Nagaland's future, and time and again all shades of opinion have categorically asserted that peace hinges on unity of all warring groups. It is for them to respect this sentiment. The objective of the ceasefire is merely to create a congenial atmosphere for talks. Reconciliation and a final settlement will come only when rebel attitudes change.

THE STATESMAN

11 MAY 2001

9/2/88  
10/5

## Campaign of terror

THE SPURT in violent attacks by the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) just before the elections is both worrying and baffling. The extremist organisation had been lying low for some time perhaps for tactical reasons. A secessionist outfit like the ULFA, which has all along given a call for boycotting the elections, was expected to intensify its violent campaign during the polls to scare away voters. But the loss of over 40 lives, mostly of workers and sympathisers of the AGP and the BJP, underlines the diabolic nature of this subversive group whose depredations have often been part of a well-calculated political strategy. This year's campaign has been by far the most violent. At first sight, the targeting of the AGP leaders by the ULFA militants is mystifying. After all, they had been in close contact with the AGP for a long time. During all these years, it was the Congress workers who bore the brunt of the ULFA's campaign of terror.

The BJP's charge that the ULFA is in league with the Congress is a typical example of political exaggeration. It only serves to divert attention from the kind of threat which the underground outfit poses. What is clear is that for all the official efforts to check its influence, the ULFA's influence and firepower have remained largely intact.

Evidently, the Prafulla Mahanta government's stage-managed surrenders by the militants were pure self-deception. The composition of the social and political forces which are still sustaining the ULFA remains a matter of conjecture. There was a time when it enjoyed some support particularly among the parochial sections in Assam. But its campaign of mindless violence has gradually undermined its position. Today it is increasingly viewed as a terrorist group, with killings, kidnappings and extortions as its main operational tactics.

Whatever sympathy the ULFA enjoyed at one time suffered a blow after its description of the Pakistani infiltrators in Kargil as "freedom fighters". It is disconcerting that it still manages to secure arms while its ranks are replenished by unemployed youth. However, its recent acts of ethnic cleansing have reportedly created a rift within the organisation. With no clear command, the ULFA militants are probably acting as desperados. Militants in Tripura and Manipur too belong to a similar league, unlike in Nagaland where the militants have responded favourably to the Centre's peace initiative. As the violent run-up to the elections in Assam has shown, the conditions there call for close surveillance.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 MAY 2001

# Election official in grip of Ulfa fear

MALINI VERMA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DHUBRI (Lower Assam), May 9. — Time: 5 a.m. Place: a room in a hotel. Mr Ranjan Chakravarty is gulping down glass after glass of Aristocrat whisky. Out in the open nature is venting its fury through thunderstorms and heavy rain.

The middle-aged presiding officer of nearby Golakpur polling station is about to finish the bottle when this correspondent peeps through the door kept ajar.

"Do you know why I'm drinking at this wee hour?" The bugger have sept me to an Ulfa area," he says. "I may be killed anytime in the booth itself...

The liquor may help me overcome the fear."

Mr Chakravarty is drinking apparently to keep his spirits up. He seems scared all the same, the many pegs of whisky notwithstanding.

He starts lispig: "I may not meet my wife and kids again... I have to report to the polling station at 6 a.m. sharp tomorrow... D-Day is coming..."

Mr Chakravarty's fear is not unfounded. The ultras have killed 40 people, including the BJP's Dibrugarh nominee, Jayanta Dutta, in the run up to the polls. "And no one knows how many more lives will be lost till the 10 May evening", says Md Nasiruddin, a senior Congress leader of Dhubri.

Terror is the in word in Dhubri, though the district town on the bank of Brahmaputra resembles a police camp. Men in khaki patrol the streets. Army jawans take positions behind piles of sandbags at countless points on the 300-km long road cutting through Guwahati, Barpeta, Bilasipra, Gauripur and Dhubri.

"Yes, there's a threat of an ULFA strike all the time", says the Dhubri's deputy commissioner, Mrs Gayatri Baruah. "My husband and son ring me up continuously asking me not to move out in the rural areas... our men are frightened and they have a reason for that... Except for the south, Dhubri is surrounded by insurgents..."

Militants sprayed bullets on an AGP office, killing two persons and injuring one in Raiganj area last week, she says.

The lawkeepers and poll officials may be tense, not the voters. Says one enthusiastic voter: "I'm not bothered about this Ulfa... Sulfa... We'll cast our votes."

"Ulfa will do nothing to the common voter," says another.

Mr Tarun Bharatiya, a filmmaker and lecturer in a Shilong college who keeps visiting Assam regularly explains: "The Assamese have no longer any reason to fear the Ulfa... For, it's no longer as potent a force as it used to be in the Eighties. It has lost its much of its fire power... It's striking here and

there to show it's still active."

"The locals are aware of the facts and so are not frightened... But most of the poll officials who have come from other states are scared because they are unaware of the real situation in Assam."

Mr Nizam Sheikh, a Dhubri resident, denies 40 persons have been killed in the past few days. Even if they have been, the "toll in Bihar, UP and several other states are far more during polls."

The AGP-BJP alliance is fighting with its back to the wall. The AGP holds four of the seven Assembly seats in Dhubri. "It will be a miracle if the AGP retains them," says Salima Khatun.

THE STATESMAN

10 MAY 2001



# Centre committed to Naga ceasefire

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 9 MAY

THE CENTRE, on Wednesday, sought to assure the NSCN(I-M), which has threatened to call off the four-year-old Naga ceasefire due to the former's failure to extend the operational area of the ceasefire. The Centre had said it would take all steps to maintain ceasefire and peace in the state.

The Centre's chief interlocutor for Naga talks, Mr K. Padmanabhaiah, told reporters here on Wednesday that with the ceasefire having brought about a sea change in the law and order situation in the state, the government was keen to take the peace process further and will be holding further discussions with the NSCN(I-M) and the chief ministers of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh on extension of the peace process to Naga-inhabited areas in their states.

Refuting the NSCN(I-M)'s charge that the government of India had not honoured its commitment to extend the ceasefire beyond Nagaland, Mr L Padmanabhaiah said the issue had been discussed with the chief ministers of the concerned states who had "an open mind."

The clarification comes after the NSCN(I-M)'s threat to review the ceasefire as the government "backtracked" on its assurance to extend the ceasefire coverage. The extension of the cease-fire is to expire on July 31, 2001.

It may be recalled that the Centre had agreed to "consider" the long-standing demand of the Naga outfit to extend the geographical coverage of the ceasefire, provided its willingness to address the issue was not misinterpreted by the Naga cadres as a step towards conceding their demand for "Greater Nagaland".

The Economic Times

10 MAY 2001

# NAGAS: THE LONG MARCH

**T**huingalang Muivah is one of the legendary insurgent figures of the Asian theatre, not just in the militancies of the Northeast which he has dominated after the death of Angami Zapu Phizo, the man who initiated the Naga movement against India. For those who dismiss the Nagas as hostiles or secessionists, they would do well to remember that as far back as 1929, a delegation of Nagas told a British government delegation that after they (the British) left, the Nagas wanted to be left alone as before their incorporation into the British Raj. There was the famous meeting, as told by the Nagas, between Mahatma Gandhi and Phizo and his group in the Harijan Basti where the Mahatma is believed to have said that he would not force the Nagas to stay in India. And on August 14, 1947, the Nagas declared independence!

To some Indians all this may sound irrelevant and specious but to the Nagas it is the very stuff of their history, it is the core of their being and their separateness and why my Naga friends say that they cannot be denounced as "secessionist when we were never part of you anyway!"

But back to Muivah: he led that long march, along with General Thinsolie through the leech-infested jungles of Northern Burma from Nagaland before landing up in China's Yunnan Province and finally at Kunming, the capital. With them were 100 Nagas, the first men to be trained in arms, politics and tactics by the Chinese. Muivah went on to meet Zhou en-lai, the elegant statesman who visualised China's support to struggling "national" liberation movements. Swu went to China in 1968. Today, in their late 60s, Muivah and Swu are among the last survivors of another era but they have ensured their place in history. Their contemporaries in Asia's drama of little armies fighting big systems include Zau Mai and Brang Seng of the Kachin Liber-

*At a hotel in Bangkok, Sanjoy Hazarika, journalist, writer and filmmaker, held a frank discussion with Muivah and Swu, two Naga leaders on whom much of the fate of their people, and to a degree that of the Northeast, depends. Hazarika, a specialist on regional issues, especially that of the Northeast and its neighbours, has in the past met Thuingalang Muivah, the general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), and Isaak Chisi Swu, the organisation's chairman. This time, the first meeting was held with Muivah, with one aide present. Swu was not in town that day but was present for the next interview*

ation Organisation and others of the Communist Party of Burma such as Kya Mint and Thakin Ba Thein Tin, of the Karenis and the Shans.

However, what is not clear is whether they will be remembered as the men who brought a lasting peace and settlement to the Naga Hills of Nagaland and Manipur, a peace that has eluded those lands for the past 40 years and more. What shape will that peace take, beyond the ceasefire which is being renewed every year, with the shape of a future Naga homeland? What legal shape will it have? How much autonomy can it be given? And will it have the support and mandate of the Naga people, including the groups with which the NSCN (I-M) have had such bitter disputes — especially the faction of S.S. Khaplang, which has, a few days ago, formalised a ceasefire that has already existed?

**T**o the I-M, the Khaplang group is the equivalent of an Indian puppet although this is stoutly denied by the other side. The Khaplang men and women have the support of the Konyaks, the most populous of the Naga tribes which have populations in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and in Burma. Khaplang himself is from the Burma side and is an *ang* or tribal chief. The tragic and bloody falling out between Khaplang and the Muivah/Swu groups led to the killing of dozens of Muivah's best fighters, an event that the latter has neither forgiven or forgotten.

Muivah himself is a Tangkhul of Manipur. His tribe does not have members in Nagaland. Swu is a Sema, an influential group in Nagaland, both in business and politics. And although the Gov-

ernment of India has declared a ceasefire with both NSCN factions, it has made clear that it will hold negotiations as of now only with Muivah's group. Four years of talks have not led to any substantial steps forward in the search for a durable and honourable settlement. In addition, there are still sharp differences in perception with the other Northeastern governments, especially Mahipur and Assam, on demands by the Nagas for the inclusion of areas from these states in a larger Naga homeland. The current ceasefire with their group has endured since it was first announced in 1997 and has given ordinary people in Nagaland a chance to live with less fear and greater openness.

What was clearly needed, as

**Muivah led that long march, along with General Thinsolie through the leech-infested jungles of Northern Burma from Nagaland before landing up in China's Yunnan Province and finally at Kunming, the capital. With them were 100 Nagas, the first men to be trained in arms, politics and tactics by the Chinese. Muivah went on to meet Zhou en-lai, the elegant statesman who visualised China's sup-**

port to struggling 'national' liberation movements. Swu went to China in 1968. Today, in their late 60s, Muivah and Swu are among the last survivors of another era but they have ensured their place in history. Their contemporaries in Asia's drama of little armies fighting big systems include Zau Mai and Brang Seng of the Kachin Liberation Organisation and others of the Communist Party of Burma

they said in the second half of this interview, was a political initiative from the Indian government. The talks in Bangkok also opened up little-known personal aspects of Muivah's life and how childhood experiences have shaped his perspectives. He recounted how during school, the Meiteis, the Vaishnavite plains dwellers who dominate his home state of Manipur, would refuse to let him drink water from the same glass. "Often I would be thirsty and at school in Imphal, they would tell me, 'Don't come near us.' I would ask for a cup of water and they would leave a cup of water for me and walk away, they used the equivalent of a derogatory word for us, you have it in other parts of India also — untouch-

BY SANJOY HAZARIKA

## PART I

able."

*Excerpts from the interview (Part I is an exclusive talk with Muivah):*

**O**N CHINA: My understanding is that they know how to go forward. They do not leave anything to chance. They will not tolerate any anti-China ring (around them). From the time of Chairman Mao, they have retreated step by step. In the case of the Soviet Union, they pushed forward and did not retreat and see what happened to the Soviets. Zhou and Mao (Zedong) were very clear and precise, they built China to an unshakeable position.

**ON RELATIONS WITH ASSAM AND MANIPUR AND THE ISSUE OF LAND:** We have told Assamese friends that the Nagas will not be a danger to them. When it comes to the land dispute, we believe that the Nagas and Assamese can do better without inviting anyone to settle the problem, without interference from any side. In the final analysis, this would be the best way of dealing with it for the Assamese and the Nagas are the best people to solve it. If they have that attitude, then an amicable solution is very near. With the Meiteis (valley dwellers of Manipur), it is very different. They think that they have given this land (the hills) to us. When were the Meiteis ever in the hills? The hills belong to us... The Meiteis attacked but did not conquer our land. They should understand that they cannot impose their will on us.

**ON CEASEFIRE AND ITS EXTENSION:** The Indian government does not seem to be sincere. The Naga side can honour its com-

mitment, but the Indians cannot. There should be no fighting between the NSCN and the Indians... They say that the ceasefire is for Nagaland. Where is the logic? Are you saying that we should fight in Assam and Manipur? There should not be any fighting at all. As far as the ceasefire coverage (to other states) is concerned, even till today it is not clear. The ground rules of the ceasefire will be modified as well as the area coverage. But we have clarified before and we will do so again: the ceasefire and the land issue are different, separate issues which have to be negotiated separately. The ceasefire must be there between the Indian forces and ours. There should be ceasefire even in Paris, wherever our people are. Ceasefire is for creating a congenial atmosphere. But if they do not cease fire, then what do they want? If they start raiding our offices and harassing our people... it is an insult to us. If a commitment is not honoured, then what is the point? They want to blackmail us, to push us away from the ceasefire.

**ON A VISION FOR THE FUTURE:** We are convinced that we cannot solve the problem by ourselves. In order to solve the problem, India must cease the use of force against all groups, against Assamese, Meiteis, Dimasas and Bodos. The Bodos and the Assamese will have to co-exist with each other. The differences should be settled through talks and peaceful means. But Indians are not yet prepared to understand the Nagas as well as the Northeast. Talks have to be unconditional from both sides. We should be prepared to understand the difficulties of the people of India: India should understand the difficulties on our part. Until we have the authority to decide our own future, how can we think of the future?

*TO BE CONCLUDED TOMORROW: Sanjoy Hazarika in conversation with both Naga leaders*

THE ASIAN AGE

• 8 MAY 2001

A 'people's movement' that became a cruel joke

# Assam's lost decade

ANY journalist of my vintage would have paid his dues somewhere in the course of a long career. I believe I paid mine as a reporter for this newspaper covering internal strife in the troubled eighties, more in the Northeast than in Bhindranwale's Punjab.

The Northeast, particularly Assam, was then a unique story, perhaps the only one in independent history when the national media's sympathy — even admiration — was with the trouble-makers. Most of us on the beat, barring the Calcutta media, never even called them troublemakers. In print, we called them the Assam movement leaders. In conversation, they were just "boys". We were so forgiving, so much in love with the "boys". They were said to have rejected (then home minister) Zail Singh's suitcases, defied (then IG, law and order) K.P.S. Gill's lathis, braved the scorn of the Bengali media, lived in modest hostel rooms in Guwahati University's rundown campus, where they sometimes did not have five rupees to buy you "bhaat" at lunch but at whose call the entire population of Guwahati would come out on the streets, turning L.P. Singh's curfew into such a miserable joke.

This was the early eighties. It is such a pity there was no television to record those heady times. Prafulla Mahanta and Bhriku Phukan led a people's movement that fired the imagination of not only gullible young reporters but old Gandhians and JP-ites who were quick to compare it with the satyagrahas of yore. Common people came out in lakhs, blockaded refineries, oil pipelines, roads, railway lines and for more than three years the writ of the government did not run. If the government imposed a curfew, people would fill the streets and defy the CRPF to thrash them. Then, to rub it in, on a national day like August 15, the student leaders would declare a "people's curfew" and you couldn't stir out unless you had a "curfew pass" from them. And just so they won't be misunderstood as being anti-national, Mahanta and Phukan would hold their own Independence Day celebration a day earlier or later. If, during some period of quiet, it seemed as if the movement was flagging, they would announce a martial sounds day.

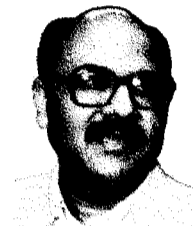
All of the Brahmaputra Valley would come out on the streets at a fixed hour, clanging anything they could find in their kitchens, thalis, buckets, pots and pans, anything that would make an almighty racket. Then they would declare a people's blackout and all of the Valley would look as if the Chinese were again probing what was left of the perimeter defences of Tezpur.

The "boys" were then gods. They could do nothing wrong. They

could never be bought, scared, enticed. Their word was law because they were so perfect, so sincere to not only the Assamese but the national cause, so indivisible, so incorruptible and so brilliant they even topped all their examinations in spite of spending all their time on the streets. Many of us thought a lot about that. The past decade has already shown how wrong we all were and that is not only because we figured much later that dotting professors and deans sometimes sat and answered the question papers for their favourite "boys".

they were not so weak and pusillanimous — remember how Mahanta retreated after making such noise on the issue of corporate links with ULFA? Did you ever even hear anything about the cases his police registered with such fanfare against Tata executives?

## NATIONAL INTEREST



SHEKHAR GUPTA

THE subcontinent specialises in producing a particular breed of demagogue, one who articulates a minority's grievances, real and imagined, so effectively as to build a mass persecution complex. I have made much of my living as a reporter

**Mahanta has run a government twice as corrupt as any the Congress gave Assam in the past and about a tenth as effective as the late Hiteswar Saikia's**

The coming election will further prove how touchingly stupid people like us were in not being our usual, sceptical, questioning selves while dealing with them.

IT WILL not be the first time that the "boys" will be defeated in an election. Ever since Rajiv Gandhi enticed them into the mainstream political process after the peace accord of 1985, everything the former agitation leaders have done has underlined just one point. That deep down, they were as cynical, selfish, divisible and venal as other politicians. Mahanta and Phukan started out a bit like Vajpayee and Advani, chief minister and home minister, and often called Ram and Lakshman by their followers. Today

dealing with the type. Bhindranwale, Pirabhakaran, Subhash Ghisingh, Pakistan's Mohajir leader Altaf Hussain are all masters of the same craft. But there was no one better at that than Mahanta and Phukan. Their real master stroke was giving their very regional movement a nationalist colour — they were, after all, only fighting Bangladeshi infiltrators. But at a "people's" Independence Day rally they wouldn't forget to ask how come the national anthem (written by a Bengali) made no mention of the hills and valleys of Assam.

They also built this elaborate secular facade... they were not singling out Muslim infiltrators, they wanted the Hindus out equally. Those of us who witnessed the mas-

**It is a pity so many of us were fooled into believing these "boys" would actually change, not only the face of Assam, but that of national politics**

they are the most bitter of enemies. Mahanta's direct electoral rival is Atul Bora, the former general secretary of the All Asom Gana Sangram Parishad, the ubiquitous bearded presence in so many group photographs at negotiations with the Centre. Mahanta has run a government twice as corrupt as any the Congress gave Assam in the past and about a tenth as effective as the late Hiteswar Saikia's. Ask any long-suffering IAS/IPS officer of the Assam cadre and chances are he will talk nostalgically of Saikia, even Anwara Taimur in comparison. At least

sacres during the February 1983 elections at Nellie and elsewhere were often confused by the evenhandedness with which both Hindu and Muslim settlers were slaughtered. We were confused because we were sensitised so far to look at riots through a communal prism. So we missed the point that this was, pure and simple, ethnic cleansing, the first time such a thing happened in our independent history. If you spoke Bengali, you were an "infiltrator" and, therefore, in trouble. But what Mahanta, Phukan and others also proved subsequently was that

ethnic hatred was negotiable as long as they had political power. They forgot the foreigners' issue, deported even fewer infiltrators than the Congress governments had done in the past and failed to bring in even the most basic concessions to their impoverished state from the Centre.

Mahanta has run the most ineffectual, unimaginative and worthless government in Assam in a long, long time and chances are that his own voters are now going to make him pay for it. The very Assamese caste Hindu who treated him and the other student leaders like gods is now set to boot out each one of them. Not only is the Congress likely to make a second return to power now, Mahanta's alliance with the BJP also signals the arrival of the second national party as a main contestant in the state. While all the other regional parties have strengthened themselves by aligning with the NDA, the Asom Gana Parishad will now finish whatever remained of its old romance, ideology, regional commitment.

Let me also suggest, nothing could be better for Assam. The demise of the AGP, and thereby the final burial of the euphoria of the old movement, is as welcome a change as the growth of the BJP in Assam. The BJP had already been eating into the votebank of the AGP and now that process will become more complete. For many of the loyal, Assamese caste Hindu supporters of the AGP, it will be a logical homecoming to the BJP. With its bitter and bloody divisions of ethnicity and language, Assam, more than Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu, will benefit if its politics is run and contested from a more national standpoint, something the rise of the BJP as the main challenger to the Congress would now do.

Funny, that we should so happily anticipate the death of a regional party in this era of coalitions. But Mahanta, Phukan, Bora, Bharat Narah, Nagen Saikia, Arun Sarma, all the legendary leaders of that great movement proved so inadequate to the challenge of converting a people's movement into a credible political force for the benefit of their own state. Assam, as a consequence, has not only lost a decade, it's even slipping backwards. The only good this has done is drive more and more talented Assamese outside the region in search of jobs and opportunities, something they were loathe to do in the past. Besides this, a decade of rule by alleged people power has done nothing for Assam. It is such a pity so many of us, this writer included, were fooled into believing these "boys" would actually change, not only the face of Assam, but that of national politics. But then we were perhaps so young, idealistic, and gullible.

**T**HE taxi took longer than expected to reach the agreed location in Bangkok. The reason for the delay was the city's perennial problem — traffic jams, although these have eased enormously after the construction of numerous flyovers and expressways in the past few years. One good thing about taxis in Bangkok, as in other major cities of the world where the basics of modern town planning exist, is that they are airconditioned. So, the delay, this muggy mid-April morning, is not as bad as it could have been. But, admittedly, I was a little tense — after all, it had been five years since my last meeting with Thiungulung Muivah, the General Secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M group).

Muivah was waiting at the designated meeting area with an aide while another received me at the hotel lobby. The legendary figure of the Naga movement for independence was dressed casually. This first meeting lasted seven hours in which we covered a vast range of issues, from the peace process to visits to China and meetings with Zhou en-Lai, about his perceptions of the North East, relations with other militant groups and his vision for the future. The second interview in Bangkok a few days later lasted three hours and in this, Muivah was joined by Isaak Chisi Swu, one of his closest comrades and the chairman of the organisation. Together, they comprise what is known to the Nagas as "the collective leadership" of the NSCN (I-M). Recalling that first visit to China in 1966, Muivah said that initially the Chinese did not take him and his co-leader, General Thinsolie of the Naga army, or their 100 followers seriously. But after watching them for three months, seeing their interest in political and strategic issues, they were convinced enough to eventually take them to Chinese Premier Zhou en-lai. The Chinese statesman's initial response was "You are a child!" At the time, Muivah was 30 and he was impressed by Zhou's "greatness and graciousness". "He was always prepared to understand us"; Muivah too was

# In search of peace

Sanjoy Hazarika talks to Naga rebel leaders T. Muivah and Isaak Chisi Swu about the Naga issue and the recent peace initiatives



given time to present his views.

The new organisation, NSCN, split a few years later over personal and ideological grounds, opening another chapter of fratricidal killings and hatred among the Nagas. Muivah and Swu were on one side and Khaplang led the other. There is a smaller third group, the old Naga National Council led by Adino, Phizo's daughter. The divisions have been marked by bitter, factional fighting that has scarred the Naga movement and led to bloodshed on either side. Khaplang now runs his own faction of the NSCN, which has been denounced by the I-M as being in India's pocket. Indeed, the latest

**Although Muivah has not officially reacted to the latest peace moves, he and Swu made it clear that they regarded such a truce with suspicion**

ceasefire between the Khaplang faction and the Government of India has largely been enabled by the Assam Rifles, which has been in extremely close contact with this "insurgent" group for a long time.

The group is also said to be close to the Nagaland's Congress government led by S.C. Jamir, who has been calling for a separate ceasefire with this faction for years. The mutual antipathy between Jamir and Muivah is well-known and the April 28 ceasefire may lead to more complications to the Naga story than it may resolve. The Centre says it is seeking to increase the space for peace in the Naga hills and

elsewhere in the North East, especially the eastern districts of Arunachal Pradesh where the Khaplang group is strong.

What makes both comprehension of these issues and their resolution more difficult is that technically, the Government of India cannot come to an agreement with Khaplang; he is, after all, a Naga leader born on the Burmese side of the border. Any agreement at any level, should, therefore, be conducted with an aide or associate born on the Indian side!

Although Muivah has not officially reacted to the latest peace moves, he and Swu made it abundantly clear in their interview that they regarded such a truce with suspicion and as one which would be used against them. However, the Government of India says that the Khaplang group will be restricted to specific, designated camps as is being done for the I-M militants and that this would help keep a safe distance between the two.

But there was fulsome praise from both Muivah and Swu for former prime minister Narasimha Rao, whom they had first met secretly in Paris in 1993, and who authorised follow-up meetings by trusted interlocutors in New York and Bangkok. They were also saddened by the sudden death of Rajesh Pilot, the former minister of state for home, who had interacted with them both during and outside his days of power. "We have great respect for Narasimha Rao because he honours his word, we told him we would leave no stone unturned" in the search for a long-term settlement, said Muivah, pondering the strange ways of Indian democracy and the former prime minister's current predicament. I suggested that they must be weary of dealing with so many prime ministers — the perils of elective democracy — from Narasimha Rao, Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral and now Vajpayee. The "collective leadership" of the NSCN has remained intact for over nearly two decades. There was perhaps a lesson for India in this! The Naga leader smiled in response.

(To be continued)

THE HINDU

5 MAY 2001

40-2 ✓

## VIOLENCE IN ASSAM

5/3

THE POLL PROCESS in Assam has been vitiated. The spurt of violence in the past few days, including the murderous attacks on candidates may not be new. The political scene in the State had been held hostage by armed mercenaries belonging to the various outfits, the ULFA in particular, during the past decade or so. It is a fact that these outfits, armed with sophisticated weapons, had managed in the past few years to strike at their will and members of the various political parties have been their target. In this sense, escalation of violence was only to be expected with elections to the State Assembly round the corner. And, hence, the State Government — the political leadership as well as the civil administration — cannot escape the charge of having failed in their duty. The armed mercenaries could not have struck in the way they did (killing a BJP candidate and also injuring a nominee of the Samata party) if only the personnel belonging to the law-enforcing agencies were on guard particularly when the poll process is on. The State Government could not have remained oblivious to the machinations of these armed gangs, those belonging to the ULFA in particular, during the poll campaign. The ULFA has been engaged in disrupting all institutions of the democratic edifice and it was imperative for the police machinery in the State to up the ante.

It may be true that the recent spell of violence has to do with the elections. But then, most parts of Assam have been in the grip of the mercenaries for over two decades now. And the major political parties in the State have had a role, in letting the political discourse slip into such anarchy, in their own way. If the ruling AGP as a political party had its beginnings in the violent agitations that marked the State's political discourse in the early 1980s, sections in the Congress(I)'s Assam unit were not at all innocent in the game of promoting sectarian groups with a view to vitiate the political atmo-

sphere. And the BJP, an ally of the AGP in this election, too had its role in whipping up passions across the State on communal lines and conjuring up images of a threat to the demographic balance in Assam from the immigrants from Bangladesh. In this sense, the BJP's campaign was picked up from where the All Assam Student's Union (AASU) — out of which the AGP was born — had left off after its leaders wrested power in the 1987 Assembly election. It is in this context that one will have to look at the violence in Assam as not merely a poll-eve development. Instead, the killings and the attacks (taking place by the day) are an integral part of the strategy by forces inimical to the democratic process. And for this very reason such escalation of violence on the eve of the elections were only to be expected.

In this context, the remarks by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, charging the Congress(I) with having engaged ULFA mercenaries to vitiate the poll process is simply unwarranted. Mr. Advani must realise at least now that he is no longer just another leader of a political party. Instead, it is his responsibility as the Union Home Minister to ensure adequate Central forces in Assam (as well as in other States that go to polls on May 10) rather than behave in such partisan manner as he has in this context. This is the imperative for Mr. Advani and his aides in the Union Home Ministry, as well as those at the helm in the Government in Assam at least in the immediate context. The trouble in Assam, with armed mercenaries of various hues managing to strike at will and hold the political process to ransom, is indeed a larger challenge. And the political leadership at the Centre and the various parties that have a stake in Assam cannot afford to let the democratic process be derailed. This is the task before the leaders of the parties and the personnel of the civil administration in the long run and not just until the elections are over.

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THE HINDU

1987.07

## More forces for Assam as ULFA violence continues

**GUWAHATI, MAY 4.** Suspected ULFA insurgents killed eight AGP workers in Assam's Nalbari district as authorities today deployed more companies of security personnel in the sensitive areas ahead of the May 10 Assembly polls. A group of ULFA militants stormed the AGP office at Bogorihatigaon in Dharmapur, the constituency of the State Agriculture Minister, Mr. Chandramohan Patowary, and opened fire.

Three workers were killed on the spot and another died on way to hospital, police said. Four workers succumbed later. In another incident, 17 AGP workers were injured in a grenade attack by the ULFA at a party poll office in Goalpara. The ULFA has so far killed 29 people in poll-related violence, including the BJP's Dibrugarh candidate, Jayanta Dutta, and injured over 50 people, including Barpeta's AGP candidate, Mr. Kumar Dipak Das.

Mahanta blames EC: Meanwhile, the Chief Minister, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, termed the Election Commission's decision to hold a one-day poll in the State a "disaster". "The people of Assam are aware that my Govern-

ment has repeatedly stressed the need for holding the elections in the State in three phases, but unfortunately the E.C. in its supreme arrogance, mistrust of the Government's stand and lack of foresight decided to hold elections on a single day."

He said the Commission's restrictions had come in the way of maintaining law the order.

10 injured in Haldia: In West Bengal, at least 10 persons, including a Tinamool Congress candidate, were injured when a clash broke out between Trinamool and CPI(M) supporters at Brajalal Chowk in Medinipur's Haldia sub-division. Police said the Students Federation of India, on behalf of the CPI(M), filed an FIR alleging that TC supporters thrashed three of their supporters and broke their three-wheeler while they were campaigning for the CPI(M) candidate, Mr. Nityananda Bera.

However, Mr. Tushar Mondal, sitting MLA and TC candidate for Sutahata SC constituency, alleged that CPI(M) workers hurled stones and injured him and six of his party workers. — PTI, UNI

More reports on Pages 13, 15

**THE HINDU**

**5 MAY 2001**

# ASSAM KILLINGS

5/6 5/15  
Ulfa must not be allowed to disturb poll

**I**F the United Liberation Front of Asom's current activity is anything to go by, the 10 May assembly elections will be anything but peaceful. Over the past three weeks 10 people have been shot dead in different districts. A damning reflection on the law enforcing agencies is that it should happen despite beefed up security measures. Governor SK Sinha (ret'd) has assured the electorate of checking violence through surface and air surveillance but to no apparent avail. He has been busy propping up the chief minister on behalf of the Union to the extent of allowing prosecution at public expense of Prafulla Mahanta's allegations of defamation at the hands of responsible newspaper editors. The uncomfortable truth which will not go away is that Ulfa is the creation of the ruling Asom Gana Parishad. During his first term, chief minister Mahanta is alleged to have helped in sending a group to Nagaland for training. If the Ulfa remained quiet or to some extent helped the AGP in the 1996 Assembly poll, it was because the party manifesto demanded the right to self-determination and promised the army's withdrawal. The promises were never honoured, but it did not prevent Mahanta from making confusing noises to placate the militants so it hardly behoves the AGP to blame the Ulfa.

Pre-poll violence is not a new phenomenon. Not surprisingly, even the Election Commission no longer thinks in terms of postponing dates. In Tripura before the 1993 assembly elections, when the seriousness of the trouble was far less than it is today, elections were postponed for more than a month. The AGP is making excuses because it is haunted by humiliating routs in the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The AGP-BJP accusation that the Congress is hand in glove with the Ulfa is nonsense and only denotes the extent of their nervousness. In any case, should the alliance fair dismally, either partner has a ready excuse to blame the nexus.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 2001

# Cong demands CBI probe into charges of Ulfa links

P P Singh

GUWAHATI 6 MAY

TOP CONGRESS (I) leaders from Delhi and Assam on Sunday called for a CBI enquiry into the allegations of having made a nexus with Ulfa to win the polls. This decision comes in the wake of pre-poll violence which has left over 25 people dead so far all over the state.

AICC (I) general secretary and Assam polls in-charge along with APCC (I) president Tarun Gogoi while addressing the media said since even the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has accused them of having a nexus with the militants like Ulfa, they call upon the Union home minister L.K Advani to order an enquiry by CBI or by a Judge nominated by the Chief Justice of India within the next 24 hrs "into present and past links of the ULFA."

He said: "if he does not order the CBI enquiry he should apologise to the people of Assam for misleading and politicizing violence. He said when their party comes to power they will use political and security forces to solve the problem. APCC (I) chief Tarun Gogoi added that the AGP government had five years to solve the problem of extremism and militancy and they have failed.

Meanwhile, the APCC chief who is also being projected as the next chief minister of the state (though he is not contesting the polls) added that they would tackle the problem of insurgency through economic development of the state as most of the problems relates to the economic neglect of the state.

When asked, none of the Congress leaders present were willing to outrightly blame Ulfa for



TRUTH MUST PREVAIL: APCC (I) chief Tarun Gogoi (R) and AICC (I) general secretary Kamal Nath, who is in charge of polls in Assam and West Bengal, addressing the media at Guwahati on Sunday— Caroline Singh

the killings, they said: "we condemn these killings no matter who is behind them, even if it is Ulfa." Even the killings of their own party men they did not want to attribute to Ulfa.

Kamal Nath said: "it is for the state government to find out the people behind the killings since they have an alliance with the BJP they have all the resources of the central government. Let Mr Prafulla Mahanta find out and let us condemn them."

Tarun Gogoi and Kamal Nath said: "we want to condemn any one and every one behind the killings, I have said this before and I am saying this unambiguously now specially for the ears of Prime Minister and Mr Advani."

Mr Nath also attacked the state governor Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S.K Sinha and said the governor might be a BJP man in his heart but he cannot be so in action. Mr Nath said: "we condemn the governor for trying to usurp the role of executive." He said: "The governor must realise that after 13th there will be a new government."

## Kamal Nath may have encouraged defections in WB

P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 6 MAY

DID AICC (I) general secretary Kamal Nath who is also in charge of his party polls in West Bengal and Assam encourage defections in his party? If one has to believe his own words the answer is, yes.

Mr Nath was addressing the media on Sunday. When asked why his party went for an alliance with Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, who had encouraged defections in their party before, he said these MLA's had approached him in Delhi and apprised him of the ground realities.

He said they informed him if they contested under Cong (I) ticket they will not win, "it was due to this unfavourable situation that I told them to meet Mamata."



## Ten Congmen killed in Assam

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, May 5

AFTER LOSSES of lives in BJP and AGP, the pre-poll bloodshed in the State took its toll in the Congress camp with unidentified gunmen killing 10 party workers at three constituencies on Friday night.

In Dharmapur Assembly constituency in Malbari district public emotions following the killing of six AGP workers on Thursday night turned violent as AGP supporters burnt down at least 30 election offices of Congress yesterday night.

APCC's media department president Dr Bhagawan Chandra Lahkar told *Hindustan Times* on Saturday that five party workers were shot dead in Barpeta, two in Biswanath Chariali and three in Borcholla constituencies on Friday.

In Dharmapur constituency, where State Agriculture Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary is a AGP candidate, led a protest march on Friday shouting slogans against the Congress and ULFA.

The protestors later burnt down 30 Congress election offices. The violence claimed the life of BJP's candidate for Dibrugarh while the AGP candidate for Barpeta was injured. Gunmen suspected to be ULFA militants together killed eight other AGP and BJP workers. No militant outfit has claimed responsibility for the killings.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

36 MAY 20

## 'NO UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE IN ASSAM'

# Increasing powers of EC should be gone into: PM

By Barun Das Gupta

**GUWAHATI, MAY 5.** The powers of the Election Commission are increasing and this matter "should be gone into", the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has said.

Mr. Vajpayee, who was addressing a press conference at the Raj Bhavan here today, was answering a question on the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's, statement yesterday strongly criticising the Election Commission for not agreeing with the State's suggestion of holding the polls in the State in three phases.

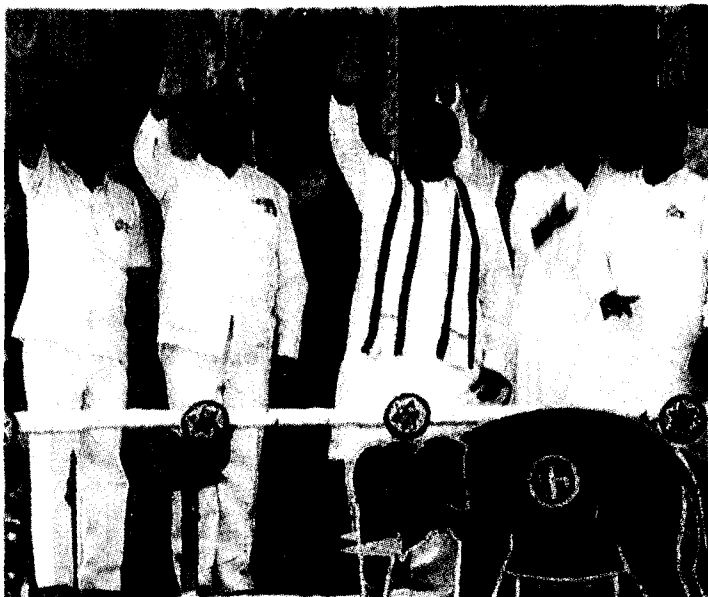
Mr. Mahanta had also said that for the last several years "the encroachment of the powers of the State by the Election Commission has been increasing and it has reached a stage where it has become difficult to effectively discharge even the Constitutional obligations without being blamed for violating the code of conduct."

Mr. Vajpayee said that "unfortunately" the Election Commission had not accepted the Chief Minister's suggestion for holding the poll in three phases.

Agreeing with Mr. Mahanta's contention that the Election Commission's powers were increasing, Mr. Vajpayee, however, ruled out "codifying" these powers. Sometimes, political parties themselves wanted more powers for the Commission to ensure free and fair elections.

Asked whether the Government was conducting any inquiry into the BJP's allegation of a Congress-ULFA "nexus", he said while no "formal inquiry" had been ordered, an "internal inquiry" was being held and the "truth will come out".

He said there was no need for a unilateral ceasefire with the militants in Assam and no talks were



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, at an election rally in Guwahati on Saturday. The Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the BJP in-charge for north-east, Mr. Sunil Shastri, the BJP State unit president, Mr. Rajen Gohian, and the Union Minister, Mr. Bijoy Chakraborty, are also seen. — Photo: Ritu Raj Konwar

being held with the ULFA. Talks were going on between India and Bhutan on dealing with the militants who had taken shelter in that country and had set up camps there.

Earlier, Mr. Vajpayee addressed a central election rally at the Judges' Field here. In a city of over a million people, hardly 2,000 people, including a large number of uniformed and plainclothes securitymen, TV cameramen and newsmen, had gathered.

A BJP leader said the poor turnout was due to the fear struck by the ULFA by the recent killings. "How will people coming from the villages go back after dark," he asked.

That Mr. Vajpayee was fully aware of the situation became clear when he told the gathering: "If you are afraid of coming to the

meeting, how will you come out on the polling day to cast your votes?"

His message to the people was: shed fear, come out fearlessly, exercise your franchise and defeat the conspiracy of the terrorists to drown democracy in a bloodbath.

### Mamata 'living in illusion'

**PURNEA (Bihar), MAY 5.** Less than two months after she quit his Government, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, for the first time, today launched a frontal attack on the Trinamool Congress leader, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, accusing her of "living in illusion" and playing second fiddle to the CPI(M).

"The Trinamool's decision to snap ties with the BJP in West

Bengal will not adversely affect our electoral fortunes," Mr. Vajpayee told reporters during a brief stopover at the Chainpur Air Force base here while proceeding on a campaign trail to Malda in West Bengal.

"Ms. Mamata Banerjee has the habit of living in illusion and we can't help it," he said.

### 'Trinamool is C team of CPI(M)'

Later addressing an election rally at Bulbulchandi in West Bengal, he said the Trinamool after joining hands with the Congress had emerged as the "C team" of the CPI(M) in the State.

"The Trinamool Congress had dubbed the Congress as the B team of the CPI(M), but after allying with the Congress it has itself become the C team of the CPI(M) and is fishing in troubled waters." He also doubted that Trinamool-Congress combine could make any change in the State. He expressed the confidence that BJP and its allies would perform very well in Assembly polls in West Bengal and Assam. "We will perform very well in the elections in both West Bengal and Assam."

### 'Let Cong., Left seek mandate'

Mr. Vajpayee said that the Congress and Left parties, demanding his resignation, should themselves go to the people to secure a mandate.

"The Congress and the Left parties, which disturbed the last session of Parliament, has been demanding my resignation without any logic," Mr. Vajpayee said addressing an election meeting at Malda district in West Bengal.

"I can't just resign as I have a majority support. The people elected me and it is only they can remove me. Let the Congress and the Left parties go to the people and get their mandate," he said.

— PTI

# Congress, Ulfa hand-in-glove: PM

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, May 5

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee charged the Congress with "working hand-in-glove" with the outfit.

"The present situation in this election indicates that they both (Congress and ULFA) are working hand in gloves," he told newsmen at the Raj Bhawan.

"Congress workers have been killed on Friday and yet the party does not seem to have any clear views on these killings," he said.

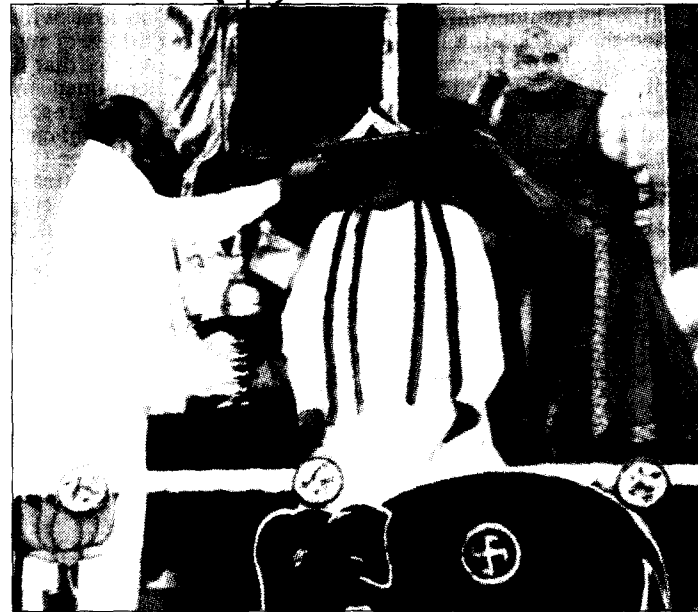
The Prime Minister said that no formal probe was needed to prove the allegation of Ulfa-Congress nexus. "Internal inquiry is going on and the report will be submitted soon."

Earlier in the day, addressing a joint election meeting of AGP and BJP at Judges' Field in Guwahati, he said that the Congress has lost its voice to condemn the killings. The party is also not willing to open its mouth either, which is enough to indicate its support to militants.

"When the Congress finds its grip over power losing, it stops believing in democracy and that is what they are doing," he said.

The Prime Minister was also critical of the Election Commission's decision to hold the election in one day, rejecting the Chief Minister's suggestion for a two-phase poll.

"It is unfortunate that the EC did not accept the Chief Minister's suggestion and decided to



Prime Minister A B Vajpayee being welcomed with the traditional Assamese jaapi and sarai at a rally in Guwahati on Saturday.

hold the election in one go." He said that once the election notification has been issued there was no way to change the dates but added that assessment of the law and order situation was under the jurisdiction of the commission. The Chief Minister had demanded two-phase election on law and order grounds.

Asked to comment on the Chief Minister's letter stating that EC's powers have been extended far too much, he said

that there was no need for codification at the moment.

"In fact in certain cases, political parties demand more powers for the EC to ensure a free and fair election," he said.

On the BJP's failure to repeal the IM(DT) Act, he said that since the party does not have a majority in the Parliament, the Act could not be repealed. "I hope good sense will prevail and we can get support from the opposition."

9-11-56,  
He said that the Centre was trying to evolve a common policy with the Bhutan Government for flushing the militant groups of the State settled in the Himalayan Kingdom and talks are on between both the countries.

Describing militancy as both a political as well as a law and order problem, he said that talks are being held with all concerned, except Ulfa, to bring the militant outfit to the negotiation table. "At the moment there is no need of unilateral cease-fire with Ulfa," he said.

**No Intelligence feedback:** The recent attack on Border Security Force (BSF) by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was by all counts an intelligence marvel by Bangladesh. For the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee himself admitted that attack, which left 16 BSF personnel killed in cold blood, had taken India by surprise. "What happened was so sudden that the forces were taken by surprise," he said here on Saturday while addressing newsmen.

He said that his Government has been doing everything to ensure a secured border. However, he refused to comment on former defence minister George Fernandes' remarks made here on Friday that India has been careless with its borders for the last 53 years of independence.

"I am not aware of such statement and I would not like to comment on what has appeared in newspapers," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

5 MAY 2001

6 MAY 2001

# Two to Tango

## In Step with the Naga Peace Process

By SANJOY HAZARIKA

11-10 21/5

OVER the past four years, the most powerful militant organisation in the North East, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), has held talks with the Indian government on a lasting settlement to the Naga issue which has defied solution for as long as India has been independent. During this period, the two sides have made tangible progress towards peace on the ground, despite many hiccups. The I-M group is a formidable fighting machine and ideological organisation, whose leaders, T Muivah and Isaak Chisi Swu, are regarded as the most influential of the Naga political leadership "outside" the Indian system.

This peace process has been translated into a ceasefire that began in the summer of 1997, following earlier initiatives under then prime ministers Narasimha Rao and Deve Gowda. There have been violations of the ceasefire by both sides but a peace, however tenuous and fragile, is welcome after decades of bloodshed and hatred. The people of Nagaland have been able to breathe freely again and are beginning openly to speak their minds.

It is worth evaluating the value of this ceasefire, especially because the government has now felt it appropriate to enter into another ceasefire arrangement with a second major armed insurrection, the NSCN (K), which is led by S S Khaplang. Chief minister SC Jamir of Nagaland has long encouraged a ceasefire with the NSCN (K), which is a rival of the other faction. Indeed, the Khaplang faction is widely perceived to have close links with the Indian security forces and it is no secret that the Assam Rifles has been associated with the launch of the latest ceasefire.

Under the 1997 truce, the I-M and the government and its security forces have observed a cessation of hostilities in the existing state of Nagaland. There is a Ceasefire Monitoring Group (CFMG), comprising representatives of the Centre, the state government and the militant group. This group looks at the conduct of the ceasefire, brings to the attention of the other side what it regards as violations and seeks remedies. In addition, there is another group that is associated with the framing of ground rules for the extension of the ceasefire to other states where the NSCN (I-M) has a presence. Under this group, the NSCN needs to notify

the government of the existence of various camps; no armed movement of militants is allowed within the ceasefire region and any movement must first be notified to the government authorities.

At the third level is the political process, where the government's representatives hold discussions with the NSCN (I-M) leadership at a designated venue to look at the bricks of a political settlement. The political process can be made possible if the other two processes are working — but also, at a more significant level, if Naga civil society speaks out openly against intimidation, violence and extortion and clarifies what it seeks in terms of a settlement.

Recently, I held lengthy discussions with Mr Muivah and Mr Swu in Bangkok. Although the familiar rhetoric and suspicions about India, Indians and Indian motives still swirls around, one also found

### IN BRIEF

- The NSCN (I-M)'s position is that the ceasefire process is separate from the land issue
- The organisation is prepared to assure India of the security of its borders
- The PM must nominate a senior leader to the negotiating team

them firm on their goals yet open and flexible. They were prepared to understand the difficulties of the Indian government and that of its leaders. But they also have a point when asking for reciprocity.

There were several significant positive points which emerged from these conversations. One, while aware of the limitations of the government, they want the talks to be upgraded to that of a senior politician representing the prime minister. In the past years, Swaraj Kaushal, the former Lt-governor of Mizoram who had a role in shaping the Mizoram peace accord of 1986, was the prime minister's representative until he had a falling out with the powers that be and was regarded as having exceeded his brief.

Two, the talks have been hampered by the arrest of Mr Muivah in Bangkok in January 2000 for travelling on a fake passport. He is currently out of prison but one case against him continues and he is not at liberty to travel out of Thailand

nor does he apparently have a genuine travel document.

Three, Mr Muivah and Mr Swu categorically stated that the ceasefire, when extended to other regions in the North East where the NSCN (I-M) was active, would not mean a concession of those lands to any Naga homeland, which some call Nagalim, by these states. It was explained to them that even redrawing the boundaries of existing states within the Indian Union would be a very difficult task because of the political sensitivities of the issue. The Naga leaders affirmed strongly that the ceasefire process was separate from the issue of land and both questions had to be discussed separately.

Four, Mr Muivah regarded a possible ceasefire between the government and the Khaplang group as inimical to them. However, the latest announcement by the government on this ceasefire indicates that the Khaplang group will be restrained from any action against other armed groups and also restricted to specific camps where they will be located. This framework of control should be enough to satisfy the I-M that their rivals cannot turn their fire against them and that this is, truly, a move for enlarging the space for peace in the North East. However, much depends on how the government is able to keep the Khaplang group and the state government in check.

Five, the NSCN (I-M) is prepared to assure India of its security on its borders, citing how it refused to attack Indian forces during the Kargil conflict as evidence of its sense of honour.

Finally, I found the "collective leadership", which is how Mr Muivah and Mr Swu are described in their organisation's parlance, prepared to respond to a meaningful gesture from the government's side, especially at the level of the prime minister.

First, Atal Behari Vajpayee must nominate without further delay a senior political leader, who has his confidence and negotiating skills, to the negotiating team. Second, he must make a major statement of reconciliation, one that only he is uniquely placed to make, that will reach out to the Naga people, a people of great valour and dignity, seeking a long-term settlement that meets the concerns of all sides, honours all those who have died for causes dear to their heart, seeks unity and ensures an end to bloodshed.

# 18 AGP, BJP workers killed in Assam pre-poll violence

P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 2 MAY

SO FAR, at least 18 people, including BJP candidate for Dibrugarh Jayanta Dutta, have been killed in pre-poll violence in Assam since the poll process started in the state on April 4 this year.

Thirty-four persons have also been seriously injured, including AGP candidate from Barpeta Kumar Dipak Das, DGP H.K. Deka stated here on Wednesday.

Mr Deka, while addressing the media, stated that they had had prior intelligence reports on Ulfa and NDFB making AGP and BJP candidates and partymen their targets. They had intensified security covers for candidates and the various party offices.

He also said that on April 30, they had reviewed the situation under the Unified Command. A re-deployment of troops had been discussed and they had deployed 300 columns to ensure free and

fair polling in the state on May 10.

He said that since April 4, there had been 174 poll-related incidents of violence, in which 34 people had been killed, including political workers, poll officials, police, security personnel, onlookers and extremists and 129 people had been injured.

He said they had also recovered 94 weapons with 476 rounds of ammunition and 99 explosives, detonators, grenades, bombs etc. They had arrested 867 persons in connection with these incidents.

Additional DGP (operations) G.M. Srivastava, who had also been present at the press conference, said 25 more companies of paramilitary forces were being sent to the state for the polls. Some units of the Army were also coming, but they would be used mainly for counter-insurgency operations. Mr Srivastava said the Army would not be deployed for the security of candidates or

polling stations.

Later, while talking to this correspondent, the DGP said that on Wednesday morning, he had had a telephonic discussion with CEC M.S. Gill, who had assured him that all possible help for maintaining law and order would be extended. He also promised some additional troops to ensure free and fair polls.

But when asked if these killings could have been averted if they had held the polls in three or at least two phases, as demanded, Mr Deka refused to comment.

Meanwhile, chief minister and AGP president P.K. Mahanta made a trip to Dibrugarh on Wednesday to take stock of the situation there after Tuesday's killings, in which five persons were gunned down by armed Ulfa militants. While addressing a meeting here, Mr Mahanta condemned the role of Congress in the entire episode.

The Economic Times

23 MAY 2001

23 MAY 2001

# Centre rushes additional paramilitary units to Assam

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 2 MAY

TAKING A serious view of the killing of BJP's Dibrugarh nominee by suspected Ulfa militants on Tuesday, the Centre has rushed additional paramilitary forces to Assam and deployed more army units along the Indo-Bhutan border to check the Ulfa's designs to vitiate the poll process."

At a meeting held here on Wednesday to review the security scenario in Assam in view of the killing/attacking of BJP and AGP activists by the Ulfa militants, the Union home ministry, in consultation with the defence ministry and central para-military forces, decided to deploy additional units of the Army in the vulnerable areas in the state for counter-mil-

itancy operations and for sealing the international borders with Bhutan to check armed infiltration/exfiltration.

The Centre's decision to intensify area dominance by the security forces in parts of Assam bordering Bhutan has been necessitated by the fact that both the Ulfa and NDFB are running camps in Bhutan and use its border with India to infiltrate armed militants into Assam.

The deployment of additional companies of the CRPF to the trouble spots in the state was confirmed on Wednesday by Chief Election Commissioner M.S. Gill who also reviewed the poll arrangements in the five election-bound states at a full commission meeting here on Wednesday.

Home secretary Kamal Pande has assured me he would ensure that additional central forces are immediately despatched to Assam," Mr Gill told newsmen after the meeting.

The Ulfa has gunned down a BJP candidate and injured the AGP nominee in Barpeta, apart from killing 10 activists of the two allies and attacking the AGP's office in Dispur which is a stone throw's away from the chief minister's residence. Mr Gill, commenting on the spate of violence in the state, said he spoke to the state chief electoral officer and DGP who assured him that they are "confident" the elections would be held and that "there was no cause for panic."

The Economic Times

20/5/88

# Assam in flames

85-6  
20/5

Don't SOS the EC, just tighten law and order

**A**SSAM is witnessing one of its most violent assembly elections. Already a dozen people, including the BJP candidate for Dibrugarh, Jayanta Dutta, have been killed and many, including the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) candidate for Barpeta, Kumar Dipak Das, severely injured. An abortive bid was also made on the life of chief minister and AGP chief, P.K. Mahanta, when a bomb blast occurred outside the AGP office where the chief minister was to pass by. The situation has come to such a pass that the AGP has been forced to impose a 'sunset ban' on campaigning by its candidates and workers. Not only that, the party has also sent an SOS to the chief election commissioner to use his authority to ensure a free and fair poll. But how on earth can the Election Commission ensure such a poll if the Central and state governments are unable to ensure law and order? As it is, the AGP is the ruling party in the state and its partner, the BJP, at the Centre. All the forces that the Election Commission will be able to deploy are already under their command. If Union Home Minister L.K. Advani has reasons to blame the Congress-ULFA nexus for the violent incidents, he is duty bound to take action against them. Similarly, far from sending an SOS to the EC, Mahanta should activate the law and order machinery under his command to come down heavily on those who threaten violence and vitiate the election atmosphere.

The campaign so far suggests that the AGP government has not been truthful in portraying the ULFA as a spent force. All those reports of surrender of ULFA cadres do not seem to have

made any impact on the ground situation. The present situation in the state also proves the BJP's favourite argument until it decided to team up with the AGP a couple of weeks ago mainly to prevent the Congress from enjoying a walkover that the AGP government had miserably failed on the law and order front. The point to be noted is that whatever may be the present size and appeal of ULFA, it has been able to terrorise the ruling party to impose its 'sunset ban'.

While the primary responsibility of law and order rests with the state government, doubts will linger in the minds of the people as to why ULFA has been targeting only the AGP and the BJP. An inquiry alone will prove the Union home minister's charge that the Congress is hand in glove with the ULFA. Given the fact that in the past the party has benefited from ULFA's recourse to violence as in the 1998 elections to the Lok Sabha, the party will have to do a lot of explaining on its links with the secessionist organisation. The Congress should not forget that ULFA has proved itself to be one of the most ruthless secessionist organisations. In fact, there is a body of public opinion which believes that ULFA could not have thrived without the tacit support of some sections of the ruling party. Whether it is because of its realisation that the AGP is unlikely to return to power that it has hitched its wagon to the Congress or not is a matter of speculation. Whatever be the case, the Central and state governments owe it to the people of Assam to tighten law and order and ensure that they are able to vote in a free and fair manner.

INDIAN EXPRESS

MAY 20 1988

# Two more killed in Assam

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, May 2. — Suspected Ulfa militants struck again late last night, killing two persons in Nalbari and Kamrup districts.

The ultras fired at a Congress office at Ghagrapar, Nalbari, killing a tea vendor. At Rangiya, Kamrup, a person died when a Samata Party vehicle came under attack. He was looking after the vehicle's public address system.

**Police advice:** The Assam police has advised the candidates and their supporters not to move around after dusk. Seventeen people, including the BJP candidate for Dibrugarh, Mr Jayanta Dutta, have been killed by militants since the Assembly polls were notified. "It's difficult to provide security in the dark, but if they still want to campaign, we'll sanitise the area beforehand," the DGP, Mr Hare Krishna Deka, said today.

He said intelligence reports had indicated that the National Democratic Front of Bodoland and the Ulfa would target the AGP-BJP "for reasons best known to them."

"An analysis of the incidents taken place so far reveals the Ulfa is behind most of these. It has gone against candidates and important leaders of the BJP-AGP in an organised way."

The DGP said security arrangements for candidates and other leaders have been reviewed. "We've decided to augment security for them and their offices." The candidates and their supporters are being briefed on the precautionary measures to be taken while travelling from one place to another and attending rallies.

Mr LK Advani, during his visit to Assam, had said the Ulfa had asked its cadres to obtain written undertaking from Congress candidates that if the party came to power it would not oppose the outfit's activities and accept the Ulfa's goal.

The outfit had also instructed its cadres kill and kidnap workers of the AGP and BJP and attack security forces from 1 May.

THE STATESMAN

3 MAY '70



## WELCOME TRUCE

But Delhi must also end fratricidal killings

THE Centre's declaration of a ceasefire with the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland was a mere formality. Security forces and the Khaplang faction had mutually suspended operations against each other for about three years. If Delhi took so long to decide, it was possibly because it did not want to offend the rival faction led by Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah which claimed to be sole spokesman for the Nagas and was against involvement of others in the negotiations. The Centre has apparently surrendered to pressure from the Naga Hoho, NGOs, church leaders and various private organisation which believe that unless all warring groups are brought under one umbrella the current talks will be meaningless. Khaplang's importance cannot be ignored. When all other groups were for talks, Khaplang consistently refused to sue for peace and this led to the split in the NSCN in 1988. It is desirable to bring the third group — the Naga National Council, the parent body — under the truce. Nagaland, however, will continue to be tense unless both NSCN factions stop fratricidal killings.

The NSCN-IM's activities in Nagaland have stopped but its cadres continue to play havoc in the hills of Manipur by not allowing oil tankers to pass through the area or burning vehicles as punishment for non-payment of what is described as "agreed money". Surprisingly, the Centre did not think it necessary to renew the unilateral ceasefire by the Manipur government. Although no insurgent groups reciprocated the gesture, something must be done. The comparative lull in ethnic clashes was broken last month when five Kukis were murdered. The NSCN-IM has denied involvement but there is little doubt that the newly-floated Kuki National Army is being helped by them. The KRA's main objective appears to be revenge against their own people who had betrayed them in the last assembly elections. Such terror tactics must be nipped in the bud to restore harmony in the hills.

THE STATESMAN

3 MAY 2001

# Cong slams Advani for Ulfa taint



EASTERN PROJECTIONS PHOTO

Kamal Nath addresses reporters at Guwahati on Tuesday.

**HT Correspondent**  
*Guwahati, May 1*

THE CONGRESS on Tuesday reacted sharply to Union Home Minister L K Advani's comments linking the party to the banned United Liberation Front of Assam.

Addressing a press conference, senior Congress leader and the Assam AICC observer Kamal Nath stated that Advani's statements were unbecoming of his position. He also added that the violence against AGP workers in the past few days was a conspiracy of the AGP-BJP combine to divert the attention of the people from the misrule of the AGP.

On Monday, the Union Home Minister had asked the Congress to stop encouraging the Ulfa and come clean on its links with the banned outfit. He had also stated that the Ulfa was supporting the Congress in the coming elections.

"Perhaps Advani has forgot-

ten that he is the Home Minister and the AGP is the ruling party in Assam. If they fail to provide security to their workers, one can only imagine what will happen to the common people," said Kamal Nath.

The Congress leader strongly refuted Advani's charges and denied any link with the ULFA. "The Congress condemns all sort of killings. If we are voted to power, we will do our best to solve the militancy problem both politically and from the security point of view," said Nath.

"The Congress is concerned about the AGP-BJP plan to use the security forces to disrupt polling in Assam," said Nath. He, however, did not elaborate on the matter.

Nath dubbed Advani's party as communal and said it was a threat to the communal harmony in the society. "The BJP symbolises communalism and is a threat to society," said the Congress leader.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME.

12 MAY 2001

# Ulfa guns down BJP candidate, five others

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, May 1. - Suspected Ulfa militants gunned down the BJP candidate for the Dibrugarh Assembly constituency and a general secretary of the party's Assam unit, Mr Jayanta Dutta, and five others, including two AGP workers and a constable, and injured eight in three separate incidents in Dibrugarh and Dhubri districts this evening.

Police said that about half a dozen militants, who came in a Tata Sumo, fired indiscriminately at the BJP office at Sonaripatti in the heart of Dibrugarh town when Mr Dutta was coming down from the first floor around 8.30 p.m.

Mr Dutta and eight others were injured in the firing. Mr Dutta and two BJP workers, Mr Biren Phukan and Mr Prashanta Gogoi, died of the injuries at the Assam Medical

College Hospital. Six others, including four policemen, were being treated at the hospital.

Almost simultaneously, two militants walked up to the AGP office at Chowkidinghee in the town and fired at it, killing a party worker, Mr Thaneswar Buragohain, and a constable, Mr Narayan Didingiya, on the spot.

## ■ Ulfa fear haunts AGP supporters, page 2

In the third incident at Bilasipara in Dhubri district, Ulfa militants gunned down one AGP worker and injured two others.

Details of the incident were awaited.

A former president of the Assam unit of the BJP, Mr Narayan Borkotoky, said Mr Dutta had made immense contribution to the growth of the party in Assam.

Before today's incidents, Ulfa had killed seven AGP workers and injured many in a string of incidents beginning 18 April.

The AGP has accused the Congress of being in league with the Ulfa in the attacks on the AGP.

The Ulfa has made it clear that it was against the BJP and AGP because the two were trying to spread the "venom of communalism" in the state. The Ulfa has also said it was not going to favour any party that supported the "Indian occupation" of Assam.

According to an Army spokesman, large reinforcements of the Army and paramilitary forces were being moved in to sensitive areas to ensure an environment for free and fair election.

At least 300 columns of security forces would cover the entire state during elections, he said.

STATESMAN  
GUWAHATI

## ABETTING QUANDARY

Advani's comment on Aasu politically motivated

**B**EFORE the 1996 Assembly elections Prafulla Kumar Mahanta promised to have the army withdrawn if his party came to power. He had to eat crow within days of assuming office. This time round he is cautious, saying his party will not use troops to contain insurgency but at the same time, redouble its efforts to end the menace. This cannot be taken seriously considering the ruling party has not fulfilled most election pledges, one being to seize all illegal arms within three months. Assembly elections are a high point for parties to make promises and exchange pleasantries with partners. Neither the AGP nor the BJP was sure of their strength so they came together. Aligning with the party in power in Delhi has an advantage and Mahanta is optimistic of a clear verdict. Yet he seems to feel uneasy. Perhaps the fears stem from desertions from both parties, triggered by the alliance, or that he thinks the Congress prospects have improved. Things came to such a pass that rebels floated the Asom BJP and central leaders had to go to Assam to suppress the revolt. Thankfully, the misunderstanding has been sorted out. Ulfa activists' recent attacks are indications of things to come. But that will be a mistake. The renewed atmosphere of hate leaves voters in a quandary.

What is somewhat surprising was LK Advani's statement that the Aasu movement against foreign nationals was one of the most peaceful. No one can forget the massacre of nearly 2,000 Bangladeshis at Nellie in 1982, a tragedy which occurred when Aasu was riding the wave against illegal migrants. Even admitting that Advani has reason to justify his apparently political comment, would he care to explain why government waited for 19 years to say so?

THE STATESMAN

- 2 MAY 2001

# No Assam ceasefire till killings stop: Advani

P.P. Singh  
GUWAHATI 30 APRIL

**T**HE UNION home minister, Mr L.K. Advani, on Monday, ruled out an extension of ceasefire against the Ufla militants unless they stop the killings. Mr Advani said the government was willing to hold talks with the insurgents only if they stop the violent acts.

At the end of his two-day election tour of Assam, Mr Advani told reporters that the situation was different in this north-eastern state. Unlike the other states, where only the political parties were active, Assam also had to face militancy, he said. While talking to reporters at the airport, Mr Advani said the insurgents had already struck in two places during the past three days, injuring one AGP candidate and many others.

At all the election rallies, the AGP and BJP workers have been told that they were not fighting for victory in elections but for protecting the democratic system of the country, Mr Advani said. Although the militants were active during the previous parliamentary elections, they had not targeted any political party. However, this time,



**CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan (centre) addressing the media in Guwahati on Monday.** — Caroline Singh

the militants have indicated that their anger will be directed towards the candidates and workers of AGP and BJP, he added.

Mr Advani said this was an indication that the AGP-BJP combine was a threat to militants, which he interpreted as a compliment to the parties. All the political parties, including the Congress and the Left, should condemn militancy, he said. The responsibility of fighting the separatist forces was not just the AGP or BJP's but of

every party, he added. He said during the past five years the Ufla had lost its mass base in the state due to the AGP government's efforts and the initiatives taken by the people. There have been several instances where the armed militants were apprehended by the people, he added.

The home minister said the recent deaths of BSF personnel at the Indo-Bangladesh border cannot be a poll plank since it was an accident. Mr Advani added that

the Centre had taken up the matter at a political level and the Bangladesh government had promised to conduct an enquiry and punish those responsible.

He said the IMDT (Act) is their poll plank since only those parties who work on the politics of "vote bank" were opposed to it. There is no reason why the Foreigners Act which is applicable in other parts of the country should not be sufficient to detect the illegal migrants in Assam, he said.

Earlier in the day, CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan called for a unilateral ceasefire, on the lines of the one functional in Kashmir, against militants in Assam.

The veteran leftist leader who is in Assam to campaign for his party told reporters on Monday that the solution to the insurgency does not lie in killings and counter-killings by the government but in a peaceful dialogue.

When told that the government had offered to declare a ceasefire but the militants had been asking for inclusion of sovereignty in the agenda for talks, Mr Bardhan said there was no question of compromising on the sovereignty of the state.

# NSCN(K)-Centre formulates truce charter

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, April 30. — The Centre and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) have formulated a 15-point charter to enforce ground rules for ceasefire in Nagaland which came into effect on Saturday, a home ministry spokesman said today.

Under the accord, NSCN (K) would not undertake offensive operations like ambush, raid, sniping and killings or cause damage to property of the se-

curity forces and civilians.

The security forces, in turn, would not attack NSCN (K) cadres but would reserve the right to continue operation against all other militant groups which were not in the ceasefire.

NSCN (K) would notify to the ceasefire supervisory board a list of all their camps and CSB,

after scrutiny, finalise the list of 'designated' camps where all armed cadres of the outfit would be located within three months.

It was agreed that in the interest of promoting the peace process, there would be no movement in uniform with arms outside the 'designated' camps, the spokesman said adding that inter-camp movement would be carried out after informing security forces and CSB.

NSCN (K) would refrain from road blockades, support to other militant groups, acquiring additional arms, ammunition and military equipment and forced extortion.

It would also refrain from forcible recruitment of armed cadres.

Army, paramilitary forces and Nagaland police would continue to prevent infiltration of militants and arms as at present.

However, patrolling within 1 km of designated camps would be carried out with intimidation to CSB, he said.

Protection of convoys and patrolling of roads would continue to be undertaken by the security forces.

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