

# BJP hopes for stability in N-E

10-13  
By Our Special Correspondent 207 x

**NEW DELHI, JULY 29.** Welcoming the imposition of President's rule in the violence-hit Manipur, the BJP today hoped that the State would regain political stability in the near future and the Northeastern region would witness accelerated efforts for all-round development.

A resolution on the Northeast situation was adopted by the party's national executive today on its concluding day of the three-day session. During discussions on the situation in the Northeast, particularly the turmoil in Manipur and the Naga Ceasefire Agreement, much heat was generated.

It is understood that the party's in-charge of the Northeast affairs, Mr. Padmanabhacharya, was virtually put down during discussions by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani. The Home Minister reportedly charged him with being totally irresponsible and immature in his articulation of the Manipur situation which had portrayed the BJP as trying to get its government installed in the State by engineering defections.

Noting that normal life in Manipur was affected after violent protests broke out against the June 14 Naga Ceasefire Agreement which extended the truce beyond Nagaland, the resolution felt that the ceasefire's extension had been misunderstood by the people.

"The extension of the ceasefire to a few other

States, including Manipur, made people of Manipur to have apprehensions that their territorial integrity would be affected. Assurances by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister together with the steps taken to revoke the extension of the ceasefire beyond the boundaries of Nagaland, would go a long way in restoring normality in Manipur," the resolution said.

The party's national executive also suggested nine- points to the Centre for the overall development of the entire Northeast region. These include setting up hydro-electric projects, improving roads and communication links, taking effective flood control measures, toning up security and administrative machinery and promoting small-scale industries.

Expressing satisfaction over the Prime Minister's Rs. 10,500-crore package for economic progress of the region, the party's national executive called upon the Centre to devise a mechanism for monitoring of the implementation of the package.

It noted that massive influx of infiltrators from a neighbouring country had not only adversely affected the social, political and electoral balance but also changed demographic profile of the region. The resolution said the area had become vulnerable to ISI activities as well as those of extremists and religious fundamentalists. Secessionist activities had disrupted normal life of the people, jeopardising smooth implementation of various development schemes.

# Win peace back, bit by bit

Centre's negotiating tactics in Northeast need reviewing

THE Centre could not have found it easy to retreat on the issue of limiting the operation of its ceasefire agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) to Nagaland. But in the circumstances it is the sensible course of action. With the deletion of the provocative words, "without territorial limits" from the agreement, there are no more grounds for alarm in Manipur and other Northeastern states. Popular agitations were protracted and law and order in the region was severely strained. Normal life was affected by curfews and bandhs. It is important to restore calm. Political instability in Manipur made the whole scene worse and was surely a key factor behind the Centre's change of mind. As the Rajya Sabha's smooth ratification of President's rule in Manipur suggests, the NDA and the Congress party are agreed on early elections. That would be in Manipur's interests but peaceful polls would be impossible in an atmosphere of heightened fears and anti-Centre rhetoric.

The Centre may need to review its negotiating tactics. Evidently, the wider ceasefire covering the whole region and going into effect from August 1, was a political miscalculation. The Centre's chief negotiator, K. Padmanabhaiah, is being held responsible for that major error in judgement and Chief Minister S.C. Jamir of Nagaland is calling for someone with more political experience to do the job. But it is improbable that Padmanabhaiah

was given carte blanche in negotiations with the NSCN (I-M). In every phase, crucial parameters for talks have been laid down in consultation with the political leadership. Either there is more than meets the eye in the failure to take into account the wider impact of the ceasefire, or there was a collective blunder. It must be hoped the situation has now been retrieved.

Where does the restoration of the status quo ante leave the NSCN (I-M)? It is assumed the narrower Nagaland ceasefire will continue for at least another year during which talks will continue. That scenario would suggest T. Muivah has been prevailed upon to come to terms with the reality of the situation in the region. Further progress in negotiations on Naga issues would be impossible during an uproar in the rest of the Northeast involving the people as well as the whole political leadership. If good sense has indeed prevailed, if the NSCN (I-M) has accepted that other interests must be accommodated and therefore backed away from an all-encompassing ceasefire, it presages a positive outcome from future negotiations which are on the anvil. There are a lot of 'ifs' here; too little is known of the Naga side of the equation. Whatever the truth, in the political and ethnic tinder-box that is the Northeast, it is essential to take precautions against trouble at all times. Opportunistic action may be taken by groups tempted to view the Centre or NSCN's climbdown as a sign of weakness.

## INSIGHT DAWNS

### Peace wins over Naga truce intent

THANKFULLY the nagging uncertainty over the extension of the ceasefire beyond Nagaland has at last come to an end, much to the relief of those in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. It should have happened sooner, as soon as the error was identified. The decision to delete the contentious "without territorial limits", incorporated in the 14 June agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-IM at the time of renewal for one more year from 31 July, should help restore normality in these states. When the Centre finally decided to come to grips with it, the delicate task was handled with skill but what made this possible was the magnanimity of NSCN-IM general secretary Thuingaleng Mui-vah, who reportedly complied with New Delhi's suggestion. The obvious question that arises is why Union home secretary K Padmanabhaiah agreed to extend the ceasefire in the first instance. Former Prime Minister IK Gujral, who brokered the truce, has now admitted he did not discuss the question of jurisdiction with the Naga rebel leaders who insisted the Centre agreed to it "in principle". Several young lives and property worth lakhs of rupees could have been saved had Delhi thought of the implications. Nagaland chief minister SC Jamir's support to the extension is surprising considering that last year he had said the Centre must not bunch together Nagaland's problem with that of Manipur's Nagas. Even his ministerial colleague, Neiphuo Rio seems hurt that "the Centre has taken us, the Nagas, for a ride" but he was the one who had taken exception to the Centre's talks with the NSCN-IM sidelining the state government. If peace is the overriding concern, the Centre's decision has hurt no single state.

Since the ceasefire in Nagaland became effective in August 1997, the Manipur hills have also witnessed a comparative lull in the Naga-Kuki clashes which left about 1,500 dead since mid-1992. Of importance now is the restoration of the democratic process in Manipur, under President's rule. MLAs were literally banished from Manipur and their houses attacked by protesters holding them responsible for the sad state of affairs. With both the Samata Party and the BJP deciding to stay away from forming a new government, there is little prospect of other parties coming together to form a ministry. The alternative is to dissolve the assembly, under suspended animation, and go in for a fresh election. Hopefully, politicians have learnt a lesson and one expects the new elected representatives to put service before self. What this incident demonstrates is the need for close supervision of the delicate negotiations. Padmanabhaiah has claimed that he was not properly briefed, if this is indeed true then it was an appalling lapse which must not be allowed to recur. The Home Minister must also keep close tabs on what is going on; the need for political direction will be constant and ceaseless.

## WATER COSTS MONEY

JUL 2001

# No agreement on truce revision: NSCN

DIPANKAR ROY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DIMAPUR, July 28. — The 'collective leadership' of the NSCN today denied there was any agreement with the Centre to withdraw the ceasefire from areas beyond Nagaland.

A statement issued late this evening said nothing was finalised in the talks at Amsterdam on the proposal raised from the Indian side for reviewing the 14 June Bangkok agreement.

"Therefore, any announcement or declaration or statement given from the Indian home ministry or in any mass media are unfounded and so are they in no sense acceptable to the Nagas," the statement said.

Protest bands and rallies in Dimapur, the commercial capital of Nagaland, and the Naga-inhabited Senapati district of Manipur, marked the Centre's declaration yesterday that the NSCN was agreeable to withdrawal of the ceasefire from areas beyond Nagaland. Confusion had prevailed in the state over the Centre's declaration till the NSCN came out with the statement.

A senior NSCN leader, Mr Phungthing Shimrang, told **The Statesman** earlier in the day that there was no question of agreeing to such a thing and warned that the ceasefire could break down on this point. "We are prepared to head back for the jungles,"

he said.

The brief joint statement by the Centre and NSCN on the outcome of the Amsterdam meeting also makes no mention of dropping the three words 'without territorial limit' that was agreed upon on 14 June in Bangkok between the two sides.

The statement only speaks about the "process of deliberations on substantive issues being carried ahead in a spirit of openness and earnestness" among other things.

Mr Shimrang said he had no information about any such agreement having been reached between the Centre and his organisation.

The Naga Ho Ho vice-president, Mr G Gaingam, said that he was waiting for some reaction from the NSCN to the Centre's decision. "I have only read about it in the newspapers," he said adding that he was not willing to believe it.

The Naga People's Council president, Mr Uska Sumi, also said that he did not know whether the NSCN had agreed to the withdrawal of the ceasefire from areas beyond Nagaland. "But yesterday's decision was a superimposition, grave injustice amounting to burying the Naga alive," he said.

The Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and the Naga Mother's Association, two leading organisations in the state, were guaranteed in their reaction.

"We are not going to behave



NSCN (I-M) members prepare to unfurl a flag at their Dimapur camp in Nagaland on Saturday. — AP/PTI

the way the Meiteis have done because we want to maintain good neighbourly relations," said Mrs Neidonuo Angami, NMA president. "But the fact remains that the Centre's decision is most unfortunate," she said adding that the demand for extension of the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas "will not die."

An NPMHR activist said that by agreeing to expand

## Decision hailed, curfew lifted

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI, July 28. — The Centre's decision to restrict the ceasefire with the NSCN-IM to Nagaland was welcomed in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh today even as life returned to normal in Imphal and other districts after over a month's unrest.

Curfew was lifted from the valley districts of Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal, officials said. The Arunachal chief minister, Mr Mukut Mithi, described the Centre's decision as a wise one and said his state would cooperate with it to bring peace to the region.

Thanking Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani for appreciating the concerns of the state, he said his state needed the Centre's help to control insurgency.

The Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chakra Parishad, United Committee of Manipur, Manipuri Students' Federation and Manipuri Joint Committee of Shillong have also welcomed the Centre's decision. The AJYCP chief, Mr Apurba Bhatlacharya, UCM representative Mr Sushil Huidrom, MJC convener R Thingbamjam and MSF chief P Nando Luwang hoped the restriction would be

## Centre urged to start talks with ultra groups

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 28. — The Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, which is ruling the Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council, has demanded that the Centre start a "direct dialogue" with the various militant underground outfits in Tripura.

This demand was formally conveyed by a four-member delegation of the IPFT to the home minister, Mr LK Advani, yesterday evening.

Mr Vijay Wrangkhhal, the front leader, told **The Statesman** that the delegation told Mr Advani that a direct dialogue was a must to bring lasting peace in Tripura.

According to Mr Wrangkhhal the delegation also urged Mr Advani to take the initiative to expedite the pending amendment of the Autonomous Council Act and the transfer of nine departments from the state government to the council.

Mr Advani was also asked to undertake a fresh census to determine the increasing influx of illegal Bangladeshi migrants.

The delegation further demanded the "dismantling" of the Tumbu hydel project since "it has affected at least" three thousand families in the area.

accepted by the Nagas. Thousands of people turned out to lay wreaths for the 17 martyrs of the anti-ceasefire stir in Manipur today. UCM leaders held a meeting at the cremation ground at Kekruphal river, attended by over 10,000 people.

The UCM leaders didn't formally announced the end of the agitation, even though Mr Vajpayee said yesterday that the words "without territorial limits" would be dropped from the Bangkok ceasefire agreement at his meeting with chief ministers of north-eastern states in New Delhi.

They also announced a three-day mourning period (29 to 31 July) and asked for black flags to be flown at half mast.

**North Cachar bandh:** Life returned to normal in the North Cachar Hills district of Assam today as the four-day bandh against the ceasefire extension passed off peacefully, officials said, a report from Guwahati adds. The bandh, which began on 24 July, was called by the Dimasa Students' Union (DSU), Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), Dimasa Women's Society (DWS) and North Cachar Hill Students Federation.



# Manipuris rejoice, Nagas defiant

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 28

28/7  
KFA

THE UNION Government's announcement limiting the truce with the NSCN (IM) to Nagaland has drastically altered the situation in Manipur. While Imphal Valley is limping back to normal, the first signs of unrest have been reported from the hill districts of the State.

The Meitei-dominated Valley erupted in joyous celebrations last evening. Leaders of the United Council Manipur (UCM), in a show of maturity, put the lid on the celebrations today and declared a four-day mourning for the 17 people killed by security forces. The Naga-dominated areas in the hills, on the other hand, witnessed dharnas and spontaneous bandhs today. But in a move that could have far-reaching and explosive consequences, the Nagas have decided to blockade National Highways

39 and 53 —the two lifelines of Manipur— from this evening.

More than 25,000 people attended a meeting convened by the UCM at Khumon Lampak Sports Complex at Imphal. "We decided to stop celebrating since there is nothing to celebrate. The Union Government has restored the status quo," UCM leader and prominent lawyer RK Anand told *Hindustan Times*.

The UCM leaders' decision to curtail the celebrations that erupted last evening is driven by two considerations. Apart from reminding the people of the 17 lives that were lost since June 16, it is also a well-considered move against further alienating the Naga residents of the State.

Chandel, Tamenlong and Senapati districts witnessed sporadic demonstrations and bandhs today. "We have decided to blockade National Highways 53 and 39 that pass through the hills. We will stop movement of

all vehicles, including those carrying food and other commodities to the Valley," Naga People's Organisation president M Dili said from Senapati Bazar. Naga leaders who are in New Delhi at present have decided to meet Central leaders to seek a clarification on the Union Home Minister's statement on the deletion of the phrase extending the ceasefire outside Nagaland. "We are shocked. It will lead to a dangerous situation and things may spin-out of control in the Naga-inhabited areas in the hills. Many youngsters are saying that if the agitation by the Meiteis could make the Government buckle, they could do more," Naga People's Movement for Human Rights leader Neingulo Krone said. Krone, who was part of the delegation that met the PM yesterday, claimed that Vajpayee had promised not to alter the Bangkok agreement without taking the Nagas into confidence.

## Nagaland NSCN leaders reject truce extension withdrawal

Rahul Karmakar  
Kohima, July 28

THE NSCN leadership based in the country has scotched reports of the outfit having accepted New Delhi's decision to withdraw the ceasefire from areas beyond Nagaland.

A statement issued by senior NSCN leader Apam Muivah from the outfit's mobile headquarters at Oking late on Saturday said that "nothing was finalised in the July 23-24 Amsterdam talks on the proposal raised from the Indian side for reviewing the 14 June Bangkok agreement.

"We are constrained to issue this statement to make things clear to both the Naga and the Indian peoples so that the pursuit of peaceful solution may not be hindered," the statement said.

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HINDUSTAN TIMES

## Ulfa leader calls for autonomy plebiscite

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, July 27: Affirming its faith in "people's power", the proscribed Ulfa has made a case for a referendum on the issue of "Assam's sovereignty", a cause it has been espousing for over two decades now.

The text of the statement by Ulfa chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa on the occasion of "martyrs' day" has been reproduced in the outfit's fortnightly newsletter, *Freedom*, in place of the regular editorial. "If a referendum is required to take a decision on the issue of sovereignty, so be it. Urgently and boldly, let us fill the air with our slogan — we want independence," Rajkhowa said.

He warned the Centre against any delay in initiating the process, saying it would be "damaging". He said it was time to ascertain the views of the state's indigenous people on his outfit's struggle for independence.

"My earnest appeal to all sections of the people of Assam is to remember that regional self-government, cultural autonomy, independent nationhood, the lot, can be discussed and decided amongst ourselves in the fullness of time. Now is the time to be united, putting aside caste, creed, religious and ethnic differences. This is what we need now to regain our freedom. To achieve this, we need to fight New Delhi (our common enemy) unitedly. We want a political solution to the Indo-Assam conflict," the Ulfa chairman said.

The statement is significant because it is for the first time that the Ulfa has directly spoken about a referendum and "people's involvement" in the process of a dialogue. Rajkhowa's call has, however, evoked hope and scepticism in equal measure. It is believed that the Ulfa is merely testing the waters before beginning a political dialogue with the Centre.

"Having realised the futility of an armed struggle, it is changing tack," said a top functionary of the strategy group of the Unified Command, which plans and executes counter-insurgency operations in Assam.

But Asom Jatiyatibadi Yuva Chatra Parishad chief Apurba Kumar Bhattacharjee said seizing the opportunity to hold talks with the Ulfa was more important than speculating about its motive. "The Centre should seize the opportunity and propose a tripartite dialogue. The people will be a party to the process," he said.

The youth leader said the Ulfa's call for a referendum was indicative of its changed attitude. "It has taken cognisance of the ground realities. This is why it has indirectly expressed confidence in the Indian democratic polity, where the majority opinion is decisive," he said.

Under pressure from N-E leaders and Manipur protests, Vajpayee drops controversial clause from pact

# Centre volte-face on Naga ceasefire

FROM KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, July 27: After 43 days of vacillation and largescale violence in Manipur, the Centre today did a somersault on the Naga ceasefire issue and revoked the notification extending the truce "without territorial limits".

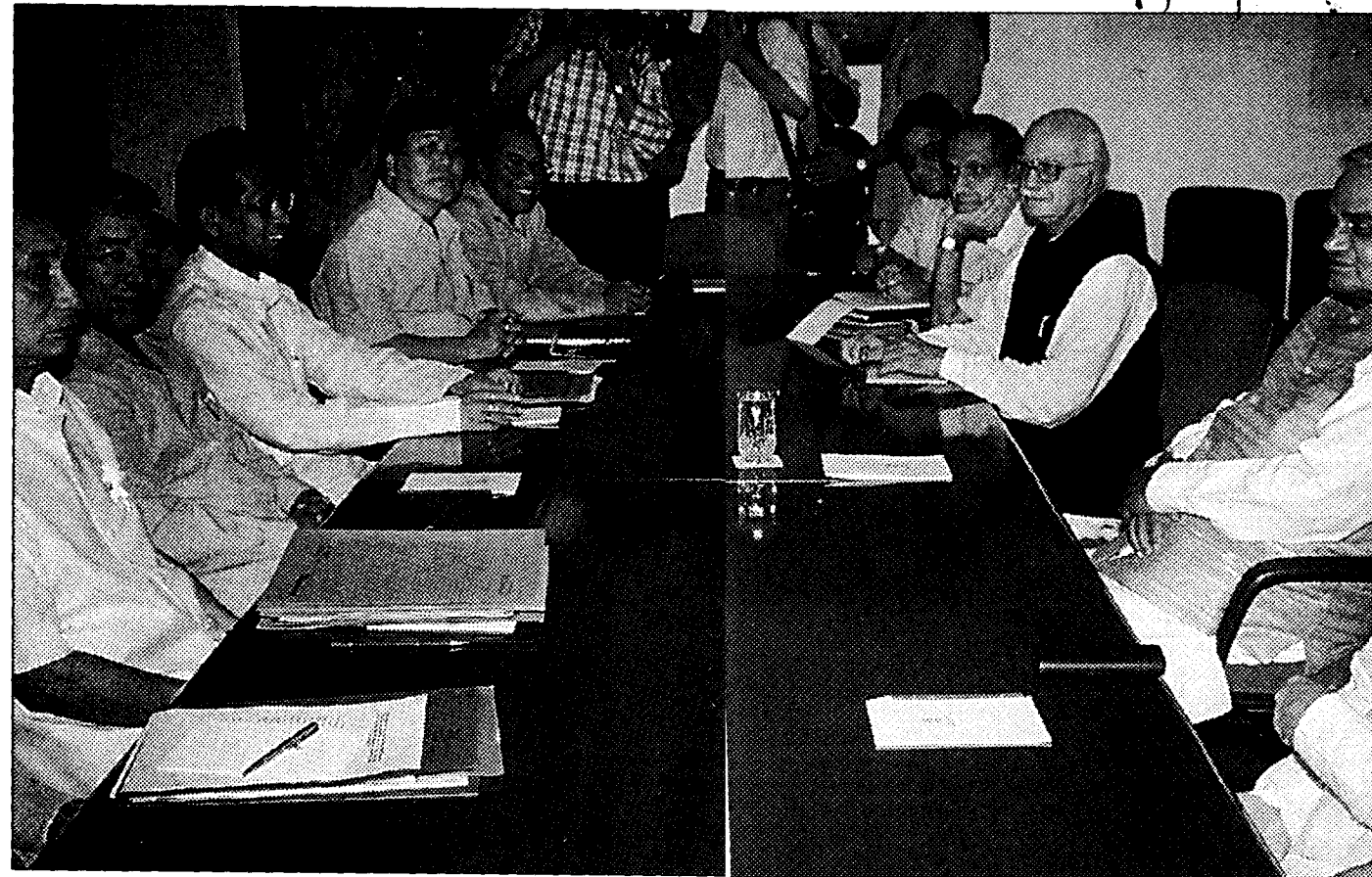
Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made the announcement at a meeting with chief ministers of the northeastern states at his residence.

The Prime Minister sent former Union home secretary K. Padmanabhaiah to Amsterdam early this week to hold talks with NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah on the issue of withdrawing the ceasefire from Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. He took the decision to revoke the June 14 Bangkok declaration after receiving the green signal from Padmanabhaiah.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting at Vajpayee's residence, Union home minister L.K. Advani said the Prime Minister told the chief ministers of the northeastern states that the words "without territorial limits" would be deleted from the text of the Bangkok declaration and "restore the status quo ante of June 14".

Advani said representatives of the Centre discussed the issue with the NSCN(I-M), and the outfit was "agreeable to this proposal". However, he declined to elaborate.

The chief ministers of six northeastern states — Tarun Gogoi (Assam), Mukut Mithi (Arunachal Pradesh), E.K. Mawlong (Meghalaya), S.C. Jamir (Nagaland), Manik Sarkar (Tripura) and Zoramthanga (Mizoram) — arrived here yesterday for the meeting. Manipur, which is under President's rule, was represented by Governor Ved Marwah. Advani and Union minister of state for home I.D. Swami, too, attended



Chief ministers from six northeastern states at a meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the latter's residence in New Delhi on Friday. (AFP)

the meeting. Student organisations in Manipur had asked legislators from the state to resign en masse by July 31 if the Centre did not revoke its ceasefire-extension agreement with the NSCN(Isak-Muivah).

Over 40 legislators have been camping in New Delhi since June 18, when violence broke out in Manipur, to lobby for revocation of the ceasefire-extension agreement. Except Nagaland, all the northeastern states opposed the Centre's decision to extend its

ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) to all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas of the region.

The Centre's agreement with the NSCN(I-M) was construed as a step towards acceding to the outfit's demand for formation of a "Greater Nagaland", including parts of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and neighbouring Myanmar.

Padmanabhaiah, accused of "misleading" the Centre on the issue, was conspicuous by his absence at tonight's crucial con-

ference. It sparked speculation that he might be removed from the post of principal interlocutor in Naga peace talks after the dust settles down.

Nationalist Congress Party (P) leader P.A. Sangma is expected to replace Padmanabhaiah. The only chief minister to oppose the decision was Nagaland's Jamir.

Before leaving for New Delhi yesterday, he had said in Kohima his government and the Naga community backed the Bangkok

agreement. "It is the only way to create an atmosphere conducive to peace talks. The law and order situation in Nagaland has improved considerably since the ceasefire took effect four years ago. The process should be continued," he said.

In a separate memorandum to the Prime Minister, four Naga organisations from Senapati district in Manipur said they could "muster the numbers" to prove that people in Manipur supported the ceasefire agreement.

## Manipur erupts in joy, Nagas furious at retreat

OUR BUREAU

Imphal, July 27: Celebrations broke out in Manipur immediately after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee decided to limit the NSCN(I-M) ceasefire within the territory of Nagaland. As soon as the decision was announced by Union home minister L.K. Advani after his meeting with the Prime Minister and Northeast chief ministers, residents of Imphal came out on to the streets to celebrate.

Although UCM leaders were not available for comment, a spokesperson for the All-Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (Amuco), a component of the UCM, said this was not the time to celebrate. The Amuco leader said people should instead mourn the death of 17 protesters during the anti-ceasefire agitation.

Residents burst crackers to celebrate the decision, which was taken after 40 days of curfew and 42 days of protest. Altogether 17 people were killed in the protest movement. Several government buildings, including the Assembly secretariat and the chief minister's office, were also gutted.

State police officials are now apprehensive of a backlash in the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur in view of the Centre's decision. There is also a strong possibility of Nagas resorting to a highway blockade, sources said.

"It is now a case of peace in the valley and trouble in the hills," a government official said.

Manipuri intelligentsia are observing the developments minutely to figure out how the NSCN(I-M) leaders finally agreed to the withdrawal of the ceasefire extension. Contradictory reports about talks between Centre's interlocutor K. Padmanabhaiah and NSCN(I-M) general-secretary Thuingaleng Muivah had made the people of Manipur suspicious about the Centre's stand. The situation was further aggravated by the attempts of several Naga leaders to secure the autonomy of the Naga-inhabited districts of Manipur.

Earlier today, thousands of Manipuris came out of their houses to stage sit-in-protests in all major roads of the city. Dressed in traditional white attire, people openly defied prohibitory orders

to take part in the protest movement. Kukis and Kabut Nagas also took part in the demonstration. Residents of Thoubal district yesterday formed a human chain of 65 km to register their opposition to the ceasefire extension.

Concerned over the paralysing of administration in the state because of the UCM's "civil disobedience movement", the state government today directed its employees not to take part in the protests. However, they staged sit-in-dharnas in front of their offices to protest against the proposed ceasefire extension.

Life in the state capital was adversely affected despite the 13-hour curfew relaxation as the city's main marketing centre, the Khwairamband Bazar, remained closed because of a bandh called by traders and women vendors.

### Naga reaction

In Dimapur, the mood was one of despondency. Chief minister S.C. Jamir said he had nothing to say as the agreement was between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) and Muivah had reportedly agreed to the Centre's terms. He, however, did not apprehend violence.

Lamu Longkumer of the Naga People's Human Rights Organisation rued the fact that instead of building confidence, the Centre had created mistrust in the minds of the people. "If the Centre kept on retracting like this, it should forget about peace," he said.

Naha Hoho vice-president Gaingam, however, refused to comment, saying, "We are yet to hear from the other parties."

In Assam, the anti-ceasefire brigade was more than satisfied. "Our stand has been vindicated. We are very happy," the AJYCP said. There were sighs of relief in Manipuri basti in the capital.

Earlier in New Delhi, the Nagaland Students' Union submitted a memorandum to the chief ministers of the northeastern states before their meeting with Vajpayee, expressing fear of resumption of violence if the ceasefire collapsed.

"The consequences will be quite unfortunate for India, the Nagas and the Northeast India," a union member said. The leaders urged the chief ministers to ensure the implementation of the Bangkok declaration in letter and spirit.

# Delhi in no hurry to hold Manipur polls

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 27: Union home minister L.K. Advani today told the Rajya Sabha that the Manipur Assembly will soon be dissolved, but the government was not going to hold polls in a hurry.

Cutting across political lines, all parties backed the resolution ratifying President's rule in Manipur. However, the CPM criticised the Centre for "creating" a situation that led to Central rule in the state.

"We will dissolve the House, but will not hold polls till we can restore good governance, check corruption and ensure security for the people in the state," said Advani while replying to a two-and-a-half-hour debate on a resolution for ratifying President's

rule in Manipur.

The home minister warded off criticism from CPM's Sarla Maheshwari that the Centre had slapped Article 356 on Manipur to reconcile the tugs and pulls in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

There was no friction in the NDA, the home minister said. "There were problems in some parties of the NDA, but that does not mean it had any impact on the NDA," he added.

Advani told the Upper House that he was staunchly against forming a government through defections. "The MLAs had come to my office, but I sent them back. Fortunately, my party supported my stand against coming to power through defections," the home minister added.

When grilled by the Opposi-

tion on the BJP's record of falling back on defections to wrest power, the home minister said, "I have not made any claims that the BJP has never formed governments through defections. I was only referring to Manipur."

Though discussions in the Rajya Sabha today revolved around the ratification of President's rule in Manipur, the speakers reminded the government of a

fractious debate on the ceasefire extension.

"I want to assure the House we will not compromise the territorial integrity of Manipur. Government has already decided its intention to review the extension to extended ceasefire in Manipur," the home minister

said chief ministers from northeastern states are going

# No ceasefire extension beyond Nagaland

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 27. — The Centre today decided to restrict the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) to Nagaland and would not extend it to other parts of the North-eastern region. The ceasefire will continue in Nagaland according to the 14 June agreement.

At a high level meeting called by the Prime Minister this evening, the government decided to restore status quo ante as on 14 June, 2001. This means extension of the ceasefire in Nagaland but not in the region adjoining the states of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya. The chief ministers of the North-eastern states and the Manipur Governor were present in the meeting. Mr LK Advani, who attended the

meeting, told reporters at the end of the meeting that the ceasefire would not be extended beyond Nagaland.

The Centre has been under pressure not only from the state governments in the North-east, but also from the BJP itself. The party president, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, criticised the Centre's policy in extending the ceasefire to the region outside Nagaland at the BJP's national executive meeting, which began here today.

The inclusion of some North-eastern states, bordering Nagaland, in the agreement between the Centre and the NSCN (I-M) leaders virtually set Manipur on fire.

There were violent demonstrations and police firing, resulting in the death of several people. The resistance to the ceasefire continues in Manipur.

Welcoming tonight's decision, the Assam chief minister, Mr Tarun Gogoi, said the Centre took a wise step after realising the ground reality in the region where the situation was going from bad to worse. The North-eastern chief ministers assured the Centre that they would fully cooperate in ending hostility in the region.

Earlier in the day, some Naga outfits like Naga Ho Ho, United Naga Council of Manipur and Naga Students' Federation met Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee with an appeal not to withdraw the ceasefire. The Naga leaders repeated their commitment to peace, but reminded the Prime Minister of the long struggle of the Nagas.

Meanwhile, the government today had the Rajya Sabha approving the statutory resolution on President's rule in

Manipur with near-unanimity after Mr LK Advani ruled out immediate elections in the trouble-torn state. The Assembly, kept in suspended animation, will be dissolved after the Lok Sabha approves the resolution. Though all parties, except the CPI-M and AIADMK, supported the resolution, several members blamed the BJP and Samata Party for fuelling political instability in the state by encouraging demerit elections in the state after dissolving the Assembly which shouldn't require President's rule.

Mr Advani said the government wanted to ensure that there was good governance in the state by containing corruption first so that people's faith was restored before holding elections. In this, he said he agreed with noted ju-

rist, Mr Fali S Nariman (nominated), who urged the government not to hold elections soon to enable the disenfranchised electorate to enjoy the fruits of good governance in a state where public representatives had failed people. Good governance during President's rule would enable people to repose faith in democracy.

**Manipur celebrations:** While youths in Manipur celebrated the withdrawal of Naga ceasefire from the state, elders said the Centre must make provision in the Constitution to ensure Manipur's territorial protection, adds PTI from Imphal. Thousands celebrated the truce withdrawal. But many people remained sceptical as the Centre's decisions on the issue was unclear.

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## PROTESTS FORCE CENTRE'S U-TURN

# HD-1 Ceasefire beyond Nagaland withdrawn

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 27.** The Centre tonight took a u-turn on the Naga ceasefire agreement and decided to restrict the four-year-old arrangement to Nagaland, taking into account the violent protests that have erupted in Manipur over the past one month.

The words "without territorial limits" which sparked violence in Manipur, now under President's rule, would be deleted from the June 14 agreement reached between the Central Government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) in Bangkok.

Announcing this here, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, said the decision to delete the three words was taken at a two-hour meeting which the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, held with the northeast Chief Ministers tonight at his 7, Race Course Road residence.

Reading out a brief statement, Mr. Advani said, "After discussing the issue of the Naga ceasefire agreement with the Chief Ministers of the northeastern States, the Prime Minister announced that the three words 'without territorial limits' in the agreement of June 14 would be deleted and *status quo ante* of June 14 would be restored." The Government's representatives had already discussed the matter with the NSCN (I-M) and "they are agreeable to

this proposal". The Centre's interlocutor on the Naga ceasefire, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, returned here on Thursday after holding talks with the NSCN (I-M) leadership, Mr. Thiuangaleng Muivah and Mr. Issac Chisi Swu, in Amsterdam. Mr. Padmanabhaiah flew to Amsterdam in the wake of the worsening situation in Manipur, where protesters took to the streets venting their ire against the June 14 agreement and demanding that the ceasefire be confined to Nagaland. His mission was to get the NSCN(I-M) leadership to agree on reducing the area of operation of the agreement to the original territorial limits of Nagaland.

Well-placed sources in the Government said all the Chief Ministers articulated their known views on the ceasefire agreement but agreed that peace must prevail in the region.

By deciding to confine the ambit of the ceasefire to the original position, the agreement is now back to square one. However, sources were inclined to believe that the NSCN (I-M) was open to continuation of the dialogue with the Government.

Today's meeting assumed significance as the Naga ceasefire agreement is due to expire on July 31. The meeting was attended by the Chief Ministers of Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and the

Governor of Manipur. From the Government's side, apart from the Prime Minister and Mr. Advani, the Minister of State for Home, Mr. I.D. Swami, and other officials were present.

While announcing the extension of the ceasefire in June "without territorial limits" by another year, the Government had taken into account the demand of the NSCN (I-M) that the ambit of the ceasefire be extended to all Naga-inhabited areas in the northeast. The insurgent outfit, which has a presence in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur, threatened to pull out of the agreement if the demand was not met.

The extension of geographical boundaries prompted the three States to protest, fearing that the NSCN (I-M) may ultimately use it to legitimise its demand for a "Greater Nagaland".

The intensity of protests and violence was most sharp in Manipur, where the Assembly Secretariat was set ablaze. MPs and MLAs from the State had been camping here, threatening to resign en masse if the ceasefire was made operational beyond Nagaland after July 31. They were joined by NGOs, youth organisations and student bodies. The Left parties had also demanded revocation of the ceasefire outside Nagaland.

THE AMINO

# Centre in Ulfa wait and watch

FROM SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, Nov. 30: Realising that the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) is under pressure from security forces and its cadre are in disarray, the Centre is not going out of its way to take up the militant outfit's offer for talks.

The Ulfa has over the last few years lost considerable public support in Assam and is also under pressure from Bhutan to remove its camps from the Himalayan kingdom by December or face action from its security forces.

The Ulfa camps in the rich tropical jungles of Bhutan, adjoining Assam, had been a convenient getaway for militants.

Once they were in Bhutan, hot pursuit was impossible for Indian forces as they could not cross the international border and spark a diplomatic row with a friendly neighbour.

Bhutan has for long asked Ulfa and other northeastern militant groups to clear out of its territory but with little success. Now, however, it is determined to throw out the militants and the threat of military action for the first time indicates that it means business.

Officials believe that the Ulfa offer for dialogue may be a tactical move to gain time to recruit and put its network of operational cells into place.

In recent months, Ulfa has lost many cadre in encounters with security forces, demoralising its rank and file.

The outfit's problem is that the a large number of people in the state do not support the demand for an independent homeland, being much more intergrated with the rest of the country than other northeastern states.

Ordinary citizens have been turned off by the spiral of vio-

lence the militants have unleashed, forcing industry and capital out of Assam.

Officials say New Delhi will wait and watch before committing itself to dialogue.

The low-key approach is understandable, considering that the banned militant group has not directly got in touch with anyone from the Centre or even the state government.

"The government of India has a settled policy on this: We are prepared to talk to all militant groups without any conditions, provided they are willing to abjure violence," I.D. Swamy, minister of state for home, said today.

"If the Ulfa is serious about peace, they must get in touch with the Governor or any of our senior officials here or in Assam, they can also write to us," Swamy said. But apart from newspaper re-

ports, the Centre has had no word from Ulfa.

Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi has welcomed the Ulfa's change of heart and said his government will support the peace move.

The Centre is in no hurry to rush into talks without first being sure that the separatists have had a change of heart. It is waiting for the militants to make the next move.

## Talks offer

Ulfa today repeated its offer for peace talks, adds Reuters. Its publicity secretary Mithinga Daimari said in a statement that talks can take place if they were held in a foreign country under UN supervision and discussed the question of sovereignty. "Ulfa favours a political dialogue with the government if its three conditions are acceptable to New Delhi," he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

# Bhutan ban drives Ulfa to Meghalaya

20/12 5-8 9 NB Sr.  
**FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT**

**Shillong, Dec. 2:** The banned Ulfa, facing a fast-approaching deadline set by the Bhutan government to quit bases in that country, is planning to establish permanent camps in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya for a sustained extortion campaign to replenish its dwindling assets, intelligence sources said.

Saturday's abduction of Phulbari legislator Abu Taher Mondal's cousin Safiur Mondal and his nephew Esteak Salim Mondal from Phutamati is part of a "special mission" of the Ulfa, police sources believe.

Safiur Mondal — a businessman from Phulbari — was picked up by suspected Ulfa militants at 1.30 pm yesterday when he was on his way back home from here. The police said the militants had abducted the businessman and his minor son mainly to extort money.

"We see no other motive because no one has been injured and the driver of the vehicle was released," a police source said. The police have not been able to track down Mondal and his son yet.

Abu Taher Mondal, MLA, said his cousin had come to pick up his son Esteak, who is a student of St. Peters School here. Modal said he, too, felt that ransom could be the motive behind the abduction since "Safiur has no enmity with anyone and is a friendly person".

Incidents of kidnapping and extortion by the Ulfa in and around the Garo Hills are on the rise. "It appears that the Assam-based outfit has already made bases in some areas close to Bangladesh. Areas which have been identified as potential hide-outs include Phulbari, Mahendraganj, Tikrikilla, Mancachar in West Garo Hills bordering Bangladesh and Rajashimla, Nongalbibra, Rongjeng and Rongduli in East Garo Hills," a source said.

According to intelligence sources, more than 150 Ulfa rebels sneaked into Garo Hills recently. The police, however, claimed to be making progress in its plan to hunt down Ulfa hitman Dristi Rajkhowa, who was injured in a recent shoot-out. Rajkhowa, according to senior police officials here, is the outfit's main man in the Garo Hills.

"He has good links with the local outfits and access to some interior villages," a police official said.

The Ulfa hitman was instrumental in ferrying arms and ammunition from Bhutan to Garo Hills, the police said.

According to intelligence reports, Rajkhowa has established a "good rapport" with the banned Garo outfit, the Achik National Volunteers' Council, which is helping the Ulfa settle down in the area.

Recently, the police unearthed a huge quantity of explosives and rocket-launcher shells from Rajashimla in East Garo Hills.

The sleuths said the Ulfa has already winded up four of its nine camps inside Bhutan and moved all its arms and ammunition close to the border for transshipment across to the Garo Hills in Meghalaya as well as Nalbari and Darrang in Assam.

There are still around 2,000 armed Ulfa rebels inside Bhutan. Meghalaya and Assam police are contemplating a joint strategy to deal with Ulfa militants.

## How long, Mawlong?

5/11 He can do worse than quit graciously 9-11-01

Like Manipur, politics in Meghalaya is littered with defections, splits and alliances of convenience. No single party is capable of forming a government, elected representatives being so fickle-minded as to have no ideological commitment. Trust is non-existent and for about a month now their antics have reduced the Meghalaya government to a state of flux. The trouble began with the opposition demanding EK Mawlong's ouster, alleging corruption in the Kolkata Meghalaya House deal. Mawlong silenced them by cancelling the deal, transferring some ministers allegedly involved and ordering a judicial probe. But the NCP, the dominant coalition partner, wanted the chief secretary sacked. When this did not happen it withdrew support. Mawlong upstaged this by engineering a split in the NCP, winning support of 12 of its 15 MLAs. At one point it appeared Purno Sangma had lost control of his men. However, within days they returned, reducing the Mawlong Ministry to a minority, the rebels apparently fearing the Speaker would disqualify them under the Tenth Schedule.

With the formation of the People's Forum of Meghalaya — comprising the NCP, Congress, Hills State People's Democratic Party, BJP and Independents claiming 42 seats in the 60-member House — which has staked a claim to forming an alternative government, Mawlong has no business sticking to power. He suffered a further setback when eight legislators of his United Democratic Party formed a breakaway group with the Speaker's recognition. He has two choices: quit or face a no-confidence motion on 7 December when the assembly meets. For whom the bell tolls will depend upon the greed of the moment. Delhi, however, cannot be oblivious of the fact that its delay in appointing an acting governor (the present incumbent has been indisposed for a long spell) is creating a constitutional crisis.

THE STATESMAN

- 4 DEC 2001



Jaideep Mazumdar  
Kolkata, December 18

THE NAGA Council of Elders (Naga Hoho) has launched a major initiative to bring the 52 Naga tribes together. Christened the "peace and reconciliation process", the council will kick off its efforts with a rally at the Kohima Public Grounds on Thursday morning.

The immediate objective of Naga Hoho is to end the clashes between the warring factions of the NSCN. The latest round of these factional clashes that broke out on October 24 this year, has claimed nearly 40 lives so far.

"Our ultimate objective is to iron out all differences amongst the tribes. We'll start off with the 36 Naga tribes that are here

# Naga council bid to unite tribesmen

in Nagaland and slowly include the remaining 16 that are in Myanmar. This is geared towards the desire of the Nagas to stay together as one people," Dr N Venuh of the Naga Hoho's media committee told *Hindustan Times* from Kohima.

A statement issued by the Hoho said: "The Nagas will begin a very difficult, painful and long process of rebuilding the Naga family with the launching of the reconciliation process". "We are expecting about 20,000 representatives from the various tribes and from a cross-section of Naga society," said Venuh.

He, however, said that the "greater Nagaland" goal of the NSCN's Issac-Muivah faction is not a part of the whole 'process'. "Our initiative has nothing to do with this 'greater Nagaland' or 'Nagalim' objective. We simply want to unite all the Nagas and help ourselves realise our dream of living together as one people. We have been divided by the British and then by New Delhi. We now want these divisions to go," he added.

The NSCN(I-M) wants a "greater Nagaland" comprising all Naga-dominated areas in neighbouring Assam and Manipur as well as Myanmar.

This demand has caused a lot of heartburn among the people of the neighbouring states and was the main reason behind the violent uprising at Imphal in June this year. The Hoho, it is learnt, will start clear of this sensitive issue. The rally on Thursday will commence on a symbolic note with the stitching of the distinctive shawls of all the tribes.

The Hoho statement further said: "Efforts would be made by every Naga, represented by every tribe, Church and people's organisation, to heal past wounds inflicted upon one another through the course of

the conflict". Thursday's rally, the statement added, "is a clarion call to all Nagas to come forward and participate in the healing process".

The 'peace and reconciliation process' is the outcome of deliberations between elders of all the tribes over the past few months. The Hoho is the apex organisation of all Nagas. "We will place a few draft resolutions," at the rally for consideration," said Venuh.

Sources said that while most of the resolutions would call upon the rebel factions to make peace with each other, at least

one would reiterate the Naga's desire to "live together as one people" and would call upon New Delhi to "respect the wishes of the Nagas".

Another important resolution likely to be adopted is one that would call on New Delhi to take the Naga people and society into confidence during any talks. "Negotiations to end insurgency in Nagaland should be held with people who are acceptable to all sections of the Nagas," said Venuh.

This is significant since the negotiations have, so far, been held only with the NSCN(I-M), which has been portraying itself as the sole representative of the Nagas. This resolution may question this claim and pave the way for an end to the hegemony of the NSCN(I-M).

## NSCN(K) CEASEFIRE

THE NSCN(K) has stolen a march over the NSCN(I-M) by declaring a ceasefire. A declaration signed by the Khaplang faction's chief N Kitovi Zhimomi said the ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) is a gesture of goodwill.

Coming on the eve of the first-ever initiative by the apex Naga Hoho to unite the warring factions, the ceasefire declaration would win the Khaplang faction many brownie points. Zhimomi, in his declaration, said the ceasefire would be for a period of one month from December 19. Zhimomi said this decision was taken after consultations with S S Khaplang to prove his faction's "genuine desire" for peace and reconciliation.

HTC, Kolkata

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 DEC 2001



# Like weighing frogs

Having already had five governments comprising different coalitions and given the brand of politics practised in Meghalaya, confirming the veracity of claims now being made to form the sixth ministry is best left to providence, writes DIPANKAR ROY



The Nationalist Congress Party general secretary Purno Sangma (below) went after Meghalaya Chief Minister EK Mawlong's jugular in a battle for supremacy

assembly elections are due only in 2003.

For the moment, with two days remaining for the assembly's winter session, the newly formed People's Forum of Meghalaya claims it has the numbers to dislodge the EK Mawlong government. It boasts of the magic number of 42, excluding speaker ED Marak, in a house of 60.

But Mr Mawlong continues to hope, even in the face of such claims and a seemingly hopeless situation for him and his fragmented United Democratic Party. "These are tall

claims. Let us wait and see," he says with as much confidence as the PFM leadership. Confirming the veracity of such claims of numbers by political parties in this picturesque north-eastern state of India is as difficult as weighing frogs.

Consider how the political dice has rolled over the past few days and the picture of uncertainty becomes as apparent as the waters of Umiyam lake, about 15 km from the state capital of Shillong, aka the "Scotland of the East". The present political crisis was

ministry. But the delay has given the chief minister some vital breathing space where he could poach on the Sangma camp. Congress Legislature Party leader DD Lapang is said to have already been offered the post of chief minister.

"Don't write off anything" is the line political analysts in Meghalaya tout. A dinner or a lunch-

eon meeting could once again change the equation. This much is reflected in the fact that despite his claim of the PFM having majority support, Mr Sangma has not been able to leave the state and return to Delhi — he only went to the national capital for a day to apprise the Prime Minister and the home minister of the situation in the state. When the

NCP legislators rebelled, Mr Kharsing had also said: "The mice play when the cat is away." Perhaps, Mr Sangma's departure from the state at this juncture could encourage the mice to play once again.

(The author is The Statesman's Guwahati-based Special Representative.)

Party. A happy chief minister rewarded some of them with cabinet berths and made their leader, Lotising Sangma, his deputy.

All Mr Kharsing could do was threaten: "Let Mr Purno Sangma come and everyone will fall in line." NCP general secretary and former Lok Sabha speaker Purno Sangma was in Delhi. He rushed to Shillong the next day. And then battle for supremacy began.

The NCP legislators remained defiant and set conditions for the party to fulfil, saying the "door for negotiations" was still open. Mr Sangma then won over the Congress. The NCP legislators followed soon after and declared rather sheepishly that they had returned to the party to make it stronger. The truth lay elsewhere. When they wrote to the speaker seeking recognition for their group in the house, they had made a blunder.

They said they had left the party voluntarily. And that is not viewed as a "split" or a "merger" under the Tenth Schedule. Disqualification thus hung dangerously over them and with the assembly elections still some way off, they had only one option: return to Mr Sangma.

But Mr Sangma was yet to sheathe the sword. He went for Mr Mawlong's jugular and broke the UDP. Eight legislators from the chief minister's party swore allegiance to Mr Sangma in no time and the PFM was formed.

As Mr Sangma would reveal later to *The Statesman*, he decided to go after the UDP despite already having the desired number, because there was no representation of the Jaintia Hills district among the legislators available with him.

All the seven legislators from the district belonged to the UDP. Mr Sangma could not have got them, because this would not be allowed under the Tenth Schedule. By the time the look of content returned to his face, the eight UDP legislators were on his side.

The PFM, raring to form the government, however, encountered a delay as the governor was in Chennai for medical reasons. The new group has now resigned itself to waiting for the assembly session to begin to move a no-confidence motion against the Mawlong

triggered by the Meghalaya House deal in Kolkata. It was alleged that the government had sold the state's interests in a deal that weighed heavily in favour of the Kolkata-based Asian Housing Construction Company Limited. The government stood to lose precious revenue.

The NGOs got together and formed an umbrella organisation they christened the People's Rally Against Corruption. Their members spread out to different parts of Meghalaya explaining to the people the raw deal they would get if the agreement with the construction company was not scrapped; they also identified ministers and officials in the government who had been party to the deal and demanded their removal. They wanted Mr Mawlong, among others, to step down.

As the public outcry grew, the BJP with its three legislators in the ruling coalition, withdrew support. Two ministers of Mr Mawlong's own party resigned as well. Now it was the turn of the Nationalist Congress Party, another constituent of the ruling coalition.

Its president, Robert Kharsing, dashed off a letter to the governor stating that the NCP was withdrawing support. But that was easier said than done. The NCP legislators — barring four, including the speaker and the deputy speaker — were not interested.

All of them pledged support to Mr Mawlong and, going a step further, formed the Meghalaya Nationalist Congress Legislature



motion against the Mawlong

# An entire generation of scientists lost

**Aloke Tikku in New Delhi**

Dec. 7. — Nobel laureate Amartya Sen coined the term “missing women” to refer to the millions of girls who were never allowed to be born or killed soon after birth. The Indian scientific establishment would probably now be able to relate to what Professor Sen meant as they grapple with the phenomenon of “missing scientists”; an entire generation of scientists lost as students moved away from fundamental science.

This is one of the challenges that the government will face as it gets about implementing the new science and technology policy 2001. And in this, the task may be much more difficult than it was post-1958, when India's first Scientific Policy Resolution emphasised on building the “modern temples” for national development and increasing the number of sci-

ence and technology personnel on a scale adequate to satisfy the nation's needs in areas of agriculture, education, industry and defence.

For one, because unlike four decades ago, the “temples” are in for competition. It is not just a question of numbers in the 21st century but of quality as well.

The draft new S&T Policy 2001 — the third since Independence — acknowledges the problem at hand. “Research laboratories are faced with the problems of an ageing pool of scientists, a consequence of the slow pace of recruitment, inadequate infrastructure, declining numbers of research students and limited resources”.

“Even the best of our national institutions do not have access to state-of-art facilities and the strategic departments like space, defence and atomic energy find it increasingly difficult to attract the best of human resources.”

Of course, the problem begins much earlier in colleges. “Science teaching at the under-

graduate level is in a state of crisis, with students drifting away to other disciplines which offer better avenues for employment”.

The draft policy promises a major initiative to modernise the infrastructure for science and engineering in universities and academic institutions, integrating teaching and research and creating an autonomous structure for funding basic science in academic institutions. It suggests that the demand for technologists in critical spheres like defence, health and industry should be continuously assessed to ensure constant supply of trained manpower.

That, however, is only one part of the problem. Alongside, the government will also have to promote, nurture and reward innovations, push industry to get into research and development and integrate science with all spheres of national activity. One way would be to make an S&T input essential in all decision-making on government policies even in socio-economic issues.

# Mawlong voted out, protests

**Statesman News Service**

**GUWAHATI, Dec. 7.** — The EK Mawlong ministry was today defeated in a no-confidence vote.

The newly formed People's Forum of Meghalaya has staked claim to form the new government.

However, the acting Governor, Mr Arvind Dave, is yet to invite the new party to form the government under Mr FA Khonglam's leadership.

The Governor has reportedly sought clarifications from the Speaker, Mr ED Marak, regarding the manner in which the proceedings vis-a-vis the trust vote were conducted in the House.

He has also sought a report from Mr Marak on the issue of disqualification of Mr Khonglam, an associate member of the Na-

tionalist Congress Party. Mr Mawlong met the Governor and told him that the Speaker had acted in a partisan manner in admitting the no-confidence motion for which the mandatory 24-hour notice was not given.

Mr Mawlong's aides said he might go to court.

In a letter to the Governor, the Speaker said the motion was admitted under relevant rules.

After the House proceedings were over, leaders of the Congress, NCP and Meghalaya United Democratic Party, which mainly constitute the coalition, met the Governor.

Mr Khonglam met Mr Dave and staked claim to form the government.

The United Democratic Party had sought Mr Khonglam's disqualification saying he had withdrawn support to the government

at the behest of the NCP high command although he was an Independent MLA who joined the NCP as an associate member.

The hearing was held in the Speaker's chamber yesterday, but the decision was not known.

The controversy over the no-confidence motion, moved by the PFM secretary, Mr RJ Lyngdoh, broke out because it was not listed as the day's business.

The Treasury Bench members opposed its tabling saying the mandatory 24-hour notice was not given. But the opposition cited rules to say it could be done by seeking leave of the House.

A voice vote went in favour of moving the no-confidence motion, which led to a furore.

Some ruling party members were also removed by the marshals. Another voice vote then ensured Mr Mawlong's defeat.

Vajpayee meets Isaac, Muivah

# Naga talks in Osaka

CL MANOJ  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

OSAKA, Dec. 8. — In yet another move towards solving the complicated Naga issue, the Prime Minister today held talks here with Mr Th. Muivah and Mr Isaac Swu, general secretary and chairman of the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah). Though officials are evasive on the details, there are indications that the meeting marked the beginning of negotiations for a "political settlement" to the Naga issue.

A brief statement issued by the government after the 30 minute talk at Hotel New Otani, where Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has put up, said: "At the meeting it was reiterated that a negotiated peaceful settlement remained the objective of the two sides. Further talks between government of India and NSCN-IM will take place shortly".

Mr Vajpayee was accompanied by his principal secretary, Mr Brajesh Mishra, and the chief government negotiator with the NSCN-IM, Mr K Padmanabhaiah, who reportedly reached Osaka yesterday with the IB

chief, Mr KP Singh. The Naga leaders were not available for comments. Government negotiators may soon leave for Bangkok for follow-up talks.

This is the first meeting between the NSCN-IM and the Prime Minister since the decision to extend the cease-fire beyond Nagaland was withdrawn after violent protests in Manipur and other North-eastern states. The talk was reportedly arranged by the Union home ministry.

Today's meeting is seen as a step forward from the October talks that Mr Padmanabhaiah had with the NSCN-IM leaders. He had reportedly conveyed to the government the Naga leaders' message that they were only interested in a dialogue aimed at finding a "political solution." They also reportedly demanded a meeting with Mr Vajpayee.

The Naga leaders have reportedly been demanding a "political settlement" of the issue beyond Nagaland. Today's meeting and the announcement of more talks are being seen here as indicative of forward movement.



The PM at a reception  
in Osaka. — PTI

■ Another report on page 13

THE STATESMAN

# Vajpayee meets Naga leaders

9/12 By Neena Vyas HD-8

**OSAKA, DEC. 8.** In search of a peaceful settlement of the Naga issue, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had a meeting with the NSCN(IM) leaders, Mr. Isaac Swu and Mr. T Muivah, for half-an-hour here this afternoon.

Present at the meeting were the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, and the interlocutor for the Naga talks and former Home Secretary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah. It was stated that the two sides reiterated their commitment to a negotiated and peaceful settlement of the issue. Official sources were unwilling to say anything more, but it was clear that today's meeting was only part of the process that began several years ago. The effort for establishing peace in Nagaland and arriving at an effective political settlement.

The Naga Ceasefire Agreement signed earlier by the Government could not be fully implemented as it met with stiff resistance in Manipur and other States of the North East. The other States ob-

jected to a clause in the agreement by which the ceasefire would have been applicable to territories outside Nagaland. This was seen as the start of a political process to create a "greater Nagaland," comprising the Naga inhabited areas in other States.

Unfortunately, around the time of the announcement of the agreement, political instability in Manipur resulted in the Naga issue getting embroiled in a Manipur's politics of defections. Politics within the NDA — the

9 N & States  
Bharatiya Janata Party had tried to replace the Samata Party government in Manipur — also had played a role in eruption of violence. But now that President's Rule has been imposed in Manipur and elections are to take place, that unnecessary complication is out of the way.

The talks with the NSCN(IM) have always been shrouded in secrecy with the Government's interlocutor meeting Mr. Muivah and others in Bangkok and Paris.

## PM enthralled by Hindi play

**OSAKA, DEC. 8.** The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and an elite Indian audience were thrilled today when a Japanese troupe presented a play in Hindi.

The one act-play, *Aaina* (mirror), by Chiyomi Hara was a Hindi translation by Prof. Tomio Mizokami and Dr. Arun Chaturvedi.

Mr. Vajpayee was impressed with the chaste Hindi dialogue of the Japanese artistes and he personally complimented each of them.

The Disinvestment Minister, Mr. Arun Shourie, the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Omar Abdullah, the Indian Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Aftab Seth, were among the audience.

The play was staged soon after the business meeting at the new Otani Hotel, where the Prime Minister is staying. — UNI

# Khonglam is Meghalaya CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Dec. 8. — Independent legislator Dr Flinder Anderson Khonglam was sworn in as Meghalaya chief minister along with 36 others, including deputy chief minister, Mr DD Lapang. The coalition People's Forum of Meghalaya that Mr Khonglam heads has 42 MLAs and is the sixth government since the February 1998 Assembly polls.

Mr EK Mawlong, who refused to resign even after his United Democratic Party government was defeated in the no-confidence vote in the House yesterday, finally put in his papers this morning.

The Governor, Mr Arvind Dave, then invited Mr Khonglam to form the government.

The jumbo Khonglam ministry is two bigger than the erstwhile Mawlong ministry, which had 35 members.

Mr Purno A Sangma, former Lok Sabha Speaker and Nationalist Congress Party general secretary who put together the PFM to oust Mr Mawlong, had told **The Statesman** recently that the ministry would have to be big because various groups had to be given representation.

The PFM's main plank is battling corruption. But the ministry that was sworn

in today has at least one member who is under a cloud in connection with the Kolkata Meghalaya House deal that had triggered off the several weeks long political crisis in the state.

The deal, struck by the Meghalaya government with a construction company, was allegedly not in the best interests of the state and suited only a few individuals including ministers and officials.

It led to a public outcry and constituents of the Mawlong ministry like the BJP and NCP withdrew support to the government.

His own United Democratic Party also split and the new Meghalaya United Democratic Party joined hands with the NCP and the Congress to form the PFM along with Hill State People's Democratic Party and People's Democratic Movement besides an Independent.

Although reduced to minority, Mr Mawlong refused to resign till he lost the no-confidence motion yesterday and after some protestations threw in the towel today.

The PFM has promised to institute a judicial enquiry into the deal, which was eventually scrapped by Mr Mawlong.

The PFM constituents are also confident that they will be able to stick together till the next elections due in February 2003.

THE STATESMAN

- 9 DEC 2001

# India possible venue for Centre-Muivah peace talks

Chandan Nandy  
New Delhi, December 10

THE PROSPECTS of the Centre's dialogue with the NSCN (Isak-Muivah) leaders being held in India have brightened considerably after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's talks in Japan this Saturday with rebel Naga chief Thuingaleng Muivah.

It is understood that during the meeting in Osaka, Prime Minister Vajpayee indirectly mooted India as the venue for taking the dialogue on "substantive issues" forward. Muivah, though non-committal to the Prime Minister's invitation, indicated that he might consider the proposal.

After the Osaka meet, the next round of talks between the Centre's interlocutor in the Naga peace talks, K Padmanabhaiah, and the NSCN(I-M) leadership, is scheduled in Bangkok. Padmanabhaiah has had several rounds of dialogue with the NSCN(I-M) leadership — Muivah and NSCN (I-M) chairman Isak Gishi Swu — in Amsterdam and Bangkok.

A few months back, Union Home Minister L K Advani had invited Muivah and Swu to visit India. Provided an Indian passport in July this year, he could not altogether discard the invitation.

In fact, New Delhi helped Muivah and Swu to get visas for Japan for the meeting with Vajpayee. During his Amsterdam talks with Padmanabhaiah, Muivah had insisted on a direct interaction with top political leaders.

Officially, Muivah's meeting with the Prime Minister at Hotel New Otani is being described here as a "call-on" in which Vajpayee did not enter into the nitty-gritty of the Naga issue. Both sides agreed to work towards the objective of a "negotiated, peaceful, political settlement" to the vexed Naga issue.

However, sources said Vajpayee, who was accompanied by National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra, Padmanabhaiah and Intelligence Bureau director K P Singh, threw broad hints that he would prefer the future rounds of talks to be held in India.

Indian officials are extremely keen to continue the dialogue with the NSCN(I-M) in India as has been the case with the NSCN(Khaplang). Analysts here said that it would be a victory for the Centre if Muivah visits India to participate in future rounds of political dialogue.

However, other sources are sceptical. They say that the NSCN(I-M) leadership would not "bite the bait yet" and take some more time to formulate a stand on the proposal.

Muivah has persistently refused to return to India or accept Indian citizenship. But this July he accepted the Indian passport, an indication that he was willing to tone down his extreme views and work towards a more realistic political settlement.

# Nagas hope for peace after Osaka meet

BY SYED ZARIR HUSSAIN

AA 10/12  
Guwahati, Dec. 9: Hopes for an end to five decades of violent insurgency in the northeastern state of Nagaland have brightened with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee meeting top tribal Naga separatist leaders in Japan.

Mr Vajpayee held a 30-minute meeting at Hotel New Otani at Osaka on Saturday with Isak Chishi Swu and Thuigaleng Muivah, chairman and general-secretary respectively, of the outlawed National Socialist Council of Nagaland.

The NSCN is fighting for an

independent tribal homeland in Nagaland. "Any move that could bring peace to our state is welcome," Mr G. Gainam, leader of the influential Naga Hoho, the apex tribal council in Nagaland, said on phone from Dimapur, Nagaland's commercial hub 75 km from the state capital Kohima.

"We sincerely hope the meeting between the Prime Minister and the two NSCN leaders in Osaka paves the way for a permanent solution to the vexed insurgency problem in the state."

During the Japan meeting, the two sides stressed the need for a "negotiated, peaceful, political set-

tlement" of the insurgency in Nagaland, besides agreeing to hold further talks, although no date or venue was fixed.

National security adviser Brajesh Mishra and Mr K. Padmanabhaiah, the Central government's interlocutor for the Naga peace talks, also attended the meeting with the two top rebel leaders.

"The meeting at the Prime Minister's level could mean the government and the NSCN are on the verge of clinching an accord or a deal to solve the Naga insurgency," an analyst said.

In a statement last month, the NSCN said a "final settlement" to

J N B Guler  
the insurgency problem was in the offing with talks with New Delhi progressing smoothly.

The NSCN entered into a cease-fire with New Delhi in August 1997. "We want peace in Nagaland, and the Osaka meeting could be the beginning of an end to long years of bloodshed and violence in the region," added Rev. V.K. Nuh, head of the Council of Baptist Churches in Nagaland.

"Let the Indian government approach a sincere attitude and not just allow the problem to drag on." This is the second meeting between Mr Vajpayee and the NSCN leaders. (IANS)

THE ASIATIC

10/12/97

## The Osaka talks

*J. N. B. G. 10/12*  
*AA-6*

**B**y resuming dialogue with one of the two dominant groups behind the oldest insurgency in the Northeast, the Vajpayee government has sent out a clear signal: notwithstanding the violence which greeted the Naga peace accord just a few months ago, the Centre would still like to persist with the negotiations with the Isaac-Muivah faction. However, given the fate of the accord; the real significance of the Vajpayee-Muivah meeting in Osaka perhaps lies in the fact that it was held at all. The result of the talks in ending the schism that has existed for several decades between linguistic and ethnic groups in the region will become apparent only when the Khaplang group, the other Naga insurgent faction, reacts to the meeting at the ground level. The latter has made its displeasure at being relatively neglected by the Centre several times. The last meeting between central emissary K. Padmanabhaiah and the I-M faction in Bangkok was clouded by a rather bitter controversy regarding some informal package deal between the Indian government and the Bangkok based group. The accord which was subsequently signed led to a vertical divide in Manipur, even as a host of Naga-dominated villages were also caught in the crossfire. The rejection of the accord by almost every political party in Manipur accentuated the existing divide. The kind of homework that has gone into the latest meeting is thus a matter of widespread speculation, and perhaps understandably so. The last time round, it had become clear that unless all the contending parties are brought together on the same negotiating table, no real advance could be expected. Since then, some Union home ministry officials and the intelligence agencies have been following the fallout of the controversial accord, but there is as yet no concrete evidence that either the Khaplang faction or the general sentiment prevailing in Manipur have been very happy and satisfied with the accord's progress. The longstanding feud between the Kuki and Naga segments has gone on almost unabated. If the idea behind the negotiations was to swing the popular mood in favour of the accord, that currently stands unfortunately nullified. The selective targeting of poor and largely defenceless Nagas that followed the accord led to almost immediate disillusionment with the manner in which the talks had gone. The Centre has, in the corresponding period, readily acknowledged that picking up the threads of the negotiations will not be easy, and it was with this perception in mind that the Vajpayee-Muivah meeting was held. The I-M faction's continued faith in the dialogue going on is intended to emphasise its centrality to the prevailing situation in Nagaland and Manipur. The real meaning of the talks will be clear only when a more tangible reaction is available from the region in question, and the Indian government has thus suggested that subsequent talks could be held at home rather than abroad. There are no clear pointers to whether that suggestion will indeed be carried through in the future. Meanwhile, the Muivah faction has responded by trying to seek greater local legitimacy in the backdrop of the resumed negotiations. The Khaplang faction, which has been steadfast in its refusal to be treated as anything less than completely equal to the I-M group, is not expected to take much time in coming out with its perception of the Osaka meeting. Till that happens, the various groups involved will necessarily keep their fingers crossed.

THE ASIAN AGE

10 DEC 2001



## Under a cloud

Six governments in three years is Meghalaya's tragedy

MINISTRIES have been like the clouds that come and go in Meghalaya. The People's Forum of Meghalaya (PFM) government, sworn in on Saturday, is the sixth since the 1998 elections. Though Flinder Anderson Khonglam, who took over as chief minister, enjoys a comfortable majority in the 60-member House, there is no certainty that his will be a stable government. Political instability has been the bane of Meghalaya, where only two chief ministers — Williamson A. Sangma and S.C. Marak — have completed their full terms in office since the state was formed in 1972. In a state where political parties do not matter much and where politicians change sides as often as they find it expedient, politics revolves around the whimsies of the leaders. Thus it would not be surprising if the ousted chief minister, E.K. Mawlong, makes a bid to come back to power given his immense capacity for political manoeuvring. He knows only too well that the memorandum of understanding his government reached with a private firm to construct a six-storied building at Meghalaya House in Kolkata was just a ruse for his detractors to destabilise his government. In the end, they may have succeeded in defeating him on the floor of the Assembly but he did not go without a fight and without proving his capacity for manipulation.

It is loyalty to Nationalist Congress Party leader and former Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma that has helped Khonglam come to power but to cling on to that post he will have to prove greater political skills. The new government

is unique in many respects. When the NCP-Congress government was formed in Maharashtra, Sangma claimed to have had no role in its formation. In fact, he had made his distress known over his party sharing power with the Congress. By breaking bread with the Congress even while insisting that he was still opposed to Sonia Gandhi ever becoming prime minister, Sangma has proved himself to be just another politician. Khonglam needs special talents to keep the government from falling prey to petty politicking by parties supporting him from within and without the government.

Khonglam's government is the first of its kind in which the Congress is a partner and which has the blessing of the BJP, if not its support. In fact, Sangma had publicly claimed a few days back that the coalition he had put together had the approval of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L.K. Advani. Of course, for the sake of record, all that the BJP's state leadership was prepared to admit was that the party would play the role of a constructive opposition. Anyway, if the understanding the Congress has reached with the BJP is with the express objective of providing Meghalaya a clean and efficient government that will improve law and order and address the pressing developmental problems of the state, the people would not raise their eyebrows. But if Khonglam and company use power only to line their pockets, it will be a repetition of the drama so familiar to the long suffering people of Meghalaya.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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## So far so good

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### Nagaland's future lies in peace plus development

**T**HE Naga peace talks have entered a decisive stage with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee holding discussions with the leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland at Osaka in Japan. Obviously, the two sides are satisfied with the progress they have achieved so far in the talks the Centre's interlocutors had with the NSCN bosses, Thiungaleng Muivah and Isak Swu, at places as far as Bangkok, Amsterdam, Zurich and Paris. The Osaka talks clear whatever doubts that remained about the agreement the government's interlocutor, K. Padmanabhaiah, had reached with the NSCN leadership a few months ago. The agreement had for the first time extended the ceasefire in force in Nagaland for over three years to areas outside the state. States like Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh felt threatened by the extension, which they saw as part of the NSCN's dream of achieving a Greater Nagland. The protest in Manipur was so violent that the Centre was forced to go back on its written agreement with the NSCN. The peace process would have suffered a body blow if the NSCN had insisted on the extension of ceasefire to the contiguous non-Naga areas.

Some behind-the-scene cajoling by the Centre's interlocutor who, at one point, found himself on the firing line, helped bring the NSCN leadership to Osaka. When the Centre initially conceded the demand for the extension of the ceasefire, it had extracted some promises from the NSCN with regard to the conduct of their

cadres in Nagland, which it continues to honour. There is a genuine feeling on both sides on the need to end the insurgency in the state, which is as old as the Indian Republic. Fortunately, the government continues to show its commitment to the process of negotiations rather than the deployment of draconian laws like the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (Poto). Incidentally, there are a large number of tough laws which are specific to the Northeast and which have been used against the insurgents there. The talks have already paid rich dividends — Nagaland is today one of the most peaceful states in the region. Yet, there is no clamour for an early accord on both sides and this bodes well for the state.

There are no quick-fix solutions for problems like Nagaland. One such attempt was the Shillong Accord the Central government forced on the then Naga supremo, A.Z. Phizo, and it failed precisely for this reason. In fact, the NSCN was launched to frustrate the accord. In sharp contrast, the Mizoram accord has succeeded in bringing peace and prosperity to the state because the Mizo National Front leader, B Laldenga, was able to convince his cadres about the need to eschew violence and lay down their arms. Logically, the Naga talks should enable Muivah and Swu to bring overground all the Naga rebels. Meanwhile, any step that helps in the peace process, like good development programmes, should be conceptualised and put in place. The best antidote to insurgency lies in the well-being and progress of the people.

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 1 DEC 2001

## PEACE PROCESS IN NAGALAND

THE BRIEF MEETING that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had with Mr. Isaac Swu and Mr. Thiungaleng Muivah — the two leaders of the NSCN(I-M) — during his official visit to Japan, could not have been an occasion for reaching a final settlement of the crisis involving the Naga people. The meeting, after all, was only a formality. Such meetings with the NSCN(I-M) leaders have been held in the past few years, particularly after the Union Government agreed for a ceasefire with the Naga rebels. While Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda met Mr. Muivah in Zurich (in the midst of his other engagements in Europe), Mr. Vajpayee himself had such an engagement with the NSCN leader in Paris on his way back from the U.S. Such engagements outside India have served the limited purpose of conveying to the NSCN(I-M) leadership the seriousness with which the top political leadership in the Union Government treated the Naga peace process. The negotiations, after all, are being held at different levels and coordinated in that sense by Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah who has been working as interlocutor, on behalf of the Union Government, on the Naga ceasefire.

That Mr. Padmanabhaiah was present (along with Mr. K. P. Singh, Director, Intelligence Bureau) when Mr. Vajpayee met the NSCN(I-M) top brass is indeed a clear message to Mr. Muivah and Mr. Isaac that they are being engaged in talks with all seriousness. Apart from the symbolism, the NSCN(I-M) leaders are also understood to have agreed "in principle" to the idea of holding talks in Delhi at a future date. It may be true that a lot more work will have to be done before the Naga outfit is brought around to accepting the idea of working out a solution within the framework of the Constitution. This will mean a radical shift away from the demand for a "greater Nagaland", Mr. Muivah has been

maintaining, even if it is only for the record, that the NSCN(I-M) remains firm on the demand for "greater Nagaland" while the Union Government has been equally firm that any solution shall have to be within the Constitution. This had become necessary in the context of the agitation that broke out in Manipur against the Centre's decision to accept the NSCN(I-M) demand that the ceasefire be extended to Nagamajority areas outside Nagaland too. This had provided the context for reviving a discussion on the idea of a "greater Nagaland"; there was no way that the Union Government could have allowed the idea (essentially one that involves a Naga state outside India) to gain legitimacy. Hence, the extension of the ceasefire was revoked. This too must have been an issue that must have been talked about, even if it was in a cursory fashion, when Mr. Vajpayee met the NSCN(I-M) leaders in Osaka. 14/12

Be that as it may, it will make ample sense for those at the helm in the Union Home Ministry to ensure that leaders of the various political parties are briefed about the meeting in Osaka. It is possible that there are constraints over revealing all the details and the progress made in the talks hitherto. But then, it is imperative for the Government to take the political leadership cutting across the spectrum into confidence before committing itself to the NSCN(I-M). This, after all, is the lesson that Mr. Vajpayee and those at the helm in the Union Home Ministry must have learnt after the violent agitation in Manipur (and in Assam) against extending the ceasefire. For this very reason, it is important for those involved with the Naga peace process to ensure that the various State Governments in the Northeast too are kept informed about the progress. 40-10

DE MINDO

14 DEC 2001

After Amsterdam, Bangkok and Osaka, talks should move closer home, says SANJOY HAZARIKA

# Naga talks need new address: India

**T**HE recent meeting between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN I-M) at a hotel in Osaka, Japan, will give an impetus to the discussions between the two sides which have been stuttering along formally for over four years and informally for more than five.

The presence of National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra at the Osaka discussions is significant, for he has been the Prime Minister's point man on numerous matters related to national security, external policy and relations with neighbours — take his in-depth meetings and briefings with leaders in Europe and the United States during and after Kargil as well as recently and Mishra's dash to Dhaka after Begum Khaleda Zia came to power a few weeks ago. K. Padmanabhiah, the Government's representative at the Naga talks over the past two years, and K.B. Singh, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, were also present — they are the main interlocutors with the NSCN at other meetings. Singh's predecessor, Shyamal Dutta, had earlier accompanied Padmanabhiah to talks with the Nagas at Bangkok and Amsterdam.

While both sides maintained guarded silence over the content of the meeting between Vajpayee and Issak Chisi Swu, chairman of the I-M faction of the NSCN, and Thiungelang Muivah, the General Secretary, what was indicated by the Government side was that a long-term solution would be found in two to three years. It appeared that the talks were for about half an hour, cordial and satisfactory to both sides.

However, did they represent a breakthrough? That is questionable for discussions between the Government of India and the Naga leadership will now have to turn to the nuts and bolts of a possible agreement. This is likely to take some time for there are some 30-odd points that Muivah, the principal negotiator for the I-M faction, has put forward for discussion. These include issues as complex as the concept of Naga citi-

zenship (it should be pointed out that he himself is currently holding an Indian passport which was issued to enable him to travel to Amsterdam from Bangkok, where he was earlier based).

What is raising questions about

The political negotiations should be conducted in India, formally, with an Indian political representative at the cabinet level, and the Naga leaders should be given safe passage to consult with their people and with Indian shapers of public opinion.

tractable problem?

If it is, then it should be thought out. The Naga problem is too complex to bear repeating in detail here. But the following facts should suffice:

■ While the NSCN (I-M) is the

ity that this is a well-armed group which will have to be brought into the peace process and that any agreement must include the K faction and the NNC. Otherwise, no accord has a chance of succeeding. That is what happened to the 1975 Shillong Accord which ended up by creating greater divisions in Naga society than before.

■ Naga civil society groups are unsure, despite their good contacts with the factions, of what is being discussed at Amsterdam, Bangkok and Osaka. They will need to be briefed for, whether the Government of India likes it or not, the demand for sovereignty is still strong among many Nagas. Any settlement that protects the status quo of states and communities is unlikely to find many takers—they have fought for 50 years for a particular goal—and both sides need to show realism and restraint.

■ The neighbours, particularly Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh are not going to part with their land. Their political parties, legislators, media, scholars, NGOs and public opinion will not allow it.

■ There must be a sense of unity, not just at the political level but at the community level in Nagaland. This crucial process of healing in Naga society, binding up the wounds suffered by families and communities and inflicted by Nagas as much as others, has been seen as one of the most significant and challenging tasks before the naga Hoho, the civil society assembly representing all Naga tribes.

Such a process of reconciliation has begun and is likely to be publicly announced at a large public rally of all tribes in Kohima on December 20. This is the first such rally of its kind, organised by non-partisan groups, over the past 50 years and its significance cannot be sufficiently underlined. For it is here that Naga society has found its voice and is speaking clearly to Delhi, Nagaland and their neighbours.

The message is simple, the intent is clear: "that whatever you do, we have to sort our inner problems out first. Without that, nothing can work and the old hates and angers will re-emerge to destroy good work."



Padmanabhiah with Muivah in Bangkok. Reuters file photo

**NAGA TALKS** Negotiations should be conducted in India, formally, with an Indian political representative at the cabinet level, and the Naga leaders should be given safe passage to consult with their people and with Indian shapers of public opinion

the discussions is that they have been held away from the light of public discourse. This in turn raises the disquieting view that apart from renewing the ceasefire, considering issues relating to violations of the ceasefire (which has held since it was first announced in 1997 and despite the Government's bowing to pressure from the Manipur Valley in June and retracting its decision to extend the ceasefire beyond the confines to Nagaland), the discussions have not gone beyond a particular stage.

It is understood that Muivah's points will be taken up issue by issue in the next rounds of discussions. But why the two-to-three year time frame that the media and the Government keep talking about? Apart from the age of the protagonists (Vajpayee is 76, Muivah and Swu are above 66), general elections in India are also due in that schedule. So is the National Democratic Alliance seeking to conclude an accord with that election in mind and gather votes for "solving" a seemingly in-

most powerful Naga militant group, there are two other groups it has been at odds with. These are the NSCN (K) and the older Federal Government of Nagaland, or the original Naga National Council. The K faction has been fighting with the I-M since 1988 and recently stepped up attacks and counter-attacks on its rival in Nagaland, labelling them "terrorists". The K group is said to be close to the State Government in Nagaland but even that label cannot overlook the real-

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# TIME FOR HEALING

## A Defining Moment In Naga History

9 - NB States

By SANJOY HAZARIKA

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19/12

An extraordinary event, unprecedented in the past 50 years in the history of the Naga movement for independence, is to take place in Kohima, on 20 December. It promises to be a defining moment in Naga contemporary history and as important, if not more, than the numerous rounds of talks over ceasefire and peace that have taken place between the Indian Government and the Naga pro-independence leadership over many years.

For the first time — as far as veterans of the Naga struggle and observers of the North East can recall — tens of thousands of Nagas representing all the tribes of this community in the region (not just Nagaland) are to gather at the Kohima Local Ground to demonstrate, not against India, but, against the cycle of revenge, bloodshed and suspicion within the Naga family that has devastated them as much as than the armed conflict with New Delhi.

### Realisation

It is to call for reconciliation among the Nagas, who have become divided on ethnic as well as ideological lines, and, indeed, the personal likes and dislikes of their "underground" and "overground" leadership.

On 19 December, all Nagas are being asked to pause in a moment of silent prayer as church bells across their rugged hills peal in memory of those who died fighting for their cause. That time of silence is to be followed by the meet on reconciliation the following day, organised by the Naga Hoho, the apex body of all Naga tribes within and outside Nagaland. This largely non-political body was formed a few years ago after realisation grew within Naga civil society that political dialogues and extension of ceasefires between New Delhi and various powerful armed groups while significant did not go far enough to help ordinary Nagas understand the ground realities of the existing situation.

These discussions at the political level, including the recent meeting in Japan between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), Thiuenglang Muivah and Isaak Chisi Swu, deal with the overall demands of the Nagas. They do not and cannot by their very

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nature meet the acute divisions within Naga society where in the past four and a half years of ceasefire where more Nagas have died at the hands of fellow Nagas than at the hands of Indian security forces. This internecine conflict is not new and goes back to the 1960s when tribal rivalries erupted, fanned by the Government of India.

Indeed, the negotiations have taken place with the dominant group in the Naga movement, the NSCN (I-M) which has

ble of doing, given their mindsets, structures and agendas.

In addition, the Naga conclave is being viewed with a mixture of concern as well as even grudging admiration by their neighbours in the North East.

The concern stems from the anxiety that Naga unity could hurt their neighbours especially in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh where the NSCN(I-M) has made territorial demands seeking the inclusion of "Naga-inhabited areas" (with-



been insisting on the exclusion of its rival groups, the NSCN (Khaplant) and the rump Naga National Council.

### Concern

The underground factions as well as the Government of India and the State Government in Nagaland are watching closely the conciliation efforts. For these are things that Governments and even clearly defined political groups are incapa-

out defining such a term specifically: it does not for example even look at the demographic balance of the areas they seek, whether the Nagas are in a majority, living in contiguous places and whether they actually want to join a Naga "homeland."). In addition, there is no mention of those who suffered and fell fighting on the "other side", i.e., India, while defending the concept of an Indian nation. This should be addressed by the

Naga side — there has been valour and honour shown by fighters as well as negotiators from both sides.

The admiration stems from the realisation that the concept of internal healing and reconciliation calls for fearlessness, an ability to confront the demons of the past, to seek forgiveness from one's enemies and those one has harmed as well as been harmed by. This has not even been attempted by any of the larger states bordering Nagaland and who knows may lead to such efforts elsewhere. The 20 December meeting appears to be an affirmation of the faith that the Nagas swear by.

### Realistic

The organisers of the meeting say that "without including all the tribes and all sections of Naga society, there will not be a final settlement of the Naga issue." There cannot be a clearer statement to the underground groups and to the Government of India on the need for Naga unity, based on this process of conciliation. As this writer has said earlier, the Naga political groups need to be nudged to a common platform by a representative group such as the Hoho, on a common agenda and aims.

They differ on means, not the end. But the demand for sovereignty is not going to be accepted by either this government in Delhi or any other.

A realistic solution that meets the concerns of the Nagas for dignity and honour and the concerns of their neighbours has to be hammered out. And that cannot happen without the top leadership of the I-M group as well as the others returning to India and to the Naga hills and consulting public opinion, as well as Governments, on what is possible and what is not.

Fifty years may not be long in the history of a nation. But it is very long if one considers the fact that two or three generations have not known peace in the Naga Hills.

Peace in the north east hinges on Naga developments, if not entirely then certainly substantially. The Naga movement was the forerunner of other demands for self-determination. The NSCN (I-M) is called the mother of all insurgencies and feared throughout the region for its striking power. It is the duty of all organisations involved in the Naga situation, including the Government of India, not to mess up this unique chance by playing one group against another.

THE STATESMAN

19 DEC 2001

# The silent war within

The meeting of the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, with senior leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) on his recent visit to Japan, has been widely welcomed as a move which would take the Naga peace process further.

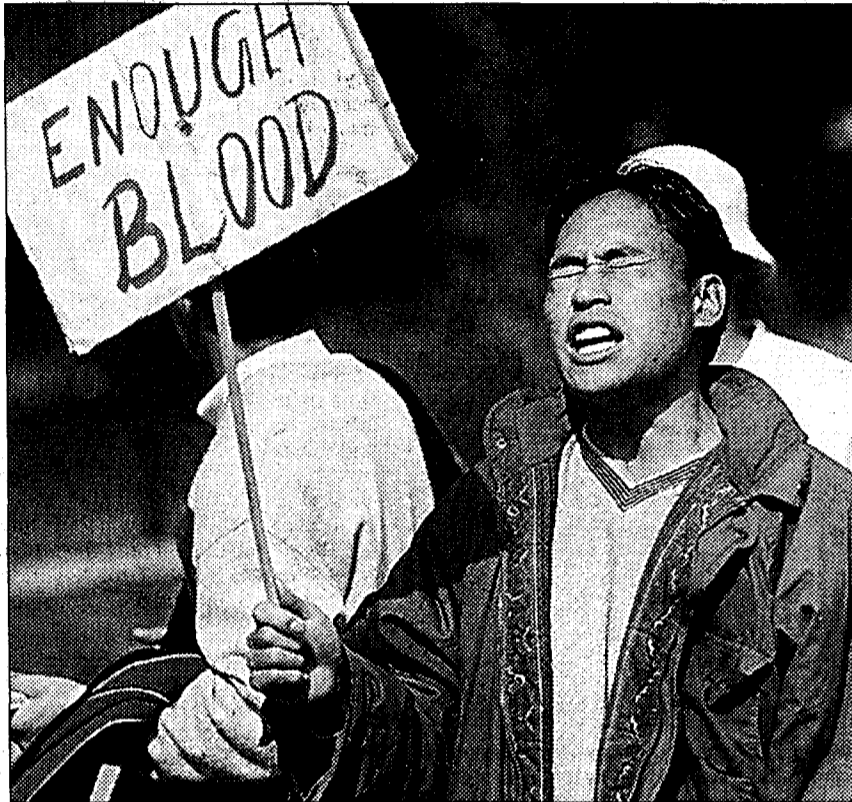
Though this was the first time the two sides met after the proposal for the ceasefire extension was revoked earlier this year, what transpired at this meeting and the one held soon after in Bangkok has been kept secret. The Centre and the NSCN(I-M) have once again reiterated their need to abide by the framework worked out earlier this year at the Hague, which promised to wrap up negotiations by 2003, when the assembly elections are scheduled to be held in Nagaland. There were also indications that while the Centre would not moot the idea of a Greater Nagaland, it would offer a special package for Naga-inhabited areas in the three states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Assam. This may include autonomous councils for the Naga people living in these regions.

However, even as the government continues its peace excursions with the NSCN(I-M) and seems willing to give this Naga group a greater role in the future, another vexatious problem remains — whether to involve in the talks all Naga factions, including the rival Khaplang group that has for long challenged the claim of the NSCN(I-M) of representing the interests of all Nagas. The NSCN(I-M) on its part has been adamantly opposed to sitting with the rival Khaplang faction for working out a solution.

Since rivalry between these two groups, which are divided on ethnic lines as well, has dogged all attempts to allow an effective cease-fire to prevail, the Naga peace talks have always appeared to lack direction. Though the guns have been muted since 1997, it is anything but a ceasefire. Hundreds have reportedly died either in clashes between these rival factions or in militant activities. The Khaplang group has been warning the government of the perils of ignoring it in the peace process. Only last year, it was assuaged to an extent by the Centre when a separate ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(Khaplang) came into effect. The faction is still believed to maintain its links with several militant groups who are engaged in extortions and run camps across the border.

There are divisions among prominent Naga leaders as well. The Nagaland chief minister, S.C. Jamir, has been time and again accused by the NSCN(I-M) of nipping unity moves in the bud and using the Khaplang faction to wreck peace negotiations. Jamir has repeatedly urged the Centre to involve

**Anuradha Kumar suggests that there are other Naga groups and movements which deserve as much prominence as the NSCN(I-M)**



Grassroots movement

all underground groups, the state government, other political parties, non-governmental organizations and churches in the dialogue process, instead of only one or two militant factions.

On the other hand, there are other groups claiming to be noticed by the Centre. The largest Naga tribe in the region, the Zeliangrong, represented by the All Zeliangrong Union (Assam, Nagaland and Manipur), sundry women's and students' unions have demanded urgent steps to integrate all Naga dominated areas under a single administration. The United Naga Council, representing Nagas living in Manipur, has time and again apprised the Centre on the "grave

situation" faced by the Nagas, particularly those displaced from Manipur after the violent anti-ceasefire agitation in Imphal valley.

The credit for bringing the two NSCN factions to a ceasefire stage and urging them towards negotiations goes largely to a motley comprising several students' federations as well as the Naga Hoho, an apex body comprising Naga leaders of tribal councils. The Naga Hoho, which has unanimously resolved to launch the reconciliation process from December 20, has also long warned the NSCN(I-M) of serious consequences if it remained adamant about its demands for the cessation of Nagaland from the Indian Union. In its bid to foster peace and unity

among people in the Naga inhabited areas of the Northeast, the two apex church organizations of Nagaland have also called for reconciliation among the Naga underground groups. The NSCN (Khaplang) is also reported to have sent feelers to the NSCN(I-M) through the Naga Baptist Church Council, which is trying to unite the Naga groups.

The general secretary of the Ao Students' Conference, Imotemjen Longchar, also recently admitted that the never-ending conflict and armed revolution has had a telling impact on the younger generation who feel frustrated by the difficult future ahead of them. Longchar also called upon the rival NSCN factions to bridge their differences since he believes that sans unification among rebel groups, there will not be a permanent solution to the Naga problem.

But while there is need for a joint platform or an umbrella organization for conflict resolution and political dialogue, peace efforts launched at the grassroots level also need to be encouraged. In a bold move in January this year, villagers of Mangkolemba declared their sub-division of Mokokchung district a "peace zone", indicating to the many underground factions in the region their desire to work towards peace in the area. This followed repeated clashes between rival NSCN factions in Mokokchung. Last year, tribal councils of Zunheboto and Tuenchang districts had also declared their areas as peace zones, restricting armed conflicts among underground factions.

In a peace rally at Mangkolemba, representatives from 29 village councils resolved not to allow underground activists to take shelter in their villages and "to avert any possible armed conflict between the rival factions". The rally also asked armed cadres of the outfits to leave the villages and requested security forces to set up post in Mangkolemba in order to instil a sense of security among the villagers. Though the "yearly contribution" to underground groups would continue, the decision that no other extortion demand would be entertained was unanimously endorsed.

A five-member sub-committee has been constituted to implement the resolution, signalling a new beginning in the district. This in turn reveals the unanimous desire for peace.

This move is akin to the resistance put up by the Chakmas and the Jamiyas of Tripura against militant demands. These people continue to stubbornly hold out against the exploitative demands of the National Liberation Front of Tripura. These fledgling resistance movements, if encouraged, may realize the promise of peace in the beleaguered region.

**While there is need for a joint platform or umbrella organization for conflict resolution, peace efforts launched at the grassroots level also need to be encouraged. In a peace rally at Mangkolemba, representatives from 29 villages recently resolved not to allow militants to take shelter in their villages**

THE TELEGRAPH

20 DEC 2001



# Chinese arms for N-E ultras seized in Myanmar

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Kolkata, December 19

A LARGE consignment of Chinese small arms recently headed for the North-eastern insurgent groups was seized off the Myanmar coast by that country's armed forces.

A ship carrying the arms was headed for Cox's Bazar, where the consignment was to have been off-loaded for passage through Bangladesh.

Indian intelligence agencies have been briefed about this seizure by the Myanmar authorities. The ship was reportedly apprehended off the coast

somewhere between Sandoway port in Rakhine province of Myanmar and the Cheduba Island. The medium-sized ship, it is learnt, was flying the Vietnamese flag, but had itself registered at Cambodia. The ship's crew is being interrogated in Myanmar. "On our end, we are trying to ascertain which insurgent outfit of the North East the arms were meant for," said a senior intelligence officer.

But the intelligence agencies here had prior information about such an arms consignment headed for the North East through the Bay of Bengal. As

had been reported in the *Hindustan Times*, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) had ordered for Chinese arms and had set up the ultra-Leftist People's War Group (PWG) as a conduit for sourcing the arms from China. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had sounded an alert and vigil on the seas was stepped up.

"We also requested Myanmar to be on the lookout for such a consignment. It was due to this general alert that the ship was apprehended. But what aroused the Myanmar Navy's suspicion and led them to search this particular ship is something we

don't know at this stage," said the officer.

The ship was carrying small arms manufactured by China. These included pistols, revolvers and even light machine guns used by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). "We have requested Myanmar to let us know the details of the arms that have been seized. We will know very soon," said a top-ranking army officer. It is learnt that Myanmar has not publicised the seizure of the ship for obvious reasons.

"The arms had all been manufactured in China and it is obvious that they could have been brought out of China without

the collusion of the Chinese authorities. But Myanmar is dependent on China militarily as well as economically. So it does not want to rub China the wrong way or embarrass it," explained the intelligence officer.

Interrogations of the ship's crew have revealed that the port of destination was Cox's Bazar. "We are interested in knowing its port of origin. We have also started out own investigations into this," said the officer. Indian intelligence has received a vital input about the onward journey of the arms consignment through Bangladesh. "We

believe a major Bangladesh-based Islamic fundamentalist group that has strong links with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was to have facilitated the passage through Bangladesh. We are now trying to confirm this input and once we do that, we'll have to establish which insurgent group of the North East has links with this Islamic fundamentalist group. Things could fall into place then," he added.

As had been reported earlier, the ULFA had paid a large sum of money as an advance for the arms consignment. "If this seized consignment was meant

for the ULFA, then it is just a part of what the this group had paid for. In that case, more consignments can be expected in future and we cannot let our guard down," the officer added.

In the past, too, Chinese arms as well as those with Chinese markings have come in to the hands of the insurgent groups of the North East through the Bay of Bengal. A major advantage of sending arms through the sea route is a major Chinese presence at Coco Islands that occupies a strategic position in the Bay of Bengal. Chinese forces based at the Islands can ensure safety of passage to such ships.

**Jaideep Mazumdar**  
*Kolkata, December 29*

NAGA HOHO, the apex Naga body, today launched a landmark peace process and pledged reconciliation not only with tribesmen but also with non-Nagas.

This is being touted as the first step towards lasting peace among the tribals and the non-tribals, who have been involved in bloody clashes for the past five decades to achieve sovereignty.

At a 'peace and reconciliation' meeting convened by the Naga Hoho (Council of Elders) at the Kohima local grounds this morning, representatives from all 52 Naga tribes resolved to work hard to achieve peace and unity.

"We will start a peace process whereby we'll sincerely examine the areas and ways in which we may have hurt others, so that practical steps towards reconciliation can be undertaken and lasting peace can be achieved," one of the resolutions adopted by the council stated.

Speaking to *Hindustan Times* from Kohima, Naga Hoho spokesperson Dr N Venuh said the "healing process" would also include the non-Nagas. "When we are talking of a peace and rec-

onciliation process here, we are not limiting ourselves to just the Nagas but others as well," he clarified.

Another resolution adopted at today's meeting was far more specific: "We'll go beyond our limits and see how others have hurt us, but also what we may have done to provoke others to hurt us".

This is enormously significant since it is the first time that the Naga society has indicated its willingness to undertake intro-

spection and re-examine its past instead of blaming New Delhi for wrongs, both perceived and real.

"It is very important that we extend the peace and reconciliation process to the non-Nagas as well. That is the only way lasting peace can be brought about. There may be perfect unity and total peace between the various Naga tribes, but if we are not at peace with the rest of the world or our immediate neighbours, we will not have lasting peace. It is

necessary to start building bridges both within and without," said Venuh.

He said the resolutions adopted at the meeting reflected the strong desire of the Nagas for peace. "The Nagas have suffered a lot, not only due to factional clashes, but also due to insurgency as such. Innocent Nagas have died, tortured and maimed and human rights violated because of this insurgency. Five decades of such sufferings have led to a re-think in

Naga society and we want peace now," he added.

Another significant aspect of the meeting was the demand raised by almost all speakers that the Naga society be included in the ongoing talks between New Delhi and the dominant Issac Muivah faction of the NSCN.

Many speakers said that one group could not claim to represent all Nagas and a lasting solution could only be brought about through talks with genuine representatives of the Naga society.

# Nagas pledge peace with non-tribals

This was a direct snub to the NSCN(I-M), which has been claiming to be the sole representative of the Nagas.

"Apart from chipping away at the hegemony of the NSCN(I-M), the meeting at Kohima could be termed as a historic one. The Nagas had never spoken about reconciliation with non-Nagas.

This reflects a significant climbdown from their earlier intransigence and signals a genuine desire to leave the violent past behind," a senior Army officer in the State said. Venuh echoed him saying: "This is a clarion call for a new beginning. Enough of war, now let's have peace among ourselves and with all our neighbours."



# Nagas vow to strive for unity

Dec. 20. — The NSCN(I-M) vice-president, Mr Khodao Yanthan, burnt more than thousand rupees saying money from Delhi had corrupted and divided the Naga society while Nagas from the North-east and Myanmar vowed to strive for unity at a programme here today.

The programme was organised by the Naga Hoho, apex body of Naga tribal councils, to launch a reconciliation campaign.

"There must be consensus to negotiate with the Centre," said Mr M Vero, the Hoho president.

The NSCN(I-M), which had rejected the Hoho effort, surprised everyone by sending Mr Yanthan and the convener of the outfit's ceasefire monitoring cell,

2112  
"Colonel" Phungthing Shimrang, agreement. J N 387,  
to the programme.

Although the NSCN(I-M) supported the idea of reconciliation, Mr Shimrang made it clear that the exercise must be based on "national principles."

However, the NSCN(K), which had welcomed the Hoho move, did not participate.

But the organisers were not disappointed.

"This is not a one-day affair. We've just opened the highway on which, we are hopeful, all would walk," Mr Vero said.

The Naga National Council chief, Rev M Kent, welcomed the reconciliation campaign.

But he warned the Hoho not to follow National People's Convention, which had negotiated with the Centre and accepted statehood under the 16-point

The Nagaland chief minister, Mr SC Jamir, did not attend the programme, but said in his speech that was read out that Nagas must understand the Centre's limitations while seeking a solution to the Naga issue.

He said Nagas have only themselves to blame for the worsening of the Naga crisis over the years.

"We can't allow the society to remain divided. The time has come to bury the hatchet and open a new chapter of reconciliation," he said.

The congregation ended with the pledge that "the most urgent need for our people at this moment is to recognise and understand our history and to heal the wounds of the past and learn to forgive and be forgiven."

THE STATESMAN

21 DEC 2001

# Between the lines

<sup>JN 2/8/97</sup> Naga Ho Ho campaign good, <sup>SS-9</sup> public opinion better

The Ho Ho, Nagaland's apex council of elders, deserves to be complimented for trying to get the warring militant National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), the NSCN (Khaplang) and the Naga National Council to patch up their differences. But negative reaction to this well-intentioned "reconciliation campaign", a day before its launch, was best served by NSCN(IM) leader "Colonel" Phunthing Shimrang saying a solution to the Naga political issue was possible even without unity. Talk of reconciliation has been in the air since the 1980 split in the NNC over the 1975 Shillong Peace Accord, leading to formation of the NSCN which, in turn, split eight years later. Reconciliation, as explained by the Naga Scholars' Society for Research and Documentation, means an end to enmity by overcoming one's weakness and ironing out differences in a spirit of forgive and forget. Humility, too.

But Isak Swu and Th Muivah have made it clear more than once that they are not prepared to meet the NNC unless it "publicly disowns the Shillong Accord" and SS Khaplang admits his "mistake" and personally apologises for the slaughter of their comrades-in-arms at the time of the split. Since this is unlikely, the "reconciliation campaign" may seem to overreach itself, even if NSCN(IM) representatives reportedly participated, while absence of Khaplang's men was conspicuous. The July 1997 Atlanta Meet organised by church leaders was no less significant, save for the fact that the NSCN(IM) played truant. The Isak-Muivah visit to Nagaland in May 1999 also raised hopes but the two left after reiterating their demand that "sovereignty is inalienable". Unity between the NNC and Khaplang may be possible since their representatives met in Atlanta, but one cannot perceive the NSCN-IM sitting at the same table with its rivals. All the same, it would be stupid to ignore general opinion. Numbers are, after all, what make the individual.

THE STATE

# More vulnerable

9.11.2001 5/11/01 North-east in retrospect 28/11/01

**F**or the North-east 2001 has been a disappointing year. Solutions to many problems remained elusive. The ceasefire in Nagaland continues. Delhi and NSCN-IM have pledged to clinch the issue by 2003. NSCN leaders, Isak Swu and Th Muivah, met the Prime minister in Osaka to show their seriousness. The Naga Hoho's reconciliation campaign may be of little help if the two leaders continue to maintain that nothing can heal the wounds from the 1988 split with rival SS Khaplang that killed many of their comrades. Ulfa and Bodo militants are on the run; yet their striking power cannot be underestimated. Manipur is under President's rule. Last July, the violence that followed the Centre's bungling over ceasefire extension to Manipur claimed 17 lives and property worth crores of rupees destroyed.

The Asom Gana Parishad was humiliated in the May Assembly elections; by far the most significant was Prafulla Mahanta stepping down as president following allegations of his secret marriage with an Assembly secretariat employee. Tarun Gogoi inherited an empty coffer. The long delayed panchayat polls were held this month. Mizoram is prolonging the agony of 43,000 Reang refugees (taking shelter in Tripura since October 1997) by refusing to repatriate them. This is likely to heighten tension along the border. Tripura claimed fewer killings. Meghalaya moved ahead. The EK Mawlong government was pulled down on corruption charges for the first time in Meghalaya's political history. Meghalaya also earned the distinction of being the only state to make an Independent, FA Khonglan, chief minister. What Delhi needs to watch is the growing influence of China in Myanmar and the existence of an unfriendly neighbour. To say the least, the North-east is becoming more vulnerable than ever before. //

THE STATESMAN

29 DEC 2001

# Chased in Bhutan, Ulfa seeks base in Nepal

HT Correspondents  
New Delhi/Guwahati, Dec 29

FACING EXPULSION in Bhutan, Ulfa military chief Paresh Barua is possibly looking for prospects in Nepal. His latest "friend" is the China-backed Maoist groups of Nepal. It was the People's War Group (PWG), which acted as Barua's go-between.

Barua had reportedly based himself in Dhaka for the last few years and is now at the Nepal capital as a guest of the Maoists, intelligence sources said. He has been holding a number of meetings with the Maoists rebels and Chinese personnel, who have assured him help in his "struggle".

The Chinese have been supplying arms to Ulfa for several years now. But the deals were never conducted directly between the two parties. Barua's meetings with Chinese personnel, sources said, would be aimed at reaching an agreement on arms supply and other logistical support.

The Myanmar Army had recently captured a Cambodian ship carrying Chinese-made arms that were reportedly meant for Ulfa and other militant outfits in the region. Both Ulfa and NDFB extensively use Chinese pistols and hand grenades, as is evident from the seizures made by the Army and the police.

The arms are transported from Laos via Cambodia and Myanmar to Cox Bazar in Bangladesh before being smuggled into the North-

## 2 NDFB MILITANTS KILLED

TWO NATIONAL Democratic Front of Bodoland militants were killed in an encounter with the security forces in Assam's Kokrajhar district, official sources said here on Saturday. Acting on specific information, troops intensified patrolling in the Kachugaon area of the district on Friday. They retaliated when militants fired while attempting to flee. In the encounter that followed, the two militants were killed on the spot. Security forces recovered a .22 pistol, some detonators, gelatine sticks and large quantity of assorted ammunition. *PTI, Guwahati*

east through the Chittagong hill tracts and Sabrum in south Tripura. Far from the gaze of the international media, tiny Bhutan is taking care of its own terrorist problem by asking Ulfa to pack up its camps in southern Bhutan adjoining Assam and leave before December 31.

Ulfa is reportedly bowing to the Bhutanese order. Sources said all but four small camps in the Samdrup Jhonkar and Gilephu districts have been abandoned. Its leaders, who are underground in Bangladesh, are learnt to have assured the Bhutanese Government that the remaining cadres

will leave Bhutan before the deadline. Ulfa's presence in Bhutan had been the subject of much concern for Thimpu. There are also Bodo camps inside Bhutan, but the present ultimatum is applicable only to Ulfa. Government sources said Bodo militant groups based on its soil would be dealt with later.

The Royal Bhutan Army has build up a huge presence in the districts. Thimpu has not officially asked for Indian assistance to push out Ulfa cadres who stay on after December 31, but sources in New Delhi said Indian forces would be vigilant on the Assam side of the border.

To fire the morale of the RBA, which does not have any experience in combat, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk has conferred medals and citations on an unprecedented number of soldiers. In all, 49 soldiers, including Goongleon (General) Gongma and Chief of Army Staff Gen Lam Dorji were decorated in a ceremony on December 17.

Despite strong evidence, Dhaka has always denied Barua's presence in Bangladesh. Ulfa's general secretary Anup Chetia, alias Golap Barua, was arrested in Bangladesh and is being held in a Dhaka jail.

There were several reports of attacks on Barua inside Bangladesh. Though Ulfa had once contradicted the report of an attack on him, he has never denied his presence in Bangladesh.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Deadline for ULFA to close down camps ends today

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#10-11

**GUWAHATI, DEC. 30.** The deadline for the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) to close down its camps in Bhutan expires tomorrow as the Army braces itself to check any possible intrusion from across the border. In the past week, more than a dozen militants were killed. All were in groups of three, signifying that terrorists have been moving down in smaller groups to evade the Army dragnet, an official source said.

The ULFA, until recently, had at least 36 camps in Bhutan, some of them with well-entrenched bases, complete with firing ranges and other training and recreational facilities. An estimated 2,000 cadres, led by the deputy commander-in-chief, Raju Baruah, formed the bases inside the kingdom.

The presence of ULFA insurgents in Bhutan has topped the country's national agenda with the National Assembly or the Bhutanese Parliament discussing the issue for the past five years. Elected representatives in Bhutan have been asking the Government to resolve the issue peacefully and use the military option should the rebels refuse to leave the kingdom. Meanwhile, the Army has alerted the Assam Government to the possibility of hordes of ULFA rebels sneaking into the State from Bhutan, which has asked the organisation to quit

its bases in that country by tomorrow. Authorities in Bhutan, on Saturday, said they were "carefully watching" the pullout of armed ULFA rebels from within its territory as part of a deal made in June.

"Rebels of the United Liberation Front of Asom have already closed one camp located inside our country at Pemagashel and are in the process of winding up three more bases besides reducing the number of their cadres here," Bhutan's Home Secretary, Tasho Pema Wangchuk, told local newspaper *The Sentinel* from capital Thimpu.

With tomorrow's deadline for the ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) approaching, the Royal Bhutan Army and the country's militia units have moved into combat mode.

The ULFA is said to be withdrawing following its written assurance in June given to the Royal Government in Thimpu that it would remove four of its nine camps in the Buddhist kingdom by December 31, 2001, and reduce the strength of its cadres.

"We are watching the pullout very carefully. After the rebel group fulfills its commitment of closing down four camps by December 31, we shall immediately sit with its leaders to work out the modalities for the closure of the remaining five camps and their total

withdrawal from the country," Mr. Wangchuk said.

Mr. Lyonpo Lago Tshering, Bhutan's Ambassador to India, commenting in a section of the media recently, said he was confident his country would not have to extend the December 31 deadline for ULFA to dismantle four of its camps in Bhutan.

According to Mr. Tshering, the ULFA would have to abide by the understanding it reached with the Bhutanese Government in June. Over the past week itself, soldiers shot down at least nine ULFA cadres and six NDFB militants, besides busting three camps in the bordering area.

"The busting of three NDFB camps in Ripu and Chirag reserve forest in quick succession has put both ULFA and the NDFB on the defensive. The setbacks suffered by the NDFB has put both the outfits under tremendous pressure." The ULFA has more than nine well-fortified camps within Bhutan which they had set up during 1994-95. After considerable persuasion followed by sustained pressure by the Bhutanese Government, the ULFA had eventually agreed to move out.

The security forces have suspected that ULFA might move into Bangladesh, where it had camps prior to their Bhutan bases. — UNI

10-11

10-11

# BNP ties with N-E ultras, ISI worry Centre

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Kolkata, November 1

THE UNION Home Ministry has constituted a special cell to monitor the Indo-Bangladesh border and activities of the militant and Islamic groups.

India fears that given the BNP's track record, the eastern and north-eastern sectors may once again become hotbeds of militancy and fundamentalism and a happy hunting ground for Pakistan's ISI.

All the militant groups in the North-east were provided a safe haven in Bangladesh during the BNP's previous tenure. That period also saw the ISI fomenting trouble, mainly through Islamic fundamentalist organisations in this region.

According to senior intelligence officers, BNP leader and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's pre-poll statement supporting the Ulfa in its "fight for Independence against India" could be a clear indicator of things to come.

"All signals that we have received point to trouble in the North-east and West Bengal. We have recently obtained evidence of the Ulfa's links with Jamaat-e-Islami that is allied to the BNP," an intelligence officer said.

"Leaders of the NLF of Tripura (NLFT) campaigned for the BNP in tribal-dominated areas of Khagracheri adjoining South Tripura. The Jamaat has strong fraternal links with Pakistan and is often used as a front by the ISI which is planning to get active here once again."

Official sources said Sheikh Hasina's Awami League Government had stopped ISI activities in that country and kept the Jamaat and other Islamic fundamentalist groups in check.



KHALEDA ZIA

"Though the last Awami League Government did not drive away the militant groups of the North-east from Bangladeshi soil, it had imposed certain restrictions that led to a steep decline in their activities," said a military intelligence officer.

"We have reports of the Ulfa investing hundreds of crores in businesses in Bangladesh owned by families of Jamaat leaders and those with very close links to Pakistan. The NSCN (I-M) and NLFT are doing the same," he said.

Intelligence sources said vigil has been stepped up on organisations like the Muslim Liberation Tigers of Assam and the Islamic Liberation Army of Assam. "These two organisations are supported by Islamic fundamentalist organisations in Bangladesh and receive huge sums of money from Gulf countries," a source said. "This money is used to build madrasas that preach hate and churn out jihadis."

(Concluded)

# Meghalaya CM buys peace with NCP

HT Correspondent  
Shillong, November 6

MEGHALAYA CHIEF Minister E K Mawlong finally succeeded in "appeasing" his "agitated ally" Nationalist Congress Party today by agreeing to fulfil its demands.

Mawlong met the agitated NCP MLAs at his office this morning and succeeded in striking a happy medium. The NCP had threatened to quit the coalition by tonight if their two conditions were not fulfilled. Without wasting any time, Mawlong "agreed" to order a Judicial Inquiry Commission headed by a sitting Judge of High Court to dig out the details of the controversial Kolkata Meghalaya House deal.

"I have already given the necessary directives for the execution of the formalities for the official order to institute the commission," Mawlong said after the meeting, adding the formal request is also being sent to the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court for deputing a judge for the inquiry.

The Chief Minister had to take the hasty step to order the institution of the commission to "save" his Government from collapse. "Earlier, we had also agreed to scrap the deal as our allies had demanded it," Mawlong said.

Finding himself in a soup, the Chief Minister also "promised" the NCP legislators to take immediate

**MAWLONG CHOKES ON DINNER CHARGES**

MEGHALAYA CHIEF Minister E K Mawlong on Tuesday "fumbled" when asked about the high-profile "party" hosted by Asian Housing and Construction Limited at Tolly Club in Kolkata which he had attended.

"I don't think I have attended any such dinner party," Mawlong told a crowded press conference. With a quick whisper from one of his Cabinet colleagues, the tainted Chief Minister added, "Well, well....is there any problem in meeting friends? I don't say I have no friends in Kolkata."

It was reported that Mawlong, flanked by some bureaucrats and ministers, had attended the dinner hosted in his honour by a leading builder of Kolkata. On his alleged involvement in the controversial Kolkata Meghalaya House deal, Mawlong said, "Now, let the inquiry commission find it out."

HTC, Shillong

disciplinary action against Chief Secretary J P Singh and General Administration Department (GAD) Secretary Arindom Som "within a day or two" for their alleged involvement in the murky deal.

On the other demand to immediately remove GAD Minister Nimarson Momin, Mawlong said he had already offered to relinquish the post. "Let's not rush this. Every step will be taken at the appropriate time."

The NCP's Parliamentary Party leader Lotsing A Sangma said: "As the Chief Minister has fulfilled almost all our demands, what's the use of withdrawing from the Government?"

Asked about the BJP's demand to immediately change the leadership of the ruling Meghalaya Parliamentary Forum (MPF), Mawlong said: "Why does the

BJP want to get themselves involved in our internal issues? What is their locus standii? When we are not asking the BJP to change their leadership, why should they do that? If they intend to withdraw from the Government, we leave it to their wisdom."

Mawlong can now dare the BJP as he has bought peace with the NCP, knowing fully well that the BJP — with only three members in the House — cannot topple his Government. Even without the BJP's support, Mawlong would enjoy the support of 37 MLAs in the 60-member House.

But observers do not believe Mawlong is totally out of danger. According to them, the General Assembly meeting of the United Democratic Party, which is scheduled on Wednesday, will be the litmus test for him.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 NOV 2002

# NSCN-IM on alert against Khaplang

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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**GUWAHATI, Nov. 8.** — The NSCN-IM has declared a virtual state of emergency and cancelled leave of its cadres and asked them to report back to their units "immediately".

A member of the NSCN-IM monitoring cell, Mr W Shimray, told *The Statesman* over phone from Dimapur today that the Khaplang group was trying to destroy the peace process. "We aren't going to allow that." He said the Khaplang group's evil designs had the blessings of the "Indian security forces".

"We're committed to the peace process that enjoys the people's support, but the Khaplang gang is targeting us," Mr Shimray said. "We've asked our army to be on full

alert to retaliate if necessary. We don't want to be the aggressor but we can't keep quiet if they try to destroy the peace process."

The order to the cadres to report back for duty follows a Khaplang faction's attack on the NSCN-IM's truce monitoring cell in Dimapur recently. "They've also been killing innocent people," Mr Shimray said.

The NSCN-K has termed its rivals "terrorists" and warned of intensifying "strategic military operations." It has asked the people to bear with it for its fight against "terrorists."

In a statement issued yesterday, the group warned that those funding the "terrorists" couldn't escape.

The security forces engaged in counter in-

urgency operations in Nagaland have taken note of the exchange of threats and warnings between the two groups, fighting a bitter war since they split in 1988, said nobody will be allowed to vitiate the atmosphere of peace prevailing in the state.

The NSCN-IM and Centre have been engaged in a dialogue since 1997 to find a solution to the Naga problem. Talks are on between the Centre and Khaplang faction too.

However, there are no reports yet of any discussions on substantive issues having taken place in the talks between the NSCN-IM and the Centre. Till June, the two sides were busy sorting out issues like ceasefire ground rules and the geographical area of the ceasefire.

9 NOV 2002



# Non-Bodo groups oppose 6th Schedule solution

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Nov. 9. — The Sanmilita Jana-Gosthiya Sangram Samity, a conglomeration of 18 non-Bodo organisations, today warned that creation of an administrative structure under the Constitution's Sixth Schedule to protect the interests of the Bodos would unleash an ethnic unrest that will be worse than what has been witnessed since signing of the Bodo accord in 1993.

The Samity called for a 12-hour Assam bandh on 12 November to protest against the Centre's reluctance to hear non-Bodo groups in order to find a solution to the Bodo

problem.

Opposing the Sixth Schedule solution, the Samity's deputy chief convener, Mr Brajen Mahanta, said it would curtail the rights of the non-Bodos who were in the majority in the proposed Bodoland Territorial Council area.

"How can the minority rule over the majority," he said. He was unwilling to trust reports that Article 332 will be amended to ensure due representation in the Assembly and Parliament for all. Mr Mahanta warned that creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council under the Sixth Schedule would lead to ethnic cleansing once again. "Only, this time it

will be worse."

Several hundred people were killed and lakhs were rendered homeless — more than 2 lakh people are still in relief camps — after Bodoland Autonomous Council was set up.

"We demand that a round table conference be held involving all ethnic groups to find a solution acceptable to all," Mr Mahanta said. The Samity's opposition to a solution under the Sixth Schedule comes a day after the Congress government in the state said it had no objection if necessary amendments were made to the Constitution to accommodate the interests of all.

On Wednesday, seven other

parties had agreed that a solution should be found under the Sixth Schedule.

The Bodo Liberation Tigers, which declared ceasefire last year and started a dialogue with the Centre, had proposed an administrative structure for the Bodo areas under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution so that it had constitutional validity.

The present Bodoland Autonomous Council, that had come into being after the Bodo accord of 1993, is a creation of the state legislature.

Leading Bodo groups have rejected the BAC saying it had failed to fulfil the aspirations of the Bodos.

THE STATESMAN

10 NOV 2002

# PEACE IN DANGER

## Ominous fratricidal tensions in Nagaland

THE mounting tension between two NSCN factions may lead to something more serious than the Meitei-Naga standoff last June following the Centre's decision to extend the ceasefire to Manipur. The Khaplang faction's alleged attack on the ceasefire monitoring cell of the Isak-Muivah group at Dimapur is ominous because until now both groups had for two years exercised self-restraint. The Isak-Muivah group suspects that the motive is to widen Khaplang's influence over Nagaland's commercial hub and is said to have alerted its cadres. About 200 people died in feuds in the first three months of the ceasefire coming into effect in August 1997. The most serious was the murder in August 1998 of Dally Mungro, touted as Khaplang's successor. The Khaplang group is not a party to the ceasefire but early this year it formalised its two-year temporary truce with the Centre. This could have irked the NSCN-IM which, apart from refusing to recognise any other group, put the Centre in a tight spot by repeating its longstanding demand for the ceasefire's extension to Naga inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

There has to be a formal truce between the two NSCN factions for the sake of the tenuous peace now prevailing. Not impossible since they have in the past agreed to not attack each other, particularly during Christmas. The Centre must ensure fratricidal killings do not jeopardise the peace process. The warring groups must soften uncompromising stands in the interest of an honourable political settlement. Rebel leaders have admitted the people must decide Nagaland's future. Then why are they not respecting the popular public sentiment? Time is no respecter of assumed grievances and delay could be unkind to the ageing Naga leadership.

THE STATESMAN

14 NOV 2002

# SEPARATED BY DISTANCE

## Naga Leaders Must Forge Coalition

By SANJOY HAZARIKA

**T**HOUSANDS of kilometres separate the leaders of the two major Naga groups — the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaak-Muivah) and the NSCN (Khaplang). The ideological, political and personal distance appears almost as great as the physical divide between them, especially after the recent attack on the I-M's Ceasefire Monitoring Cell group in Nagaland by its rival.

While the ostensible reason for the attack was to issue a warning to the I-M not to conduct alleged "extortion and kidnapping" rackets from its Dimapur office — a charge that has been denied — the more subtle reason is to also warn New Delhi that it cannot take the Khaplang group for granted in any political negotiations with the Nagas.

Mr Thiungelang Muivah, the General Secretary of the I-M group, now lives in Amsterdam after years of having based in Bangkok. His compatriot, Isaak Chisi Swu, the Chairman of the organisation, also stays in South-east Asia. The head of the Khaplang faction, SS Khaplang, a veteran of guerrilla conflict, lives on the India-Myanmar border while his deputy, Kitovie Zhimoni, now is in Mokokchung, the capital of the district of the same name in Nagaland state, without fear of arrest because of the ongoing ceasefire between the two Naga groups and the Government of India.

### TANGKHUL POWER

The ceasefire with the I-M began in 1997 but the formal truce with the Khaplang faction began in April this year.

Each group regards itself as the true representative of the Nagas. It views the other as inimical to Naga interests. There is a third claimant to this mantle — the Naga National Council or NNC, the original founder of the movement against India and now a tiny fraction of its original self. This is led by Adino, the daughter of the legendary Angami Zapu Phizo, who launched the Naga independence movement against New Delhi nearly 50 years ago.

There are many fissures and complications in the Naga structure and the hierarchy of Naga politics, which is based not merely on ethnic groupings or ideological considerations but on which community supported which side and when. The Tangkhuls, the tribe to which Mr Muivah belongs, have in the past decades successfully challenged the influence of other communities such as the Aos, the Angamis and the Semas, which have led the political, economic and bureaucratic power structure among the Nagas, not just in Nagaland, for decades.

The Tangkhuls are located in the hills of Manipur and have shared a cultural relationship with the Meitei community of

the plains for centuries. In recent years, a growing divide between the Meiteis and the Nagas, including the Tangkhuls, has put Manipur in an unfortunate nutcracker situation.

The NSCN (I-M) is powerful in the hills, extracting heavy "taxes" and raising other funds from those living there or those passing through, including transporters; it sees this as a

factions should unite. The logic is simple: the Khaplang and Muivah groups have grown out of the NNC and they should return to the parent fold.

Unity is necessary. But the I-M group does not agree with Mr Zhinomi's view that unity is more important than other issues. However, it is here that the I-M and its associates run the risk of being out of sync with public opinion in Nagaland. Respected scholars and church leaders in Nagaland have thus called for unity on the basis that all sides acknowledge that they have made mistakes, hurt each other and need to move on to seek a common platform.

Secondly, just as with the case of the ceasefire, "unity" cannot be a goal. It can only be a means to an end. But without unity, there is little likelihood of one group accepting any agreement thrashed out by the other. No Government in New Delhi can afford to come to an agreement that does not include

all Naga groups; otherwise it will meet the fate of the much denounced Shillong Accord of 1975, which divided Naga society down the middle.

One need not agree on everything in order to come to an understanding. Unity also should not be interpreted to mean merger or surrender by a weaker group to a stronger one. It means a coalition of interests and surely that is more important than who is right.

### CONSULTATION

Unity should represent a common platform, with a common agenda. What we are advocating is a kind of political coalition or alliance, which comes together on the basis of a common programme and with the background of a common struggle. Such a platform should have the mandate to hold detailed consultations with the Naga people and their representatives, across the board — without leaving any one out and by that one means the State Government as well — on the issue of a long-term settlement.

Finally, one would recommend a strong dose of realism as far as the Naga leaders and the Government of India are concerned. The Naga leaders need to travel across India and assess Indian public opinion, not just the views of the Naga people. Such discussions began last year at the civil society level but now needs also to be done at the level of the Naga political leadership, currently outside the country, or their nominees. Without it, the negotiations cannot be built on solid foundations.

The Government of India needs to have a better understanding of what the Nagas in Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur want — for they are not a monolith, with one view. It also needs to take all states into confidence with detailed briefings as develops a political strategy for the negotiations. It cannot afford to repeat the *faux pas* of 14 June on the "extension" of the Naga ceasefire.



legitimate way of sourcing its finances, but the weight of such taxation hurts the innocent and the small as well as the wealthy. People are resentful of these taxes as well as of the fact that chunks of Central Government funds meant for hill development goes to the I-M, a fact corroborated by respected Naga public figures. Of course, there is the wholesale loot by politicians of all parties and officials as well — from the hills as well as the plains which has hampered development.

But the I-M, whether its leadership likes it or not, is seen as a Tangkhul dominated organisation. Whether it is Mr Muivah himself or the negotiating team (the Chairman, Mr Swu, who is a Sema, does not take part in the discussions but is apparently kept informed of their progress), or the makeup of the I-M's Ceasefire Monitoring Office in Dimapur, there is little doubt as to who calls the shots in the organisation.

### COMMON GROUND

Thus, the present difficulties in the Naga imbroglio have as much to do with the changing profile of the leadership and the clout of ethnic groups as much as the ideological content of their views. Indeed, it could even be asserted that the first two issues have a greater say in the moulding of public opinion than the latter.

Take the composition of the other two groups: the Khaplang group has considerable support among the Konyaks, the most populous of all the Naga tribes; they are to be found in a belt stretching from Arunachal Pradesh and the border areas of Myanmar through Nagaland. It also has backing from other smaller communities.

As far as the NNC is concerned, it continues to have the backing from the Angamis and the Chakesangs, groups which were torchbearers for the Phizo call and there are those within it who say that the NNC should be the umbrella organisation under which the two other

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THE STATESMAN

# Meghalaya Speaker faces no-trust

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SHILLONG, Nov. 23. - A no-confidence motion has been filed against the Meghalaya Speaker, Mr E D Marak, who is yet to recognise the nascent Meghalaya National Congress Legislature Party.

Thirty-one legislators of the Meghalaya Parliamentary Forum coalition ministry, headed by Mr EK Mawlong, submitted the mandatory resolution to the Speaker, expressing no-confidence in him, after a meeting yesterday at Mawlong's residence.

The speaker said that he had received the resolution signed by 31 legislators, including those of the MNCLP, in the ruling coalition.

"I am studying it. There should not be any problem," he said when contacted.

The resolution, which bore the signatures of the chief minister, the deputy chief minister and leader of the MNCLP, Mr Lotsing Sangma, and senior-most United Democratic Party and

former chief minister Mr BB Lyndoh, alleged that the speaker had failed to perform his duties.

His removal was demanded under Clause (C) Art 179 of the Constitution and Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

It also pointed out that Mr Marak was yet to recognise the newly-formed MNCLP.

The development comes close on the heels of the speaker walking into a press conference convened by the NCP National general secretary, Mr PA Sangma, on 19 November, when it was announced that efforts were being made to form an alternative government together with the United Meghalaya Opposition Forum.

Mr Marak had then told surprised newsmen that he was present as a personal friend of Mr Sangma's.

■ Editorial: Carry on, Mawlong, page 6

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23 NOV 2011

# People's Front of Meghalaya with 42 MLAs to form new government

By P.P. Singh  
Times News Network

GUWAHATI: With all the NCP MLAs back under his wings NCP general secretary and former Lok Sabha speaker P.A. Sangma is all set to dethrone the E.K. Mawlong government in Meghalaya on Wednesday and place NCP MLA Dr Khonglam as the next chief minister in newly formed People's Forum of Meghalaya government.

Mr Sangma, while talking to this correspondent after a core committee meeting of the constituents of the newly formed People's Forum of Meghalaya with 42 MLAs from NCP, Congress, HSPDP, break away group from ruling UDP.

He informed that the PFM in its meeting on Tuesday unanimously elected Dr F.A. Khonglam an associate member of the NCP as its leader who will head the next government and also meet state governor M.M. Jacob on Wednesday after his arrival from Delhi and stake his claim to form the new government. The swearing-in cere-

mony of the new government is likely to take place on either late Wednesday or on Thursday.

The Forum has 42 members in a House of 60 members, which includes 14 members from the NCP, 15 from the Congress, 2 from HSPDP, 8 from breakaway faction of UDP, one from PDM and 2 independents and with the speaker who is also from the NCP the total number goes to 43.

Mr Sangma said they have constituted a seven-member core committee under the chairmanship of Mr Sangma while the newly elected leader Dr F.A. Khonglam would be the co-chairman with two members from Congress ie former chief minister S.C. Marak and D.D. Lapang, two from NCP i.e. Lotsing A. Sangma and Robert Kharsing, two from the breakaway faction of UDP i.e. Scot Lyngdoh and Martin Mukhim and leader of HSPDP H. Lyngdoh.

He said this core committee would meet on Wednesday morning at 11 a.m. to decide the future course of action after they form the

government. When asked if the issue of deputy chief ministership also came up for discussion as it was expected that the same would be given to the Congress, Mr Sangma said no such issue was discussed.

It may be mentioned in a late night development on Monday all the 13 MLAs and minister of NCP who had defected and formed a new Meghalaya Nationalist Congress Party submitted their resignations from the government and handed over the letters of resignation to Mr Sangma for onward submission to the chief minister and the governor reducing the Mawlong government to minority.

Mr Mawlong received another setback when 8 of his party MLAs also deserted him and joined the opposition camp under the leadership of his finance minister Scot Lyngdoh. Mr Mawlong has been evasive about the entire issue when contacted, his aides informed that he would be talking to the media later.

# Oust-Mawlong plan fizzles out

HT Correspondent  
Shillong, November 22

THE TALL claims of former Lok Sabha Speaker and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) general secretary, Purno A Sangma, about toppling the scam-tainted E K Mawlong-led Government in Meghalaya by Thursday turned out to be a damp squib.

Sangma had claimed on Wednesday that the NCP and its allies, along with the members of the United Meghalaya Opposition Forum (UMOF) would form the alternative Government in the State to bring an end to the "corrupt" Mawlong Government.

There was a general feeling that Sangma would pull a rabbit out of his hat today as the num-

bers were not in his favour till Wednesday evening. However, he has claimed to enjoy the support of 37 MLAs in the 60-member House.

"No, nothing will be held today. We are waiting for the Governor to return," the former Lok Sabha Speaker said with a broad grin, still claiming that the MLAs are with him. "I have all their signatures." Governor M M Jacob is undergoing treatment in Chennai. Refusing to accept his "defeat", Sangma, who is said to be the most mature politician the North-east has ever produced, said, "The MLAs are with me. Don't worry. We will form the Government only when the time comes." He claimed that Mawlong was, at present, is leading a

minority Government in the State. However, the political "drama", which was scheduled to be held in Sangma's residence today, had to be "postponed" as the MLAs, who had "promised" to rush back to "rescue" his "sinking ship", did not turn up.

This was in fact, the second setback Sangma suffered in his political career in Meghalaya in the past three days. Earlier on November 19, 11 out of the 15 NCP MLAs slapped the veteran politician on his face by floating the Meghalaya Nationalist Congress Legislature Party.

Even his new-found ally, the UMOF, lost one of their members on Wednesday night when the lone Garo National Council (GNC) MLA, Clifford R Marak

crossed the floor and extended his support to the Mawlong-led Government. Marak even attended the meeting of the ruling Meghalaya Peoples' Forum (MPF) at the Chief Minister's residence. "You should know that I am camping here by missing Parliament sessions and that means I am not here for any small reason. I am here to find the out ways for the alternate Government," Sangma, who is now caught in a desperate face-saving exercise, said.

The former Lok Sabha Speaker held several rounds of discussions with UMOF MLAs during the day. But nothing concrete seems to have emerged out of the day-long meetings to give a shot in his arm.



P A SANGMA

# ULFA threat: BSF to guard border with Bhutan

**BHAVNA VIJ**  
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

THE Border Security Force (BSF) has a new task. BSF troops will be deployed in the hitherto unmanned Indo-Bhutan border to check the growing incidence of terrorist infiltration and arms and drugs smuggling.

In a new strategy to seal porous borders, the Government has also decided to deploy the Special Security Bureau (SSB) at the Indo-Nepal border. The Group of Min-

isters (GoM) took the decision earlier this month after intelligence agencies provided evidence of terrorists using the unguarded borders to cross over into India.

"It has been known for long that Nepal was being used as an entry point into India by Pakistan-backed terrorists. But lately, concrete evidence of ULFA camps and militant bases at the Bhutan border has also emerged. So it was decided to deploy the BSF there," a Government source said.

Director General, BSF, Gur-

bachan Jagat confirmed that BSF was going to be deployed along the 587-km-long border with Bhutan. "We have recommended to the GoM that it would require 12 battalions (each consisting approximately 1000 men) to effectively man the Bhutan border," said Jagat.

According to sources, the Government has decided to get tough and plug all the routes being used by militants. "The Bhutan border was not manned and it was the responsibility of the local police to

deal with the militancy. Their constant complaint was that they were forced to deal with them once they were inside the state but they could not do anything to prevent the infiltration," an official said.

"The ill-equipped and poorly trained state police were no match for the terrorists armed with the latest sophisticated weapons. Then they also had to take care of the law and order problems," he added.

According to sources, drugs and weapons smuggling was another big menace. "The drugs

coming in from here were being pushed into the other northeastern states, specially Manipur. Even weapons were being sent to militants in Nagaland," a source said.

A government official pointed out that there was also an urgent need to strengthen security around the Bangladesh border. "The BSF will have to raise more battalions.

In fact, even for deployment at Bhutan border additional troops will have to be recruited. The process of obtaining sanction from government is on," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

23 NOV 2001

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# N-E militants shifting base along Bangla border

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, Nov. 15. — Even as Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has been pressuring the country's law enforcing authorities to curb activities of terrorist groups and criminals in that country, new camps of Tripura insurgents are coming up along the state's border with Bangladesh's Sylhet region.

Militants have been setting up new camps right under nose of the Bangladesh Border Guards.

It was feared that the recent political change in Bangladesh might boost the morale of North-east's militants operating in that country. Fundamentalist elements in the ruling party, some backed by the ISI, are extending "all possible help" to the insurgents to expand their network along the international border.

Insurgents of the outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura recently set up a new

camp at Shrimangal in Sylhet region of Bangladesh. Another such NLFT camp came up at a village in the Sylhet area opposite Tripura's Kamalpur subdivision in Dhalai district. These are in addition to the innumerable transit camps already functioning along the Sylhet border. Intelligence reports say the NLFT and the All Tripura Tiger Force are now keen to shift their operational camps to Sylhet from Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Tripura government has already provided information and maps showing exact locations of the 29 militant camps along Bangladesh's border to the Union home ministry.

The chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, spoke with Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi. Mr Vajpayee was urged to take up the issue with Bangladesh.

On several occasions, Mr Sarkar drew the Union home minis-

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ter, Mr LK Advani's, attention to the matter. Mr Sarkar criticised the BJP-led alliance for failing to persuade Dhaka to smash the North-east rebel camps. So long as the rebels were receiving the patronage of the Bangladeshi government, it was difficult to combat insurgency, he felt.

There has been a marked rise in the number of rebel camps, with a number of armed Muslim youths operating with the NLFT in the Sylhet area, say reports from across the border.

Meanwhile, a second unit providing special training to security forces to counter insurgency has been set up at Kachuchhara in north Tripura's Dhalai district. The training unit was opened on 8 November. The first such unit was set up at Vairengta, Mizoram. A batch of a hundred security personnel will receive special training over two months. At least five such batches will receive training.

THE STATESMAN

16 NOV 2001



# NCP splits, rebels back Mawlong

HT Correspondent  
Shillong, November 19

PURNO A Sangma suffered a huge setback on Monday evening when 11 of his Nationalist Congress Party's 15 MLAs in Meghalaya floated a new legislature group, accusing him of being a "dictator."

Deputy Chief Minister Lotsing A Sangma announced the birth of the Meghalaya Nationalist Congress Legislature Party (MNCLP) at a crowded press conference at his official residence.

"The MLAs, after a threadbare analysis of the entire issue and dictatorial attitude of Purno Sangma and state unit President Robert Kharshing, decided to disassociate themselves from the party," Lotsing A Sangma told reporters. "The new legislature group will continue to support

the E K Mawlong-led Government.

State Tourism Minister Kulert C Momin and Abu Taher Mondal will support the legislature group as associate members, the Deputy Chief Minister said. He has also been unanimously selected leader of the new legislature group in the house.

A formal letter, informing the formation of the new legislature group, has already been sent to Speaker E D Marak.

"As the Speaker was not in town, the letter has been received by the Secretary of the Assembly," Lotsing A Sangma said. He claimed that the Speaker too was in his camp.

Pooch-poohing the directive of the State NCP executive committee asking its ministers to resign their posts within 5 pm today, Lotsing A Sangma said: "Why

## ASSAM NCP LEGISLATORS MAY JOIN CONG

NOTHING SEEMS to be going right for PA Sangma's home turf — Meghalaya and Assam.

All the three NCP legislators in Assam are set to defect to the Congress. None other than Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi announced this at a Congress function here to mark the 84th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. According to Gogoi, the three NCP legislators — Shahid Mazumdar, Sheikh Shah Alam and Husne Ara Islam — were keen on joining the Congress. The three had met All India Congress Committee president Sonia Gandhi and other senior party leaders in New Delhi recently in this regard.

At least 10 independent MLAs were also keen on joining the Congress, Gogoi said. Most of them are party discards like Samsul Haque and Tara Prasad Das the controversial ex-chairman of Assam Public Service Commission who was denied a Congress ticket from Sarupeta. The NCP, which was billed as the most up-and-coming party for the May Assam-bisly elections, had won three seats. All three seats are in Assam's Goalpara district adjoining Meghalay's Garo Hills which is Sangma's stronghold. The Congress has 72 seats in the 125-member House. NCP legislators and independents would raise its number to at least 85, giving the Congress a two-third majority.

HTC, Guwahati

should we resign or apologise? The people of Meghalaya want us to continue in the Government." He accused the party leadership of trying to "hijack"

the "duty" of the MLAs to serve the people. "The high-command cannot take such an arbitrary decision," the Deputy Chief Minister said, adding the rebel MLAs

are still "open" to negotiation with the NCP provided their two conditions — that the high command gives up its dictatorial attitude and allows them to continue supporting Mawlong as the Chief Minister — are met. Lotsing A Sangma, who also holds Home, has asked State police to ensure the security of all the MLAs of the new legislature group.

## Sangma hits back

Late in the evening, the NCP suspended Lotsing A Sangma and Forest Minister Adolf Lu Hitler R Marak with immediate effect. Purno A Sangma told reporters that the NCP had found prima facie evidence of breach of discipline by both ministers, who have been spearheading the "revolt" against the party high-command.

# Double blow to Mawlong Government

HT Correspondent  
Shillong, November 26

MEGHALAYA CHIEF Minister EK Mawlong today not only lost his allies, but also his own partymen.

Former Finance Minister and senior UDP leader AH Scott Lyngdoh said the party had split and that he was heading a breakaway faction of nine leaders. He said he would officially announce the split tomorrow morning. Officials said Lyngdoh has the support of at least seven UDP legislators.

The Mawlong Government was struck another blow when Speaker ED Marak confirmed that the rebel NCP leaders have requested for the no-confidence motion and the letter asking for the recognition of Meghalaya Nationalist Congress Legislature Party to be withdrawn.

Twelve NCP legislators had left the party to form the Meghalaya Nationalist Congress Legislature Party (MNCLP) on November 19 after the NCP withdrew support from the tainted Mawlong Government. Fearing disqualification, the rebel MLAs are now making a beeline around NCP General Secretary PA Sangma.

Sangma said the homecoming was "a very healthy development". He said 10 of the NCP MLAs have already resigned from the Mawlong-led coalition. On the no-confidence motion against the Speaker, he said: "The MLAs have already written to the Speaker in this regard."

A demoralised Mawlong went all out to keep his alliance together. He "requested" the NCP not to "leave" as the Government would plunge into a crisis if they withdrew their support.

"I will request them to contin-

ue supporting the Government," the Chief Minister said, adding that he had "no objection" if they want to go back to Sangma's fold.

Accusing Sangma of trying to destabilise the political arena of Meghalaya, he said: "I did not expect that such a move would be initiated by a man of his (Sangma's) stature."

"I have no intention to break any party. So, no one also should try to break my party," Mawlong said. Mawlong, apprehensive that a break-away faction of his party might jump into Sangma's bandwagon to throw him out of power, said the process of "patching up" with the dissident members of his party was still on. Martle N Mukhim and Lyngdoh, while resigning from the ministry, had declared open war against Mawlong's leadership.

In spite of all odds, Mawlong claimed there was no threat to his leadership from within the party. "Though there have been talks, none of the party leaders, till today asked me to step down," he said.

The Chief Minister said the Judicial Inquiry Commission will soon begin investigating into the Kolkata Meghalaya House deal. He said retired judge of Gauhati High Court, Justice S Haque, has agreed to head the inquiry commission.

Sangma, the kingmaker of Meghalaya politics, has already started talking about the modalities of the alternate Government under the banner of Peoples' Forum of Meghalaya (PFM).

He said the new Government would be led by the NCP and supported by the Congress, Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) and Independent. "Even break-away groups of any other parties are welcome."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 NOV 2001

# Non-Bodos fear rights violation

DIPANKAR ROY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RANGIYA (Assam), Oct. 29. - Non-Bodos of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) area are anxious about the outcome of the ongoing dialogue involving the Centre, the state government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) to find a solution to the Bodoland imbroglio.

Reports that a new council, proposed to be named 'Bodoland Territorial Council', will be set up under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to replace the existing BAC, have worried the non-Bodos.

Representatives of several non-Bodo organisations from the BAC area said they were worried that the Sixth Schedule status would deprive the non-Bodos of their right to hold property, or any other right.

"We are not aware of the direction in which the talks with the BLT are progressing. The government must take us into confidence," they said.

They said they were with the All Bodo Students' Union-Bodo People's Action Committee in seeking a peaceful and early solution. "But we cannot see ourselves reduced to second-

class citizens," they said.

The Sixth Schedule applies to two hill districts in Assam - Karbi Anglong and North Karbi Anglong - and Meghalaya and Mizoram. A constitutional amendment would be required if the Sixth Schedule is to be extended to the Bodo-inhabited areas in Assam. Besides, Article 332 of the Constitution which stipulates 100 per cent reservation of Assembly and parliamentary seats for tribes in the Sixth Schedule areas would also have to be amended.

"The composition of population in the Bodoland area is a mix of tribals and non-tribals, unlike the two hill districts in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram where the population is predominantly tribal. Therefore, 100 per cent reservation of seats for tribals is not possible in the Bodoland area," Mr Urkhao Gwra Brahma, adviser to Absu, said.

He, however, said the Government would want at least 50 per cent of seats to be reserved for tribes.

Mr Rabiram Narzary, Absu president, sought to dispel fears of non-Bodos by saying that since the new council would have constitutional validity, rights of all groups of people would be protected.

THE STATESMAN

# 7 cops killed in Ulfa ambush

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, October 28

SEVEN POLICEMEN were killed and three others injured in an Ulfa attack on late Saturday night in Dhubri district bordering Bangladesh.

There are no reports regarding casualty on the militants' side. Five policemen were killed on the spot while the remaining two, including the in-charge of Paglahat outpost, succumbed to injuries on way to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital.

According to the sources, the Paglahat police were misled that a dacoity was being committed at around 10 pm at nearby Hazirhat village.

A team of 10 policemen, including personnel of 7th Assam Police Battalion, after finding the information fake were returning from Hazirhat village when the militants attacked.

The Dhubri district special branch told Hindustan Times that there was heavy firing from both sides of the road and several grenades were lobbed on the



Constable Ram Nath Roy, injured in the Ulfa ambush, at Down Town Hospital in Guwahati on Sunday.

police vehicle.

The vehicle caught fire and five men were killed on the spot. The injured driver, however, managed to drive the vehicle, with punctured tyres, back to the outpost.

This is the second incident of violence in the district in last three days. Four persons were killed in an explosion by suspected NDFB militants at a Durga Puja pandal at Gauripur on Friday night.

A total of 123 persons have

been killed and another 152 injured by militants during the last six months of Congress rule. Among the victims 15 were gunned down by Ulfa, 48 by NDFB, 13 by UPDS and 13 by "unknown extremists."

Among the security personnel, 13 have been killed by Ulfa, 13 by NDFB, 12 by NSCN, two by UPDS and one by other extremists.

The security personnel have killed 36 ULFA, 45 NDFB, two NSCN, two UPDS and six militants from other outfits.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 OCT 2001

# Muivah demands high price for peace pact

Chandan Nandy  
New Delhi, October 28

THE TALKS between the Centre and the NSCN (I-M) appear to have run into rough weather with the former finding it difficult to meet the set of demands made by the outfit.

The demands were made in writing to the Centre's interlocutor, K Padmanbhaiah, during his recent visit to Amsterdam where he met NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah and chairman Isak Chisi Swu,

Though secession from India was not mentioned in the outfit's wish-list, it sought separate citizenship for Nagas, their own currency, passports and due recognition of the Naga culture.

The matter was referred to a committee of three Home Ministry officials headed by Special Secretary (North-east) PD Shenoy.

The panel sent a note to Solicitor-General Harish Salve to determine whether any of the demands could be met without compromising the country's unity and integrity.

"These are demands which will be extremely difficult to concede to. But the Solicitor-General is studying each of them closely and examining what can be worked out," a senior official said. The Government will "take into account realistic" proposals that can form part of the dialogue on "substantial issues", he said.



Th Muivah with other NSCN (I-M) officials.

HT PHOTO.

Besides these demands, the NSCN(I-M) has sought a meeting with the Prime Minister — either in New York, where he will attend the UN General Assembly on November 10, or during his trip to Japan.

Muivah had wanted to meet Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Cyprus, which the PM was to visit before his trip to the US in September. The trip was cancelled after the

terrorist attacks on the US.

In 1998, Muivah and Swu had met Vajpayee. Swaraj Kaushal was the Centre's principal interlocutor at that time. But now, neither the PMO nor the Home Ministry is keen for a Vajpayee-Muivah meeting.

It is learnt that Padmanbhaiah will meet Muivah and Swu in the Netherlands only after the PM's return from the US.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# ALWAYS BACKWARD

## N-E development funds need monitoring

EVERY government that has come to power at the Centre since 1996 has been concerned about development in the North-east but progress has been rather tardy, if not stagnant, despite announcement of special economic packages. In 1995, the Congress government created the North-East Development Bank with an authorised capital of Rs 500 crores but how far it has helped expansion and modernisation of industrial enterprises is not allowed to be known. The region still lacks good road, water and electricity, the basic needs for development. What can help boost growth is the annual estimated pool of Rs 1,500 crores collected from the unspent balance of the amounts earmarked for different Union ministry departments in the region, with the emphasis on financing feasible projects, the benefits of which all the seven States can share. The chief ministers had no answer when Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha last week asked in Shillong why there was poor response to utilisation of funds for Central schemes when sufficient funds were allocated. One possible answer is that no state is interested unless it can get its paws on some money.

Today, most North-east states find it difficult to pay employees' salaries on time. As an obvious consequence of such mismanagement, the Centre may have to bail out some states, particularly Manipur. This calls for strict checks on the misuse and diversion of funds, detailed guidelines for which were issued three years ago but remain on paper. The suggestion for the auditor-general's staff to make field visits to verify use of funds and involvement of NGOs and the local media in monitoring and publicising development projects should help lend transparency to the process.

THE STATESMAN

7 4 OCT 2001

# NORTH-EAST PEACE

## Nagas And Meiteis Must End Bitterness

By SANJOY HAZARIKA

As our eyes, ears and minds — and, to a considerable extent, our hearts and spirits — turn every day to the unfolding tragedy in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood, New Delhi seems to have well and truly forgotten about the troubles of our little North-East. Thankfully, there is an energetic, committed and thoughtful Minister for the Development of the North East, Arun Shourie, who also is, not coincidentally, the Minister for Disinvestment.

However, it is too much to expect Shourie to cook up a storm, if the restaurant's major owners and patrons are dining elsewhere and the available raw materials are sparse. One is, of course, referring to the National Democratic Alliance and its top leadership, which right now appears totally focussed on heading off Pakistan, having a role in a future Government in Afghanistan and becoming another supplicant before the United States.

### MEDIA BIAS

As the BBC observed, apart from criss-crossing the world to mobilise support for the anti-Taliban blitz, it was also time that Tony Blair put the NHS (National Health Service) into shape. Domestic problems are not going to go away; they may not be the subject of much public discussion — barring the downslide in the economy and the upsurge in violence in Kashmir — but they are here to stay, bin Laden or no bin Laden. One hopes that the various departments of government which are often so active with regard to the North-East continue to follow developments there with equal focus and commitment.

This is where the media has a critical role to play. One should be forgiven for thinking, by reading, even cursorily, the newspapers and watching the various television channels that there is nothing happening in the world but America's "War on Terror" and how "America Strikes Back."

That is why an analysis of news coverage of the region, and specifically, the situation in Manipur where an uneasy peace prevails after the withdrawal of the Naga ceasefire to areas outside of Nagaland is of value. One is referring to a slim booklet brought out by the Manipur Research Forum in New Delhi which looks at the media coverage of the events from a "Manipuri" viewpoint. However, the view is largely that of the majority Meitei and it seeks, in a calm and assured voice, to explain where the media coverage was biased, incorrect and slipshod.

For one thing, one writer pointed out, journalists cannot even spell the name of the majority community correctly (it is Meitei, not Meiti, Meitis, Meities, we are informed). A report in a metropolitan daily talked about "apprehension of tension in three Naga dominated districts — Khonsa of

Arunachal Pradesh, Temenglong and Ukhrul of Manipur and certain parts of Assam, where members of Thankghul Nagas, which is the support base of NSCN (I-M), are living."

Apart from getting the grammar wrong and butchering the English language, the facts are hopelessly wrong. The Tangkhuls of Manipur's hills are in

they once called home. This kind of situation is not just unhealthy but breeds the kind of alienation that leads to greater bitterness and carries the seeds of great ethnic discord and violence.

Surely, it is up to the Meiteis and the non-Meiteis in the Imphal Valley to come together in a delegation to the hills and ask those Nagas who have fled Imphal to return assuring them that they will guarantee their safety? Meiteis and non-Meiteis should make common cause again on the return of the Nagas?

One hears often an argument from the Meiteis that the hill regions are underdeveloped, despite the long terms of Naga Chief Ministers in Manipur and the fact that the tribal welfare department is in the hands of a "tribal", usually either a Naga or a Kuki. The assumption here again is facile — that the "tribal" ministers and chief ministers are responsible for the mess.

### CONCILIATION

They may have a part — but is it so difficult to realise that most of the funds for Manipur stay within the Imphal Valley: because like in other state capitals, everyone (whether Meitei or non-Meitei) is just too interested in feathering his or her own nest instead of bothering about the people in the villages and hamlets who elected them in the first place. Money, power, sex, *dalali* and *goonda girdi* — all of these are on parade in our state and district capitals. We need not look to Delhi for confirmation of such a trend!

The majority community in Manipur must acknowledge that they have also made mistakes. So have the Nagas and other groups. Without such an honest assessment and review of their respective roles, one cannot hope for any changes for the better in the State, should elections be held next year. Indeed, it is the contention of this writer that state assembly elections in Manipur should be held only after the Nagas and Meiteis begin ending their suspicions and bitterness and start to walk on the path of reconciliation.

The Naga leadership, especially the Naga Hoho, that unique grouping of representatives of Naga tribes in the region, has shown that it can reduce rhetoric, create goodwill and reduce ill-will by a series of thoughtful steps.

One of these steps was the lifting of the road blockade of the Imphal Highway, where Naga Hoho leaders had to wear down the tough opposition of their compatriots from the Manipur Hills. They counselled restraint and carried the day. This is a sign of goodwill. But hardly one "national" newspaper or broadcast network carried the news. The Meiteis and other non-Meitei groups should be statesmanlike enough to respond. A secure future for all the people of Manipur surely lies in this approach, not secret negotiations in closed hotel rooms in distant European and Asian capitals.



Ukhrul and Senapati District; there are few Tangkhuls outside of Manipur state. There are other tribes living in Khonsa, Tamenglong and "certain parts of Assam", including the Noctes and Wanchos, the Zeliangrongs and the Semas. One is pretty sure that most reporters in New Delhi, covering the "North Eastern beat" in the Home Ministry, have not heard of at least three of these tribes.

The Manipur Research Forum remarked that its study of the writing in three prominent "national dailies" and a TV new channel showed that certain news reports were "misleading" and reflected "the kind of casual and half-hearted approach to the issue by the news media." In addition, it said, there were exaggerations and "hyperbolic presentation of certain incidents"; most writing and reporting was shallow and half-baked with a "silence on the historicity of the readers and the audience."

They also accused some reporters of carrying comments by Naga groups which were "bent on trying to spew ethnic venom or trying to add an ethnic or communal twist to the whole issue."

### SAFE RETURN

Alas, this is only part of the case. There is little doubt that Meitei groups have equally viciously hurled venom against Nagas in the Imphal Valley; notes were circulated among the Naga community or sent to Naga individuals in Imphal which abused them in the vilest of terms and threatened dire consequences if they did not leave.

It is all very well for us to say that there was no violence against Nagas inhabiting the Meitei-dominated plains; that tens of thousands did leave for the hills but large numbers have come back. There is equally little comfort to be had by saying that those Nagas who continue to live in the hills do so under pressure from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M).

Many Naga children of school and college age remain in the hills, without a place where they can continue their studies. For one reason or another, clearly, they do not feel safe enough to return to the place

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THE STATESMAN

17 OCT 2001

## MANIPUR REALITY

### Fresh poll unlikely to end political instability

JUDGING by the emergence of new and smaller parties it would seem Manipur is again headed for political instability even after the Assembly elections due early next year. The second in less than three years, Manipur had had 18 new governments in 29 years and several spells of President's rule. The elected representatives are responsible as they see no wrong in offering themselves to the highest bidder. A chief minister preoccupied with survival strategy has little time for public affairs. The presiding officers' role has also been far from exemplary. Haobam Borobabu delayed the Congress' homecoming in 1992 by disqualifying seven legislators and, as Speaker, former chief minister W Nipamacha also disqualified some legislators to prevent them from supporting the Opposition group. J. N. G. S. 2

The Democratic People's Party, floated by social, human rights activists and political and student leaders, and the Manipur People's Conference under Nipamacha, may further complicate political life. Already there are 10 smaller parties, none of which has the credibility to secure a working majority. The Congress, which ruled the state for several years, is reduced to one member in the 60-strong House. The largest, the Manipur People's Party, the only one capable of challenging the Congress, is hobbled because of a split. Unless smaller groups have some pragmatic electoral understanding, the next government will also be a rag-tag combine. But the new legislators are expected to behave impeccably after the electorate taught the outgoing ones a lesson last June for indulging in toppling games at the cost of the State's territorial integrity. Most of them were forced into shelter in Delhi during the violence that followed extension of the Nagaland ceasefire. Whether that fear will be the key to political integrity remains to be seen.

THE STATESMAN

1 2 OCT 2001



120 injured  
in Assam  
bomb blast

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Sept. 25. - More than 120 people were injured when a bomb blast derailed seven coaches of the Delhi-Guwahati North East Express at around 7 p.m. between Chaprakata and Goroimari stations in the Bijni area of Bongaigaon district. Unofficial reports said at least three persons died.

A North-east Frontier Railway spokesperson said two coaches caught fire after the explosion and the broad gauge and metre gauge tracks were damaged.

Senior NFR officials, police officers and a medical team have left for the spot.

Bijni police said the culprits fired at an Assam Police Battalion camp in the vicinity to cover their escape.

No group has claimed responsibility but it's suspected that the secessionist National Democratic Front of Bodoland may have triggered the blast though it is not known to have carried out such attacks in the past.

The Bodo Liberation Tigers had been targeting trains and railway property. But of late it has suspended its operations and is holding talks with the Centre.

26 SEP 2001

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## SO YOUNG, SO JADED

AGP has much soul-searching to do

NOT yet sweet sixteen and the Asom Gana Parishad's credibility has already soured, its reputation further tarnished by the Prafulla Mahanta "affair" and the sex scandals of former ministers. Given the mandate to rule in 1985, dissensions led to a split and the formation of the Natun Asom Gana Parishad by stalwarts like Bhrigu Phukan, Dineswar Goswami and Brindaban Goswami (now AGP president). Worse still, the first Mahanta-led government was dismissed months before it could complete a full five-year term for failing to contain Ulfa violence. The coming together of the two in 1993, however, brought the AGP back to power in 1996 but the Mahanta-Phukan rivalry persisted and since 1998 the party has been on a losing trail. Whatever public support they had was lost in the May 2001 assembly elections when Mahanta was defeated in the prestigious Dispur constituency, finishing a poor third. He won the Berhampur seat by a mere 5,000-vote margin. Several senior leaders lost. Had it not been for the All Bodo Students' Union which secured 10 of the 12 seats contested, the allies' rout could have been complete.

Mahanta attributed the Congress victory to support by the Ulfa. Even assuming it was so, what else explains the Congress win in the by-elections from Titabor and Dibrugarh. Tarun Gogoi's election was a forgone conclusion, the only question being by what margin. Awarded the chief ministership for his performance as party chief and his ability to get himself elected, Gogoi polled 45,200 votes compared to his AGP rival's 10,195, with most other small fry forfeiting their security deposits. The victory over the BJP rival in Dibrugarh was equally impressive, by a margin of more than 25,960 votes. The prospect of the AGP coming back to power is so bleak as to call it into question in the long haul.

Three feared killed, rail link snapped as needle of suspicion points to Bodos

# Explosion rocks N-E Express

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Guwahati, Sept. 25: Suspected Bodo militants triggered an explosion on the Guwahati-bound Northeast Express in Bongaigaon district tonight, disrupting rail communication with the rest of the country. Three passengers are feared killed. Over 97, including four seriously, have been injured in the blast, according to preliminary reports.

Police said the explosion occurred between Sapakhata and

Garaimari under Bijnai police station in Bongaigaon district at 6.55 pm. Of the eight damaged bogies, two overturned while another caught fire. Two sleeper coaches, a general coach, one three-tier A/C and two A/C two-tier coaches and the engine of the train derailed. The train was coming from New Delhi. The injured were admitted to Gauhati Medical College Hospital and Bongaigaon civil hospital.

Militants may have also fired at the nearby police camp.

Confirming the blast, the

North East Frontier Railway said senior railway and police officials have rushed to the site. "Train services will be affected. Senior railway officials, including the general manager along with a few engineers, have reached the spot. A medical van has also arrived," an official said.

Allaying fears of commuters, a railway official said train services with the rest of the country would be maintained through the south bank route. However, it is unlikely that night running of

trains will continue.

The Raidhani Express, also coming from Delhi, was supposed to cross the site of the incident about 15 minutes later. The train was halted at Bongaigaon station while another train, Manas Rhino, proceeding towards Bongaigaon was stopped at Patiladah.

Talking to **The Telegraph**, inspector-general of police (law and order), B.P. Rao said he suspected the hand of the banned National Democratic Front of Boroland. "The blast could have been trig-

gered by a remote-controlled or a pressure device," Rao said. There were reports of militants targeting the trains in the proposed Bodoland area, he said.

Earlier in the day, suspected NDFB activists killed an Adivasi woodcutter and injured several others in Kokrajhar district. The Bodo heartland is witnessing a surcharged atmosphere following the Centre's reported move to include non-Bodo government groups in the peace process before sealing a fresh Bodo accord.

THE TELEGRAPH

20 SEP 2001

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## REANGS' RETURN

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### Delay may be to Mizoram's detriment

MIZORAM's procrastination over the repatriation of Reang refugees is likely to snowball into a serious problem. About 40,000 of them are living in Tripura camps since October 1997. Aizawl has not issued any official version as to what triggered the exodus but reports suggest they fled after ethnic violence followed the killing of a Mizo forest employee by suspected Bru (Reang) United Liberation Front militants. At the Centre's intervention, Mizoram agreed to take back about 31,000 and the first phase comprising 16,000 was to have begun in October last year, but it was a non-starter with Aizawl agreeing to accept only bona fide residents after screening them and also setting preconditions that BULF must give up violence before repatriation. A hardening of attitude was no surprise as militants are demanding an autonomous district council for Reangs as enjoyed by other tribes like the Maras, Lais and Chakmas. Even if Aizawl feels Reangs (numbering around 100,000) do not deserve a district council, there has to be some package for their socio-economic uplift.

The 1986 Mizo accord ended the 20-year insurgency and Delhi rightly awarded Mizoram a peace bonus last year, the apparent motive being to make it a model for other insurgent-prone and cash-strapped states. But the situation in Mizoram is changing with the Hmars aiming for upgradation of their development councils. They are sore over inadequate allocation of funds for their development. Having given the ethnic tribes autonomy, Mizoram is duty bound to treat them as equals.

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THE STATESMAN

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GOOD GESTURE <sup>SI-6</sup>  
Naga goodwill mission to Assam significant <sup>9-N & States</sup>

BY inviting a Naga goodwill mission to visit the state last week, the Asom Sahitya Sabha displayed more than common sense. Because this came at a time when ties between Assam and Nagaland are strained over a boundary dispute, not to forget the NSCN-IM's claim over parts of Assam. In 1952, a similar mission visited Assam when the Naga Hills were still part of the state. That visit though, turned out to be one-sided, with Assamese politicians sermonising on the virtue of democracy, the main message being that Nagas should abandon their demand for independence. Which only invited ridicule from some delegation members who reportedly remarked, "Let's go back home", their pride evidently hurt because, through village councils, the Nagas enjoy an elevated form of democracy. The latest mission consisting of the Naga Hoho (apex council of elders), did touch on the more serious question of Nagaland's cessation from India and felt serious consequences would arise if the NSCN-IM demanded this without taking into confidence different Naga tribes, a message the rebel leaders cannot ignore.

Traditional relations between the Meiteis and the Nagas of Manipur have also nosedived following the Centre's recent bungling over the ceasefire extension, and calls for some sort of confidence-building exercise. The fact remains that despite heightened tensions and the stand-off, Meiteis have never harmed Nagas and vice-versa. Hopefully, this will continue. Any cases to the contrary have been isolated ones, instigated by vested interests. Being the larger community, the Meiteis must take the initiative of sending a goodwill team to the hills and facilitate the return of Naga "refugees" who are said to be sheltering in Manipur's Senapati district.

# MIZO WOES

## Small Interventions Can Help Solve Problems

By SANJOY HAZARIKA

THE town of Saiha, as it is shown on maps, perches precariously about 1,500 metres above a low valley in Mizoram. It takes two days to reach this remote sentinel of the East from Aizawl, with the occasional break for meals and an overnight halt.

Saiha is a dot that's smaller than most other dots on the map, which tell us of the places and regions that make this planet what it is. The approach to Saiha is marked by rugged countryside that is sparsely populated and rich in unending bamboo groves and both semi-tropical and deciduous vegetation. The hill ridges are part of the great chains which form the spine of the state; the jungles grow along the roads, making for a visual treat but sighting the next stretch is much more difficult as branches and tall grass bend and wave their way across macadamised paths.

This is surely a paradise for guerrilla warfare. Little wonder too that

Mizoram has one of Asia's few counter-insurgency training centres, at a little place called Vairangte. It's located up near the border with Cachar and the Assam plains, and to it come soldiers and officers from the United States, Australia, Britain and other parts of Europe.

### COUNCILS

There were never any clear victors in the Mizo insurgency but the losers were visible as they are in any conflict situation, be it Kashmir, Nagaland or Sri Lanka: the ordinary people. It was the pressure of ordinary folk, through the Church and other groups, as much as that of the security forces which helped the Mizo National Front of Laldenga to come to an honourable peace with New Delhi and their own Mizo brethren.

Saiha is close to the tip of the political boundaries that form the trijunction of Myanmar, India and Bangladesh, as Mizoram, shaped like a spearhead, plunges into the hills and forests of the frontiers of South East Asia.

Despite the hills, the convoluted topography ensures that Saiha, the capital of the Mara Autonomous District Council, can be seen from another ridge at a distance of nearly 40 km, en route from Longkhlai, the capital of the Lai Autonomous District Council. There is a third autonomous district council to the west, the Chakma Autonomous District Council. The last named is one of the poorest areas of Mizoram and the North East. District Councils were set up under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to enable tribal communities to develop economically, culturally and politically in the manner that they wished. But there have been major problems.

Each complains of the lack of representation in the govern-

ment services, in education opportunities, in training skills for industrial employment. Each has a different yet similar story of alleged discrimination by the majority Mizo tribe, as do representatives of the Hmars and the Paites, other groups which are also demanding autonomous district councils so that they can run their own affairs. But they can't: financial and political control rests with Aizawl, the biggest

man had to travel another 220 km to try and cash the cheque at Aizawl only to be sent back to Kamala Nagar — it hadn't been countersigned by a senior member of the council. The Chakma District Council has no hospital, not even a post office.

The Maras, some distance away, make their views known quite openly. They resent the fact that in the list of Scheduled Tribes, they are still defined by an older name, Lakher, while in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitu-

tion, they are referred to as Maras! The case of the Lais is even more poignant. They are called by this name in their council area but are called the Pois in the Scheduled Tribes list, a name that angers them deeply.

The Maras are a community of about 50,000 persons who live predominantly in the district council area but also have kin in neighbouring Myanmar. And they are very sensitive about place

names as well as how they are officially called. As soon as you enter Maraland, the spelling of their capital changes: it's no longer Saiha. That's a Mizo name, we are told, signifying nothing. It is Siaha, a place where the tusks of an elephant fell after it died.

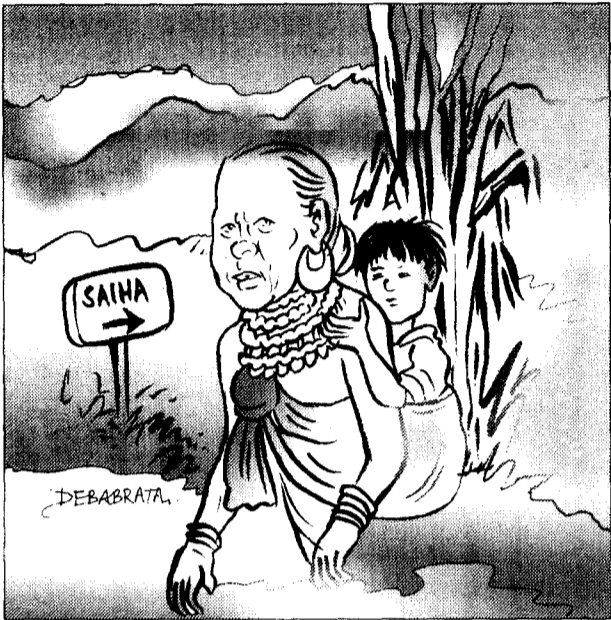
### FRUSTRATION

There are other small groups demanding recognition and inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes List. One is the Paite, with a population of about 60,000 in eastern Mizoram. Their demands for inclusion goes at least back to 1980, when they addressed memoranda to Indira Gandhi, seeking this right. Despite backing from the current chief minister Zoramthanga, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

It does not take much for these changes to be brought about. The Home Ministry and the tribal affairs ministry need to put their heads together and act quickly. These are small communities but they are strategically placed at the trijunction of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Arms, smuggled goods and people flow with ease across this region. Myanmar insurgent groups camp on the Indian side of the border. Indian intelligence agencies prowl the hills and towns. In this little place, great games are played.

The demands of Mizoram's small groups can be met within the existing constitutional, economic and political framework: central funding for local governance; reservations in jobs at the state level; recognition of groups in the Scheduled Tribes list to name the basics. Otherwise, the growing but dormant frustration in this strategic end of India could create a fresh nightmare. It may not take much to defuse the current situation — small interventions, sensitivity and the simplicity of foresight and wisdom.

Surely, it does not require an insurgency to help New Delhi and Aizawl to see this?



district which hogs more than 60 per cent of state funds. The district councils say that they are starved of money and cannot even implement central government schemes sanctioned for them because these funds must be routed through the state government.

Indeed, ironically, the complaints by the Maras, the Lais and Chakmas are similar to the grievances of the Mizos against the Assam government in the 1950s and 1960s. The Khasis and Garos had voiced similar resentment. The Mizos have their own state as do the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos with Meghalaya but they're still clashing with each other on who gets more of the financial cake.

In some cases, as that of the Chakmas, basic facilities of government do not exist. First of all, frequent travellers on the road connecting the Chakma capital of Mamla Nagar (this is what they call it; the Mizos call it Chwangte) is a back-breaking exercise. Little wonder, then, that hardly any heavy transport vehicles (read buses and trucks) ply the roads.

### NAMES

This road is the responsibility of the state public works department while the narrow but brilliantly built national highway No 54 which takes up from the steamy, overcrowded, messy plains to the twisting and turning bends of the hills and their clear, fresh air has been built and maintained by the army's Border Roads Directorate Organisation. Landslides are frequent in the furious monsoon rains but are cleared at a steady pace by the BRDO.

Not to speak of banks, there isn't even a sub-treasury. When asked to set up a branch in the district council, the State Bank of India demanded that the council pay for its security.

The council sends its cashier to Lungleh, about 120 km on that hellish highway, to draw money. On one unfortunate day in July, there was not enough cash at Lungleh so the poor

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THE STATESMAN

12 SEP 2001

# Sushma, Advani to meet over N-E package

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 8. — The information and broadcasting minister, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, is expected to meet Mr LK Advani, over the next few days to finalise the North-east package, an effort to counter the propaganda activities of neighbouring countries.

The North-east package (hardware for the Andamans and Lakshwadeep will also be included) is yet to be finalised as the amount to be earmarked is uncertain. Two years ago Rs 1,100 crore had been earmarked. It brought down to Rs 618.03 crore early this year. Now, it appears that it could be around Rs 900 crore.

The North-east is a critical area as a large number of insurgent outfits are active there. Some of them receive help in neighbouring areas. The Cen-

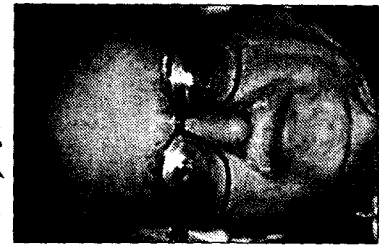
tre feels it is important that the strains of mainstream thought reach the area.

The level of coverage of the North-east, now badly neglected in terms of information and broadcasting, has to be improved, government officials believe. According to the ministry's own figures, about 50 per cent of the North-east and Sikkim in terms of area and about 20 per cent, in terms of population, do-

n't receive coverage from Doordarshan at all. In terms of area, about 85 per cent of Arunachal Pradesh (China has laid claim to the area) doesn't get DD1. Nor does 49 per cent of its population. The situation in Manipur and Nagaland isn't much better. About 32 per cent of Manipur and 68 per cent of Nagaland, actually get DD1, in terms of area. In terms of population percentage, a third of the population of



Sushma Swaraj



LK Advani

both states don't receive DD. In terms of medium-wave and FM coverage of AIR, the situation is better with 73 per cent of the area and 85 per cent of the people covered. Even that means, a sixth of the population of the North-east doesn't get AIR. These are considered 'official' figures as some of the transmitters are ageing and may not be in great shape. The actual coverage may therefore, be a little less.

The North-east package, till recently, comprised of about Rs 200 crore for AIR and about Rs 418 crore for DD. But the DD figures could go up if the finance ministry agrees. This would include giving 200 dish antennas to villages, a cheaper option if they have to be linked by terrestrial transmitters. There is also a proposal to ensure that the area receives DD Metro coverage too.

# CMs resent Centre's silence on North-east

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, Sept. 6. — The chief ministers of the North-eastern states have urged the Centre to include a chapter in the Tenth Five Year Plan approach paper regarding the Union government's stand on their demand for a national policy on tribals.

The chief ministers told Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and the Planning Commission deputy chairman, Mr KC Pant, that the Centre should include its views regarding implementation of the Shukla Commission

report on the development of North-East.

Disclosing this, the Tripura chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, said here the chief ministers from the region had, in the North-eastern Council meeting in New Delhi, recently expressed their resentment over the Centre's silence on the North-East affairs in the Tenth Plan approach paper. "They felt, there should be a separate chapter in the approach paper regarding problems and issues of the region", he said.

The chief ministers passed a resolution on their demand. Copies of the resolution have

been sent to Mr Vajpayee and Mr Pant.

In his speech at the national development council's meeting in the capital, Mr Sarkar stressed the need for implementing a policy of land reforms in the country during the Tenth Plan period, declaring those who were involved in farming as owners of the land.

He said the Shukla Commission report had given certain important suggestions for developing economic infrastructure in the region. Mr Sarkar said the lack of proper development was the chief cause behind insurgency.

THE STATESMAN

SEP 7 1971



# BODO UNREST

## No Scope For Further Division Of Assam

By SATIS C KAKATI

IN Assam, tribals both in the plains and the hills have been a cause of concern to the government over the decades. In the Government of India Act of 1935 the rulers evolved a device apparently to protect the tribes from exploitation by non-tribals who, the rulers thought, were advanced in many respects. This was reflected in the provision of the Reforms Act of 1935 known as the partially excluded areas and the excluded areas.

While in the partially excluded areas the ministry had responsibility in respect of law-making the Governor had absolute authority in the excluded areas; even in the affairs of the partially excluded areas the Governor had powers to overrule the ministry. In consequence the tribals particularly in the hill districts developed a sense of isolation from the mainstream, and in this the foreign missionaries assisted the rulers through their benevolent activities like spread of education and health care.

However, with the spread of the nationalist movement under the auspices of the Congress, tribals made efforts to establish their identity through the Tribal League.

### SEPARATION

The Ahoms through the Ahom Sabha made a similar effort. Tribal leaders Bhimbar Deuri and Rupnath Brahma, two Calcutta University educated youths, took the lead in forming the Tribal League to secure political and economic advantage following which the chief minister Sir Md Saadullah and the leader of the Opposition, Gopinath Bardoloi, vied with each other in wooing the Tribal League.

Having watched this trend, the Governor Sri Andrew Clow (1942-46) tried to keep the tribals equidistant from the Muslim League and the Congress blaming both the parties for backwardness of the tribes. This fostered a sense of separation among the tribes, both in the plains and the hills.

In 1938 there were serious efforts between the Muslim League then in power, on the one hand, and the Congress, on the other, to win over the tribal members in the Assembly to their respective folds. This was more than evident in the speeches made at the second session of the Assam Tribal League held at Kokrajhar in June 1938 at which Bhimbar Deuri accused the successive Saadullah governments of failure to improve the condition of the tribes particularly in respect of land in terms of the Line System. On the other hand, Bardoloi in his speech assured them that the Line System which was basically a part of the government's land policy for protection of tribals, would be strictly enforced if and when his party would come to power. In countering Bardoloi's offer, Saadullah promised that he would plead for a separate electorate for the tribals as in the case of the Muslims when the opportunity would come for review of the Constitution.

*The author is the former editor of The Assam Tribune.*

Bardoloi's words seemed to have satisfied the tribal leaders as was evident from support of the tribal group to the Congress Party in toppling the Saadullah Ministry in September 1938.

The question of integrating the hill tribes received special attention during the discussions in the Constituent Assembly as a result of which the Constituent Assembly set up a sub-committee under the chair-



manship of Gopinath Bardoloi to go into the question of hill tribes and recommend measures for their development. It toured the hill areas and recommended provisions which were incorporated in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

This Constitutional arrangement appeared to have worked satisfactorily for several years but the All Party Hill Leaders Conference under the leadership of Capt Williamson Sangma, a Garo legislator, started an agitation for a separate hill state to comprise all the hill districts — Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Lushai Hills, North-Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong — on the charge that the Assam government had spent the special grants for development of hill areas for the plains districts.

### BACKWARDNESS

The centre set up a three-member commission under the chairmanship of HV Pataskar which found the allegation baseless and stated: "There is no evidence of any deliberate neglect of the hill areas in the matter of development; nor was there any diversion of funds to the hill areas for the benefit of the plains" adding that the hill districts had recorded a higher rate of increase than the plains in respect of the state and per capita income.

The entire movement was politically motivated and chief minister BP Chaliha's effort to placate Capt Williamson Sangma by including him in the Congress ministry with an important portfolio proved fruitless. The Government of India granted a separate state called Meghalay comprising only two hill districts Khasi-Jaintia and Garo hills while the other three-North-Cachar, Karbi Anglong and Lushai hill districts electing to remain in Assam but later on political exigency led to formation of a separate state called Mizoram out of Lushai hill district besides another hill district, North-Eastern Frontier Agency till then under the Centre.

In this way Assam was split and the North-East region was called the "seven sisters"

though fear of further bifurcation of thrice truncated Assam still lingers with the demand of the Bodo tribe for a Bodoland. Surprisingly, the question of making any special provision like the Sixth Schedule for the plain tribes did not figure in the discussions of the Constituent Assembly except for reservation of a few seats in the Assembly and Parliament under Article 330 of the statute for a period of 10 years.

However, the Bodos known as Kacharis who are the largest plains tribal group in Assam and are known to be ancient rulers of Kamrup have a case for agitation inasmuch as successive governments have failed to remove their backwardness. A few Bodos leaders formed the Plains Tribal Council since the old Tribal League had become defunct; in fact, the PTC fought the parliamentary election and sent one member to the Lok Sabha.

Taking the cue from the All Assam Students Union, the Bodo students formed their own organisation and raised the demand for a separate Bodoland.

### DRAWBACK

In view of the demand for a separate state to comprise the Bodo-dominated areas in Lower Assam the then chief minister, Hiteswar Saikia, through the mediation of the central minister of state for internal security, Rajesh Pilot, struck a settlement with the All Bodo Students Union and the Bodo People Action Committee on 20 February 1993 known as the Bodo accord under which the Government of Assam committed to adopt a number of schemes for improvement of the Bodo tribe through an elected Bodo Autonomous Council, but the drawback in the accord was that the Council's territory was not defined and soon disputes arose.

However, efforts are on to resolve the problems through discussions among representatives of the Centre, the Government of Assam, ABSU and other Bodo organisations. An early settlement of the Bodo problem is desirable with fresh problems arising because of the activities of Bodo extremists like the Bodo Liberation Tigers and the National Democratic Front of Bodo who, it is suspected, killed the Bodo Sahitya Sabha president Bireswar Brahma on 19 August 2000.

It should be admitted that the Bodos have been neglected though popular governments have come one after another. In the Barak Valley comprising the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, the Government has established a medical college, an engineering college and a Central university among other institutions. This shows the government has neglected the Bodo-dominated areas of western Assam. It is for the Bodo organisations to unite and negotiate with the government, but they will be well advised not to press for a separate state as there is no scope for further division of the thrice split Assam. Besides, district-like states are not economically viable as experience has shown in the North-East.

THE STATESMAN

- 7 SEP 2001

# Goswami ready to take over from Mahanta

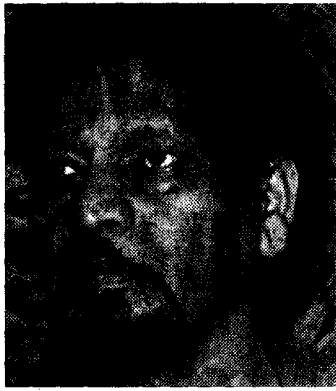
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Sept. 5. - Former education minister and one of the founder leaders of the Asom Gana Parishad, Mr Brindaban Goswami, today appeared all set to succeed Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the party president.

At the end of a four-hour long executive council meeting, party sources felt Mr Goswami is likely to be elected unopposed.

Mr Goswami, however, told some reporters that he would prefer to wait till tomorrow when the general council meets to elect the new executive council. "I have never said I want to be the party president," he said. However, he said that he had never refused to accept the responsibility.

The executive council meeting today forwarded Mr Mahanta's resignation letter to the general council for consideration. "It is the general council which can accept or reject the resignation," the acting president of



Mr Brindaban Goswami

the party, Mr Biraj Kumar Sharma said. Mr Mahanta resigned yesterday citing "personal difficulties" as the reason.

The entire executive council will also resign tomorrow to facilitate formation of a new council. "We are resigning because we are morally responsible for the electoral defeats the party has suffered over the last few years including the May assembly polls," Mr Sharma said.

THE STATESMAN

- 6 SEP 2001

# Mahanta quits as friends turn foes

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, September 4

BADLY HIT by allegations of bigamy, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta today bowed to the wishes of a section within the party and resigned from the post of president of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

Till only a few days back, Mahanta was confident he would beat back party rebels and get himself re-elected AGP chief at Thursday's general council meeting.

But his hopes came crashing down last evening when his

## SC RULING ON BIGAMY

IN A bigamy case, a woman must prove that her husband's second marriage is valid under the parties' personal law (that is, it has been conducted with all the necessary rites) even though it's void under the Hindu Marriage Act, a Supreme Court bench ruled on Tuesday.

HTC, New Delhi

once-trusted party colleagues stormed into his house and demanded that he should resign immediately. Sources said they even had a draft of the

resignation letter ready.

Not long ago these very people had lobbied to keep Mahanta at the helm of affairs despite allegations of bigamy against him. They had readied a second plan to have another person of their choice in the president's chair in case the first plan failed.

"Yes, I have resigned from the post of party president as well as from the post of the leader of the AGP Legislature Party in the State Assembly," Mahanta said soon after handing over his resignation letter to AGP president-in-charge, Biraj Sarma, at the party headquarters here.

"I have received the resignation letter from Mahanta and this will be placed at the party executive meeting tomorrow," Sarma told reporters later.

In his letter, Mahanta cited "personal difficulties" as the reason for stepping down. "I will fight the allegations levelled against me as an ordinary party member and not as the party president," he said.

Political observers here say that the decks have now been cleared for former Education Minister Brindaban Goswami, a hardliner in regional politics, to take charge of the party.

THE HINDUSTAN

- 5 SEP 2001

# Advani calls for limited state Cabinets

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3. — The number of ministers in a state shouldn't exceed a certain limit and the Constitution should be amended to include this provision, the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani said while inaugurating the meeting of the North-eastern council today.

Referring to the recent developments in Manipur, Mr Advani said there was always an effort to manufacture an artificial majority in the Assembly. Such efforts end in creating instability, chaos and imperil national security. The Constitution should be amended to see that the council of ministers doesn't exceed a certain limit, he said.

Giving an example of Delhi, where the constitution provides that the council of minister shouldn't exceed

seven including the chief minister, the home minister said such a provision would prevent horse trading, bring stability and strengthen democratic institutions.

He asked chief ministers of the North-eastern states to make an uncompromising attempt to curb militancy.

The militants were obstructing the progress and harassing people. The reasons for growth of militancy, unemployment and social tension could be tackled at its own level. The north-eastern states are in a sorry state of affairs. Funds didn't reach people and were going to the militants. This had forced the Centre to hold back funds for these states, he added.

The home minister said the developments in Manipur were a test case for the Centre and creation of a sep-

arate ministry to take care of development of the region, was one solution. He emphasised the need to preserve the identity of all groups in the region and said the independent North-eastern ministry had been created to give more impetus to homogeneous progress and peace in all states in the region.

Mr Advani said the government would welcome those who shun violence and are prepared for talks. He admitted that some misgivings had cropped up about the nature of the ceasefire with the NSCN-IM, which had led to unrest in Manipur.

But the situation had eased as the government had dispelled all concerns that the peace initiative was at the cost of the territorial integrity of other states in the region, he added.

He called for establishing new organisational linkage between the

ministry and the states. Calling for improvement in implementation of all welfare and developmental projects, he said there was a lot of scope for integration of economies of the North-eastern states.

Given the small size and resources of each state, there was a need to look at the entire region as a single economic unit.

Mr Arun Shourie, it seemed had already done his homework at his one-day-old ministry. He said the region had enormous development potential and the region's dependence on the rest of the country should be changed to the rest of the country looking at the states.

He called for better interaction among the North-eastern states, strengthening coordination among NEC members and timely completion of all development projects.

## BJP DEFENDS MBC QUOTA

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3. — The BJP today defended the decision of the Uttar Pradesh government to give reservations to the most backward castes (MBCs) from within the quota reserved for the other backward castes (OBCs) and said this was done on the basis of the party's "morality and principle" that justice must be done to all.

"Where ever we see injustice, we will come to the rescue," the BJP general secretary and spokesman, Mr Sunil Shashtri, said and claimed the decision had nothing to do with the coming Assembly polls.

Why the same principle wasn't being upheld in other BJP-ruled states or at the central level? He said the decision could only be taken by the state government. — SNS

# 'Sanghamitra exploited my generosity'

DIPANKAR ROY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Sept. 1. — Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said he should have been more careful in his dealings with Mrs Sanghamitra Bhargali. "I did try to help her out on certain occasions — as I had helped many others — but I could never dream that my benevolence would be so crudely exploited by her," he told **The Statesman** in an exclusive interview here today.

"If I had known what she was planning to do, I would have been more careful, which I was not, and, to that extent, I admit I too am to blame for the present controversy," Mr Mahanta said.

A junior officer in the Assembly secretariat, Mrs Bhargali said in an interview to a

vernacular weekly that their two-year old affair had culminated in marriage at a temple in Mumbai on 11 March this year.

Asserting that there was no "illicit relationship between us," the former chief minister said: "I don't understand under whose or what pressure she has done this to me."

He said the controversy has not only hurt him but also his well-wishers.

"I'm confident, though, that they will continue to repose their faith in me because the allegations are baseless," he said.

Whether people will stand by him or not remains to be seen, but several of his former Cabinet colleagues are baying for his blood ever since the scandal broke.

They are demanding a change of the AGP leadership.



**Mr PK Mahanta**

"And they are the ones who benefited the most when we were in power," Mr Mahanta said.

"This had happened in 1991, too, after we lost the elections.

I had stepped down as the party president then but was asked to take over the reins. They worked against our party again. But such criticism should be made at the appropriate forum of the party, they should not have gone to the press with their grievances," he said.

Mr Mahanta said that the executive council has already decided to resign and facilitate formation of a new council. But would he agree to continue as the party chief if asked by the general council at its meeting on 6 September? "I can only say that I shall abide by the party's wish," he said.

Reflecting on the elections the party lost — not a single seat in the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections and finally the defeat in the Assembly polls — since it came to power in 1996, Mr Mahanta said it was mainly because of the bold stand taken by his government against the intricacies. "They worked against our party, both covertly and overtly, in these elections," he said while also accepting that the government had failed to fully meet the "very high" expectations of the people.

But Mr Mahanta is confident that the vote was not against regionalism, which the AGP represents. "Regionalism is still alive. What we need to do is strengthen the party," he said. "Now that we are not in power some fair weather friends will certainly switch loyalties and that should leave the party with only those who are ready to sacrifice and work with dedication for the party. That in itself will be a step towards strengthening the party," he said.

# ASSAM A BIGAMY CHARGE HAS MAHANTA AND THE AGP ON THE DEFENSIVE

The country's youngest chief minister is struggling to salvage his image and pride. SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP reports

OCTOBER 14, 1985 is counted as an red-letter day for regional politics. It's the day the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) was formed at a national convention organised by the All Assam Students' Union at Goalghat. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who had led the Assam Accord with the Centre two months ago, had quit the president's post of the student body after a six-year tenure. Obviously, Mahanta was on to bigger, better things.

Mahanta had entered Guwahati city riding a wave of popular support and adulation. 'Prafulla Mahanta zindabad', 'AASU zindabad' cheered people who had lined every inch of the 24-km road from the airport to Guwahati city. Sure enough, AASU stormed to power within two months of its birth, pushing aside the Congress government. Twenty-four-year-old Mahanta also entered the record books as the youngest chief minister any state in India had ever had.

A lot of water has flowed down the Brahmaputra since. One of the most visible faces of Assamese politics now stands red-faced in the people's court, trying to defend himself against charges made by Sanghamitra Bharali. Sanghamitra's allegation that the much-married Mahanta married her in a temple in Mumbai has seriously dented the image of one of Assam's most popular parties.

The party was so demoralised it could not even send a delegation to Barpeta, where over 2,000 children suffered from food poi-

soning in a government-sponsored function. The Farun Gogoi government has also moved in for the kill, reviving the multi-crore letters of credit (LoC) scandal that rocked Assam a few years ago. In fact, the CBI would have filed a chargesheet against Mahanta had it not been for state governor SK Sinha, who refused permission to prosecute the then chief minister.

Mahanta isn't alone in the dock — many AGP leaders are facing far more serious charges, of rape. While Rajendra Mushahary, former minister for tribal welfare, has been already arrested for allegedly raping a tribal. While Jatim Mali, former education minister, has been served a notice of appearance by the police after a woman alleged she was raped by him.

The AGP's fall from grace also reflects in its defeat in recent elections. In its heydays, the AGP was such a crowd-puller that Mahanta scored over Amitabh Bachchan and even Rajiv Gandhi. But its vote share has been consistently dipping: from 34 per cent in 1985, the party got just 23 per cent in the recent Assembly elections this year.

The AGP's problems have been growing over the years: in 1988, a massive rice procurement scandal had almost pulled down its government. The party's image suffered more dents during its first term in 1990, when its mishandling of the insurgency situation only increased the clout of ULFA rebels. The AGP government was finally dismissed by the Centre with less than two

## Fall from grace



### One of the most visible faces of Assamese politics now stands red-faced in the people's court, trying to defend himself against bigamy charges

months to complete its tenure. In March 1991, the AGP's headache came from within, when Bhriugu Kumar Phukan and former union minister Dinesh Goswami walked away with several leaders to form the Natun Assam Gana Parishad (NAGP). This led to a disastrous showing in the 1991 assembly elections, with the two factions together getting only 24 out of 126 seats. Though the two sides patched

up, the undercurrent between Mahanta and Phukan continued, and Phukan finally left to form the Asom Jatiya Sammilani in 1998, which merged with the Nationalist Congress Party after the recent Assembly elections.

Ironically, this could have been an excellent opportunity for the AGP to launch a campaign against the three-month old Congress government which is still struggling to find its feet. But

leaders. But the allegation against Mahanta is different. I have nothing personal against Mahanta. Nor do I have any sympathy for the woman who has claimed Mahanta had married her. There is a category of people in today's society who want to climb up by clinging to powerful politicians. I think this woman belongs to that category," he said.

Though Mahanta's father Debakanta Mahanta too doesn't believe the second marriage story, he blames the former CM's downfall on his wife, Jayashree. "Mahanta's downfall began the day his wife entered politics," said Mahanta, a former school teacher and head of a Vaishnavite monastery.

Jayashree Goswami Mahanta, who was a lecturer in the prestigious Cotton College before she joined politics four years ago, was elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha two years ago against a vacancy created due to the death of Parag Chaliha, a former president of the party. Her entry created considerable dissent within the party, with stalwarts like Bhriugu Phukan, Atul Bora and Pulakesh Barua accusing Mahanta of promoting his family over the party.

Though Mahanta promptly issued a denial to the bigamy charge, he's finding it hard to shake off the slur. "I have a happy married life with three children and there has been not a single instance that anybody has spoken anything against my moral character," he told *The Indian Express*. But with reports that the AGP is looking for a "clean" leader in Mahanta's place, it looks like his self-defense isn't cutting ice even within his own party.



# Peace has more than a chance

**T**HE FEAR that the Centre's faux pas in first extending and then revoking — in the face of large-scale violence in Manipur — the extension of the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas of the Northeast might derail the peace talks with the NSCN(I-M) has been belied. The NSCN(I-M)'s reaction has been restrained and there has been no violence on a large-scale.

There are several factors that make it near impossible for the NSCN(I-M) to return to its old ways, the most important being the Naga people's overwhelming urge for peace, for an end to half-a-century of bloodshed that has scarred their beautiful State.

Before going into these factors, it is worth noting an intriguing thing about the "revocation" of the extension of the ceasefire beyond Nagaland. The joint statement of the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) issued from Amsterdam on July 24 made no mention whatever of the revocation. It was only three days later, on July 27, that the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, announced that the three words "without territorial limits", incorporated in the June 14 statement, were being "deleted" and the "status quo ante June 14" was being restored.

The next day, the NSCN(I-M) reacted — in very guarded language, carefully avoiding words such as "revocation" or "without territorial limits". Its statement said: "In view of the adverse situation created, (without explaining what the 'adverse' situation was) we are constrained to issue this statement to make things categorically clear to both the Naga and the Indian people so that the pursuit of peaceful solution may not be hindered".

The statement went on to say: "In the talks in Amsterdam dated 23-24 July, nothing has been finalised on the proposal raised from the Indian side for reviewing the 14 June Bangkok Agreement. It was understood together that implementation of the ceasefire, especially the necessity of keeping the rampant activities of all the Indian armed forces under effective control, was first and foremost before any decision is arrived at. This is the truth and whole truth of the talks".

The concluding paragraph said: "And so there is practically no point on the part of the Indian Government to make

*In Nagaland, the urge for peace is very strong. Barun Das Gupta on what lies in store.*

announcement beyond this understanding. Therefore, any announcement or declaration or statement given from the Indian Home Ministry or in any mass media are unfounded and so are they in no sense acceptable to the Nagas."

This was uncharacteristically restrained and diplomatic language for the NSCN(I-M). But there was more. After the statement was released, the Ceasefire Monitoring Cell of the NSCN(I-M) based at Dimapur rang up the local newspapers late in the evening requesting them not to publish this statement. However, the request

came too late for some of the newspapers which carried the statement the next day.

This whole chain of events shows that the NSCN(I-M) leadership is careful not to do anything rash that may jeopardise the peace process or result in a breakdown of the talks. The leaders know if they miss the present opportunity of breaking the impasse and resolving the conflict, there may not be a second chance for them.

For one thing, most senior leaders of the NSCN(I-M), including the president, Mr. Isak Chisi Swu, and the general secretary, Mr. Thuingelang Muivah, are now in their Seventies. For all their uncompromising stance on Naga independence and sovereignty, they know they cannot go back to the jungles and start fighting again.

They also know — though they will never admit it — that

neither the Nagas in Nagaland nor the Nagas in Manipur want a Nagalim or Greater Nagaland. It is quite likely to aggravate the inter-tribal conflicts. Mr. Muivah is a Tangkhul Naga from Manipur, Mr. Swu is a Sema from Nagaland while Mr. Khaplang, leader of the rival faction of the NSCN, is a Hemi Naga from Myanmar. It is a question of their acceptability to other tribes in a Greater Nagaland.

Then there are some small Naga tribes outside Nagaland — such as the Taro Nagas in the Chandel district of Manipur who number only 700-800 — who would like to be left alone, rather than be part of a Greater Nagaland where more advanced and larger tribes could gain ascendancy.

In fact, this is the reason why the Nagaland Chief Minister, Mr. S. C. Jamir, recently said that while he was for bringing all the Nagas under one administrative unit, it should be done "only if they (the Nagas outside Nagaland) wanted it". It may be recalled that thrice in the past, on December 12, 1964, August 28, 1970, and September 16, 1994, the Nagaland Assembly had passed unanimous resolutions urging that all Naga-inhabited areas should constitute one unit.

The urge for peace is very strong. The Naga Ho Ho, the Naga Mothers' Association, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) — all have come out strongly for peace. While the NSCN(I-M) urged people to boycott the Independence Day celebrations and hoist black flags on the rooftops of every house, the Church leaders opposed the boycott call and urged the people to hoist white flags instead to express their desire for peace.

The people of Nagaland are fed up with violence. On the eve of Independence Day, there was a clash between the Isak-Muivah and Khaplang factions of the NSCN at Wokha town in which a teenager received bullet injuries. Angry youth reportedly decided to attack the camps of the two rival groups but actually vent their ire on the local administration and ransacked the Deputy Commissioner's office.

A political solution of the Naga militant movement may be difficult to arrive at, but it will be immensely more difficult for anyone to disturb the peace and bring back the gun culture.



Naga youth rally for peace in New Delhi.

THE

19 AUG 2001

# Mizoram's stand on Reangs irks Centre

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, Aug. 17. - The Centre is not happy with Mizoram's inaction regarding Reang evacuees, living in camps in North Tripura.

A Union home ministry report said Aizawl didn't show the "desired sense of urgency" to implement the decision, taken up earlier in a meeting of the chief ministers of Tripura and Mizoram in presence of the home minister in New Delhi on 7 August 2000.

"The Reang problem persists without a solution," the report said, adding that the presence of such a large number of Reang tribesmen in Tripura is a serious threat to the security of both the states. "There are

reports on recruitment of young camp inmates, who are getting increasingly frustrated, to the underground ranks of the Bru National Liberation Front, a militant group of Reang tribals, operating in the region."

The Mizoram ministers have recently said the state might begin repatriating the evacuees if the BNLF shows readiness to surrender their arms before the government. The BNLF leaders, on the other hand, had sent a memorandum to the Mizoram chief minister, urging him to set up an autonomous council for the minority Reang tribals in the state. The BNLF feels Reangs' autonomy could only save them from torture for being

the religious and ethnic minority. The BNLF has also demanded reservation of seats in the Mizoram Assembly for Reangs. The outfit wanted the government to assure a safe conduct so that its leaders could join a dialogue with the authorities.

Mizo leaders have always been opposed to autonomy demand. Former Mizoram chief minister, Mr Lal Thanhawla, had rejected it when the current chief minister, Mr Zoram Thanga, felt that Reangs didn't belong to the state's original population. Most of them arrived at the state from hill Chittagong areas of former

East Pakistan and now Bangladesh. Many of them sneaked into Mizoram from Tripura area in search of Jhum land, the chief minister said.

The report said a National Human Rights Commission team had visited Reang refugee camps in Tripura in October 1999. The NHRC had observed that the Reangs, living in refugee camps in North Tripura Kanchanpur subdivision, were lawful citizens of Mizoram and the state is obliged to take them back in accordance with the agreement reached by the chief minister with the Union home minister

in November 1997.

"Mizoram should take all necessary steps to create a sense of confidence and security in minds of the evacuees who had fled Mizoram villages in the wake of ethnic tension and disturbances in September and October in 1997," the report said. More than 31,000 Reangs are living in six camps in North Tripura. The Centre has so far released Rs 25 crores for food and relief for the refugees.

In the 7 August 2000 meeting, the Mizoram chief minister had agreed that in the first phase of repatriation, his government would take back 16,000 refugees, earlier verified by the Mizoram authorities within 30 October 2000. In the second phase, there would

be further verification of the refugees, awaiting repatriation when the Mizoram government would complete the entire process of taking back refugees by 31 December 2000. Besides the home minister, the Tripura chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, was present in the meeting. It was also decided by the meeting that tripartite talks would be held between the Government of India, the Mizoram government and the Reang leaders of Mizoram to sort out differences. The ministry had assured security and rehabilitation for the refugees who would return to their villages. Mizoram, however, did nothing to take back the refugees from Tripura.

## CENTRE'S REPORT ALLEGES APATHY

THE STATESMAN

18 AUG 2001



# PM knocks at Sangma door for N-E peace

Prabin Kalita  
Guwahati, August 9

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee has sought former Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma's "services" for initiating peace talks not only with the NSCN(IM), but in the entire North-eastern region.

Sangma said today that Vajpayee met him and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president, Sharad Pawar, last Monday.

The Prime Minister asked me whether my services could be "spared for initiating a peace process in the entire region," Sangma said.

"I have given my consent...it is an extremely difficult job... I have conveyed to the Prime Minister that negotiations with NSCN(IM) alone would not help. We should negotiate with as many groups as possible," Sangma said.

But contrary to reports that he would replace K Padmanabhaiah as the Government interlocutor, the NCP leader is not in favour of stepping into the former Union Home Secretary's shoes.

"I would not like to be described as a former Lok Sabha Speaker replacing a former Home Secretary," Sangma said.

"It is for the Government to decide now and till today there is no official communication with me," he added.

The Government has taken Sangma into confidence and he had a round of discussion with Padmanabhaiah.

While the three Congress Chief Ministers of the North-east have not objected to his services, Sangma feels the All India Congress Committee (AICC)

high command is against it.

"The Prime Minister told me that most of the Chief Ministers of the region have accepted my name. Nobody has told me about any objection.

"Personally I have not spoken to any one of them but Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has welcomed it in an interview to a national daily, Nagaland Chief Minister S Jamir and Arunachal Chief Minister Mukut Mithi too have no objection," Sangma said.

But a recent article by Mani Shankar Aiyar has hinted at the Congress high command being unhappy with this development. Sangma said the opinion of the people of the North-east is more important than that of 24 Akbar Road.

Sangma refused to spell out how he would proceed once the official announcement is made but he has put forward to the Prime Minister his own ideas, including that he would not take the peace talks with NSCN(IM) as an Indo-Naga talks as projected by the militant outfit.

Earlier, the N-E MPs' forum, under the chairmanship of Meghalaya Congress MP PR Kyn-diah, adopted an eight-point approach.

This too has been submitted to the Prime Minister.

"We have emphasised on a two-pronged negotiation. Negotiation with militant groups for peace and negotiation with government for development," he said.

The MPs' forum has stressed the need for transparency in all negotiations and the need to take the people and political parties of the region into confidence.

# Centre mulls talks with Ulfa, Assam

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 16 AUGUST

THE CENTRE is exploring the possibility of initiating a tripartite dialogue with Ulfa involving the Assam government, even as the secessionist group is yet to give its formal consent to the proposal.

The Union home ministry's optimism in roping in the north-east's most dreaded terrorist outfit stems from feelers sent by Ulfa commander in chief Paresh Barua through reliable intermediaries. As per the feelers, the Dhaka-based Barua had, around 2-3 months ago, laid down five conditions for

coming to the negotiating table. These were:

- The talks must be held in the presence of a UN observer
- They must be held in a third country
- An enquiry must be held into killings by the Surrendered Ulfa (Sulfa)
- Action must be taken against terrorist elements in the Sulfa
- Army must be withdrawn.

However, recent feelers indicate that Ulfa has softened up and is willing to do away with its insistence upon having a UN observer. Besides, Mr Barua — who is said to be virtually under house arrest in

Dhaka after a recent blast injured his arm — is not averse to holding talks in India itself.

The Tarun Gogoi government in Assam, on its part, has decided to set up a commission of enquiry into killings by the Sulfa. A decision to this effect was taken by the state Cabinet. It has also delivered on the Ulfa's condition for action against Sulfa by conducting raids on the latter's hideouts.

The Centre, by involving the state government, hopes to achieve three objectives. One, after the recently-ousted AGP government in Assam which had unleashed a major campaign to crush the Ulfa,

the Tarun Gogoi regime is viewed as a "friendlier" bet by the secessionist group.

Second, having the state government as a party to the dialogue will ensure that the Manipur experience, in which the Centre was forced to review its ceasefire pact with the Naga group NSCN(I-M) following opposition from the state, is not repeated.

Third, the bipartisan approach — with both the NDA dispensation at the Centre and the Congress government in the state — will spread the blame for failure or success of the talks equally over the political spectrum.

The Economic Times

17 AUG 22

# Towards a happier Northeast

By Murkot Ramunny

10-10 16/8  
**D**R. S. RADHAKRISHNAN'S words have to be remembered today, "Look backwards and live forwards". The Centre's tackling of the problem of Naga insurgency appears to have been knee-jerk action, resulting in setting Manipur 'on fire'. It almost succeeded in spreading the flames throughout the Northeast. The poorly-considered decision to extend the 'cease-fire' without territorial limits, the forced 'u-turn' following protests in Manipur, and the resultant confusion at the Centre, all go to prove that little attempt was made to understand the context, go back into the history of the problem and above all the psychology of the tribal people.

Statements contrary to the facts made in public by those in authority shake the confidence of people everywhere. This is more so with the tribal people who staunchly honour their word once given. They have accepted the commitments made by the Centre. But when that is broken, or completely altered, their faith in the Government is shattered — with terrible consequences.

Now is the time that a scientific review of the problems of the Northeast as a whole needs to be made by a competent group which is aware of its history, politics and, above all, the aspirations of the youth. In Nehru's words, those who are detailed to make this comprehensive study should know "why they do, what they do". The group should have a strong regional presence and no preconceived ideas. It should be willing to learn from the people, and have sympathy for them. Unfortunately, most of those who deal with the 'problems' of the Northeast belong to other parts of the country and lack the experience to deal with these issues. This has been one of the main causes of the lack of confidence in those who come from outside. The situation of 'we' and 'they' should disappear from the minds of both sides.

It is unfortunate, but it has to be admitted that there is a psychological divide between the people of the Northeast and the people from 'mainstream' India. Lack of contact and ignorance of the culture of

each other are the major gaps, even 50 years after Independence. These have to be overcome. There has to be more consultation both between the Centre and the Northeastern States and among the States themselves. Immediately after Independence, a lot of interest was shown in this region. A number of committed and talented 'outsiders' volunteered to work to develop this region. The hopes and aspirations of the people were supposed to have been met, and generous financial support provided by the Centre.

***A scientific review of the problems of the Northeast needs to be made by a group which is aware of its history, politics and, above all, the aspirations of the youth.***

After creating a number of new States and having installed elected Governments, in consonance with local aspirations, it was probably felt by the Centre that the people would look after themselves. This has unfortunately not happened. Even worse, there has been growing discontentment in the region. Part of the neglect of the Northeast comes from its relatively low population and hence its meagre representation in Parliament and in the national political leadership, which is dominated by leaders from the Hindi heartland. We seem to have forgotten that India (that is Bharat) was conceived as a welfare state where every part, every corner, every citizen has to be given full opportunity to develop. This promise has to be realised in both letter and spirit, if the 'law and order' problems of the Northeast have to be addressed.

Whether right or wrong, there is a feeling of alienation among the people of the region, which is in various ways reciprocated by many in other parts of the country. There has to be more interaction at the people-to-people level. Exchange of students from the Northeast to different States and vice versa is one way. Organised tours of youth and youth festivals where participants are exchanged could

be another. This does happen. But very rarely.

Internal as well as external communication is very important. In the Northeast, road, rail and air communication infrastructure is still very rudimentary. For example, the Prime Minister's golden quadrilateral project stops at Kolkata. A start, however, has been made of opening travel through Bangladesh. This should be expanded. Opening up a road to Myanmar from Manipur was another important step. Normalisation of trade and

proportion of educated youth in the country. A disgruntled youth has a dangerous potential, as we should know from the militancy in Punjab.

In the hill areas, the *jhum* cycle is reducing rapidly. Every village was once self-sufficient for food. But with rapid increase in population and a reduction of food producing area, there are bound to be food shortages. Exclusive dependence on PDS rice and wheat from other parts of India is not a sustainable solution in the long run. There has to be improved local food security through sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. The region is one of the richest repositories of biodiversity in the world. Sustainable use of these plant resources in keeping with local culture and skills could bring great prosperity to the region. Investment in intellectual and institutional capacity to develop these resources needs to be made expeditiously.

From ancient days, the Northeast has inherited and preserved village and tribal administration of land and its resources. Apart from the hills, in the plains too, the local administration, cooperation and sense of values of the people were of a high order. Modern education, lack of employment, increase in population, insurgency and lack of communication connecting the rest of India to other countries to the east have bottled up the people and are proceeding to suffocate them.

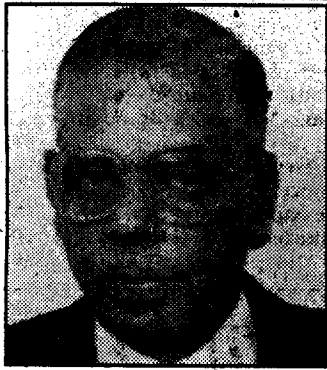
Working for peace while simultaneously planning improvements in agriculture, industry and communication, to ensure sustainable local livelihood and economic integration with the rest of India, are essential. Else, the gains of peace will be squandered in less than a generation. The hopes and aspirations of two generations of ordinary Indians who have struggled to improve their lives, through periods of economic and political turmoil in the Northeast, must not be belied, as also the future of their children and grandchildren.

(The writer is a former administrator involved for over two decades in the development of the Northeast.)

16 AUG 2001

# Northeastern faultlines

NEWSWATCH



M.K. NARAYANAN

**A** multiplicity of past and present internal security crises have yet to produce a coherent or systemic framework of response on our part. An element of tentativeness can be condoned where democratic governments are involved, but this must not become an excuse for condoning repeated follies. Failure to adhere to basic norms of security policy and practice viz. the need for a proper information back-up, allowing for knowledge and experience while deciding on the proper course of action, and clearly enunciating plans, are primarily responsible for this. Where talks are involved, special negotiating skills also become critical.

The latest snafu, involving the extension for a further one-year period of the ceasefire with the NSCN(I/M) — but this time “without any territorial limits” — is a classic case of this kind. The centrality of peace in the region, with the “ceasefire” only a means towards this end, seems to have been clearly overlooked. Also ignored is yet another aspect, i.e. institutional responses to internal security threats require a combination of diplomatic, political and covert means, accompanied by the judicious use of force. To inane-ly insist on exclusive departmental domain can only be counter-productive, more so at a time when dynamic and proactive initiatives are called for.

Delhi should never underestimate the degree of volatility present in the security scenario in the entire Northeast. Here the faultlines of society lead not only to acute divisions based on tribal and other identities, but in many instances result in lasting bitterness. Secessionary nationalism with strong ethnic undertones — even extending at times to ethnic cleansing — has for over five decades adversely affected peace and tranquillity. Only a mixture of political, strategic, economic and strong-arm measures has kept the lid on many problems that might otherwise have been transformed into major conflicts.

Not to adequately comprehend the depth of feeling as well as the under currents of tensions that clearly exist is unpardonable. For long, ethnic organisations backed by militant outfits sporting various labels, have held sway in the Northeastern states. Manipur, currently in “the eye of the storm”, has numerous militant groups. Both the NSCN(I/M) and NSCN(K) are active here. Several Meitei organisations — the Peoples Liberation Army (armed extension of the Revolutionary Peoples Front), PREPAK, the United National Liberation Front, IBRF, the KYKL and the Kangleipak Communist Party, flourish in this state. Many Kuki militant factions, such as the Kuki National Army, the Kuki Revolutionary Army and the Kuki National Front are also present. A malignant ambience of inter-tribal clashes exists. Conflicts between the Meiteis and the Nagas, the Nagas and the Kukis, and the Kukis and



NEGOTIATE PEACE: ‘In managing the NSCN, the support of other ethnic communities, leaders of various tribes in the region and governments in other northeastern states would not only be invaluable, but crucial as well. By ignoring and overlooking this aspect the situation can only get worse’

the Paites, are a regular feature.

Avoiding any kind of provocation should thus have been the first call. The volatile cocktail of militant organisations and the perceived, if misguided, threat to the state’s integrity meant that Manipur was waiting to explode. The June 14 announcement of extension of the ceasefire “without territorial limits” provided the spark. A mere verbal assurance that extension of the truce beyond Nagaland would not in any way impinge on the territorial integrity of other states in the region was clearly insufficient in the prevailing atmosphere of

**T**alks with the NSCN(I/M) for a ceasefire date back to the final years of PM Narasimha Rao’s tenure. Then these were handled professionally eschewing any kind of publicity. The ‘original sin’ was that of Mr Deve Gowda, who thought it fit to effect a meeting with the collective leadership of the NSCN(I/M) outside the country, and well before the ground rules had been formally settled in the nation’s favour. It was only in 1997 when Mr Gujral was the PM, that the ‘ceasefire’ was actually clinched. In the abiding spirit of the ‘Gujral doctrine’, the agreement proved to be largely one-sided and favoured the NSCN(I/M).

suspicion or worse. The fact that this assurance did not find mention in the actual ceasefire agreement added to the feeling of conspiracy. By the time the Centre had made a “U-turn” and reverted to the status quo ante six weeks later, the damage had been done. The region — essentially Manipur — had by then witnessed an orgy of violence and a tragedy of monumental proportions. Seventeen persons lost their lives. The speaker of the Manipur Assembly and two MLAs belonging to the BJP were badly injured. The Manipur State Assembly, the chief minister’s secretariat and a part of the Raj Bhavan were

ravaged by fire. Assembly documents and property worth crores were destroyed. A 66-hour general strike called by students unions’ and women’s organisations was a total success.

**T**alks with the NSCN(I/M) for a ceasefire date back to the final years of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao’s tenure. At the time, these were handled professionally eschewing any kind of publicity. The “original sin”, however, was that of Mr Deve Gowda, who as Prime Minister thought it fit to effect a meeting with the collective leadership of the NSCN(I/M) outside the country, and well before the ground rules had been formally settled in the nation’s favour. It was only in 1997 when Mr Gujral was the Prime Minister, that the “ceasefire” was actually clinched. In the abiding spirit of the “Gujral doctrine”, the agreement proved to be largely one-sided and favoured the NSCN(I/M). The NSCN(I/M) were given an assurance of non-interference from security forces inside Nagaland. The NSCN(I/M) did not in return, however, retract from their original position regarding “sovereignty” for the Nagas or resile from their concept of Naga independence. In the four years of the “ceasefire”, the NSCN(I/M) has come to totally dominate the scene inside Nagaland. Killings have, no doubt, come down, but extortions are now the rule. “Clubs” have been established where the secessionist ideology is skilfully purveyed. All contrary influences have been gradually eliminated. The NSCN(I/M) feels more emboldened today than at any time before to move into newer areas like Arunachal Pradesh.

Central interlocutors in this case have possibly turned a “Nelson’s eye” to the enlarging web of influence and pernicious tactics of the NSCN(I/M) during the ceasefire phase. The NSCN(I/M) has hardly hidden its territorial ambitions, or that its vision of “Nagaland” is many times larger than the existing state of Nagaland. Their “Nagaland” incorporates sizeable areas of Manipur and parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and even the adjoining Naga inhabited areas of Burma. This fact seems to have been glossed over deliberately or otherwise.

At what price “peace” is being secured in Nagaland is thus of critical importance. It is again directly related to the overweening attempts being made by the NSCN(I/M) to extend this kind of “peace” to other so-called “Naga inhabited areas”. Success in dealing with secessionist, insular, exclusivist and militant movements comes with

a price. It also often needs assistance and support from other and diverse elements. In managing the NSCN (both factions of which do not subscribe to a solution within the Indian Constitution) therefore, the support of other ethnic communities, leaders of various tribes in the region and governments in other northeastern states would not only be invaluable, but crucial as well. By ignoring and overlooking this aspect the situation can only get worse and can hardly improve.

Post-1997, negotiations seem to have gone into a kind of wilderness. Choosing an appro-

**T**here are many inherent disadvantages for the Indian side in the extant situation today. Muivah is both a crafty militant and a hard negotiator. ‘Handling’ him needs a degree of understanding of Naga history as also of past and present Naga personalities. A further complication is the involvement of Pakistan’s ISI. Muivah is today a person without a country, and thus ideally placed as far as agencies like the ISI are concerned for being manipulated. Consequently, his capacity for mischief becomes unlimited... He has reportedly endeared himself to the European Parliament by distorting ‘human rights issues’ inside Nagaland

priate negotiator, someone with adequate knowledge, experience, background and acceptability in the Northeast has not received the kind of attention it deserves. Temporary residency as the head of a Central ministry is no substitute for in-depth knowledge, skill, acumen, and knowledge of the type needed. This proved only too true in the negotiations with the Bodos during 1993. Sole negotiators can also fall into a trap of developing a vested interest in the “negotiation process” per se, instead of concentrating on the end result. Too much resilience, fearing a break down of talks, and consistently placat-

ing the collective leadership of the NSCN(I/M) also does little to help India’s cause.

Delhi must seize the initiative in any future negotiation with the NSCN(I/M). There are many illustrious examples in the past of successful negotiations with different secessionist or anti-national groups which can be emulated. The Parthasarathy-Beg Accord (Kashmir Accord) in the mid-Seventies, in which G. Parthasarathy was the principal negotiator on Delhi’s behalf, was a seminal effort. The Mizo Accord which helped to bring Ealdenga into the national mainstream was the outcome of long and skilled negotiations buttressed by “pressures” of various kind. In the late Eighties, the TNV gave up arms and returned to the political mainstream, the result of skilled negotiations, good intelligence back-up and pressure from the security forces. The Assam Accord during the Eighties and the Shillong Accord during the mid-Seventies are other commendable examples. In none of these did India allow the initiative to pass into the hands of the opposing militant factions.

**T**here are, no doubt, many inherent disadvantages for the Indian side in the extant situation today. Muivah is both a crafty militant and a hard negotiator. ‘Handling’ him hence needs a degree of understanding of Naga history and the Naga psyche, as also of past and present Naga personalities. This the current crop of Indian negotiators lack. A further complication is the involvement of Pakistan’s ISI. Muivah is today a person without a country, and thus ideally placed as far as hostile foreign intelligence agencies like the ISI are concerned for being manipulated. Consequently, Muivah’s capacity for mischief becomes unlimited. It is hardly fortuitous that the NSCN(I/M) has been assiduously seeking international mediation. NSCN(I/M) has also been actively campaigning with the United Nations Indigenous Peoples Organisation, for intervening on behalf of the so-called indigenous Naga population, against “Indian oppression”. Muivah has reportedly endeared himself to the European Parliament by grossly distorting “human rights issues” inside Nagaland. There are also enough misguided NGOs in the West, anxious to prop up Muivah and the NSCN(I/M)’s cause for “self determination”.

We must heed the lessons of our past mistakes. Allowing secessionist outfits like the NSCN(I/M) with dubious external linkages to dictate terms even if it be in small matters — can have adverse consequences as far as the course of negotiations is concerned. We also need to make more detailed preparations with much less publicity. Well meaning — and sometimes not so well meaning — personalities are best kept out of the chain, since they more often than not “muddy the waters” by posing as ultra-liberals sacrificing national interest. On the ground, the NSCN(I/M) must be compelled to adhere to the previously agreed upon ground rules of the ceasefire. Details of all NSCN(I/M) camps, and restricting their presence to the designated camps, must be insisted upon. Extortions must be put an end to. The embargo on not assisting other militant groups must be strictly enforced. Only then, with India gaining the upper hand, can meaningful negotiations be carried on.

■ M.K. NARAYANAN has served as chief of the Intelligence Bureau

# Manipur Nagas to run parallel Govt

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Kolkata, August 9

IN A move fraught with the danger of sparking another ethnic conflict in the volatile North-east, the Nagas of Manipur have decided to "snap all ties" with the Manipur Government. According to information received here on Thursday, leaders of all Naga outfits in Manipur who met at Senapati Bazar, 65 km from Imphal, decided on a number of other measures that could incite a backlash from the majority Meitei community in the State.

Representatives of all Naga outfits have decided to vest the apex United Naga Council (UNC) with powers to administer the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur. They have also decided against paying any taxes or surcharge levied by the Manipur Government and have asked all

Government officials, including the district magistrates posted in the four hill districts — Senapati, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Chandel — to move out. The Manipur police and the Manipur Rifles personnel would also be given quit notices. "We have vested the UNC with powers to administer and govern our territory as per the Naga traditional system of village republic until an alternative arrangement is made," a leader of the All Naga Students' Association of Manipur (ANSAM) told *Hindustan Times* from Senapati Bazar.

About 1000 delegates representing 15 different Naga tribes in Manipur, participated in the convention at Senapati bazaar on Wednesday. They also directed all schools and colleges in the hill districts to withdraw affiliation from the Manipur Board of School Education and the

Manipur University. The decisions taken at the convention, they said, would take effect immediately. Leaders of the Ansam, Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM), the Naga Hoho and the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) also participated.

"We have decided to snap all ties with the Meiteis. When Nagas were suffering at the hands of the Indian security forces, not a single voice of solidarity was heard from the Meiteis, who never tire of saying that the Nagas and Meiteis are one. But when the ceasefire was extended beyond Nagaland, giving Nagas here a chance to enjoy peace, the Meiteis went on a burning and looting spree, thus exposing their hatred towards the Nagas. So we have decided to chart our own destiny. We can't remain a part of Manipur," said

C Daipao, an influential leader of a Naga tribe. "There will be no room for any reconciliation with the Meiteis. That time is over," said G Gaingam, a Naga Hoho leader.

But the Meiteis are not biting the bait as yet. "We are a mature people and have not reacted to many provocations by the Nagas in the past. They have to realise the futility of their dream of dividing Manipur. That is not possible. And there has to be reconciliation between all the communities. We have to co-exist," R K Anand, UCM leader that spearheaded the anti-truce-extension protests, said from Imphal. He added that all Meitei organisations have been asked to exercise restraint in the face of such provocations from the Nagas. The question, however, is how long the Meiteis can exercise restraint.

Hope amid the confusion in the Northeast

# Build on Naga restraint

**R**EPORT after report in the metropolitan media only adds to the confusion about the Naga peace process. On one day, we are told — without an official announcement — that the present interlocutor for the talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), K. Padmanabhaiah, is being replaced by former Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma. Another day, it is said that Sangma is not going to take Padmanabhaiah's place as chief negotiator for the government. What the media has failed to note is that some Nagas are opposed to the former not because he is from the Northeast but because he has opposed the extension of the ceasefire to other parts of the Northeast. The visual media has been particularly guilty of hype and inaccuracies.

The NSCN faction negotiating with the government says that the Home Minister's announcement of a ceasefire rollback from areas other than Nagaland is unacceptable because it was not agreed to. Yet, New Delhi persists with its position and the Naga militant leaders, despite their bluster, do not revoke the truce. The negotiations continue with the same interlocutor! This time again the venue is Amsterdam, where Muivah has relocated after his departure from Thailand. The ceasefire continues in Nagaland and so does the peace process outside! Muivah, in an interview to this writer some time ago and in subsequent interviews, emphasised that he is prepared to understand "the difficulties of the Government of India" and indicated that the Nagas cannot ignore the needs of their neighbours. This attitude could pave the way for a real understanding; one cannot help wondering that if the status quo has prevailed, without more than rhetoric flowing — could it have happened unilaterally, despite the opposition by Naga public organisations?

The June 14 agreement in Bangkok, proposing an extension of the ceasefire area led to a backlash by the majority community in Manipur, the

Meitei Vaishavites, angered by decades of bad governance and for being taken for granted by their leaders and New Delhi. Lives could have been saved if there had been adequate consultations with public groups.

Meanwhile, President's Rule has been endorsed by both Houses of Parliament, suggesting that elections to the state legislature can be held in the next six months; one hopes that public organisations, which have been at the forefront of the anti-ceasefire agitation, now put forward some respected candidates who can

the time is for the return of Nagas to the valley; Meitei leaders of all political hues, respected public figures and non-government groups, must go to these temporary shelters and persuade the Nagas to return. There is no place for ethnic cleansing.

Those Naga organisations which have announced a programme of intimidation by urging their brethren to stay on in the hills are doing their community and peace a gross disservice. Their pressure must be rejected by the Nagas and all groups. The previous century has taught us



SANJOY HAZARIKA

**The good news from Nagaland is that Naga elders are speaking out in favour of peace and for the continuance of even a limited 'official' ceasefire**

better protect the interests of the state.

There is another factor in Manipur — having successfully agitated for a rollback of the Bangkok agreement which extended the ceasefire "without territorial limits", the Meitei people of the Imphal Valley must come to terms with the rift between them and the Nagas who dominate parts of the Manipuri hills. Thousands of Nagas have left Imphal and other parts of the valley and gone to temporary relief camps in the hills, where other Nagas also live. Yet, there has not been a single reported instance of an anti-Naga attack or molestation in the Manipur Valley.

This suggests that despite the simmering tensions which have forced people to leave, the Naga-Meitei relationship is not beyond repair. Indeed, in contrast to the violence and near-frenzy that swept Imphal and the Manipur valley for weeks, the Nagas have shown much restraint. This should be acknowledged and praised. But now

that extreme political groups have taken advantage of displaced people living in camps, channelising their discontent into confrontation. The bandhs and road blockades sponsored by the Naga Students Federation and the United Naga Council in Manipur, aimed at choking Manipur's lifelines, should stop. Surely, there cannot be any good reason for such disruptions, which can only force a price rise in goods and further alienation of communities.

Both the Meiteis and Nagas need to rein in their more radical elements and let those favouring people to people dialogues do their work. The bandh and counter-bandhs from both sides need to be stopped as a confidence building measure. The Nagas who have left the Imphal Valley need to return and be assured of protection. Surely, no one wants a repeat of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir of 1990, when tens of thousands of Kashmiri Pandits left Srinagar and their

homes in the Valley and now eke out pathetic existences in camps in different parts of northern India.

The good news from Nagaland is that Naga elders are speaking out in favour of peace and for the continuance of even a limited "official" ceasefire (the informal ceasefire continues in different parts of the Northeast with the I-M), they are proposing to undertake journeys of understanding to their neighbours to help explain their concerns and listen to the views of others. It is important to heed voices such as those of Niketu Iralu and Wati Aier, two men of great integrity and vision, who summed up the opportunities and dangers in a remarkable article in *The Nagaland Post* recently:

"At this particular juncture, as human beings, many of us will be tempted to express our anger and frustration by resorting to violent acts. While this would be fully understandable, we Nagas stand to lose all that we have gained so far, if we are to do what is easiest and most tempting. So far, many in the Indian civil society have watched with disbelief the restraint Nagas have shown, especially by our Naga brothers and sisters in Manipur ... We have followed that false guide (violence) for long enough and we know there is no future in more violence ... We call upon the Government of India to recognise that the time has come to work out an acceptable settlement with the Nagas acting with complete transparency, imagination, seriousness and the needed political will."

These voices must become stronger in the weeks and months to come for an acceptable agreement cannot be hammered out in secret, foreign locations, inside hotel rooms. It will have to be finalised with the Indian political leadership and with open discussions with civil society across India, inside India. For that to happen, Muivah and Swu will have to return, but as peacemakers to the land they left many years ago as insurgents. Otherwise, a great opportunity will be wasted, for time and age are not on their side.

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 2001

## A THOUGHTLESS MOVE

THE UNION GOVERNMENT'S approach to seeking a negotiated settlement with the rebel outfits in Nagaland seem to be marked by such carelessness that it defies all logic. If the announcement on June 14, 2001, extending the four-year-old ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(I-M) and enlarging its scope to all Naga-inhabited areas outside Nagaland had led to the setting of Imphal (and other parts of Manipur) on fire, the loud thinking by the Union Home Ministry now on appointing the Nationalist Congress Party leader and former Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. P. A. Sangma, as the chief negotiator has once again lit the fire. Even if this was only an idea in the minds of the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and his officials, the damage seems to have been done. There are statements on behalf of the two NSCN(I-M) leaders — Mr. Thiuangaleng Muivah and Mr. Issac Chisi Swu — against the idea of having to negotiate with a political leader. And the negotiations with the NSCN(I-M), which are indeed the very basis for any hope of a solution to the crisis in Nagaland, now seem to be uncertain.

That those involved with the issue in the Union Home Ministry did not care even to take into account a guiding principle that the NSCN (I-M) claims to have laid down even before entering the negotiations (four years ago on the basis of an initiative at that time by Mr. Swaraj Kaushal who acted as the Centre's emissary with the rebel outfit) — that it will not negotiate with anyone from among the political class — is indeed baffling. And the blame for such a casual and reckless approach cannot rest with the officials in the Union Home Ministry alone. After all, the top leaders of the ruling NDA, including the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had been taking part in the discussion on the crisis in Nagaland in recent times. And it is only fair to expect them to take the issue with a lot more seriousness than is in evidence now. If it is true

that the NSCN(I-M) leaders had laid down the exclusion of members of the political class from the negotiations, it was important that Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani ensured that any such thinking to nominate Mr. Sangma as chief negotiator was discouraged at the very movement it was broached. Instead, they let it be known through the media that Mr. Sangma was likely to be the negotiator with the NSCN(I-M) on behalf of the Centre. This was reported even while Mr. Padmanabiah was in Amsterdam talking to Mr. Muivah, casting doubts over the credibility of the ongoing negotiations.

There are larger concerns as well. It is not clear even now as to what exactly is the position of the NSCN(I-M) on the issue of a "greater Nagaland." That this demand of the NSCN groups is not one that seeks a redrawing of the political map in the Northeastern region needs to be borne in mind. The demand for a "greater Nagaland" is one that seeks a separate nation outside India. Even if it be true that the NSCN(I-M) as such has refrained from coming out explicitly in recent times with the demand for "greater Nagaland", the fact is that Mr. Muivah has gone on record several times in the past few weeks that he remains committed to the idea. And yet, those at the helm in the Home Ministry have refused to speak categorically against the idea even while holding out the assurance that the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(I-M) will in no way endanger the territorial integrity of any of the States in the region. Concern over the greater Nagaland demand and the fact that there is yet another faction of the NSCN — the Kaplang faction — is only natural particularly in the context of the manner in which the Union Government has been dealing with the crisis. It is time the Nagaland issues and indeed the whole of the Northeast was attended to with a greater degree of seriousness at the highest levels.

THE

# Eight jawans killed in Bodo revenge blast

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, Aug. 5: The National Democratic Front of Boroland today exploded an improvised explosive device, killing eight CRPF personnel and two civilians near Bijni in Bongaigaon district.

A CRPF convoy of the first battalion was on its way to Bijni from Amguri when the powerful devise went off at 12.15 pm at a place between Amguri and Borobazar, about 35 km off Bijni, inspector-general of police B.P. Rao said.

This is the second major strike in a week by the underground outfit fighting for a "sovereign Bodoland".

On July 31, the NDFB had killed six Bhutanese nationals by blasting a mini-truck in Kokrajhar district. Eight Bhutanese were also injured in the attack.

Sources said today's attack could be in retaliation against the gunning down of three NDFB rebels in two separate incidents yesterday in Nalbari and Kokrajhar districts.

Two of them were killed at

village Swargapuri under Tamulpur police station in Nalbari district.

Two rifles of AK series were recovered from the possession of the slain militants.

The other NDFB rebel was killed at Jharbari village under Gossaigaon police station of Kokrajhar district.

The first of the two trucks (number ASG 1383) of the convoy took the full impact of the blast and was completely damaged.

All the eight CRPF men, along with the civilian driver and the handyman, were killed on the spot.

Two other CRPF men were seriously injured. The following truck, however, escaped the explosion.

According to preliminary investigation, the devise was exploded with the help of a 200-metre flexible wire. A six-volt battery was also recovered from near the blast site.

The deceased were identified as inspector M.C. Sharma, havildar D.N. Sonowak, constables Kailash Yadav, Sunit Kumar, Bhagwan Singh,

Ramji Mishra, Dharam Pal, Jagadish Sharma, driver Lal Mian and handyman Rahim Ali.

The injured — Rajendra Prasad Singh and Mani Ram — have been shifted to the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital.

Senior police officials have rushed to the spot and launched combing operations.

The attack on Bhutanese nationals on July 31 is being perceived as the NDFB's way of sounding a warning to the Bhutan government.

Bhutan has asked both the Ulfa and the NDFB to leave that country by December. Though the Ulfa has agreed to shift four of its nine camps by December, the NDFB has not yet given any commitment.

A red alert has been sounded throughout the state as 12 underground outfits, including the NDFB, have called for a boycott of Independence Day.

Security forces apprehend more violence in the run-up to the August 15 celebrations.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 6 AUG 2011



# North-east CMs to discuss truce withdrawal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, Aug. 4. - The chief ministers of the North-eastern states will meet in Shillong on 9 August to review the situation arising out of the Centre's decision on withdrawing ceasefire provisions from areas outside Nagaland. The meeting will also discuss measures for fighting insurgency in the region more effectively.

The chief ministers will attend the meeting of the North-eastern council in Shillong the next day.

Tripura chief minister Mr Manik Sarkar said here that he was unhappy with the council's performance. He said, Tripura was yet to get the allocation approved by the council for states in the region during the last financial year. The council provides about Rs 350 to 400 crores a year on an average to all the North-eastern states.

The North-eastern chief ministers forum had deman-

## CPM LEADER KILLED

AGARTALA, Aug. 4. - Senior CPI-M tribal leader and member of the party's divisional committee, Sarbajoy Reang, was shot dead by NLFT insurgents at Gachirampara in Kanchanpur subdivision of north Tripura last night. He had been kidnapped earlier by rebels from his house. - SNS

ded for increasing the council's allocation to the states to at least Rs 1,000 crore a year, Mr Sarkar said. The forum had approached the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, to convene a meeting of the region's chief ministers to assess the progress of work under the projects earlier announced by him for the development of backward North-eastern areas. "We also wanted Mr LK Advani's presence in the meeting", he said.

Mr Sarkar said, the Centre was now giving more attention to the

the North-east's problems in view of escalating insurgency. "But the Centre's approach must be positive", he said.

The chief minister said, a bill seeking reorganisation of the North-eastern council was now under the Parliament's consideration. The North-eastern chief ministers had earlier wanted the Centre to appoint either the Union home minister or the deputy chairman of the planning commission as the chairman of the council, he said.

Regarding repatriation of the Reang evacuees from Mizoram, Mr Sarkar said, he had recently discussed the problem with Mr Advani. "Mr Advani had expressed his dissatisfaction over the inaction of the Mizoram authorities in taking back the Reang refugees." He said, both the Centre and the state government had approached the Mizoram government repeatedly to take back the Reang evacuees, "but nothing has been done yet."

# Naga Youth Front blocks highways

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

IMPHAL, Aug. 4. - The Naga Youth Front today began an indefinite blockade on NH-39 and NH-53 to protest against the Centre's decision to limit the ceasefire to Nagaland only.

Blockades started from 28 July, the day after Mr LK Advani announced that the ceasefire would be limited within Nagaland. Since then no vehicles were plying on these two highways.

On the other hand, Manipur International Youth Centre has appreciated the efforts made by the Centre and NSCN (IM) during the past four years for a just, fair and lasting political solution regarding the latter's demand for sovereignty. The MIYC has urged the Centre to intervene immediately and stop "strangulation" of the lifelines of Manipur, NH-39 and NH-53, perpetrated by the frontal organisation of NSCN (IM) for the past one week.

# After exodus, Nagas seek world attention

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Imphal, August 4

AFTER HAVING stage-managed the exodus of thousands of Nagas from the Imphal Valley, the Naga leadership is now on a mission to beam their plight to the rest of the world.

A representative of the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) has complained to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP) about this "exodus".

The NPMHR representative told the 19th session of the UNWGIP at Geneva last week that "thousands of Nagas have been forced to leave their homes in Imphal Valley" since the violence that rocked this capital town on June 18.

He also told the UNWGIP, which is under the aegis of the

United Nations Commission on Human Rights, that the State's security forces "had done nothing to prevent the mob terror campaign against our people".

As has been reported in this newspaper earlier, the "exodus" was engineered to show to the world how the Nagas were being oppressed in Manipur and could, therefore, never coexist with the Meiteis. This would, obviously, strengthen the Nagas' demand for a "greater Nagaland" State comprising the hill districts of Manipur.

The Nagas have so far ignored calls by the Meitei leaders to return to the Valley. But, not a single case of attack on the Naga residents of Imphal Valley was reported during the course of the 42-day agitation and till date.

"There have been no attacks on the Nagas. No Naga has ever complained of any form of

harassment by the Meiteis to the police or security forces. Some Naga leaders have alleged that anti-Naga slogans were shouted and posters put up. We carried out investigations and have found such complaints to be baseless," a top police officer told *Hindustan Times*.

"Nothing was ever done against the Nagas. We ensured they were never harmed in any manner. Our agitation was not against them, but the Union Government. So what is the justification for the Nagas fleeing the Valley? It's part of a sinister gameplan. They say slogans were raised against them. Has anyone ever left his home and hearth just because of such slogans?" thundered a leader of the United Council, Manipur (UCM), the umbrella organisation of the bodies that led the stir. The NPMHR representative,

in his submission, contended that the Nagas "have always tried to bring an understanding with the Meiteis through dialogue and community sharing".

Regretting that the Meiteis "have not been coming forward", he attributed this to "the tradition of Hindu social segregation".

The statement gives a communal hue to the Meitei-Naga divide. The Nagas openly claim a "Christian homeland" while the Meiteis are mostly Vaishnavites. Many Naga leaders have been alleging that the Nagas are being "oppressed" by the Meiteis since they (the Nagas) are Christians.

The claims ring hollow given the actions of the Naga leaders, who have not been responding to repeated calls by the UCM leaders to sit for a dialogue for reconciliation.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 AUG 1981

INTERVIEW ASSAM'S CM TARUN GOGOI ON THE NAGA CEASEFIRE

# 'Centre is very casual in its approach to N-E'

ASSAM Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, who has completed 11 weeks in office, is a seasoned politician. He has been in politics since the early 1970s, when Dev Kanta Barooah was at the helm of the Congress in the state. A six-time Lok Sabha member, Gogoi is of the opinion that the failure of the Centre to understand the ground realities of the North-east had led to the recent fiasco over the ceasefire with the NSCN(IM). He spoke at length to SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHEE last week on the fallout of the ceasefire extension. Excerpts:

I am happy that a leader of Sangma's stature has been given the responsibility. He is a veteran and experienced politician who knows all the issues pertaining to the North-east inside out. In fact, he is one of the ablest leaders from the region.

■ You were earlier leading the move to remove K. Padmanabhaiah from the post of Interlocutor in the Naga peace talks.

Yes, I was the first to demand his removal. But I do not have anything personal against him. After all, he was the country's home secretary. What I objected to was that he was not briefed properly and that whatever decision he took on behalf of the Government of India had led to lot of chaos and unnecessary loss of lives and property.

■ Then, do you blame the Centre?

Yes, who else? The Centre did not take into account the pros and cons of a territorial extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN(IM) to whole of the region. He was given a go-ahead, with the Centre not realising what repercussions it would have on the people of the region. And we have already seen what happened in Manipur. Luckily, the fire



did not spread to Assam. But had it done, it would have also turned uncontrollable.

■ Why do you feel the Centre does not understand the ground realities of the North-east?

It is very clear from the way they have been handling so many issues of the region. The Centre is very casual in its approach towards the North-east. It did not heed the warning that we in As-

sam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh gave. Even after the reactions began in Manipur, with the setting on fire of the state Assembly building, the Centre simply remained busy with other things. This is very unfortunate. Delhi could have reacted immediately after the first few days, when the situation turned volatile.

■ Do you also hold the Centre responsible for the heavy loss of life and property in Manipur?

Who else? A number of persons, including a woman, lost life in the police firing in Imphal as the people protested against the ceasefire extension. The Assembly building was set afire. MLAs and other political leaders were attacked. And the Centre remained a silent spectator. The Centre is solely responsible for all this.

■ But the Centre says it had earlier consulted Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and other chief ministers of the region.

But all of them (Mahanta and others) have denied that they had agreed to such a proposal. I think only Home Minister (L.K.) Advani, former chief ministers Mahanta and Nipamachha Singh know what they discussed and

agreed to.

■ Nagaland has been illegally occupying a lot of Assam territory for several decades. What do you have to say about that?

It is a fact that a considerable portion of Assam's land, especially in Golaghat district, is under the occupation of Nagaland. Several committees and commissions have failed to resolve the issue. The matter is pending in the Supreme Court for several years. How can we allow more of our land to be claimed by others when so much area is still under Nagaland's occupation?

■ Do you think that the Centre has been falling on all fronts and that the failure on the Naga front too is one of them?

Yes, exactly. The NDA Government has been stumbling on all major issues. Look at the talks with the Pakistani President. Then, look at how the Prime Minister suddenly decides to quit, and then goes back on his word the very next day. These are not good signs. It is not expected of Prime Minister Vajpayee to be so casual on serious issues.

INDIAN EXPRESS  
INDIAN EXPRESS  
INDIAN EXPRESS

# N-E gets a familiar face to talk peace

■ Former LS speaker Sangma is Centre's choice of chief negotiator with NSCN (I-M) and militant outfits

**AJAY SURI**  
NEW DELHI, AUG 2

THE NDA Government has decided to appoint senior NCP leader P.A. Sangma as the chief negotiator for talks with the NSCN(I-M).

Before going ahead with the move which has the backing of most of the chief ministers of the North-East states, Union Home Minister L.K. Advani held a brief discussion with the Prime Minister's emissary for the Naga talks, K. Padmanabhaiah, on Wednesday afternoon.

With Sangma at the helm of the affairs,

Padmanabhaiah's position as the emissary is still not clear although sources said he would leave for Amsterdam later this week for another round of de-liberations with NSCN(I-M) leaders.

At this stage, it seems that New Delhi will be utilising the services of both Sangma and Padmanabhaiah.

According to North Block observers, Sangma's position would be that of K.C. Pant, who is currently holding political negotiations with various factions in Jammu



& Kashmir. In any case, say sources, Sangma with a wealth of experience in North-East affairs, would be an ideal man to pursue "political aspects" of the ceasefire as it involves every politician of the North-east.

Till late in the evening, senior Home Ministry officials were tight-lipped about the developments.

It's, however, learnt that the Government has already talked things out with Sangma and obtained his okay for the job.

Padmanabhaiah, who replaced Swaraj Kaushal as the emissary two years ago, was of late facing a barrage of criticism — mostly by a group of North-East chief ministers — for going ahead with the controversial, and now withdrawn, June 14 agreement with the NSCN which brought the entire North-East in the ambit of ceasefire.

Meanwhile, the fresh ceasefire agreement between New Delhi and NSCN came into force, amidst reports that the outfit is not too happy with the Government's move to curtail the ceasefire to Nagaland alone.

## ENTER SANGMA

But Delhi must have a clear cut policy

THE Centre's decision to involve former Lok Sabha speaker PA Sangma as "chief negotiator for the North-east" is belated realisation of the need for a senior politician to oversee the region's problems. K Padmanabiah, who will continue as the Prime Minister's "emissary", cannot be blamed for the 14 June Bangkok agreement with the NSCN-IM to extend the ceasefire beyond Nagaland and the subsequent Amsterdam meeting rescinding it, because whatever decisions he made were influenced by inputs from the home ministry. The North-east's problems need careful handling and Delhi as yet has no clear cut policy. Last year, while one joint secretary said there had to be preconditions for talks, his colleague differed saying these had to be within the Constitution.

Sangma is the only national leader from the region with vast experience. But his task is daunting because the Nagaland situation has changed drastically since the September 1964 ceasefire with the Naga National Council being split into three factions, each equally assertive. Being a Nationalist Congress Party leader, Sangma is unlikely to devote full time suggesting further delay in finding a solution. Naga rebel leaders may help expedite matters if they negotiate on home turf. They did visit Dimapur two years ago, so what is preventing them from doing so again? The only one disappointed at Sangma's coming into the picture is Nagaland chief minister SC Jamir who, perhaps anticipating the appointment, remarked early this week that the Centre's new negotiator should not be from the North-east as he might have "certain compulsions" that could be a setback to peace efforts. He is entitled to his view, particularly as he is a more senior and seasoned politician.

THE STATESMAN

# Naga 'exodus' a ploy by NSCN(I-M)

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Imphal, August 2

THE 'EXODUS' of Naga residents from Imphal Valley is, according to observers here, a stage-managed one. In fact, it could well have been engineered to further the cause of the NSCN(I-M).

Naga leaders say a majority of the 60,000-odd Naga residents of Imphal Valley have fled to the safety of the hills during the course of the anti-truce extension agitation.

"Many were openly asked to quit. Others were insulted and everyone faced covert pressure to leave the Valley," PA Thekho, Convenor of the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), said. He said that during the 42-day agitation, Naga houses were attacked, anti-Naga slogans raised and "objectionable" posters were put up.

Facts, however, do not bear this out. Convenor of the United Council Manipur (UCM), RK Anand, said: "There has been absolutely no pressure on them to leave. A few stray slogans may have been raised, but that was no cause for them to go away."

Those who stayed back privately admit this as do the thousands of non-Meitei residents of Imphal. "There has never been any pressure on us from the Meiteis to leave. There was pressure from other quarters," said an old Naga woman. She was reluctant to name the "other quarters".

But the statement issued by the NSCN's Khaplang faction let the cat out of the bag yesterday. It said that the NSCN(I-M) had ordered this 'exodus' to further its own agenda. This agenda is not hard to fathom.

"By ordering this 'exodus', the NSCN(I-M) wanted to show to the world that Nagas cannot co-exist with the Meiteis. This would definitely strengthen the argument for forming a 'greater Nagaland' large tracts of land from Manipur," said a senior police officer.

"The NSCN(I-M) has played a very dangerous game by ordering the Nagas to leave the Valley. Many of the 'refugees' have been put up in relief camps and some Naga organisations known to have links with the NSCN(I-M) have started a media campaign on this.

They have been taking media-persons to the camps, trying to portray to the world the sufferings of the Nagas and the oppression they are facing. This is a well-calculated gameplan based on Goebbels' infamous technique that a lie repeated a hundred times becomes the truth," said a top police officer.

Naga leaders at an information centre for displaced persons in Senapati Bazar said there were 7,590 people in 21 relief camps there.

They also claimed that the flow of people from the Valley continues unabated and on Wednesday, 51 people had sought refuge there. An unwillingness matched only by the eagerness to take this correspondent on a conducted tour of the overcrowded indoor stadium at Senapati Bazar that forms the main relief camp.

The UCM leaders are worried. "We are formulating a strategy to counter this false propaganda war. We are also issuing a call to the Nagas to come back to the Valley. We can guarantee their safety and security," said UCM leader Dr Dhanabir Laishram.



The 72-hour bandh in Manipur on Thursday did not affect Pallel in Chandel district.

## Street march in Imphal to demand return of Nagas

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, August 2

HUNDREDS OF people belonging to different communities took to the streets of Imphal today with a different demand. The participants in the march demanded that the Nagas who had fled the State return to their homes and official quarters in the Manipur valley soon, particularly in Imphal.

The marchers passed through Naga-inhabited areas including New Chekkon where the Nagas are living in quarters and rented houses. The march assumes significance in the backdrop of the large-scale agitations carried out by the pro-ceasefire extension groups. Officially, around 5,000

### 15 MANIPUR MLAS RETURN

FIFTEEN MANIPUR MLAs, who had left for Delhi after widespread violence following the extension of the Naga ceasefire, returned home today after more than a month, official sources said. Speaker Sapam Dhananjay, former Food and Civil Supplies Minister H Bidur, former Cooperation Minister Kh Amutombi Singh and some BJP MLAs were among those who returned.

PTI, Imphal

Nagas have fled the Manipur valley and are taking shelter in dif-

ferent makeshift arrangements in the hills of the State and in Nagaland.

**Bandh peaceful:** The 72-hour bandh called by the United Naga Council and Naga Youth Front in the four hill districts of Manipur to protest the ceasefire review passed off peacefully today at 6 pm. No major incident has been reported so far. The bandh was called in the four hill districts of Manipur — Senapati, Chandel, Ukhrul and Tamenglong.

The 66-hour bandh call on the National Highways 39 and 53 will conclude tomorrow at 6 pm. The MSF has called the bandh to protest against the Centre's divide and rule policy towards the Nagas and Meiteis.

# Talks with NSCN(I-M) to continue

By Vinay Kumar

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 1.** After terminating the geographical extension of the Naga ceasefire agreement in the wake of violent protests in Manipur, the Centre is stepping up efforts to keep the NSCN (I-M) leadership engaged in a dialogue. Notwithstanding contradictory statements by the NSCN (I-M) over the past few days, the extension of the ceasefire for another year came into effect today.

It is learnt that the Centre's emissary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, and the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Mr. K. P. Singh, have been asked to visit Amsterdam once again for another meeting with the NSCN (I-M) leadership.

Highly-placed Government sources said the two would leave for Amsterdam on August 4 to meet the NSCN (I-M) chairman, Mr. Isaac Chisi Swu, and general secretary, Mr. T. Muivah. It will be Mr. Padmanabhaiah's third meeting with the NSCN (I-M) leadership over the past three months.

The Government was said to be keen on continuing the dialogue with the NSCN (I-M) and not allow the "temporary setback" to snowball into a major issue. Sources indicated that the statements of NSCN (I-M) leaders in Nagaland and their angry reaction to the with-

drawal of the ceasefire extension beyond the State was meant for their domestic constituency. Nagaland observers feel the extension of the ceasefire had acted as a "unifying factor" among various factions, NGOs and prominent social bodies in Nagaland but cautioned the Government to tread cautiously lest tension rose to a feverish level in the State.

On June 14, after talks with the NSCN (I-M) in Bangkok, the Centre announced extension of the four-year-old ceasefire agreement for one more year "without territorial limits".

Failing to read the ground situation in Assam and Manipur, the Centre was caught off guard as protests and violent incidents rocked Manipur; and even the MPs and MLAs were up in arms against the move, camping in the capital and threatening to resign en masse if the extended ambit of the truce was not withdrawn by July 31. Bowing to pressure, the Centre last week announced deletion of the three contentious words "without territorial limits". Though the announcement was welcomed in Manipur, it has created tension in Nagaland.

The Naga ceasefire, extended for the sixth consecutive time, "is on", according to the Home Ministry spokesman. Ever since the extension of the ceasefire beyond Nagaland was withdrawn, the NSCN(I-M) has claimed that the June 14 agreement was "twisted" by the

Centre. However, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, had stated in the Lok Sabha that the extension had been terminated after consulting the NSCN (I-M).

The Home Ministry spokesman said the Government and the NSCN (I-M) had expressed a desire to meet as frequently as possible to arrive at a mutually acceptable and satisfactory solution to the Naga issue. The Ceasefire Monitoring Group, comprising representatives of the Government, security forces and the NSCN(I-M), would ensure that the truce ground rules modified in January this year were followed in letter and spirit.

Though some northeast Chief Ministers were said to favour bringing in a politician for negotiating the Naga issue, sources said, the Government was not inclined to change the interlocutor midway and Mr. Padmanabhaiah would continue as the negotiator.

Meanwhile, the Congress spokesman, Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, has demanded clarification from the Home Minister whether the consent of NSCN(I-M) was taken before extension of the ceasefire was terminated. The situation in the northeast was turning from bad to worse, he said and alleged that the Government had failed to control it.

456 **SAVING TRUCE** 118  
Both Delhi and NSCN-IM must come clean

**T**HE hope of normalcy returning to Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur recedes with NSCN leaders and Union Home Ministry making contradictory claims. Last Friday LK Advani announced that the ceasefire would be limited to Nagaland, asserting that the decision was taken after NSCN-IM general secretary Th Muivah agreed to delete "without territorial limits" incorporated in the 14 June Bangkok agreement. But the very next day the NSCN-IM in a statement said the "Government of India has gone far beyond the understanding reached between the two parties on 24 July at Amsterdam". What transpired between Muivah and Union home secretary K Padmanabhiiah is not clear but in the past secret understandings have hurt both Naga and Meitei sentiments. The July 1997 ceasefire accord made no mention of the areas to be covered and within days of the truce coming into effect the NSCN leaders claimed it covered all contiguous Naga inhabited areas of three states. It is time both Delhi and NSCN-IM cleared the cobwebs once and for all.

It would appear that the very continuance of the four-year ceasefire is in danger. The NSCN-IM claims the truce concerns itself and the Centre, implying that it is free to deal with opponents. On the face of it, the truce has been a farce from day one. It may have silenced the guns but it has heightened the psychological warfare, what with the boom in extortion and intimidation. Now the crisis has deepened. The peace process is bound to be further complicated once the Centre starts a dialogue with the NSCN-Khaplang and the "Federal Government of Nagaland". Will the Nagas accept the piecemeal agreement with the NSCN-IM? Nothing positive can emerge unless all groups are involved. Here lies the crux. Instead of talking about the ceasefire in the context of the "Greater Nagaland" concept, Naga leaders would do well to look inward and reconcile tribal differences.

THE STATESMAN



# New lease of life for old Naga truce

## FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, July 31: Nagaland will step into another 12-month phase of ceasefire from tomorrow with no change in the basic character of the truce that came about between the NSCN (I-M) and Delhi four years ago.

As of now, there are no signs of the ceasefire agreement falling through though the post-truce renewal period this time weathered a storm because of the fiery opposition to its "limitless" nature.

The reversal of the Bangkok declaration of July 14, which made the ceasefire "limitless", prompted a rebuff from the NSCN (I-M), leading to speculation that

the outfit may pull out of the four-year-long truce.

Even the NSCN "rebuke", contained in a statement from Amsterdam, carried hints that the outfit's leaders were keen on carrying on with the negotiations which have reached a crucial phase.

A home ministry official said for the talks to continue, the ceasefire must remain in force. "Now that the political talks are about to begin, the Naga leaders can ill afford to dash the hopes of the Naga people who see the ceasefire as the beginning of the end of the over 50-year-old turmoil in the state," the official added.

The Centre's emissary to the Naga peace talks, K. Padmanabha-

iah, who has interacted with the NSCN leadership on many occasions, said from Delhi he did not see any possibility of a breakdown of the peace process.

Punthing Shimrang, convener of the NSCN's ceasefire monitoring cell, also skirted a question on whether the outfit will pull out of the agreement.

He, however, said the Centre's claims of consulting the Naga leaders before revoking the ceasefire extension were "bogus" and that "a ceasefire within the so-called state of Nagaland has no meaning". But Padmanabhaiah claimed that Delhi had reached an "understanding" with the Naga leaders on revoking the clause.

THE TELEGRAPH

AUG 22.

# WHY THE PM IS SAYING WHAT HE IS SAYING



19-1 118

**Since I am the Prime Minister, I am responsible. I feel I have not been able to manage and discipline the NDA. I have grown old. People also say I am unwell and, therefore, I should retire. I myself have decided to step down**

**A.B. Vajpayee**

## NAGA CEASEFIRE



The first ominous smoke signal. Vajpayee was abroad when the truce was extended. But the resultant violence and somersault charred the reputation of the Vajpayee government

## HEALTH CLOUD



The Prime Minister underwent the second knee surgery, bringing back into sharp focus the status of his health. Vajpayee, too, referred to his health on Tuesday

## BROKEN TRUST



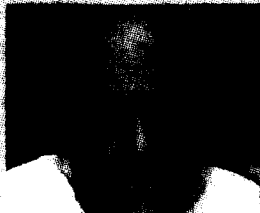
The UTI bombshell rocked a perceived BJP pillar—the middle class. Yashwantrao Sinha's response and a dud firm's link with Lucknow; Vajpayee's seat, did not help

## STAIN SUMMIT



Vajpayee played by the rules at Agra. But Musharraf scored PR points with his unorthodox tactics. Stray rumours in the BJP broke through the veneer, ranking Vajpayee

## PARTY PUNCH



New BJP president Janta Krishnamurthy struck when the steel was molten. The party frowned on the re-entry of the PMK into the NDA and warned against courting Trinamool

## NIRUPAM'S NAIL



Ally Shiv Sena's member dealt a body blow, springing allegations of calls being made from the PM's residence that were of little

A meeting of the NDA has cumulative result of what was jasthan chief minister, Bhairon Minister's prerogative. Reporting this mo  
Singh Shekhawat — a Vaipavee

# Ceasefire turmoil throws up 'clean' future leaders

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 31

FROM THE ashes of the old, a new order will emerge. A new order marked by honesty, justice and fair play.

This is what the people of this State say whenever they pass by the charred remains of what was till June 18 morning the Manipur Legislative Assembly.

The torching of the Assembly by frenzied protestors that sultry summer noon was an act of outrage and anger against those who played petty games and bartered away the State's interests inside that building. And, so hopes the man on the street here, none of them (the present crop of politicians) would be able to occupy a seat in a new legislature. "I am sure an overwhelming majority, if not all, of our politicians will not win the next elections. They have been exposed for the corrupt, selfish and petty people that they are," Prof Dhanabir Laishram, convener of the all-powerful United Council, Manipur (UCM) told *Hindustan Times*.

"We'll see all new faces in the next Legislative Assembly. People have lost all faith in these politicians and will never elect them again to carry on with their loot and plunder of the State exchequer, the frequent defections and all sorts of illegal and immoral activities," Laishram, a prominent academician, added.

The leaders of the UCM — the umbrella body of the organisations which launched the anti-truce extension protests on June 16 — feel that the fresh set of politicians will be radically different from their predecessors.

"They'll have to be honest, just and would have to keep the interests of Manipur uppermost in their minds. Or they'll meet the same fate as their predecessors, who had to run away from their own State," said R K Anand, a

prominent lawyer and spokesperson for the UCM.

But what the UCM leaders would not admit on record is that a few of them would like to test their fortunes at the hustings. "Yes, there are many who would like to continue to guide the people of Manipur. There's nothing wrong with that. They'd be doing so in their individual capacities," said a leader of the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (Amuco), a major constituent of the UCM.

"The agitation (against the ceasefire extension) has changed the political landscape of Manipur. In fact, it has marked a turning point in Manipur's politics. The leaders of the various organisations under the UCM have provided mature and democratic leadership to the masses. They have been able to capture the people's imagination since they are untarnished. The goodwill that they enjoy can easily translate into votes," said a senior State Government official.

No wonder the UCM wants fresh elections very soon. "It'll naturally be in the UCM's interests, and of course even the interests of the Manipuris," said the official.

The UCM wants things to stabilise before it demands fresh polls. "No matter how effective the administration is under the Governor, the people want a democratic set-up," said Anand.

The Centre, however, does not seem to be in any hurry. It would, naturally, go by the recommendations of the State units of the BJP and Samata Party. And the State units of these NDA partners would definitely not like to commit political suicide by okaying elections at which they stand the prospect of being wiped out.

And this is where fresh trouble could start — with the UCM demanding early polls and the political parties trying to covertly resist this demand.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ALL 23

# Centre to decide on Manipur Assembly dissolution soon

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 30 JULY

WITH PARLIAMENT putting its seal of approval on the proclamation imposing President's rule in Manipur, decks have finally been cleared for the dissolution of the year-and-five-months old state Assembly.

While seeking the Lok Sabha's endorsement to the Presidential proclamation, home minister L.K. Advani, however, made it clear that the Centre will take some time before deciding when to dissolve the Assembly. "We do not want to form an alternative government in the state even though we have the numbers. But you should grant us the permission to decide the timing for dissolving the house. We'd like to use the interregnum to restore normalcy in the state," he said in his reply to the statutory resolution.

While declaring that the Centre had taken the NSCN (I-M) into confidence before making the "U-turn," he announced that the government was willing to grant immunity to the leaders of the underground organisation so as to persuade them to hold peace talks in India, and not in Bangkok or any other place abroad. "We hope this comes true some day," he quipped.

The Union home minister told the Lok Sabha that the Centre wanted the peace process to continue. "We'd like to hold such talks not just with the NSCN (I-M), but also with the other militant outfits operating in the North-East, including the Ulfa. It, in fact, applies to all those persons who have taken up the path of militancy," Mr Advani said.

Responding to the criticism aired by some opposition MPs, the home minister attributed the delay in revoking the Centre's earlier decision to extend the territorial limit of the ceasefire to the talks with the NSCN (I-M) at Amsterdam.

He also reiterated that the proposal to extend the scope of the ceasefire had been discussed with the chief ministers of the north-eastern states in two separate meetings convened by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

## Nagas go from peace march to hard line

Our Correspondent  
GUWAHATI 30 JULY

CUTTING ACROSS all geographical boundaries, Nagas from all walks of life — including NSCN(IM), student organisations, women's bodies and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) — have suddenly taken a tougher stand after the Union government on July 27 decided to exclude the words, "without territorial limits", from the agreement signed with the NSCN(IM) in Bangkok on June 14.

Since the reaction and stand of the NSCN(IM) collective leadership was not available to the Naga organisations, in the first 24 hours, they reacted cautiously. They had merely condemned the decision to review the agreement signed by the Government of India.

As soon as the NSCN(IM) came out with its statement — which not only refused to accept the changes but also stated that the information fed to the media by the home ministry, that an understanding has been reached with NSCN(IM) in Amsterdam before the change, was misleading and factually incorrect — these organisations also changed its tone, sharply criticising the Union government for deleting the three words.

The NSCN(IM), in its statement issued from Okeng on July 28, said: "In the talks in Amsterdam dated July 23-24, nothing has been finalised on the proposal raised from the Indian side for reviewing the June 14 Bangkok Agreement."

It also said: "And so there is practically no point on the part of the Indian government to make an announcement beyond this understanding. Therefore, any announcement or declaration or statement given from the Indian home ministry or in any mass media are unfounded and so they

are in no sense acceptable to the Nagas."

This statement prompted a Naga organisation to accuse the government of backtracking. It stated: "In line with this admission, the present peace talks is 'unconditional' and is being held at the prime ministerial level in a third (foreign) country. But now, as India has gone back on all its commitments to resolve the problem, will the UN International Court of Justice entertain a Naga plea for justice?"

The Naga Students Federation, an apex organisation of all the Naga students, said in a statement: "It is quite lamentable that India, as a nation with considerable respect in the eyes of the world, would backtrack on its commitment. And that, it would rather listen to the voice

of violence than logic and reason."

NSF president Vipopal Kintso, in the signed statement, said: "If India chooses to ignore the plea of the Nagas, spoken with reason and logic, and only take cognisance of violence, we shall also be constrained to change our language."

On the other hand, the Nagas in Manipur immediately declared an economic blockade on the two vital highways i.e. NH53, which links Manipur with Silchar passing through Naga inhabited Tamenglong district for 48 hours from July 28-30 and for 36 hours on NH39, which links Manipur with Nagaland passing through Naga-inhabited Senapati district of the state.

The Dimapur Naga Students Union, again reacting late, called for a bandh in Dimapur and closed all business establishments on July 28 after they had organised a long peace march earlier, asking for retaining the Bangkok Agreement.

**GOING GETS TOUGH**

The Economic Times

30 JUL 2001

## 1110 Northeast See-saw 2/17

The history of New Delhi's relationship with that remote extremity of the Indian Union called the northeast has seldom been a smooth one. The developments of the last month and a half illustrate the reasons why this will remain the case for the foreseeable future, notwithstanding much complacent talk among analysts about the growing federalisation of the Indian polity. The time is undoubtedly past when Delhi as the unquestioned centre of the imperium could lord it over a vast heterogeneous empire, but not everyone will be convinced about the inevitability of the sobering-down process. Consider the following sequence of events. On June 14 last, the home ministry announced an extension of the existing ceasefire agreement with the NSCN (Isak-Muivah). Under the revised terms, the ceasefire was to be observed not just in Nagaland but in Naga-inhabited areas of bordering states such as Manipur, Assam and Arunachal. No sooner had the agreement been announced than the affected states, especially Manipur, erupted in outraged protests. The Centre's unexpected move was widely apprehended to be a prelude to the creation of a greater Nagaland. From Guwahati to Imphal to Kohima, there was not one political figure of any standing, including the governor of president-ruled Manipur, who had a kind word to say about the extension. However, the home ministry justified its actions as being the outcome of widespread political consultation. Notwithstanding public rhetoric in the affected states, ran the North Block refrain, everyone had been taken into confidence. No matter that this was contradicted by no less a person than the Manipur governor. In what followed, the onus of the Centre's northeast policy — with former defence minister and NDA convener George Fernandes openly backing the Manipuri cause against his own government's stated position — shifted from the home ministry to the PMO. Under pressure from a key ally, the prime minister assured Manipuri leaders that the extension would be reviewed in its entirety.

The result of that review was made public last Friday. True to expectations, it has signalled a complete reversal of the earlier decision. While the move has been widely hailed in Manipur as a victory of their unrelenting pressure on the Centre, it is too early to predict if the same can be said for the people of Nagaland and, more importantly, for the NSCN(I-M) leadership. For now, the home minister has reassured us that the revocation has the concurrence of the militant group and its leadership. But given the sorry fate of similar emphatic proclamations in the recent past, it will be wise to wait. Not that there isn't reason enough to be concerned. The chief ministers of Nagaland and Assam have openly questioned the capabilities and political judgment of the Centre's negotiator with the NSCN(I-M) leadership, former home secretary K Padmanabhaiah. After all was it not the same point-person on whose advice the ceasefire was earlier extended? Equally, if the leadership of the NSCN(I-M) was amenable to a climb-down, then why did it take the government so long to realise it? For the damage done in the intervening period has been enormous. For one, it has eroded the credibility of the home ministry. For another, it has considerably restricted the Centre's elbow room in future parleys, should events in Nagaland take an unfortunate turn in the coming days.

# Centre's decision unacceptable: NSCN(I-M)

HD-13  
31/7

NEW DELHI, JULY 30. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muivah) today said the Centre's decision to restrict the ceasefire to Nagaland was "not acceptable" and claimed that nothing was finalised on the review of ceasefire extension at the recent talks the Centre's interlocutor, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, had with its leaders in Amsterdam.

During the two-day talks last week, "nothing was finalised for reviewing the June 14 Bangkok agreement", a statement by the NSCN(I-M) leaders, Mr. Issac Chishi Swu, and Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah, said.

"Therefore any announcement or declaration or statement given by the Home Ministry or in any mass media are unfounded. And so, they are in no sense acceptable to the Nagas," the statement added.

'Centre must clarify'

In Kohima, the Nagaland Chief Minister, Mr. S.C. Jamir, today appealed to the Centre and the NSCN (I-M) to clear the doubts in the minds of the Nagas on the modification in the cease-fire terms.

"While the Centre has claimed that the decision to delete the words 'without territorial limit' from the agreement was taken after the consent of the NSCN(I-M), the latter had contested this view," he said.

He appealed to the Centre to accept the insurgency in the northeast as a "national problem". Solving it would help the Centre handle other problems in the region with ease, he added.

Bandh in Manipur

Meanwhile, a three-day bandh in four hill districts of Manipur has been called from midnight tonight by the United Naga Council and the Naga Youth Front in protest against the decision to limit the ceasefire to Nagaland only, official sources said.

The NYF and the Zeliangrong Students Union were also continuing the economic blockade at the two National Highways 39 (Imphal-Dimapur) and 53 (Imphal-Silchar) for the third day today.

The Army, para-military and police have been put on maximum alert in view of the bandh, police said. Security forces have been deployed at all vulnerable points and patrolling has been intensified.

Ceasefire hailed

The Arunachal Pradesh Government today welcomed the confining of the ceasefire to Nagaland. "The people of the State have welcomed the limitation of the ceasefire area to Nagaland only," the State Information and Public Relations Minister, Mr. Takam Sanjay, said. — PTI, UNI

THE HINDU

31 JUL 2011

## ADVANI EXPLAINS U-TURN ON NAGA CEASEFIRE

# Parliament nod for Central rule in Manipur

By Our Special Correspondent

HD-1  
31/7

**NEW DELHI, JULY 30.** Parliament today approved the imposition of President's rule in Manipur. A statutory resolution seeking approval of the Presidential proclamation was adopted by voice vote by the Lok Sabha this evening.

The Lower House's approval of the resolution, adopted on Friday by the Rajya Sabha, where the Opposition has numerical superiority, was deemed to be a formality, but not before the Union Home Minister Mr. L. K. Advani, did some explaining.

Replying to the discussion, Mr. Advani defended the Government's approach on tackling the situation in Manipur, saying there was no question of another Ministry assuming power in Imphal. Central rule would continue for some time to bring back normality in the State so that the legislators could begin work in their constituencies.

Mr. Advani said the Centre did not shy away from taking a U-turn on the Naga ceasefire agreement as it felt duty-bound to honour the sentiments of the people of Manipur, Assam and other northeastern States.

Giving reasons for the delay in announcing the deletion of the three words — "without territorial limits" — from the June 14 agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), he said the Government

wanted to consult the outfit first. He discounted reports in a section of the media that the NSCN (I-M) had not agreed to the deletion of the three words.

Stating that the people of Manipur were not against the ceasefire and the peace process, he pointed out that the Government's commitment to protecting the State's territorial integrity was even stated in the National Democratic Alliance manifesto.

The Government did not agree to the ceasefire being extended to all Naga-inhabited areas in the region fearing that it could have been used for raising the demand of a "greater

**Centre's decision on ceasefire unacceptable, says NSCN (I-M): Page 13**

Nagaland". The Chief Ministers of the States concerned were consulted on the extension of the Naga ceasefire agreement last year as well as in March this year, he said.

Agreeing with the suggestion that the Naga peace talks be held in the country, Mr. Advani said the Government had inherited the arrangement from the United Front regime. "We want Mr. Thiungaleng Muivah to come to the country and hold talks. We are even ready to grant him immunity for that. We hope Mr. Muivah will agree and the peace process will

move ahead." Earlier, opening the debate, Mr. Santosh Mohan Dev of the Congress took Mr. Advani to task for failing to manage the political contradictions within the NDA and accused him of failing in his duty as the NDA allies created instability.

In a hard-hitting speech, Mr. Dev said "Manipur was a fit case" for invocation of Article 356, but wanted to know why the Minister failed to do his "duty" six months earlier (when the Samata Party had managed to put together a majority through defections).

Alleging that perhaps for the first time the Governor of a State had to flee from the Raj Bhavan, that too when New Delhi had a Home Minister who was known as 'Sardar Patel', the Congress leader reminded the House that the Centre was obliged to send out a message that President's rule would mean equal protection for all sections of society in the northeast.

Introducing the motion, Mr. Advani assured the Lok Sabha — as he had done in the Rajya Sabha last week — that the Manipur Assembly would be dissolved and that the elections would be held within a reasonable time.

In view of the Supreme Court verdict in the Bommai case, it was not possible to dissolve the Assembly right away, and the dissolution had to await the formal ratification of the imposition of President's rule.

THE HINDU

# Manipur politicians too afraid to return

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 30

AN UNEASY peace may have returned to the Imphal Valley of Manipur, but the State's politicians have not. They fled the State after being served with quit-Manipur notices by the All Manipur Students' Union (Amsu) that was leading the truce extension protests.

The reluctance of most of the 60 legislators to return to their homes from New Delhi is due to the absence of any 'welcome back' call by the Amsu or the United Council, Manipur (UCM) — the umbrella body that led the often violent protests here.

Such a call might not come in the near future since the Amsu wants to unravel the mystery behind the Centre's announcement to rollback the truce extension.

"We are really not sure about what transpired at Amsterdam (where the talks with the NSCN (I-M) leadership were held on July 23 and 24) and suspect a hid-

den agenda. Until we get to know all details of this, we are not keen to have the politicians back here," an Amsu worker told Hindustan Times.

"No decision has been taken on the return of the politicians. There are more important matters to be discussed right now. We'll discuss this matter with the Amsu soon," said UCM leader R K Anand.

The Amsu may be looking at the politicians' return as a bargaining chip to secure the release of its own leaders. Top Amsu leaders were arrested in June and are still behind bars.

"This issue (the return of the politicians) can only be decided by our top leaders since they are in prison. Let them be released and then they can decide on this matter after holding consultations among themselves and the society as a whole," said the Amsu worker.

The State's politicians came under attack on June 18 when rampaging mobs torched the State Assembly building and the

official residences of some political leaders.

"They had failed to prevent the extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) to Manipur. And then they said the Union Government had not consulted them on the ceasefire extension. It was after the mass uprising that they ultimately went to New Delhi to urge the Centre to revoke the extension. So of what use are such politicians?" said a senior leader of the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (Amuco), a constituent of the UCM.

A senior State Government official said the politicians-in-exile were in constant touch with them (the officials). "They are keen to return, but they want the dust to settle down first. And things are still at a fluid stage in the absence of a clear-cut statement from the Centre," said the officer.

He said a final decision on the release of the Amsu leaders — a step that may eventually lead to the 'welcome-back' call would be taken soon.

# Ceasefire rollback brews dissent in Nagaland

Jaideep Mazumdar  
Imphal, July 30

AFTER MANIPUR, it is Nagaland's summer of discontent. The Centre's decision on the truce rollback may have placated the Imphal Valley, but there's a palpable churning of outrage in the neighbouring State.

An outrage that in the days ahead could crystallise into mass protests that this Valley has been witnessing since June 16. Home Minister L K Advani's declaration on Friday to limit the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) to just Nagaland and the NSCM (I-M) leadership's subsequent statement terming the rollback as "unacceptable" has created confusion here.

While Advani said the rebel leadership had agreed to the rollback during talks with the Centre's interlocutor K Padmanabiah at Amsterdam on July 23 and 24, NSCN (I-M) leaders made it clear in a statement that no decision on the matter was taken at Amsterdam.

## State Govt kept in the dark again, says Jamir

NAGALAND CHIEF Minister S C Jamir says his Government is in the dark on what really transpired in the July 23-24 Amsterdam meeting between the Centre and the NSCN (I-M). "My Government was not taken in confidence when the ceasefire was extended at the June 14 Bangkok talks. We still do not know whether the truce has really been reviewed as the Centre claimed," he told newsmen in Kohima on Monday.

HTC, Kohima

This again led to widespread suspicion in not only Nagaland, but also Manipur, that New Delhi had something to hide.

Various Naga organisations have been holding a series of discussions among themselves over the past few days to formu-

late a strategy for protesting the rollback decision. There have been sporadic protests in Dimapur and Kohima.

"The people here are waiting for some more statements from the NSCN (I-M) collective leadership before taking any final decision. Leaders of some organisations are trying to get in touch with the leadership. Everything will depend on what the leadership says," a senior bureaucrat from Kohima told Hindustan Times. That the NSCN (I-M) President Issac Swu Chisi and General Secretary Muivah issued a very mild statement on Saturday has surprised and confused the Nagas.

"We are holding continuous meetings and may be able to announce the outcome tomorrow. Whatever action will be taken will be decided by all the organisations unitedly in consultation with the Naga people in Nagaland and the neighbouring states," a senior Naga Students' Federation functionary said.

# Manipur alert against Naga backlash on truce rethink

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 30

THE STATE administration has sounded a high alert to counter any activities of the NSCN (I-M) cadres in Manipur.

Fearing strikes by the Naga militants following the rollback of the truce extension from Manipur, police and paramilitary forces have been asked to stay on alert.

"They (the NSCN(I-M) militants) may try to carry out some

operations as a show of protest against the decision to limit the ceasefire to just Nagaland. And such operations may be carried out just to prove that limiting the ceasefire to Nagaland will not serve any purpose since the Naga militants' areas of influence extend beyond that state's boundaries," said a senior State Government officer.

A senior intelligence officer here said: "We have received inputs about movement of the NSCN(I-M) cadres in some Naga-

dominated hill districts of Manipur. We are keeping a close watch and the intelligence machinery has been geared up". Of particular concern is traffic along National Highways 39 and 53 that pass through these hill districts."

"We have reports that the NSCN(I-M) cadres are not happy with the rollback decision. They are also confused about the soft stand taken by their collective leadership," said the intelligence officer. The absence of any fur-

ther communication from NSCN(I-M) President Issac Swu and General Secretary Thuingaleng Muivah has also caused disquiet among the otherwise disciplined cadres of the outfit.

"This is what is worrying us. There seems to have been no communication or clear-cut instructions from Amsterdam (where the two rebel leaders are now) after Saturday's statement that the rollback is unacceptable and the announcement was made without consulting them. In such

a situation, some of the cadres located in this State may decide to undertake independent strikes against security forces or civilian targets," he added. State Governor Ved Prakash Marwah discussed this matter at length in New Delhi at the North-east Chief Ministers' meeting with the Prime Minister on Friday.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs is being constantly briefed on the situation in the hills and we must admit that it

does look ominous. We wish the NSCN(I-M) leadership passes on some instructions to its people in Nagaland," said an officer of a central intelligence outfit.

He agreed with the State intelligence that there may be fresh militant activities in Manipur. "That will have repercussions in the Valley as well. As per our assessment, any strikes now would be able to prove that limiting the ceasefire to just Nagaland is a bad strategic decision and thus force a rethink on the issue

HT CLASSIFIEDS

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Give peace a chance in North-East

By Rajindar Sachar

THE SITUATION in the North-East, especially in Manipur, is a cause of national concern. It was in 1995 that the initiative for a ceasefire was taken by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, and the collective leadership of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland.

In February 1997, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Deve Gowda, even had a meeting with Mr. Muivah, General Secretary, NSCN. The breakthrough came in July, 1997, when the Prime Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral, informed Parliament that "it has been mutually agreed to cease fire with effect from August 1, 1997 and initiate a discussion at the political level.

Subsequently, Mr. Vajpayee met the NSCN collective leadership and it was followed by regular meetings of government emissaries with the NSCN. The ceasefire did have some visible impact because even according to government figures, casualties since 1997 had come down to one-third.

Initially, when the ceasefire was announced, no specific area was mentioned, but in answer to a clarification in Parliament, Mr. Gujral stated that it applied to Nagaland. This seems to have become the bone of contention which did not let the ceasefire agreement take firm root. The NSCN complaining of a breach of ceasefire and the Government taking cover that it was restricted to Nagaland and not outside that area. This led to a situation where there was a grave risk of the ceasefire not being extended when it was to expire in July 2000. So delicate was the situation that the former Prime Ministers, Mr. V. P. Singh and Mr. Chandra Shekhar, issued a public appeal to the Union Government to renew the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN in the same manner as was done in 1997. However, though it was extended, the NSCN has been under grave pressure from its cadre both outside and inside India to the effect that it made little sense to have the ceasefire in a limited area and continue using guns in the rest of the North-East. That without this precondition any political settlement would be in grave jeopardy was impressed upon us when some of us interacted with Mr. Muivah and the NSCN leadership at Bangkok.

Though this assessment was discussed with a high political functionary of the Union Government, the response was negative. This approach would have endangered the very existence of the ceasefire. Fortunately, the Union Government probably recognised that to confine the ceasefire to Nagaland when the NSCN operates in all those areas was counter-productive, as the whole idea was to keep the guns silent. This led to the ceasefire agreement, "without territorial limits" in June, 2001.

This immediately led to violent reactions in the rest of the North-East, especially in Manipur (which has several

realising its implications, the UCM's declaration of June 26, 2001 unfortunately even went to the length of stating in the preamble that Manipur was involuntarily merged in 1949 into the Dominion of India (a language ironically similar to that used by the NSCN). Though the UCM extends its support to the ongoing negotiation for an honourable settlement of the Naga National Movement, it also warned that any attempt to alter the existing boundary of Manipur would necessarily initiate the process of disintegration of the Republic of India constituted in 1950 — and this in spite of clarification by the Union Government and even by Mr. Muivah that the extension of the ceasefire has no connection or relevance to the reorganisation of Manipur.

## *All people in the North-East yearn for peace — this compulsion must determine the future course of action by the Union Government.*

vah that the extension of the ceasefire has no connection or relevance to the reorganisation of Manipur.

Considering the pressure on the NSCN and the risk of alienation from its cadres of accepting a limited ceasefire, and the equally strong sensitivity of the Manipurites, I should have thought that there was a proper via media available to the Government subject of course to both sides refraining from taking a churlishly stubborn attitude.

In my view if all the political parties in Parliament had passed a resolution reiterating the integrity of the present boundaries of Manipur, specifically declaring that the extension of the ceasefire "without territorial limits" is only for the limited purpose of making guns silent in the North-East, and that it has no relevance directly or indirectly as regards a change in the existing boundaries of North-Eastern States, there was no reason why such a declaration should not have satisfied the UCM.

The Government and all political parties did not even try to reason out with the Manipurites. Instead, Mr. Padmanabhaiah was asked to meet Mr. Muivah to request him to agree for a modification of the agreement so as to delete the

words "without territorial limits."

This was followed by a beaming Mr. Advani announcing that the NSCN had agreed to modify the agreement by deleting the three words without at the same time appreciating the sensitive responses of the NSCN that it did not wish to stand on false prestige of some words remaining in the print — provided a firm commitment was made by the Union Government that in spite of a change in the phraseology guns will remain silent throughout the North-East and not merely in Nagaland. Such a one-sided partisan announcement by Mr. Advani (motivated possibly by prospective elections in Manipur) was bound to cause an adverse reaction. So we now have the immediate repudiation of Mr. Advani's statement by the NSCN leadership. A denial has also come from the Naga Hoho President (the highest civil functionary of Nagas in the country) of the version given by Mr. Advani and demanding a clear statement about the alleged agreement. Tension is also mounting in Naga areas threatening to blockade essential supplies on the highway.

There is visible concern amongst Nagas whether this modification is not a prelude to the unleashing of armed violence in the North-East. Manipurites have understandably expressed joy publicly. Care should be taken to see that it does not degenerate into a victory dance against the Nagas. If this was to become an issue of Manipur vs Nagas, it would be a grave tragedy. All people in the North-East yearn for peace — this compulsion must determine the future course of action by the Union Government.

No political party can gain by the continuation of the present impasse in the North-East. Like the emperor in the old fable, they are all without clothes. Must they require a child to show them the mirror. It is a good sign, therefore, that the Raja Sabha has resolved to dissolve the Manipur Assembly, and to hold fresh elections.

The North-East is too important for the security of India to permit any political party or group to play its small game.

(The writer is a former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court.)

# Naga truce survives a scare, more talks with Muivah likely

Swati Chaturvedi  
New Delhi, July 26

THE FOUR-YEAR-OLD Nagaland ceasefire that was hanging by a thread will now remain in place.

The NSCN (I-M) agreed to extend the ceasefire during its negotiations in Amsterdam with the Prime Minister's emissary, K Padmanabhaiah. Four days of talks ended yesterday and NSCN(I-M) sources say that the next round of talks are scheduled in a fortnight.

NSCN (I-M) leader Thuingaleng Muivah agreed to sign a joint declaration that committed both sides to further negotiations, and said that this was the last time that he was willing to compromise. This, according to sources, explains the Government's urgency to have a further round of parleys and work out the framework of the ceasefire extension.

Sources say that the negotiations were tense with Muivah repeatedly accusing the Indian Government of "trifling with the Naga's honour and repeatedly going back on its commitment". The Government representatives, Padmanabhaiah and K P Singh, Director, Intelligence Bureau, found it difficult to explain the Government's compulsions on reviewing the extension of the Naga ceasefire to the rest of the North-east.

Speaking from Amsterdam, Muivah's aides said that they held the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) responsible for the entire mess. A senior Naga leader said, "There is no clear chain of command. We are told that the entire process is being monitored by the Prime Minister and then we find ignorant junior functionaries holding forth." This was a reference to Minister of State for Home I D Swami who the NSCN(I-M) seems to see as the chief villain of the piece.

Senior PMO officials are concerned at the way the situation is being handled. Even the joint declaration, hailed as a breakthrough, was supposed to be released by the MHA but later put on hold.

Muivah is learnt to have asked the authorities to endorse his travel documents to travel to several countries other than five he can now visit.

**Govt optimistic about meet with N-E CMs:** The Government today went into a huddle to study a new agreement between the Central representative, K Padmanabhaiah, and the NSCN(I-M) leaders in Amsterdam. The Centre's mood is buoyant after the "positive outcome" of the talks between Padmanabhaiah and NSCN general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah.

The NSCN reportedly agreed to the dropping of some words from the accord so that the Manipur groups can be urged to call off their agitation. But the Centre is not sure how the States would react to the review.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Jamir supports truce extension

51-2  
267  
**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

KOHIMA, July 25. - Nagaland chief minister, Mr SC Jamir, said today that his government supported the 14 June Bangkok Declaration on Naga ceasefire and urged other North-Eastern states to contribute to the peace process in settling the insurgency problem.

Mr Jamir said the Bangkok declaration was "nothing new" as the 1964 ceasefire between the Centre and NNC (Federal) had covered all Naga inhabited areas of the region.

He was speaking to newsmen before leaving for Delhi to attend a meeting of North-Eastern states' chief ministers, convened by Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, on 27 July.

The meeting is scheduled to review the Naga ceasefire in "entirety" following agitations, particularly in Imphal valley,

against its extension to the neighbouring states.

"We feel the opportunity of this peace process or extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland should be availed by the neighbouring states, because unless peace is restored in the entire north-east, no problems can be sorted out across the table," Mr Jamir said.

The chief minister said though there were 'lots of reactions' from neighbouring states, after area enlargement of the truce, the situation in Nagaland since the declaration of the cease-fire four years ago, was 'far better' and the number of killings had reduced substantially.

"So my government, council of ministers, Congress party and the Naga people want the continuation of peace process and an amicable settlement of the decades-old Naga political problem once and for all," he said.

Several Naga organisations and individuals in the state have urged the Centre not to abrogate the ceasefire agreement and cautioned that such a decision might derail the entire Naga peace process.

Asked about the reported exodus of Nagas from Imphal valley to Kohima and Dimapur, Jamir said his government was aware of it. The Nagaland government had already written to Manipur governor, Mr Ved Marwah, and the chief secretary to ensure security to all sections of the people there, he said.

Although no official figures are available with the deputy commissioners of Kohima and Dimapur, Naga NGOs of Manipur like United Naga Council (UNC), All Naga Students Union Manipur and others claimed about 2,000 Nagas had taken shelter at Dimapur and 1,000 in Imphal since the first week of July.

THE STATESMAN

## PM calls meeting of N-E CMs

**NEW DELHI, JULY 24.** The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, has convened a meeting of Chief Ministers of the northeastern States here on July 28 to review the situation in the region in the wake of the extension of ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) without territorial limits.

The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, gave this information to the Lok Sabha during zero hour, after several members expressed concern over serious developments in Manipur.

Raising the issue, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) said the Chief Ministers and the people concerned in Manipur and other States in the region were not consulted on the extension of ceasefire. The whole of Manipur was in turmoil as the people were protesting against its extension to the State, he added.

Without naming Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, the CPI-M leader questioned his political and legal status as an interlocutor and his negotiations with Naga group in Bangkok and Amsterdam.

"The situation is so 'bad' that MLAs, MPs and Ministers cannot go back to Manipur," he said, demanding a statement from the Government.

In the Rajya Sabha, Mr. W. Angou Singh (Congress), raised the issue through a special mention, and urged the Prime Minister and the Centre to withdraw the extension of ceasefire immediately.

He regretted that the Centre had taken the decision without

consulting the State Government and such a hasty step had resulted in damage to properties worth over Rs. 300 crores besides loss of several lives.

**Be flexible, Govt. tells NSCN(I-M)**

The Government has asked the NSCN(I-M), to be flexible in its approach and limit the ceasefire to Nagaland.

"If they (insurgents) are really sincere in having peace in the northeast, the words, the formulations (of the ceasefire extension accord) should not stand in the way of defusing the whole situation," the Minister of State for Home, Mr. I.D. Swami, told 'Star News' when asked whether the Government wanted the NSCN(I-M) to be flexible on the territorial limits of the ceasefire. — UNI, PTI

## Assam students to join agitation

By Our Special correspondent

**GUWAHATI, JULY 24.** Seven Left-wing student and youth organisations of Assam have opposed the extension of the Naga ceasefire to Assam and urged the Centre to revoke it immediately.

A State-level convention of the organisations also extended its full support to the Manipur people's movement against the ceasefire extension and to the 96-hour bandh of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar districts of Assam called by the Dimas Students' Union.

THE HINDU

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## Padmanabhaiah meets Muivah 2A/7

**NEW DELHI, JULY 23.** The Centre's interlocutor for the Naga accord, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, held a few rounds of discussions with the NSCN (I-M) leader, Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah, in Amsterdam following the Government's decision to review the truce extension accord in its entirety.

The talks assume significance as the Government decided to review the accord, which extended the ceasefire by another year as also its area coverage that created unrest in Manipur and parts of the northeast. The present term of the ceasefire expires on July 31.

Mr. Muivah, who had signed the accord in Bangkok last month with Mr. Padmanabhaiah, had flown to Amsterdam a week ago.

The two met on Sunday and today, Union Home Ministry sources said. — PTI

### MLAs' houses attacked in Manipur

**IMPHAL, JULY 23.** A 24-hour strike against the Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire extension affected normal life in Manipur today and the residences of the former Chief Minister, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, and some MLAs came under attack, official sources said.

Sources said about 200 people gathered at Kwakeithel area this morning and set fire to the house of BJP MLA and former Manipur Power Minister, Mr. Govindas Konthoujam. — PTI

# Imphal burns in truce anger

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 23

29/7  
Xr-6

THE HOUSES of MLAs, senior Government officials and paramilitary personnel were attacked today during a 24-hour general strike called by the United Committee Manipur in protest against the ceasefire extension with the separatist NSCN-IM.

Over 200 people torched the house of Regional Manipur State Congress Party (Chaoba group) MLA and former Manipur Power Minister Govindas Konthoujam at Kwakeithel near Imphal airport. Property worth over Rs 50,000 was destroyed in the fire.

Protesters also damaged the house of BJP legislature-wing leader and former Chief Minister RK Dorendra Singh at Yaiskul. But securitymen foiled a bid to set the house on fire.

Another target was the house of CRPF officer Premkumar Singh, who was in-charge of security at the Chief Minister's office on June 18 when 14 people were killed in CRPF firing after a mob stormed the complex. The residence of Imphal West District Commissioner Imocha Singh was also attacked.

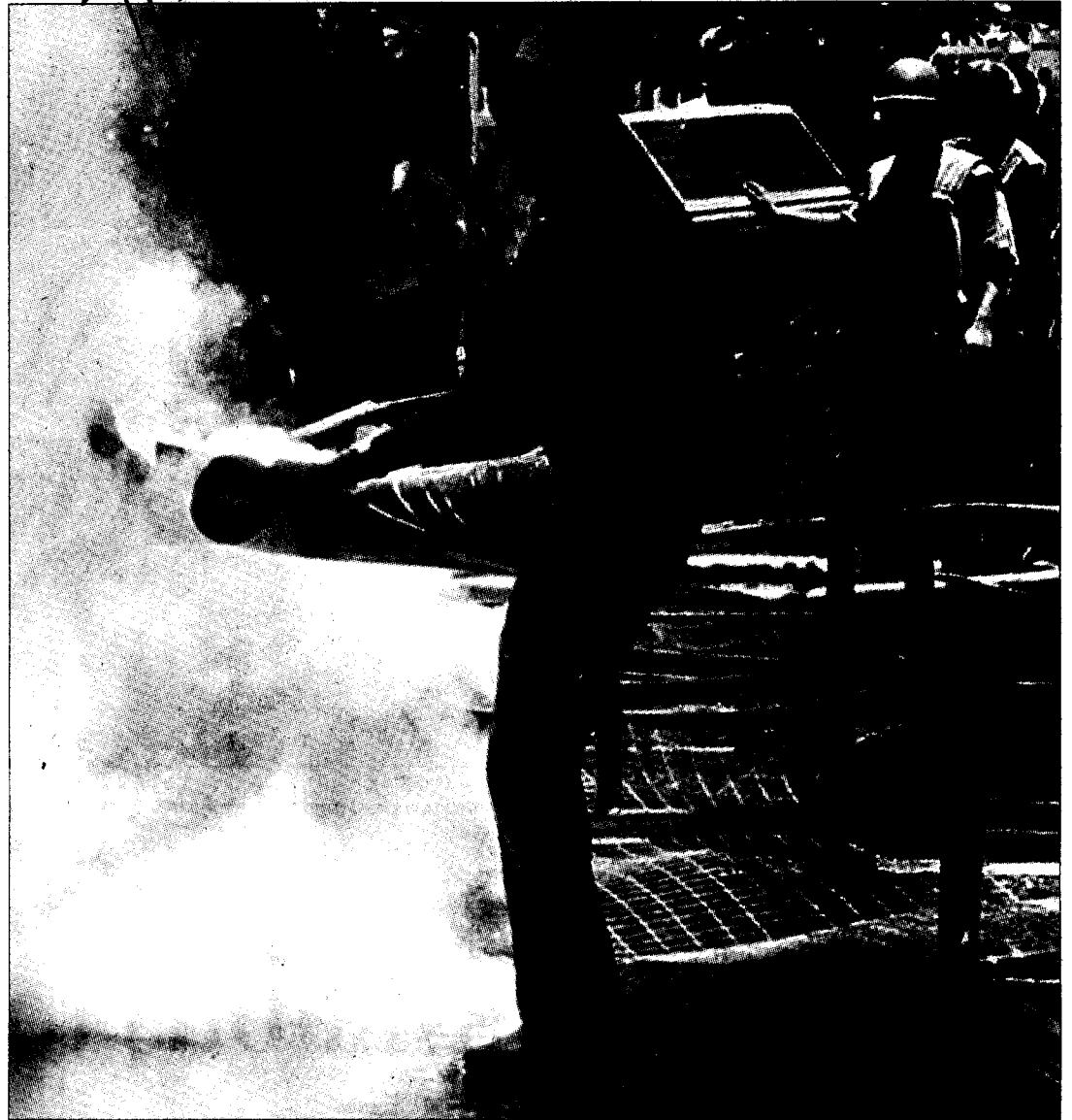
On July 11, armed men had attacked the house of Govindas at Ningthoukhong in Bishenpur.

Tension ran high in Imphal East and Imphal West today and there was no relaxation in the curfew. Army and paramilitary forces have stepped up security in sensitive areas.

Shops, markets and business establishments remained closed. Attendance in Government offices too was thin. Traffic remained off the road and the streets wore a deserted look.

Sit-in protests and rallies were organised across the State. Over 200 protesters, including 15 volunteers of the Students' Federation of India and Manipur State Council, were injured in police action.

Manipur police chief A S Siddiqui said up to 30,000 protesters burnt tyres and pelted stones at Government residences and



AFP PHOTO  
A policeman kicks a teargas canister in New Delhi on Monday during a protest against the truce extension led by MPs and MLAs from the North-east.

security patrol groups late on Sunday night in Imphal.

"Troops fired teargas and rubber bullets in the air to disperse the crowd...the situation is tense but under control," Siddiqui said.

Witnesses, however, said paramilitary soldiers baton-charged the protesters and fired rubber bul-

lets, injuring more than 100 people.

**Delhi protest:** MPs and MLAs from the North-east today held a demonstration in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Parliament house complex on the opening day of the monsoon session protesting against the truce with NSCN (I-M) beyond Nagaland,

adds PTI from New Delhi.

The protesters, led by Manipur Assembly Speaker S Dhanonjoy Singh, demanded immediate withdrawal of the ceasefire. The Manipur MLAs have already threatened to resign from the State Assembly en masse if their demand was not met by July 31.

# Manipur slips back to house burning

FROM OINAMSUNIL 29/7

**Imphal, July 23:** Manipur continued to reel under violence as protesters torched Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) legislator and former power minister Govindas Konthoujam's house here this morning. The house of another MSCP legislature wing leader R.K. Dorendra Singh was also attacked last night.

A controversy erupted when the mob raiding Govindas' house at Sangaipurou allegedly found "medicines" used by drug addicts.

While the curfew imposed by the administration was violated by the mob, the 24-hour general strike called by the United Committee, Manipur (UCM) was a resounding success. Streets wore a deserted look.

The UCM, which is spearheading the ongoing agitation against the extension of the Naga ceasefire to the state, is an umbrella forum comprising six organisations.

Over 50 people were injured in last night's clash between the securitymen and the protesters near the Raj Bhavan. Twenty-three SFI activists were injured when they clashed with the police inside the lock-up this morning.

Altogether 140 activists were arrested by the police yesterday for staging a protest rally in the

capital, violating curfew. They were detained at Langol police station without food and "proper shelter."

After sleeping in a damp room without food last night, the student activists, including girls, demanded better treatment this morning. The altercation soon degenerated into a scuffle and the SFI activists tried to break open the door of the room in which they were confined. The police locked the door from outside and fired tear-gas shells from the window. The SFI members, however, managed to break open the door and flee.

BJP leader Dorendra Singh's house at Moirangkhom was attacked by 30 protesters during last night's rally. They pelted stones and used catapults, shattering window-panes. The house of CRPF officer Premjit Singh, who had allegedly ordered firing on June 18, was also attacked last night.

Protesters laid siege to Govindas' house at Sangaipurou last night and razed a godown. This morning the house was attacked once again and the main building torched. Two of Govindas' relatives, who were staying at the house were hounded out by the protesters before the attack.

When the mob came across "medicines used by drug addicts", they turned wild and went

on a rampage.

State director-general of police A.A. Siddiqui admitted the protesters' complaint about the recovery of drugs but said the medicines had been destroyed before reporting the matter to the police. He added that whatever could be recovered from the debris have been sent for analysis.

Siddiqui said the people should have reported the matter to the police before the medicines were burnt. He, however, said some relatives of the former power minister reportedly owned a pharmaceutical shop.

The DGP described the situation in Manipur as grim and explosive. He said politicians and government officials have become the targets now. Two CRPF battalions would arrive soon, he added.

Referring to reports of Nagas fleeing Imphal, Siddiqui said, "Spreading an alarm over the issue is unwarranted." He said it was normal for people to leave a place when there was trouble. "People feel insecure and so they leave. It was the same in Punjab when militancy was at its peak," he said.

Manipur Governor Ved Mahwah will attend the Northeast chief ministers' meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in New Delhi on July 27 as the state is now under President's rule.



Manipur students at a demonstration on Parliament Street in New Delhi. Picture by Rajesh Kumar

## Thousands of Nagas flee Imphal valley

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Guwahati, July 23:** The United Naga Council (UNC) today alleged that thousands of Nagas living in Manipur had fled fearing more violence in protest against the extension of the Nagaland truce without territorial limits.

According to the UNC, Imphal valley, which has nearly 50,000 Nagas, witnessed the maximum exodus. "After the eruption of violence on June 18, the Nagas have

started leaving. Not even a few hundred remain today," UNC president Paul Leo said.

Leo alleged that the Manipur government had turned a blind eye to the problem by refusing to "acknowledge and admit" the exodus, while the Manipur police and Manipur Rifles had compounded the fear of the Nagas by refusing to provide security.

"The government has also not provided any relief to the displaced. The little succour that has

been provided has come from Naga organisations and individuals," he said.

According to the UNC, people who had left Imphal valley and were staying in Senapati district alone had crossed 6,000. An equal number of Nagas were camping in Ukhrol district.

Appealing for "moral, physical, and logistic support" for the displaced, Leo said, "In Chandel and Tamenglong districts too, the figures are in the vicinity of over three

and five thousands respectively.

"Thousands are taking shelter in the homes of relatives and friends in Kohima and Dimapur. There are still unaccounted number of Zeliangrongs (Kaouis), permanent settlers of Imphal valley, who despite having their own villages have been reduced to refugees in their own land."

As the July 27 deadline to review the ceasefire draws near, several Naga organisations have extended support to the proposed

peace rallies to be held at the district headquarters of Nagaland and the hill districts of Manipur. According to our Kohima correspondent, the Naga Students' Federation's federal units or tribal units will organise the rallies.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has called a meeting of the Northeast chief ministers on July 27 to review the ceasefire. The extension of the ceasefire in the neighbouring states will be effective from August 1.

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Corrigendum to Tender No.: SRBC/MM/OPS/L/SC/040/2000-2001 for CHARTER HIRE OF WORK OVER RIG of 100 Ton Capacity appearing in this newspaper on 29th May 2001. The due date of Tender Closing/Opening of un-priced bid is hereby extended to 26th July 2001 (1400 hrs./1500 hrs.) from 12th July 2001. The tender document will be available for inspection/sale on any working day upto 25th July 2001. All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

## Police fire to disperse protesters in Imphal

9-11-81  
HO-1 2877  
IMPHAL, JULY 22. Police opened fire and burst teargas shells to disperse several thousands of people who gathered at various places tonight in apprehension that the Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire would be extended for one year from August 1. No casualty was however reported, official sources said.

The sources said tensions ran high following reports published in a section of the press that the ceasefire would be extended for an year to bring peace to the northeast.

Reports in the evening papers here said that the Centre's envoy, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, had left for Amsterdam to meet the NSCN (I-M) chief, Mr. Muivah, to discuss the issue. But the reports did not mention anything about the withdrawal of the ceasefire.

Soon after the news was circulated, thousands of people, including women with torches, gathered at Kurai, Nongmeibung and Kwakeithel and shouted slogans, official sources said, adding that police and paramilitary forces were struggling to disperse the mob.

"Mr. Muivah may talk a lot but we will not allow the Government to break up our State," the protesters shouted.

At Lilong, about 10 km south of here, more than 70,000 Muslims

organised sit-in protests, official sources said. Reports from the districts said over a lakh people in Imphal defied curfew and prohibitory orders and launched dharanas and rallies. The State Government has alerted all police and security posts in view of the 24-hour general strike by the United Committee Manipur, which is spearheading the anti-ceasefire stir. In Kohima, several Naga organisations urged the Centre not to abrogate its ceasefire agreement, cautioning that such a decision might derail the entire peace process.

The Ex-parliamentarians' Association of Nagaland expressed serious concern over the development in the region and appealed to the neighbouring States to be "more considerate and conduct a serious retrospection" into the events of northeastern political history pertaining to Nagaland.

About 200 activists of the Students Federation of India and the Manipur State Council (MSC) courted arrest defying indefinite curfew and prohibitory orders, official sources said here. The MSC joint-secretary, Ms. N. Uma Devi, said the arrested students included the MSC secretary, Ms. A. Ibemcha Chanu, and president in-charge, Ms. H. Ibetombi Devi.  
— PTI



# Naga ceasefire talks begin in Amsterdam

New Delhi, July 22

THE INDIAN Government on Sunday began crucial negotiations in Amsterdam on the future of its ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M).

Intelligence sources said former home secretary K Padmanabhaiah, the Government's emissary for talks with Naga rebels, flew to Amsterdam on Saturday for the three-day talks with the outlawed NSCN (I-M).

Thuingaleng Muivah, the NSCN (I-M) chief, arrived in the Dutch city last week from Thailand. The talks assume significance since the four-year-old truce between the Indian Government and the NSCN (I-M) expires on July 31. The ceasefire, earlier valid only in Nagaland, was expanded "without territorial limits" on June 14.

The decision was seen as strengthening of the NSCN (I-M)'s demand for a "greater Nagaland", comprising all Naga-inhabited areas of the region.

The Government said on July 8 it would review the ceasefire expansion. The NSCN (I-M), however, remains opposed to any review of the ceasefire.

Significantly, Muivah flew to Amsterdam from Thailand on an Indian passport provided by intelligence agencies in order to avoid being deported to Pakistan.

287  
Muivah was arrested in Thailand in January 2000 when he flew in from Karachi on a fake passport. As the Thai Government had a strong case against him, there was a very distinct possibility that he could be deported to Pakistan.

"It would not have served our purpose if he was deported to Pakistan," an official said. "Besides, Islamabad was not too keen on receiving Muivah at a time when it is trying to improve relations with India."

The Government and the NSCN (I-M) have not been able to reconcile their differences despite several rounds of talks since the ceasefire was announced in August 1997. The changes in Governments in New Delhi and the removal of the original negotiator, former Mizoram governor Swaraj Kaushal, also impeded the talks.

The talks were also hit by Muivah's arrest in Thailand, after which meetings were stalled for more than eight months last year, as the NSCN did not nominate any other leader in his place.

A threat from legislators from Manipur to resign if the decision on the ceasefire extension was not withdrawn by July 31 has only compounded the Government's problems.

IANs

# Autonomy plan for five Manipur districts

Chandan Nandy  
New Delhi, July 21

A PLAN to grant 'autonomy' to five hill districts of Manipur to assuage two warring tribes — the Nagas and the Kukis — is on the anvil even as crisis grips the State over the Centre's ceasefire accord with the NSCN (Isak-Muivah).

Home Ministry officials are not willing to say whether the plan will be mooted as one of the solutions to the Naga question in the backdrop of the controversy generated by the Centre's decision to extend the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) "without territo-

rial limits".

Sources believe granting an 'autonomy' package to the five districts — Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Churachandpur — where the Nagas and Kukis dominate, could be a solution. But the Melitris in the Imphal Valley, who are already up in arms over the ceasefire pact, would not take it kindly.

"The autonomy package need not necessarily be linked to the question of Greater Nagaland and we are not yet in a position to say whether it can form the basis of a political dialogue with the NSCN (I-M). But it is definitely under consideration," a senior

official said, refusing to disclose the details of the package.

Manipur has a population of 23.88 lakh. Of this, Nagas constitute 4 lakh and the Kukis slightly over the same figure. In Tamenglong, the various Naga sub-tribes constitute 65 per cent of the population while the Kukis comprise merely 35 per cent. The Naga-Kuki population in Senapati is equally divided while in Ukhrul the Nagas are 70 per cent strong with the rest are Kukis. These population figures were culled recently and well after the alleged 'ethnic cleansing' of the Kukis in the three districts.

Of the 20 legislators elected to

the state Assembly from the hill districts, 11 are Kukis and the rest Nagas. The Kukis have a strong presence in Chandel, where the Nagas comprise only 25 per cent of the population, and Churachandpur which is almost completely devoid of any of the Naga tribes, namely the Kognacs, Aos, Angamis, Chakesangs, Thangkuls and Semas.

These sub-tribes are predominantly spread over Nagaland, but their loyalty to the NSCN (I-M) and the NSCN (Khaplang) is divided. While the Kognacs largely support the Khaplang faction, the Thangkuls [NSCN (IM) general secretary Thuingaleng

Muivah is a Thangkul Naga] back the NSCN (I-M).

Officials believe the Semas will "desert" the NSCN (I-M) and join the Khaplang faction in the event of any abrogation of the ceasefire extension.

Home Ministry officials say scrapping the ceasefire between the Centre and the NSCN (I-M), signed last month, will "not be the right step" because there is a "genuine yearning for peace in Nagaland". The four-year-old ceasefire has led to the growth of a "peace constituency" which will be very difficult for the both the Centre and the NSCN (I-M) to ignore.

# 100 hurt in Imphal as students storm Raj Bhawan

HT Correspondent & PTI  
Imphal, July 20

OVER A hundred students were injured at Imphal today when police and CRPF lobbed teargas shells and fired at them to prevent the students from entering Raj Bhawan in defiance of prohibitory orders.

The injured students were admitted to hospital, where the condition of some of them is serious. Some policemen were also wounded when the protesting students pelted stones at them. Police said the situation is now tense but under control.

At Uripok, five persons, including one non-Manipuri and an old man, were injured in CRPF firing. The students also set a Gov-

ernment car on fire at Uripok. Police resorted to lathicharge, firing, tear gas shells and rubber bullets but failed to control the agitation. The arrival of the CRPF personnel only made the situation worse.

Police armed with clubs, cane shields and teargas shells tried to bring agitating students under control in Keishampat and Khoyathong too. About 70 protesters were arrested. The agitating students reportedly snatched away weapons from the police, but later handed them back on persuasion by the journalists at the scene.

Trouble began when over 3,000 students kicked off a rally from the All Manipur Students' Union office at the DM College campus. They were headed for Raj

Bhawan to hand over their books to Governor Ved Marwah and to tell him that they had suspended their studies in protest against the ceasefire extension.

The students, dressed in uniform and armed with their textbooks and placards, assembled at the THAU ground in Imphal around 10 am and took to the streets of Imphal.

Police tried to block the rallies in different parts of Imphal. The students were not allowed to proceed beyond Samumakhong in the Khuwaramband market complex.

Police said today's agitation was the strongest since the uprising of Manipuris that cost 15 lives on June 18 at Imphal.

The All Manipur Students'

Union (Amsu) has intensified its agitation, demanding revocation of the Bangkok Agreement between the Centre and NSCN-IM on extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland. Nine representatives of the union met the Governor.

Earlier, over 20,000 sportspersons took part in a rally organised by the Manipur Olympic Association in protest against the ceasefire extension.

In view of the prevailing situation, the President's Rule Administration has shut down all educational institutions in Greater Imphal for two days. All shops and business establishments also remained closed today. Indefinite curfew has been re imposed in the bazar area from 2 pm today.

## PARTIES ASK PM TO VISIT MANIPUR

THE ALL-POLITICAL Parties' Forum, Manipur, has urged Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to visit Manipur to take stock of the situation arising out of the Bangkok agreement to extend the Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire outside Nagaland.

The chairman of the newly-formed Forum, Lt Col (ret'd) Haobham Bhuvan, in a fax message, insisted that the Prime Minister visit Manipur for a few hours to see for himself the ground situation in the State, after extension of the ceasefire.

The message assumes significance as the Forum was the only political body to refuse the visit to New Delhi for talks. The Forum has been demanding talks with the Centre's leaders in Imphal to settle the issue. All the leaders of the political parties and various voluntary organisations of the State were invited to the talks with the Prime Minister at New Delhi. The agreement between the Centre and NSCN (I-M) on extension of ceasefire without limits is presumed to be the prelude to break Manipur away, which may happen at any time, the message states. The NSCN (I-M), meanwhile, is in no hurry to execute

its part in the agreement. Under the cover of the ceasefire, the NSCN (I-M) recruited and trained cadres, established extensive militant networks and camps, apart from indulging in extortions, road blocks and murders, the message alleged. The extension of the ceasefire means extension of the NSCN (I-M) influence, the Forum says. It also urged the Prime Minister not to extend the ceasefire to other states.

Criticising the federal structure of the Constitution, the Forum said the Centre should not ask the Manipur Government to fight insurgency in the districts where ceasefire extension has been enforced. Government forces have to fight with various underground outfits while the NSCN (I-M) men are taking advantage of the ceasefire in the same districts, it said. The Forum was formed on July 4 by nine political parties including BJP, Samata Party, Janata Dal (S), Federal Party of Manipur, Manipur State Congress Party (Chaoba), MSCP (Nipamacha), and Rashtriya Janata Dal.

HTC, Imphal

## Centre's envoy to meet Muivah

HD-11 By Harish Khare

*21/7*

**NEW DELHI, JULY 20.** The Vajpayee Government's designated interlocutor, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, is scheduled to leave for Amsterdam on July 22 to have a dialogue with the Naga rebel leader, Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah, in an effort to see how the "ceasefire" agreement, concluded on June 14, 2001 can be reformulated. The agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah) has run into serious political trouble in Manipur because the agreement seeks to extend the truce to the entire northeast. The old ceasefire is to expire on July 31.

As the Union Home Ministry failed to anticipate the possible political consequences of extending the pact with the NSCN (I-M) to the entire northeast, the Centre is now constrained to reopen negotiations with the rebel group. Having imposed the President's rule in Manipur, there is no political mechanism to negotiate the popular misperceptions of the ceasefire "extension".

The Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, is totally unequal to the task of calming the tempers, and is believed to have told the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani,

*I Centre State*

that it was essentially a political task which was better attended to by the political leadership in Delhi.

Mr. Padmanabhaiah is now charged with the responsibility of seeing how the agreement can be reworded as to meet the objective of the June 14 accord as well as can take care of the concern among the other ethnic groups in northeast.

A bureaucratic solution is being sought because the Home Ministry's political leadership failed to read the signals. The MLAs and MPs from Manipur have been camping in New Delhi, pressuring the Centre to "review" the June 14 agreement. The MLAs are afraid to go back to Manipur lest they face the public wrath.

Even today the CPI general secretary, Mr. A.B. Bardhan, has released to the press a letter he wrote to the Prime Minister on Thursday, reminding Mr. Vajpayee of his commitment to "review the ceasefire agreement". Mr. Bardhan suggested that Parliament be asked to provide a "constitutional guarantee about the territorial integrity of Manipur State". Mr. Padmanabhaiah is expected to seek Mr. Muivah's cooperation in formulating such a constitutional guarantee with which the NSCN (I-M) live.

# Naga swoop on Manipur to back truce

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 19

SECURITY WAS tightened along the Manipur-Nagaland border on the National Highway 39, particularly in Senapati district of Manipur, today after hundreds of Nagas drove across the Mao border from Nagaland in a convoy on Thursday morning en route to Senapati.

Several Naga leaders met at the Mini Stadium, Senapati, today and resolved to organise a massive rally at the Senapati district headquarters on July 23, the first day of the monsoon session of Parliament.

The Nagas living in the hills of Manipur and Nagaland have been supporting the agreement signed between the Centre and NSCN-IM on the extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland.

The South Naga Union of Nagaland (women's wing) organised the caravan of vehicles plying towards Senapati district headquarters from Kohima today, officials said.

The Nagas drove up in 39 light vehicles and six buses around 10:30 am at the border gate and were allowed free passage to Senapati district, about 60 km north of here.

The Senapati District Women's Association welcomed the visiting members from Nagaland and

## Civil disobedience paralyses State

HT Correspondent  
Imphal July 19

THE CIVIL disobedience movement launched by the United Committee Manipur (UCM) has crippled normal life in Manipur today.

All financial Institutes, offices of the Central and State Governments, educational institutes were paralysed on the first day of the civil disobedience movement. The UCM, an umbrella body of six powerful organisations of the State, is demanding total revocation of the Bangkok Agreement. The movement would continue till July 22.

Bank transactions came to a grinding halt today when over 2000 employees of various banks staged a sit-in protest

against the ceasefire extension. The sit-in protest was organised in front of the Manipur State Legislative Assembly. The protest was organised under the banner of the United Forum Banks, Manipur. Several bank employees representing, State Bank of India, Imphal branch, United Bank of India, Imphal, Manipur Cooperative Banks and all commercial banks took part in the dharna.

Besides, employees and staffs of the Life Insurance Corporation, Imphal branch, New India Insurance Corporative Ltd and Oriental Insurance Cooperative Limited have taken part in the dharna. Employees of the Central and State Governments took mass casual leaves today and took part in the sit-in protest organised at their office

premises today. Over 1000 employees of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Imphal also staged protest in front of the Telephone Bhavan today.

Employees of the Minor Irrigation, Electricity, Institutes of Cooperative Management, Imphal took part in the dharna after taking mass casual leaves today. All colleges and education institutes in the valleys were paralysed today after several students in response to the appeal made by the UCM staged protest in the college premises. Relay hunger strike and human chains marked the protest. Sit-in protests were organised at Singjamei, Chingamakha, Sagolmang, Uripok, Tera, Khurai, Lamshang, Wangkhei, Thoubal, Bishnupur and Kakching.

organised an emergency meeting today. Several Naga leaders representing the United Naga Council, Manipur, Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (Manipur sector), Naga Women's Union Manipur and All Naga Students' Association addressed the meeting.

This is the first meeting organised at the Senapati district headquarters since the Manipuris started protesting against the ceasefire extension. The strength of the visiting members from Nagaland would be around 600.

Security forces and all police outposts were put on alert and

additional forces rushed to the district. Meanwhile, several Naga organisations in Manipur and Nagaland are gearing up for an indefinite economic blockade on National Highways 53 and 39 in Manipur if the Centre decides to review the ceasefire extension.

# PM to meet north-east CMs to rework Naga ceasefire pact

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 18 JULY

WITH THE Agra summit behind him, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee will now concentrate on reviewing the Naga ceasefire pact to exclude other north-eastern states from its ambit.

Mr Vajpayee will shortly hold talks with the chief ministers of north-eastern states on the issue while the Centre's chief interlocutor for Naga talks, Mr K. Padmanabhaiah, embarks on a tour of Amsterdam to get NSCN (I-M) chairman T. Muivah's consent for reworking the July 14 agreement that was signed in Bangkok. The pact had allowed extension of truce to Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Although Mr Vajpayee's meeting with the chief ministers is only a part of the Centre's review process, it is Mr Padmanabhaiah's Amsterdam mission ahead of the July 31 deadline that is crucial to the resolution of the Naga impasse.

With the Naga agreement being bilateral in nature, the ball is now in the NSCN (I-M)'s court and the outfit's position will determine whether the Centre can deliver on its July 8 assurance to Manipur



**TAKE TO THE ROADS: Manipuris protest the Nagaland peace pact in Imphal on Wednesday. Nearly two-lakh residents of the state participated in this bicycle rally. — PTI**

MPs and MLAs to review the ceasefire pact "in its entirety," including the deletion of the phrase "without territorial limits."

So far, the NSCN (I-M) has not shown any willingness to cooperate with the Centre on rewording the pact. The announcement of the extension of truce had evoked violent protests from the people of Manipur and Assam, who felt the move endangered the "territorial integrity" of their respective states.

Mr Vajpayee's upcoming meeting with the north-east chief ministers will ascertain their views regarding the proposed review of the truce agreement. The decision to hold this round of discussions with the chief ministers was taken at a high-level meeting presided over by the Prime Minister here on Wednesday and attended by Union home minister L.K. Advani, Army chief S. Padmanabhan and others.

The Economic Times

# BJP blames Cong for N-E crisis

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, July 14. - Mr Padmanavan B Acharya, BJP's national secretary, today accused the Congress of being responsible for the worsening situation in North-east.

Mr Acharya, the party's in-charge of North-east affairs, said, the Congress government at the Centre had reached a series of agreements with the underground groups in the region, but later

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went back on its tall promises which had deepened mistrust among tribal groups resulting in a turmoil.

He said, the BJP was in no way responsible for the present crisis in Manipur. "We honour the patriotic sentiment of the Manipuri's," he remarked.

He said, the Congress had always indulged political corruption in North-east. "It has never got the peoples' mandate to rule. "It has only ma-

nipulated things to capture the power," he alleged.

Mr Acharya, however, admitted that the Centre couldn't act properly in Manipur because of certain "bureaucratic lapses."

"I can only assure that there are many in the ruling alliance at the Centre who are now in favour of reviewing decision on extension of areas under the ceasefire agreement with the Naga rebels," he said.

THE STATESMAN

119-10

## THE CRISIS IN THE NORTHEAST

14/7

THE ASSURANCE HELD out by the Union Government that the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN (I-M) will be reviewed may have led to peace in Manipur, even if it be for the time being. After the violence that rocked the Manipur capital, in which a cross section of the political leaders there were hounded out by the agitators, there was no way the Centre could have denied such an assurance. And by managing the assurance, the leaders of the various political parties from Manipur may have found for themselves a little bit of space to manoeuvre in Imphal. The agitators, mostly students, had made the MLAs (of the Manipur Assembly now under suspended animation) and the various leaders of the parties their target and had even served an ultimatum that they resign from all elected positions. The demand was plain and categorical; that the Union Government rescind its ceasefire agreement with the Isak-Muivah faction of the NSCN that included all Naga-inhabited areas (including those outside Nagaland). The students and the various sections of the people in Manipur were agitating against the ceasefire agreement being extended to four districts in their State — Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Chandel and Senapati — where the Nagas outnumber the others.

The basis for this opposition was that by enlarging the area of the ceasefire, the Union Government would be seen ending up giving credence to the idea of a "greater Nagaland". Similar fears were found in Assam too. The Union Home Ministry's agreement with Mr. Muivah's outfit, struck initially during Mr. I. K. Gujral's regime (when Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah took up a post-retirement assignment as the Home Ministry's emissary and managed to establish links with Mr. Muivah), for ceasefire had indeed created some conditions for restoring normality in the region. And there was no opposition to the ceasefire as such. It is in this context

that the Union Home Ministry announced its fresh "initiative" that the area of ceasefire with the NSCN rebels has been expanded. It may be true that the NSCN had placed this as a demand and made such expansion a condition for extending the agreement. But then, the Union Home Minister and his officers could have gone about consulting the political leaders from the region — particularly from Assam and Manipur — before agreeing to the NSCN negotiators. And this is what led to the crisis.

It is in this context that one would expect all those involved with the negotiations with the NSCN representatives at this stage to learn from the past mistakes. The NSCN will now insist on the Government remaining committed to the terms agreed in June and sticking to the expanded area of ceasefire. The rebel outfit, after all, has its stakes too. But then the Union Government cannot allow itself to be goaded into any deal (even if it is done by the emissaries on its behalf) that will be seen as endorsing, even in a symbolic manner, the idea of a "greater Nagaland". And this will have to be the terms on which the Home Ministry officers carry out their talks with the NSCN's representatives in the coming days. And in this sense, while it is important that the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN is kept in place and the political process to achieve peace in the region is speeded up, the concerns bothering the people of Manipur and parts of Assam will have to be taken care of. There is no way that the Government can allow its negotiators to strike such agreements that will lead to insurgency and violence spreading across the Northeastern States. The imperative for the officers and interlocutors of the Union Home Ministry in this context is to involve a cross section of the political leaders in all such debates and take them into confidence before any "agreements" are finalised.

THE MINISTERS

11/11/77



40-12  
1997

# Naga ceasefire and Manipur

By Radhabinod Koijam

**T**HE RECENT ceasefire with Naga militants announced by the Government of India without territorial limits caused a massive outburst of anger in Manipur. Manipuris are afraid that their centuries-old State would disintegrate and their rich cultural heritage would be buried and they would be rendered homeless and reduced to being non-entities. Fear, of course, is the key.

Contained within the protest is the question, "Does anyone care for Manipur?" Despite various representations to those who matter across the political spectrum at the highest levels, the Centre did not think it necessary to inform the public of Manipur and to take them into confidence before taking a decision that may change the course of the State's history.

The Union Government has been appeasing the NSCN(I-M) by agreeing to enter into a 'ceasefire agreement' (a terminology reserved for use between two independent nations) and to hold talks outside India. Mr. T. Muivah, NSCN(I-M) general secretary, says, "We do not want Greater Nagaland or Smaller Nagaland, we only want 120,000 sq. km of land that belongs to Nagas. Nagaland (now Nagalim) has always been a sovereign nation. It was forcibly apportioned between India and Burma (Myanmar) after their respective declarations of independence. The part which India illegally claims is subdivided and placed under four different administrative units, viz., Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland States... Nagalim, however, transcends all these arbitrary demarcations of boundary." Access the NSCN(I-M) website, [www.angelfire.com/mo/Nagaland/map.html](http://www.angelfire.com/mo/Nagaland/map.html), to see the map of its so-called Nagalim, which includes two-thirds of Manipur, and access [www.angelfire.com/mo/Nagaland/Background.html](http://www.angelfire.com/mo/Nagaland/Background.html) to know its claim to sovereignty, and to 120,000 sq km in between the longitudes 93 degrees E and 97 degrees E and the latitudes 23.5 degrees N and 28.3 degrees N with a population of 35 lakhs. The present Constitutional State of Nagaland has an area of only 16,579 sq. km with a population of about 16 lakhs. The claims of Mr. Muivah and the attitude of the Indian leaders justify the fears of the Manipuris.

Sighting an opportunity to twist the

Union Government around its fingers, the NSCN (I-M) extracted its pound of flesh and made it agree to the extension of the ceasefire to territories outside Nagaland. The demands of the Naga movement started by Phizo in the 1940s centred around the rights of Nagas in the then Naga Hills district of Assam as well as in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). They had nothing to do with the Nagas in Manipur. A look into the Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord, 1947, would make this clear. The Accord was signed by the representatives of Nagas inhabiting the Naga Hill district and NEFA with the Assam Governor. None of the Na-

mountain ranges separating Manipur from the Lushai Hills (present day Mizoram). On the east, river Chindwin was the boundary between Burma and Manipur as confirmed in January 1830 by the Supreme Government (the British Govt. of East India Company). However, this was changed to the foothills of Yoomadoung in 1833 after the Kobo Valley was transferred to the Burmese on payment of Rs. 500 a month as compensation to the Raja of Manipur. The arrangement continued till 1953 when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru permanently gave away the Kobo Valley to Burma and stopped payment of the compensation to

pertaining to the hill areas of Manipur to be considered for passing by the Manipur Legislative Assembly have to be first vetted and approved by this Committee.

In the 30 years since Manipur got Statehood, two Naga (Tangkhul) leaders were Chief Ministers for almost 15 years, the remaining period being occupied by President's rule (three years) and by a Muslim and six Meiteis. There are two seats to the Lok Sabha, one of which is reserved for the hill peoples. The elaborate arrangement between the peoples of the plains and the hills and the delicate balance in relations among different communities in Manipur are being jeopardised by the extension of the ceasefire to the Naga-inhabited areas of the State. There is no area in the State which is inhabited exclusively by the Nagas. Many other non-Naga tribes too inhabit these areas. Any step to create a premium in favour of a community will disturb the ethnic balance and could result in violence. The wounds of the ethnic violence that erupted in 1993-97 in the hill areas of the State between Nagas and Kukis, which left thousands homeless and hundreds killed, are still not completely healed. The extension of the ceasefire to Manipur may create new conflicts between communities and may also intensify the secessionist movements there.

The Ceasefire Agreement read with the ground rules give leeway to the NSCN(I-M) to establish camps and for its armed cadres to move freely from one camp to another and to carry out subversive and illegal activities. It would forcibly create an artificial atmosphere favourable to them in the areas where the ceasefire is extended. Some argue that the Ceasefire Agreement and the ground rules have bound down the NSCN(I-M). Mr. Muivah must be tickled pink by the good-hearts who say this, but the Manipuris know otherwise and are not fooled.

Manipuris feel that no price would be too high to pay to safeguard the centuries-old boundaries of Manipur. They are watching the Government of India to see on whom it puts a premium, the armed secessionists or the people who stand for national unity and integrity.

(The writer is a former Chief Minister of Manipur.)

## *The delicate balance in relations among different communities in Manipur is being jeopardised by the extension of the ceasefire to Naga-inhabited areas of the State.*

ga tribes of Manipur was represented in this.

Manipur's history is more than 2000 years old. It was an independent princely kingdom. From the 16th to the 19th centuries it was a powerful kingdom. The plains of Manipur are surrounded by nine hill ranges where the tribals live. The tribals of Manipur comprise mainly Nagas, Kukis and Zomis. The present population of Manipur is 23 lakhs of which the Meiteis and the Muslims are 14 lakhs and 1.5 lakhs respectively while the Nagas are 3.60 lakhs and Kukis including Zomis and other sub-tribes of Kukis around 3.40 lakhs. Other smaller communities constitute 0.50 lakhs.

The Nagas of Manipur could be broadly divided into four categories — Tangkhul Nagas, Mao and Maram Nagas, Kabui Nagas, and Anal Nagas and Marings. They have been living in Manipur from time immemorial as peaceful subjects. They never had any social or cultural ties with any Naga tribes in the Naga Hills district or NEFA. The forest between the rivers Doyang and Dhansiri was officially declared by the British in 1835 to be the northern boundary of Manipur. On the west, the line of river Jiri and the western bend of river Barak were declared Manipur's boundary by the treaty of 1833 concluded by Raja Gambhir Singh with the British. On the south lie the

Manipur. Manipuris still grudge the gifting away of Kobo Valley.

Manipur adopted democracy in 1947. It framed its Constitution, the Manipur Constitution Act of 1947, and drew up a regulation for the administration of the hill peoples — the Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation, 1947. It vested the responsibility for the administration of the hill peoples in the Maharaja-in-Council to be exercised in accordance with the Constitution Act of the State. The Manipur Assembly was constituted on April 18, 1948, with 53 members elected to it from both the hills (18 members) and the plains. The Cabinet consisted of seven members, four from the plains and two from the hills headed by a Chief Minister nominated by the Maharaj. Maj. R. Khathing, a Tangkhul Naga, was the Minister in-charge of hill affairs.

Manipur was merged into the Indian Union on October 15, 1949. It was granted statehood in 1972 with a 60-member Assembly. Nineteen seats are reserved for the hill areas and one seat for Scheduled Castes. The Assembly has a permanent inner chamber called "the Hill Areas Committee" which acts as a mini-Assembly. Its Chairman enjoys the status of Cabinet Minister and all MLAs from the hill areas of the State are ex-officio members. All laws

ONE THING

10 JUL 2001

## WELCOME REVIEW

### Manipur has genuine cause for uneasiness

THE Centre has admitted its mistake in agreeing to review the Naga ceasefire. There would have been no crisis had Delhi rejected the NSCN-IM demand for the truce's extension to Assam, Arunachal and Manipur at the threshold. Union Home Ministry officials are largely ignorant of the lay of the North-east, as was exemplified by a bureaucrat who, before taking up his post in the 1950s, was said to have asked how far Imphal was from Manipur. One wonders how many of them have heard of Molcham, a Manipur border village whose inhabitants are under constant threat of the Myanmarese army since 1981. The disappearance of adjacent Tuivang village from the Indian map hardly seems to have mattered. Happenings in the North-east cause hardly a ripple in the rest of the country and vice-versa. When the Bangladesh Army killed BSF jawans last May along the Meghalaya border, public protest was muted. And when violence erupted after the Babari Masjid demolition, the region, with the exception of some parts of Assam, set a healthy precedent in communal harmony.

The familiar refrain that Delhi's neglect alienates the region is a matter of opinion. But the Centre created new states without caring to delineate boundaries. Since the Naga rebels could not be militarily subjugated, Delhi played at division and tried to pay cash for peace. Central assistance after the formation of Nagaland in 1963 created only a handful of rich people. Rebels continue to exploit Delhi's weakness. But Manipur has genuine cause for uneasiness and Delhi is duty bound to maintain peace in this border state.

# Naga warning against betrayal

FROM SENTINARO JAMIR

Dimapur, July 10: The NSCN (I-M) today warned of a "far bigger resistance if New Delhi betrays the Nagas once again".

In its first reaction to the Centre's announcement of a review of the ceasefire extension on Sunday, the outfit's convenor in the ceasefire monitoring cell, "colonel" Punthing Shimrang, made it clear that the "Nagas cannot be divided or suppressed". Shimrang is among the top India-based Naga rebel leaders and the overall in-charge of the NSCN(I-M)'s monitoring group. He is also responsible for implementing the ceasefire ground rules.

"That is why we have been fighting for so long. If the government of India goes back on its words, we will be back to square one. There will be a far bigger resistance," Shimrang told **The Telegraph** in an exclusive interview at a "safe house" here.

The outfit's leader reiterated the NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah's assertion that "there is no Greater Nagalim or Smaller Nagalim. The Nagas are also not demanding anyone else's land, but only the land which historically belongs to us".

Questioning what New Delhi meant by "review" of the ceasefire extension, the Naga rebel leader said, "The government of India must explain it clearly during the (forthcoming) high-level political talks," implying that the outfit

had not broken away from the peace process despite widespread apprehensions.

While talking to **The Telegraph** from Delhi yesterday, the Centre's emissary in the Naga peace talks, K. Padmanabhaiah, had ruled out a breakdown in the negotiations with the NSCN(I-M) despite the Prime Minister's announcement of a review of the ceasefire.

Padmanabhaiah said the Centre has already set the ball rolling for the next round of talks with the NSCN leadership and "they are likely to convey the dates of their availability very soon".

Putting the ball in the Centre's court, Shimrang said if the ceasefire is withdrawn, "it will be (done) by the government of India and not the NSCN(I-M). And if they do so, it will not be the first time India has betrayed the Naga people".

Reacting to the largescale opposition and violence in Manipur following the ceasefire extension, the Shimrang said, "The people have been instigated and there is a motive behind the developments. We see no reason why they should behave like this." He, however, did not specify who instigated the people of Manipur.

Shimrang was blunt in accusing the Meiteis of Manipur as being "against peace" and also criticised them for allegedly using "foul language" against the Nagas. "This only exposes their psychology and mindset," he added.

# Manipur: Home ministry officials in slanging match

SHIVMATH JHA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 9. - There is a split among Ministry for Home Affairs officials and policymakers over the ceasefire agreement with NSCN (I-M) though the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, has promised to review its entire framework.

Some officials blamed reviewers and negotiators including the minister of state, Mr ID Swami, former home secretary, Mr K Padmanabhaiah, and MHA's additional secretary, Mr PD Sheno, and other top brass of the ministry for "misguiding" the Prime Minister on the issue that led to the "present crisis".

However, others said "it was a calculated design of the ruling BJP government at the Centre to carve out greater Nagaland out of the area inhabited by the Naga people in NE region."

An MHA official said: "While sug-

gesting the extension of ceasefire early last month, negotiators ignored the sentiments of the N-E people and furnished their reports to the tune of their political master."

MHA officials also quoted some Intelligence reports saying, "if the ceasefire was extended beyond Nagaland, thousands of people including women, would take to the streets making it difficult to maintain the law and order." Though the reports were submitted in January, March and April, none had reportedly raised the issue. All efforts to contact Mr Padmanabhaiah proved futile.

PMO officials, however, said: "The Prime Minister will make his own assessment after going through various reports - both political and administrative - submitted in the recent past. Mr Vajpayee will also take into consideration the Intelligence as well as other para-military forces reports

before making any announcement on the ceasefire in future."

Officials said the Intelligence Bureau, in its recent report, informed the government that "if the extension of ceasefire was granted in other Naga-inhabited areas of the N-E states,

besides immediate law and order problem, the entire region will turn into a smugglers' paradise as large quantities of narcotics, arms and ammunition, and contraband goods are supplied into India from across the border though this region."

MHA officials said as per the map of the proposed Nagalim, which has been projected by NSCN-IM through its website, the outfit claimed that areas like the Dibang Valley, Lohit district and Tirap of Arunachal Pradesh should be included in Nagalim.

The map also includes Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills districts of Assam, parts of Golaghat, Sibsagar,

Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Nagaon and Cachar districts of the state and most parts of Manipur.

Quoting NSCN-IM leaders, sources said that Nagalim had always been a sovereign nation occupying a compact area of 1,20,000 sq km of the Patkai range. It lies at the trijunction of China, India and Burma (Myanmar).

"Nagalim without the knowledge and consent of Naga people was appropriate between India and Myanmar after their declaration of independence.

The part, which India claims, is subdivided and placed under four different administrative units - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.

"The eastern part, which Myanmar claims is also placed under two administrative units - Kachin state and Sagaing division," the NSCN claimed.

The NSCN-IM secretary general, Mr T Muivah, in an interview to BBC, however, denied they were campaign-

ing for a greater state.

He, however, threatened to intensify their violent activities if the Centre failed to fulfil its commitment to the extension of ceasefire to Naga-dominated areas in N-E region.

**BJP welcomes move:** The BJP today welcomed the Prime Minister's decision to review the ceasefire with NSCN (I-M) and appealed to the people of Manipur to maintain peace and tranquility in the region.

The party spokesperson, Mr Sumil Shastri, justified the ceasefire decision and said the repeated assurances of the government and the BJP that the agreement with the Nagas wouldn't be detrimental to the interests of the state of Manipur should have satisfied the people.

Now that the Prime Minister had assured review in the context of the feelings of the people of Manipur it should satisfy all who wanted peace in the North East, he added.

11-10

## Review Reflex 1077

There is little to commend in the belated — though not entirely unexpected — decision of the Centre to review the ceasefire extension agreement reached with the NSCN (Isah-Muivah). This has to be said, paradoxically, regardless of the substantive merits of the decision. It is admittedly true that faced with a situation of escalating civil and political unrest in Manipur, the Centre had little choice but to signal a climb-down of sorts in favour of the affected state. But to announce a blanket review of the agreement is to jump from the frying pan into the fire. It will doubtless complicate and aggravate the situation in a region where an emphasis on nuance and a careful balancing of countervailing factors ought to be order of the day. Clearly, the decision will not humour the NSCN (I-M). If the earlier move to extend the ceasefire, without prior consensus-building in the affected states, was an inexplicable capitulation to the threats held out by the NSCN (I-M), the latest manoeuvre will antagonise the militant outfit just as emphatically. There are widespread fears that the current situation in Manipur may now be replicated in Nagaland, on an equivalent, if not greater, scale. Having seen that the Centre is vulnerable to threats of violent disorder, not to mention likely political blackmail, it is hard to see how else will the people of Nagaland — even granting that they are not a homogenous entity — react to the present measure. Sadly, this raises rather disturbing questions about the mechanics of the Centre's decision-making on crucial issues affecting the country.

When the original ceasefire extension was first greeted with widespread condemnation in the border states of Nagaland, the Union home minister had defended the step by claiming that it had been reached after sustained consultation with all the affected parties. The impression was also sought to be created that everyone concerned, notwithstanding their public posturings, had been taken into confidence on the issue. That the official version was at best an exercise in putting a brave face on a situation that was fast going out of hand became evident when it was contradicted by no less a person than the Centre's own representative in Manipur, state governor Ved Marwah. In the process, Mr Marwah also dropped enough hints that he had warned the Centre against the extension. It is nobody's case that the Centre is obliged to depend entirely on the assessment of the governor or any other source — although no non-Naga leader of any consequence openly endorsed the decision — in arriving at sensitive political decisions. The integrity of the government's decision-making depends on its perceived objectivity and independence. But, what then explains the complete abandonment of the policy? After all, if the Centre had believed in the merits of the ceasefire extension, then it should have had the courage to back the policy substantially. In this context, is it without significance that the review has been announced at the explicit behest of the prime minister rather than the home minister? Or are we entitled to speculate that the change of policy has something to do with the internal politics of the NDA government?

## Accord discord 96-6

Manipur's fears should have been gauged before Naga pact

**I**T was an embarrassment the Centre could well have spared itself. The inept handling of the ceasefire agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) has boomeranged badly on the Vajpayee government, revealing yet again the dangers of attempting to solve a political tangle without approaching it holistically. If before signing on the dotted line with the Bangkok-based leader of the NSCN (I-M), Thuingaleng Muivah, the Centre had bothered to take the other Northeastern states into confidence, addressed the popular misgivings of the people there, and generally moved with more circumspection, the accord need never have been the source of so much regional discord. But, as things turned out, years of hard work may come unstuck with the prime minister announcing on Sunday that the Union government will now review the ceasefire agreement, including the words "without territorial limits" presently incorporated in the agreement.

This is a major failure of intelligence — both in terms of basic grey cells and information gathering. The local police and the paramilitary forces in the region were caught completely off guard when, in the wake of the accord, Manipur exploded on June 18, resulting in 13 deaths and a badly gutted state assembly building. Of course, the anxiety to settle a problem that has bedevilled the Indian state, even when it was a colonial one, is understandable. The Nagaland insurgency has long been regarded as the mother of all insurgencies, and one that had fed, in turn, numerous other rebellions in the region. It was this anxiety that led the government's interlocutors to agree on extending the Naga ceasefire to areas

outside of Nagaland. This clause, alas, turned out to be the undoing of the agreement, since it stoked fears of a "Greater Nagaland" destroying the territorial integrity of the other states in the region, especially Manipur, already riven by sharp geographical and religious divides. Over the last few days protests had broken out all over the state, with some of its most noted literary and theatre personalities resolving to return the honours bestowed upon them by the Centre, to protest what they perceive as unacceptable highhandedness on the part of the Centre and the Naga leadership. What forced the Centre's hand on Sunday was the threat held out by the MPs and MLAs of the state to resign en masse if the controversial clause on the extension of the ceasefire was not withdrawn by July 31. By Monday, even this promised review did not satisfy the angry people, with the United Committee Manipur demanding the complete scrapping of the agreement.

So is there a way out of the impasse? Much will depend upon how the Naga leadership responds to the current developments. It is only to be hoped that it will conduct itself with maturity and quickly diffuse any tension that may surface among the Naga population. Thuingaleng Muivah had earlier clarified that there was no question of the Nagas "claiming territory" from other states. Unfortunately, nobody in Manipur heard him, or if they did, preferred not to believe him. As for the Centre, it will now have to go back to the old drawing board as far as the ceasefire accord is concerned. Clearly, to bring about lasting peace in a region as complex as the Northeast would require a degree of sensitivity and surefootedness that it has not displayed thus far.

# Manipuris for total ceasefire withdrawal

51-8 107  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE &  
Agencies

NEW DELHI/IMPHAL, July 9.  
- Mr LK Advani today said there might be a fresh round of talks with NSCN(I-M) to review the ceasefire but failed to impress the United Committee of Manipur, spearheading the movement against the extended Naga truce.

The UCM convener, Mr Sapam Jadumani, said: "Nothing less than a total withdrawal of the ceasefire area from Manipur will satisfy us."

(Speaker's house attacked: About 10 gunmen attacked and damaged the Assembly Speaker, Mr Sapam Dhananjay Singh's house at Khongman Okram Chuthek in Imphal East district late last night and damage to the house, officials said today. But no casualty was reported. The Speaker was in New Delhi when his house was attacked.)

During an informal chat with journalists, Mr Advani said it was clear that all sides would have to be heard before there can be any review of the ceasefire vis-a-vis the reference to "without territorial limits."

He said the reference relating to "Naga-inhabited areas in neighbouring states" was only an interpretation since the words used in the ceasefire document on 14 June were "without territorial limits."

**Amsu hails decision:** In a release issued from the Sajiwa Jail, leaders of the All Manipur Students Union expressed confidence with the government's effort to review the ceasefire policy, adds UNI.

**Protest march:** Nearly 4000 protestors marched the streets of the Imphal today amidst heavy security deployment. The businessmen of Khwairamband Bazar today downed shutters to protest the ceasefire extension to Manipur and urged the centre to withdraw it from the state.

In a memorandum, submitted to Governor Mr Ved Prakash Marwah, they requested him to convey their feelings to Mr Vajpayee.

THE STATESMAN

XG-8

## Don't alienate Manipur

9/7

BLACK FLAGS atop every house, days of tense curfew followed by angry demonstrations of women and students, yet another round of tear gas and police firing, a woman protester dead and scores injured. Since June 18, when the Imphal secretariat was set ablaze and 14 protesters shot dead by the police, it has been an unfinished story of simmering restlessness in Manipur. The protests against the ceasefire with the Naga rebels have turned into a question of self-identity: Manipuri theatre persons and filmmakers have declared that they will not participate in functions hosted by the Union government. The recent 'peace mission' sent by the Centre was met with hostile black flags. With the All Manipur Students' Union threatening to launch a separatist movement, Manipur is sitting on a deadly powder keg which the Centre can ignore at its own peril.

For Delhi, it has always been an easy ploy to put the 'seven sisters' of the North-east out of its mind, as if they do not exist, or resort to force when things go out of control. The NDA government must realise that its contradictory postures on the ceasefire have been taken with a large pinch of salt. Even Assam is suffering from 'bad faith'. That the Manipuris

are not ready to believe that no further geographical divisions would be enacted, only goes to prove that the home ministry has botched up the ceasefire package. Now, with the weaker Khaplang faction of the Naga underground asserting the Nagas' 'right to sovereignty' (the NSCN-IM faction has already stated that it stands for a 'Greater Nagaland') and pro-ceasefire rallies in the Naga-dominated areas in Manipur, even president's rule seems to be backfiring. Besides, ominous shadows of ethnic conflict once again linger on the horizon as the separatists think this to be an appropriate time to up their ante.

Manipur is in a state of alienation; there is a virtual institutional breakdown, the opportunist political class has lost all credibility, the government is bankrupt, salaries have not been paid for months, and underdevelopment has pushed the state into an abyss. This is the subterranean angst which forms the backdrop of the on-going protests. The Centre must move fast. Manipur deserves a better deal. That no territorial compromise will be allowed should be stated categorically. Any dilly-dallying or dubious political games might lead to a dead end.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Centre agrees to review Naga ceasefire

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 8. - The Centre today agreed to review the entire framework of the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M). The decision was announced after a two-hour meeting between the Prime Minister, the home minister and the Manipur leaders.

"We shall review the cease fire agreement including the words "without territorial limits", presently incorporated in the agreement so as to ensure that all doubts about preserving the integrity of Manipur and other Northeastern states are removed", Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee

said in a statement after the meeting.

Mr Vajpayee invited more Manipur leaders to meet him for a "free and frank" discussions and said he would visit Imphal at the earliest. The Prime Minister appealed to the Manipuris to remain calm and expressed grief at the loss of innocent lives.

The decision is seen as a setback for Mr LK Advani who had personally piloted the controversial ceasefire. Briefing the press after the meeting, Mr Advani's deputy, Mr ID Swami, said the government "hopes to review the entire ceasefire by the July end".

Asked if the decision was an

admission that the truce agreement was announced hastily, Mr Swami said: "I won't call it hasty. But yes, certain facts were not taken into consideration. It's like allopathic medicine, the ceasefire led to certain reactions. We are now trying to rectify it". He admitted the possibility of Kukki-Maithi clashes influenced the review decision.

The meeting was attended by the home secretary, Mr Kamal Pandey, and the Centre's negotiator with the NSCN (IM), Mr K Padmanabhaiah.

Did the home ministry

■ See CEASEFIRE: page 2

## Manipur firing

CEASEFIRE:

(Continued from page 1)

recommend this move? Mr Swami said he had briefed Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani about the situation in Manipur and the people's reaction to the truce agreement. The people were agitated, he said. Asked if the government had delayed reacting to the situation, Mr Swami said the government was constantly monitoring the situation. Will Mr Padmanabhaiah continue as the government negotiator? "Well, he is there", he said.

On whether the NSCN-IM was taken into confidence about the review decision, the minister said: "It's a bilateral agreement. We will talk to them while reviewing the ceasefire".

Referring to the Manipur Governor's letter to Mr Advani warning that the state leadership could pass onto the ultras, Mr Swami said: "I don't foresee such an eventuality."

Mr Swami's report deals extensively with the unhappiness in Manipur and recommends a review of the ceasefire agreement especially the words "without territorial limits".

The spokesman of the Manipur legislators, Mr Chandramani Singh, said: "The question of happiness and unhappiness does not arise. Let us see. After all it's an assurance given by the Prime Minister". The legislators will be in the capital for a few days to assess the situation, he said.

Former state chief minister, Mr Radhabinod Koijam, also hoped for the best after the assurance of a ceasefire review.

THE STATESMAN

# Manipur to return medals, Arjuna awards

## Truce protestors rule the streets

HT Correspondent  
Imphal, July 7

MANIPUR WILL stay away from the sixth National Games in Punjab and return all medals received in the team championships in the previous Games if the ceasefire is not withdrawn from the State, Manipur Olympic Association president G Joykumar Sharma said today.

Manipur won 49 gold, 24 silver and 39 bronze medals in the last National Games besides the Raja Bhalendra Singh trophy.

Two Arjuna award winners from Manipur, boxer NG Dingko Singh and weightlifter Kunjarani Devi have been asked to return their awards, Sharma said.

Sharma conveyed the decision to Union Minister of State for Home ID Swami today even as protestors ruled the streets across the State.

Thousands of people defied the curfew orders and took to the streets of Manipur today in protest against the ceasefire extension.

At least 20 protestors, including six women, were injured as police resorted to lathicharge and lobbed teargas shells to control the mob at Wangkhei and Tinsid Road in Imphal.

Swami left for New Delhi along with additional Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, PD Shenoy, to submit a report on the situation in Manipur to Union Home Minister LK Advani today. The two had to be flown from the Assam Rifles helipad to the airport in an Army chopper to avoid the protests.

Before leaving for Delhi, a Central team led by Swami spoke to politicians, lawyers and academicians to gather public opinion on the ceasefire extension.

But United Committee Manipur (UCM) representatives refused to meet the team, saying their main demand was the withdrawal of ceasefire from Manipur.

Mass sit-in protests were reported from Lamsang, Wangkhei, Kongba, Nongmeibung, Mantripukhri, Wahengbam Leikai, Malom, Singjamei, Moirangkhom, Liberal College area at Luwang Sangbam and New Cachar road.

Largescale protests were also staged in parts of Thoubal and Bisnupur districts and the hill district of Churachandpur.

The protestors carried placards reading 'withdraw ceasefire immediately' and 'do not disturb our territory'.

Assam Rifles personnel and the police dispersed the gatherings at the VIP area of Babupara, Uripok and parts of Imphal.

The six-party UCM, which spearheads the anti-ceasefire agitation, had urged the people to participate in large numbers in the demonstrations.

Various social organisations, in separate statements, said they would support the ongoing agitation till the withdrawal of the ceasefire from the Manipur boundary.

They said passing a resolution in Parliament to protect the State territory would not calm down the people as such a resolution can be revoked any time.

# Ulfa alert sounded in Assam

Utpal Parashar  
Guwahati, June 7

THE NEW Tarun Gogoi ministry in Assam faces its first major brush with Ulfa following reports that a group of over 50 hardcore militants belonging to the banned outfit have entered Assam from Bhutan in a bid to carry out strikes all over the State.

According to intelligence reports and statements given to the Jorhat police by two arrested militants, a group of nearly 50 militants, mostly belonging to the outfit's Enigma Unit, has entered Assam during the last week of May.

An alert has been sounded all over the State following the revelations.

On Wednesday morning, the Jorhat police arrested two militants, Brojen Mili and Horen Konwar, both belonging to the Enigma Unit, from a house in Teok.

According to the police the militants had come to Teok in an Upper Assam bound bus.

In their statements, both the militants revealed that they belonged to the group, which had entered Assam from Bhutan.

## 11 CRPF men injured in rocket attack

Guwahati, June 7

AT LEAST 11 CRPF personnel were seriously injured in a twin rocket attack by Ulfa on a CRPF camp and police station in Assam's Goalpara district early Thursday morning marking the second assault on a police station by the outlawed group this week.

Goalpara police said on Thursday, a group of ultras arrived at the CRPF camp and the adjacent police station at Dhupdhara and fired from rocket launchers and automatic weapons.

The police and CRPF men retaliated which led to an exchange of fire for about an hour, police said adding that the firing damaged glass panes were shattered and office property.

Any casualty on the ultras' side was not immediately known as they escaped under cover of darkness, police said.

The injured have been admitted to the Gauhati Medical College Hospital.

Thursday's onslaught was the second after Monday night's attack on Patacharkuchi police station in Barpeta district in the State since the Tarun Gogoi-led Congress ministry took over the reins last month. On Monday night Ulfa militants attacked Patacharkuchi police station in lower Assam's Barpeta district with rockets and AK-47 assault rifles injuring two civilians.

Security measures have been stepped up and search operations launched to trace the ultras.

PTI

"They claimed that they were sent for some specific missions to be carried out at Jorhat. Interrogation is on to get the details of their plans," said Pradip Chandra Saloi, SP

Jorhat. He added that security arrangements in the district have been beefed up following the disclosures made by the arrested militants.

At present, the Ulfa and the

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NDFB have nearly a dozen camps located in the dense jungles of South Bhutan where most of their cadres are imparted training.

Security along the Indo-Bhutan border was intensified before the Assembly elections, to prevent militants from entering Assam.

"But it seems, the Ulfa and NDFB militants were able to sneak in after the elections were over and are now trying to carry out strikes," said a senior police official.

On Sunday, a group of suspected NDFB ultras shot dead 10 woodcutters in the Lunchung Reserve Forest in Kokrajhar district. A day later, a group of suspected Ulfa militants fired a rocket at Patacharkuchi police station in Barpeta district of Lower Assam.

The rocket fired from a truck damaged the constables' quarters. No one was injured in the attack.

According to intelligence sources, a group of 20 Ulfa militants armed with rocket launchers and sophisticated weapons has entered Golaghat district last week with the intention of collecting funds and carrying out strikes.

# Manipur MLAs, MPs serve ultimatum

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 7.** Manipur MPs and MLAs have threatened to resign their seats en masse if the Government fails to withdraw the territorial extension of the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (I-M) by July 31.

At a press conference here today, the former Deputy Chief Minister of Manipur, Mr. L. Chandramani Singh, said political leaders and people of the State were against extension of the ceasefire to Manipur.

"We support the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) in Nagaland but certainly not in Manipur and other northeastern States. We demand its withdrawal from Manipur immediately," he said. The MPs, MLAs and other party leaders are scheduled to meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, tomorrow.

Two former Chief Ministers — Mr. W. Nipamacha Singh and Mr. Radhabinod Koijam — the Assembly Speaker, Dr. S. Dhananjoy Singh, and the BJP leader, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, were also present. The MPs and MLAs have floated a forum — the Manipur MPs and MLAs Forum for Territorial Integrity, led by Dr. Dhananjoy Singh — to carry forward their struggle against the extension of the ceasefire. Describing the situation in Manipur as "very serious", Mr. Chandramani Singh said that violent protests had broken out because of the Centre's "incorrect decision" to extend the ceasefire "without territorial limits."

He feared that the extension would only help legitimise the designated camps of the NSCN (I-M) and the insurgent outfit, could at a

later stage, use it as a ploy to demand greater Nagaland.

On the proposed meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Singh said a detailed memorandum reflecting the developments after the visit of the Central team to the State would be submitted. But he added the "bottomline remains withdrawal of territorial extension of the ceasefire."

## Minister's assurance

UNI, PTI report:

In Imphal, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. I.D. Swami, assured the people of the State that the Centre would manage to pass a resolution in Parliament on protecting the territorial integrity of Manipur. He gave this assurance to senior citizens before his departure for New Delhi.

The high-level central team met representatives of various communities, including Muslim and Naga representatives, during their three-day visit.

## 20 injured in lathicharge

At least 20 protestors, including six women, were injured when para-military forces and police resorted to lathicharge and fired teargas shells as thousands of protestors defied curfew and took to the streets in Imphal and across the State.

## NSCN (I-M)'s warning

The NSCN (I-M) has warned that it would be forced to return to the path of violence if the Government does not fulfil its commitment relating to extension of ceasefire. In an interview to BBC in Bangkok, the NSCN (I-M) secretary-general, Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah, said there was no question of compromise on what had been agreed to in the ceasefire.

# Ulfa, Bodos agree to reduce presence in Bhutan

BY MANOJ ANAND

Guwahati, July 7: The banned United Liberation Front of Asom and National Democratic Front of Bodoland have signed a written agreement with the Royal Government of Bhutan in June this year at Thimpu to reduce their presence from the Himalayn Kingdom.

After three days of talks, Ulfa's political advisor, Mr Bishnujyoti Burhagohain, and the finance secretary cum assistant general secretary, Mr Chitran Hazarika, signed the agreed minutes with the government on three points: the

Ulfa will remove four of their nine camps in Bhutan by December, 2001; they will reduce the strength of their cadres in the remaining five camps; and, following the implementation of this agreement within December, 2001, the government and the Ulfa will meet again to find a solution to the remaining five Ulfa camps in Bhutan.

However, the NDFB, who were also told to remove their camps from Bhutanese territory, had agreed to leave but could not commit a deadline. The home minister, Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho, informed

this to the National Assembly of Bhutan on Friday.

At the behest of the King and the National Assembly, the home minister had led a Bhutanese delegation in five rounds of talks with the militant in June this year.

The Zhung Kalyon, Dasho Rinzin Gyaltsen, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Royal government, explained that the agreement with the Ulfa leaders had been signed primarily in keeping with the general consensus in the Assembly to solve the problem through peaceful means, and to uphold Bhutan's status as a

peace-loving nation.

The content of the agreement had been drafted taking into account the country's security, Bhutan's cordial relationship with India, and the interests of the Bhutanese people, the state run national daily of Bhutan *Kuensel* reported on Saturday.

The home minister informed the Assembly which expressed apprehension over the credibility of the middle-rank cadres of the outfit that the Ulfa leaders had specifically informed the royal government that their representatives had been given full mandate to take decisions. "During the three days of dis-

cussions, the contents of the agreement was thoroughly discussed," he said.

Some of the senior members of the House however pointed out that the country should not forget that the militants had dishonoured their own words in the past so the administration should be ready to face any eventuality in case of Ulfa and Bodo militants breaching the agreement.

The National Assembly had also resolved that, if the militants did not honour their own commitment as stipulated in the agreement, there was no option but to resort to military force.

# Naga talks: just a few words more

## Bordering on peace

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**T**HE news media has portrayed a dismal picture of the state of talks and the ceasefire between the Government of India and the major Naga faction, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M). In truth, the two sides are separated by barely a few words on the extension of their four-year-old ceasefire.

Some problems developed during the visit of the government representative, K. Padmanabhiiah, to the talks with the Nagas in Bangkok in May. The discussions were, at times, brutally frank and the NSCN leadership even threatened to pull out of the talks if the government did not accept its views on the extension of the area under ceasefire in the Northeast.

A Naga participant who confirmed the differences said he was surprised by Indian news accounts of the talks for the two sides were barely "a line or two" from agreement. So where are these major differences that some newspapers have headlined as pushing the talks onto "its last legs?"

The Naga leadership is based in Bangkok and this is the second round of talks in recent months between Padmanabhiiah, the designated representative of the prime minister, and the NSCN (I-M)'s main negotiators: Thiungelang Muivah and Isaak Chisi Swu, respectively general secretary and chairman of the most powerful rebel military machine in the Northeast.

The remarks by the Naga official, who is close to Swu and Muivah, have been confirmed by Padmanabhiiah, a former Union Home secretary who has been special envoy to the talks since July 1999. The two days of consultations with Muivah and other NSCN leaders focussed on the announcement of the extension of the ceasefire to a larger geographical area than its current limits to the state of Nagaland. This would mean, in real terms, that the two sides would observe the truce in parts of the hills of Ma-

nipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh where the NSCN has bases and cadres and where there have been clashes between the Nagas and security forces. The Naga side has affirmed that the ceasefire area extension and their demand for a larger state comprising "Naga-inhabited areas" were two separate issues and would be negotiated separately.

The Nagas say that it is illogical for the government and the NSCN to have a truce in Nagaland and be prepared to fight each other in other parts of the region. Of course, one of the principal demands of the NSCN has been



**SANJOY HAZARIKA**

ened to break off the discussions and authorised his followers to be prepared to return to the jungle. He also dissolved the Tata Hoho, the 'Parliament' of the underground organisation. But this should be seen in the light of asserting his political pre-eminence in the group and giving him a free hand with the negotiations.

The sticking points arose over two phrases in the Indian draft which said that the ceasefire would "operate throughout the Northeast" and spoke of the 'claim' to a so-called Greater Nagaland.

The Naga draft reads: "The extent of

sides signed a ceasefire accord and agreed to work for a long-term solution of the Naga issue; the militants have been demanding independence from India. Despite occasional problems, the truce has held although the NSCN (I-M) has made it clear from the initial stage that it wanted the ceasefire to be applicable to all 'Naga-inhabited areas' and rejected its limitation to Nagaland. A tougher stance by the group came, predictably, a few days after the Government of India signed a ceasefire accord with a rival NSCN wing on April 28, a move seen by the I-M faction as trying to marginalise it. The action infuriated the Muivah camp. Yet, the Nagas are aware that the stakes are too high to force an abrogation of the ceasefire: civil society in Nagaland and other parts of the Northeast want peace to continue.

The Naga people have been able to breathe — albeit to a limited degree — freely since the ceasefire began. Confrontations between the army and Naga armed groups have sharply fallen. The current ceasefire, restricted to Nagaland, expires on July 31 and both sides have benefited from the peace process. Little or no fighting has been reported in Nagaland; a number of NSCN cadres have settled down to a peaceful life, buying houses and real estate. The extortion of funds by some cadres has also increased. The latter problem has caused the NSCN leadership much concern.

Four years is long enough to tighten the nuts and bolts of the ceasefire. Both sides should now resolve to tackle substantial political issues such as the future of the Nagas and other key elements of a long-term settlement. For that to happen, the Indian political leadership will need to be involved because the impact will be felt far beyond the Northeast. Meanwhile, the Indian media would do well to dig below the surface before jumping to sweeping and erroneous conclusions.

**Four years is long enough to tighten the nuts and bolts of the ceasefire. Both sides should now resolve to tackle substantial political issues**

that the negotiations and ceasefire be between 'two entities', meaning that the issue is not limited by geographical lines.

Although there was initial opposition from the other state governments on the ceasefire area extension, they had virtually come around to accepting the extension as a positive move that would reduce tension and conflict in their areas. However, there have been changes in the regional political scene in this past month with a new Congress government in Assam and President's Rule in Manipur. It is unclear how the new government in Assam would react. But despite misgivings, it would make a great deal of sense if all sides agreed to the ceasefire extension to the region in addition to the state of Nagaland. This would be a positive step to a substantive peace.

The talks between Padmanabhiiah and Muivah in Bangkok were inconclusive and Muivah, at one point, threat-

the ceasefire has no bearing on the issue of the Naga territories. These two are separate issues." Barring this and the dropping of the 'Northeast' phrase and no reference to extension of ceasefire for a year beyond August 2001, when it is due to expire, this draft is identical to the government version. Both talk of the ceasefire agreement as between 'two entities', that the two sides would abide by revised ceasefire ground rules established in January this year when an elaborate system of checks and balances on both sides was worked out; and to chew the peace pipe further "on substantive issues to bring about a lasting political solution."

The government says that while the ceasefire between the two entities is not restricted by physical borders, the reality is that the two sides confront each other only in the Northeast.

Peace returned to Nagaland in 1997 after many years of turmoil when the two

*The writer's latest book is 'Rites of Passage'*

# Centre to bring resolution on North-East states' integrity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

GOVERNMENT is willing to have a resolution adopted in Parliament on protection of the territorial integrity of north-eastern states following the extension of area coverage of the ceasefire with NSCN (I-M), Home Minister L K Advani said today.

"The territorial integrity of all north-eastern states will be protected and there will not be any compromise on this issue," Advani said, while allaying apprehensions raised by MPs at the meeting of the

Consultative Committee of his Ministry here.

Responding to unanimous appeal from the Committee members that there should not be any violation of territorial integrity of these states, he said, "The Government would be willing to have a resolution passed in Parliament on the protection of territorial integrity of the north-eastern states to allay fears and apprehensions in the minds of the people."

When Committee members pointed out that there should have been "wider consultations" with all concerned state governments and

other organisations before the agreement was signed, Advani said it was not correct that Centre had not consulted the state governments.

Advani said chief ministers were consulted on different occasions on the issue and there was a unanimous view for extension of the truce to bring peace in the region, according to an official release.

He also mentioned about his meeting with the all-party delegation before he left for a three-nation tour.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Centre to bring resolution on N-E states' integrity

Referring to the prevailing situation in Manipur, he said a high-level delegation, led by Minister of State for Home I D Swami, is now in the state to talk to various organisations like the All Manipur Students' Union and leading women's body, Meirphaibis, to know their views on the issue.

Advani informed the members that the report of the team would be discussed at a meeting convened by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday. He said the Centre was also in touch with the NSCN (I-M) on the issue.

Home Secretary Kamal

Pande briefed the committee on the ground-rules of the ceasefire, revised this January.

After a resume on the truce right from 1997, Pande said there were enough safeguards in the ground-rules and clarified that no area can be defined as Naga-inhabited area outside Nagaland.

When CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee pointed out about the demand for a separate kamtapur state being raised by an extremist outfit in North Bengal and their nexus with ULFA, Advani said the Government had "sensitised" the state government to deal with the situation.

## Central team in Manipur

**IMPHAL, JULY 5.** A Central team, headed by the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. I. D. Swami, arrived here today to assess the situation arising out of the extension of ceasefire between the Centre and the NSCN (I-M), the Manipur Governor, Mr. Ved Marwah, said.

The team's visit offered an opportunity to put across the views on the ceasefire agreement and express the fears on the threat to the territorial integrity of Manipur, Mr. Marwah said in a release. He was aware of the people's anguish and would do everything possible to convey their feelings to the Centre. Everyone had a right to express his or her view, without creating a law and order situation or escalating communal tension.

The Government did not want to muzzle peaceful forms of protest, he said and appealed, particularly to mothers, Meira Paibi organisations (women torch bearers' associations) and the

student community, to refrain from any act of violence.

The State administration was keen on avoiding any confrontation but in the light of the tragic incidents of June 18, it had to be doubly careful, the Governor said. He appealed to the people to maintain peace. — PTI

### Left parliamentary team's visit

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 5.** The Left has decided to send a parliamentary team to Manipur between July 7 and 8, to study the situation there. The move came in the wake of popular protests in the State over the Centre's extension of ceasefire accord with the NSCN (I-M) to all Naga-inhabited areas.

The six-member team, including Mr. Subodh Roy, Mr. Bajuban Riyan, Mr. Nikhilnanda Sar (CPI-M), Mr. Ajay Chakraborty (CPI), Mr. Bir Singh Mahato (Forward

Bloc) and Mr. Manoj Bhattacharya (RSP), would meet the Governor, the leaders of various political parties, the people and organisations, the CPI(M) announced today.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Manipur MPs and MLAs called on the Lok Janshakti president and Communications Minister, Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, to garner support for its demand on the withdrawal of the ceasefire.

The party spokesman, Mr. Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said the delegation apprised Mr. Paswan of the popular protests in Manipur. It pointed out that the Centre had extended the area of ceasefire without consulting the State.

Mr. Paswan told the delegation that his party's sub-committee, set up under the former Union Minister, Mr. Jai Narayan Prasad 'Nishad,' had recommended that the Government reconsider the decision to extend the ceasefire in Manipur.



# 'No solution for Nagas within Constitution'

By Barun Das Gupta

**FROM SOMEWHERE IN MOKUKCHUNG (Nagaland), JULY 4.** From outside, the house does not look different from any other house. But as one is ushered into the main hall, one finds about a dozen young men in their late teens or early twenties, armed with AK-47 rifles and UZI sub-machine guns, keeping a close watch on the surroundings.

One is led down a winding staircase, each landing guarded by an armed militant, three storeys below into the office of Mr. Kitovi Zhimomi, general secretary, NSCN, and Ato Kilonser ("prime minister") of the "Government of People's Republic of Nagaland" (GPRN) of the Khaplang faction.

On a table beside him, is a closed-circuit TV. "This is for our security," Mr. Zhimomi says, "for, sometimes we have unwanted visitors."

Under the formal ceasefire the Centre entered into with the NSCN (K) on April 28, there is no restriction on the movement of their men but they cannot move

openly and outside designated areas with arms.

Before the formal ceasefire, there was an "informal" one between the NSCN (K) and the security forces for the past one year. The April agreement only gave *de jure* recognition to a *de facto* reality.

Mr. Zhimomi gives his views on a wide range of subjects. On the integration of the Naga-inhabited areas or on the demand for Naga sovereignty, Mr. Zhimomi does not have any difference with Mr. Muivah of the rival faction.

There is one difference, though. The Centre's latest agreement with Mr. Muivah extends the ceasefire "without territorial limits" as if it were applicable to the whole country. Mr. Zhimomi, on the other hand, wants it extended to Naga-inhabited areas with "specific territorial limits."

About the present relations between the two factions, he says: "We usually try to avoid each other. Our orders to our men are to observe maximum restraint. But sometimes when the two sides

happen to run into each other, they fight. But normally we inform each other (of our movements) to avoid accidental confrontation."

He cautions the Centre against coming to "different understandings" on a solution of the Naga problem with different groups such as the two factions of the NSCN and the NNC. About his own side's taking part in any future talks with the Centre, he says they would have to do their homework which would involve consulting all the 30 Naga tribes.

He also adds that any settlement with the I-M group "which is acceptable to the Naga people" will be acceptable to the Khaplang group as well. But what if the I-M group accepts a solution within the framework of the Indian Constitution?

"I am sure the Naga people will never accept anything but sovereignty," he says. "Nothing short of a sovereign, independent Naga country will be acceptable to us. There can be no solution within the framework of the Indian Con-

stitution." The other point he harps on is the integration of the Nagas living in Myanmar. Their population is over two million. The Nagas in Myanmar, he says, will also have to be brought into the Naga State. After solving the problem of integrating Indian Nagas into one State, the second problem will be integrating the Myanmar Nagas. For this, some other country's intervention may be necessary, he says.

The Myanmar authorities were now willing to have a ceasefire with the Khaplang group, "but we are not willing."

His observation about China is interesting. He thinks China wants Myanmar to remain a military junta-ruled country, if it does not become a communist country.

But China would never like to see Myanmar as a democratic country.

He recalls that China had helped them before the Cultural Revolution and also afterwards and feels sure that "even now they may support us".

HP-9  
5/8

# Northeast Chief Ministers discuss ceasefire extension

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 4.** MPs and MLAs from Manipur today decided to take all possible steps in a democratic and peaceful manner to pursue the demand for immediate withdrawal of the extension of ceasefire agreement between the NSCN (I-M) and the Centre without territorial limits.

Even as the Manipur representatives held a meeting, three Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya met this evening to share notes on the extension of ceasefire to their States.

The Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, told *The Hindu*, after the meeting that both Mr. Mukti Mithi of Arunachal Pradesh and Mr. E.W. Mawlong of Meghalaya, were of the opinion that the States should have been consulted by the Centre before taking the decision.

Mr. Gogoi said the Chief Ministers plan to meet the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, tomorrow to convey their feelings. Mr. Vajpayee has called a meeting here on Sunday to discuss the crisis in Manipur.

Meanwhile at an emergency meeting here today, three Manipur MPs — the Union Minister, Mr. Th. Chouba Singh (MSCP), Mr. W. Angou Singh (Congress) and Mr. Hoikhomang Haokip (NCP) — and 30 MLAs blamed the Centre for the present crisis in the

State on account of the decision to extend the ceasefire to Manipur and other North-East States without consulting and taking the consent of the State Government and the political leaders.

The meeting lambasted the Centre for not paying "proper and immediate" attention to the cause of Manipur while taking up the case of Tamil Nadu without delay.

The meeting also resolved that in case the Centre failed to bring about an amicable solution to the problem being faced by Manipur on July 8, all MPs and MLAs would launch a mass agitation in a democratic and non-violent manner and join the common people and all political parties to "save the territorial integrity of Manipur".

The Manipur leaders also expressed concern over the division among the people of the State by organising separate rallies and said it might hamper the "Save Manipur" mass movement of the people. "Manipur does not belong to any particular group or community but it belongs to all and all are Manipuris," the leaders said while appealing to the people to join hands.

The MLAs, who were present included the Speaker, Mr. S. Dhanjoy Singh, the former Chief Minister, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh and the former Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. L. Chandramani Singh.

THE HINDU

# The ceasefire with the Nagas

By Murkot Ramunny

HP-12 9/7  
**T**HIS IS not the first time a ceasefire has been introduced in Nagaland. Lessons of history have not been learnt while facts are being twisted by some media experts, particularly the electronic media, misleading the present generation of Nagas and the rest of the people of the Northeast, India and even the world. The main intention here is to set the record straight, to explain the short-term and long-term effect of the recent order extending the ceasefire to Naga-inhabited areas of neighbouring States.

Sir Akbar Hydari, then Governor of Assam, visited Kohima, headquarters of the Naga Hills district, on June 27, 28 and 29, 1947. He had long discussions with leaders of the Naga National Council (NNC). The result was the Nine-Point Understanding between the Governor and the NNC. Its main points were decentralisation of administration to the NNC, with special powers regarding land and its resources.

Points number six and nine need special mention. Point six said: "The present administrative divisions should be modified so as (1) to bring back into the Naga Hills district all the forests transferred to the Sibsagar and Nowgong districts (of Assam) in the past; (2) to bring under one unified administrative unit, as far as possible, all Nagas. All the areas so included would be within the proposed agreement".

The administrative situation in the Northeast at that time was that Naga Hills was a district of Assam, so was Mizoram known as Lushai Hills, present Meghalaya consisted of two districts Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills. Arunachal Pradesh was then the North East Frontier Agency, technically a part of Assam but administered by the Governor through an Adviser. Manipur and Tripura were princely states. Changing the borders of the districts of Assam "as far as possible" (according to the Understanding) would have posed no problem. I do not think, at that time, anyone thought of touching Manipur, then under the Maharaja.

The ninth point of the Understanding was "at the end of ten years the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at". There was vehement opposition from

one section of the NNC. To this minority, the ninth point meant "the Naga right to self-determination at the end of the agreement period". Seeing that the majority of the members had been persuaded, the then Deputy Commissioner, Sir Charles Pawsey, and P. F. Adams, Secretary to the Governor, both British ICS officers, put the issue to vote. The agreement was approved by a small majority. Negotiations ended, with the opposition still protesting.

independence". The Prime Minister accepted the proposal for setting up a centrally administered unit with Naga Hills district and Tuensang Frontier Division of the then NEFA, which was also centrally administered through the Governor. The new unit came into being on December 1, 1957.

This administration continued for about two years, while the Naga Peoples Convention consolidated its position and from

## *If the Government of India gives in on small matters, the militants expect to gain the upper hand on bigger issues.*

The Nine-Point Agreement was sent to Nehru saying "The ten year period envisaged in this understanding will promote integration of the hills and plains. With a sympathetic policy, financial assistance, and right type of administrative officers, this could be achieved". Nehru's reply was "I congratulate you on the success you have achieved. The note on the discussion and understanding arrived at Kohima will be sent to the Constituent Assembly".

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution dealing with the tribal people of the Northeast formed them into District Councils but gave them all the powers, in fact more than that envisaged in the Agreement, the Understanding was, however, not mentioned anywhere.

The point to note is that Governor Hydari's discussion, the Agreement, or the Constitution did not concede that contiguous areas would be added to Nagaland. It was just a pious wish according to point six of the Agreement, "to bring under one unified administrative unit as far as possible all Nagas". To say that in 1947, India had promised all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas would be incorporated in Nagaland is incorrect. Nehru met the moderate Naga leaders who organised the Naga People's Convention on September 25, 1957, and told them "The Government of India was prepared to consider changes in the administrative setup in the Naga areas, which may involve changes in the Constitution. The Government were not prepared for any scheme based on

October 22 to 26, 1959, met and passed "a sixteen-point resolution to form the basis of negotiation with the Government of India for the final Naga political settlement". This has been misinterpreted by some media (particularly private electronic media) that this was a "Sixteen-Point Agreement" and that it included a Constitutional guarantee for including neighbouring Naga-inhabited areas in Nagaland.

The Naga delegation met the Prime Minister on July 26, 1960, and when the first resolution — "The territories of NHTA, and any other Naga area which may hereafter come under it shall form a state within the Indian union, known as Nagaland" — was read, the Prime Minister said "Yes it shall be a state within the Indian union" but added "Regarding the question of other areas, which may hereafter come under it, we do not know which areas will come. You do not want to be part of another State, while it is a State".

Each one of the 16 points of the resolution was read and there were agreements on some; on some like "There shall be a council of six Ministers and three Deputy Ministers", the reply was that the Constitution does not lay down the number of Ministers. This is given as an example to show that it was not a "16-Point Agreement" but a resolution consisting of 16 points, some of which were accepted, some did not need acceptance, and some were rejected. Point number 12 of the resolution was for transfer of reserve forests

which had gone to Assam. The Prime Minister's reply was "This is a complicated issue. The Government of India cannot decide unilaterally since Assam Government was involved. They have to be consulted".

Point number 13 of the resolution said "The other Naga tribes inhabiting the areas contiguous to the present Nagaland can join that State, if they so desire". At the detailed discussion at the official level, regarding the 13th point, the delegation was told, "When a State was formed, areas have to be precisely given. If there were to be any additions Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution have to be followed". These articles indicate that the President has to refer to the Legislature concerned.

The present fear of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh are of short-term and long-term nature. The short-term implication is of law and order which is a State subject. Going by the ground rules agreed by the Government, camps of the NSCN will not be attacked. Other militants when chased could take refuge along with the Naga groups, in their camps or in their villages. Militants of other States will get a boost, assistance and refuge.

The long-term danger is the NSCN demanding "greater Nagaland". This was prevented up till now. According to the NSCN leaders, at present the problem does not come up. They do not vouch for the future. The NSCN (I-M) general secretary, Mr. T. Muivah, has a personal interest. He belongs to the Thankul tribe of Manipur; his village is in that district of Manipur. There has been relative peace in Thankul area. We have to see what will happen when he moves freely there.

The lesson is that if the Government of India gives in on small matters, the militants expect to gain the upper hand on bigger issues. At one stage during the "cessation of operations" in the 1960s, the Prime Minister was asked to go to Calcutta Airport and meet the Naga militants. Indira Gandhi refused, and asked them to come and meet her in her office. They did. Today the representative of the Prime Minister, a former Home Secretary, travels to foreign countries to meet them.

(The writer, an IAS officer, retired as Adviser to the Governor of Nagaland.)

THE HILL

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## MANIPUR SPEAKER AND CHIEF MINISTER WANNABE DHANANJOY SINGH

# 'I was only trying to give Manipur a stable govt'

Sapan Dhananjay Singh has made dubious history by becoming the first assembly speaker since the anti-defection law was enacted to stake claim for chief ministership. Though he withdrew his claim for lack of numbers, he remains unconvinced that the requirements of impartiality as speaker, and the fact that his office is vested with quasi-judicial powers, should have prevented him bidding for power. He spoke to **SANKARSHAN THAKUR**.



**"Manipur is such a poor state, where will the money come from? People change parties because they are fed up with inefficient governments. They want results, so their MLAs keep on trying. One Government, another government, then another Government, like that."**

■ Why are so many defections take place in Manipur? Why is the assembly so fractured?

I AM the speaker. The defections take place among the MLAs. I am only here to recognise or not recognise groups when they split from each other. It will not be proper for me to comment more. I have nothing to do with what happens inside political parties.

■ But you became an active player even as speaker, you dabbled in factional politics, you staked a claim...

YES, but not because I wanted to. What can I do if so many MLAs pressure me to become the Chief Minister? They have been coming to my place for the last few months and mounting pressure on me. What can I do? I am also an MLA in addition to being speaker. I also have a political life, a political future.

■ But in the end you didn't have the MLAs you say were pressuring you.

SO many things happen in politics, so many twists and turns. What can I do if they withdrew at the last moment?

■ Isn't it true that you wooed MLAs, that you held a camp of defectors at your official residence?

MY house is open to all MLAs and it should be. What can I do if MLAs want to come to my official residence? Should I put a ban on their entry?

■ Do you think it was wrong of you to have staked claim for Chief Ministership without resigning as speaker?

NO, it has happened in the past.

■ But that was before the anti-defection law came, then the speaker did not have the powers they now have.

THERE are lots of allegations that I misused my chair to get a majority of MLAs behind me, all that is not true, not true at all. How can any speaker do anything unless the MLAs themselves want to defect? People defect in Manipur, nobody can stop them.

■ Why do you think they defect so much? Why are so many government toppled?

ASK the MLAs, don't ask me. I know people are saying I played a role in toppling the Kojiam Ministry. I did not, the MLAs did. The Government was voted out on the floor of the house. How can a speaker prevent that?

■ There are allegations that a lot of money changes hands in Manipur, which is why governments are falling all the time.

NO, no, not true at all. Manipur is such a poor state, where will the money come from? People change parties because they are fed up with inefficient governments. The people want results, so their MLAs keep on trying. One Government, another government, then another Government, like that.

■ You don't think it is an unhealthy trend?

LISTEN, what can I do if MLAs want to split and form separate groups? That is

politics. As far as I am concerned, I did not do any such thing in the recent problems. I could have done some things because I have certain powers as speaker, but did I do them? Kojiam is blaming me also but why could he not control the BJP,

which is his party's ally? They toppled his government, not I.

■ What do you see happening now?

LET us see what happens. Maybe after some time there will be another govern-

ment, people want a popular government and maybe after a little time, the MLAs will get together and do something constructive for the state.

■ So you are against fresh elections?

ABSOLUTELY, why have elections? The MLAs will find a way, I am sure, like-minded parties will get together and find a solution to the current impasse. There is no need to dissolve the assembly.

■ And are you in the race?

THERE is no race at the moment (laughs). I tell you clearly, I did not have the right number of MLAs eventually, even though all the time they had been telling me to stake a claim and promising me that they will support. Actually, I was not in the race the last time also. It is only the MLAs who kept coming to my house and pleading with me and forcing me. That is why I agreed to finally stake a claim. No otherwise, I did not want to become Chief Minister. I am already the speaker.

■ So are you saying you will not be in the race when efforts resume to form a government?

I AM only talking about now. I am not in the race now because there is no race. About the future, only time will tell. I cannot promise I will not try again. After all, my aim is good and noble. I am only trying to give Manipur a much needed stable government.

For the moment, I don't want to resign from the speakership. The Governor asked me to resign before staking claim. But I took legal opinion. I do not have to resign. Some people want me to resign. They are the ones blaming for toppling their government.

But ask Radhabinod (Kojiam) what he did when he himself was toppling the Nipamacha government a few months back. Now he is complaining about being toppled (laughs).

■ What happened during the toppling of the Nipamacha Singh Government? did you side with Kojiam then.

NO, nothing like that, nothing unfair. Just politics, you know how it is, MLAs defected, the government lost its majority and it fell. The same thing has happened now, why blame me?

## PakistanPeriscope

### The road taken on talks

AFTER adopting a holier-than-thou attitude for 18 months, India has now more than just agreed to talk to Pakistan: its prime minister has actually invited Pakistan's military leader for talks in India on all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. On his part, too, General Pervez Musharraf doesn't seem rigid any more. He began by rubbishing the Lahore Peace Summit of 1999 in which Kashmir didn't figure as the 'core issue' between the two sides. Later, however, he shifted ground, sought domestic support for a "moderate and flexible" approach to the Kashmir issue, and called for unconditional talks "anytime, anywhere". Does this mean that the situation is ripe for Hindu hardliners in India and the military hawks in Pakistan to arrive at a historic compromise and bury the hatchet?

We think not. For starters, the weight of history is pitted against such a quick fix. In the last decade, there were at least four false starts in 1989 (Bhutto & Gandhi), 1994 (Bhutto & Rao), 1997 (Shahri & Gujral) and 1999 (Sharif & Vajpayee). But there are more concrete reasons why one should not build high hopes into the latest diplomatic furries. General Musharraf was fairly gung-ho when he arrived on the scene in November 1999 and spurned the idea of pursuing the Lahore Peace process. But within months, he realised that even an accidental conflict with India, let alone one provoked by Pakistan, would derail his reform process (especially on the economic front which was critically dependent upon American goodwill) and undermine the stability and longevity of his regime. So the hardliner quickly switched from a policy of "fight-fight" (via the jihadis in Kashmir) to one of "talk-talk, fight-fight" when the Hizbul Mujahideen offered a conditional ceasefire in July 2000.

India, in the meanwhile, wasn't sitting idle either. After five decades, it had finally succeeded in charming America to tilt in its favour. Now it certainly wasn't going to allow Pakistan to chip at its newfound friendship with the sole superpower. So the fraudulent Hizb ceasefire sponsored by Islamabad was followed by a row of fraudulent ceasefires by the Indian army in Kashmir. Clearly, it is going to be talk-talk, fight-fight all the way for India as well. Pakistan's response has been somewhat confused. The invitation was "positively" accepted, but the Foreign Office mandarins have been clumsy. They initially supported the content in which the Indians proposed the talks — the Simla Agreement and Lahore Summit in which both sides agreed to a bilateral solution to all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, without assigning primacy to any one at any time. But then the blundering Pakistani High Commissioner to New Delhi, Ashraf Qazi, succumbed to the foot and mouth disease by unnecessarily suggesting that the third option of independence for Kashmir could be considered if the Kashmiris so desired, after an agreement by India and Pakistan to seek an amendment to the UN resolutions, and the Kashmiri freedom-fighters could be persuaded to "alter the pattern of their behaviour" in the event of progress on the peaceful-solution front. This has prompted our Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar to back-pedal furiously by bringing Kashmir back into the "core-issue framework" and insisting that the talks will take place in the context of all previous agreements with India, including the UN resolutions for a plebiscite to determine Kashmir's future in India "or" Pakistan. We have been down this slope many times in the past. The opening moves by both sides were so full of hope and promise. But after each summit, there has been a lull and bitter estrangement because neither side had the courage or sincerity to seek a historic compromise. We hope it will be different this time. But we fear it won't. (Najam Sethi, The Friday Times)

Before the imposition of President's rule, most parties and politicians in Manipur were running scared of the Assembly's dissolution and wanted it kept under suspended animation. The reason? All of them believe that, given time, they could cobble a government of their respective choices from the current mess on the assembly floor. Although they will not admit it at the moment, the two

parties most keen on forming a government once the current heat between them has dissipated are the toppler and the toppled: the BJP and the Samata Party. And given the past of Manipur's politics and politicians, it isn't inconceivable that bitter foes of the recent past will become friends in future. **Sankarshan Thakur** gives a brief rundown on the chequered careers of the leading lights of Manipur politics.

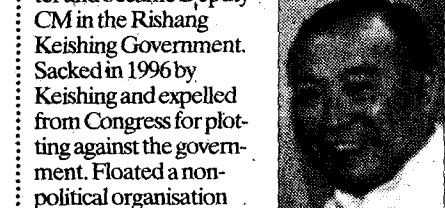
**R.K. DORENDRA SINGH:** The BJP leader and royal family section who led the toppling game. Elected on a Manipur People's Party (MPP) ticket in 1974. Became Assembly speaker the same year. (Mis)used his powers to engineer defections and skittled the R.K. Ranbir Singh Government to become Chief Minister. Joined the Congress during the emergency. Left the Congress to join the Janata Party after the emergency. Joined the Congress again in 1980. Was briefly considered as Ambassador to Norway for loyalities shown to Indira Gandhi during the early 1980s but the posting never came about. Left Congress in 1994 upon being denied leadership of the legislature party. Joined BJP in 1998.



**NIPAMACHA SINGH:** Elected to the Assembly for the first time on a Congress ticket in 1980. Defected to the Congress (S) the following year but came back to the parent party within months. Split the Congress along with Th. Chouba Singh and current Assembly Speaker S. Dhananjay Singh in 1997. Toppled the Risharf Keishing Gov-

ernment and became Chief Minister as leader of the newly formed Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP). Split the MSCP again in December 2000, though he continued to remain Chief Minister. Currently leads the MSCP(N) faction in the assembly and is believed to be eager to join the Congress.

**RADHABINOD KOJIAM:** Samata Party leader and toppled Chief Minister. A former advocate, he became an independent MLA in 1984. Joined the Congress soon after and became Deputy CM in the Risharf Keishing Government. Sacked in 1996 by Keishing and expelled from Congress for plotting against the government. Floated a non-political organisation called Manipur Congress Forum. Rejoined Congress in 1997 and became leader of the opposition in the State Assembly.



Elected to the Assembly again in 2000 on a Congress ticket. Was CLP leader. Defected from the Congress in January 2001 with ten MLAs to join the Samata party. Toppled the Nipamacha Singh Government and became

CM in February. **TH. CHOUBA SINGH:** MP from inner Manipur and Central Minister of State for Food Processing. Elected to the Assembly in 1974 on a Congress ticket. Joined the MPP in the mid-seventies and had a brief spell in the Janata Party before rejoining the Congress. Defected from Congress in 1997 along with Nipamacha Singh and contributed to the toppling of the Keishing Ministry. Split from Nipamacha Singh in December 2000 to form the MSCP (C). The son of a fisherman, Chouba Singh is believed to have become one of Manipur's wealthiest politicians.

**S. DHANANJOY SINGH:** Speaker of the current Assembly. First elected at 1995 on an MPP ticket. Defected to the Congress in 1996. Split the Congress in 1997 and topped the Keishing Government along with Nipamacha Singh and Thouba Singh. Remains in the MSCP and refuses to recognise either the Nipamacha or Thouba factions on the floor of the House. Had staked claim to Chief Ministership as speaker. Declined to quit his key perch despite the advice of Governor Ved Marwah, chose to withdraw his claim to power instead. Openly plays host to defectors at his official residence but insists he does nothing wrong.

**BOROBABU SINGH:** Currently in BJP, and among the ringleaders of the plot to topple the Kojiam Government. First elected in 1990 on an MPP ticket. Became speaker during R.K. Ranbir Singh's Government and earned nationwide notoriety as the only presiding officer of a legislative house ever to have been summoned by the Supreme Court. Borobabu is alleged to have misused the Speaker's Office to disqualify MLAs in the midst of a toppling game. The courts overruled Borobabu Singh but he declined to restore the membership of MLAs, earning a severe rap from the Apex Court.

There are perhaps only two among Manipur's senior leaders who have resisted switching sides over the years. Former Chief Minister and congress leader Risinang Keishing has been in the party since 1962, a consistency record that will take some breaking. The other is MPP leader O Joy Singh. He first came as an MPP MLA in 1974 and has never switched sides, even though that has meant spending 90 per cent of his political career in the Opposition benches. O Joy was a minister in the just toppled Kojiam Ministry, only his third stint in office. Like this one, both previous ministerial terms for O Joy lasted only a few months each.

### Unplug the Enron row

IT'S high time the Government of India intervenes in the Dabhol standoff and thrashes out a solution. It's understandable that the Maharashtra government, or for that matter any state government, cannot afford to buy power at an exorbitant rate of Rs 6.50 per unit. At the same time, it will send negative signals to the entire world and potential investors if Enron is pushed out of business. It can also have some bearing on the Indo-US relations as the Enron owner happens to be a close friend of President Bush. On the other hand, Enron finds itself on a strong legal wicket as its contract with the Maharashtra government is heavily tilted in the US giant's favour. It will be very difficult for the state government to find faults in a contract, which was considered and reconsidered by two successive governments and was finalised after getting scrapped thrice. Those ministers and bureaucrats who finalised the deal knowing fully well that the cost of power would fluctuate with naphtha's market price, should be made accountable for their decision. At present, the Dabhol Power Corporation is producing 670 MW of naphtha-based power for which the Government of India is providing counter-warranty. In the second phase, DPC will produce 1,400 MW of gas-based power for which plants have been already set up. Maharashtra government says it cannot buy this 1,400 MW and its lawyers are trying to find loopholes in the contract to corner Enron in the Court of Law. Their key objection is that Enron is not being able to live up to the contract commitment of providing emergency power supply at three hours' notice. But we should not lose sight of the key issue. After all, India



**Front Foot**  
Rajeev Shukla

needs power and the Government has stopped investing in power plants since 1991. One should also realise that no Indian investor has the capacity to set up plants of 2000 MW capacity. A middle path has to be adopted so that we can let Enron do business without jeopardising our national interest. Unfortunately, a Congress government in Maharashtra, a Shiv Sena minister in the Union Power Ministry and a man not known for proactive records at the helm of a commission looking into the issue — all these have complicated the tangle. The Union Power Ministry has put the ball in the Finance Ministry's court. But the Finance Ministry is supposed to only provide counter-warranty. Still the solution plan submitted by Finance Secretary Ajit Kumar to the Union Cabinet has been the most feasible formula offered till date. Kumar proposed that the NTPC and the Power Trading Corporation should buy the additional 1400 MW of power from DPC. Gas based power comes cheaper and Dabhol itself has assured that once its plants start producing 92 per cent of its capacity, power will be offered at a much cheaper rate of about less than Rs 4 per unit. This rate would suit everybody as all the state governments sell electricity to industries at Rs 4.50 per unit.

### Changing places

FIVE key vacancies at the secretary level will be created this June. The 1967 batch of IAS officers are likely to be accommodated in this process. Personnel secretary B.B. Tandon has become Election Commission member. Industrial development secretary Piyush Mankad is moving to Asian Development Bank. Petroleum secretary P. Shankar will take charge as chief secretary, Tamil Nadu. The secretaries to basic education department and National Productivity Council are retiring. Hectic lobbying is expected particularly for the lucrative petroleum portfolio and the personnel that controls CBI matters. The post of secretary to PMO is already vacant and no suitable candidate has been found yet. The PM is likely to take his time before making this appointment.

### BJP versus babus

THE BJP rank and file is upset over the appointment of Governors. They feel the Government has been unnecessarily handpicking bureaucrats despite having a large number of senior leaders like J.P. Mathur, Ashwini Kumar and others available for this purpose. While several bureaucrats have been rewarded with Governors' posts, the BJP has accommodated only a few party veterans like Sunder Singh Bhandari, Kedar Nath Sahni till date. It has been a Congress tradition to induct out-of-Parliament senior leaders in Governors' posts. The BJP rank and file, for a change, insists that the party goes the Congress way and honours its senior leaders.



# AASU threatens stir over Naga truce

**SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP**  
GUWAHATI, JULY 1

**T**HE agitation in Manipur promises to spread to Assam, with the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and Asom Jatiyabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) threatening to launch a massive protest unless the Centre withdraws the decision to extend the ceasefire with NSCN(IM) to other states.

While the AJYCP will announce its schedule by next week, the AASU announced yesterday a

## Agitation intensifies in Manipur

**IMPHAL:** The ongoing agitation against the Centre-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire extension in Manipur today intensified with thousands defying prohibitory orders marched in a rally amid tight security deployment in interior parts of the state. Official sources said 5,000 people, including women and children, held a march at Kakching, the sub-divisional town in Thoubal district.

The protesters shouted slogan "we say no ceasefire", "save Manipur territory", "we will shed blood for our territory", etc, the sources said. Sources said widespread sit-in protests were also reported from greater Imphal including Chilingmaikha, Pishum Chinam Liekai etc, and other parts of the state despite heavy deployment of security. No arrest was reported from any parts for defying prohibitory orders, sources said adding that Army and para-military forces have stepped up patrolling and other security measures. However, no untoward incident was reported from any part of the state.

—PTI

state-wide sit-in demonstration against the ceasefire extension on July 7. "We are not opposed to the ceasefire agreement. But its extension beyond Nagaland definitely threatens the region's integrity," said AASU president Prabin Boro.

Boro also criticised the Centre for not initiating dialogue with the Assam militants, more particularly the ULFA, and said carrying on talks with the Naga groups, while ignoring others, would not help bring lasting peace to the north-eastern region.

Meanwhile, a citizens' meet organised by the AJYCP here

termed the Centre's decision as immature. In its resolution, the meeting said that the decision to extend the ceasefire beyond Nagaland was "the most insensitive decision" taken by New Delhi while dealing with the region's insurgency issue. The meeting also called for the President's intervention in the and recommended a 48-hour state-wide bandh in the next few days. A series of agitational programmes, like a march to Raj Bhavan, pressure on the state's MLAs and MPs and public protest meetings were also planned by the meeting.

# After India, it will be Myanmar: NSCN-K

9-11-87

DIPANKAR ROY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MOKOKCHUNG (Nagaland), July 1. — The NSCN-K will turn its attention to Myanmar after the Naga political problem is settled with India and bring all Nagas together in "one sovereign country."

The NSCN-K and the Centre declared a ceasefire on 28 April after about a year of "informal" truce.

The NSCN-K general secretary and "prime minister" of the "government of People's Republic of Nagaland", Mr N Kitovi Zhimomi, told **The Statesman** somewhere in Mokokchung district that half the Naga population lives in Myanmar and his organisation cannot rest till they (Nagas in Myanmar) and their land are freed from Myanmarese occupation and integrated with other Nagas and the areas inhabited by them in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and the present state of Nagaland as one sovereign nation.

Sitting in his seemingly well-fortified office — a close circuit TV watches for any inimical activity outside the building built on a hill slope while over a dozen young men with automatic weapons guard the way to his chamber three stories below the road level — Mr Zhimomi asserted that no solution of the Naga political problem could be found within the Indian Constitution.

"Even if we arrive at any settlement with the Indian government regarding Nagas living in India, our struggle against Myanmar will continue," he said. According to him, about 1.3 million Nagas live inside the "administrative zone" of the NSCN-K in Myanmar.

Another million live in areas where the NSCN-K is not so dominant.

"In fact, Myanmar is not very happy that we have entered into a ceasefire agreement with the government of India

and not with them despite the fact that half the Nagas live there," Mr Zhimomi said. The NSCN-K chairman, Mr SS Khaplang, is himself from Myanmar.

He said the Myanmar junta had sent feelers to the NSCN-K for a ceasefire but the organisation has rejected the offer because there is military rule in that country. "How can we resolve a problem with a military power," the leader said.

He said a delegation of his government, including some ministers, had met Myanmarese officials some time ago and apprised them of the NSCN-K's demand and the latter's "response was at least not negative as they acknowledged the existence of the Nagas."

On future talks with the Centre, Mr Zhimomi said the NSCN-K was doing its homework. "We'll ask the people how they want the problem solved and we'll act accordingly." The NSCN-K will ac-

## 'ALL NAGA-INHABITED AREAS TO BE INTEGRATED'

cept any settlement that the Centre may arrive at with the NSCN-IM, if such a solution is acceptable to the people.

But will the NSCN-K agree if the Nagas in India want to remain in the country?

"I have interacted with a lot of people and they, too, are pining for independence from India. After having sacrificed so much for over five decades they cannot be satisfied with anything short of sovereignty. India must understand these sentiments, it cannot go on suppressing our people," Mr Zhimomi said.

On the controversy regarding extension of the ceasefire area (with the NSCN-IM) "without territorial limits," he said: "We told the Indian government that the area should be specific and cover only areas where Nagas live. We aren't asking for land from Maharashtra or West Bengal, so what is the meaning of the ceasefire area being without geographical limits," he said.

■ Another report on page 8