

Sterile surrender

SC-6 29/12 9:15:30
Tripura rebel leaders unpredictable

The surrender by 138 National Liberation Front of Tripura (Nayanbashi Jamatia faction) militants on Saturday in accordance with the peace accord signed in Delhi last week does not necessarily mean the end of sniping in the tribal belt because they did so in the absence of their leader Jamatia who is said to control the outfit's armoury. That 55 more staying in designated camps did not turn up suggests second thoughts on their part. Jamatia disappeared a few weeks after signing the April ceasefire accord with former NDA government and there were reports that he was in Thailand to cancel an arms shipment deal or in Bangladesh to wind up rebel training camps. Jamatia's volte face only strengthens the suspicion that he is acting at the behest of foreign agents. He seemed least interested after Delhi made it clear that it would not accept his demands for an autonomous state, reservation of 80 per cent of assembly seats for tribals and chief minister's post.

Altogether 72 Montu Koloï faction cadres laid down arms in May. Another group led by Biswamohan Debbarman is not a party to the ceasefire possibly for fear of retaliation by fundamentalist forces, which before the 2001 Bangladesh elections sought its "support and help" to defeat the ruling Awami League. So is the All Tripura Tiger Force. These groups can do anything to disturb peace and stability to attract attention.

If the Centre is really serious about wooing rebels to renounce violence it must come out with more attractive incentives. There is the tendency to wash its hands off former rebels' rehabilitation once an accord is signed and funds expeditiously allocated. It must make sure that the money earmarked for them is not diverted or misused.

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THE STATESMAN

AFSPA panel holds hearing

Statesman News Service

17 killed in Tripura

IMPHAL, Dec. 28. — The Five member Review Committee of Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, today, began their first public hearing at the Manipur Human Right Complex, amidst heavy security coverage necessitated by a public imposed by an anti-talk, anti-Review Committee faction of the Apunba Lup, a conglomerate of 32 organisation which spearheaded the agitation against the Act.

The hearing began sluggishly in the morning with about only three people turning up in the pre-noon session but later picked up.

Among those who came to plead their cases were the families of, Brojen and Ojit, youths who have died in the hands of armed forces deployed in Manipur to tackle insurgency under the provision of the AFSPA Act. described here as "draconian."

AGARTALA, Dec. 28. — 17 people, including 14 jawans of the Territorial Army, were gunned down by NLFT insurgents at Dangabari in Tripura's South districts today. Rebels looted a light machine and 15 AK rifles from possession of the victims. The incident occurred when TA personnel, in two trucks, were patrolling the area to provide security to workers engaged in road construction. — SNS

A woman who had been raped by an Army Jawan in 1998 also gave her testimony appealing to the Review Committee to repeal the Act. Ningthoujam Ongbi Pramo, recounted her tragedy to media-persons outside the panel office saying, she remained affected by the Act, as even her husband has abandon her. She said while other rape victims have got justice her tormentors are at large.

29 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Tripura rebels kill 16 soldiers

Syed Sajjad Ali
Agartala, December 28

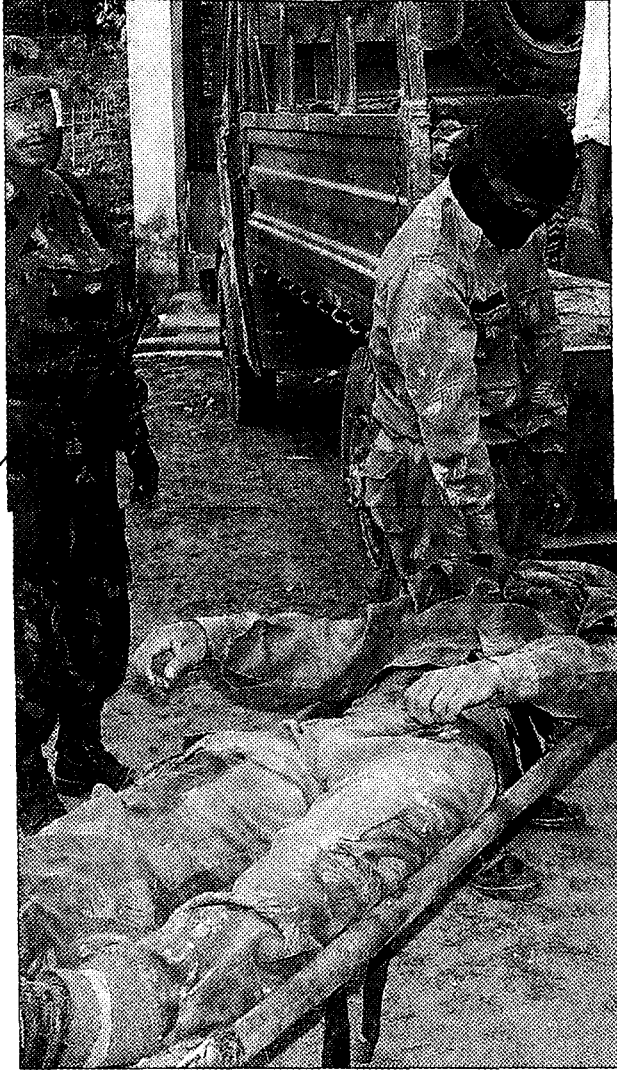
IN A surprise hit-and-run assault, the tribal rebels gunned down at least 16 soldiers of the Territorial Army in Tripura on Tuesday. A rebel was killed in the exchange of fire that lasted for about an hour. This was one of the biggest insurgency-related incidents in a year, which was marked by surrenders and peace initiatives.

This was third major attack on Territorial Army in the state and its nine personnel were killed in the ambush at Sindhu Kumar Para in south Tripura district two years ago.

The incident took place at Hakumbari, some 80 km south of Agartala, at around 8 am. The outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) has been blamed for the attack,

"A platoon of Territorial Army was moving in two trucks when the rebels began firing at them all on sudden. The army was caught unawares and took some time to react. Even as they retaliated which resulted in the exchange of fire 15 soldiers were killed and four injured. One of the injured later succumbed in hospital," said Nepal Das, superintendent of police (Operations).

Reports said Territorial Army personnel were engaged in providing security to the GREP engaged in construction of an alternative highway in south Tripura.



AFP
Soldiers load the bodies of their slain colleagues on a truck at Hakumbari village, Tripura, on Tuesday.

Personnel survived the attack, retaliated and killed one rebel. The rebel dressed in olive green fatigue has not yet been identified. The rebels also looted 14 AK series assault rifles and one light machine gun as well as huge ammunition from the ambushed soldiers, police said adding further details are awaited. Hakumbari, where the incident took place, is located at a remote place.

Paramilitary reinforcements have been sent to the area to track down the rebels. The attack has been one of few major insurgency

related incidents this year in the state that borders Bangladesh on three sides.

The bloody attack cast a shadow on the peace initiatives that saw surrender of some 250 rebels or collaborators this year. However, the authorities got a jolt when the Nayanbasi Jamatia avoided surrender of his group of 138 rebels on December 26. Nayanbasi, however, is now reportedly hiding somewhere in Baithalangsung under Karbianglong district in Assam and is trying to restructure the organisation.

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এন এল এফ টি-র হামলা : ত্রিপুরায় ১৬ জওয়ান খুন, লুট ১৪ এ কে রাইফেল

সমীর ধর: আগরতলা, ২৮ ডিসেম্বর— জঙ্গিদের অতর্কিত হামলায় মঙ্গলবার সকালে দক্ষিণ ত্রিপুরা জেলার বীরগঞ্জ থানা এলাকার হাকুমাবাড়িতে মোট ১৭ জন নিহত হয়েছেন। আহত ২। এরা জি বি হাসপাতালে রয়েছেন। নিহতদের মধ্যে ১৪ জনই টেরিটোরিয়াল আর্মির আসাম রেজিমেন্টের জওয়ান। দু'জন গ্রেফের ড্রাইভার। আরেকজন হল হামলাকারী জঙ্গি দলের সদস্য। জওয়ানদের পাল্টা গুলিতে ওই জঙ্গিও ঘটনাস্থলে মারা গেছে বলে পুলিশ জানায়। মৃত জওয়ানদের কাছ থেকে প্রচুর আধুনিক অস্ত্রশস্ত্র লুট করে নিয়ে গেছে জঙ্গিরা। এর মধ্যে আছে এ কে সিরিজের ১৪টি রাইফেল এবং একটি লাইট মেশিনগান। ১৫১০ রাউন্ড গুলিও হাতিয়েছে জঙ্গিরা। আই জি (আইনশৃঙ্খলা) অধিনায়কম্বর শুক্ল-সহ পুলিশের পদস্থ অফিসাররা দুপুরের মধ্যেই ঘটনাস্থলে ছুটে গেছেন। ব্যাপক চিহ্নিত তল্লাশি চলছে। এখনও নিশ্চিত না হলেও, পুলিশের প্রাথমিক অনুমান এন এল এফ টি জঙ্গি বাহিনীর বিশ্বমোহন গোষ্ঠীই এই হামলা চালিয়েছে। নিহত

জঙ্গি পরিচয় মিললেই এ বিষয়ে হুড়াহুড়ি জানাতে পারবে পুলিশ। বেশ কিছুদিন পর ত্রিপুরায় এত বড় ধরনের জঙ্গি হামলার ঘটনা ঘটল। সম্ভাব্যবাদীদের এই হামলার তীব্র নিন্দা করেছে সি পি এমের ত্রিপুরা রাজ্য সম্পাদকমণ্ডলী। আসন্ন উপজাতি এলাকা স্বশাসিত জেলা পরিষদ নির্বাচন বানচালের লক্ষ্য সামনে রেখেই জঙ্গিরা হামলা ও অস্ত্র লুট করেছে বলে সি পি এম মনে করে। জওয়ানদের শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিজনদের প্রতি সমবেদনা জানিয়ে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মানিক সরকার এই খুনেবাহিনীকে খুঁজে বার করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন পুলিশ ও নিরাপত্তা বাহিনীকে। সন্ধ্যাতি এন এল এফ টি-র নয়নবাসী গোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রীয় ও রাজ্য সরকারের ত্রিপুরা অস্ত্রবিরোধি চুক্তির পর নয়নবাসী নিজে কয়েকজন সঙ্গী-সহ ফের গা-ঢাকা দিলেও তার গোষ্ঠীর বাকি সব জঙ্গি অস্ত্র-সহ সরকারের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ করেছে। এছাড়া বিশ্বমোহন গোষ্ঠী এবং টাইগার ফোর্সের বেশ কিছু জঙ্গি সদস্য গত কয়েকমাসে স্বাভাবিক জীবনে এসেছে। পুলিশ, টি এস আর এবং

অন্য নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী অনেকগুলো সাফল্য পেয়েছে জঙ্গিবিরোধী অভিযানে। নভেম্বর মাসের মাঝামাঝি থেকে খবর আসছিল জঙ্গিরা বাংলাদেশের ঘাটীগুলোতে আবার নিজেদের শক্তি সংহত করছে। উপজাতি জেলা পরিষদ (এ ডি সি) নির্বাচনের আগে বড় হামলার আশঙ্কাও জমাছিল। এ ডি সি নির্বাচনের আগে দু'গুন অঞ্চলগুলোতে জঙ্গি-সংগ্রহ অভিযানের পরিকল্পনা নিয়েছে পুলিশ। কিন্তু তার মধ্যেই ঘটে গেল মঙ্গলবারের হামলা। দক্ষিণ জেলার অমরপুর মহকুমায় শান্তিবাজার-আমবাসা বিকল্প জাতীয় সড়ক নির্মাণের কাজ করছে গ্রেফ। তাঁদের নিরাপত্তা দেওয়ার জন্য নিয়োজিত রয়েছে টেরিটোরিয়াল আর্মি। মঙ্গলবার সকালে দুটি ছোট লস্কিতে করে টেরিটোরিয়ালে আর্মির ১১৯ শতক বাটেলিয়ানের জওয়ানরা তাদের কাউয়ারা ক্যাম্প থেকে নির্মীয়মাণ জাতীয় সড়কের দিকে যাচ্ছিল। দাঙ্গাবাড়ি থেকে পলিবাড়ির মানামারি অত্রস্থ দু'গুন হাকুমাবাড়ি অঞ্চলে পৌঁছোতেই রাস্তার দু'পাশের চিলা-জঙ্গলে ওত পেতে থাকা জঙ্গিরা ঝাঁকে ঝাঁকে গুলি চলাতে শুরু করে। জওয়ানরা

লরি থেকে নামারও সুযোগ পাননি। আকস্মিক আক্রমণের ফলে কিংকর্তব্যবিমূঢ় অবস্থা কাটার আগেই অধিকাংশ জওয়ান এবং দুই লরির ড্রাইভার গুলি বেয়ে লুটিয়ে পড়েন। বাকি জওয়ানরা পাল্টা গুলি চালান কিছুক্ষণ। কিন্তু অল্প সময়ের মধ্যেই জওয়ানদের সব প্রতিরোধ থেমে যায়। ঘটনাস্থলেই নিহত হন দুই ড্রাইভার-সহ ১৫ জন জওয়ান। উরুতর আহত অবস্থায় অমরপুরে আনার পথে আরেক জওয়ানের মৃত্যু হয়। এছাড়া ঘটনাস্থলে পাওয়া গেছে গুলিবর্ষণ এক জঙ্গির মৃতদেহ। জঙ্গিরা মৃত জওয়ানদের সব অস্ত্রশস্ত্র নিয়ে চম্পট দিয়েছে। বীরগঞ্জ থানা থেকে হাকুমাবাড়ির দূরত্ব প্রায় ২০ কিলোমিটার। অমরপুরের মহকুমা পুলিশ অফিসার তাপস দেববর্মা এবং ও সি নিতাগোপাল সরকার, এস আই জয়ন্ত কর্মকার, এ এস আই সোনাপদ জমাতিয়া খবর পেতেই ঘটনাস্থলে ছেটেন। পরে আগরতলা ও দক্ষিণ জেলা সদর উদয়পুর থেকে যান উচ্চপদস্থ পুলিশ অধিনায়কম্বর। শেষ খবর পাওয়া পর্যন্ত তল্লাশি চলছে। কোনও গ্রেপ্তারের খবর নেই।

নিহত সেনা জওয়ানদের নাম

১. লাল নায়েক জয়চন্দ্র দাস, ২. লাল নায়েক দেবানন্দ বরদলাই, ৩. হেড কন্স্টেবল ভজন সিং, ৪. হেড কন্স্টেবল রঞ্জিত রায়, ৫. কন্স্টেবল মুকুল দাস, ৬. জিতেন সেন, ৭. ভূমেশওয়ার সিং, ৮. ভোলানাথ দাবানি, ৯. মলিন বিশ্বাস, ১০. প্রদীপ সিং, ১১. এতান সিং, ১২. পঙ্কজ দাস, ১৩. জিরেন দাস, ১৪. বুদ্ধেশ্বর নাথ, ১৫. ড্রাইভার মনোহর সিং (গ্রেফ), ১৬. ড্রাইভার রামলক্ষ্মণ সিং (গ্রেফ)

আহত

১. লালনায়েক প্রমোদ রায়, ২. কন্স্টেবল মলি বড়ুয়া

আয়েম্যন্ত্র লুট হয়েছে

- ১৪টা এ কে রাইফেল, ৩৮ ম্যাগাজিনে ১২৬০ রাউন্ড গুলি-সহ
- ১টা এল এম জি, ১০টা ম্যাগাজিনে ২৫০ রাউন্ড গুলি-সহ
- ২টা মোটরোলা অ্যান্টেনেস সেট

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Weapons believed looted 5 cops killed in Imphal ambush

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

IMPHAL, Dec. 25. — Five police commandos, including a sub-inspector attached to Imphal East Police, were killed on the spot when the vehicle in which they were travelling was ambushed by an unidentified armed group at Napet Palli in Lamlai Police station today morning.

The insurgents hurled bombs and opened fire from all sides. Police suspect the insurgents seized the commandos' weapons since only one partly burnt AK 47 was discovered in the charred vehicle.

The commandos have been stationed at Laikoiching where a BSF post had been set up since 23 December in order to step up security.

There were altogether 11 police personnel at Laikoiching.

The incident occurred when the vehicle carrying five police personnel had reportedly gone to a nearby bazaar to buy ration.

Police suspect that there

28/12 SF 7
J. N. S. S. S. S.
were around 10 attackers. Over 1,000 spent cartridges and lethal bomb shells were found from the spot.

Soon after the incident, police and BSF troops rushed to the spot and conducted a search operation. They also scanned the nearby hillocks and villages. However, there is no report of any arrest. IG P Baral and Imphal East SP Chadramani also visited the area.

The deceased have been identified as SI Md. Ziauddin, son of late L Iboyai from Lilong Hangamthabi, Louriyam Meghachandra Singh (son of Amu Singh of Khurkhul) Sewak Leikai, Chingangbam Premkumar, Md. Naseer Shah and Kongbrailatpam Megha Singh.

The bodies of the deceased policemen were first taken to the RIMS morgue for post-mortem and then to 1st Manipur Rifles Battalion. Top police officers paid floral tributes to the deceased before handing them over to their families.

So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Rebels surrender minus leader

26/12
KC-3
'Bangla official stopped more militants from laying down arms'

Syed Sajjad Ali
Agartala, December 25

REPORTS ON Nayanbasi Jamatia's mysterious disappearance were confirmed today when he did not turn up while 138 militants led by dissidents in the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) laid down arms in Agartala.

The surrender was in pursuance of a settlement arrived at with the Union home ministry on December 17. Governor Dinesh Nandan Sahay received the militants at Police Lines here, in the presence of two senior Left Front ministers and top police and civil officials.

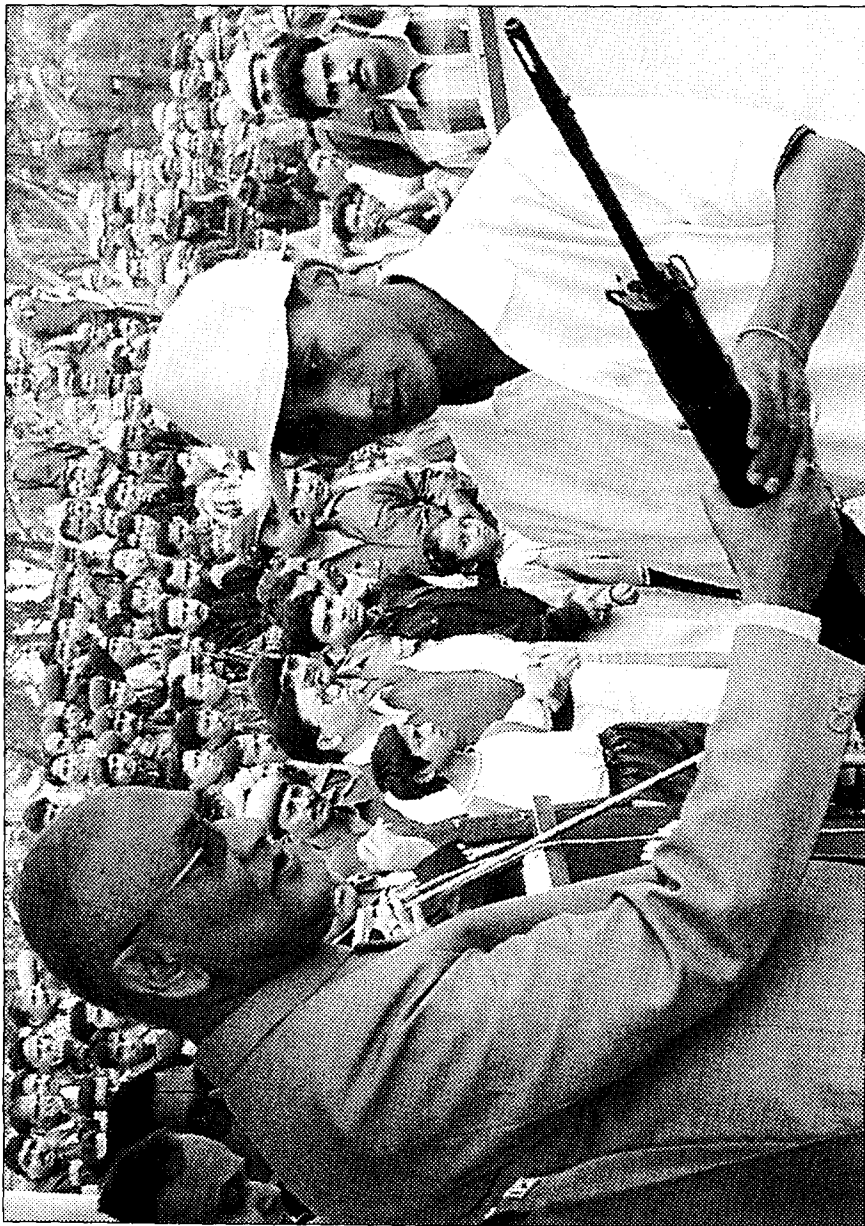
They deposited 14 arms, including two LMGs and ammunition. This was second biggest surrender event this year; 72 NLFT militants led by Mantu Koloj had surrendered on May 6.

Jamatia, who skipped the final round of negotiations in New Delhi after the state as well as the Centre refused to concede to his political demands, did not give himself up amid speculation that he has returned to his secret hideout in Bangladesh.

In his absence, other leaders of the faction signed a peace agreement to end their long struggle — from the underground — for a tribal homeland.

The outfit's self-styled vice president, Buchuk Borok, was the first to surrender, with an LMG. Ten more leaders followed suit. But the shadow of Nayanbasi's absence loomed large over the ceremony.

DGP G.M. Srivastav believes that Jamatia is left with not other option but to respect the peace process as most of his rank and file have surrendered. Even his close aide,



PTI
A militant hands over his weapon to Tripura Governor Dinesh Nandan Sahay in Agartala on Saturday.

Bartha Lamai, left him and arrived late last night to join the surrender.

The DGP alleged a Bangladesh security official prevented 16 more militants, with sophisticated weapons, from crossing the border to join the surrender ceremony. "Whenever th-

ere is a process of surrender or negotiation with the militants, agencies in Bangladesh become active", Srivas-

tav said, adding another group of 70 militants have been under scrutiny in the run up to the surrender.

Meanwhile, Nayanbasi Jamatia expelled four top leaders of his faction for what he said selling out tribal interests to India. Speaking with a vernacular daily here he said crores of rupees were transacted to manipulate the leaders to betray him and the tribals.

Manipur votes down anti-Act resolution

Statesman News Service

IMPHAL, Dec. 24. In a blow to the anti Armed Forces Special Powers Act lobby, the Congress-led Secular Progressive Front government yesterday voted down the Anti-AFSPA resolution moved jointly by four Opposition MLAs.

The private member resolution on repeal of the Act was defeated by 36 votes to 16 in the house of 60. In absence of Speaker Mr TN Haokip, Dr Nara of CPI chaired the session. MLA Mr Y Erabot of the Treasury Bench abstained.

Two voice votes were taken on the resolution. However despite a clear majority of the ayes and nos with the Treasury Bench scoring the majority an unsatisfied Opposition pressed for a division yielding the final result.

Ulfa against Asom Sena

The All Assam Students' Union's decision to form Asom Sena, an unarmed organisation, has put the organisation on a collision course with the Ulfa, SNS adds from Guwahati.

Ulfa vice-chairman Pradip Gogoi has said that the formation of Asom Sena would create rifts among different ethnic communities in the state instead of serving the interests of the people of the state.

Something brewing

Sibsagar Aasu's Sena could armtwist AGP *5/8 24/12*

There is no reason to assume that the All Assam Students Union's decision to form an Asom Sena will revive the bogey of "reign of terror" and disruptive and minatory tactics adopted during the height of the Assam Movement (1979-85). Indeed, there is some solace in Aasu adviser Samujjal Bhattacharyya's assurance that its objective is to "give vent to the anger of the indigenous population against exploitation and deprivation" and that it would be "in a peaceful and democratic manner". Then again, the Sena could well serve as a suitable platform for "overaged" senior Aasu leaders, including Bhattacharyya and president Probin Boro, to stay in the limelight. They are expected to quit their posts during the party's general session at Sibsagar early next year. The Sena is bound to act as a pressure group to dictate terms to the Asom Gana Parishad. Well timed before the 2006 assembly elections, it might pressure AGP into giving some party nominations to its leaders. Since Aasu is not a political organisation, the motive perhaps is to use the Sena to play kingmaker as far as regional parties are concerned.

Aasu's foresworn mission is to oust illegal migrants and it belatedly realised that the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act 1983 was a trap to end the students' agitation. In a way, Aasu is also responsible. In 1980 it rejected the Centre's suggestion for 1967 and 1971 as compromise and base years, respectively, for detection, disenfranchisement and deportation and insisted on 1951. But at the time of signing the 1985 Assam accord it quietly accepted 1971. However discriminatory the Act may be, it is the best guarantee against the situation reverting to the pre-Accord days.

24 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Peace within peace

9-NB-58
2/12 Nagas must forgive and forget SIB

With the Centre and the NSCN(IM) having agreed that confrontation is in neither's interest, there is an optimistic tint to the future. But all would be meaningless if the warring factions do not display a spirit of give and take. Significantly, on arrival in Nagaland both Isak Swu and Th Muivah spoke of unity and reconciliation, so reassuringly removed from their earlier stand that "reconciliation cannot be forced, it has to come naturally". Senior NSCN(IM) leader Khodao Yanthan even went to the extent of saying reconciliation was not necessary. The reconciliation committee set up after the Naga Hoho initiated the process in December 2001 is now defunct following the en masse resignation by its members after Muivah criticised the appointment of two office-bearers belonging to the late Angami Zapu Phizo's tribe. While unity between the Naga National Council headed by London-based Adino Phizo and the NSCN (Khaplang) faction may be possible (their representatives attended the 1996 Atlanta peace "summit" organised by church leaders), the NSCN-IM and NNC ever seeing eye to eye seems impossible. But there are some signs of the NSCN-IM softening its attitude as evident from its praise of the parent body for laying the foundation of Naga nationalism and stressing the need to "understand together again the issues of the Nagas".

The question is whether the NNC will submit to the NSCN-IM terms as it denounced the 1975 Shillong Peace accord signed by a pro-Phizo group. SS Khaplang is unlikely to meet the NSCN-IM demand that he personally apologise for the massacre of cadres at the time of the 1988 split. Whatever their differences, the Nagas seem bent on the Greater Nagaland concept, even as the Centre cannot complacently assume that all will fall into line once a deal is struck with the NSCN-IM. It has got to involve all the three states whose territorial integrity is threatened.

22 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Aasu to form Asom Sena

Statesman News Service

GUWAHATI, Dec. 20. — The All Assam Students Union has announced its decision to constitute a new regional outfit, Asom Sena, to fight for the protection of the rights of indigenous people.

Aasu adviser Dr Samujjal Bhattacharrya said today that there would be nothing militant about the new outfit which would be constituted with the basic objective of "giving vent to the anger of the indigenous population in the state" against the exploitation and the deprivation, albeit "in a peaceful and democratic manner". "Asom Sena will remain vigilant against traitors of the state," the Aasu adviser said. Asked why such an outfit was need at this juncture, he shot back: "How do you expect us to react when even a peon in the North-east Frontier Railway is recruited from Rajasthan?"

The decision to constitute the Asom Sena was arrived at the state-level convention of the Aasu that concluded at Dibrugarh last night. "Those who had promised a Golden Assam ruled the state for two full terms for themselves. Now we have been compelled to set up the Asom Sena with the youth who have become directionless," Dr Bhattacharrya said in an oblique reference to the regional Asom Gana Parishad that was an earlier offshoot of the Aasu in the early 1980's. Dr Bhattacharrya, who is all set to give up his position as Aasu adviser, is expected to lead the Asom Sena which he said would be a political outfit unlike Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.

21 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Hang on, Yangon

51-8
Delhi must see sense to desist

While the Bhutan Royal Army cracked down on Ulfa and Bodo insurgents in December last year, the Indian Army confined itself to blocking escape routes. Nor does it have any direct role in the ongoing Myanmar military offensive against North-east groups like NSCN (Khaplang) and Ulfa, despite reports of an imminent joint exercise. It is inconceivable that vice-Chief of Army Staff Lt-Gen. Shantonu Choudhry was ignorant of the ceasefire between the Centre and the Khaplang unit for the past three years when he said in Kolkata last week that the Army was ready and awaiting Yangon's nod to put their act together. Though the Khaplang group is not a party to the Nagaland peace process, like the Naga National Council which first took up arms against the establishment, it is a factor in state politics. What Myanmar is doing is its internal affair but any involvement of the Indian Army would risk violating the ceasefire. However much the Army might justify jumping in because the truce is not applicable to Myanmar, the Centre will be seen as playing partisan to please the collective NSCN-IM leadership now in Nagaland. The timing of the Myanmar operations suggests the main objective is to clear its border areas where Khaplang's writ runs. But if Yangon was so keen on flushing out the unwanted guests, it could have acted soon after the Bhutan operations. Admittedly the poorly equipped military junta may not have the necessary wherewithal, but last December some "vehicles" carrying Indian "military equipment" were said to have passed through Manipur's border checkpost of Moreh.

Last week's clashes between the Army and Manipur's proscribed UNLF, having links with the NSCN(K), in Chandel along Myanmar corroborates what is going on. Many border villagers were forced to flee to Myanmar. The Centre must see the Myanmar operations do not trigger an influx from across the border and create problems for Nagaland as happened after the 1992 Myanmar episode. Peace is what Nagaland needs most.

20 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

NLFT faction signs peace treaty

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, December 19

AS PART of a tripartite settlement with the Centre and the Tripura government, the Nayanbasi faction of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) has softened its political demands and agreed to ask its cadre to come overground.

As many as 150 NLFT cadres would be surrendering before December 31 after a tripartite seven-point agreement was signed by the outfit, the state and the Central governments.

The state government has

promised to withdraw all cases against them except those relating to crime against women, official sources said at the end of the negotiations that had been going on with the insurgent group in the last few months.

Official sources said the settlement came after government negotiators convinced the NLFT delegation that economic development was the key to progress and agreed to a special package worth Rs 55 crore for all the tribal areas.

Formulation of a special rehabilitation package for the insurgents beyond the normal surren-

der scheme in force is also a part of the seven-point agreement, the sources said.

Following the agreement, they said there was no need to extend the ceasefire anymore. This is in line with the stand of the ruling Left Front government in Tripura, which has been opposing extension of cease-fire with the group or concession by Delhi over their political demands.

Founded in 1989 by Dhananjay Reang, the NLFT was proscribed in 1997 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1997.

It is one of the two major outfits operating in the northeast-

ern state, the other being the All Tripura Tigers Force (ATTF). However, NLFT later split into three factions and the one led by Biswamohan Debarma—the strongest of them—is yet to respond to Delhi's offer of talks.

This group has an estimated strength of about 550 cadres with bases in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

The split in NLFT came as a result of tribal rivalries between the Halams and the Debbarmas, and the emerging conflict between the Christians and the Hindus led to another split in 2001, one year after its first split.

The NLFT had entered into peace talks with the NDA government in April this year and reached an agreement with the government to cease operations against each other.

In fact, efforts to bring them to negotiations were initiated in the previous year when Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga was asked by the NDA government to establish contact with northeast militant outfits. The cease-fire, initially valid for six months, was extended for three months despite stiff opposition from the state government.

পায়ে গুলি করে উপাচার্য, রেজিস্ট্রারকে ছাড়ল জঙ্গিরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, গুয়াহাটি, ১৮ ডিসেম্বর: অপহরণের পাঁচ দিন পরে মণিপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উপাচার্য ও রেজিস্ট্রারকে পায়ে গুলি করে মুক্তি দিল জঙ্গিরা। শুক্রবার গভীর রাতে পাহাড়ি থাউবাল জেলায় একটি জায়গায় উপাচার্য ও রেজিস্ট্রারকে নামিয়ে দিয়ে গা-ঢাকা দেয় অপহরণকারী কেওয়াইকেএল-এর জঙ্গিরা। আহতেরা সেখান থেকে ফোন করেন বাড়িতে। অন্ধকারে, পাহাড়ি রাস্তায় একটি ট্রাকে করে নিয়ে এসে তাঁদের ভর্তি করা হয় ইফলের রিজিওন্যাল ইনস্টিটিউট অব সায়েন্সেস-এ। সেই সময় বাড়ির লোকের সঙ্গে পুলিশও ছিল।

কড়া পুলিশি প্রহরায় হাসপাতালে দু'জনেরই চিকিৎসা চলছে। চিকিৎসকেরা জানিয়েছেন, দু'জনেরই বিপন্ন। তবে তাঁদের সঙ্গে কথা বলা বারণ। ফলে, পুলিশ আজও অপহৃতদের কাছে থেকে অপহরণ-কাণ্ড নিয়ে কিছু জানতে পারেনি বলে জানান আই জি (আইন-শৃঙ্খলা) জে সি দাভাস। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের দুই উচ্চপদস্থ মুক্তি পাওয়ায় প্রতিষ্ঠানের শিক্ষক ও ছাত্রেরা তাদের অনির্দিষ্টকালের ধর্মঘটের ডাক প্রত্যাহার করে নিয়েছে।

পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, কেওয়াইকেএল নামের জঙ্গি সংগঠনটি এই অপহরণ কাণ্ডটি ঘটিয়েছে।

উপাচার্য ও রেজিস্ট্রারকে মুক্তি দেওয়ার আগে বিকালে সেনাপতি জেলার এক অজ্ঞাত স্থানে অতীতের মতো সাংবাদিকদের নিয়ে গিয়ে জঙ্গিরা জানায়, ডাইরেকটর নিয়োগ নিয়ে দু'জনেই তাঁদের ভুল স্বীকার করেছেন। তাঁরা বলেছেন, সমস্ত নিয়ম মেনে পুনরায় বিজ্ঞাপন দিয়ে ডাইরেকটর নিয়োগ করা হবে। জঙ্গিরা জানিয়ে দেয়, আজই মুক্তি দেওয়া হবে দু'জনকে। তবে ভুলের শাস্তিস্বরূপ পায়ে গুলি করে। তারা অবশ্য উপাচার্য ও রেজিস্ট্রারকে সাংবাদিকদের সামনে হাজির করেনি। কথা মতেই কাজ করে জঙ্গিরা। রাতে, দু'জনের একটি করে পায়ে গুলি করে রাস্তার এক জায়গায় ছেড়ে দেওয়া হয়। পুলিশ অবশ্য জানিয়েছে, আহত দু'জন হাসপাতালে ভর্তি থাকায় তাঁদের সঙ্গে কথা বলা যায়নি। তাঁদের জিজ্ঞাসাবাদ করে সেইমতো ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।

গত কয়েক বছর ধরে দাপিয়ে বেড়াচ্ছে কেওয়াইকেএল নামের এই জঙ্গি সংগঠনটি। পুলিশ সূত্রের খবর, উদ্দেশ্য ও চরিত্রগতভাবে অন্য জঙ্গি

সংগঠনের সঙ্গে কেওয়াইকেএল-এর পার্থক্য আছে। রীতিমত কলেজ-বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে পড়া শিক্ষিত যুবকেরাই তৈরি করেছে এই জঙ্গি সংগঠনটি। এদের প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য, মণিপুর রাজ্যের শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থাকে কলঙ্কমুক্ত করা। উদ্দেশ্য সফল করতে তারা স্কুল থেকে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পর্যন্ত শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থার সব স্তরে নিয়মিত কড়া নজর রাখে। তাদের অপহরণের তালিকায় আগেও শিক্ষার সঙ্গে যুক্ত কয়েক জন পদাধিকারী রয়েছেন। কেওয়াইকেএল অপহরণ করে কাউকে মেরে ফেলে না। তাদের একমাত্র 'শাস্তি' পায়ে গুলি করা। অপারেশনের নাম 'কাংলেইপাক'।

২০০২ সালে রাজ্যের মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চমাধ্যমিক স্তরের পরীক্ষায় কেওয়াইকেএল জঙ্গিদের কড়া নজরদারিতে 'শাস্তি' পায় ১০ জন। এঁদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন নকলের অভিযোগে ছাত্র, নকলে বাধা না দেওয়ায় পরিদর্শক এবং নকল করতে বাইরে থেকে সাহায্য করার জন্য কোনও ছাত্রের পরিবারের লোক। অপহৃত পদাধিকারী জঙ্গিদের ডেরায় সাংবাদিকদের সামনে তাঁর অপরাধ সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে স্বীকার করেছেন, এমন ঘটনা ঘটেছে মণিপুর।

Nagas seek consensus on peace

Bijay Sankar Bora
in Dimapur

Dec. 15. — The two top leaders of the NSCN-IM, Swu and Muivah, who have come home to be with the people are 'fighting for' will not take much time to realise that Naga masses would hate another suffocating era of violence and bloodshed. At least, that's what the statement of Naga Ho Ho President, Mr M Vero reflects: "The situation is much better than what it was earlier. We are hoping against the hope. A concrete solution is expected. The civil society groups influencing the Naga society need to wake up to the reality, the need for lasting peace."

After tasting life in peace during the last few years, it has dawned on them that lasting peace will be possible only after finding a final solution



to the Naga problem. "It was a rare moment to see all the tribes gathering at the airport to greet our leaders. It showed the high hopes of the majority for a solution that will facilitate peaceful co-existence," said Rajenmeilu, a student.

The SP, Mr Janardan Singh, agreed that the state will be plunged in turmoil without a final solution.

The clamour for peace could be used as a trump card by Swu and Muivah to carry forward their 'mission of Naga reconciliation'. They have made it clear that Naga unity is the key to a solution and that it is their sole mission for coming here after so many years. Mr Muivah struck the right chord yesterday at a brief speech at the NSCN-IM council headquarter (CHQ), Camp Hebron. He lauded the efforts of the rival faction, Naga National Council (NNC) in laying the foundation for the movement.

"The foundation wasn't laid by NSCN but the NNC. Let us understand together again the issue of the Nagas," he said, making a reconciliatory gesture to the group. The crowd gathered at the NSCN-IM CHQ on the occasion burst into applause, as if, trying to convey to the leaders: this is the spirit.

Come forward with ideas, NSCN leaders tell Nagas

15/12
By Sushanta Talukdar
J. N. S. N. S.
10-13

HEBRON (NAGALAND), DEC. 14. The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) chairman, Isak Chisi Swu, and general secretary, Thuingaleng Muivah, today asked all Naga people to "consolidate as one nation" and come forward with suggestions on issues relating to the ongoing peace talks before any final settlement on the Naga problem is reached.

The NSCN(IM) leaders, who arrived at the Central Headquarters (CHQ) of the outfit here to a rousing reception this afternoon, told the outfit's cadres and supporters that "the Government of India, by recognising the uniqueness of the Naga history, has acknowledged the historical fact that Nagas were never part of India."

Addressing the first formal press conference on their second homecoming, the NSCN (IM) leaders said the sovereignty of the Nagas was still an issue for the outfit.

Mr. Muivah said: "Sovereignty of the Nagas belong only to the Nagas. It does not belong to India. Nagas are the sovereign authority to decide their own fate."

The two leaders arrived here in two bullet-proof cars and escorted by heavily-armed cadres of the Naga Army in a convoy. The convoy was escorted from the Dimapur airport by the outfit's cadres, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Nagaland police till Manglamukh, entrance of the Hebron camp. Commandos of the India Reserve Battalion guarded the entire route from the Dimapur airport to Manglamukh.

The two also inspected a guard of honour by soldiers of the Naga Army before addressing a 3,000-strong gathering of Naga Hohos, (apex tribal council body), members of various Naga organisations.

As part of the reception organised at the CHQ by the self-styled Government of People's Republic of Nagalim (GPRN), the parallel government run by the underground outfit, GPRN choir groups presented hymns. Immediately after they landed at the Dimapur airport, more than 3,000 Naga men and women, clad in traditional attire, welcomed them.

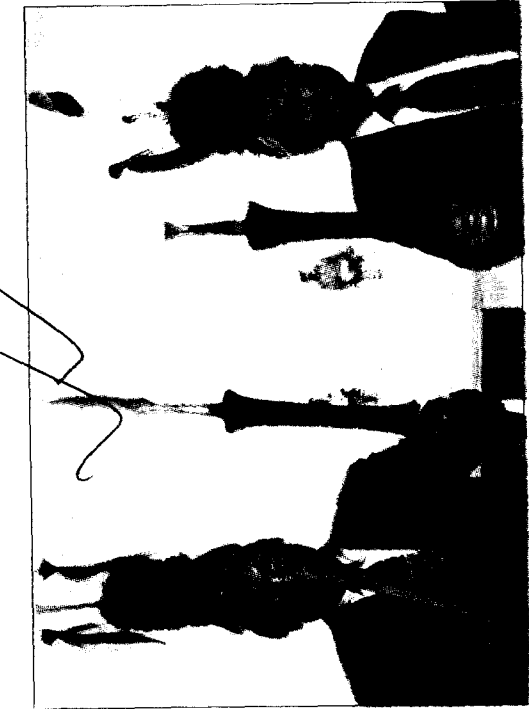
Asked if they would be holding consultations with the rival NSCN (Khaplang faction), Mr. Muivah said that they were ready to discuss with anyone who comes forward.

— ICHHROHES WHI AISO DE UHSSUSSUU.

'Final solution' call after 37-year exile

15/12/2004
Bijay Sankar Bora in Dimapur

9 - N. E. Naga
Naga group to work together for a final solution."



Traditional headgear with jacket and tie. Th Muivah (left) and Isak Chisi Swu at Dimapur airport on Tuesday. — PTI

to decades-old Naga tangle. Elated at the red-carpet welcome accorded by about 5,000 Nagas representing 40 tribes from Nagaland and Manipur, NSCN-IM chairman Swu said: "I am running short of words to express my happiness... We have come here with God's blessings and hope to realise our dreams. "We have come here to explain how we have been serving our nation from outside and negotiating with India. We have met the Prime Minister, the home minister, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mr Vajpayee and other leaders. All of them are fully prepared to settle the Naga issue. Therefore, the time has come for the Nagas to consolidate themselves into one people. This is a call to every

Muivah, the more articulate of the two, said: "Whatever the solution, it has to be acceptable to the historical rights of Nagas and India. We have come at the invitation of the Prime Minister. He assured us that a solution will have to be honourable and through peaceful means because violence can't bring any solution. He told the Nagas: "We have come because we are responsible for you. Whatever you tell us we are ready to listen. Time has come for Nagas to be realistic. We are invincible because you are invincible. You have the shown the world that in the past 50 years... This is history now."

people. This is a call to every

people. This is a call to every

Dec. 14. — Top NSCN-IM leaders Isak Chisi Swu and Th Muivah, who were accorded a colourful public reception by Naga tribes at Dimapur airport today, gave a clarion call for reconciliation amongst all warring Naga outfits and said violence would not bring "honourable solution" to the Naga problem.

Overwhelmed at the reunion with the Naga masses after 37 years of self-imposed exile, the NSCN-IM leaders promised that they would not let Nagas down and would allow the people of Nagaland to have their say in finding an honourable settlement

Serial blasts rock Assam

Ulfa attack on minister's house, district Congress office

Digambar Patowary
Guwahati, December 14

ULFA ACTIVISTS today carried out serial attacks in different parts of the state. At 6 pm, Ulfa activists lobbed a hand-grenade at the house of state Cabinet minister for Excise and Labour Rameswar Dhanowar in his native Topolabasti village under Digboi police station.

The grenade hit a flowerpot in the minister's house but failed to explode. At the time of the attack, Dhanowar was not at home. He was in the state capital to attend the ongoing winter session of the Assam Assembly.

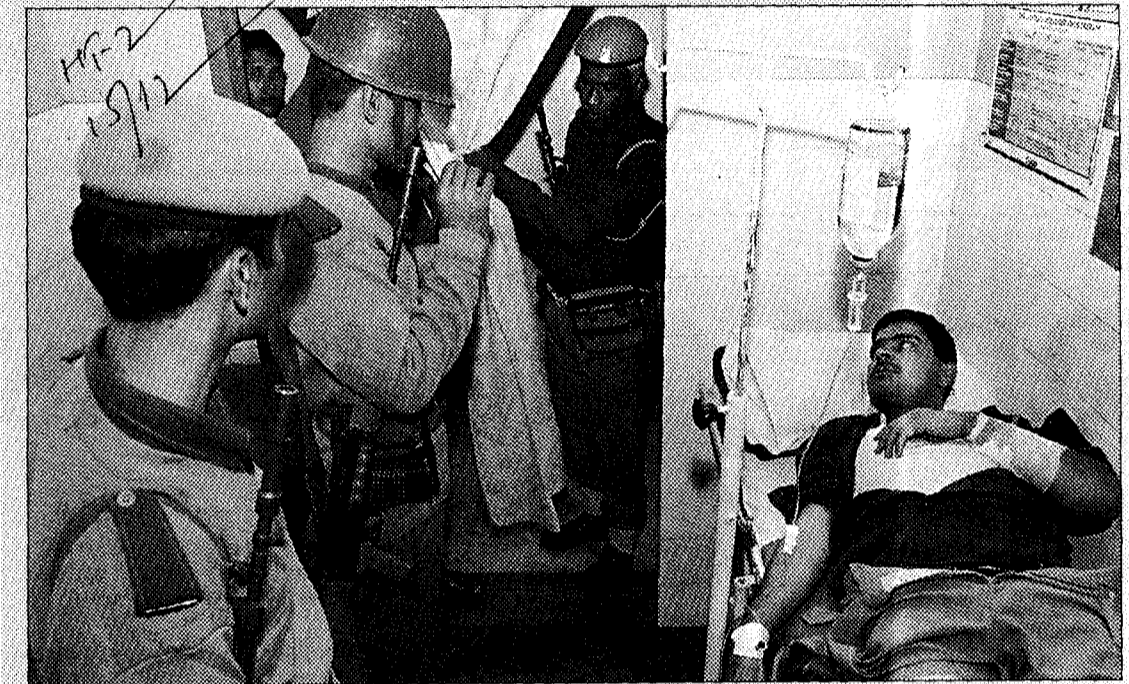
At 6.10 pm, activists of the banned outfit triggered a blast just outside the Tinsukia district office of the ruling Congress. According to Tinsukia police, the bomb was kept on a bicycle. Two persons were injured in the blast.

In Guwahati, two youths on a motorcycle lobbed a hand-grenade at a CRPF patrol just opposite Anuradha cinema in Bamunimaidam at 5.30 in the evening. A CRPF officer was injured and a cart-puller was also hurt in the grenade blast.

Seven people were seriously injured in a bomb blast, which occurred at 4.30 pm on Tuesday, at Maya Bazar in Morigaon town of the Morigaon district. According to the police control-room of Morigaon district, the bomb was kept on a bicycle at Maya Bazar, which is a fish market. All the injured have been admitted to Morigaon civil hospital. The police suspect the Ulfa is behind the blast.

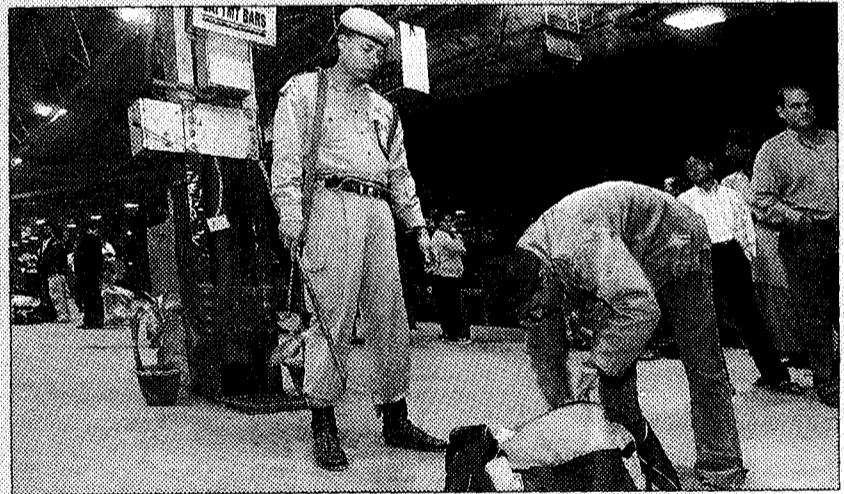
In another incident here, Ulfa cadres lobbed a grenade near Gauhati railway station. The grenade hit a pile of stone chips kept at the side of the road for repair purposes. No one was injured in the second blast in the city.

At Nagaon town in Nagon district, Ulfa activists triggered a powerful blast near the Hoiborgaon police outpost under Nagaon police station. Eight people were seriously injured. At Chabua in Tinsukia district, Ulfa cadres tossed a hand-grenade at Chabua police station. Though the grenade exploded, no



AP PHOTOS

(Above) Paramilitary jawans comfort an injured colleague at a Guwahati hospital after the proscribed Ulfa triggered five blasts in the city on Tuesday, killing two and injuring several others. (Right) A security personnel checks a passenger's luggage near Gauhati railway station after the blasts.



one was injured.

All the incidents took place on the first anniversary of 'Operation All-Clear' launched to flush out Ulfa militants in Bhutan. On December 14 last year, the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) had launched a military offensive against

the Ulfa, National Democratic Front of Bodoland and KLO. All these three insurgent groups faced a severe blow to their set-up in the military operation by the Royal Bhutan Army.

Assam Police IGP (Special Branch) Khagen Sarma confirmed

that the Ulfa was behind all the blasts in the state.

In another incident at Simaluguri, in Sibsagar district, a police constable fired several rounds from his service rifle on a group of youth following a clash. Two youths were killed on the spot.

For 12-yr-old, Muivah no more just a photo

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP
DIMAPUR (NAGALAND), DECEMBER 14

TWELVE-year-old Worin had fill now seen grand-uncle Thuingaleng Muivah only on the front pages of newspapers, and sometimes on television. Thus when her grandfather Ahan Muivah went to pick her up from her hostel this morning so she could meet him in Dimapur, she was overjoyed.

"My grandfather told me even he had not seen him for over 30 years," said Worin, a student of Std VII at the Patkai Christian Academy, about 20 km from here. She always wondered what kind of a grand-uncle he was, who never came to their village for so many years, she said. "I don't know anything about politics. I only know he is a very famous man," she added.

"I am so happy that he is here, standing in front of thousands of people, talking about a solution. I am not yet pre-



Muivah family for the NSCN(I-M) leaders to arrive. Worin, however, could not get close to Muivah at the public recep-

NSCN(I-M) leaders Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Chisi Swu at Dimapur airport on Tuesday. P 71

tion at the airport. Her grandfather said the NSCN(I-M) would arrange a family reunion for them later in the evening.

"As we drove to the airport, my grandfather showed me the posters alongside the road and said, 'look, that is my brother'," Worm said. Ten members of the Muivah family were "special invites" to the public reception that Muivah and Isak Chisi Swu were accorded on their arrival at the Dimapur airport by the Naga Council and the Naga Hoho, the apex body of all the Naga tribes.

Worin's grandfather, 80-year-old Ahan, came all the way from Somdel, the ancestral village of the Muivahs in Manipur's Ukhrul district. His wife Ashum, younger brother James, and first-cousin Tuizar, a retired IAS officer, too were there to meet Muivah. Muivah is the third of four brothers, while their only sis-

ter, Longrunghah, died a few years ago. "He was a very naughty boy. But he was also brave and honest," recalled elder brother Ahan, recalling, how as a child, Muivah used to be the natural leader of the children in Somdel. "He also played football, but was better at playing the guitar," Ahan said.

James Muivah, a retired school-teacher said, "He was a very good student. When he came home from Shillong on vacation, he would go to his old school and teach the students for free."

Muivah studied BA in St Anthony's College, Shillong, and MA in Political Science from Gauhati University before proceeding to Delhi to study law.

"We sent him to Delhi to study law. He would have made a very good lawyer. But within a year, he disappeared and joined the national movement," James said, adding how Muivah's favourite topic during his college and university days was "Naga nationalism and nothing else".

Red carpet awaits Naga leaders

12/11/04
SR-3
Statesman News Service

DIMAPUR/NEW DELHI, Dec. 13. — A grand public reception awaits top NSCN-IM leaders Mr Isak Chis Swu and Mr Thuingaleng Muivah on their arrival at the airport here tomorrow morning even as the rival NSCN-K (Khaplang) faction has promised people the most "peaceful Christmas".

The security arrangements made by the state notwithstanding, the Union home ministry today issued fresh instructions to the Nagaland government to ensure fool-proof security for them during their stay.

NCSN-IM deputy klonser (minister) for information and public relations Mr Kraibo Chawang today claimed that the greater Dimapur area had been "sanitised of elements



A file photo of Muivah and Swu.

posing a security threat" on the eve of leaders' arrival.

"The NSCN-IM's Dimapur town command has engaged its army cadre to beef up security in coordination wi-

9-N.B. Gales
th police and CRPF. Our team inspected security arrangements in and around Dimapur airport yesterday," Mr Chawang said. Dimapur SP Mr Janardan Singh said: "Nagaland police personnel, who will escort the leaders to the notified area around the outfit's headquarters, have been carrying out dry drills."

NSCN-K general secretary Mr Kitovi Zhimoni has issued a statement stating that the group has decided to halt all military operations from 15 December in the interest of "peace and unity" among Nagas and promised the "most peaceful Christmas".

After a public reception by Naga groups outside the airport, the leaders will be whisked away to the NSCN-IM headquarters at Jalukie Kam after a brief stopover at the council headquarters at Camp Hebron.

Well enough begun

13/11/52-6 9-11-52
But Naga peace hinges on change of heart

Amiable signals emanating from the Prime Minister's first meeting with NSCN leaders Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah suggest both sides have enjoyed greater confidence than before. The collective Naga leadership reiterated its stand that there will be no more fighting and the problem should be resolved through understanding and introspection. Endorsing this, Manmohan Singh sought an honourable solution, an obvious reference to a settlement acceptable to all without a breach of peace in the region. Given the complex nature of the Naga problem, misgivings persist, however. Senior NSCN-IM functionary VS Atem put things in the right perspective when he said talks on "substantive" issues were yet to begin, these being demands for sovereignty and Greater Nagaland. The ball is now in the government's court since the Naga leaders are here with the firm belief that the "scope of negotiation" on these issues has not changed. They have asserted that Nagaland has never been a part of India and the previous NDA government even acknowledged this "uniqueness" of Naga history.

It is wise of the Centre to have arranged for the collective leadership's visit to Nagaland during Christmas before taking up "substantive" issues. They must see things for themselves, after all Isak Swu is president of the self-proclaimed "Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim" and Muivah its prime minister. Their meeting with cross sections of people should help since they are "committed" to consult them at every stage of a political settlement. For one thing, tribalism runs deep in Nagaland and the exclusion of the SS Khaplang faction and Naga National Council from the talks has only widened the gulf. More than trying to understand each others' problems, what Nagaland needs today is a change of heart. And that, hopefully, will not be long in the coming.

13 Oct 2004

THE STATESMAN

Naga red carpet for Isak, Muivah

Preparations on war-footing, govt repairs roads to camp

Gaurav Shrivastava
Dimapur, December 12

Preparations are on a war footing here to greet NSCN(I-M) leaders Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah who would be returning to Nagaland after a gap of four years.

The road to the NSCN(I-M) headquarters, which till date was bumpy and unmanned, is now being "smoothened" by the state government. The 40-km drive leading to Munghlamukh on the outskirts of the town, which leads to the general headquarters of the outfit where the leaders are going to stay, is being thoroughly repaired. At the same time, the council headquarters is also undergoing a sea change.

Christmas has marked the beginning of the festive season and, with the Naga leaders expected to stay in their own camp, the cadres have been asked to give a face-lift to the camp area.

While approach roads are being repaired, old thatches are being replaced with new ones. New offices have been built to hold high-level meetings and share high tea when the leaders arrive. Many senior office-bearers will also stay in the camp when chairman Swu and



FUTURE PERFECT? Isak Chisi Swu (left) and Thuingaleng Muivah in New Delhi

general secretary Muivah arrive.

The senior office-bearers don't want to leave any stone unturned. They are planning a gala reception: Bamboomade traditional Naga gates have been erected at various locations through which the convoy of the leaders will pass. Welcome banners and posters will also be put up at various sites. The grand reception will be hosted at Dimapur airport on December 14, which is expected to be bigger and boisterous than the one hosted at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. Representatives of various frontal Naga organisations will also be present at the airport, a source in the NSCN said.

It may be mentioned that during their stay in New Delhi, Swu and Muivah met several top leaders of political parties. The focus of the meetings had reportedly

been on getting to know the present leadership better before getting down to the brass tacks of resolving the Naga demands for greater autonomy, territorial sway and peace. After some hiccups, peace talks between the Centre and NSCN(I-M) appear to be back on track.

PEACE ROUTE

This had raised hopes and aspirations among the people that when both the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) are committed to the peace process, some mutually acceptable solution would come out soon to end crisis.

The Amsterdam-based NSCN(I-M) leadership had indicated last month that it was "reconsidering" its decision to visit India to carry forward the peace process after virtually threatening

to pullout of talks to an issue that has been a burning topic for over five decades.

Apparently the explanation given by the NSCN(I-M) leaders for reconsidering their visit was that another insurgent group NNC was "arming" itself while it was maintaining a ceasefire with security forces in Nagaland. The leaders said their rival faction, NSCN(Khaplang), was accusing it of "undermining" the issue of sovereignty and talking to Delhi.

Informed sources said that the Centre's interlocutor for the Naga peace process, K. Padmanabhaiah, spoke to both Swu and Muivah recently to inform them that the Indian government was sincere in continuing the peace process. The Naga leadership "saw the logic" and had finally decided to come to India on December 5.

ANI

Mannohan Singh in the Northeast

By Walter Fernandes

DURING HIS visit to Manipur and Assam on November 20-22, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh brought no economic package to the Northeast, as his predecessors had done, but took some symbolic steps that can be confidence-building measures. At this stage, more than economic packages, the region probably needs symbolism — actions such as handing over the Kangla Fort in Imphal to the Manipur Government and flagging off the South Asia-Southeast Asia car rally.

Kangla Fort, a structure that predates British rule, is a symbol of the identity of Manipur, especially of its dominant ethnic group, the Meitei. Since Independence, it has been in the possession of the Indian Army, and many Manipuris see this as a sign of repression. Since 1958, the Northeast has lived with the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

One can perhaps better understand it by drawing a parallel with the Red Fort. After defeating the Indian forces in the 1857 war of independence, the British forces desecrated the throne room of the Red Fort by drinking liquor in it. They allowed the Red Fort to stand as a sign of their triumph. At Independence, India established its link with its pre-colonial past by beginning the tradition of hoisting the tricolour from its ramparts.

The Indian Government took no such deliberate decision to desecrate the Kangla Fort but many Manipuris are unhappy the armed forces held it. The people were not even allowed in

as tourists. So the gesture of handing it over was a symbolic recognition of their identity and specific history.

The car rally belongs to another genre. Many have criticised Dr. Singh who represents Assam in the Rajya Sabha for sparing only a few hours to visit his adopted State during the floods in July. Their charge is that he found time to flag off a commercial extravaganza of a car rally while doing nothing about the floods. There is

the Northeast. A sign of the refusal to use this region as a link is the withdrawal of the Guwahati-Bangkok Air India flight, the only international flight from this region. So in spite of being a commercial extravaganza, the car rally too has some symbolic value as a sign of the Centre's willingness to recognise their ethnicity as an asset and of its desire to go to Southeast Asia through the Northeast.

These gestures will not solve the

The Northeast needs not more packages but serious steps towards a solution to the problems that have resulted in insurgency.

probably some truth in this criticism but there is also some symbolic value in the act of flagging off the rally. Most Northeastern communities are of Mongloid stock as are the people of Southeast Asia. As such they can be a link with Southeast Asia. The complaint is that instead of treating them as such a bridge, most leaders of what they call "Mainland" India hold their ethnicity against them. For example, a senior leader is reported to have said two years ago that some Indianness should be put into the people of the Northeast.

The Central leaders do not seem to have changed such thinking even after their "look east" policy. Instead of allowing the region to function as a link with Southeast Asia its people are made to believe that they can benefit from this policy only if they go to Southeast Asia through Delhi. They would like Delhi to go east through

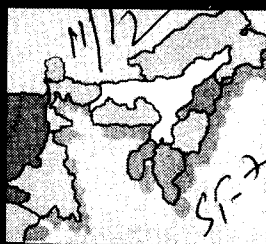
together into a package. The few new components have by and large remained on paper. Little wonder then that the packages did not establish trust between the region and the Centre.

The region needs not more packages but serious steps towards a solution to the problems that have resulted in insurgency. The outsiders controlling its economy have treated the Northeast only as a source of raw material — tea, coal, and petroleum — and have not invested in industries. The educational level of its people is higher than that of most of the rest of India but the economic decision makers have not created productive jobs. As a result, the region has an estimated backlog of 30 lakh unemployed or 25 per cent of its active workforce. Immigrants from the Hindi belt and from Bangladesh encroach on land that is the centre of the economy, culture and identity, and that causes more tension.

These problems cannot be solved overnight. To find a long-term solution, the Centre has to go beyond symbolism and show that it is capable of trusting the people of the region and of treating their cultural and ethnic identity as a national asset. The gestures made by Dr. Singh were thus in the right direction but the Government needs to go far beyond them — the people have to be taken into confidence about the peace and development initiatives. The Centre should not fail the Northeast once again.

(The author is Director, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati.)

NORTH by NORTH EAST



SANJOY HAZARIKA

Naga talks: Beyond the 'feel good' factor

THE leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim have held a series of intensive back-to-back meetings with Indian leaders in New Delhi: they met the Prime Minister and home minister and also called on three former Prime Ministers. Their journeys also took them to Sonia Gandhi, whom they praised for her political sagacity and influence. But between these, they also held a face-to-face with Naga residents of the city, especially with students, and then prepared for a large interaction with civil society figures based in the city. These are significant efforts to open up and should be appreciated.

En route to Dimapur next week, they will stop in Kolkata for meetings with chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and former chief minister Jyoti Basu. They are clearly taking Dr Manmohan Singh's suggestion seriously that they travel across India and meet with a representative cross-section of civil society. In Nagaland, while their base will be the NSCN headquarters near Dimapur, they are also slated to travel to Kohima to meet with former chief ministers, members of the state legislature and former lawmakers. Beyond niceties and the "feel good" factor, these conversations are bound to be the beginning of the hard talk that is necessary to develop a consensual approach to the problem which is defined in their terms as the "Indo-Naga problem".

In Delhi, they also met among themselves and their follower as also with the Nagaland chief minister, Neiphiu Rio, who came with the three MPs from the state.

Both Mr Swu and Mr Muivah have been wary in their interactions with the media. Neither side wanted to say anything that would spoil the mood during these pre-Christmas meetings which were both courtesy calls and efforts to understand each other up close – for the Nagas, it was their first meeting with Congress-led government since PV Narasimha Rao held office in 1996.

Clear positions

BUT the positions are clear, although stated courteously: Mr Muivah stressed that the Government would need to address the unique position of the Nagas – what he meant by that, one presumes, is the need for New Delhi to recognise the consistent and persistent struggle of the Nagas to forge their own identity and space. There can be little doubt that the Nagas occupy a special status in the region; but there are other unique ethnic groups too – yet, Mr Muivah's point is not just based on ethnicity; it is on the historical premise the Nagas asserted before India became independent that they weren't a part of this country. Acceptance of the past doesn't mean binding one to it or it becoming the basis of negotiations: it could put aside a hurdle and pave the way for a fresh step.

There is another point which Mr Muivah made after their meeting with Sonia Gandhi: that whatever action India takes, the Nagas will respond to it in 10 times measure. This is a view he has expressed before; in their political positions, the Nagas have, on the whole, been consistent.

Clearly, this is an appeal to the leaders in Delhi and across the country to understand the difficulties of the Nagas whose stated position has been for sovereignty. But as one Naga leader said to me: "If it was sovereignty, then what would be left to discuss?" Clearly, a short-term settlement has to be of a different nature although the long-term goals may remain unchanged. Both sides have a better comprehension of the difficulties that each faces; this is a view that has matured over seven years of hard negotiations, which has seen table thumping by both sides. Things have moved a long way since.

Mr Muivah's efforts to reach out to younger Nagas is significant, because many of them have a different view of India and the world as well as their own lives than earlier generations. This is a view that cannot be ignored, because the approach must be as practical as it must be visionary and imaginative.

An inclusive approach

THE pain and challenges of the 50-year struggle have never been far from any Naga, young or old. Yet, tens of thousands of Naga students and professionals live outside the state, embracing a lifestyle which they do not see in their home state – in most metros, they can move about freely, without being questioned, till late; this is impossible given the security strictures in their homeland and in villages, life anyway closes early; they can watch movies (there are no cinema halls in Nagaland) and restaurants are open till late. They also have realised that education is the key to holding their own and progressing in an increasingly competitive world.

In their discussions at home, the Naga leaders must take a proactive, inclusive approach that brings in those in civil society with whom they disagree and listen to them seriously: that is the true test of statesmanship. The issue of the other militant and armed factions remains unresolved: to an outsider, it appears axiomatic that a long-term solution is sought without first establishing unity among groups and tribes. These divisions are deep and go back many years: there must be an appeal to bury the hatchet and the differences of the past, if a truly representative solution is sought and if the NSCN (I-M) seeks a mandate from all Nagas for such a settlement.

The issue of territory is bound to crop up in the next weeks and months. But even this is solvable, given goodwill, imagination and flexibility on all sides. Detailed discussions, proposals and counter-proposals are required; experts and specialists would need to be consulted.

Ulfa shuts down talks

SO, the Ulfa has closed its efforts to talk peace through litterateur Indira Goswami. This reported decision has received scathing response in the local media. Such a turn of events was not unexpected however, given the fact that the discussions were being virtually carried out on a daily basis through the media, which is the worst way of conducting a peace process forward. Ulfa will surely return to conversation mode at some time. It can't ignore public opinion, nor can Delhi. The next effort must be better organised, with little publicity (to which its leaders and interlocutors should be committed) and involve people who understand the issues both at a policy, political, ideological and ground level.

Watching, listening, speaking: The NE awaits Muivah-Swu

Assam: Studied silence amidst opposition

By Bijay Shankar Bora

ALTHOUGH there appears to be a studied silence on the part of civil society groups in Assam over the territorial issue, all groups are prepared with plans of action to oppose Naga claims over Assam areas at the "appropriate time".

An influential youth group, the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad, says it is "monitoring developments" in the wake of the Swu-Muivah visit to India and has also opposed the demand for integration of parts of Assam.

The powerful All Assam Students Union says that there hasn't been a softening of its stand on this question. It is learnt that the coordination between Aasu, the All Manipur Students Union and the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union still holds against the Naga demand since all three states are affected by it.

"When the time comes, Aasu, Amsu and Aapsu will join hands again to oppose the (integration) bid," said Aasu advisor Samujjal Bhattacharyya. This is in line with the state government's position: an all-party resolution in Assam Assembly against the NSCN (I-M)'s claim over Assam areas is also in place.

There have been skirmishes and tension along the hot spots on the Assam-Nagaland border at Merapani in Golaghat district and Karbi Anglong areas because of alleged attempts by armed Naga groups to encroach on Assam land. Earlier this year, a young Assam government magistrate was killed when Nagas fired at an Assam police eviction party at Dhansiri reserve forest area in Karbi Anglong district.

Support comes from an unusual source: the banned United Liberation Front of Assam, which is known to be close to the rival NSCN (K) group! Ulfa has been quick off the mark to reiterate

its strong opposition to the view on integration.

In a statement, Ulfa chairman Arobinda Rajkhowa criticised intellectuals and historians in Assam for maintaining a "studied silence" over the NSCN's demand for integration of a large part of Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat,



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shakes hands with Th. Muivah while Isak Swu looks on. — PTI

Karbi Anglong, North Cachar, Hailakandi and Silchar districts of Assam into the proposed Naga homeland. He appeared to have ignored consistent statements and views by many who have taken a tough anti-integration stand.

(The author is the Guwahati-based Special Representative of The Statesman.)

Open forum

territorial integrity along with a resolution that not an inch of territory will be spared for the creation of a

"Greater Nagaland."

According to a former minister from Tirap district, TL Rajkumar, the Tirap-Changlang Peoples' Forum has unanimously endorsed that in "any decision to be taken during the Indo-Naga talks affecting or concerning the two districts of Tirap and

Arunachal: Not an inch will be spared

By Mamang Dai

WHATEVER the outcome of the peace talks between the Centre and NSCN (I-M) chairman Isak Chisi Swu and general secretary Th. Muivah, the arrival of the Naga leaders in Delhi has provoked a strong statement from the state on the question of

Changlang (bordering Nagaland), the people of those districts must be consulted and taken into confidence."

The TCPF includes present and former elected leaders, panchayat members, student union presidents and a 12-member executive body headed by a chairman and co-chairman, civil supplies minister CC Singpho and Rajkumar respectively. Amid fears that the Centre may slice away parts of Arunachal in the interests of a solution to the Naga problem (an earlier proposal was that Tirap and Changlang be made a Union Territory under the Nagas), Rajkumar said while everyone has supported the peace process, no one in these districts wanted to be linked to the problem or become part of a larger Nagaland.

Rajkumar said that a strong reaction from the state government was the need of the hour. At a meeting in Itanagar, the TCPF appealed to all political parties, public leaders, student organisations, human rights activists and NGOs in the state to be alert to any negotiation between the Centre and the I-M leaders that might jeopardise Arunachal's integrity.

The Forum has called a one-day bandh on 16 December as a mark of protest against the insurgency related killings in the two districts.

The influential All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union also reiterated its stand that the apex student body would do everything needed to protect the state. Aapsu has called for a meeting of all its top district student and college union leaders on 15 December to discuss the issue. In New Delhi, the state's two Lok Sabha MPs, Tapir Gao and Khiren Rijiju, also met home minister Shivraj Patil to convey to the government that no agreement involving Arunachal should be arrived at without taking the people and the state government into confidence.

(The author is an Itanagar-based freelance journalist.)

Manipur: Knotty peace prospect

By Pradip Phanjoubam

THE much anticipated "substantive" political negotiations to settle the Naga problem hopefully will begin while the two NSCN (I-M) leaders, Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah, are in India.

While Nagas and non-Nagas wish for an amicable settlement, everybody is also at a loss as to what possibly can be the content of such a settlement. There is no gainsaying the issue is beset with many hurdles. The two most fundamental of these are the questions of sovereignty and territory.

It's unlikely anyone would be still nurturing any illusion that sovereignty can be had through niceties exchanged across the table, or for that matter by scoring debating points. Probably the NSCN (I-M) leaders would bring up the matter, but this would be more in the nature of posturing, compelled by events in the bitter history of the Naga struggle.

The Shillong Accord of 1975 is precisely one of these for

its rejection was the basis of the birth of the undivided NSCN. The Accord signatories agreed to give up the idea of Naga sovereignty and were termed as betrayers by those who formed the NSCN.

Although we have no doubt that the Nagas want peace, the question is would they also accept a solution that has been consistently rejected by the I-M itself? Again, if there is to be another accord now, what possibly can it have more than the Shillong Accord, which spawned such discord among the Nagas? For even the idea of a Greater Nagaland is not alien to the 1975 accord.

The consultative meetings the two Naga leaders are planning in Dimapur with Naga civil society representatives, we suppose, is meant to thrash out these issues. But here too, these consultative meetings are likely to end up as reunion of supporters, for the NSCN (I-M) had vehemently ruled out any reconciliation with supporters of the NSCN (K) or the Naga National Council.

There is no easy answer to the territory question either. Short of sovereignty, the NSCN (I-M) leaders would be looking at the Greater Nagaland (Nagalim) demand as the

trophy to walk home with but all know where the opposition would come from. The Assam and Manipur Assemblies have passed resolutions to oppose dismemberment of their territories. Arunachal Pradesh too has not shown any inclination of generosity on the matter either.

The Government of India is unlikely to concede to this demand until a broad consensus is reached with all the concerned states; such a consensus is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

The other points of negotiation such as a separate flag can be agreed upon, but these are peripherals and in our opinion not much more than the modern equivalent of the patronising red blankets village *dobasis* and chiefs were rewarded with in the past.

As we see it, at this juncture what is needed is an altogether new and more broad-based approach road to this vexing problem instead of doggedly insisting on walking the one that has failed to bring the destination anywhere in sight.

(The author is editor, Imphal Free Press.)

'ULFA now wants peace talks letter signed by PM'

SHIV AROOR
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 10

THE ULFA, which yesterday rejected a letter from the PMO inviting the group for unconditional talks, today said it will only respond to a letter signed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, himself. The previous letter was signed by PM's special advisor M.K. Narayanan.

Though ULFA's mediator Indira Mamoni Goswami was told today that an offer signed by PM was not protocol, she said she would continue to seek one. Goswami said: "The ULFA is very clear that sovereignty should be an issue in any talks that happen. I have drafted a letter to the PM requesting that he himself send a formal offer for peace talks and will send it to him in a day or two. I spoke to Paresh Barua (ULFA president) to-

day and while he has appreciated the offer, he thinks the requirement to give up militancy contradicts the offer for unconditional talks."

In the Capital, the NSCN(I-M) said while its principle de-

Goswami told an offer signed by PM was not protocol, she says will continue to seek one

mand to the Government for a "Greater Nagaland" held good, there was "no question of discussing autonomy".

Yesterday, after an NSCN(I-M) camp in Manipur's Tamenglong district was attacked by other separatist Naga factions, its emissary Gen V.S. Atem — who pegged the blame on

NSCN(K) and UNLF — said the group was in touch with all Naga separatist outfits, including NSCN-K and KNF. He added that they were plans to take them into confidence for the larger peace process likely to begin in January.

When asked how NSCN(I-M) could reconcile with groups like NSCN(K) — which had accused it of easing up its demands to the Indian Government — Atem said: "One or two people can shout. But this is not the voice of the Naga people. Ninety-nine per cent of Nagas want what we want."

The group met Naga students, government employees and MPs today in what a source within the group called a "confidence building exercise with the community".

NSCN(I-M) leaders Isak Chisi Swu and T. Muivah will be meeting former Defence minister George Fernandes.

Ulfa no to PM offer

Statesman News Service

GUWAHATI, Dec. 9. — The banned United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) today ruled out any chance for it to sit across the negotiation table with the government of India as a sequel to the PMO's reply to litterateur Dr Mamoni Raisom Goswami's proposal for peace talks.

In a statement e-mailed to the media persons here, the Ulfa commander-in-chief while appreciating Dr Goswami's "sincere and courageous effort" to find a way to solve the "Assam-India" conflict, declined to hold talks with the government of India as the PMO's letter did not mention anything about the outfit's demand for "sovereignty".

The full text of the Ulfa leaders's statement is : "The reply of the Indian Prime Minister sent by the Security Adviser in the PMO to Dr Mamoni Roisom Goswami's letter for peace talks with Ulfa

will disappoint not only her but the peace loving people of Assam in general. However, this is not surprising to Ulfa. The reply sent by the Security Adviser in the Prime Minister's office shows that the Indian Prime Minister did not even think it worth to give a personal reply to the sincere effort of Dr Goswami.

"The letter from the PMO is self-contradictory and confusing.

It says that the Indian Prime Minister has not put any pre-condition while offering to hold talks with any group who are prepared to abjure the path of violence, which itself is a pre-condition. Besides it does not mention anything about the core issue of sovereignty.

Ulfa has categorically stated that Sovereignty should be on the agenda for discussion.

"Under the circumstances it is simply not possible for Ulfa to proceed further for holding talks. But we once again

express our sincere appreciation to Dr Goswami for her sincere and courageous effort in bringing about a solution to the Assam-India conflict."

With this statement the banned outfit which is suspected to be under control of the Pakistani ISI, has watered down all the hard work put in by the noted litterateur from Assam Dr Goswami to facilitate peace talks.

She had met the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh last month with the proposal and stated that she found the PM very concerned and keen to solve the insurgency problem in the state.

All along the Ulfa has been maintaining that the talks must revolve around its demand for sovereignty thereby.

However, the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had in clear terms stated in Guwahati on 22 November that, "There should be no doubt in anybody's mind about the reality that Assam is an integral part of India."

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THE STATESMAN

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2004

NOW FOR A BREAKTHROUGH

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THE CENTRE AND the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) have shown commendable clear-headedness in putting aside their differences to make possible the meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah, the two top leaders of the powerful Naga group. The meeting served the purpose of breaking the ice between the United Progressive Alliance Government and the NSCN (I-M), with which New Delhi has engaged in negotiations since 1998. Originally scheduled for November, it was in danger of not taking place at all when the Naga leaders, who live abroad in self-exile, suddenly called off their visit expressing their displeasure with the Centre for "encouraging and facilitating" the rival Khaplang faction of the NSCN. It speaks to the importance the Centre attached to their visit that it exerted itself to persuade Mr. Swu and Mr. Muivah to make the trip, denying their accusation and assuring them of the NSCN (I-M)'s pre-eminent position in the peace negotiations. Evidently, the NSCN (I-M) leaders also assigned considerable significance to the meeting with Dr. Singh, and decided to come out of their sulk quickly. From the reiteration by the Prime Minister and the Naga leaders during their meeting that "no stone should be left unturned to achieve a peaceful solution to the Indo-Naga conflict", it is clear both sides recognise that continuous engagement is the way forward.

Aside from the meeting with Dr. Singh, the visit by the two Naga leaders is important for another reason: Mr. Swu and Mr. Muivah will also travel to Nagaland, returning home only for the second time since leaving India in 1967. Although the Centre's separate ceasefire agreements with the NSCN (I-M) and the NSCN (Khaplang) have brought peace to the State

J.N.B. S. Palan

since 1997, clashes between the two groups have not stopped. At the heart of the problem is the NSCN (I-M)'s claim to be the sole representative of the Nagas. The group does enjoy considerable popularity, but as the strongest of all the armed groups, it has also often been accused of trying to enforce its writ on the Naga people through heavy-handed tactics. It runs a virtual parallel government in the State, challenging every now and then the authority of the elected Government through its *diktats*. While it goes about asserting its supremacy, there are voices in Nagaland that want the peace process to take on board all militant and political groups, as only such inclusiveness can provide a lasting peace and an enduring solution to Naga demands. The month-long stay by the Swu-Muivah team in Nagaland will be watched closely for its impact on the group's relations with rivals as well as for the ability and willingness of the two leaders to accommodate the interests of different groups and political interests in the State.

Most importantly, when the two leaders return to New Delhi for further talks with the Centre, they will have a first-hand feel of the eagerness with which the Naga people await permanent peace. While it is too much to hope that this can be achieved in the immediate future, the two sides can at least make a concerted effort to begin talking about substantive political issues, the most important of which is the demand for a "greater Nagaland" incorporating all Naga-inhabited areas of the North-East. This is a sensitive and even explosive issue for the entire region but the peace process cannot continue indefinitely without discussions on this or other political issues. The Swu-Muivah visit to India provides an opportunity for making a breakthrough. Both the Centre and the Naga leadership must take it.

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THE HINDU

শেষ সুযোগ আলফাকে, মণিপুরী জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি ওড়ানো হচ্ছে মায়ানমারে

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

৭ ডিসেম্বর: মায়ানমারে মণিপুরী জঙ্গিদের ঘাঁটিগুলি নির্মূল করার অভিযান শুরু হয়েছে পুরোদমে। মায়ানমারের সেনাবাহিনী এ কাজে ভারতকে সব দিক দিয়ে সাহায্য করলেও ওখানে অবস্থিত আলফা ও কামতাপুরীদের জঙ্গি ঘাঁটিগুলি এখনই নিশ্চিহ্ন করা হচ্ছে না। ভারত সরকার আলফা জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে বোঝাপড়ার শেষ চেষ্টা করছে। শান্তির পথে আলোচনার টেবিলে তাদের বসানোর লক্ষ্যে সক্রিয় কেন্দ্র। এই কারণেই আলফা জঙ্গিদের কাছে বিশেষ বার্তা পৌঁছে দেওয়ার উদ্দেশ্যে কেন্দ্র এই দ্বিমুখী রণকৌশল নিয়েছে। কদিন আগে মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকেও অসম রাইফেলস আইন সংশোধন করে একই ভাবে ইতিবাচক বার্তা পাঠানো হয়েছে আলফা জঙ্গিদের কাছে।

এন এস সি এন (মুইভা) গোষ্ঠীর দুই নেতা আইজাক ও মুইভা দিল্লি এসে আলোচনা শুরু করেছেন। মুইভার সঙ্গে আলোচনার মডেল অনুসরণ করেই আলফাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলার চেষ্টা চলছে। মায়ানমারে জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি নির্মূল

করার কথা স্বীকার করে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ বলেছেন, “মায়ানমার সরকার সব দিক দিয়েই সাহায্য করছে। ওই দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রীকেও সব তথ্য দেওয়া হয়েছে।”

কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্র অনুসারে, জঙ্গি-শিবির নির্মূল করতে নরম-গরম পদ্ধতিই নেওয়া হয়েছে। স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের কাছে খবর, শিলিগুড়ির কাছে নেপাল-ভারত সীমান্তে ঝাপা জেলার একটি জায়গায় প্রায় ৫০০ জন আলফা ও কামতাপুরী জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি বানিয়েছে। বি এস এফের গোয়েন্দা শাখা এ খবর দিয়েছে। নেপাল সরকারকেও ভারত এ ব্যাপারে সতর্ক করেছে।

কেন্দ্র ঠিক করেছে, আলফার দুই নেতা, পরেশ বরুয়া ও অরবিন্দ রাজখোয়াকে একটা শেষ সুযোগ দেওয়া হবে। জ্ঞানপীঠ প্রাপ্ত সাহিত্যিক ইন্দ্রিা গোস্বামীও এ কাজে ব্যস্ত। পরেশের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ, ঢাকায় আই এস আইয়ের কাছ থেকে তিনি সব রকম মদত পাচ্ছেন। পরেশ সম্প্রতি ফোনে অসমের একটি দৈনিকে দেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারে বলেন, “আলোচনায় বসতে হলে সার্বভৌমত্ব নিয়ে কথা বলতে হবে।” এ প্রস্তাবে কেন্দ্র রাজি

নয়। এ অবস্থায় মধ্যস্থদের প্রস্তাব, শর্ত ছাড়াই দু’পক্ষ আলোচনায় বসুক। সেখানে সার্বভৌমত্ব-সহ অন্য সমস্ত বিষয় নিয়েই কথা হতে পারে। এ দিকে, ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর দাবি, মণিপুরের চুড়াচাঁদপুর জেলার কাংলেই ইয়াওল কান্না লুপ নামের গোষ্ঠীর ১২০টি জঙ্গি প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রকে গুঁড়িয়ে দেওয়া সম্ভব হয়েছে।

ছান্দেল জেলায় খোংটাল এলাকায় মণিপুর-মায়ানমার সীমান্তে ভারতীয় সেনা মায়ানমারের সেনাবাহিনীকে মূল অভিযান চালাতে সাহায্য করে। ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনী রিমোট সেনসিং স্যাটেলাইট সিস্টেম ব্যবহার করে ১২০টি শিবিরকে চিহ্নিত করে। চুড়াচাঁদপুর, চান্দেল ও বিষণপুর— এই তিন জেলায় ১২০টি শিবির ছিল। অভিযানে ৩২টি তাঁবু, দু’টি প্রশিক্ষণ ক্ষেত্র, একটি ফায়ারিং রেঞ্জ এবং একটি খেলার মাঠ জঙ্গিদের হাত থেকে উদ্ধার করা হয়। পাশাপাশি, ম্যাগাজিন-সহ একটি রাইফেল, ১০টি গ্রেনেড, ২টি রেডিও সেট এবং ৪০ কিলোগ্রাম বিস্ফোরক উদ্ধার করেছে সেনাবাহিনী।

এর আগে ৬ ও ৭ নভেম্বর থিগোটাঙ্গ-এ পিপলস লিবারেশন

আর্মির একটি প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্র উড়িয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছিল।

বড়ো জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গেও কেন্দ্র একই ভাবে আলোচনায় বসতে আগ্রহী। এন ডি এফ বি রাজ্যের সঙ্গে আলোচনার প্রস্তাব খারিজ করার পরে কেন্দ্র এখন ওই জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গে সরাসরি যোগাযোগ গড়ে তোলার কথা ভাবছে।

মুইভাদের মতো আলফা বা বড়ো জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে বোঝাপড়া সম্ভব কি না, তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে। কারণ, অন্য রাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ ছিন্ন করার পরেই মুইভা গোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গে বোঝাপড়া হয়েছে। ব্যাঙ্ককে মুইভাকে গ্রেফতার করে পাসপোর্ট কেড়ে নেওয়া হয়। পরে পাকিস্তান বা অন্য রাষ্ট্রের কাছ থেকে তিনি নতুন পাসপোর্ট তৈরিও করেননি। পরেশ বরুয়া কিন্তু এখনও বাংলাদেশে বসে আই এস আইয়ের সাহায্য নিচ্ছেন। এই সাহায্য ছিন্ন না হওয়া পর্যন্ত বোঝাপড়া কতদূর সম্ভব, সেটাই প্রশ্ন। এই কারণে বাংলাদেশের উপরেও ভারত প্রবল চাপ সৃষ্টি করছে। আলফা যদি তা-ও কথায় রাজি না হয়, সে ক্ষেত্রে ভারত আবার মায়ানমার, ভুটান ও নেপালের সেনার সাহায্য নিয়ে বৃহত্তর সেনা অভিযান চালাবে।

08 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

No inch of Assam, Ulfa tells NSCN

Nagas never had control over the state: Barua

Rahul Karmakar
Guwahati, December 7

THE ULFA has lashed out at the NSCN concept of Greater Nagalim, timing its outburst with the visit of NSCN top guns Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah for a month-long visit to India.

The Ulfa criticism of NSCN's idea of integration of all Naga-inhabited areas of the Northeast and beyond has also come in the wake of the Centre's offer for unconditional talks with the Assamese militant outfit "on any issue" except sovereignty of Assam, something the Ulfa is adamant about.

The offer letter was handed over a couple of days back by the PMO to Delhi-based Assamese writer Indira Mamoni Goswami, who had volunteered to be the facilitator of talks.

In an e-mailed statement, Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Barua said history was witness to the fact that Nagas never had any control over Assam. He also claimed Assam was never a part of India, lambasting the bid by a couple of historians in Assam to prove otherwise.

The Ulfa military chief recounted the 1836 Treaty of Yandaboo between the British and the then Burmese royalty following which the East India Com-

Edge of reason

■ Ulfa rapped the NSCN concept of Greater Nagalim

■ Ulfa is against the NSCN's idea of integration of all Naga-inhabited areas of the N-E and beyond

■ The criticism came after Centre's offer for unconditional talks "on any issue" except sovereignty of Assam

■ Ulfa chief Paresh Barua said Nagas never had any control over Assam

■ He said Assam was never a part of India. Barua criticised some historians' contention over Assam's identity

pany gained control of the whole of undivided Assam. Nagaland, referred to as Naga Hills, was then a province of Assam.

Pradip Gogoi, the incarcerated vice-chairman of Ulfa who was presented before the Tada court here on Tuesday, was more direct in attacking the NSCN. "We will not give even an inch of Assam to fuel NSCN's Greater Nagalim dream," he said.

The stand of the Ulfa—it is close to the Khaplang faction of the NSCN, a bitter rival of the Isak-Muivah

group—on Assam's territorial integrity is incidentally the same as that of the Congress government and political rival Asom Gana Parishad besides the influential All Assam Students Union.

Manipur, too, is opposed to Greater Nagalim that seeks to bring under one administrative umbrella the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Myanmar besides Nagaland.

The Greater Nagalim issue had led to bloodshed in Manipur when New Delhi agreed to extend the purview of the ceasefire with NSCN beyond the boundaries of Nagaland in July 2001.

The violence forced the Centre to withdraw the geographical extension of the ceasefire.

Meanwhile, the territorial tussle entered the schools in Manipur with the Democratic Students Alliance of Manipur pointing out a "sinister plan" by the NCERT to distort the history of the state in favour of Nagaland through Hindi textbooks.

The students' body resented the "twisting" of Manipur's history in the Class VIII Hindi textbooks published by NCERT. The book refers to freedom fighters Rani Gaidenliu and Jadonang as icons of Nagaland instead of Manipur.

Manmohan for honourable solution to Naga problem

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 7. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, favours a "mutually acceptable and honourable solution that can ensure that the Naga people live a life of peace with dignity and self-respect."

During his first meeting with Isak Chishi Swu, chairman, and Thuingaleng Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), here today, Dr. Singh said the Government would make a "sincere effort to find an honourable way out" to the over five-decade-old Naga problem.

A spokesman of the Prime Minister's Office said the Naga leaders thanked Dr. Singh for his warm hospitality: "It is a measure of your great wisdom and we respect that," they told him. Seeking an honourable solution, Mr. Swu and Mr. Muivah said that "a solution cannot be found in violence and blood."

The Naga leaders, accompanied by a five-member delegation, met Dr. Singh for 30 minutes during which several issues on the Naga peace process came up for discussion.

Working group

Informed sources said that Dr. Singh offered to set up a "working group" to talk at length at a later stage to the NSCN (I-M) delegation. The Naga leaders did not make any demand and both sides avoided touching upon controversial issues. "The effort was to understand each other as it was their first contact with the UPA Government at the highest level," sources said, adding that it was Mr. Muivah who came across as the more articulate of the two.

The Naga leaders appreciated Dr. Singh's genuine concern and sincerity and hoped that it would firmly put the peace process on track. They had a word of praise for the Centre's interlocutor, K. Padmanabhaiah, who has been meeting them regularly either in Thailand or the Netherlands.

Dr. Singh said he would meet them again after their return from Nagaland and know more about their perception of the problems.

The Naga leaders are scheduled to visit Nagaland next week

and stay there till mid-January and then return to Delhi to continue their talks.

Mr. Swu and Mr. Muivah met the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and his Deputy, L.K. Advani, last January. Ever since the ceasefire agreement was reached with the NSCN(I-M) in August 1997, it is their second contact at the highest political level in Delhi. They met Mr. Vajpayee and his predecessor, H.D. Deve Gowda, abroad on more than one occasion.

We will work for peace: Patil

The NSCN (I-M) leaders also had an hour-long meeting with the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil. Mr. Patil said that it was an opportunity to get acquainted with the NSCN (I-M) leadership. "We did not discuss anything substantive or controversial. We will work for peace and make all-out efforts to create a good atmosphere," he said.

Last month, the peace process seemed to have hit a roadblock as the leaders postponed their visit to India, charging Central agencies with "encouraging and arming their rivals such as the NSCN (Khaplang) and the Naga National Council (NNC). After clarifications and assurances by Mr. Padmanabhaiah — that the Government was sincere in continuing the peace process — they agreed to change their stand.

Mr. Patil said the Naga leaders would also meet Mr. Vajpayee and the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi. "I am happy that they are here at our invitation. Their visit will help build bonds of trust and understanding."

Later, the Naga leaders assured the Centre that "no stone should be left unturned" to achieve a peaceful solution.

'Cordial, optimistic'

A statement later described the parleys as "cordial and optimistic" and said the leaders would "strive for an honourable and mutually acceptable solution." Both sides "reaffirmed and reassured" each other of their commitment to finding a peaceful solution, the statement signed by V.S. Atem, emissary of the collective leadership of NSCN(I-M), said.

Photograph on Page 13

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Naga talks

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will begin once Swu and Muivah return from their proposed interactions in Nagaland. Other meetings are scheduled with Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi as well as former Prime Ministers Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr PV Narasimha Rao.

"They are happy with the talks and are excited to be returning, they will meet a cross-section of people when they go home," said Varengam Horam, the deputy minister for home affairs in the NSCN's "Government of the Peoples Republic of Nagalim". Nagalim is a Naga word for Nagaland.

Christmas is a season of calm, joy and giving (and some drunken revelry) as well as family unions, not just in Nagaland but across the hills of the North-east and beyond. It is poignant that Swu and his compatriot will be with their larger families for the first time in 40 years in Nagaland. Muivah is, of course, from across the border, from the Tangkhul-dominated district of Ukhrul in

Manipur. It is unsure if he will be going home to Somdal village yet, largely, as was reported yesterday, for security reasons.

At their discussions in Nagaland, Horam said, "no one in particular will be excluded or included", responding to a question on whether those disagreeing with the I-M group would be invited for talks. He deftly skirted a query on the possibility of discussions with their rival militant factions, the NSCN-Khaplang and the Naga National Council.

The challenges of unity in the Naga militant movement, with the group led by Muivah easily being the most powerful, remain untouched and extremely sensitive with each group opposing the other bitterly. A question which is often asked in Nagaland and elsewhere in the North-east is whether a settlement can be forged without political unity and reconciliation among the Nagas. One group — the I-M — believes it can. Others disagree; the differences run along political and even ethnic lines.

Indeed, this issue and

that of territory — of a Nagaland or Nagalim that includes slices of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Assam — remain the most contentious of all. A senior government official says that the effort should be to sort out "the soft issues" before moving to the hard ground.

Muivah made his views clear this morning, "We know a solution cannot be found in violence", while paying tribute to the Prime Minister's "great wisdom" and also supporting the role of the government's interlocutor, Mr Padmanabhiyah, who has wrestled with dozens of rounds of negotiations with the Nagas abroad and here.

The Prime Minister also outlined the challenges in finalizing a settlement: he was responsible, in a democracy, to the public and would have to "take public opinion into consideration". He wanted, the economist-Prime Minister declared, "the Naga people to live with honour" and pledged that his government would make "sincere efforts" for an honorable settlement.

07 DEC 2004

Nagaland: Gap between aspiration and Centre's position

(Continued from page 1)

Both sides must recognise this reality. Mr K Padmanabhiiah, the Centre's interlocutor with the NSCN-IM over the past years, will be at discussions here, as a person who has kept the negotiations going even at times when it appeared they were stuck and prepared to fall apart. There was one such moment last year during their visit to New Delhi and there have been a few since, including a couple of weeks ago when the NSCN-IM accused the government of arming and assisting its foes in the Naga movement. But

that appears to have been stilled although Mr Muivah declared that any settlement must recognise the unique history and status of the Nagas (although Mr AB Vajpayee did that last year during his October visit to Kohima) — meaning their separateness. These talks are preliminary but both sides have been preparing intensively for them: till late tonight, the home minister was consulting top officials.

The Naga leaders are here for a longish visit, which may last about a month or so, and are planning to go to their base near Dimapur, the

commercial capital of Nagaland, after about a week where they will spend Christmas. Mr Swu is planning to visit his home village, not far from Kohima, his first in nearly 40 years. It is not clear whether Mr Muivah, whose village is Somdal in Manipur's Ukhrul district, will be going home. Much depends on perceptions of security for them. Dozens of rounds of talks in South-east Asia, India and Amsterdam have perpetuated the ceasefire, in place since 1957. But a large gap still remains between Naga aspirations for a homeland that includes contiguous areas in

Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, a move fiercely opposed by all three states, and the position of the Centre.

A real test for the Naga leadership will come when the head homeward and their conversations with people from all walks of life, including those who disagree with them, as well as the public organisations which dominate the tribes. The IM refuses to negotiate with the smaller but influential Khaplang faction and brushes aside the Naga National Council as of no consequence. But there are sections of opinion in Nagaland which believe that no set-

tlement with New Delhi will last without unity among the factions.

New Delhi is negotiating only with the IM although it has a ceasefire with the Khaplang faction, whose camps in Myanmar are currently under threat of attack by the Myanmar army.

The Naga discussions have major implications for the North-east: it is the oldest movement fighting for independence and the most powerful and best-funded. It is formidable as an organisation and also as a political force. Its leaders are recognised as the toughest and most capable of the Naga groups. And Mr

Muivah and Mr Swu are coming for talks at a time when other militant groups are also pressing for peace.

This is a time for serious bargaining — both sides will have to be flexible and perhaps call in assistance to broaden the areas of agreement. The real test of the Naga leaders' visit is whether they can carry others with them, including those who oppose them strongly, whether politically within the Naga movement or over issues such as land. This is the time for statesmanship on all sides, to overcome the obstacles faced by history and suspicion and seize the moment of opportunity.

On the wings of hope

Sanjoy Hazarika in New Delhi

9/12
Dec. 6. — Isak Chisi Swu and Th Muivah, leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (I-M), who arrived in New Delhi yesterday to hammer out a settlement to the 50-year-old Naga imbroglio and are preparing to meet the Prime Minister tomorrow, have arrived on the wings of hope, with expectations as well as concerns high in Nagaland and the North-east.

Dr Singh and home minister Mr Shivraj Patil will have an opportunity to meet them, their first face-to-face encounter with two legendary leaders of an epic struggle that is the oldest militant movement in South Asia. The Prime Minister will be assisted by the Internal Security Adviser, Mr MK Narayanan, who as former director of the Intelligence Bureau, helped craft policy toward the Nagas and was at one point regarded as a hawk but now is seen as extremely firm but even-handed. It's a tough call for them: the



NSCN-IM leaders Th Muivah and Isak Chisi Swu arrive at Delhi airport. — PTI

Prime Minister is a captive of the Constitution, of the Union and answerable not just to his party but to the people and Parliament. There are many things he can give — just as there are other areas he may not be able to, even if he is sympathetic and wanted to.

See NAGALAND, page 5

07 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Swu, Muivah gauge home mood

ALOKE TIKKU

New Delhi, Dec. 6: Naga leaders Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah spent the first day of their trip to New Delhi meeting "home authorities", an euphemism for senior NSCN (IM) functionaries based in Nagaland.

The duo, who arrived in the capital to a rousing reception from Naga students and members of various organisations, will meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union home minister Shivraj Patil tomorrow in a bid to "narrow down" differences in their perception of various issues.

V.S. Atem, who is the special emissary of NSCN (IM)'s

top leadership, said no meeting with the political leadership was arranged today because Swu and Muivah arrived only last night.

The Naga leaders made their second visit to India in as many years on the invitation of the Prime Minister. They are scheduled to meet Singh at 11 am. The meeting with Patil is slated for 12.30 pm.

Atem said an appointment with Congress president Sonia Gandhi was eagerly awaited. "We are ready to meet her anytime," he said.

Sources said there was a possibility of Swu and Muivah meeting Sonia at 6 pm tomorrow.

The NSCN (IM) leaders are also expected to meet de-

fence minister Pranab Mukherjee and Left leaders A.B. Bardhan and Sitaram Yechury before they leave for Dimapur, Nagaland's commercial hub.

The two Naga leaders, who will be in New Delhi for a week, are staying in a house protected by central paramilitary personnel.

The NSCN (IM) leadership's meetings with senior members of the government over the next few days are seen as opportunities to weigh each another.

Discussions on what the outfit refers to as "substantive issues" will be taken up only after Swu and Muivah return to Delhi in the second week of January.



Naga leaders Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah address supporters on their arrival in New Delhi.

Picture by Ramakant Kushwaha

Peace comes knocking once again

TWENTY-TWENTY

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Thuingaleng Muivah, the general secretary of the National Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) is given to saying, "Peace does not come knocking at your door often." With his visit along with the chairman of the organization, Isak Chishi Swu, peace has come knocking at our doors once again. This time the opportunity should not be missed.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Govind Ballabh Pant and the then Congress president, U.N. Dhebar, missed it when a Naga member of parliament from Outer Manipur, Rungtung Suisa, went to them with a solution. He had proposed a federated relationship with key competencies being shared with the Centre and the rest being with the Nagas. Suisa claimed that the Congress leaders had been convinced by him, but unfortunately, nothing came of it.

Naga legend has it that Suisa later went to Indira Gandhi when she became prime minister and asked her what her primary concern *vis-à-vis* the Nagas was. She apparently replied, "The security of India." To this Suisa said, "What if the Nagas were sensitive to India's security?" Indira Gandhi apparently told him, "Then there is no problem."

Suisa then proceeded to London to inform Zapu Phizo that Indira Gandhi was ready to settle the Naga issue and put his proposed solution before him. He was warned by an angry Phizo of dire consequences if he persisted with his effort. Suisa quietly withdrew from the scene.

He had, however, recognized the crux of the Naga problem and even though the time was right and the Indian leadership was willing to listen, it was the Naga leadership that failed him. Suisa was a determined man, and in retro-

spect seems to have had a tremendous impact on another determined person seeking peace with India, Thuingaleng Muivah.

Suisa and Muivah come from the same village. As a youngster, Muivah was opposed to Suisa's proposals and admits to getting very angry with him. He once said, "I used to get so angry with him that I often felt like slapping him. But today I realize that Uncle Suisa was right. He had the correct approach to the Naga issue."

Muivah does not endorse Suisa's proposal, but he now claims that it was indeed a way forward. History had catapulted "Uncle" Muivah to the role of peacemaker today. Neither the Nagas nor India should miss the opportunity again.

Even though the time was right and the Indian leadership was willing to listen, it was the Naga leadership that failed Suisa

Often those who attempt to make peace do not know their own strength. And those who are opposed to peace deliberately try to create doubts in their mind, trying to make them unsure of themselves. They also actively create roadblocks to peace to protect their vested interests.

This has been evident in the present peace process as well. But Muivah and Swu have a groundswell of support with them. The competitive, extreme and unreasonable demands of some wannabe players have not eroded their support. Their peace efforts have been underwritten by the Naga civil society organizations. The Naga people know that the ceasefire has benefited them — internecine killings have gone down drastically and a congenial atmosphere for peaceful negotiations has been created. Muivah and Swu, therefore, come to India with a strong negotiating position.

How then should India deal with

not as one of law and order but a political issue, to be settled through political means. This was the first milestone. The ceasefire agreement was the next.

In the next qualitative breakthrough, instead of using extreme language to define their position *vis-à-vis* India, the Nagas started talking in terms of "division of competencies". This signalled the Naga desire for a close and deep relationship with New Delhi as well as the recognition of India's security concerns — that is, the Nagas were willing to discuss which subjects could be jointly managed and which ones ought to be managed separately while not compromising on the protection of Naga identity.

Although the Nagas emphasized that the integration of all Naga areas had to be a part of the agreement, they were in effect also giving a commitment that if an agreement were reached, they would not do anything that might harm India's interests.

New Delhi also recognized that for reaching a better understanding, there was no point in limiting the talks to the framework of the Indian constitution, which in any case was not immutable.

Any process for the integration of the Naga areas must give a chance to those adversely affected by it to have their say

What lent impetus to the Naga peace process was the joint communiqué from Amsterdam on July 11, 2002, recognizing the "unique history and situation of the Nagas". The Nagas took it to mean that the government of India recognized that the Nagas saw themselves as a separate and unique people who were never conquered by anyone. However, the affirmation of historical separateness of the Nagas in the communiqué was not seen as a point of arrival but as a point of departure for forging a close bond with India. The desire of the Nagas to come

adversaries into partners for peace. One of this means that the Naga peace talks will not hit bumps on the road ahead. The integration of Naga areas itself will be a tricky issue. If it is not handled properly, there is unlikely to be a permanent solution. Yet, any process for the integration of the Naga areas must give a chance to those adversely affected by it to have their say — they should show good reason why the natural desire of the Nagas to live together is inimical to their interests.

Balancing one set of alienated people with another set is not going to be easy. The division of competencies and the new framework it would require will demand tremendous political imagination and would depend on the politicians that the prime minister, Manmohan Singh, chooses to negotiate on New Delhi's behalf.

However, the important point is to start this journey of joint exploration for peace. The Nagas should take a leaf out of "Uncle" Suisa's book and ask themselves before entering intensive peace negotiations: What is the primary concern of India *vis-à-vis* the Nagas? As for the Indian negotiators, they should figure out what the interests of the Nagas are and whether they can prepare a mutually acceptable roadmap to get there. Aggressive power-play and hostile emotions so prevalent when it comes to dealing with India's north-east can never be a substitute for a well-prepared strategy of converting the Nagas from adversaries into partners for peace.



Joint effort

progress has been made in the Naga peace talks over time. That progress is not reflected merely in the annual cease-fire extensions, although they were important achievements in themselves. There are several yardsticks for measuring progress over the last seven years.

The peace process itself began because India recognized the Naga issue

closer to the rest of India has also been demonstrated by the NSCN leaders through the detailed proposals that they have made to New Delhi. These proposals are now likely to be discussed substantively during the ensuing peace talks.

One of this means that the Naga peace talks will not hit bumps on the road ahead. The integration of Naga areas itself will be a tricky issue. If it is not handled properly, there is unlikely to be a permanent solution. Yet, any process for the integration of the Naga areas must give a chance to those adversely affected by it to have their say — they should show good reason why the natural desire of the Nagas to live together is inimical to their interests.

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04 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

By Anil Bhat

IN handing over the Kangla complex to Manipur, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh fulfilled a promise made too often but never implemented in the past five and a half decades. His presence at the formal ceremony and alacrity of the decision should go a long way in assuaging the hurt pride of the Meiteis, the dominant community of Manipur.

It will be relevant to take a glimpse at the history of Kangla and the people of Kangleipak, as the Manipuri kingdom was known. In the 1850s, the British were invited by the then ruler of Manipur, Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh, to witness a game of Sagol Kangjei (*sagol* means horse and *kangjei* means a game of stick and ball) in Cachar in Assam's south-west, to where the Meitei kingdom extended.

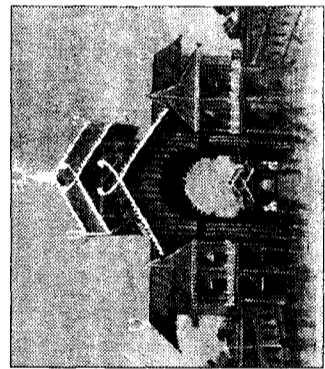
The British were impressed and by the end of the 1850s they had modified this game and gave it the name polo (derived from *pulu*, which in the local language of Ladakh, where a similar game was played, means the root of the bamboo plant, from which the ball is carved). The game is also played in the frontier areas of Pakistan, especially in the Skardu and Gilgit region.

The relationship soon changed when the British realised that they would not be able to annex Manipur without subduing the Mei-

teis. The bloody Anglo-Manipuri war, as it came to be known, ended in 1891 only after three Meitei generals, namely Bir Tikendrajit, Paona Brajabasi and Thangal, were publicly hanged by the British in the Kangleibung (polo field) just opposite Kangla. Before this war, a Meitei women's movement named Nupi Lal, launched against the British over the issue of the export of Manipur's local rice (a large grain of sticky variety), gave them a tough time.

When the British sent Christian missionaries of all denominations into the North-east to convert the entire region, staunch Vaisnavites among the Meiteis in the Manipur valley and the Assamese resisted.

The mile-long rectangular Kangla complex is located in the heart of the Manipuri capital of Imphal, and alongside the river with the same name. It comprised the original Govindaji Temple with a sacred *pukhri* (pond) and a fort. It also had a smaller temple named after Bir Tikendrajit. Believed to have been built in 33 AD, Kangla was the spiritual as well as temporal seat of Meitei power. A lot of planning went into its construction as it had a network of tunnels, and labyrinth for intercommunication and



An artist's impression of the Western Gate, Kangla Fort.

rebuilt later about a kilometre away from the complex. The British occupied this entire palace area and constructed buildings to house at least a battalion of Assam Rifles, raised by them as the very first para-military force officered by the Army. During the Burma campaign of World War II, it was a hub of Allied operations against the Japanese and after Independence, it became the location of the headquarters of the Manipur Range, Assam Rifles, and also housed an AR battalion.

A number of figures have been at work

Kangla back with Kangleipak

escape even across the river. The fort was a formidable one made more so by a moat which ran along its frontage and flanks of the entire complex, with an impressive gate with a guard-house.

The British, in their bid to humiliate the Meiteis and establish their supremacy, destroyed large parts of the fort, the temple and sealed off all the tunnels. The Govindaji Temple was

over these decades to research and document Kangla. Among them is Prof. Ningthoukongjam Khelchandira who has included photographs and sketches of the temples and the fort before their destruction. Raj Kumar Chandrajitsana, a prominent artist of the Meitei history and the Anglo-Manipuri war.

To preserve Kangla and keep it free of encroachment and vested interests, the entire site must be placed under a trust which should include historians, cultural figures and respected persons from Manipur. This should be done without any delay if the fort is to be maintained as a heritage site of national importance. The battle against the British by the Manipuris, especially Bir Tikendrajit, should also be honoured as part of the fight against colonialism.

In keeping with this status, the Archaeological Survey of India must restore Kangla to its original glory and a museum, with a special *son et lumiere*, should be established which will both enhance its historic value and make it a major magnet for tourists.

(The author is Editor, WordSword Features & Media.)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004

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SEVEN-YEAR HITCH

THE DECISION BY the two leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) to cancel their visit to India is a disappointing development for the Naga peace process. The self-exiled Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah were to have travelled to New Delhi in the last week of November following an invitation from the Centre to meet members of the United Progressive Alliance Government. Their acceptance of the invitation was by itself a significant step forward in the seven-year-old process. Aside from one visit by the two to New Delhi in January 2003 to hold talks with the National Democratic Alliance Government, the group has not deviated from its stand that it would negotiate with the Indian Government only in a "third country." Following the UPA victory, the new coalition Government was keen to convey to the Naga leaders the message that the peace process set in motion by its predecessor would continue. It quickly held two rounds of talks in Bangkok. The Isak-Muivah visit would have, in turn, signalled that the leadership of the NSCN (I-M) reposed trust in the new dispensation at the Centre. But the coming apart of this carefully choreographed two-step arrangement over accusations by the group that New Delhi is "encouraging and facilitating" the rival Khaplang faction of the NSCN, and arming other Naga groups — the reasons adduced by the two leaders for calling off the visit — shows how tenuous the process remains despite years of engagement between the two sides.

The setback also highlights the absence of substantive progress in the Naga peace process. The NSCN (I-M) and the Centre, through its representative, former Home Secretary K. Padmanabiah, have held several rounds of talks in various world capitals since 1998. While very little of what has happened in these talks is in

the public domain, it is clear they have not yet approached the core issues, the most important of which is the NSCN (I-M) demand for a "greater Nagaland" that will integrate all Naga-inhabited areas including those falling in the neighbouring States of Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. As the 2001 incidents in Manipur showed, this is an extremely inflammable issue in the entire region. Nonetheless, there is no escape from tackling this beast if the ongoing process is to move towards finding a lasting peace in Nagaland. A ceasefire has been in place since the process started in 1997, and thus far, remains its main and most notable achievement. There can be no taking away from this. As a result, Nagaland is today one of the most peaceful States in the Northeast and the side that ventures to break the truce risks alienating the Naga people. On the other hand, the longer the peace process continues without any tangible breakthrough, the greater the build-up of pressure on the ceasefire.

What recent developments make clear is that the two sides still need to travel some distance in building mutual trust and confidence. Right from the start, the Centre did well to acknowledge the NSCN (I-M) as the most powerful group in Nagaland and begin talks with it. While it is sensible for New Delhi to keep the other groups on board, it must not estrange the NSCN (I-M) without which a peace deal in Nagaland is impossible. At the same time, the Isak-Muivah leadership, which has shown some sobriety in its dealings with the Centre thus far, needs to recognise that its predominant status does not mean it is the sole representative of the Nagas. Without wasting too much time, the two sides must iron out these irritants quickly so that they can get on with the task of dealing with the bigger issues that are weighing down the process. The upstanding people of Nagaland deserve this much and more.

02 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Tilting scales

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Ulfa could even lose referendum

Except for a handful of Ulfa hardcore elements, no one else talks of sovereignty and plebiscite anymore. Apparently unnerved by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ruling out discussion on sovereignty, Ulfa chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa wants Delhi to hold a plebiscite. But before reviving the demand, he should have carefully assessed the prevailing situation and the people's mood. He cannot be unaware that public opinion has tilted against the outfit and whatever little sympathy it enjoyed has all but disappeared after the Dhemaji Independence Day outrage that claimed 13 innocents, including women and children. Even the powerful All Assam Students' Union, of which Ulfa is an offshoot, condemned the carnage in no uncertain terms and reasserted its faith in the Constitution. The patience of Assam's middle-class, Ulfa's main support, is wearing thin.

The new development dashes Jnanpith Award winner Mamoni Goswami's hope of bringing the two sides to the negotiating table. She has been trying to play facilitator after self-styled Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah roped her in and she strongly feels a breakthrough must involve both sides adopting a conciliatory attitude without preconditions. But this is easier said than done. Ulfa has already spurned the idea of a ceasefire but remains in two minds since it is merely dancing to the tune of its foreign agents without whose material support it has long abandoned its "worthy" ideological commitments. What keeps Ulfa bigwigs away is the cash windfall and ostentatious life they enjoy in a country inimical to India. However much distance might lend enchantment to Ulfa's view, there really is no alternative to dialogue. Unconditional talks could provide the starting point.

30 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Goswami middle path to please Centre, Ulfa

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, November 28

JNANPITH AWARD winner Indra Goswami on Sunday said she was trying to dilute the word 'sovereignty' in her own appeal to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh so that it becomes acceptable to both the government and the Ulfa.

Assam could not attain sovereignty but the issue must be discussed to bring the Ulfa to the negotiating table and to know their other demands, she said. The writer was still hopeful of a positive outcome of her efforts to bring the Ulfa to the negotiating table.

The proposed talks had made some headway but got struck over the Ulfa's demand for inclusion of 'sovereignty' as a precondition. During his recent visit to the state, the Prime Minister had announced there would be no talk on 'sovereignty'. But, Ulfa C-in-C Paresh Barua is sticking to the 'sovereignty' issue.

"So I am trying to dilute the word 'sovereignty' in my own



Indira Goswami
Caution's the word

appeal to Prime Minister, which may be acceptable to both the Government and the Ulfa", Goswami said.

The government can ask the militants why they want sovereignty and as the discussions proceed their other demands will become transparent and if these can be fulfilled then other issues "might be compromised", she said.

"I am optimistic about the

outcome of my efforts," Goswami said, adding that the Prime Minister had assured her to wipe out blood from Assam during his tenure. The PM's Chief Security Advisor too had shown keen interest in the matter and, "I feel that the government will not back down at this stage".

On the series of blasts triggered by the Ulfa last Thursday, Goswami said it was in reaction to the Prime Minister's statement that sovereignty could not be discussed.

She had talked to Ulfa leaders after the blasts. They conveyed to her that the Prime Minister's statement indicated that talks could not be held. But, "I urged them to restrain their cadres and wait till the Prime Minister replies to the issue of sovereignty mentioned in my appeal to him", Goswami said. Holding talks was a delicate issue and all concerned must proceed in a cautious manner, she said. Asked what made her take up the initiative of bringing the militants for dialogues, she said.

29 NOV 2004 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

UNLF ridicules Manmohan offer to replace AFSPA Act

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

IMPHAL, Nov. 27. — The United National Liberation Front, one of the major militant groups of Manipur, has ridiculed Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's offer to replace the Armed Forces Special Powers Act with a law having a "human face," saying that such an idea would be self-contradictory.

In a statement issued on its 40th anniversary, the UNLF's central committee said it is not possible to give any repressive act a human face. Even if the AFSPA is repealed, another act in a new form with certain cosmetic touches will be enacted. It is also naive to believe that the atrocities committed by the government and armed forces would cease once AFSPA is repealed.

It also pointed out that as long as "the Indian colonial rule is not rooted out", repression will continue. Stat-

ing that people's agitation against Indian atrocities have been going on for 40 years, it hailed the role of mothers who had played a pivotal role in transforming the agitation against the AFSPA into a popular movement.

It also saluted Pebam Chit-taranjan who had immolated himself, Memita Devi, who was killed in a police crackdown, Manipur Forward Youth Front volunteers who had attempted self-immolation and Irom Sharmila, who has been fighting a lone battle against the AFSPA.

Stating that the "atrocities by the "Indian occupation force" (read Army) is no longer a closed-door affair and even well-known to the international community, particularly the United Nations, the statement said: "We have taken up arms as the last resort to protect our nation and regain our independence. If the United Nations inter-

venes to bring an end to the armed conflict, we are prepared to lay down arms. The UNLF also firmly believes in world peace and would work to bring peace in this part of the world".

The statement claimed that its Manipur People's Army has been engaged in fierce battles with security forces after the latter launched attacks on its bases. During these encounters, the MPA killed 20 security personnel including one major and a lieutenant while more than 35 were wounded. It lost only one fighter to the security forces while two others were wounded. Three MPA fighters lost their lives by stepping into their booby trap. The UNLF is still in control of its bases, the statement said.

Giving a call for a united struggle, the UNLF suggested that a "national revolutionary government" be formed to help Manipur gain independence from India.

28 NOV 2004 THE STATESMAN

Ulfata talks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Nov. 27. — Reacting to what Dr Manmohan Singh said about the Government of India's stand vis-a-vis the United Liberation Front of Assam during his visit to Assam, the banned outfit today raised the demand for a plebiscite in connection with its demand for sovereignty.

In a statement e-mailed to the media here, Ulfata chairman Arobindo Rajkhowa sounded critical of the Prime Minister's remarks ruling out talks with the Ulfata till it gives up violence

and its demand for sovereignty. The Ulfata leadership said the statements of Dr Singh would throw a spanner in the process of finding a solution to the insurgency in Assam through peaceful negotiations.

The Ulfata leadership said: "Such statements from the Prime Minister of India amounts to putting a precondition for talks which is in sharp contrast to the Government of India's appeal to the Ulfata not to put conditions for negotiations."

The Ulfata ridiculed the statement of Dr Singh that "Assam is an integral part of India" and

plebiscite

termed it "shallow" on the ground that in 1962, the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had bade farewell to the people of Assam after the state was invaded by the Chinese army.

The Ulfata leader said: "If our demand for sovereignty for the people of Assam is not negotiable, let there be a plebiscite allowing the people of the state to decide their own fate."

Despite its critical view of what Dr Singh said here on 22 November, the Ulfata still sounded hopeful that the "humane and wise" Prime Minister

would be able to fathom the real problems. "We understand that Dr Manmohan Singh is not only a politician but also a kind-hearted, humane and wise person. We are still hopeful that he will be able to understand the issues related to the rights and identity of the Assamese nation," Mr Rajkhowa said.

The Ulfata statement has been issued on the eve of its protest day tomorrow. The Indian Army launched its first operation against Ulfata, codenamed Bajrang, from the midnight of 28 November 1990.

28 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Rebuffed Ulfa in attack mode

Six injured in Assam blasts

HTC/Agencies
Guwahati, November 25

JUST THREE days after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh left Assam after dismissing the Ulfa's demand for inclusion of 'sovereignty' as a precondition for talks with the Centre, six persons were injured in three different incidents of blast in Upper Assam district of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Laximpur.

Assam Police said the United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) was behind the blasts that took place on Thursday evening.

The first incident occurred at about 5 pm on Thursday at Dhakuwakhana police station, where suspected Ulfa men lobbed a powerful hand-grenade. According to state police control, no one was injured in the blast, but parts of the police station were damaged.

Just an hour later, Ulfa cadres lobbed a hand-grenade at a post-office in Dibrugarh district. The grenade exploded near a bus belonging to the Air Force. Four persons were critically injured and the rear portion of the bus was damaged.

At 7pm, Ulfa cadres triggered a blast at a gas pipeline at Bordubi, in Tinsukia district. The police said two persons were injured in the blast and the gas pipeline was totally damaged. Three days earlier, Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh had left the state without making any formal announcement on talks with the Ulfa. Manmohan Singh had dismissed the banned outfit's demand for inclusion of 'sovereignty' as a precondition for talks between the Ulfa and Centre. The Ulfa had earlier announced they would sit with the Centre if the issue of 'sovereignty' was made a precondition for talks.

The initial groundwork for the talks was laid at the initiative of Jnanapith award winner and Assamese author Mamoni Roysom Goswami.

In the past two days, Assam Police intercepted the Ulfa commander-in-chief's message, where he asked his cadres that they should be prepared to make a storm ('Dhumuha ananiboloi sajau thaka').

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi reiterated on Thursday that the sovereignty of Assam was not negotiable, even though the Centre was prepared to sort out any other issues bothering the proscribed Ulfa.

"We've taken a vow to protect the sovereignty of the country. Sovereignty is not negotiable", Gogoi told.

Stating that he wanted the peace talks with the Ulfa to go forward, Gogoi said every insurgent outfit was welcome for talks to settle their problems through negotiation.

26 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Minister accuses Paswan of shielding criminals

Outburst Provides Cabinet Feud For Thought

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Union rural development minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh on Monday accused fellow cabinet member, steel minister Ram Vilas Paswan, of shielding criminals.

"Daku palte hain," Singh said in what may well be an unprecedented instance of public feuding in the top tier of the government at the Centre. Singh belongs to Lalu Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal and his assault on Paswan is an escalation of the already-bitter confrontation between the railway minister and the steel minister.

Singh's attack was prompted by the abduction of two engineers belonging to the National Hydel Power Corporation. Lalu Prasad and Singh had "persuaded" the PSU to step outside its domain to repair the decrepit roads in Bihar with an eye on the approaching state elections. The kidnapping of the two engineers has raised fears that NHPC might prefer pulling out of the hazardous venture, embarrassing Singh and Lalu Prasad.

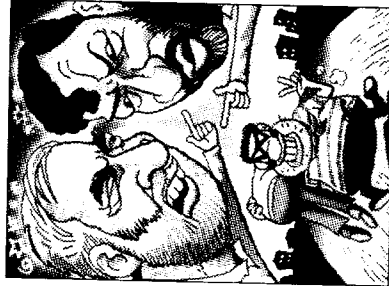
The fact that Paswan is a fellow cabinet minister made no difference to Singh. "The whole world knows it," he said. He did not al-

low himself to be constrained by the fact that his own party was ruling the state and that the engineers were abducted from his home turf, Vaishali.

He described the abduction as a conspiracy to derail work on the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna. There has been no ransom demand, making it obvious that it's just a conspiracy, he said. Those behind the abduction have yet to be identified but Singh let loose when asked about Paswan.

In Bihar, the police are already checking out those believed to be close to some of Paswan's party MLAs. If certain names have come up, said Singh, it's because investigators will obviously examine the possible role of criminals in the abduction. When asked if Paswan should be part of the government, he said it was a coalition. "See what happens the day we have power."

What this outburst may hide—apart from the political rivalry for Bihar as it goes to the polls early next year—is the worry that this incident could completely derail Singh's own attempts to smoothen the poll road by roping in five central agencies to do up the state's rural roads.



Sovereignty of Assam can't be discussed with Ulfa, says PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Guwahati: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday rejected Ulfa's demand for discussions on Assam's sovereignty. The militant outfit, in the run-up to possible talks with the Centre had insisted on 'sovereignty for Assam' forming the core of any discussion. "Assam is an integral part of India and there should be no doubt (about this) in anybody's mind" was his terse message to the Ulfa.

He was responding for the first time to well-

known Assamese writer Indira Goswami's ongoing efforts at persuading the Centre to accept Ulfa's demand that sovereignty be treated as "the core subject of the discussions".

Acknowledging his discussions with Goswami on the Ulfa offer for talks, Singh said: "We would like to have more information on who all are meeting her and who are in contact with her. We so far have some informal information only". Singh also told youth to refrain from the culture of the gun.

আলফার সার্বভৌমত্বের

অগ্নি রায় ও রঞ্জন সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটি

২২ নভেম্বর: অসমের জঙ্গি সংগঠন আলফার সার্বভৌমত্বের দাবি খারিজ করে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। সেইসঙ্গে অনুপ্রবেশ চিহ্নিত করতে বিদেশি আইনের পরিবর্তে আইএমডিটি আইনই যে তাঁর বেশি পছন্দ, প্রকারান্তরে সেই কথাও খোলাখুলি জানিয়েছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এই ঘোষণায় অসমে আলফার সার্বভৌমত্ব এই আলোচনার দাবি, বিজেপি, অগপ এবং আসুর আইএমডিটি আইন বাতিলের দাবিটি যে জোরালো ধাক্কা খেল, তাতে কোনও সন্দেহের অবকাশ রইল না।

সীমাহীন বঞ্চনা ও অবহেলা তো রয়েছে, সেইসঙ্গে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপও যে উত্তর-পূর্বের আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নে এক বড় বাধা, তাঁর তিন দিনের মনিপুর-অসম সংঘর্ষে এসে সেই কথাটা ঘুরিয়ে-ফিরিয়ে বলার চেষ্টা করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। পাশাপাশি, এ সব যে তিনি আর বরদাস্ত করবেন না, সেই কথাটাও খোলাখুলিই জানিয়েছেন মনমোহন সিংহ।

উত্তর-পূর্বে শান্তি ফেরাতে যে-কোনও জঙ্গি সংগঠনের সঙ্গে তাঁর সরকার 'নিঃশর্ত' আলোচনায়

বসতে আগ্রহী বলে একাধিকবার বলেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তিনি এও বলেছেন, "আলোচনার জন্য আমাদের দরজা খোলা। আমি মনে করি যে কোনও ক্ষেত্রে, দাবির মীমাংসা হতে পারে ষেঁষ সহকারে গঠনমূলক আলোচনার মাধ্যমে।" আর্থ-সামাজিক ও রাজনৈতিক বিকাশের জন্য গতকাল জঙ্গিদের হিংসা আর অস্ত্র ছেড়ে 'নতুন অসম' গড়ার ডাক দিয়েছিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। আজ দিল্লি ফেরার আগে আরও একথাপ এগিয়ে জঙ্গিদের উদ্দেশ্যে তিনি বলেন, "শেষ বিচারে ভারতের শক্তি নিহিত রয়েছে তোঁটের বয়ে। বন্দুকের নল শক্তির উৎস হতে পারে না।"

কিন্তু ভারতের অখণ্ডতাকে চ্যালেঞ্জ করে, সীমাস্ত্রে সন্ত্রাস অব্যাহত রেখে অথবা দেশ বিরোধী চক্রান্তকারীদের সঙ্গে তিনি যে কোনও আলোচনায় আগ্রহী নন, আপাত নরম মনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী তিন দিনের উত্তর-পূর্ব সংঘর্ষের মুখে দৃঢ় ভাবেই সেই বার্তা পৌঁছে দিয়েছেন।

দিল্লি ফেরার আগে বিমান বন্দরে এক সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে আলফার সার্বভৌমত্বের দাবি প্রসঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, "ভারত এক অখণ্ড রাষ্ট্র। এই ব্যাপারে মানুঁষের মনে যেন কোনও সন্দেহ না থাকে। দেশের গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা মেনেই যে

দাবি খারিজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর

কোনও আলোচনা হতে পারে।" তিনি বলেন, সাহিত্যিক ইন্দিরা গোস্বামী'র সঙ্গে আলফার আলোচনায় বসার বিষয়টি নিয়ে আমার সাধারণ কথা হয়েছে। কিন্তু কারা সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসতে চান, সে ব্যাপারে আমার কোনও ধারণা নেই।"

বিতর্কিত আইএমডিটি আইন প্রসঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, "সীমাস্ত্রে অনুপ্রবেশ রুখতে আমরা বঙ্গপারিকর। কিন্তু এ জন্য সংখ্যালঘু মানুষ যাতে কোনও ভাবেই হেনস্থার স্বীকার না হন, সেটাও সুনিশ্চিত করা দরকার।" প্রতিক্রমী রাষ্ট্রের মাতিতে দাঁড়িয়ে ভারত-বিরোধী জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ চালানোর প্রসঙ্গটি টেনে এনে মনমোহন সিংহ বলেন, "এ ব্যাপারে বাংলাদেশ ও মায়ানমারের সঙ্গে আমাদের কথা হয়েছে। আশাকরি, তাদের দেশ থেকে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ বন্ধ করতে ভবিষ্যতে ওরা আমাদের আরও বেশি সাহায্য করবে।"

কিন্তু এটা ছিল তাঁর সফরের একটি দিক। কাম্বীর থেকে ইফল হয়ে গুয়াহাটি এসে তিনি বারেকারে বলেছেন উন্নয়নের কথা। তাঁর এই আগ্রহ শুধু যে কথার কথা নয় সেই প্রমাণ দিতে মণিপুর ও অসমের সার্বিক উন্নয়নের জন্য বেশ কিছু প্রকল্পের কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর তরফে প্রেস বিবৃতিতে জানানো হয়, রাজ্যের ২২ টি প্রকল্প নিয়ে রাজ্য সরকারের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কথা হয়েছে। এরমধ্যে অনেকগুলির কাজ চলছে। কয়েকটি প্রকল্পের ব্যাপারে দিল্লি ফিরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী সিদ্ধান্ত নেন।

উত্তর-পূর্বের সুসংহত উন্নয়নের জন্য যে দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার দেশগুলির সঙ্গে সুসম্পর্ক গড়ে তোলা খুবই জরুরি, সেই উপলব্ধির কথা প্রধানমন্ত্রী এ দিন শুনিয়েছেন ইন্দো-এশিয়া কার র্যালির উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে। গুয়াহাটির নেহরু স্টেডিয়ামে প্রথম ইন্দো-এশিয়া কার র্যালির উদ্বোধন করে তিনি বলেন, "এশিয়ার প্রবেশদার এই উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের পরিকাঠামো উন্নয়নের বিষয়টিকে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচিতে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব সহকারে রাখা হয়েছে। এই অঞ্চলের এক জন সাংসদ হিসাবে প্রতিশ্রুতি পালনের ক্ষেত্রে আমার একটা বিশেষ দায়িত্বও রয়েছে।"

নেহরু স্টেডিয়ামে বর্ণাঢ়্য কুচকাওয়াজের পরে র্যালিতে আগত শতাধিক বিদেশী অভাগাতদের উপস্থিতিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ঘোষণা করেন, "দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার দেশগুলির সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যিক সম্পর্ক বাড়াতে গুয়াহাটিতে একটি 'অত্যাধুনিক ট্রেড সেন্টার' তৈরি হবে।"

মনমোহনের আহ্বান নতুন অসম গড়তে অস্ত্র, হিংসা ছাড়ুন

২১ নভেম্বর
২২/১১
রঞ্জন সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটি

২১ নভেম্বর: চার দিন আগে 'নতুন কাশ্মীর' গড়ার ডাক দিয়েছিলেন। রবিবার গুয়াহাটিতে 'নতুন অসম' গড়ার আহ্বান জানালেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলিতে জঙ্গি-ঘাঁটি গুঁড়িয়ে দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে ভারত যেমন ভিতরে ভিতরে তৈরি হচ্ছে, পাশাপাশি অসমে শান্তি ফেরাতে আলফা এনডিএফবি-এর সঙ্গে আলোচনা শুরুর প্রস্তুতিও শুরু করেছে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। আলফার দাবিমতো কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় 'সার্বভৌমত্ব'-এর প্রসঙ্গটি থাকবে কি না, তা নিয়ে স্পষ্ট করে হ্যাঁ অথবা না, কোনও কিছুই এখনও জানায়নি কেন্দ্র। তাঁর এই সফরে এই প্রসঙ্গে কোনও প্রশ্নের খোলাখুলি জবাবও দেননি প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তবে গুয়াহাটিতে এসে অবিলম্বে হিংসা, অস্ত্র ছেড়ে জঙ্গিদের 'নতুন অসম' গড়ার ডাক দিয়ে মনমোহন আজ বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, কালক্ষেপ না করে খোলামনে আলোচনার টেবিলে না বসলে তাদের আর সময় দেওয়া হবে না।

অশান্ত কাশ্মীর, মণিপুরে শান্তি আর উন্নয়নের বার্তা পৌঁছে দিয়ে তাঁর সফর শেষের মুখে রবিবার গুয়াহাটিতে আলফা-সহ জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির কাছে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর স্পষ্ট সঙ্কেত, "বন্দুক অভীষ্ট পূরণের লক্ষ্য হতে পারে না। অসম থেকে আপনারা এক জন প্রধানমন্ত্রী পেয়েছেন, যিনি আপনাদের কাছে শিখতে চান। আসুন, আমার হাত শক্ত করুন। আমরা নতুন অসম গড়ে তুলি।" এর আগে মণিপুরেও আলফা সংক্রান্ত এক প্রশ্নের উত্তরে তিনি বলেন, "যে-কোনও জঙ্গি সংগঠনই আলোচনা করতে চাইলে আমি খোলা মনে তাদের স্বাগত জানাচ্ছি।"

তাঁর এই সফরকে কেন্দ্র করে প্রতিবাদ-প্রতিরোধের ছমকি ছিল। এর মোকাবিলায় ছুটির সকালের মহানগরও ছিল উর্দিপড়া বন্দুকধারী আর লালবাতি লাগানো গাড়ির ছোট্টাছুটিতে শশব্যস্ত। হুমকির পাশাপাশি অবশ্য প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে স্বাগত জানাতেও প্রস্তুত হয়ে ছিল শহর। তাঁর আসা-যাওয়ার পথে রাস্তার ডিভাইডারে নতুন রঙের পোঁচ লেগেছে। রাতারাতি রাস্তার খানাখন্দ উধাও। বড় রাস্তাগুলি আলোর মালায় সেজে উঠেছে। এবং তিনিও বিমুখ করেননি সরকার অথবা আমজনতাকে। অসম সচিবালয়ের নতুন ভবনের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে তাঁর ঘোষণা, অসমের উন্নয়নের জন্য তাঁর চেষ্টায় কোনও ঘাটতি থাকবে না।

এই অনুষ্ঠানেই মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তরুণ গগৈ অসমের বন্যা বা বেকারির সমস্যা তুলে ধরেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়ে দেন, "বন্যা শুধু অসম নয়, গোটা উত্তর-পূর্বের এক ভয়াবহ সমস্যা। বন্যার সমস্যাগুলি খতিয়ে দেখতে 'টাস্ক ফোর্স' গঠন করা হবে। সেইসঙ্গে ব্রহ্মপুত্র পর্যদের খোলনলচে বদলে একে আরও শক্তিশালী করার কাজও শুরু হয়েছে।" রাজ্যে জঙ্গি-কার্যকলাপ বেড়ে যাওয়ার পিছনে যে বেকার সমস্যাই মূলত দায়ী, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী সেই কথা জানাতেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়ে দেন, "আমি প্রতিশ্রুতি দিচ্ছি বেকার সমস্যা সমাধানে যোজনা কমিশন-সহ বিভিন্ন কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারি সংস্থার সঙ্গে কথা বলে অসমের জন্য একটি 'ব্লু-প্রিন্ট' তৈরি করা হবে।"

'প্রধানমন্ত্রী জিন্দাবাদ' ধ্বনির মধ্যেই মনমোহন ফের প্রতিশ্রুতি দেন, "অসম-সহ উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের জন্য বিভিন্ন সরকারি কর্মসূচি নেওয়া হবে। উন্নয়নের এই বিবিধ কর্মসূচি রূপায়নের জন্য যে-কোনও পরামর্শ স্বাগত। দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়া ও প্রাচ্যের সঙ্গে আমাদের সরকার যোগাযোগ বাড়ানোর চেষ্টা করছে। এক্ষেত্রে অসম-সহ উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চল গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মঞ্চের কাজ করতে পারে। এই মঞ্চের মাধ্যমেই আমরা প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলির সঙ্গে আর্থিক সমন্বয় আরও দৃঢ় করতে পারি।" অসম-চুক্তি অবিলম্বে কার্যকর করার ব্যাপারেও সরকার যে উদ্যোগী হবেন, তা জানিয়ে দিতে ভোলেননি প্রধানমন্ত্রী। আজ রাতে রাজভবনে রাজ্য মন্ত্রিসভার পক্ষ থেকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বিভিন্ন দাবি সম্বলিত একটি স্মারকলিপি তুলে দেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর হাতে। দাবিগুলির মধ্যে কয়েকটি জরুরি সমস্যার সমাধানে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের উদ্যোগের কথা দুপুরের অনুষ্ঠানেই অবশ্য জানিয়ে দেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

অসমের অভিজ্ঞতা হল, অতীতে অনেক প্রধানমন্ত্রী এসে কয়েক হাজার কোটি টাকার প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করেছেন। সেই ঘোষণা কাগজে-কলমেই থেকে গিয়েছে। কাশ্মীরের পুনর্গঠনের জন্য সদ্য ২৪ হাজার কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দের কথা ঘোষণা হওয়ায় অসমবাসী মনমোহনের কাছেও প্রত্যাশা করছেন। সোমবার দিল্লি ফেরার আগে অসমের জন্যও কিছু ঘোষণা করতে পারেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। কিন্তু ঘরের সাংসদ শেষ পর্যন্ত দেবেগৌড়া, বাজপেয়ীর পথে হাঁটবেন কি না, সেটাই এখন দেখার।

A Rs 2,800 cr gift for Manipur too

Press Trust of India

Communication to improve

IMPHAL, Nov. 21. — Manipur chief minister Mr O Ibobi Singh today said Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had agreed to sanction an economic package covering various projects in the state worth Rs 2,777.68 crore.

In a statement issued after the the Prime Minister's departure, the chief minister said the Manipur government was expressing its sincere gratitude to Dr Singh for agreeing to sanction the amount.

He said the projects included Jiribam-Tupul railway line (Rs 727 crore), construction of a new state capital complex (Rs 31 crore), Loktak downstream hydro-electric project (Rs 659.36 crore), electrification of 477 tribal villages (Rs 200 crore), upgrading Manipur University into a Central University (Rs 75.96 crore) and a special employment general programme (Rs 15 crore).

Mr Singh said that in addition to these projects, the Centre would also consider providing some financial assistance for a flood control project based on the report of the task force constituted for Assam and neighbouring states.

The chief minister said the state government and the people of the state have expressed their sincere

GUWAHATI, Nov. 21. — Dr Manmohan Singh today said that his government would improve communication in the North-East to make the region more developed. Giving away Srimanta Sankardeva awards at a function at the Machkhowa cultural complex here, Dr Singh lamented that the N-E region had suffered due to poor communication. "In course of my tenure, the North-East will be connected more efficiently with the rest of the country as the region badly needs better road, rail, air and telecommunication link," Dr Singh said. "It is a pity we have not reached the level of connectivity in the N-E states in comparison to other areas," he said. — PTI

gratitude to Dr Manmohan Singh for visiting Manipur and extending wholehearted support to the state in its efforts to usher in socio-economic development and stability on the law and order front.

Mr Ibobi Singh said that it was because of the intervention of the Prime Minister himself, and his understanding of the feelings of Manipuris that the Kangla Fort could be handed over to the state after a gap of several decades. The fort was under the Army since Independence.

22 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

PM takes peace to Manipur, hands over Kangla Fort

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

IMPHAL, Nov. 20. — The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today reiterated his message of peace and development as he urged the people of Manipur to give up violence and "join the constitutional process to find solutions".

"Our government is committed to addressing the concerns of the people of Manipur," Dr Singh told a meeting to mark the handing over of the Kangla Fort complex, till date under the occupation of



The DG (Assam Rifles) hands over the key of Kangla Fort to Mr Ibohi Singh as the Prime Minister looks on. — PTI

Assam Rifles, to the Manipur government. "When constitutional and other legal methods are available to redress our grievances it is not proper to resort to arms to register protest against the government, which is willing to seek remedies to the problems of the people through negotiations.

Ordinance

Hours after transfer of the Kangla Fort, the Manipur government tonight issued an ordinance taking over the administration and control of the structure.

21 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Manmohan hands over fort, denies key demand

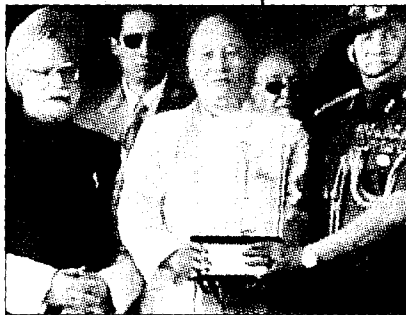
Vishal Thapar
Imphal, November 20

JUST AS he had done in Kashmir, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today tried to assuage public sentiment in Manipur against perceived excesses by the security forces, and then pushed a similar development-oriented peace package for the troubled north-eastern state.

The highlight of the Prime Minister's visit was the symbolic handover of the Kangla Fort by the Assam Rifles to the people of Manipur. The alleged rape and murder of a suspected rebel, Manorama Devi, by Assam Rifles personnel based at Kangla in July had convulsed the Manipur Valley. A group of elderly women had staged a spontaneous nude protest before the fort on July 15, drawing national attention.

The Kangla Fort, the traditional seat of Manipuri power from where the Meitei kings had ruled the state for centuries, was described by Manmohan Singh as "the nucleus of the Manipur state". It has been occupied by the military — first British and then Indian — continuously since the 1891 subjugation of the Manipur monarchy by the British.

Just as he had stood his ground against the hardliners in Kashmir, the



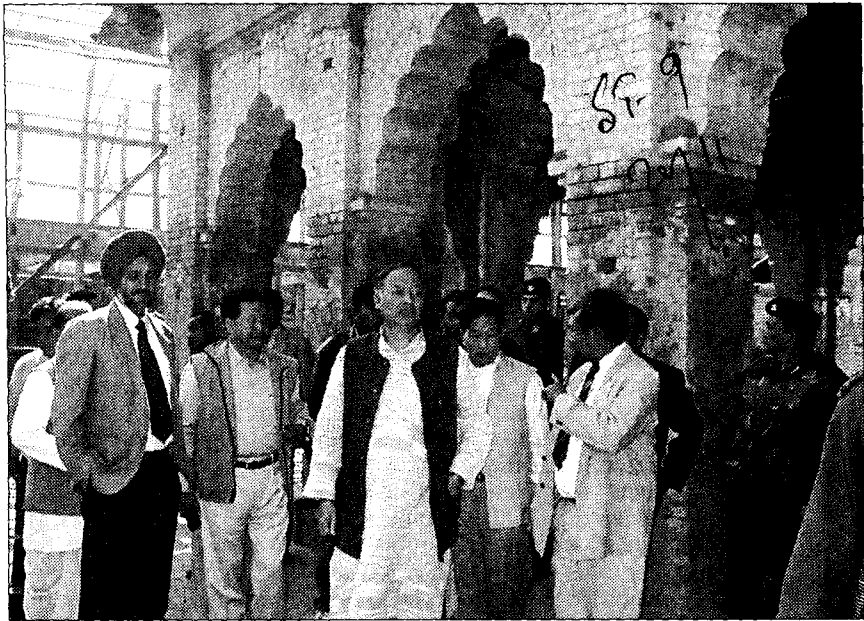
The Assam Rifles DG hands over the keys of the Kangla Fort to the Manipur chief minister as the Prime Minister looks on.

Prime Minister did not capitulate to the demand by disaffected groups here that the Armed Forces Special Powers Act be withdrawn from Manipur.

"I sympathise with the legitimate aspirations of the people of Manipur," Singh said. "There are also the imperatives of national security. To strike a balance, we have set up a committee to review the provisions of the Act." Within six months, the committee will suggest checks and balances in the Act or its replacement by a "more humane law", he said.

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PM in the NE: light, heat & dust



Manipur chief minister Ibobi Singh along with ministers inspect the Royal Palace, Imphal, prior to the Prime Minister's visit. — Eastern Projections

By Pradip Phanjoubam

EXCEPT for a seeming rift within the ranks of the Apunba Lup, with a section of it unhappy at not being made a direct part of the negotiation process, every other preparation for the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh's visit to Manipur seems on a smooth track. Some organisations have even declared a freeze of all agitations marked on their annual calendar of blockades and bandhs in view of the Prime Minister's visit.

The air is filled with expectation, especially after the unexpected warmth of the meeting between the Apunba Lup and the Prime Minister at his Race Course residence in New Delhi two weeks ago.

This is welcome for there is too much steam trapped in the Manipur pressure cooker. The unarticulated acknowledgement now is that it is time for the people to take courage and lift the lid to ease the pressure continually building up inside the society. It is noteworthy that even a resolution drawn up by the Apunba Lup in its convention on 17 November ended on a positive note. In its condemnation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, what was conspicuous by its absence was the familiar tone of bitterness. It also showed flexibility on the question of a replacement for the Act. But it also urged speedy implementation of promises on these issues.

The only thing that can sour this atmosphere of optimism is insincerity on the part of the Central government. This has happened many times before. For instance, the promise to de-garrison the sacred Kangla Fort have been broken several times by New Delhi, not bothered that each broken promise resulted in the accumulation of a residue of gall.

The Apunba Lup must also keep in mind that while it is perfectly legitimate for it to continue to demand the total repeal of the AFSPA, it will be this legitimacy it will be surrendering if it shuts the doors of negotiation, and that too at the highest level. It is true that a

lot of extreme and irretrievable events have occurred in the heat of the public agitation against the draconian Act.

A young man sacrificed his life, respectable ladies disrobed themselves in public, thousands ended up injured, one fatally, one gutsy young lady has been refusing food for the last five years... All these for the cause of having the AFSPA removed. This is not all. For although not as passionately or half as consistently, there have also been protests in the neighbouring states, particularly Nagaland.

The incessant torrent of protests softened the known stance of even those in the highest office of power, and this is a no mean achievement. The Apunba Lup must not forsake this goodwill. The radical phase of the agitation has done its best by preparing the grounds for diplomacy. From here on, it must be skilful and honest politics must take over.

The rational discourse from this point must be on whether the situation is ripe for a total demilitarisation of civil spheres, or if there should be room for the civil administration to seek military assistance under an Act, which isn't lax about human rights violation as the AFSPA is.

Let the fact not be forgotten that insurgency itself is military in nature. It is also an unwritten law that any nation state would respond militarily to challenge it. Hence, if there is to be no compromise on the demand for absolute demilitarisation of civil space, it must work both ways. This can happen under two circumstances.

One, in the event of a resolution of the core issue of insurgency; two, if there's a conditional cessation of hostilities as in a cease-fire. Hope for the earlier, though ideal, is dim at the moment, but the second condition is something that can be given a serious thought by all, particularly the Apunba Lup.

(The author is editor, The Imphal Free Press.)

By Bijay Sankar Bora

WHERE nothing happens at the right time, pace or direction, different emotions – frustration, anger and desperation – boil and when the opportunity presents itself, these pent up emotions explode.

That is exactly what is happening in Assam on the eve of the visit of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh who as a Rajya Sabha MP from the state kindled hopes for a focus from the Centre to solve some of its problems. A number of political and non-political organisations are gearing up to register protests before Dr Singh who is coming to flag off the Indo-Asean car rally on 22 November, a unique event for the region.

This is typical of a state where parties and organisations are in the habit of creating a negative atmosphere in the run-up to a big occasion, thereby not giving ordinary people an opportunity to form their own opinion.

The car rally has whipped up optimism in the region's trade and commerce circles, which have been demanding opening up of the North-east for official trade with neighbouring nations like Myanmar, Bangladesh and China. The rally is being organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry and the ministry of external affairs to drive

home the point to India that its North-east is well connected by land routes with the South-east Asian countries and that advantage can be exploited for mutual economic benefit.

If the purpose of holding the rally is achieved, it is the North-east which will benefit most in the form of growth in tourism and infrastructure sectors in the long run. At least, that is the impression given by those sponsoring it.

"What we need most is the exposure to international trading," says Abhijit Barooah, a leading entrepreneur and an executive member of FICCI. "If it becomes a reality, trucks carrying goods from mainland India will pass through the region to destinations in Asean countries; it will also spur people here to take advantage of the opportunity." Barooah says trading could be the first step to establishing manufacturing units in the region. "We must view the car rally positively," he insists.

However, the All Assam Students Union believes that a single international car rally can't trigger development in the state which, it says, would have been much better off had the Centre and the state implemented the economic clauses of the 1985 Assam Accord which ended years of agitation over the problem of illegal migration from Bangladesh.

Aasu had planned protests before Dr Singh because the Centre is continuing with the controversial Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal Act, 1983, a lopsided law

which protects migrants and which, Aasu claims, also shields "Pakistani ISI agents active in the region."

However, following assurances on talks within a month to review implementation of Assam Accord clauses including the one related to the IMDT Act, Aasu called off its protest on Friday.

But beyond the thunder and dust of the rally, the ruling Congress Party and its chief minister Tarun Gogoi are expecting Dr Singh to make an announcement on a possible peace initiative with regard to the banned National Democratic Front of Bodoland and the United Liberation Front of Asom, especially as the latter has been making conciliatory noises through the writer Indira Raisom Goswami.

The Bharatiya Janata Party unit in Assam, oblivious of the fact that the idea of an Asean car rally was conceptualised while Atal Behari Vajpayee was Prime Minister, has decided to stage a *dharna* on the eve of the rally. The regional Asom Gana Parishad, after some usual indecisiveness, finally came out in support of a protest.

The state government has made an all out effort to make the car rally a success. In his bid to dissuade agitations on the eve of the big occasion, Gogoi said, "It is not the right time to register protests. It is the time to showcase what you have when the limelight is on the state."

(The author is the Guwahati-based Special Representative of The Statesman.)

Open forum

THE STATESMAN

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THE STATESMAN

মনমোহনের প্রতীক্ষায়

জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের পর দেশের আর এক উপদ্রুত এলাকা উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চল। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ হাতের কাজ ফেলিয়া রাখায় বিশ্বাস করেন না। ইতিমধ্যেই মণিপুরের আন্দোলনকারী সংগঠনগুলির প্রতিনিধিরা নয়াদিল্লিতে আসিয়া তাঁহার সহিত সাক্ষাৎ করিয়া গিয়াছেন। সেখানে প্রধানমন্ত্রী দীর্ঘ দুই ঘণ্টা ধরিয়া তাঁহাদের বক্তব্য সহানুভূতির সঙ্গে শুনিয়াছেন। ইফলে অতএব মনমোহন সিংহের জন্য সাগ্রহ প্রতীক্ষা। প্রতীক্ষা অসমেও। এখানে বড়ো জঙ্গিদের গোষ্ঠী এন ডি এফ বি নিজেরাই সংঘর্ষ-বিরতি ঘোষণা করিয়া নিঃশর্ত আলোচনার জন্য প্রস্তুত। আলফা নেতৃত্ব ও জ্ঞানপীঠ পুরস্কারজয়ী লেখিকা ইন্দিরা গোস্বামী মারফত প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে শান্তি-আলোচনায় বসার অভিপ্রায় জানাইয়াছে। ও দিকে মুইভা-ইসহাক গোষ্ঠীর নাগা জঙ্গিরাও কেন্দ্রের সহিত তৃতীয় দফার আলোচনার জন্য ভারতে আসার প্রস্তুতি লইতেছেন। ত্রিপুরার একটি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীও নিঃশর্ত আলোচনার প্রস্তাব দিয়াছে। শান্তির সম্ভাবনা উপদ্রুত উত্তর-পূর্বের মেঘাচ্ছন্ন আকাশে রূপালি রেখার মতো দেখা দিতেছে। তাহারই মধ্যে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সফলতা

এমন নয় যে কেহই বেসুর গাহিতেছে না। প্রথমেই আলফার কথা উঠিবে। কেন্দ্রের কাছ হইতে অশোকচক্রশোভিত সরকারি লেটারহেড-এ লিখিত ও স্বাক্ষরিত আমন্ত্রণপত্র না পাইলে আলোচনায় না বসিবার আবদার ধরিয়াছেন পরেশ বড়ুয়া। সেই সঙ্গে অসমের সার্বভৌমত্ব লইয়া আলোচনার অঙ্গীকারকেও পূর্বশর্ত ধার্য করা হইয়াছে। এমন শর্ত পালনের কোনও প্রস্নই ওঠে না। তা ছাড়া, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর তরফে যখন কোনও শর্ত আরোপিত হয় নাই, তখন জঙ্গিদেরও শর্ত আরোপের যৌক্তিকতা নাই। গোল পাকাইবার চেষ্টা করিতেছে স্বেচ্ছানির্বাসিত, অভিমাত্রী নাগা নেতৃত্বও। কেন্দ্র প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী নাগা গোষ্ঠীদের অস্ত্রসজ্জিত করিতেছে, এমন কাল্পনিক অভিযোগ তুলিয়া আলোচনার জন্য ভারতে আসার প্রস্তাব তাহারা পুনর্বিবেচনার ছমকি দিতেছে। সরকারের তরফে প্রাক্তন স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব পদ্মনাভাইয়া অবশ্য নাগা নেতৃত্বকে ওই গুজব উপেক্ষা করিয়া সরকারের আন্তরিকতায় ভরসা রাখিতে অনুরোধ করিয়াছেন। আসরে নামিয়াছে 'আসু'ও, বিদেশি নাগরিক শনাক্তকরণের পুরানো অমীমাংসিত সমস্যাটিকে যুদ্ধকালীন জরুরি ভিত্তিতে সমাধানের দাবিতে তাহারা বিক্ষোভ প্রদর্শনে ব্যগ্র। অসম গণ পরিষদও আসুর বক্তব্যকে সমর্থন করিয়াছে। অথচ এই অগণ রাজ্যে ক্ষমতাসীন এবং কেন্দ্রে বিজেপি জোটের শরিক থাকা কালে সমস্যাটি আগের মতোই ঝুলাইয়াই রাখিয়াছিল।

সমস্যা সমাধানে সদিচ্ছা ও আন্তরিকতার প্রমাণ মনমোহন সিংহ আগেও দিয়াছেন। এ বারও মণিপুর যাত্রার প্রাক্কালে সশস্ত্র বাহিনী বিশেষ ক্ষমতা আইনটি পর্যালোচনার জন্য তিনি পাঁচ সদস্যের একটি কমিটি গড়িয়াছেন। কমিটি কেবল মণিপুরই নয়, কাশ্মীর সহ উত্তর পূর্বাঞ্চলের সব রাজ্যেই এ ধরনের আইনের প্রযোজ্যতা লইয়া বিচারবিবেচনা করিবে, সম্ভাব্য পরিবর্তন, সংশোধন, এমনকী বিকল্পের সন্ধান দিবে। সশস্ত্র বাহিনীর নির্বিচার গুলি চালাইয়া নিরীহ মানুষকে হত্যার প্রবণতা তো নূতন নয়। মণিপুরেই সে দিন সেনাপতি জেলায় ৭৫ বছর বয়স্ক এক বৃদ্ধ অবসরপ্রাপ্ত শিক্ষককে তাহারা এই ভাবে হত্যা করিয়াছে, তাহার স্ত্রীকে গুরুতররূপে জখম। সবই জঙ্গি-তল্লাশির অঙ্গুহাতে। নূতন করিয়া যে মণিপুর এই ঘটনায় অগ্নিগর্ভ হইয়া ওঠে নাই, তাহার কারণ মণিপুরবাসী মনমোহনের কাছে প্রতিবিধান চাহিবার জন্য অপেক্ষা করিয়া আছেন। অশান্ত, উপদ্রুত উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চল মনমোহনের জন্য বাস্তবিকই অধীর অপেক্ষায়।

শর্ত আলফার, অস্বস্তি ইন্দিরার

রঞ্জন সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটী

১৭ নভেম্বর: এ বার শর্ত দিলেন পরেশ বড়ুয়া। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে অসমিয়া লেখিকা ইন্দিরা গোস্বামী ওরফে মামণি রায়সমের আলোচনার ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই আলফার 'কমান্ডার-ইন-চিফ' পরেশ বড়ুয়া নতুন করে দু'টি শর্তের কথা জানিয়ে দিলেন। তিনি বলেছেন, "লিখিত আমন্ত্রণ না পেলে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের সঙ্গে আলফা আলোচনায় বসবে না। দ্বিতীয়ত, কেন্দ্রকে জানাতে হবে, দু'পক্ষের মধ্যে আলোচনার মূল বিষয় হবে অসমের সার্বভৌমত্ব।"

কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে অসমের জঙ্গি সংগঠন আলফাকে আলোচনায় বসাতে রাজি করানোর জন্য মঙ্গলবারই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কথা বলেন লেখিকা ইন্দিরা দেবী। সার্বভৌমত্ব-সহ আলফার দাবিগুলির কথা প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে তিনি লিখিত ভাবে জানান। মনমোহনকে তিনি জানান, শর্ত ছাড়াই আলফা আলোচনায় বসতে আগ্রহী। সার্বভৌমত্বের যে দাবি তুলেছে আলফা, তা মানা, না-মানা কেন্দ্রের ব্যাপার। কিন্তু এই নিয়ে কেন্দ্র আলফার সঙ্গে কথা বলুক।

আলফার সঙ্গে আলোচনায় কেন্দ্রের আগ্রহের কথা প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মুখে শুনে খুশি ইন্দিরা দেবী পরেশ বড়ুয়ার কথায় অস্বস্তিতে পড়েছেন। মুখে সে কথা স্বীকার না করলেও বুধবার টেলিফোনে তিনি বলেন, "পরেশ বড়ুয়ার সঙ্গে কথা হয়েছে। ওঁর শর্ত নিয়ে কংগ্রেসের দিগ্বিজয় সিংহের সঙ্গেও কথা বলেছি।"

PM's North-east visit "raises hope"

Statesman News Service

GUWAHATI, Nov. 16. — The protests by the All Assam Students Union and opposition parties notwithstanding, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's forthcoming visit to Assam and Manipur has raised hopes of peace in the troubled region.

In another development, state chief minister Mr Tarun Gogoi today called upon the Aasu to review its launch an agitation on 22 November, the day the Asean rally is to be flagged off, stating that "this is not the time to agitate when there is an opportunity for the state to bask in global limelight."

The Prime Minister is arriving in Imphal on 20 November for a three-day trip to Assam and Manipur. The visit comes at a time when serious peace initiatives have been taken vis-a-vis the Ulfa and the NDFB. Dr Singh is expected to make some announcement regarding the government's latest stand vis-a-vis the two outfits.

The people of Manipur are also hoping that the president's visit may lead to a breakthrough in negotiations with Apunba Lup which has been demanding the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. The Prime Minister will also be handing over the historic Kangla Fort which is now in possession of Assam Rifles to



the Manipur government.

In Assam, Dr Singh is expected to attend several programmes, besides flagging off the first ever Indo-Asean car rally here on 22 November.

"We welcome today's development in New Delhi and hope peace will come to Assam," Mr Gogoi said referring to the meeting between the Prime Minister and Mrs Goswami in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, the Assam government is leaving no stone unturned to make the Asean rally a grand success. Starting on 22 November, the rally will pass through Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore and end at Batam in Indonesia on 11 December.

The inauguration will be attended by several dignitaries including, Asean secretary general, ministers from Myanmar, Thailand, the Laos high commissioner, ambassadors from Singapore, Indonesia,

Vietnam, and Malaysia.

In Assam, the rally will pass through Guwahati-Morigaon-Nagaon-Numaligarh to Dimapur in Nagaland. The main rally is preceded by "Chalo Asean" mini rallies arriving here on 20 November from Shimla, Gandhinagar, Panjim and Kanyakumari. Visitors will get to see sky diving, performance by the Army band, a dare devil show on a motorcycle, cultural programmes, handicrafts exhibition by North-Eastern Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation (NEHHC) and a sound and light show.

Lup happy

Dr Singh has already had a detailed discussion with an Apunba Lup delegation and Lup leader Mr Lokendra Abiram has expressed happiness at the outcome. "We expect the Prime Minister to make an announcement", he said referring to an economic package.

'Ulfa will raise sovereignty issue'

SNS and Agencies

NEW DELHI, Nov. 16. — In a significant step towards bringing the Ulfa to the negotiating table, noted Assamese litterateur Ms Indira Goswami today held discussions with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who expressed his seriousness about finding a solution to the decades-long problem.

She maintained that without the "sovereignty" issue on the table, the Ulfa would not participate in the negotiations. Ms Goswami held one-to-one discussions with Dr Singh for over half-an-hour at his South Block office during which she informed him that the Ulfa was ready for "unconditional talks but the core subject should be sovereignty".

"The Prime Minister is very, very keen to find a solution as his own constituency is in Assam," the Jnanpith award winning author told reporters after the meeting. The discussions assume significance as Ulfa chief Paresh Barua had recently contacted Ms Goswami and expressed, for the first time, the outfit's desire for talks with the Centre, provided sovereignty was discussed. She said Dr Singh patiently read all the points in her representation and seemed sympathetic to most of them, including the demand that sovereignty issue be discussed. "I understand that he will have to find out some middle path, some solution after discussing with experts. Without the sovereignty issue, Ulfa leaders will not come (for discussions)," she said.

Ms Goswami said no time-frame or modalities for initiating talks with Ulfa or names of possible mediators were discussed during today's meeting. "It is a very long process and things have not gone to that level. But the Government is trying to find a solution." She said she would give her "feedback" to the Ulfa chief if and when he contacts her. Maintaining that she was not a mediator, she said: "My job will be over once I can bring them to the table."

Writer meets PM with Ulfa offer

'Sovereignty is the key'

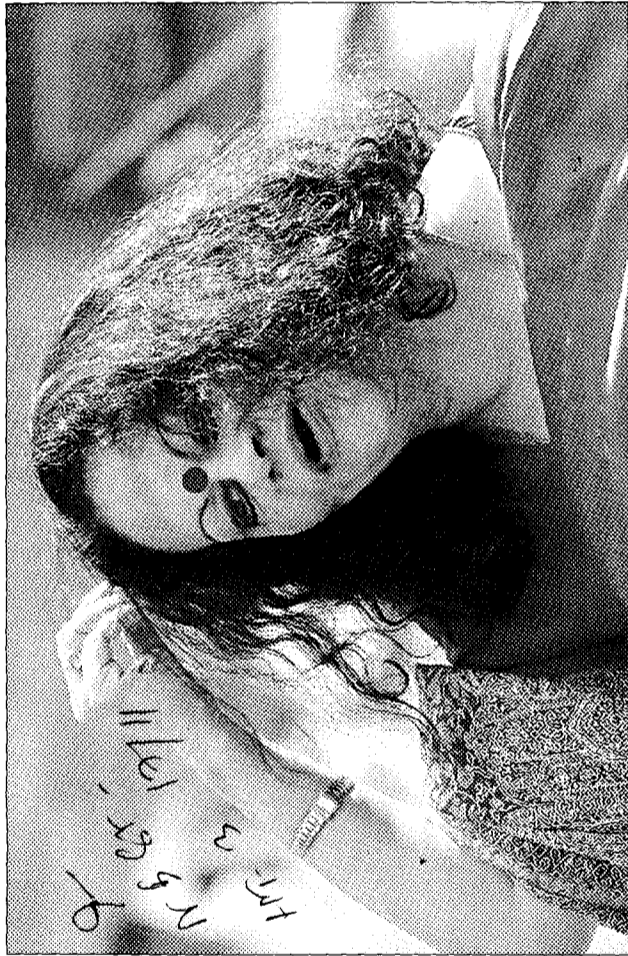
HT Correspondents
New Delhi/Guwahati,
November 16

PROSPECTS OF the Centre breaking the ice with the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) brightened today, with noted Assamese litterateur Indira Goswami — recently contacted by Ulfa chief Paresh Barua — holding discussions with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

Barua had contacted Goswami to express the outfit's desire to hold talks with the Centre, provided sovereignty was part of the dialogue process. Goswami held a one-on-one discussion with Singh at his South Block office, during which she told him the Ulfa was ready for "unconditional talks — though the core subject should be sovereignty".

She later told HT's Guwahati correspondent, "The PM's response was positive. He is for an early solution of the problem. It pains him to see innocent people getting killed in bomb blasts. The PM is very keen to find a solution, since Assam is his own constituency", Goswami added.

Her next step would be to



PTI
Jnanpith award-winning author Indira Goswami interacts with the media after meeting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his office in New Delhi on Tuesday.

No unconditional talks, says Barua

ON A day noted writer Indira Goswami raised hopes of the Ulfa coming to the talks table, the outfit's chief, Paresh Barua, clarified to news channel NDTV that his group was not ready to hold unconditional talks with the government.

Meanwhile, the Congress's Assam point-man, Digvijay Singh, ruled out the possibility of Centre-Ulfa talks with sovereignty as a precondition. "The talks must be without conditions", he said.

Agencies, New Delhi

welcomed Goswami's initiative in bringing the Ulfa to the talks table. On the NDFB wanting to hold talks only with the Centre — and not the Assam government — he said, "My purpose is to bring the Ulfa, NDFB and other outfits to the talks table. I'm not concerned with the issue of my involvement in the proposed discussions. I only want a negotiated settlement of the conflicts in a democratic manner. I won't come in the way".

Earlier these were preconditions. Maintaining she was not acting as a mediator, Goswami, however, indicated that she was ready to help if that somehow led to talks. Goswami, on Monday, had discussed with the PM's Special Security Adviser, M.K. Narayanan, who was also present during her discussions today. He left thereafter to let Goswami continue her discussions on a one-on-one basis.

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has

the Centre is keen to find a solution, a stage is yet to be reached to commence a formal dialogue", Goswami explained.

The Ulfa's appeal, 'Appeal for Ulfa talk', had been prepared in consultation with Delhi University professor Manoranjan Mohanty — also an expert on China.

Goswami, too, teaches at Delhi University. The outfit has already dropped the demand for negotiations in a third country and in the presence of a UN observer.

pass on the PM's message to Barua. "I'm eagerly waiting for Paresh's call. I'll tell him what the Prime Minister told me about the modalities for the talks", she added. The response from the PM could be in the form of an appeal to the outfit during his visit to Assam on November 21-22.

Goswami, however, clarified that no timeframe or modalities for talks with the Ulfa — including the names of possible mediators — were discussed. "Though

Author takes Ulfa message to PM

ALOKE TIKKU

New Delhi, Nov. 16: Celebrated Assamese writer Mamoni Raisom Goswami today took another step towards bringing the Ulfa to the negotiation table by meeting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to convey the banned militant group's willingness to start a dialogue with Delhi.

Goswami told the Prime Minister that the Ulfa was ready for "unconditional talks", but wanted the subject of "sovereignty" to be the main item on the agenda. The meeting was held at Singh's South Block office and lasted over half-an-hour.

Singh is understood to have communicated the United Progressive Alliance government's seriousness about finding a solution to the problem of militancy in Assam.



Mamoni Goswami

"The Prime Minister is very, very keen to find a solution as Assam is his own constituency," Goswami told the media after her meeting.

The writer yesterday met M.K. Narayanan, the special adviser to the Prime Minister, with an advance copy of the memorandum she submitted to Singh.

Though the Prime Minister did not make any specific commitments, Goswami was not disappointed. "I understand that he will have to find out a middle path after discussing (the issue) with experts. Without the sovereignty issue, Ulfa leaders will not come (for discussions)," she said.

Goswami said no time-frame or modalities for talks with the Ulfa, or the names of possible mediators, were discussed.

"It is a very long process and things have not gone to that level. But the government is trying to find a solution," she said.

Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Barua contacted Goswami recently to convey the outfit's eagerness to start a dialogue with the Centre, provided the contentious topic of Assam's sovereignty was discussed.

Chief minister Tarun Gogoi has publicly backed the initiative despite the Ulfa making it clear that it has no intention of negotiating with the state government.

17 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

আলফাকে আলোচনায় বসাতে শেষ চেষ্টা শুরু

অগ্নি রায় • নয়াদিল্লি

১৫ নভেম্বর: কেন্দ্র যখন আলফা জঙ্গি যাঁচি নির্মূলের জন্য প্রস্তুতি নিচ্ছে, ঠিক ওই সময়ে এই সংগঠনকে আলোচনার টেবিলে বসানোরও শেষ চেষ্টা শুরু হল। এই ব্যাপারে অসমের জ্ঞানপীঠ পুরস্কারপ্রাপ্ত লেখিকা ইন্দিরা গোস্বামী আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা এম কে নারায়ণনের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন। আগামী কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করার জন্য সময় চেয়েছেন ইন্দিরা। আজকের বৈঠকের পরে তাঁর বাসভবনে বসে ইন্দিরা বলেন, "আলফার প্রত্যয়ের বসভাপত্র তুলে দিয়েছি নারায়ণনের হাতে। আলফা নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসার আবেদনও জানিয়েছি। তাঁরা বিষয়টি গুরুত্ব দিয়ে দেখছেন। সব কিছু ঠিকমতো চললে জানুয়ারি মাসের মধ্যেই আলোচনা শুরু হতে পারে।" সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, আলোচনায় কেন্দ্রও উৎসাহী। তবে শর্ত, সজ্ঞাস পরিচালনা করে ভারতীয় সংবিধান মেনে চলতে হবে আলফাদের। ইন্দিরার বক্তব্য, "যদি এই বৈঠক সম্ভব হয়, তবে তা হবে ঐতিহাসিক। গত পঁচিশ বছরে এটি সম্ভব হয়নি।"

তবে আপাতত এই আলোচনায় কাটা হয়ে দাঁড়াচ্ছে সার্বভৌমত্বের প্রশ্নটি। গত পরশু আলফা সূত্রিমো পত্রের বতুরা টেলিফোনে ইন্দিরাকে জানিয়েছেন, সার্বভৌমত্ব নিয়ে আলোচনায় রাজি থাকলে তবেই নয়াদিল্লির সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসবেন আলফা নেতৃত্ব। আলফার সার্বভৌমত্বের

দাবি কেন্দ্রের মেনে নেওয়ার অর্থ তাদের একটি চেয়ে বলছেন "সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্রের স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া পৃথক রাষ্ট্র গড়ার স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া। যা ভারত না দেওয়া তা আরও বেশি দেওয়া। আপাতত তো সরকারের পক্ষে মেনে নেওয়া আদৌ সম্ভব নয়। আলোচনার বল গড়ক। সার্বভৌমত্ব শব্দটি তো অথচ, আলফাকে আলোচনার টেবিলে বসানোর নিষিদ্ধ নয়, এই নিয়ে প্রাথমিক ভাবে আলোচনা প্রয়াস বজায় রাখতে চাইছে মনমোহন-সরকার। তো হতে পারে।" পরেশও তাঁকে জানিয়েছেন, জ্ঞানপীঠপ্রাপ্ত লেখিকা অবশ্য এই জট ছাড়াতে সরকার পক্ষের থেকে তাঁদের কাছে প্রশ্ন রাখা

১৫ নভেম্বর: আবার হুমকি দিল ন্যাশনাল ডেমোক্রেটিক ফ্রন্ট অব বেঙ্গাল্যান্ড (এনডিএফবি)। মাত্র কয়েক দিন আগে তাদের একতরফা ঘোষিত অস্ত্র সংবরণের সিদ্ধান্ত প্রত্যাহারের হুমকি দিয়েছিল জঙ্গি সংগঠনটি। এ বার তারা বলেছে, অসমের তরুণ গণগণের সরকার নয়, কেন্দ্রের সংযুক্ত গণতান্ত্রিক মোর্চা সরকারের সঙ্গে সরাসরি কথা বলতে তারা আগ্রহী।

রঞ্জন সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটি

সংবাদ মাধ্যমকে পাঠানো এক ই-মেল বার্তায় সংগনের মুখপাত্র এস সামজারং বলেছেন, বেঙ্গাল্যান্ডের দাবিতে এনডিএফবি সম্পূর্ণ শাস্তিপূর্ণ ও গণতান্ত্রিক পদ্ধতিতে আলোচনা চায়। তাদের এই আগ্রহ খুবই সৎ ও আন্তরিক বলে গত ১৫ অক্টোবর অস্ত্র সংবরণ ঘোষণা করেছে সংগঠন। রাজ্য সরকারের কড়া সমালোচনা করে নির্মিত জঙ্গি সংগঠনের মুখপাত্রটি বলেছেন, যারা কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের অনুমতি ছাড়া নিজেদের দায়িত্বে মুক্ত বিরতি ঘোষণা করতে পারে না, তাদের সঙ্গে কোনও কথা বলতে এনডিএফবি আগ্রহী নয়।

মুখপাত্রটি জানান, বেঙ্গাল্যান্ড স্বশাসিত পর্ষদ (বিটিসি) তৈরির আগে বড়ো লিবারেশন টাইগার্স (বিএলটি)-এর সঙ্গে যে লাইনে আলোচনা করেছে কেন্দ্র, তারা ওই পথে কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে কথা চায় না। কারণ, তাদের দাবি স্বশাসিত পর্ষদ নয়। এ জন্য বড়ো স্বশাসিত পর্ষদকে তারা মানে না। এনডিএফবি-এর এই নতুন হুমকির প্রেক্ষিতে সরকারের এক মুখপাত্র জানান, ওই জঙ্গি সংগঠন সরাসরি কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে চাইলে তাদের কোনও আপত্তি নেই।

হোক। সেই আলোচনায় তাঁদের কথা বলার সুযোগ দেওয়া হোক যে, কেন তাঁরা সার্বভৌমত্ব চাইছেন। সরকারপক্ষের বক্তব্য, বৈঠকে যদি শর্তহীন ভাবে আলোচনা হয়, তবে সরকারের পক্ষ থেকেও অবশ্য সার্বভৌমত্ব নিয়ে আলোচনায় কোনও অসুবিধা হবে না।

ইন্দিরা আজ নারায়ণনের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে তাঁকে অসমের পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে ব্যাখ্যা করেন। তিনি যে বসভা কাগজ দিয়েছেন, তাতেও তিনি বিষয়টির বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন। লিখেছেন, "রাজ্যের এই অশান্তির জন্য গত পঁচিশ বছরে ৫ হাজার যুবকের রক্তপাত ঘটেছে। সেনা-অভিযানে আহত হয়েছেন আরও অসংখ্য মানুষ। রাজ্যে ছুটি পুরোদস্তুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থাকা সত্ত্বেও শ্যৈ শ্যৈ ছাত্র রাজ্যের বাইরে চলে যাচ্ছেন। প্রায় ৫০ কোটি টাকা এই ভাবে রাজ্যের বাইরে চলে গিয়েছে।" আলফা নেতাদের সম্পর্কে তাঁদের তাঁর মতামত, "তাঁরা নিজেদের অত্যন্ত অবহেলিত বলে মনে করছেন। আমরা অনেকেই জানিয়েছেন সে কথা। বলেছেন, পঁচিশ বছর ধরে আমরা লড়াই করেছি। একটি প্রশ্নও তো কখনও করেনি ভারত সরকার।" সম্প্রতি পরেশ বড়ুয়ার মায়ের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে গিয়েছিলেন ইন্দিরা। "আমার হাত দুটো জড়িয়ে ধরে বলেছেন, কিছু একটা করা। ছেলেকে ফিরিয়ে দাও। রক্তপাত বন্ধ কর," বলেন ইন্দিরা।

মায়ের এই যন্ত্রণাকে সঞ্চল করেই কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের দর্শনপ্রার্থী অসমের এই লেখিকা।

STRONG WORDS

The road to peace is long and uneven. If a conflict is as old as the Naga insurgency, it would be naïve to expect the peace-talks to be a smooth affair. But the latest outcry of Mr Thuingaleng Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, is a serious matter. Rarely during the seven-year peace negotiations have the group's leaders used such strong language to denounce New Delhi. He is upset with some activities of rival outfits such as the Naga National Council and the NSCN, led by Mr S.S. Khaplang, and sees the hand of "Indian intelligence agencies" behind them. The timing of Mr Muivah's allegation does not bode well for the peace initiative. It comes close on the heels of the NSCN(I-M) leaders accepting an invitation from the prime minister, Mr Manmohan Singh, to visit India in December to continue the dialogue. If that raised hopes for peace in Nagaland, Mr Muivah's complaint could be a cause for despair.

It is possible to argue that New Delhi should actually talk to as many Naga groups as possible to make the peace efforts acceptable to all. There is no denying that Mr Muivah's outfit is the biggest of the rebel Naga groups. That does not, however, make the other groups irrelevant to the peace process. It is not just a question of the comparative strength of the groups; even small outfits, left out of the process, can reduce it to a seriously flawed peace. The failure of the Shillong Agreement between the NNC and New Delhi in 1975 may not be relevant to today's situation. On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that the current peace-talks are primarily between the government and the NSCN(I-M). New Delhi must, therefore, be careful not to send out wrong signals to the principal peace-maker. If it needs to talk to other groups, it would do better to take the NSCN(I-M) into confidence about it. New Delhi needs to come clean on some of the charges heaped on it by Mr Muivah, particularly the one about the intelligence agencies clandestinely providing arms to the NNC cadre. It is one thing for the peace process to stumble on grey areas; it would be quite another if the trust between the negotiators is lost. Mr Muivah, too, cannot walk out of seven years of peace-talks in a huff. That would be a cruel blow to the people of Nagaland, who have endured untold sufferings over five long decades. Both New Delhi and Mr Muivah owe it to the Nagas to make peace, not war.

NSCN infighting 9.11.85r delays peace

GUWAHATI, Nov. 8. — The rivalry between the two factions of the NSCN has been a major concern of the Nagaland government which is eagerly awaiting the final solution to the decades-old Naga problem.

Nagaland chief minister Mr Neiphiu Rio today said: "Disunity between the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K has been the main stumbling block in the ongoing peace process." Talking to newsmen on the sidelines of the North-east chief ministers' meeting with the Planning Commission deputy chairman Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia here, Mr Rio said the troubled hill state was looking forward to the forthcoming visit of the collective leadership of the NSCN-IM to the state with the hope that it would go a long way in resolving the differences between the two rebel groups.

Stating that the Nagaland government would not interfere with the peace process, Mr Rio said: "It is high time the actual negotiation is started as the people of Nagaland have been awaiting the final solution of the problem... It has been seven long years since the cease-fire came into effect in Nagaland." The chairman of the NSCN-IM, Mr Isak Chisi Swu and general secretary Mr Th Muivah are scheduled to visit Nagaland for the first time since 1996. They are expected to discuss the issue of Naga integrity with different sections of the Naga society. Their visit to Nagaland is being coordinated by the organising committee of the Naga Ho Ho with the Nagaland playing the role of facilitator. — SNS

✓ ✓ 578 The law's okay

9-11 2 4 7 2
But Manipur needs humane enforcers 9/11

The 32-group Apunba Lup umbrella organisation fighting for repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has done what it considered its duty to convey Manipuris' grievances to the Prime Minister and his home minister. While Manmohan Singh assured the delegation of replacing the Act with a more "humane" one that would protect human rights and ensure national security, Shivraj Patil promised to form an expert committee comprising parliamentarians and jurists. But there was no hint from him about the total repeal of the Act as demanded. If he is to be taken at his word, Patil said it should not be construed as a step forward towards replacing the AF(SP) Act, that it was at a "conceptual stage" and the Cabinet and the Home ministry would examine the committee's recommendations. That no time frame has been set would suggest it will be a long-drawn out process and could be intended to keep the Apunba Lup's ire in check for the time being.

Then comes Patil's comment at a police officers' meeting that the Centre was planning a law that would not be "draconian" but would effectively curb militancy and invited their suggestions. But will this help? Arguably, there is nothing wrong with the AF(SP) Act but the fault lies in its continued use — in Manipur alone it has been in force since 1980 with little improvement; on the contrary it has merely alienated the locals. The Centre must discourage insurgency-infested states from excessive dependence on the Army and paramilitary forces. They must learn from Tamil Nadu where a small dedicated Special Task Force team, with tacit support from the chief minister, cut short four decades of depredation by forest brigand Veerappan. Manipur does not need a new law and troops — all it requires is a well-equipped, disciplined police force with incentives thrown in for good measure.

Naga whack at 'wicked' policy

১৩ নভেম্বর ১৯৯৭

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Hague, Nov. 8: The leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) seem to be having second thoughts about visiting India for an intensive and structured dialogue with the government.

Thuingaleng Muivah, the general secretary of the NSCN (I-M) currently in the Netherlands, described as "wicked" the policy of New Delhi to prompt "discredited" organisations like the Naga National Council (NNC) and the NSCN (Khaplang) to disturb the peace process.

He claimed that while the NNC was being armed by

India, NSCN (K) was being actively "encouraged and facilitated" to disturb the NSCN (I-M)'s efforts at a time when a qualitative breakthrough in the peace negotiations seemed likely. "This is not a sign of wisdom," Muivah said.

The Naga leader warned: "Unless these issues are directly and officially clarified to us by the Government of India, we will consider ourselves free of our commitment to ceasefire and the peace negotiations."

"The honour we extended to the Prime Minister's invitation by accepting to come to India is being undermined. How then can we come to India? The sincerity of the Prime Minister's invitation and

his wisdom itself have come under doubt," Muivah said.

The NSCN (I-M) leader claimed the NNC and NSCN (K) were being "used by the Indian intelligence agencies". India, Muivah said, ought to ask itself: "Against whom are these groups being used? Is it really against us or against the peace process and the solution?"

Was India then really letting the big fish get away by chasing the small fry? It would seem so from what Muivah has to say about what he calls the handiwork of Indian intelligence and security agencies.

"This time it is clear that those people who accepted the Shillong Accord in 1975 (read the NNC) are procuring brand new self-loading rifles made in

Indian ordnance factories. Where are they getting these weapons? Who gave them the money to buy these weapons? And why is India actively encouraging the emergence of another armed group in Nagaland? Can New Delhi remain silent claiming that it does not know what is happening?" Muivah asked.

"How is that Khaplang's men are being escorted to Delhi to hold press conferences threatening both India and the NSCN (I-M)? How can they cross the border from Myanmar to Nagaland and then be flown from Guwahati to New Delhi? Who is behind this? Can the Government of India still pretend to be innocent?" he fumed.

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THE TELEGRAPH

‘ঘিসিং মডেল’-এ নাগাল্যান্ড সমস্যার সমাধান চায় কেন্দ্র

রঞ্জন সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটী

৫ নভেম্বর: নাগা জঙ্গি সমস্যা সামাধানে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ‘ঘিসিং মডেল’ অনুসরণ করতে চাইছে। অর্থাৎ পশ্চিমবঙ্গের গোর্খা পর্বত পরিষদের (ডিজিএইচসি) মতো নাগাল্যান্ডকে স্বায়ত্তশাসনের অধিকার দিতে চায় কেন্দ্র। কেন্দ্রের ইউপিএ সরকারের দুই বড় শরিক কংগ্রেস ও বামশেরা এবং বিরোধী দল বিজেপি এই ব্যাপারে তাদের সম্মতির কথা জানিয়ে দিয়েছে। ‘স্বাধীন নাগাল্যান্ড রাষ্ট্র’-এর মূল দাবিদার এনএসসিএন (আইএম) শেষ পর্যন্ত এই প্রস্তাব মেনে নেবে বলে কেন্দ্র আশা করছে।

ভারতীয় ভূখণ্ডের বাইরে পৃথক নাগাল্যান্ড রাষ্ট্রের দাবি নিয়ে যে এনএসসিএন-এর জন্ম, ‘৯৭-এর অস্ত্র সংবরণ চুক্তির সাত বছর পরে সেই দাবি থেকে অনেকটাই সরে আসছে জঙ্গি মুইভা গোষ্ঠী। জঙ্গিদের খাপলাং

গোষ্ঠীও সম্প্রতি অস্ত্র সংবরণ চুক্তি করে সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনার ব্যাপারে আগ্রহ প্রকাশ করেছে।

নাগা জঙ্গিদের কথামতো যে পৃথক রাষ্ট্রের দাবি কোনওমতেই মেনে নেওয়া সম্ভব নয়, এনএসসিএন (আইএম) গোষ্ঠীর নেতাদের তা বারে বারের বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছে অতীত ও বর্তমানের কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। প্রথম দিকে এ ব্যাপারে অনড় থাকলেও সময়ের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে জঙ্গি নেতারাও তাদের দাবি থেকে অনেকটাই সরে আসছেন বলে মনে করে দিল্লির প্রশাসন। এই পরিবর্তিত পরিস্থিতিতেই স্বায়ত্তশাসনের প্রসঙ্গটি উঠে এসেছে।

এক সরকারি মুখপাত্র জানান, নাগা-সমস্যায় কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ‘দ্বি-চল’ নীতি নেওয়ার সুফল পেতে শুরু করেছে। এক দিকে নাগাল্যান্ডবাসীর চাপ, অন্য দিকে, সাত বছর ধরে আলোচনায় কিছুটা ক্লাস্ত হয়ে পড়েছেন জঙ্গি নেতারা। তাই স্বায়ত্তশাসনের

প্রভাবে নরম হলেও কয়েকটি বিষয় নিয়ে বিরোধের নিষ্পত্তি হয়নি আজও। যেমন, প্রস্তাবিত স্বায়ত্তশাসিত নাগাল্যান্ডে জনা আলাদা পতাকা, বিভিন্ন পদে প্রধানমন্ত্রী, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ইত্যাদি নামগুলি ব্যবহার করতে চান জঙ্গি নেতারা। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার এই সব দাবি নাকচ করে দিয়েছে।

সরকারি সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, পরিস্থিতি যেখানে এসে দাঁড়িয়েছে, তাতে মনে হচ্ছে, এনএসসিএন (আইএম) গোষ্ঠী নাগাল্যান্ডের সমস্যার সমাধানে যথেষ্ট আগ্রহী। সম্প্রতি ব্যাপক সফরের সময় প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে নিশ্চিত আলোচনা হবে বলে ধরে নিয়েছিলেন জঙ্গি নেতারা।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী অবশ্য সে যাত্রায় এনএসসিএন নেতাদের সঙ্গে দেখা করেননি। আগামী কয়েক দিনের মধ্যে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আমন্ত্রণে সফরের সময় তাঁর সঙ্গে আলোচনা হবে বলে

আশা করছেন জঙ্গি নেতারা। তবে এ বারও প্রধানমন্ত্রী জঙ্গি নেতাদের সঙ্গে দেখা করবেন, তেমন কোনও ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া যায়নি।

তবে বিরোধী খাপলাং শিবিরের এর নেতা সম্প্রতি দিল্লিতে সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করায় এনএসসিএন (আইএম) নেতারা দিল্লির উপরে চটেছেন। তবে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের তরফে ইতিমধ্যেই বলা হয়েছে, ওই ব্যাপারে সরকারের বিদ্যমান ভূমিকা ছিল না।

তবে তাতেও মুইভা গোষ্ঠীর ক্ষোভ পুরোপুরি কমেনি। কথা ছিল, চলতি মাসের তৃতীয় সপ্তাহে মুইভা গোষ্ঠীর নেতারা দিল্লিতে এসে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করবেন। কিন্তু এখন ঠিক হয়েছে, আগামী মাসের প্রথম ও এক সময় তাঁরা দিল্লি আসবেন। রাজধানীতে সরকার ছাড়াও প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী এবং সিপিএম, সিপিআই নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা

বলবেন।

নাগাল্যান্ডের স্বায়ত্তশাসনের প্রস্তাব নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক দলের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করেছেন। সিপিআইয়ের জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির সদস্য প্রমোদ গগৈ আজ গুয়াহাটীতে জানান, নাগাল্যান্ড ইস্যু নিয়ে বাম কো-অর্ডিনেশন কমিটির নেতাদের সঙ্গে গত মাসে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর বৈঠক হয়েছে। বাম নেতারা সরকারকে এগিয়ে যাওয়ার পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন।

এক সরকারি মুখপাত্র জানিয়েছেন নাগাল্যান্ডের স্বায়ত্তশাসনের প্রস্তাবকে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার সংবিধানের ৩৭০ ধারা মোতাবেক জন্ম ও কাঙ্গারি মডেল বলতে নারাজ। বরং পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ডিজিএইচসি-র সঙ্গে এর মিল থাকার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। তবে পুরো বিষয়টাই নির্তর করছে এনএসসিএন মুইভা গোষ্ঠীর নেতাদের প্রস্তাব মানা, না-মানার উপরে।

Hope springs from a beautiful mind

By Pradip Phanjoubam

It was a remarkable breakthrough and all credit must go to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's brand of refreshingly trusting politics. He did what other politicians in all of four and a half decades did not have the inclination or courage to do, and assured the Apunba Lup, the conglomeration of 32 civil society organisations, which spearheaded the street demand for the repeal of the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act, that the Act would be either given a human face or replaced with another that is not callous about human rights violation.

The delegation also had a good meeting with home minister Shivraj Patil, despite the frosty response to the idea of such a meeting when Dr. Singh suggested it. They had walked out of talks with Patil in a huff in Imphal.

The Lup negotiators too need praise for not bowing to pressures of fatigue as well as dilution of the emotional charge the issue commanded initially, by the lapsed time since the controversy broke out after the custodial death of Thangjam Manorama by Assam Rifles soldiers in July this year. The killing led to a bitter and angry confrontation, with Meira Paibi members, of the outspoken and well-organised women's groups, shocking the region and the country by stripping in desperate anger before the AR offices.

The confrontation was essentially between the state government and the Centre on one side (even the latter differed with the former about the withdrawal of the Act from the Imphal municipal areas) and the agitators on the other, with towns, roads, businesses, offices and markets shut for weeks, educational institutions closed and the symbolic burning of books by students before Raj Bhavan.

Kudos to the Prime Minister for not seeking to take advantage of this diluted status of the Lup's hold over the public, as the Machiavellis and Chanakayas amongst his advisors would have definitely urged him

side, but also the loss of a just cause.

It would have learned the hard lesson that it was increasingly beginning to miss the pulse of the people by not reading, honestly deciphering and keep pace with the messages posted periodically in the writings on the wall of Imphal's streets and by-lanes, morning tea stalls and women's markets. This is how the All Assam Students Union went astray in the late 1980s when it did not read the weariness with the anti-Bangladeshi agitation.

The humiliation Apunba Lup suffered when nobody took seriously its ban call for the Konghoujam by-elections last month to press its demand was an indication of the shape of things to come in the not so distant future. More than 90 per cent queued up to vote.

Vindicated beyond doubt was the genuineness of the resentment against AFSPA and nothing to do with any widely prevalent latent anti-India sentiment coming out in the open, as was being made out to be in both the government's paranoid intelligence establishment as well as anti-government forces waiting to paint the agitation with their own ideology-laden colours.

The Lup too had made the mistake of often tending to read such a message in the people's outrage.

But all is well that ends well. Any final solution to a conflict must have to be honourable to all parties. Intellectual honesty and sound reason must be the only screens to decide on the fairness of the gives and takes each parties will necessarily have to make.

The Prime Minister can be trusted to generate goodwill and create a virtuous cycle in which goodwill reciprocates goodwill. We are hopeful that the 2 November breakthrough is only the beginning of an avalanche of conflict resolutions in this trouble torn land.

After all, when beautiful minds work, hope will be abundant.

(The author is editor, The Imphal Free Press.)



The Apunba Lup delegation, and (below) Manmohan Singh. — PTI/AFP

losers, or at least not as

Those unconvinced can refer to the Game Theory of American mathematical genius and Nobel Prize winner John Nash. Sylvia Nash has done a fine job in explaining it for the layperson in her biography of Nash, titled, *A Beautiful Mind*, made even more popular by a Hollywood adaptation by the same name.

Game Theory which had its most profound influence in economics is coming to be applied to many other fields of human activity. Why not think of extending its logic, and more importantly its poetry, in seeking resolutions to some of our most vexing conflict situations?

At this point, the Apunba Lup must be careful not to slam doors as it did the last time during home minister Shivraj Patil's ill-fated trip to Imphal in September and leave the negotiations open ended. To do otherwise would not only amount to sui-



Open forum

to. Following such advice would have caused hurt that would swell again in time and widen the unbridged distance between New Delhi and the peripheral north-eastern state.

Machiavellian politics, which by the very compulsion of its fundamentals can see no political equation that does not culminate in a zero sum game, would definitely see the Prime Minister's concessions announced on 2 November evening, as an unnecessary give away for they would have counted on the Lup dying out as it was.

The trouble is, the entire security and intelligence apparatus of the establishment is replete with this kind of cynicism that only sees in terms of one man's gain as another's loss.

Far too often, what is forgotten is there is something as a win-win situation, in which all parties in a competition or an adversarial situation can end up as win-

Apt law for Assam

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The Congress-led UPA government's decision to retain the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 is symptomatic of the party's stand all along and should have caused no ripples. So the Aasu burning effigies of Manmohan Singh and Tarun Gogoi and its plans to obstruct Dr Singh's programme in Assam later this month to flag off the Indo-Asean car rally seem unwarranted. All political parties have sought to politicise the Act but it is not a bad piece of legislation. It has just been mishandled. During its first tenure, the AGP, an Aasu offshoot, did little to deport illegal migrants despite being catapulted to power on the anti-foreigners' issue. In its second term, it adopted a resolution demanding the Act's withdrawal but refrained from making it an election issue in 2001.

There is little doubt the Act preserves the Congress vote bank, but its withdrawal at this stage will only encourage witch-hunts. The party believes this legislation best safeguards the interests of genuine Indians because the Foreigners Act allows the police sweeping powers that could be misused at prompting from vested interests. Critics of the IM(DT) Act contend that the Foreigners Act renders a separate law redundant. But Assam's complexities must be understood because a thin line divides those illegal migrants who came to Assam on or after 23 March 1971 as per the Assam Accord and Bengali-speaking Indian minorities. The IM(DT) Act makes it obligatory for the authorities to follow an elaborate quasi-judicial process to determine the status of an alleged infiltrator. Critics also point out if the law is meant for the entire country, why it is applicable only in Assam? The Centre must look into this to end the controversy amicably by involving all parties and groups.

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THE STATESMAN

মায়ানমার সীমান্তে লড়াই, জঙ্গি ও সেনা দু'পক্ষেরই সাফল্য দাবি

প্রভাত ঘোষ • আগরতলা

৪ নভেম্বর: এক দিকে 'অপারেশন অল ক্লিয়ার', অন্য দিকে 'স্বাধীনতার সংগ্রাম'—দুয়ের মাঝে ওষ্ঠাগত সাধারণ মানুষের প্রাণ। দুই মতের দাবিদারদের ক্রমাগত পারস্পরিক যুদ্ধে মণিপুরের গ্রামের ঘরবাড়ি ভেঙেচুরে, পুড়ে তছনছ। গুলিতে মারা গিয়েছেন সাধারণ মানুষ। ফলে, গ্রাম ছেড়ে পালাচ্ছেন বাসিন্দারা। এই নতুন 'কনফ্লিক্ট জোন' মণিপুরের ভারত-মায়ানমার সীমান্তে। সব ক'টি নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী তথা মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর নেতৃত্বে 'ইউনিফায়েড কমান্ড'এর সাঁড়াশি চাপে মায়ানমারের ঘন অরণ্যের ঘাঁটি থেকে আসা মৈতে বিদ্রোহীদের বহু সদস্যকে নিশ্চিহ্ন করে দিতে সক্ষম হয়েছে - এই দাবি লিখিতভাবে ছড়ানো হচ্ছে ইফলে। বলা হয়েছে, গত এক সপ্তাহে নিরাপত্তা বাহিনীর হাতে মারা পড়েছে ২৬ জন জঙ্গি। উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে একে সিরিজের অ্যাসল্ট রাইফেল থেকে গ্রেনেড নিক্ষেপের স্বল্পপাল্লার স্বয়ংক্রিয় অত্যাধুনিক অস্ত্র পর্যন্ত। ইফল থেকে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রকের প্রচার সচিব মেজর এস ডি দেব গোস্বামী লিখিত বিবৃতিতে এই খবর জানিয়ে বলেন, নতুন কমান্ডের যৌথ জঙ্গিবিরোধী অভিযানে জঙ্গিদের কোমর ভেঙে দেওয়া গিয়েছে। বিরাট সংখ্যক আত্মগোপনকারী উগ্রপন্থী মণিপুর থেকে সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে মায়ানমারের জঙ্গলে গিয়ে আশ্রয় নিতে বাধ্য হয়েছে।

অন্য দিকে, মণিপুরের ইউনাইটেড ন্যাশনাল লিবারেশন ফ্রন্টের (ইউএনএলএফ) পক্ষ থেকে পাল্টা বিবৃতি ছড়িয়ে প্রচার করা হয়েছে, ৩০ নভেম্বরের রাত থেকে এ পর্যন্ত তারা ২৮ জন ভারতীয় সেনাকে খতম করেছে। লুট করেছে অস্ত্রশস্ত্র, গোলাবারুদ। তারা হুঁশিয়ারি দিয়েছে, 'চূড়ান্ত নিষ্ঠুর ইয়াঙ্গন সরকারের সঙ্গে হাত মিলিয়ে দিলি যেভাবে উত্তর পূর্বাঞ্চলের মানুষের উপর অত্যাচার চালাবার ফন্দি এঁটেছে', তা বিপ্লবীরা সফল হতে দেবে না।

ইফলে বিবৃতির যুদ্ধ চললেও দক্ষিণ মণিপুরের সীমান্ত এলাকায় কিন্তু আসল যুদ্ধের মাঝে পড়ে মানুষের প্রাণাঙ্কর অবস্থা। চূড়াচাঁদপুর জেলার সীমানাতেই চলছে দু'পক্ষের গোলাগুলি। ওই এলাকায় অধিকাংশই কুকি জনজাতির বাস। জেলার ভিলেজ কাউন্সিলের প্রধান ও তেইকোট গ্রামের বাসিন্দা থাংকানলাম কুকি আজ ইফল থেকে জানান, মায়ানমার সীমান্তের প্রায় সব গ্রাম থেকেই মানুষ পালিয়ে আসছেন। তিনি বলেন, "জঙ্গলের ভিতরে আগে গোলাগুলি চলছিল। শত কয়েকদিন ধরে জঙ্গলের বাইরে এসেও দু'পক্ষ গোলাবারুদ চালাচ্ছে। আমার গ্যামেরই যুবক মৈনাং কুকি, হারুংদাং নামে একটি বালিকা গুলিতে মারা গিয়েছে। ঘরবাড়িতে গোলা এসে পড়ছে। কখনও সেনা, কখনও জঙ্গলের লোকজন এসে গোটা ঘর ভেঙে চুরমার করে দিয়ে যাচ্ছে।" তিনি আরও বলেন, "গতকাল থেকে রাজধানীতে এসে বসে আছি মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে সব জানাব বলে। তাঁর দফতর থেকে বলা হল প্রধানমন্ত্রী নাকি আসবেন, তাই সবাই ব্যস্ত।"

5 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Experts group to review Armed Forces Act

Statesman News Service

Centre gets list

NEW DELHI, Nov. 2. — The government will soon constitute a committee to review and replace the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

After an hour-long meeting with Apunba Lup, the apex body of 32 organisations which is spearheading the agitation in Manipur since 11 July against the "Draconian" AFSPA, the Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, said the proposal to form the committee was at a "conceptual stage" and any step could be taken only after recommendations were given by the committee. He said the Prime Minister had given an assurance to the Apunba Lup leaders yesterday and setting up of the committee would be in "fulfilment of those assurances."

The committee will consist of members of Parliament, jurists, sociologists and Manipur leaders. Its recommendations would be discussed by the Cabinet and then a decision could be taken, he said. Describing the meeting with the Apunba Lup as "positive" and the discussions "quite useful and fruitful," Mr Patil said the Manipur leaders wanted to know whether, after the Prime Minister's assurance, the government

NEW DELHI, Nov 2. — The Centre has received a list of 20 to 25 people and organisations who want to have talks with Mr Shivraj Patil, during his three-day visit to J&K beginning 6 November. Mr Patil was non-committal on whether the list included the Hurriyat which has spurned at least three offers for talks so far. "We will have talks with whoever is ready to talk," he said. — SNS

would consider review and replacement of the AFSPA. "On behalf of the government, it was conveyed that the Prime Minister had assured that it can be reviewed and steps taken. Today they wanted to know the home ministry's reaction. "We told them that the assurance given by the Prime Minister will be fulfilled," Mr Patil said.

"They wanted more details. They suggested that a group of persons can examine the law and a new law can be used in its place. We told them that we can have a group of persons to examine the law. The committee members can be asked to look into the existing law," Mr Patil added. On the Apunba Lup leaders' reference to Pota which was repealed after three years, he said that he had explained the difference between Pota and AFSPA.

3 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Protests against IMDT Act

GUWAHATI, Nov. 1. — The Congress-led UPA government's decision to continue with the Illegal Migrants (Detection by Tribunal) Act, 1983 in Assam is being met with strong protests.

All Assam Students Union (Aasu) today burnt effigies of Dr Manmohan Singh and Mr Tarun Gogoi in protest despite "popular demand" for repeal of the Act. Aasu adviser and chairman, North East Students' Organisation, Dr Samujjal Bhattacharrya warned of a series of intensive agitation programmes in the state to press for the demand for abrogation of the Act which, he said was a major hurdle in detection and deportation of illegal Bangladeshi migrants from the state. The Act has been serving as a protector for illegal migrants from Bangladesh staying in Assam and Pakistani-ISI agents, he said.

The Centre's move to retain the Act has also been criticised by Asom Gana Parishad, BJP and Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad. They have accused the ruling Congress party of trying to appease its "vote bank" amongst illegal migrants.

However, the decision to continue with the Act has found favour with a section minority groups in the state. The United Minority Forum has in fact raised demand for extending the Act to West Bengal and Meghalaya infiltrated by illegal migrants from Bangladesh. The UMF maintains that the Act safeguards interests of genuine minority citizens. The official line maintained by Assam Pradesh Congress Committee is that the party is not opposed to deportation of illegal migrants from the state, but it is for safeguarding genuine minority citizens against harassment in the process of detection of foreigners. — SNS

2 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Assam alert over Ulfa threat

Gogoi mulls restricting VIP movement after dusk

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, October 31

BARELY 24 hours after Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Barua issued a threat to eliminate ministers, MLAs and leaders of the Congress, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi today sounded an alert in the state.

Barua had yesterday declared war on the Congress in Assam, with effect from Sunday. The anti-Congress operation is apparently in retaliation to the encounter deaths of five Ulfa activists in Lakhimpur district on Thursday night.

The five cadres were believed to have been involved in a series of subversive attacks across Assam since August 15 this year. Besides the twin blasts in Nagaland on October 2, their deadliest operation was the Dhemaji explosion.

Home secretary B.M. Mazumdar said the government did not want



to take any chances. "All district authorities have been directed to strengthen security," he added.

Officials said restricting the movement of ministers, MLAs and other VIPs after dusk was also on their agenda in view of the terror threat. The forces have also been asked to be on maximum alert

along inter-district and inter-state entry-exit points, besides Indo-Bhutan and Indo-Bangla borders.

The fresh Ulfa threat has, incidentally, come amid hopes that the banned outfit would follow the NDFB in declaring a ceasefire with the government. Ulfa boss Paresh Barua had even indicated taking a softer line vis-à-vis his preconditions for talks, like the issue of sovereignty of Assam.

Meanwhile, Congress-baiters in the state said the Ulfa threat could be mere eyewash aimed at diverting the focus from the alleged nexus between the outfit and some Congress ministers and leaders.

The AGP has particularly been upping the ante against Health Minister Bhumidhar Barman and Tribal Affairs Minister Bharat Chandra Narah for "aiding and abetting the Ulfa, both morally and financially".

01 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Still miles to go

57-8
29/10
9/6
Only unity can brighten Naga prospects

By accepting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's invitation, NSCN (IM) leaders Isak Swu and Th Muivah have rekindled hope of finding a workable formula at the next round of talks expected in November. Swu's reported absence at the Bangkok meeting was somewhat intriguing, leaving one to wonder what pressing engagement took precedence over the Naga parley. Unlike in January last year when the two leaders visited only Delhi, this time they are to spend Christmas in Nagaland. They were in Nagaland for a month in May-June 1999 but confined themselves to designated camps in Dimapur. The euphoria over the first round was, however, short lived as little headway was made following the rebel leaders' insistence on their demand for a single administrative Naga unit, a euphemism for greater Nagaland — a concept that threatens peace in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. The ceasefire, the only substantive achievement so far, nearly lapsed when the Naga leaders objected to the Congress-led UPA's commitment to its Common Minimum Programme for the territorial integration of North-eastern states while solving the insurgency problem. It was renewed just a day before its term expired.

There is little doubt the NSCN-IM leaders have shown exemplary patience — the UPA is the fourth government they are dealing with — and is indication of their determination to hammer out a solution. They will do well to meet a cross section of people, in keeping with their promise to take them into confidence at every stage of a political settlement. But one section alone cannot determine Naga hopes of a lasting solution and the Centre must involve the Khaplang faction and Naga National Council as well. Unity alone can light the way but the NSCN-IM has already hurt Naga sentiments by derailing the reconciliation process initiated by the Naga Hoho. The outcome of the November meeting must be viewed against this background.

India has a month for Naga talks

Sanjoy Hazarika in New Delhi

Assam parties hail MoU with Yangon

Oct. 26. — The Government of India has just one month to prepare intensely for talks on its home turf with the leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, who return to New Delhi at the end of November for what they hope will be substantive talks with India's political leadership.

The visit to India is the second official trip by the "collective leadership" of Th. Muivah and Isak Swu, general secretary and chairman respectively of the NSCN-IM), the North-east's most powerful militant organisation. They have publicly renounced armed struggle and embraced dialogue to settle issues with New Delhi, although they face criticism from a rival armed faction, the NSCN of SS Khaplang.

Indeed, the pressure which Myanmar has now agreed to mount on Indian militants there, following Gen. Than Shwe's current visit, will affect Khaplang and groups from Assam and Manipur.

The proposed NSCN visit beginning in November could last several months, as regular talks are planned to try and hammer out a settlement to the Naga problem. Mr Muivah and Mr Swu had come here in January 2003 for talks with the then Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and others.

The decision to visit Delhi follows an official invitation from Mr K Padmanabiah, the Prime Minister's representative to the talks, who met the Naga leaders in Bangkok last week. The latter indicated they would come to the Indian capital around 27 November.

"The peace talks can be pursued there on a continued and sustained basis so as to facilitate an early, satisfactory and peaceful solution to the issue," said the letter from Mr Padmanabiah, who has been handling the talks for New Delhi for nearly six of the seven years of ceasefire and negotiations between the two sides. Responding warmly, Mr Muivah said the invitation was an indication of the government's sincerity in finding a mutually satisfactory settlement.

The November-end deadline means that New Delhi needs to activate its discussions with various stakeholders in the region, including the state governments of Assam and Manipur as well as Arunachal Pradesh — all three states are now ruled by Congress governments (Assam and Arunachal) or Congress-led coalitions (Manipur). The toughest issue is that of territory: the states want an assurance of territorial integrity. The NSCN says the borders of these states transgress their traditional homelands and

GUWAHATI, Oct. 26. — Political parties in Assam have hailed the MoU signed by India and Myanmar yesterday in which the countries have vowed to jointly fight against terrorism. The Opposition party AGP and CPI today asked the Central government to cash in on Myanmar's "positive stand" and flush out militants taking refuge in that country. However, CPI-M leader Mr Sitaram Yechury said in Mumbai today that the CPI-M feels the situation in the North-east is "very serious" and all the present crises should be resolved through talks. — SNS & PTI

should be returned to the Nagas. Such a proposal evokes opposition, especially in Assam and Manipur, from all parties.

Both sides are skirting the sovereignty issue, despite declarations by Naga leaders. There are several ways of dealing with the problem: one is to leave it for the long-term and evolve a short-term settlement that recognises Naga demands and campaigns. Another could be to give a far higher degree of autonomy to Nagaland, with the Centre retaining defence, foreign relations and currency and communications. A third could be to enable traditional Naga institutions in areas outside Nagaland run their own affairs, under a special constitutional reference, without slicing up the states.

Others who would have to be consulted would be the various coalition partners as well as alliance supporters, such as the left parties. However, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Home Minister Mr Shivraj Patil must also hold talks with Opposition leaders, scholars, policy analysts as well as NGOs and respected figures from Nagaland and other states to hammer out a broad policy agenda for the discussions. Also important to such interactions would be the presence of Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi as well as Mr LK Advani, the new BJP boss.

In turn, the Naga leaders would need to hold talks with a cross-section of Naga people, not just their own followers, and reach out, as they had declared in their departure statement last year, to states which feel threatened by their political positions. The NSCN needs to hold dialogue with civil society, independent groups, scholars. Mr Muivah and Mr Swu are also expected to travel to Nagaland for Christmas, their first in the 40 years they have been away from the Naga Hills (barring brief visits). However, it is unsure if Mr Muivah will be able to visit his village, Somdal, in Ukhrul.

6 PLA activists killed in Manipur

Press Trust of India
Imphal, October 25

SIX ACTIVISTS of the separatist People's Liberation Army (PLA) have been killed and some insurgents driven out of the thick hilly jungles, in Churachandpur district of Manipur, bordering Myanmar and Mizoram, where an intensive combat operation is on to flush out the extremists.

The operation had been launched at Churachandpur district about 20 days ago to flush out the concentration of insurgents from Sajik Tampak in Chandel district and other neigh-

bouring areas at Churachandpur, official sources said.

The operation was being executed by the 'Unified Command' headed by Chief Minister O. Ibobi Singh, the sources said.

Six PLA activists and an Army jawan had been killed in an encounter in the Khunkhai area, under Singhat police station in the district, on October 8, the sources said.

However, the forces were yet to achieve the 'expected results' in the case in spite of the 59th Mountain Brigade and several battalions of the Central paramil-

itary forces being deployed besides the state forces.

Kuki shot dead

A Kuki militant was shot dead by Assam Rifles personnel in an encounter in the Kalapahar area, in Senapati district of Manipur, official sources said today. Sources said, after receiving a tip, a patrol of 14th Assam Rifles personnel rushed to the Kalapahar area, about 35 km north of here, in Senapati Hill district yesterday and launched a search.

The security personnel then engaged in an encounter with suspected mil-

itants during which a militant identified as Nekhogin Kipgen (30) of underground Kuki National Front (presidium) was gunned down, sources said.

They said the Assam Rifles also recovered a country-made pistol, nine rounds of ammunition, a cartridge and a motorcycle. However, family sources alleged that Kipgen was arrested by the Assam Rifles personnel from Keithelmanbi area, near Kalapahar, on Saturday night before being shot dead by the security personnel.

The body was handed over to the family members after a post-mortem.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
26 OCT 2004



NDFB talks will be tripartite, says Gogoi

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, October 25

ASSAM CHIEF Minister Tarun Gogoi said here yesterday that the proposed talks with the NDFB would be tripartite, involving representatives from the NDFB, the state government and the Centre. Gogoi met Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil and discussed NDFB's ceasefire offer and starting negotiations with the Bodo outfit last Thursday.

"Ministry of Home Affairs has given us the green signal to go ahead for the talks process," said Gogoi. The responsibility of taking the lead and starting the dialogue process with the NDFB now rests with the state government, while the Centre would play second fiddle.

The arrangement might not be a happy one for the NDFB, as it had wanted to hold negotiations with the Centre. On October 8, NDFB announced a unilateral ceasefire with effect from October 15 to create a congenial atmosphere for talks with the Government of India.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 OCT 2004

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25/10

Centre is only restoring troops to N-E: Patil

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Union home minister Shivraj Patil on Sunday made it clear that the recent movement of troops to the north-eastern region was only a restoration exercise as a sizable number of battalions were shifted out of the region as reinforcements during the Kargil war in 1999.



Talking to reporters on the occasion of the 43rd raising day of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Patil said, "During the Kargil war, we had brought in many battalions from the north-east. Now, we are simply restoring them (to the region)."

Earlier, addressing the ITBP staff, Patil underscored the need to equip the force with better equip-

ment. Considering the commendable job the force had done in tackling terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and performing other high-risk jobs, it was important to provide all modern facilities to the force to do its job more effectively, Patil said.

The minister said that a holistic approach would be taken keeping in mind the requirements of internal security and the para-military forces would be modernised and equipped in accordance. Stating that "sophisticated weapons, communication devices and transport systems come within its ambit", he said, "We will try our best to provide ITBP personnel with latest weaponry, surveillance and communication equipment."

THE TIMES OF INDIA
25 OCT 2004

মামণির দাবি, নিঃশর্ত কথায় ৰাজি আলফা

গুৱাহাটী, ২৪ অক্টোবৰ: কেন্দ্ৰেৰ সঙ্কে নিঃশর্ত আলোচনায় বসতে নিৰ্বিদ্ধ জঙ্গি সংগঠন আলফা ৰাজি হয়েছে বলে সংগঠন সূত্রে ইঙ্গিত দেওয়া হয়েছ। জ্ঞানপীঠ পুরস্কার প্রাপ্ত অসমের জনপ্রিয় লেখিকা ইন্দিরা গোস্বামী ওরফে মামণি ৰায়সম আলফার সঙ্কে কেন্দ্ৰেৰ সঙ্কে সঙ্কি সম্পাদনে উদ্যোগী হওয়ার পরেই আলফা শর্ত ছাড়াই আলোচনায় বসতে সন্মত হল বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। একটি সাক্ষাৎকারে মামণিৰ দাবি, “সার্বভৌমত্বই আলোচনায় প্রাধান্য পাবে। তবে এই আলোচনায় আলফা কোনও শর্ত দিচ্ছে না।”

এর আগে আলফার সঙ্কে দৌত্যেৰ ব্যাপারে চলচ্চিত্র পরিচালক জানু বড়ুয়া ও সঙ্গীত শিল্পী ভূপেন হাজৰিকা আগ্রহ প্রকাশ করেছিলেন। কিন্তু তাঁদের সঙ্কে আলোচনায় বসতে ৰাজি হয়নি আলফা। গত এক বছরে অন্তত পক্ষে তিনটি জঙ্গি সংগঠন সরকারের সঙ্কে আলোচনাৰ পরে অস্ত্রসংবরণে ৰাজি হয়েছ।

আলোচনায় বসার ব্যাপারে সার্বভৌমত্ব ছাড়া আলফা-ৰ অন্য দুটি দাবি তৃতীয় কোনও ৰাষ্ট্ৰে শান্তি বৈঠক ও ৰাষ্ট্ৰসভ্যেৰ মধ্যস্থতাকারীৰ উপস্থিতিতে আলোচনা। এই দুই শর্ত সম্পর্কে সরকার স্পষ্ট ভাবে কিছু না বললেও সার্বভৌমত্বের শর্ত পুরোপুরি খারিজ করে দেওয়া হয়েছ। অসমের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তৰুণ গগৈয়ের বক্তব্য: “শান্তি আনতে অনেক দিন ধরে আবেদন জানাচ্ছি। নিঃশর্ত আলোচনায় যারা বসতে আগ্রহী, তাদের সঙ্কে যে কোনও সময়ে কথা হতে পারে। কেউ দৌত্য করলে আমাদের আপত্তি থাকার কথা নয়।”

Arrests spill Assam ministers' Ulfa links

Opp chorus for ouster, CBI probe

Digambar Patowary
Guwahati, October 20

THE ALLEGED link between two senior ministers in the Gogoi government and the Ulfa has rocked Assam. The needle of suspicion is pointing towards Health Minister Bhumidhar Barman and Welfare of Plain Tribes and Backward Classes Minister Bharat Narah.

Recently an Ulfa activist, Gitanjali Gohain alias Lipika, was arrested from Jorhat in connection with the August 15 bomb blast at Dhemaji in which 16 school children were killed. On interrogation, Lipika revealed that Narah handed over five mobile sets to Ulfa's Rasid Bharali.

The extremist outfit also held a meeting at district vice-president Muhikanata Handique's house at Dhemaji on August 14, a day before the blast. Handique was allegedly close to Narah. Police arrested Muhikanata and found vital clues about Narah's links with Ulfa. Police even questioned Narah's personal secretary, Khusru Ahmed Borbhuyan. Sources said that vital clues were unearthed about Narah's links with Ulfa.

Besides, police found adequate evidence against the health minister's links with the banned outfit. The city police recently arrested one Anil Mazumder, executive editor of a vernacular daily, *Natun Din* in connection with extortion in the name of Ulfa.

Police arrested three Ulfa activists from city's Kamakhya area while they were about to collect Rs 5 lakh from a businessman. On interrogation, the arrested Ulfa activists revealed the outfit's modus operandi of extortion. Based on the confession, the police carried out an operation and arrested the executive editor of 'Natun Din'. The trio used Anil Mazumder's mobile in the extortion. Mazumder was allegedly close to the health minister.

Why are these two ministers not be-



Tarun Gogoi Will the smile last?

ing arrested? The AGP asked. The documents found from Mazumder were enough to establish the links between Ulfa and the state health minister. Mazumder was instrumental in establishing contacts between Barman and the Ulfa. It was alleged that through various contractors of the health department, money was given to the Ulfa.

Meanwhile, the AGP has sought Prime Minister's intervention in the matter. The party alleged that the chief minister is making a mockery of the investigation process.

The state BJP leadership demanded a CBI probe into the incident in which two senior Congress ministers have alleged links with the militant outfit. Indramoni Bora, state BJP president, alleged that the Gogoi government is going soft on the outfit. Bora alleged the Congress government is sheltering two ministers while common people are being unnecessarily harassed. The state CPI said the Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi must sack both the ministers for their links with the militant outfit.

Meanwhile, Gogoi said action would be taken on the ministers if the charges were found to be true.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
21 OCT 2004

ULFA agrees to unconditional talks

Wants Sovereignty To Be The Core Issue

By Prabin Kalita
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Guwahati: In a most crucial development bringing hopes of peace in the militancy-ravaged Assam, the ULFA leadership too, after NDFB, has now agreed to sit for talks with the central government sans their three pre-conditions.

Head of the department (Modern Indian Language) at Delhi University and Gyan-peeth awardee Assamese author Mamoni Raisom Goswami, who has been in touch with ULFA's commander-in-chief Paresh Barua, in her individual capacity to bring the "boys" to the negotiating table told TOI from New Delhi about this recent change of stance by the militant leadership.

Goswami, who is preparing a draft appeal for initiating peace process, which she will present to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA chairman Sonia Gandhi, said she had to make some changes after Barua called her up again recently to say that he was willing to sit without any conditions.

"They are going to sit for talks without any conditions but they would like to have the issue of sovereignty as the core subject in the several rounds of talks that would take place after the two sides meet. I am now working on this core subject," Goswami said.

The ULFA's three pre-conditions, talks on sovereignty only, talks in a third country and talks in the presence of a UN mediator, have been the long standing hurdles in the way of several central governments to initiate peace process with the outfit. The militant outfit has already announced that it was willing to scale down on two pre-conditions but would not compromise on the sovereign-

ty issue till the militant leader called Goswami a couple days back and conveyed his changed stance.

"This is the most significant development in the 25 years of militancy in Assam and this must be told to the Prime Minister. Some more of us should make the Prime Minister realize this important development. I have a strong feeling that if this time this process fizzles out talks will take place not place for a very long time," she said.

Goswami is being helped by her former colleague in DU, former head of department of political science Manoranjan Mohanty in

The ULFA has scaled down their three pre-conditions – talks on sovereignty only, talks in a third country and talks in the presence of a UN mediator

preparing her draft peace appeal says that the onus now solely lies on the Centre to make the peace process happen. She said, "My only objective is to make the boys sit for talks. I do not wish to mediate on my own. If both sides (government and ULFA) wants I can become one."

Goswami said that she is in touch with chief minister Tarun Gogoi also since Barua came in touch with her. She said that chief minister has extended his support to her. Gogoi has earlier welcomed Goswami's peace efforts and has also assured to provide all necessary cooperation to facilitate such a process.

The developments have been over past few weeks. Goswami first conveyed to Gogoi about ULFA willing to talk last month after which Gogoi offered 15-day time to all outfits to end hostilities for a reciprocal gesture from the government and initiation of talks. The NDFB straight away agreed to Gogoi's offer but ULFA remained silent and talked to Goswami only. Goswami then announced that she was preparing a draft appeal for both government and ULFA as a first step towards peace talks.

আলফাৰ সঙ্গৈ সন্ধিৰ ব্যাপাৰে এ বার উদ্যোগী লেখিকা মামনি ৰায়সম

অশোক সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটী

১৬ অক্টোবৰ: আলফা-ৰ সঙ্গৈ সরকারৰ সন্ধি-সম্পাদনে উদ্যোগী হলেন জ্ঞানপীঠ পুরস্কারপ্রাপ্ত জনপ্রিয় অসমীয়া লেখিকা মামনি ৰায়সম। 'ন্যাশনাল ডেমোক্ৰাটিক ফ্ৰন্ট অব বঙাল্যান্ড' (এনডিএফবি)-এৰ কাছ থেকে অস্ত্র সংবরণের ব্যাপারে সরকারিভাবে সবুজ সঙ্কেত আসার পরে আলফা-ৰ সঙ্গৈ সমঝোতার একটা প্রাথমিক রূপরেখা তিনি তৈরি করেছেন। ১৫ নভেম্বরের মধ্যে মামনি প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রীকে এই রূপরেখা পাঠাবেন।

লেখিকা হিসাবে ইন্দিরা গোস্বামী ওরফে মামনি ৰায়সম অসমের সৰ্বস্তরে স্বীকৃত। জ্ঞানপীঠ ছাড়াও পেয়েছেন নানা পুরস্কার। পেশায় দিল্লি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যাপিকা। অসমে স্থায়ী শান্তি আনার চেষ্টায় আলফা-ৰ

সঙ্গৈ দৌত্যের ব্যাপারে এর আগে অসমের শিবসাগরে জন্ম নেওয়া জনপ্রিয় চলচ্চিত্র পরিচালক 'স্বৰ্ণকমল' এবং 'গ্ৰী প্ৰি' পুরস্কারপ্রাপ্ত জানু বড়ুয়া-

সহ কিছু স্থানীয় বুদ্ধিজীবী বিভিন্ন সময়ে আগ্রহ প্রকাশ করেছিলেন। এই ব্যাপারে মামনিকে তাঁর প্রতিষ্ঠা এবং আলফা সেনাধ্যক্ষ পরেশ বড়ুয়ার সঙ্গৈ পরিচয় অনেক বেশি সুবিধা দেবে।

এনডিএফবি এবং আলফা-ৰ সঙ্গৈ সমঝোতায় আসা সম্ভব হলে অশান্ত উত্তর পূর্ব ভারতে শান্তি আনার চেষ্টা বেশ খানিকটা এগিয়ে যাবে। এই

ব্যাপারে উদ্যোগী হতে সারা অসম ছাত্র সংগঠন (আসু) ও অসমের বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক দল বেশ কিছুদিন ধরে আন্দোলন করছে।



মামনি ৰায়সম। - নিজস্ব চিত্র

মণিপুর নিয়ে কেন্দ্র এই মুহূর্তে বেশ বিপাকে রয়েছে। মামনির চেষ্টাকেও তাই স্বাগত জানিয়েছে কেন্দ্র এবং রাজ্য। এই প্রসঙ্গে তাঁর বক্তব্য: "শান্তি আনার ব্যাপারে অনেক দিন ধরে পরেশ বড়ুয়ার সঙ্গৈ আমার কথা হয়েছে। উনিও আগ্রহ দেখাচ্ছেন। আলফা-ৰ 'সার্বভৌমত্বের' দাবিটা কী ভাবে, আলোচনায় আনা যাবে, প্রশ্ন সেটাই।"

সার্বভৌমত্ব ছাড়া আলফা-ৰ অন্য দুই দাবি অর্থাৎ তৃতীয় রাষ্ট্রে শান্তিবৈঠক এবং রাষ্ট্রসঙ্ঘের মধ্যস্থতাকারী উপস্থিতিতে আলোচনা। এই দুই শর্ত সম্পর্কে সরকার স্পষ্ট ভাবে কিছু না বললেও সার্বভৌমত্বের শর্ত পুরোপুরি খারিজ করে দিয়েছে। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তরুণ গগৈয়ের বক্তব্য: "শান্তি আনার ব্যাপারে আমি অনেক দিন ধরে আবেদন জানাচ্ছি। নিঃশর্ত আলোচনায় যারা বসতে আগ্রহী, তাদের সঙ্গৈ যে কোনও সময়ে কথা হতে পারে। এই ব্যাপারে কেউ দৌত্য করলে আমাদের কোনও আপত্তি থাকার কথা নয়।"

১৯৭৯ সালের ১৪ এপ্রিল শিবসাগরের রংঘরে 'স্বাধীন, সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র' তৈরির দাবিতে জন্ম হয় আলফা-ৰ। ১৯৮৫-ৰ ১৫ অগস্ট 'অসম চুক্তি' সম্পাদনের পরেও চলতে থাকে তাদের একটানা সম্মেলন।

ANANDI DE PATRICKA 18 OCT 2004

অরুণাচলে

শপথ নিলেন

গেগং আপাং

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, গুয়াহাটি, ১৭
অক্টোবর: অরুণাচল প্রদেশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী
পদে আজ শপথ নিলেন গেগং আপাং
মন্ত্রিসভার সদস্য ঠিক করার আগে
কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করলে
আগামী কাল তিন সহকর্মীদের নিচে
তিনি দিল্লি যাচ্ছেন।

পূর্ব ঘোষণামত বি জে পি
আপাংয়ের শপথ গ্রহণ অনুষ্ঠান বয়কট
করে। বি জে পি-র পরিষদীয় দলনেতা
কামেং দোলো বলেন, আপাংয়ে
নীতিহীনতার প্রতিবাদে এই বয়কট
অরুণাচল প্রদেশের ভোটে বি জে পি
র ৯টি আসন লাভকে দোলো সাফল
হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করেন।

সংবিধানের ৯৭-তম সংশোধনের
জেরে অরুণাচল প্রদেশে মন্ত্রিসভার
সদস্য ১২-র বেশি করা চলবে না। এই
কারণে সমস্যার মুখে পড়েছে কংগ্রেস
নেতৃত্ব। জটিলতা এড়াতে তাই আপাং
একই রাজ্যপালের কাছে শপথ নেন।

মন্ত্রিসভায় কাকে কাকে নেবেন,
অন্যদের কাকে কোন পদ দিয়ে খুশি
রাখা সম্ভব, এ সব নিয়ে সনিয়া গাঁধীর
সঙ্গে কথা বলতে প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তথা
প্রদেশ কংগ্রেস সভাপতি মুকুট মিথি,
সাধারণ সম্পাদক হরি ওমবাম এবং
কার্যকরী সভাপতি টাকাম সঞ্জয়কে
নিয়ে কাল আপাং দিল্লি যাবেন।

মিথি এবং সঞ্জয় আপাংয়ের কটর
বিরোধী। তাঁদের বিরোধিতা সত্ত্বেও
মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হলেন আপাং।

Sr 2
M/10

A leaf out of insurgents' manual for N-E police

GUWAHATI, Oct. 16. — Here's a suggestion for police forces in North-eastern states to take a leaf out of insurgents' operation manual on coordinating operations utilising available resources to achieve maximum possible effect.

Addressing the concluding function of the two-day North-east DGPs conference here this afternoon, Assam Governor Lt.Gen.(Retd) Ajai Singh strongly advocated a "regional level" strategy amongst the security and police forces to combat militants and said the

highest level of coordination held the key to success of such regional strategy against militants.

"Militant groups of the region led by people who are far less experienced, have been able to reach understanding on issues of mutual benefit while pursuing their separate objectives," said the Governor who in the capacity of the GOC-in-C 4 Corps of Indian Army led "Operation Rhino" against N-E militants in early 1990s.

"It is not enough to respond to every series of insurgency violence by merely asking for additional forces

or other resources from the Centre. The strength of extremist groups is not in their cadre strength or arsenal, but in their ability to leverage limited resources in tying down security forces while they hit and run at a time and space of their own choosing," the Governor said.

Regarding the interstate movements of militants in the region, he said it was best combated when local police took the lead in a focussed offensive against extremist gangs and when public support is mobilised against violence. — SNS

IB detects foreign hand in North-east terror

9.10.04
Statesman News Service

GUWAHATI, Oct. 15. — The special director of the IB, Mr NC Padhi, today raised alarm over an international design to destabilise the North-east.

"We have a peculiar challenge in the North-east. Neighbours are in active connivance with agencies of another country in promoting insurgency within our territory," Mr Padhi said in the annual conference of DGPs of the eight North-eastern states. "A section of

our neighbours are actively promoting militancy in the North-east. We need to have a calibrated political response to this design. India must give appropriate response to this challenge at the international level."

The Assam chief secretary, Mr JP Rajkhowa, who is the administrative head of the three-tier unified command taking on insurgents in Assam, mentioned cross-border terrorism, narcotics trade, arms smuggling and movement of militants as the major problems of the North-east. He

said arms were flowing surreptitiously to the region through Myanmar and Bangladesh and some of the consignments originated in China.

There was enough evidence, he said, with the police and intelligence to prove that the ISI was trying to attack vital installations in the North-east. "The ISI is also facilitating cross-border movement of militants leaders."

The conference is being attended by officers of the Army, BSF, CRPF, IB and West Bengal police.

THE STATESMAN

16 OCT 2004

Now, cross-border terrorism on the eastern front

The recent ULFA, NDFB attacks were well-planned and designed to show their defiance of the Indian State

■ PRAKASH SINGH

THE Northeast is in a state of ferment again. It started with the Thangiam Manorama incident in Manipur on July 11; it is nearly three months, but unrest continues. Apart from the decision to send in more forces, the Centre has regrettably not taken any bold initiatives and passed on the buck to the State Government. And so, we are in a state of drift in that sensitive border State. On August 15, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) struck in a big way when they caused blasts at Dharmaji in Assam, killing 13 people, mostly school-children. This was followed by another chain of explosions on August 26. And now, on October 2, there have been blasts at Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Darrang, Udalgiri, Sonitpur, Sibsagar and some other places.

Nagaland was also rocked by violence at its commercial hub in Dimapur. The toll in these incidents is about 70, with another about 200 sustaining injuries. There has thus been recrudescence of violence in Naga-

land, Manipur and Assam. Two things should be obvious to any discerning observer. One, that the pervasive strikes on October 2 were the result of careful planning and coordination among some of the major insurgent groups operating in the Northeast. There was definitely a conspiracy to have simultaneous strikes at a number of places in Assam and Nagaland. Two, that the insurgents had deliberately chosen August 15 and thereafter October 2 to mount their attacks. It was to show their disrespect for days sacred to the rest of Indians and also their defiance of the Indian State. The ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) are suspected to have been involved in the attacks. They have since acknowledged their involvement also.

It may be recalled that these two very groups had, towards the end of December 2003, asked the Chinese Government for shelter and medical facilities when their cadres were fleeing from Bhutan. An appeal, signed jointly by Arabinda Rajkhowa, ULFA chairman, and Ranjan Daimari, NDFB chairman, requested the Chinese Government to allow members of the ULFA, NDFB, and Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) safe passage through Chinese territory "to save their lives". China, of course, ignored the appeal.

It was obvious since then that the ULFA and NDFB would launch retaliatory strikes at a time and place of their choosing — and this is what they have done. The ULFA also wanted to demonstrate that it was not a spent force and that it retained its strike capability. There was also a desire to avenge the humiliation suffered in Bhutan. As for the NDFB, it was finding itself marginalized ever since the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council on December 7, 2003, which followed the surrender of cadres of the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) at Kokrajhar. The NDFB stands for 'Bodo Hadat' — an independent Bodoland. Both these groups — ULFA and NDFB — had strong motivations to perpetrate acts of violence.

A major incident of arms seizure



It was but natural for the insurgent outfits to demonstrate the lethality of their newly-acquired weapons by indulging in violence. The flare-up in the Northeast calls for a judicious combination of short-term and long-term measures. To start with, the security forces should go hammer-and-tongs against those responsible for escalation of incidents

in Chittagong on April 2, 2004 should not be lost sight of in this context. A huge consignment of Korean, Italian, Chinese and US-made weaponry including 690 T56-1 sub-machine guns, 600 T56-2 sub-machine guns, 150 T-69 rocket launchers, 840 rockets, etc — enough to equip an infantry brigade — were covered. The Bangladesh authorities never came out clean on who sent the consignment or who were its beneficiaries. Jane's Intelligence Review has disclosed that "the purchases were financed by a foreign intelligence service seeking to

destabilise India's Northeast", and that the shipment involved ULFA's military chief Paresh Barua and NSCN's chief procurement officer Anthony Shimray.

It is obvious that some other consignments would have gone undetected. The essential point is that Bangladesh is acting as conduit for the supply of weapons to insurgent groups in the Northeast. It was but natural for the insurgents outfits to demonstrate the lethality of their newly-acquired weapons by indulging in acts of violence. The flare-up in the Northeast calls for a judi-

cious combination of short-term and long-term measures. To start with, the security forces should go hammer and tongs against the outfits responsible for the escalation of incidents. The police forces in the Northeast should be energised and given sophisticated weapons and other necessary equipments. Coordinated measures will have to be taken in all the affected Northeastern States. Unified Commands should function at the State Capitals. Rebel leaders should be detained for long periods, if necessary, by enacting a provision on the lines of UK's Anti-Terrorism Crime and Se-

curity Act, 2001. The IMDT Act should be repealed forthwith. The identity card scheme should be introduced in the sparsely-populated Northeastern States without any further delay. The utilisation of funds earmarked for economic development should be closely monitored.

To defuse the situation in Manipur, we could apply the POTA formula — in other words, repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and introduce another law in its place which, while retaining the essential provisions of the old law, would contain adequate safeguards against its misuse and also penal provisions against mala fide use of the legislation. This would meet the demands of the people and also provide the necessary legal cover to the armed forces.

From a long-term point of view, the government will have to ensure that Myanmar and Bangladesh do not provide sanctuaries, and definitely not training facilities or armaments to wage war against the Indian State. Myanmar has helped in the past, and so getting its cooperation would not be difficult. The problem would be with Bangladesh, which refuses to acknowledge the presence of rebel camps in its territory and has even the temerity to deny any illegal immigration to India. Enough is enough. We should be able to tell Bangladesh in very firm language that we mean business, that they should withdraw whatever facilities they have extended to the ISI in their country to spread subversion in the Northeast, that they must round up the rebels and hand them over to us, and dismantle their camps — or else, face the consequences.

The writer is a former DGP of Assam and director general of the BSF

PM assures allies on N-E

178/10 STS
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 12. — Dr Manmohan Singh today assured that India will take up the issue of militants running camps in Bangladesh and striking terror in the North-east.

Speaking at the UPA-Left coordination committee meeting, the Prime Minister said he would raise the issue when the Bangladesh foreign minister visits New Delhi later this month.

The Left Front leaders skipped their pet issues of FDI caps and implementation of the common minimum programme and raised the situation in the North-east with the government, sources said.

Nonetheless, the government circulated two official notes to the Left leaders — one in response to the Left questioning the raising of FDI caps in the telecommunications sector and the other a progress report of implementation of the common minimum programme. Some Left representatives touched briefly on economic issues. They met the Prime Minister over tea at his official residence.

FDI hike stays

NEW DELHI, Oct. 12. — Rejecting the Left parties' opposition to hiking the Foreign Direct Investment cap to 74 per cent in the telecom sector, finance minister Mr P Chidambaram today said investments on an "unprecedented scale" were required to achieve explosive growth, which is possible "only through FDI".

On the Electricity Act, the Left parties presented a note on the review of the legislation saying it encouraged private sector in distribution and transmission of power.

Also today, Left leaders gave a 10-day ultimatum to the Centre to stop closure of industries in non-conforming areas in New Delhi failing which, they will hit the streets. — SNS

Dr Singh had also invited defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil to brief the Left Front leaders who had put the government on notice for the alarming situation in the north-east and the Centre's failure to handle it in an effective manner.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi did not say much at the meeting except agree with some of the Left leaders views, sources said.

13 OCT 2004

13 OCT 2004

BJP OPENS ACCOUNT IN NORTH EAST STATE WITH 9 SEATS

Cong retrieves Arunachal, Apang may become CM

Itanagar
11 OCTOBER

CONGRESS on Monday stormed back to power in Arunachal Pradesh winning 34 seats in the 60-member Assembly retaining the reins of administration amid indications that the state's longest-serving chief minister Gegong Apang would get the top post again. Although the Congress did not face any real challenge from any party, its principal challenger BJP, the saffron party which had no footing in the tribal state previously, won nine seats to open its account.

Independents, mostly rebel Congressmen, emerged as the second-largest group with 13 of them romping home while NCP and Arunachal Congress picked up two seats apiece. The new leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) is likely to be elected on October 13, with Mr Apang, who won from his traditional constituency Tuting-Yingkiong defeating BJP's Ojing Komboh, emerging as front-run-

ner for chief ministership.

It was in August 2003 that the Mukut Mithi-led Congress government had been toppled by Mr Apang splitting the party to create Congress (D) which ultimately merged with BJP thus giving a high-profile presence to the saffron party in the state. Mr Apang, however, rejoined Congress soon after the NDA was voted out of power at the Centre after a gap of eight years since quitting the party and forming Arunachal Congress in 1996.

Mr Apang was chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh for a record 19 years since 1980. During his tenure it became a state in 1987. Addressing a press conference here after the declaration of results, Mr Apang said: "The CLP meeting will decide who will be the next chief minister. Since two central party observers are here they will announce the name of the new chief minister after the CLP meet beginning at 11:00 am on Wednesday. If the people think I should be the chief minister, I will accept their decision," he said.

— PTI

Centre allows BLT, BTC to talk to NDFB

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 11 OCTOBER

THE Centre has authorised the chairman of surrendered outfit Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and chief executive member of the interim Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Hagrama Basumatary, to talk to the NDFB to establish the veracity of its ceasefire offer made via e-mail and explore the possibility of initiating a formal peace process with the outlawed group.

Since no direct offer of the so-called ceasefire has been conveyed by the NDFB to the Centre or the Assam government, the Union home ministry bosses here are treading with caution and want to be convinced that the NDFB offer is "genuine" before coming out with their reaction.

The Economic Times 12 OCT 2004

অরুণাচল প্রদেশে এগিয়ে কংগ্রেস

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, গুয়াহাটি, ১০ অক্টোবর: অরুণাচল প্রদেশে প্রথম দফার ভোটগণনার শেষে এগিয়ে রইল কংগ্রেস। কিন্তু পূর্ণ স্বস্তি মেলেনি। দেখা দিয়েছে মূল্যবান একটা প্রশ্ন— সরকার গঠনে শেষ পর্যন্ত নির্দলরাই কি হবেন তুরূপের তাস? আজ গণনা শুরু হওয়ার কয়েক ঘণ্টা বাদেই নিজেদের দাম বাড়ানোর চেষ্টায় নির্দলরা মিলে একটি মোর্চা তৈরি করে ফেলেন। আপাতত তাঁদের শিবিরে অন্তত ১২ জন বিধায়ক।

শেষ পর্যন্ত কংগ্রেস সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা পেলেও মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ নিয়ে বর্তমান ও প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী গোগং আপাং ও মুকুট মিথির মধ্যে ঠান্ডা লড়াই থেকে যাবে। অরুণাচল প্রদেশ এমন একটি রাজ্য, যেখানে সিংহভাগ রাজনীতিকের মধ্যে ‘আদর্শ’ কথাটা নিছকই আভিধানিক। জামা বদলের মতো তাঁরা আনুগত্য বদল করেন। তাই মুখ্যমন্ত্রী যিনিই হোন, পাঁচ বছর কেন, পাঁচ মাসও নিশ্চিত থাকার জো নেই।

রাজ্যে মোট ৬০টি আসনের মধ্যে ভোট হয় ৫৭টি-তে। আজ ৪২টি আসনের গণনা হয়। কংগ্রেস ৩টি আসনে আগেই বিনা প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতায় জিতে গিয়েছে। তাদের বুলিতে রাত পর্যন্ত রয়েছে ২২টি আসন।

সংখ্যার হিসাবে কংগ্রেস এক নম্বরে থাকলেও ভোটের এই ফল তাদের কাছে কাঁটার সামিল। কারণ, চিন, ভুটান ও মায়ানমার— এই তিন দেশের সীমান্তঘেঁষা পাহাড়ি রাজ্যটি কংগ্রেসের দুর্ভেদ্য ঘাঁটি। বছর দুই আগেও ওখানে বিজেপি-র বিদ্যুৎমাত্র অস্তিত্ব ছিল না। নেহাত কেন্দ্রে বিজেপি থাকায় দল বেঁধে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ বিধায়ক প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী গোগং আপাংয়ের নেতৃত্বে রাতারাতি বিজেপি শিবিরে গিয়ে অরুণাচলে বিজেপি সরকার তৈরি করে। চার মাস আগে কেন্দ্রে পালাবদলের পর আবার সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ বিধায়ক কংগ্রেসে ফিরে আসায় রাজ্য থেকে পদ্মলাঙ্কিত গৈরিক পতাকা নিশ্চিহ্ন হওয়ার উপক্রম হয়। সেটা

রুখতে পেরে বিজেপি খুশি। এই আয়ারাম গয়ারামের খেলায় বাড়তি সুবিধা নেওয়ার আশায় নির্বাচনে কংগ্রেসেরই বেশ কয়েকজন দাঁড়ান নির্দল প্রার্থী হিসাবে।

রাজধানী ইটানগর ছাড়াও বমডিলার আসন কংগ্রেসের হাতছাড়া হল। বি জে পি কেড়ে নিয়েছে আরও ৪টি আসন। স্থানীয় বিভিন্ন দল, এমনকী কংগ্রেসের বিরোধিতা সত্ত্বেও লোকসভা ভোটে অরুণাচলের চাকমা-হাজং উপজাতির প্রথম ভোট দেওয়ার সুযোগ পায়। অনেকে মনে করেছিলেন, এতে বিজেপি-র সবুরে মেওয়া ফলবে। কিন্তু প্রথম দিনের ফলে দেখা যাচ্ছে চাকমাদের ভোট ভাগ হয়েছে। এন সি পি পেয়েছে ১টি, আর অরুণাচল কংগ্রেস ১টি আসন। ভোটের মুখে প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তথা প্রদেশ কংগ্রেস সভাপতি মুকুট মিথি ঘোষণা করেন, তাঁর দল অন্তত ৫০টি আসনে জিতবে। কাল বাকি ১৫টির গণনা হবে। এর পরেই চূড়ান্ত ভাবে বোঝা যাবে, কারা

তৈরি করবে সরকার।

অরুণাচল প্রদেশে এ বারের ভোটে মোট ১৬৫ প্রার্থীর মধ্যে কংগ্রেস, বিজেপি এবং অরুণাচল কংগ্রেসের যথাক্রমে ৫৭, ৩৯ এবং ১১জন ছিলেন। প্রার্থী হন জাতীয়তাবাদী কংগ্রেস দলের (এন সি পি) ১০ জন এবং নির্দল ৪৮। মোট ভোটদাতার সংখ্যা ৬ লক্ষ ৮৩ হাজার ২৬৫।

প্রাক্তন সাংসদের আত্মসমর্পণ। সংবাদ সংস্থার খবর, গোধরা-পরবর্তী দাঙ্গা মামলায় অন্যতম অভিযুক্ত প্রাক্তন বিজেপি সাংসদ নাটুভাই পটেল আদালতে আত্মসমর্পণ করেছেন। গত কাল তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে জামিন অযোগ্য গ্রেফতারি পরোয়ানা জারি করা হয়েছিল। গোধরা-পরবর্তী দাঙ্গার সময় করমসাদ গ্রামে দাঙ্গাকারীদের মধ্যে নাটুভাইও ছিলেন বলে আনন্দের পুলিশ জানিয়েছেন। তাঁকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছিল। তিনি জামিনে ছাড়া পান। তাঁকে সমন পাঠিয়ে দায়রা আদালতে হাজিরা দিতে বলা হয়।

Engaging North-east militants

TWENTY-TWENTY

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Two questions are being asked in the Indian establishment in the wake of the recent series of bomb blasts in Assam and Nagaland. Should the government talk to the insurgent outfits alleged to have been responsible? And secondly, how should New Delhi deal with those neighbouring countries which harbour these groups? While Myanmar has been fairly cooperative, Bangladesh is causing some serious concern.

Pareesh Barua of the United Liberation Front of Asom has made a public offer of a dialogue only a day after the blasts. The National Democratic Front of Bodoland has declared a ceasefire — presumably hoping for talks.

It would be difficult to deny the importance of a political dialogue, as the issues being raised by the militant groups are political in nature. The problem of India's North-east is not one of law and order and only obliquely a question of lack of development. Both the law and order situation and development indicators are perhaps much worse in some Hindi heartland states, for example.

The problem in the North-east is peculiar. Only two per cent of the boundaries of the northeastern states is with the rest of India, 98 per cent is with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Walls were erected after the Partition in 1947, through what were traditionally unified territories with constant movement of people. Irrational demarcation of state boundaries further accentuated the problem in post-independence India. Racial and tribal consciousness remain extremely strong in this area and the cultural and linguistic influence of the neighbouring countries continues to hold sway. The spread of

Christianity has also rapidly Westernized some of these tribal societies and created a heightened sense of sub-national identity. This is a society in ferment where people feel alienated and powerless. Their traditional community support structures are eroding and nothing has filled the vacuum. The ruling political groups are like pirate ships — their political affiliation merely a flag of convenience.

New Delhi's attempts at resolving the North-east's problems have been either to throw money at it or to send in additional security forces. The greater portion of the development funds sent from

New Delhi is divided among the ruling elite as a matter of right. The extortion demand of the militant groups is merely "their share" of the loot. The security forces sent to curb militancy do not always behave towards civilians in a manner befitting a democracy.

This vicious spiral of organized loot by the politicians, extortion by the militants and the increasing disenchantment of the ordinary folk cannot be broken with the help of the military. A political solution has to be sought for this malaise — and dialogue with the militant groups is a step in that direction.

That offers for a dialogue — directly by the ULFA and indirectly by the NDFB — should continue to be made even after terrorist attacks is being seen by some as a mere ploy to take the heat off the militant outfits. There are those who believe that some top ULFA and NDFB leaders are controlled by external forces inimical to India and that they are not sincere about a dialogue. In fact their role so far has been to sabotage any demand for a dialogue from within their organizations.

tion of large-scale unemployment and general alienation, the ULFA can easily recruit some more youngsters who are happy to get paid employment while espousing a cause.

Meanwhile, the top leadership of the organization sits in Dhaka or Chittagong, protected — some Indian observers believe — by powerful elements in Bangladesh and funded both by them and other anti-India forces.

The only way to make political talks viable in this context is to put pressure on Bangladesh to make it difficult for Indian insurgent groups to use its soil. Bangladeshi commentators have written reams in their newspapers about how their country has become a conduit for the illegal-arms trade.

In April this year, the largest ever consignment of illegal arms was intercepted while being offloaded from two trawlers at a government-owned jetty in Chittagong. The jetty belonged to the government-owned Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Ltd. The arms seized included nearly 1,300 AK-47s, 25,000 hand grenades, 2,000 grenade launchers, 400 Uzi guns or semi-automatic spot rifles, 150 rocket launchers, 100 Italian-made Tommy guns, 6,400 sub-machine-gun magazines and 18,40 lakh rounds of bullets. And this was only a part of the consignment!

The botched-up April landing threw up enough facts to encourage speculation about links between political leaders and the illegal arms trade in Bangladesh. The fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Mati-ur-Rahman Nizami, is the industries minister under whose charge the jetty falls; some of the ships that were berthed at the outer anchorage of Chittagong and from which the

weapons were believed to have been, unloaded belonged to a close associate of prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh National Party; the seized trucks were later released at the intervention of people close to the BNP leadership; and the magistrate inquiring into the case found that the FIR had been doctored. Does joining these dots add up to a picture of Bangladesh's complicity? One does not know. Perhaps Bangladesh has become so ungovernable that many entrepreneurs exist besides the state.

The increasing incidents of illegal-arms trade in Bangladesh and the fact that Indian insurgent groups move around freely in that country, raise many doubts in the Indian mind about the role of Dhaka. Putting pressure on Bangladesh in this context is translated by some to mean applying an economic squeeze.

It will be a sad day when, say, for example, Dhaka's attitude to India's militancy-related concerns becomes a hurdle for the Rs 100 crore humanitarian-aid relief from New Delhi. It will be equally disastrous if the hardliners start arguing that India should re-look at water treaties to punish Bangladesh or stop the cattle trade at least this November during Ramadan. The proponents of this line argue that international opprobrium against such measures would be short-lived and that these measures would be seen as part of India's war against terrorism.

However, one thing is becoming increasingly clear — while engaging the North-east militants in a dialogue, pressure must not cease on Dhaka not to let its territory be used for anti-India activities. Bangladesh owes it to India as a good neighbour to do the right thing.

Pressure must not cease on Dhaka not to let its territory be used for anti-India activities



Neighbourhood bully

However, Pareesh Barua's condition that any talks should be about "sovereignty" makes it impossible for the Indian government to even contemplate a dialogue. The sovereignty of the Assamese people lies with them and not with anyone else. Besides, such a move would have a negative impact even on the Naga peace talks. If forced into competition with the ULFA, the Nagas may also end up hardening their stance on sovereignty-related issues.

Barua would be better advised to suggest "unconditional" talks — no pre-conditions either from ULFA's side or from New Delhi's. This would leave the question of sovereignty open as it could be discussed along with a host of other issues that might be of concern to both sides.

There are those who argue that ULFA should be weakened, as it was after the Bhutan operations last December, before being engaged in a dialogue. However, experience shows that killing ULFA cadres in Assam does not weaken its leadership. In the prevailing situa-

বিশ্ফোরণে আইএসআই যুক্ত, বললেন প্রণব

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, অক্টোবর: উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতে সাম্প্রতিক বিশ্ফোরণের পিছনে পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আই এস আইয়ের ভূমিকা আছে বলে আজ জানিয়ে দিলেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। এই প্রথম বিশ্ফোরণের তদন্ত সম্পর্কে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব থেকে স্পষ্ট ভাবে বলা হল যে আলফা এবং বড়ো জঙ্গি সংগঠন এন ডি এফ বি বিশ্ফোরণগুলি ঘটিয়েছে। এবং এই সংগঠনগুলিকে মদত দিয়েছে পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আই এস আই। দু'দিন আগেই কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলকে এই ব্যাপারে প্রশ্ন করা হলে তিনি বলেছিলেন, “প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রকে সব সময় দোষারোপ করতে আমি রাজি নই। যদিও কারা এই ঘটনা ঘটিয়েছে, সে সম্পর্কে আমরা ওয়াকিবহাল।” শিবরাজ পাকিস্তানের ভূমিকাকে লঘু করে দেখানোর চেষ্টা করেছিলেন। প্রণববাবু কিন্তু সব রকম অস্পষ্টতা দূর করে দিয়ে জানিয়ে

দিলেন, প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রের গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা উত্তর-পূর্বে গণ্ডগোল পাকানোর চেষ্টা করছে। কয়েক মাস আগে ভূটানের সরকার ‘অপারেশন অল ক্লিয়ার’ চালিয়েছিল সে দেশে ঘাটি বানানো আলফা, কামতাপুরি, প্রভৃতি জঙ্গি সংগঠনের বিরুদ্ধে। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারও সেই সময়ে ভূটানকে বিভিন্ন ভাবে সাহায্য করেছিল। হালফিলের মধ্যে জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে সব চেয়ে বড় অভিযানের পরে কেন্দ্র মনে করেছিল, উত্তর-পূর্বের জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলিকে অনেকটাই অকেজো করে দেওয়া গিয়েছে। আজ প্রণববাবু বলেছেন, ওই অভিযানে ভূটানে জঙ্গি পরিকাঠামো পুরোপুরি ধ্বংস করে দেওয়া গিয়েছে, কিন্তু জঙ্গিরা অনেকেই বাংলাদেশে আশ্রয় নিয়েছে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য, “তখন কিছু জঙ্গি ধরা পড়ে। কিন্তু বহু জঙ্গি বাংলাদেশে ঢুকে পড়ে। বাংলাদেশের কাছে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আমাদের দৃষ্টিস্তা জানিয়েছি। আমি নিজে কথা বলেছি।

আমরা চাই বাংলাদেশ থেকে জঙ্গিরা যাতে আমাদের বিরুদ্ধে কার্যকলাপ চালাতে না-পারে।” দিন দুয়েক আগে ভোপালে শিবরাজ পাটিল উত্তর-পূর্বের জঙ্গি তাণ্ডব নিয়ে প্রতিবেশী কোনও দেশকেই সরাসরি দোষারোপ করতে চাননি। তাঁর বক্তব্য ছিল, সব দিক খতিয়ে না-দেখে কোনও প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্র বা সংস্থাকে দোষারোপ করা যায় না। আজ প্রণববাবু যে-ভাবে সরাসরি আই এস আই এবং বাংলাদেশের নাম নিয়েছেন, তাতে বলা যেতে পারে যে কেন্দ্রের হাতে এই নিয়ে সুনির্দিষ্ট প্রমাণ চলে এসেছে। রাই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সমাবর্তন অনুষ্ঠানের শেষে প্রণব বলেন, “সম্প্রতি যে বিশ্ফোরণ হয়েছে, তাতে এন ডি এফ বি আছে। আর হাত রয়েছে আলফার। যদিও আলফা এ যাবৎ বিশ্ফোরণের দায় নেয়নি, তবে আমাদের কাছে যা খবর, তাতে আলফার হাত রয়েছে। আই এস আই ওদের মদত দিচ্ছে।” এস কে সিনহা

যখন অসমের রাজ্যপাল ছিলেন, তখন তিনিও রিপোর্টে বলেছিলেন, আই এস আই সমস্ত জঙ্গি সংগঠনকে এক ছাতার তলায় নিয়ে আসার চেষ্টা করছে। প্রণববাবু জানিয়েছেন, উত্তর-পূর্বের বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে পুলিশকে সাহায্য করছে সেনাবাহিনী। জঙ্গিদের মোকাবিলায় পুলিশকে কমান্ডে প্রশিক্ষণ প্রশিক্ষণ এবং ভাল অস্ত্রশস্ত্র দিচ্ছে সেনাবাহিনী। পাশাপাশি বাংলাদেশ এবং মায়ানমার সরকারের সঙ্গেও জঙ্গি সমস্যা নিয়ে কথা বলা হয়েছে। প্রণববাবু বলেন, “আমরা তাদের বলেছি, জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হোক। কী ভাবে প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলি ব্যবস্থা নেবে তা নিয়ে বিস্তারিত কথা হবে। উত্তর-পূর্বের যে সব জঙ্গি আমাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে চাইছে যেমন এন এস সি এন (আইজাক মুইভা), তাদের সঙ্গে আমরা কথা বলছি। কিন্তু যারা সন্ত্রাস ছড়ানোর চেষ্টা করবে, তাদের মোকাবিলা শক্ত হাতে করা হবে।”

Civil society & armed groups

By Suhas Chakma

THE abhorrent and calculated actions of the armed groups in the North-east to cause maximum damage on innocent civilians expose their disregard for the most fundamental right – the right to life – and has been met with spontaneous condemnation by civil society groups. The killings of innocent children in Dhemaji by the United Liberation Front of Assam on 15 August and by unknown armed groups in Dimapur, Nagaland, and Assam since 2 October constitute crimes against humanity and no political or other cause can ever justify such acts.

Traditionally, human rights groups have restricted their role to monitoring violation by State agencies. Since a State has the sole legitimate right to use force to provide security, maintain law and order and guarantee protection of human rights within its jurisdiction, it is natural that civil society groups would focus on violations perpetrated by the State agencies. However, as non-state political entities resorted to serious violations of humanitarian laws, civil society groups increasingly started debate as to how to address violations by the armed opposition groups.

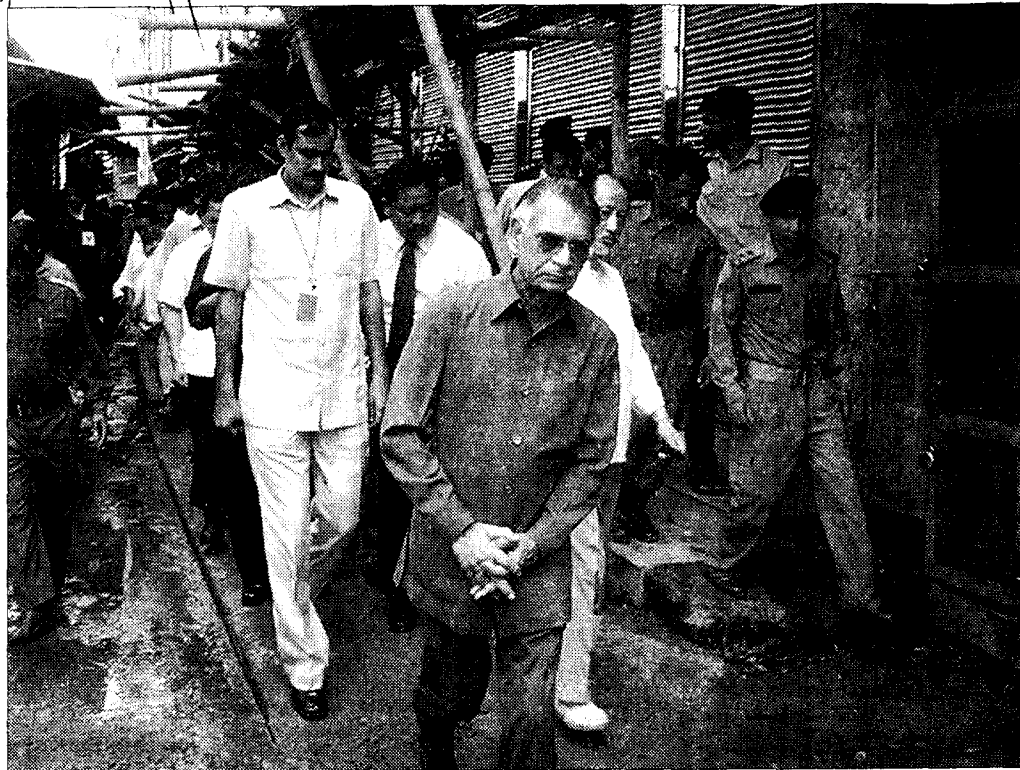
It was Amnesty International which first condemned the Sendero Luminoso in Peru and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam at its International Council Meeting held in Yokohama in 1991. Since then international human rights groups have been vocal about violations by armed opposition groups.

The Geneva Conventions and a host of international instruments on terrorism provide the legal basis to dealing with the armed opposition groups. The common Article 3 to the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 prohibits, among others, (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; (b) taking of hostages; (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial

guarantees which are recognised as indispensable by civilised peoples”.

Persons protected by Common Article 3 include all non-combatants, even if they have provided food, shelter or other partisan support to one side or the other, and members of the armed forces of either side who are in custody, are wounded or are otherwise *hors de combat*. If under these circumstances, such persons are summarily executed or die as a result of torture, their deaths are tantamount to murder. The adoption of the Optional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 in 1978, applicable to the organised armed groups in internal armed conflict situations, has strengthened the legal basis to address the abuses by the “organised armed groups”.

While most mainstream civil liberties groups in India rarely hold such policy



Union home minister Shivraj Patil visiting Hong Kong Market, the second site of Saturday's bomb blast in Dimapur. — Eastern Projections

Open forum

debates, the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee had to address the abuses by the Naxalites. In its conference in June 1997, the APCLC stressed that “all revolutionary parties had a right to chalk out their policies. This should not undermine the civil liberties of the people even in the name of revolutionary struggle.”

Many civil society groups in the North-east have been protesting against abuse by the armed opposition groups. On 8 July 2004, women activists organised a demonstration at the Zeliangrong locality in Kakhulong, Imphal demanding the safe release of the deputy director of Manipur's Commerce and Industry Department, Kaphunchung L Kalmei, who was abducted by activists of an armed outfit called Human Rights and Protection Guild on 1 July 2004.

Various social organisations including

Manipur Students Federation condemned the killing of Shyamsunder in March 2004 by PREPAK. Over 2,000 angry villagers reportedly took out a rally from Karang to Moirang with the body of a four-year old girl named Salam Thoibi, who was killed in an indiscriminate firing by UNLF cadres in Karang village in Bishnupur district, Manipur, on 22 February 2004. The Committee on Human Rights, Manipur, in a statement on 16 August 2003 termed the killing of six persons and injuring 10 others in a bomb explosion detonated by the Peoples Liberation Army on a bus crossing the Lilong bridge in Imphal west district on 14 August 2003 as an act of terrorism.

The increasing erosion of support among the public to armed opposition groups across the North-east is all-pervasive. Therefore, the present situation, contrary to the beliefs of security hawks, provides an opportunity to the Government of India to repeal or at least substantively amend the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, which provides a license to the armed forces to kill with impunity.

There are hundreds of armed encounters across the region each year. Civil society groups do not question each and every armed encounter between the armed opposition groups and security forces. However, when people, whether innocent civilians, suspects or members of armed opposition groups are captured from their houses or villages and taken away and routinely killed in fake encounters, civil society groups rise up to protest. The arrest and extra-judicial execution of Manorama Devi is a case in point.

Unless the government can prove that its security forces do not stoop to the same level as those whom it calls “terrorists”, the atrocities by these forces will continue to contribute to the growth and sustenance of insurgency. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and not merely military cooperation with Bangladesh and Myanmar, is the cornerstone to resolving the insurgencies of the North-east.

(The author is Director, Asian Centre for Human Rights, New Delhi.)

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অসমে বিস্ফোরক উদ্ধার, সীমান্ত 'সিল', যৌথ অভিযান

অশোক সেনগুপ্ত • গুয়াহাটী

৭ অক্টোবর: অসম-সংলগ্ন বাংলাদেশ ও তুটান সীমান্তের বিভিন্ন অংশ 'সিল' করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে জঙ্গিরা অসমে ঢুকে তেলের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ঘাঁটির উপর আঘাত হানতে পারলে জোরদার আশঙ্কা করছেন। সেই কারণে পুলিশ, সেনা ও আধা সামরিক বাহিনী মিলে জোরদার অভিযানে নেমেছে। এ ছাড়াও অসম-মেঘালয় সীমানার একটি গ্রামে হানা দিয়ে পুলিশ ও সেনারা প্রচুর আরডিএক্স উদ্ধার করেছে। এই ঘটনার পরে আজ সতর্কতামূলক বাড়তি ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হয়েছে। ধুবুরি, কোকরাঝাড় ও সংলগ্ন অঞ্চলের অসম-বাংলাদেশ এবং অসম-তুটানের সীমান্তে বাড়তি আধা সামরিক বাহিনী মোতায়েন করা হয়েছে। চলছে ব্যাপক তল্লাশি। অন্য দিকে, ডিমাপুরে জোড়া বিস্ফোরণের প্রতিবাদে আগামী কাল বন্ধ ডাকা হয়েছে নাগালান্ডে।

পুলিশের স্পেশাল ব্রাঞ্চ (এসবি) সূত্রের খবর, সন্দ্রতি ধৃত কয়েক জনকে জেরা করে জানা গিয়েছে, সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে এসে জঙ্গিরা তেলের

ঘাঁটি বা পাইপে আঘাত হানতে পারে। অসমে অয়েল ইন্ডিয়া, নুমালিগড় রিফাইনারিজ, ওএনজিসি, বঙ্গাইগাঁও রিফাইনারিজ প্রভৃতি সংস্থা নিজেরা এই কারণে বাড়তি সতর্কতামূলক ব্যবস্থা নিচ্ছে। নজর রাখার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে পুলিশ ও নিরাপত্তা বাহিনীকে। পাইপলাইনে নাশকতার কাজ যাতে না হয়, তা দেখতে বলা হয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় শিল্প নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী (সিআইএসএফ) এবং সিআরপি-কে।

অসম পুলিশের আইজি (এসবি) যশেন শর্মা সীমান্তে বাড়তি নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থার কথা স্বীকার করে বলেন, "বি এস এফ-কে সতর্ক করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। বাইরের গোপন ডেরা থেকে জঙ্গিরা ঢুক যাতে আবার আঘাত না হানতে পারে, সেই কারণে নিকটবর্তী থানাগুলিকেও এলাকায় নজর রাখার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে।"

মেঘালয়ে অসমের সীমানার কাছে পশ্চিম গারো পাহাড় জেলায় টিকরিকিলা গ্রামে একটি বাড়ি থেকে পাঁচ কিলোগ্রাম আরডিএক্স উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। কিছুকাল ধরে আলফা এবং এনডিএফবি জঙ্গিরা এই অঞ্চলকে বাংলাদেশে যাওয়ার নিরাপদ পথ হিসাবে ব্যবহার করছিল।

সেনাদের সাহায্য নিয়ে ওই তল্লাশি চলে বলে মেঘালয় পুলিশের ডিরেক্টর জেনারেল এল সাইলো জানিয়েছেন। যে বাড়ি থেকে বিস্ফোরক পাওয়া গিয়েছে, তার মালিক এস মারাককে পুলিশ আটক করেছে। তাঁর বক্তব্য, কিছু অজ্ঞাতপরিচয় যুবক জোর করে ওই বিস্ফোরক সেখানে রেখে গিয়েছিল। পুলিশ সূত্রের খবর, দিন দুই আগে অসমের কিছু জঙ্গিকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়। তাদের জেরা করে এই আরডিএক্স মজুতের খবর পাওয়া গিয়েছে। এর খুব কাছে পোদাবা গ্রামে কিছুকাল আগে জঙ্গিদের আক্রমণে তিন জন সিআরপি জওয়ান আহত হন।

অসমে পুলিশের তরফে অভ্যন্তরীণ তল্লাশির পূর্ণ দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে আইজি (অপারেশন) আর এম সিংহকে। আজ সিআরপি এবং সেনার সহায়তায় ধুবুরি-কোকরাঝাড়ের সীমানায় বোগরিবাড়ি, সংলগ্ন মহামায়া অরণ্য অঞ্চলে তল্লাশি চালান। তিন দিনে বোগরিবাড়িতে দু'টি বিস্ফোরণে ২২ জন মারা গিয়েছেন। আহত হয়েছেন প্রায় ৪০ জন। সেখানকার পুলিশ সুপার ও সহকারী পুলিশ সুপারকে বদলি করা হয়েছে অন্যত্র। হাইলোকান্ডি জেলার সুপার পি কে দত্তকে

আনা হয়েছে ধুবুরিতে। রদবদল হয়েছে কোকরাঝাড় জেলাতেও।

উপক্রমত ওই অঞ্চলের একাংশ স্বশাসিত বড়ো প্রশাসনিক জেলা (বিটিএডি)-র মধ্যে পড়ছে। বিটিএডি-র চেয়ারম্যান হাগুমা মহিজারি বিস্ফোরণে হতাহত বা তাদের পরিবারকে আর্থিক সাহায্য দিয়েছেন। সোমবার থেকে তিন দিন ধরে বিটিএডি এলাকায় নাশকতা-বিরোধী প্রচার চালানোর নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন তিনি। এলাকায় রাজ্য আইনশৃঙ্খলা রক্ষায় প্রশাসনিক বর্ধতার প্রতিবাদে আগামী সোমবার অসম বন্ধ ডেকেছে সারা অসম সংখ্যালঘু ছাত্র ইউনিয়ন (আমসু)।

এ দিকে, হায়দরাবাদ থেকে আসা বিশেষজ্ঞরা আজ ডিমাপুরের ঘটনায় ব্যবহৃত বিস্ফোরকের নমুনা পরীক্ষা করেন। জানা গিয়েছে, জঙ্গিরা সিডি-র আকারে ধাতব গাভের বিস্ফোরক ব্যবহার করেছিল সেখানে। এই নাশকতার প্রতিবাদে আগামী কাল সকাল থেকে ১২ ঘটায় বন্ধ ডেকেছে 'দি নাগা হোহো', 'দি নাগা মাদার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশন', 'দি নাগ পিপলস মুভমেন্ট ফর ট্রিউথ্যান রাইটস' এবং 'নাগা স্টুডেন্টস ফেডারেশন'-সহ কিছু সংগঠন।

Army gets a bigger role in Northeast

Rajnish Sharma
New Delhi, October 6



Shivraj Patil

THE UNION home ministry today declared that the security forces would play a more active role in counter-insurgency operations in Assam and Manipur, ignoring the agitations against the special powers enjoyed by the army in the region. The ministry asked the army and BSF to submit a detailed blueprint of their strategy, including their deployment plans, within a "day or two". At present, the CRPF is in charge of most of the internal security in Assam.

The ministry also directed Intelligence Bureau (IB) director A.K. Doval to activate and strengthen the bureau's network in the region. The IB drew flak for its poor information gathering — especially because some reports said Pakistan's ISI had increased its "assistance" to the North-east militants.

The decisions were taken today at a high-level meeting, chaired by home minister Shivraj Patil. Senior ministry officials said the initial strategy would be to move large contingents of BSF and the army to Assam and Manipur in the next three days.

"The idea is to make the security forces more visible," a senior official said. After that a massive joint counter-insurgency operation, like the one in Kashmir, will be launched by the army, the BSF and the CRPF. If even that fails to tackle insurgency, a special unit comprising army, the BSF and the CRPF men would be set up to be deployed in areas where Ulfa and the NDFB have launched fresh offensives.

"Since it's not easy for the army and the BSF to pull out their men from other areas and deploy them in the North-east immediately, they have sought two days' time to plan out the strategy," an official said. Army chief General N.C. Vij, who attended the meeting, also emphasised the need to adopt an aggressive approach against militants.

Police reshuffle

The Assam government yesterday transferred Dhubri SP L.R. Bishnoi and reshuffled several other senior officers — including four IGPs — for their failure to curb violence in the Bodo strongholds. Last night, 12 more people were gunned down by NDFB militants in Dhubri as violence continued to rock the state.

■ More reports on Page 3

Bandh cripples N-E

6/10
Statesman News Service 9-11-9

GUWAHATI, Oct. 5. — The 12-hour dawn-to-dusk North East bandh called by North East Students Organisation (NESO) paralysed life in the region barring Tripura where it had little effect.

The NESO had called for the bandh demanding withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) from the region and also in protest against the series of explosions that rocked Assam and Nagaland claiming a total of 77 lives so far since 2 October. There was no report of any untoward incident from any part of the region during the bandh hours, which were total in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram.

NESO leaders here termed the success of their bandh call, as a reflection of the clamour of the region's silent majority for restoration of peace in this insurgency-hit part of the country.

Meanwhile, Assam government today stated that it would examine the veracity of the positive response of the banned Bodo militant outfit, NDFB, to the offer of truce made by chief minister Mr Tarun Gogoi last week. Amid the mayhem in the state, NDFB chairman Mr DR Nabla yesterday sprang a surprise by issuing statements that the outfit was ready to accept the conditional truce offered by Mr Gogoi. The outfit said that it would

convey its decision to sit for dialogues within a few days.

However, apprehensive of the real intention of the statement issued by NDFB which has been on the rampage, Mr Gogoi gave a guarded response saying: "We have to wait and see. The veracity and sincerity of the NDFB response to my truce offer needs to be established."

Mr Gogoi, today said at a press conference: "Talks with the Ufa must be unconditional. They must realise it and stop violence. Their activities clearly indicate that they are not interested in the welfare of the people of Assam."

Khurshid takes on Opposition

Taking on the senior BJP leader, Mr LK Advani, for his criticism of the UPA government's handling of the North East situation, the AICC general secretary, Mr Salman Khurshid, today charged that the Opposition would like to "sabotage" every government initiative.

Describing the North East situation as "extremely grave", Mr Khurshid said the government and the party are aware of their "responsibility" in the matter.

He said the Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, is seriously trying to resolve the North East crisis.

Reacting to the Left's criticism of Mr Patil's handling of the scene, Mr Khurshid urged the former to "offer constructive suggestions" for being "on the same side", reports our correspondent from New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

6 OCT 2004

Left asks govt to reject US offer for help in NE

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 5 OCTOBER

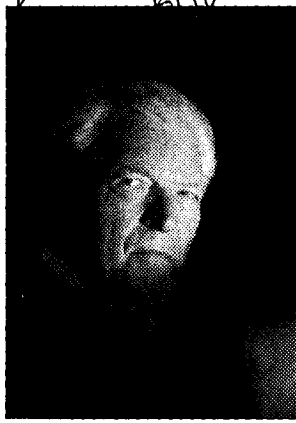
THE US offer for FBI help in nabbing those behind the bloodbath in the North East has sparked off a controversy with the Left parties asking the Manmohan Singh government to reject the proposal. The Left, which has been targetting home minister Shivraj Patil and the ministry under his command for lack of strategic thought process, described the US offer an unnecessary intervention in the domestic affairs of the country.

Sensing that it could give the Opposition an opportunity to declare that internal security operations have been handed over to American FBI agents, an angry Left asked the government to get the home minister and the chief ministers of Assam and Nagaland to do what is required of them—measures to tackle insurgency.

On his part, Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi on Tuesday morning appeared impressed with the US offer when he shared it with the media in Guwahati. He told reporters that he had received a letter from the US ambassador offering FBI help for investigating the blasts. He also declared that he had no objection if the US investigating agency helps their Indian counterpart in identifying the culprits but made it clear it should not be at the cost of national security.

Quoting Mulford's letter, Mr Gogoi said: "Should you find it helpful that the FBI should be pleased to provide technical support for investigation. I have also made this offer to home minister Shivraj Patil. I hope you will be free to contact me if there is any other way that we can be helpful."

He said the letter also mentioned that the US has considerable expertise in investigative techniques. Mr Gogoi said if the Centre did not have any objec-



HELPING HAND: MULFORD

tions it will be helpful as bigger forces were determined to disturb the entire North East.

The CPM took exception to the fact that the US ambassador David C. Mulford has written directly to state governments

saying the matter should be discussed with the Centre. "It's strange that the request is made directly to the state government. This is unheard of. The Centre should reject the offer," said CPM politburo member Prakash Karat.

Taking a more belligerent stand, the CPI wanted the home ministry to refuse US offer. "We should not agree to this. The Union government should convene a meeting of all political parties in Assam and try to find answer to the problems there," CPI leader D. Raja said. The C had blamed the home minister for the mess in the North East.

The US embassy in a statement on Tuesday condemned the violence in the North East and offered assistance of FBI "if requested" to aid in the criminal investigation by Indian authorities identify the perpetrators.

NDFB offers to hold talks with Centre

Guwahati
5 OCTOBER

A tribal separatist group blamed for a spate of bloody attacks in Assam on Tuesday offered to hold talks with government of India to end nearly two decades of insurgency. "We are ready to hold talks with New Delhi and shall soon convey our decision (in response) to the Assam chief minister's truce offer," the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) said in a statement.

The outlawed NDFB, founded in October 1986, is fighting for an independent homeland for the Bodo tribe in Assam. "We have asked our cadres to prepare themselves for a dialogue to secure our goal of freedom either through peaceful and democratic means or through prolonged fight with India," the statement said.

Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi had on Thursday offered a ceasefire with NDFB and the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa), asking the two outfits to respond to the truce offer by October 15. "We welcome the NDFB's offer for talks. If they are sincere we have no problems, but they should refrain from creating any violence," Mr Gogoi said.

— IANS

Bangla at centre of forces against N-E

Nandini R Iyer
New Delhi, October 4

BANGLADESH IS now the largest centre for militant cadres attacking the North-eastern states. Not only is it home to what remains of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, the entire Ulfa leadership too is holed up there.

The nature of the recent attacks has convinced security agencies the leadership of these outfits are being asked to pay the price for shelter — triggering off incidents in Assam at the behest of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence and the Bangladeshi Directorate General of Foreign Intelligence.

August 15: More than 10 children died in a blast triggered by an explosive device at a college in Dhemaji. Ulfa chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa admitted to the attack when he blamed the Centre saying it was using

children as shields against "expected Ulfa attacks".

June 24: Six civilians died and 21 others sustained serious injuries in a bomb blast on a bus in Mathurapur in Sivasagar District. Ulfa leader Pores Barua said the attack was carried out by Indian intelligence agencies. As insane as an argument can get.

In the last couple of months there have been multiple attacks at oil installations, local markets, buses and cinema halls. In each case, there have been multiple deaths. The victims? All innocent civilians.

There is evidence Rajkhowa and Barua are in Bangladesh. The attacks in Assam are in stark contrast to the Ulfa's stated policy of not attacking civilian targets, especially locals.

The NDFB too is now a Bangladesh-based outfit. What remains of its cadres after the Royal Bhutanese

pur adjoining the Garo hills and these facilities in Northern Bangladesh serve as a corridor for the transit of NDFB cadres into Assam.

However, NDFB top boss Ranjan Daimary and some lower cadres are all that remain of the outfit in Bangladesh. General secretary Gobinda Basumatary, vice-chairman Dhiren Boro and finance secretary Nileswar Basumatary being a case in point. No one knows what happened to the outfit's publicity secretary, B. Erakdao. Meanwhile Daimary's chief assistant and the outfit's arm's procurer, Bijay Boro, made an appearance in Guwahati, sending out feelers that he was disillusioned with the outfit.

Daimary's only senior aides now are the chief of the Bodo Army, Susranga, deputy Dimthlang and the commander of the third battalion Major Rava Gothal.

Intelligence analysis sug-



PTI
A security personnel keeps vigil at Guwahati Railway Station on Monday.

Army's "Ops All Clear" — 200 cadres — are in Boyalcharri in the Khagrachari district, Chittagong.

The group has built up joint facilities with the Ulfa in Mymensingh and Rang-

gests Daimary's refusal to participate in dialogue with India stems from his confidence that he has unconditional support from Dhaka and Ulfa's friendship.

Experts believe losing his own leaders in rapid succession combined with the almost complete Bodo support for the Bodo Territorial Council suggests that Daimary too will not be able to hold out much longer.

In view of Bhutan's refusal to allow insurgents to even remain on its territory, Myanmar's stated intent of carrying out joint operations with New Delhi against Indian insurgents, the ongoing international support against terrorism and the gathering momentum for regional co-operation under the Bay of Bengal Initiative Bangladesh

may find it difficult to provide even covert support to anti-India militant outfits based in Bangladesh.

উঃ-পূর্বে কড়া দাওয়াই চান আডবানী, সিপিএমও

স্ট্রাক রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ অক্টোবর: উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের অধিগত পরিস্থিতির প্রেক্ষিতে মহারাষ্ট্র নির্বাচনের আগে বিজেপি আজ লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীকে মাঠে নামাল, অন্য দিকে সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরোও বিবৃতি দিয়ে এই পরিস্থিতি কড়া হাতে সামাল দেওয়ার জন্য সরকারের উপর চাপ সৃষ্টি করল। প্রাক্তন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী সরাসরি অভিযোগ করেছেন, "অসমে আলফা, অক্স ও কাডম্বু নকশালদের মতো জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির সঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের যোগ রয়েছে। ভোট জেতার জন্য কংগ্রেস তাদের সাহায্য নিয়েছে। এখন তারা দেশের বিভিন্ন প্রান্তে তাম্বু চালাচ্ছে। সারা বিশ্বে দেখা গিয়েছে, সরকার যদি স্বরাষ্ট্রসবাদীদের সঙ্গে হাত মেলায় তা হলে তার পরিণাম অত্যন্ত বেদনাদায়ক হয়ে ওঠে। অতীতে ভিক্রানওয়াল এবং এল টি টি ই-র সঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের আঁতাতের জন্য দেশকে অনেক মূল্য দিতে হয়েছে।"

সি পি এম সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, ত্রিপুরার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মানিক সরকার অনেক দিন থেকেই উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের সমস্যার কথা জানাচ্ছেন। সি পি এম

যথেষ্ট উদ্বিগ্ন বলেই কাল পলিটব্যুরো প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে, রাজ্য সরকারগুলির সঙ্গে অবিলম্বে আলোচনা করে কেম্ব্র বারস্থা নিক। আর কংগ্রেসের বক্তব্য হল, কেম্ব্র ও রাজ্য মিলে কাজ করছে। পরিস্থিতি স্বাভাবিক হবে, তবে একটু অপেক্ষা করতে হবে।

এই অবস্থায় আডবানীর দাওয়াই, কড়া হাতে পরিস্থিতির মোকাবিলা করতে হবে। তাঁর প্রস্তাব, আলফা-সহ অন্য জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নিতে বাংলাদেশকে বাধ্য করার জন্যও কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারকে উদ্যোগী হতে হবে। প্রাক্তনমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে সাম্প্রতিক আলোচনার সময় এই দাবি তাঁর কাছেও জানিয়েছেন আডবানী। দাউদকে যাতে পাকিস্তান ভারতের হাতে তুলে দেয় তার জন্য মুশারফের উপর চাপ সৃষ্টি করতে হবে। বাজপেয়ী সরকারের প্রচেষ্টায় আমেরিকা, দাউদকে আন্তর্জাতিক স্বরাষ্ট্রসবাদী ঘোষণা করেছে। শুধু দাউদ নয়, বাজপেয়ী সরকারের আমলে পাকিস্তানের হাতে ভারত স্বরাষ্ট্রসবাদীদের নামের যে তালিকা তুলে দিয়েছিল,

তাঁদের ফেরত পেতেও কেম্ব্রকে উদ্যোগী হতে হবে। প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মতে, অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তার বিষয় নিয়ে সরকারের অকর্মণ্যতার ছবি বারবার সামনে এসেছে। তারা বিষয়টিকে আদৌ গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে না। সংসদের নীত অধিবেশনে বিজেপি বিষয়টি নিয়ে সরব হবে।

আডবানীর অভিযোগ, নকশাল-সহ সব জঙ্গি সংগঠনের ব্যাপারে কেম্ব্র তুল নীতি নিয়েছে। নকশালদের ব্যাপারে আডবানী পুরোপুরি পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের সমর্থক। আডবানীর মন্তব্য, "পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও কেরলের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নকশালদের সঙ্গে অক্স অক্স সরকারের এই ভাবে আলোচনার বিরোধী। আমিও মনে করি, অক্স সমর্পণ না করলে কারও সঙ্গে আলোচনা করা উচিত নয়। বাজপেয়ী সরকারের আমলে আমাদের এটাই নীতি ছিল। যে কোনও স্বরাষ্ট্রসবাদী সংগঠনের সঙ্গেই আমরা কথা বলতে রাজি ছিলাম, তবে একটাই শর্তে, আগে অক্স সমর্পণ করতে হবে।" নকশালদের সঙ্গে কথা বলার ব্যাপারে বুদ্ধদেববাবুর মতও এটাই।

আডবানীর দাবি, ইউ পি এ সরকার যে পোটারকে বাতিল করে দিয়েছে তা ফিরিয়ে আনতে হবে। কারণ, পোটা বাতিল করার পর এখন যা অবস্থা তাতে কালোবাজারি, মাদক পাচারকারীদের জামিন পাওয়ার অনেক অসুবিধা, কিন্তু জঙ্গিরা সহজেই জামিন পেয়ে যাচ্ছে। পোটার অপব্যবহার হয়েছে বলে পোটা বাতিল করল ইউ পি এ, ভারতীয় দণ্ডবিধিরও তো অপব্যবহার হয়, তা হলে কি তাও বাতিল করা হবে বলে প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন পোটার রপকার।

প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর বাড়িতে আজ সকালে উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করেন বিজেপি নেতারা। সেখানেই ঠিক হয়, আডবানীই আজ সরকারের সমালোচনায় নামবেন। তাতে অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে মনমোহন সরকারের ব্যর্থতা ঠিক ভাবে তুলে ধরা হবে। মহারাষ্ট্র নির্বাচনের আগে কংগ্রেসকে কিছুটা কোণঠাসা করাও সম্ভব হবে। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলও তো মহারাষ্ট্রেরই নেতা।

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2004

BEYOND THE TERROR

10-10 5/10

THE DEVASTATING BOMB blast at Dimapur railway station in Nagaland and the series of terrorist explosions in Dhubri, Darrang and Kokrajhar districts of Assam over the weekend are perhaps the clearest indication that the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) have managed to overcome the military setbacks they suffered when they were driven out of their camps in southern Bhutan by the Bhutanese and Indian security forces earlier this year. If anything, it now seems their forced dispersal from the Druk Kingdom has made them more mobile and desperate — and, therefore, harder to counter. Although the Bodo outfit has not claimed responsibility, the pattern of last weekend's campaign of terror strongly suggests its involvement. As for ULFA, Paresh Baruah has declared that this was his organisation's reply to the call for dialogue extended recently by Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi. There is also the possibility that the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland assisted the NDFB. Indeed the choice of Dimapur as a target suggests that the motive was either to embarrass — or settle scores with — NSCN (Isak-Muivah), which is engaged in a protracted dialogue with the Government of India. Certainly, the NSCN (I-M) has not taken too kindly to the targeting of Dimapur: the group has announced a reward for information about the perpetrators. This could mean that a period of infighting among various militant groups in the Northeast lies ahead.

Since its rebirth in the mid-1990s, the NDFB has been one of the deadliest and least conciliatory of all the insurgent groups in the region. Though the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) completed their process of surrender in December 2003 and have begun participating in the interim Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) set up in

9-N 5 800

Kokrajhar, the NDFB has consistently rejected all offers of a general amnesty. The BTC, envisaged by the Centre and the Assam Government as the vehicle for protecting the autonomy of the Bodos under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, is seen by the NDFB as a sell-out. Like ULFA, the group remains adamant about its demand for independence; it is not interested in dialogue unless this is conceded.

As the Centre considers its options, it would do well to avoid any knee-jerk crackdown. Past experience tells us that when the security forces act in haste, the margin of error increases dramatically. To be effective, counter-insurgency strategy has to be sharply focussed and professionally executed. Operations Bajrang and Rhino may have led to the elimination of extremists but the heavy-handed tactics adopted also helped create a new base of resentment that ULFA has successfully tapped into. In the long run, it is the concern for people and their democratic and human rights that gives the state legitimacy; it helps defeat insurgents like ULFA and the NDFB that recognise no civilised norms. Likewise, the Centre should think twice before accepting the advice of those who feel it is time to 'tighten the screws' on Bangladesh or Myanmar for allegedly providing shelter to Northeast militants. New Delhi's accusation against Dhaka is well known, as is Bangladesh's equally vociferous denial of any complicity in the activities of the outlawed Indian groups. While the presence of individual ULFA or Bodo leaders in Bangladesh — with or without the knowledge of the Government — is undeniable, there is no evidence that there are camps of the kind that existed in Bhutan until last year. The sooner India drops any idea of 'muscular' talk, the easier it will be to secure the cooperation of the Bangladesh Rifles in matters of blocking insurgent cells from retreating across the border.

THE HINDU

5 OCT 2004

Slaughter in the North-east

The issues are clear, 9/10
writes SANJOY HAZARIKA 5/10

THE slaughter of innocents in various parts of Assam and Nagaland on 2 and 3 October is an assertion of several developments.

First, that urban terrorism has come to the region in a major way and is there to stay. These calculated (not mindless) acts of violence have the effect of moving some insurgent groups and militants one step upward in the ladder of violence and irresponsibility – to the embrace of terrorism, where such calculated strikes do not consider the importance of human lives but are planned to strike fear and terror in the minds of the public and weaken the resolve of governments as well as expose their weaknesses.

Secondly, the blasts in Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland and one of the major towns of the North-east, indicate that whoever is behind these killings is prepared to take on that powerful insurgent group, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim of Isak Swu and Th. Muivah, which has been negotiating with New Delhi. Note that the I-M group has announced a reward for tips that will lead to unraveling the mystery behind the killings and has set up a special investigation team to probe it.

Thirdly, the style of the attacks – targeting innocents in a massive way – are not that of the Naga groups, who are known to be extremely selective and specific in their choice of targets (barring bomb blasts which hit two trains in Assam in the 1970s). But they do fall into a pattern seen elsewhere in Bangladesh, South-east Asia as well as more recently in Assam. It

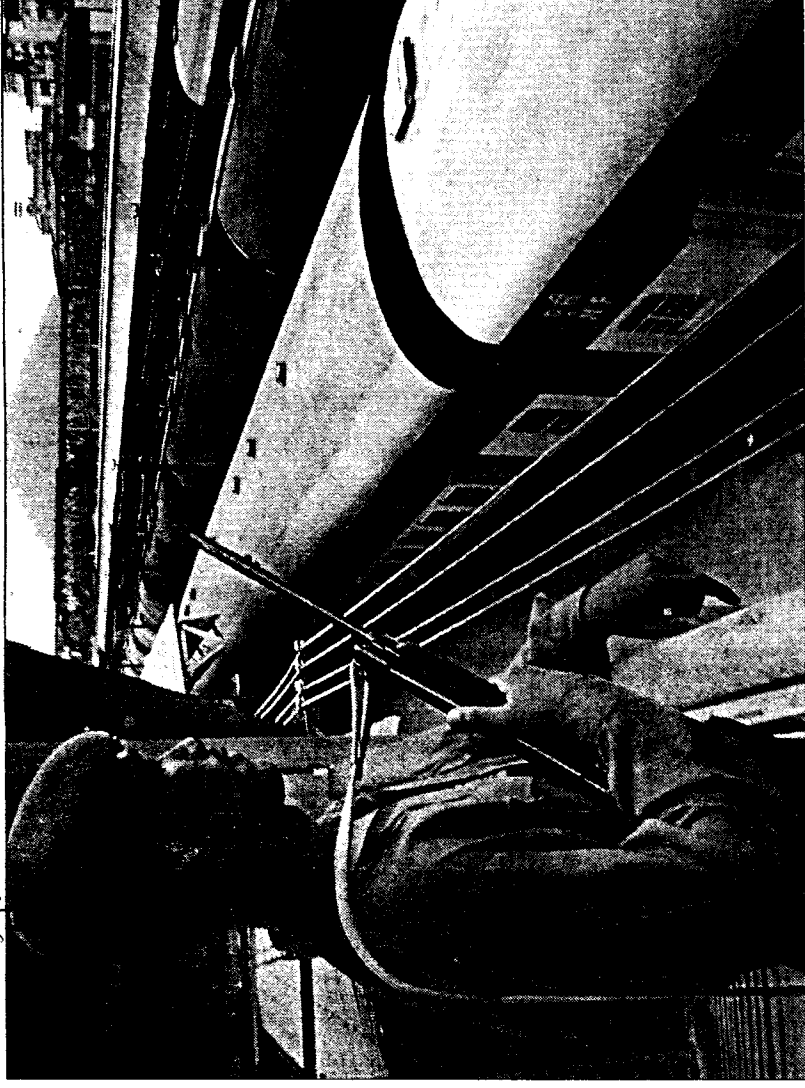
is too early to assert the presence of a foreign hand; only time and proper investigations will tell.

Fourthly, the blasts are aimed to strike fear in the hearts of ordinary men, women and children so that the peace movements, which have grown over the past years, are stifled. This will also have an impact on the ongoing negotiations between the NSCN and the Government of India because it will divert the attention of both sides to this tragedy and hunting down those responsible for it. It also comes two days after the banned United Liberation Front of Assam turned down an offer of talks and cease-fire by the state government.

It is also to be noted that the

Those who have conducted these attacks may rejoice in that the government, specially the Army brass, will become increasingly reluctant to review and overturn the controversial AFSPA

attacks took place across Assam and in Nagaland but not in any of the other states. The signal is clear: "We (whoever that 'we' is) have the capacity of coordinating and striking almost at will," at least in some areas. The threats are from within, not so much as



A security person monitors Guwahati Railway Station on 3 October. — Eastern Projections

from without.

And the attacks are massive warnings to the Centre and all state governments to shrug off the complacency and smugness which had set in over these past months and activate a far better system of intelligence sharing, coordination of information and coordinated operations against militant groups. The home minister's proposal of an anti-terrorist campaign makes sense only if the local police leadership is strongly involved, that the police is encouraged to take a lead and not the Army or other security forces. Civil society groups, such as student leaders, human rights activists and others must take up

the challenge and lead from the front.

Those who have conducted these attacks may rejoice in that the government, specially the Army brass, will become increasingly reluctant to review and overturn the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act, a demand that has seen Manipur burning and seething for nearly four months. The Centre must not make this mistake: the AFSPA cannot be put on the backburner. It must be changed and replaced with a more sensitive and competent law that protects human rights and those in uniform who are doing their legal duty. The militarisation of the region must end

but those who commit such crimes must be tackled.

But above all, the attacks underscore the contempt of the killers for human life as well as public opinion. Civil society groups, including the media, must respond fearlessly and continue activist campaigns for peace. The government must fulfil its basic duty – to protect the lives and safety of its citizens not by an overdose of armed personnel and weapons but by strategic strikes, better intelligence gathering and sharing and forcing Bangladesh and Myanmar to cooperate.

(The author is a Consulting Editor with The Statesman.)

Nagas rally for peace

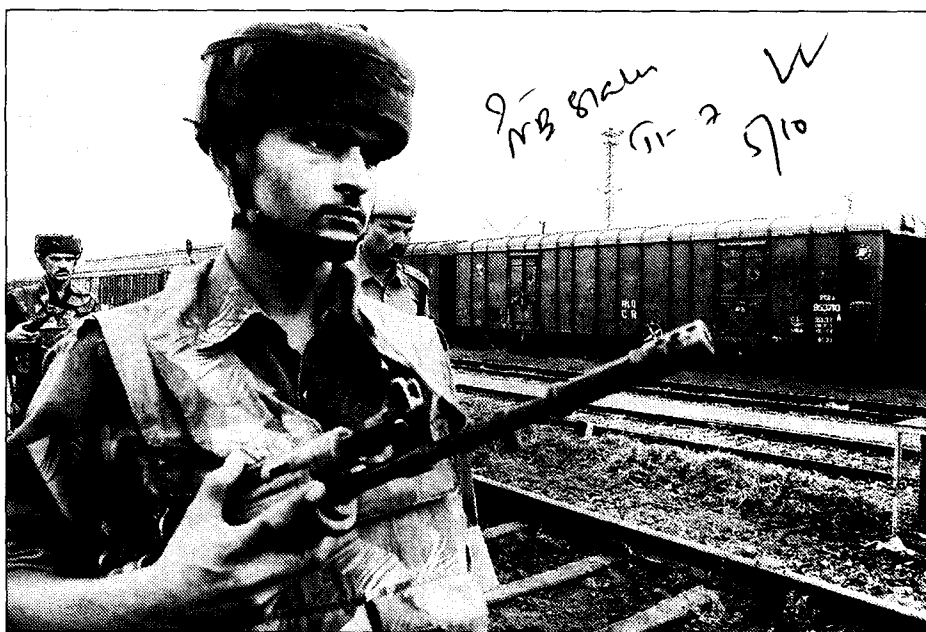
By Nirmalya Banerjee
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Dimapur: When people hold a large rally and public meetings to air their grievances in a place where disputes are traditionally settled at the point of a gun, it tells a story.

That is what happened in Dimapur on Monday. The Sumis, a dominant Naga community, held a public meeting and took out a procession. Their number was estimated to be 10,000, a large number by Naga standards. Their grievance was a killing that had taken place in August.

The Sumis first held a public meeting at the City Tower and then marched in a procession through different streets of the town to end at Purana Bazar. They carried placards like: "Killing brings no solution," "Don't take law in your own hands" and "Justice should prevail".

A placard of the Sumi Frontal Organisation said: "We want punishment for erring officials". Another said: "There should be no threat to peace". The streets of Dimapur were a riot of colours as the Sumis turned up either wearing their colourful jackets or carrying their traditional Sumi shawls.



Army personnel keep a strict vigil at Guwahati railway station in Assam

According to Zheviche, president of SSK, an organisation of Sumi students, on August 20, Ahuto, a member of the Sumi community, had disappeared. The next morning, his body was found with injury marks. He was believed to be a deserter. "He may be a criminal, but he should have been given a chance to defend himself,"

Zheviche said.

When contacted, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muivah) Cease-fire Monitoring Cell convenor Phungthing Shimrang did not make a comment on the rally. "I have no comment right now to make. But, the differences will be settled mutually," he said.

The rallyists also carried a

number of photos showing Ahuto's body and the marks of injury. According to Zheviche, a complaint had been lodged with the Government of People's Republic of Nagaland, the parallel government set up by the NSCN (I-M), describing the incident as a violation of human rights and requesting action against those who had done it.

12 killed as blasts rock Assam for second day

● Violence spreads to more districts

By Sushanta Talukdar
and agencies

GUWAHATI, OCT. 3. Twelve persons were killed and 58 injured in incidents of violence that rocked Assam for the second day today.

The Inspector General of Police (Special Branch), Khagen Sharma, said that suspected militants of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) triggered a powerful blast at a weekly market in Dhekiajuli in Darrang district. Thirty-seven persons were injured, some of them seriously. One of

the injured died on the way to hospital.

Three persons were killed and 10 injured in a blast in the busy vegetable market at Gouripur in Dhubri district, police said. Unofficial sources, however, claimed that five persons were killed.

In another blast at a fish market at Bijni in Chirang district, one person died and eight were injured.

NDFB militants triggered a blast at Gossaigaon in Kokrajhar district, in which one person was killed and two were injured. Two NDFB men were killed at

Rangapara in Sonitpur district when a bomb they were carrying went off. Militants shot at a minor girl in the Baska district of Lower Assam.

Army vehicle targeted

In attacks suspected to have been carried out by the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), four army men were killed and their vehicle was damaged in a powerful blast in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district. Two other blasts damaged an oil pipeline at Sonari in Sibsagar district. The extent of damage to the Oil India Limited's natural

gas pipeline was unknown.

Another bomb exploded at a shop in Dabosal in western Assam, wounding its owner, the District Magistrate, A.K. Bhutani, said.

And in the nearby town of Chitra, suspected militants blew up an electrical transmission tower, snapping power supply to the area, he added.

A militant was killed when the bomb he was carrying exploded at Puthimari under Kolaigaon police station in Udalguri district.

ULFA militants exploded a bomb at Borhat in Sibsagar district, in which a tea garden labourer was killed on the spot and two were seriously injured. The district police also recovered 6 kg RDX from militants and took 10 persons into custody.

The violence spread to more districts today, affecting Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Darrang, Morigaon, Chirang, Udalguri, Sonitpur, Sibsagar, Karbi Anglong, Kamrup and Nalbari.

'Joint attacks'

Mr. Sharma said that the NDFB, which is demanding the creation of a "sovereign Boroland," had carried out attacks on soft targets in a desperate bid to draw attention on its 18th raising day. The attacks had been carried out jointly by the NDFB and the ULFA.

The Director General of Police, P.V. Sumant, said the groups were coordinating their operations to strike simultaneously.

"The Assam Police has information that they [the NDFB and the ULFA] do work together as seen in yesterday's serial blasts and firings by militants across the State." "We had discussions with the Union Home Minister as to how to coordinate the security operations against the outfits as they are functioning in unison," Mr. Sumant added.

Alert sounded

Officials said "maximum alert" had been sounded in the areas where the NDFB was active. Additional security forces had been deployed and security along railway tracks intensified following apprehensions that the militants could target trains.

Reprehensible acts, says Kalam: Page 11

Patil agrees on coordinated action against militants

By Our Special Correspondent

GUWAHATI, OCT. 3. The Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, today accepted the Assam Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi's suggestion for coordinated action by the North-Eastern States against the militant outfits spreading terror in the region.

Talking to reporters at the Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi international airport here, Mr. Patil said the Home Ministry was in touch with other States in the region and was likely to give effect to the suggestion. He hinted at a crackdown on the militants, saying the Government "would not spare anyone involved in these incidents of mindless violence."

Reviews situation

Mr. Patil also reviewed the law and order situation with Mr. Gogoi and senior officials of the Army, the police and the paramilitary forces.

Asked which outfit was behind the twin blasts in Dimapur, Mr. Patil said it was the handiwork of "some people who were trying to spread terror in the region and who did not want the peace process initiated by the Government to continue." He said it would not be wise to come to any immediate conclusion when asked if he thought any foreign agencies were involved.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr.

Gogoi said he had impressed upon Mr. Patil the need to exert pressure on Bangladesh and Myanmar to demolish the camps of militant groups on their soil. Assam had become more vulnerable after the crackdown on militants in Bhutan as members of the United Liberation Front of Asom and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland had spread to the neighbouring States of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

The Assam Chief Minister said he had also spoken to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, on the need for demolition of militant camps in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Unless the roots of these insurgent groups were uprooted such incidents of violence would continue. Mr. Gogoi said he had instructed the security forces to adopt a new strategy to counter the militants.

PTI reports from Dimapur: Mr. Patil said the Centre would try to put in place soon a long-term strategy to tackle the insurgency. Stress would be laid on coordination among the law-enforcing agencies, the Army and the paramilitary forces in the North-Eastern States.

Visits blast sites

After holding talks with Mr. Gogoi in Guwahati, Mr. Patil

travelled to Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland, to visit the sites of yesterday's blasts. After holding talks with the Nagaland Chief Minister, Nephru Rio, he said, "All help, including additional security forces wherever necessary to ensure protection of human lives, will be provided by the Centre." Peace was an area "where no compromise will be made."

'Talks will continue'

Asked if the violence would deter the Centre from holding talks with the militant outfits, including ULFA, he said, "Talks are the only way by which issues can be solved. These incidents are sad. Still we are determined and we will not stop talking."

Asked if the violence in Nagaland would have any bearing on the peace process with Naga insurgent outfits, Mr. Patil said, "No, certainly not." Queried if the peace process was moving in the right direction, he said, "There has been peace for several years now, which shows it is going in the right direction."

On whether the incidents in Assam and Nagaland were linked, he said, "I think we should not jump to this conclusion. The only thing in common is the date and the weapons used." The purpose of his visit to Nagaland was to convey the message that the Centre was "rock solid" behind the State Government and the people.

হিংসা ছড়াচ্ছে অসমে, সেনা-সহ হত ১৩

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উদ্বিগ্ন পাটিল গুয়াহাটিতে ● বাংলাদেশে জঙ্গি-বিরোধী অভিযান চান গণৈ

অশোক সেনগুপ্ত ● গুয়াহাটি

৩ অক্টোবর: নাগাল্যান্ড ও অসমে কালকের জঙ্গিহানায় রক্তের দাগ শুকোবার আগেই আজ আবার জঙ্গিরা অসমের সাত জায়গায় হামলা চালালে অশুভ ১৩ জন প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন। নিহতদের মধ্যে তিন জন জঙ্গিও হানায় অশুভ ৬২ জন নিহত এবং প্রায় ১০০ জন আহত হলেন। ডিমাপুরে কালকের পরে আজ নতুন কোনও ঘটনা না ঘটলেও এক আহতের আজ মৃত্যু হওয়ায় মৃতের সংখ্যা সেখানে বেড়ে ২৭ হয়েছে।

নাগাল্যান্ডে করা কাল বিক্ষোভ ঘটিয়েছিল, তা এখনও সরকারের কাছে স্পষ্ট না হলেও অসমে জঙ্গি হানার প্রকৃতি ও এলাকাগত শক্তিবিন্যাস দেখে প্রশাসন মোটামুটি ধরে নিয়েছে আলফা ও বড়ো জঙ্গিরাই এই উপর্যুপরি হামলার পিছনে রয়েছে। আজই বড়ো জঙ্গিদের সংঠন এন ডি এফ বি-১৮ তম প্রতিষ্ঠা দিবস ছিল। কাল ধুরুরি জেলায় বড়ো জঙ্গি হানায় ১১ জন মারা যান। আজ সেখানে আহতদের মধ্যে আরও দু'জনের মৃত্যু হয়। বড়ো জঙ্গিরা আজই আবার একই জেলার

গৌরীপুরে হামলা চালিয়ে আরও দু'জনকে মেরে ফেলেছে। একই সঙ্গে আলফা জঙ্গিরাও সক্রিয়। আজই শোণিতপুর, কোকরাঝাড়, কার্বি আংলং, তিনিসুকিয়া, বঙ্গাইগাঁও, নলবাড়ি জেলায় বড়ো ও আলফা জঙ্গিরা হামলা চালিয়েছে।

পরিস্থিতির গুরুত্ব বুঝে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল আজ এখানে ছুটে আসেন। গুয়াহাটিতে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তরণ গণৈ তাঁর সঙ্গে কথা বলার পরে প্রকাশ্যেই তুটানের মতো এ বার বাংলাদেশে আলফা ও বড়ো জঙ্গিদের ঘাটি নির্মূল করার অভিযানের দাবি তোলেন। আলফা ও এন ডি এফ বি জঙ্গিরা বাংলাদেশ ও মায়নমারে আশ্রয় নিচ্ছে। কিন্তু পরে ডিমাপুরে এই প্রসঙ্গে পাটিল সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গে আলফার মাধ্যমেই সমাধানের চেষ্টায় আগ্রহী কেন্দ্র।

অসমের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর আরও বক্তব্য ছিল, উত্তর-পূর্বঞ্চলের বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের জঙ্গিরা এখন নিজেদের মধ্যে সমন্বয় করে চলেছে। সে জন্যই এক সঙ্গে এতগুলি জায়গায় তারা হামলা চালাতে পারছে। এর মোকাবিলা করতে হলে উত্তর-পূর্বঞ্চলের সাত রাজ্যকেও জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে একযোগে অভিযান চালাতে হবে। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী

জানিয়েছেন, মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর এই প্রস্তাবে তাঁর পূর্ণ সায় রয়েছে। অসম জুড়ে সর্বাঙ্গিক সতর্কতা জারি হয়েছে। কিছু এলাকায় সতর্ক করে দেওয়া হয়েছে সেনাবাহিনীকে। পরিস্থিতি পর্যবেক্ষণে কাল সকালে অসমের দুই জেলায় যাওয়ার কথা পাটিলের।

উপর্যুপরি জঙ্গি হানার পরিস্থিতিতে উত্তর-পূর্ব সীমান্ত রেল ও গুয়াহাটি বিমানবন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ বিশেষ সতর্কতা অবলম্বন করেছে। এই পর্যায়ের জঙ্গি হানার নেপথ্যে মূলত ন্যাশনাল ডেমোক্রেটিক ফ্রন্ট অব বড়োল্যান্ড (এন ডি এফ বি) থাকলেও ইউনাইটেড লিবারেশন ফ্রন্ট অফ অসম (আলফা) ও কুকি ন্যাশনাল লিবারেশন ফ্রন্ট (কে এন এল এফ) জঙ্গিরাও আক্রমণ হানছে বলে স্বরাষ্ট্র দফতর সূত্রের বরন।

আজ অসমে নিহত ১৩ জনের মধ্যে ৪ জন সেনা। সন্ধ্যার মুখে তিনিসুকিয়া জেলার মাও মেসাকি গ্রামে সংরক্ষিত অরণ্য অঞ্চলে সেনাদের একটি টহলদারি ভানে জঙ্গিরা প্রহেলেড ছেড়ে। এতে ৪ জওয়ান নিহত ও ১৭ জন আহত হন বলে ডুমডুমু থানা সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে। এ ছাড়া নিহতদের ৭ জন এন ডি এফ বি ক্যাডার। আজ বিকেলে কার্বি আংলং জেলার

হাওড়াঘাটে পুলিশের গুলিতে দুই জঙ্গি মারা যায়। ৪ জন মারা যায় শোণিতপুরের রাজপাড়ায়। শিবসাগর জেলার বোরহাটে জঙ্গি হানায় মৃত্যু হয়েছে এক চা শ্রমিকের। কোকরাঝাড় জেলার বাক্সায় জঙ্গি হানায় এক জন নিহত, ১০ জন আহত হয়েছে। কাল বগরিবাড়ি-মাকরিঝোড়ায় আহত এক জন এবং রাতে ডিমুতে জঙ্গি হানায় জখম এক সি আর পি জওয়ান আজ মারা গিয়েছেন। শোণিতপুর জেলার ডেকিয়াজুলিতে আজ

বাজারে জঙ্গিদের বিক্ষোভে আহত হন ২০ জন। বঙ্গাইগাঁও জেলার বিঘনিতে মাহের বাজারে সন্ধ্যার মুখে জঙ্গিদের প্রহেলেড হামলায় আহত হয়েছেন ৭ জন। আজ গোসাইগাঁওয়ের বাজারে জঙ্গিরা গুলি চালালে ২ জন গুরুতর আহত হন। নলবাড়ি শহরে জঙ্গিদের বোমায় আহত হয়েছে ১২ বছরের একটি মেয়ে।

কাল রাতে কে এন এল এফ জঙ্গিরা ডিফু স্টেশনের মুখে বি জি এক্সপ্রেসে প্রহেলেড ছেড়ে। ট্রেনটি গুয়াহাটি থেকে যোরহাট যাচ্ছিল। এতে পাঁচ জন আহত হন। আহত এক সি আর পি জওয়ান আজ হাসপাতালে মারা যান। সপ্তাহ তিন আগে তিন যুবতীর অস্বাভাবিক মৃত্যুর জেরে সেনা বাহিনীর বিশেষ ক্ষমতার আইন প্রত্যাহার,

ওই তিন যুবতীর মৃত্যুর উচ্চ পর্যায়ের তদন্ত প্রভৃতি দাবিতে কে এন এল এফ উত্তর কাছাড় ও কার্বি আংলং জেলায় ১৩ দিন ধরে বন্ধ পালন করছে। তাতে বিক্ষিপ্ত কিছু হামলা হলেও এই প্রথম চলন্ত ট্রেনে তারা আক্রমণ হানল। বগরিবাড়ি-মাকরিঝোড়ায় কাল ১১ জন নিহত ও ৫ জন আহত হন। আজ আহত এক জন মারা গিয়েছেন। আজ অসমের স্বরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী রকিবুল হোসেন ও মন্ত্রী ওয়াজেদ আলি চৌধুরি ঘটনাস্থলে গেলে উত্তেজিত জনতা তাঁদের হেনস্থা করেন। জনতার অভিযোগ, প্রশাসনের গাফিলতিতেই জঙ্গিরা এই ভাবে হামলা চালানোর সুযোগ পেল। কাল সকালে পাটিলের সেখানে ও নিউ বঙ্গাইগাঁওতে যাওয়ার কথা।

কাল বড়সড় হাঙ্গামা হয়েছে তুটান সীমান্ত সংলগ্ন চিরাংয়ের শান্তিপুর বাজার। সেখানে রুনিখাতা টোকির কাছে সশস্ত্রহত্যাজন এন ডি এফ বি জঙ্গিদের বোমায় ২ জন নিহত ও ১৫ জন আহত হন। বঙ্গাইগাঁও জেলার অভয়াপুরীতে সশস্ত্রহত্যাজন আলফা জঙ্গিরা বোমা ছুড়লে ২ জন মারা যান। এন ডি এফ বি ১৯৮৬-র ৩ অক্টোবর প্রতিষ্ঠার পর থেকে স্বাধীন বড়ো রাষ্ট্রের জন্য আন্দোলন চালাচ্ছে। প্রতিষ্ঠা দিবসে এত বড় হামলা এই প্রথম।

26 killed, 100 injured in Nagaland blasts

9-15-2004
 8/10
Devastation in Dimapur railway station, market • 19 die in Assam violence

DIMAPUR/GUWAHATI, OCT. 2. In a sudden outburst of violence in the North-East, 45 persons were killed and about 150 injured in a series of bomb blasts and firing by militants in Nagaland and Assam today.

Twenty-six persons, including women and children, were killed and over 100 injured in two powerful blasts that rocked the railway station and a nearby market in quick succession in Nagaland's commercial town of Dimapur, in the first such act of violence in recent times in the State.

Militants belonging to the banned National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) struck terror in Lower Assam, indulging in indiscriminate shooting at weekly markets and triggering explosions in Dhubri and Chirang districts and in Bongaigaon, killing 19 persons and injuring 48.

Giving details of the twin blasts, police said the first IED explosion occurred at the Dimapur railway station at 9.30 a.m. killing 12 persons on the spot and injuring 60. People were waiting for the arrival of the daily passenger train, running between Guwahati and Upper Assam.

The platform was crowded with people, including school-children, waiting to board the train to Bokajan in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, when the explosive planted near the entrance detonated.

The blast completely damaged the stationmaster's office, reservation and enquiry counters and blew up the roof.

Seconds later, another blast rocked the busy Hong Kong Market area, killing 10 people on the spot and injuring 40, police said. Four critically wounded people died at the district civil hospital.

The police are yet to ascertain whether any militant group of the North-East was behind the twin blasts for which no one has so far claimed responsibility.

Rash of violence in Assam

In Assam, NDFB militants stormed the Makrjhora weekly market in Dhubri district at 5.30 p.m. and opened fire killing 11 persons on the spot and seriously injuring four, a top police official, L.R. Bishnoi, said.

In a simultaneous attack in the same district, a group of militants fired at a truck going from Guwahati to Bihar and injured three.

In another incident at the oil

township of Bongaigaon, militants hurled grenades, killing three and injuring 10. Militants hurled grenades killing two motorcyclists and injuring two at Abhayapuri.

Militants set off a bomb at Santipur Bazar in Chirang district on the Indo-Bhutan border at 9.15 a.m., killing one person on the spot. Another died in hospital, while 16 injured were admitted to a hospital at Dhaligaon.

Police station attacked

Three policemen were injured when militants hurled grenades at the police station at Baihata-Chariali in Kamrup district.

One person was killed and another injured when ultras attacked the Jagi Road police station with grenades, police said. Militants fired at a train injuring 10 people at Diphu in Karbi Anglong district.

An NDFB militant was shot dead by security forces in Kokrajhar district last night.

The NSCN(IM) condemned the blasts and said "such mindless acts of terrorism, which can never achieve anything good for the people, has no place in a civilised society."

In a statement, its publicity wing chief, K. Chawang, said terrorism was "neither the culture of the Nagas nor the principle of the NSCN."

ULFA rejects ceasefire

The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) has rejected the ceasefire offer by the Assam Government. The ULFA "commander-in-chief," Paresh Barua, called up local newspapers yesterday night from a secret location and rejected the offer.

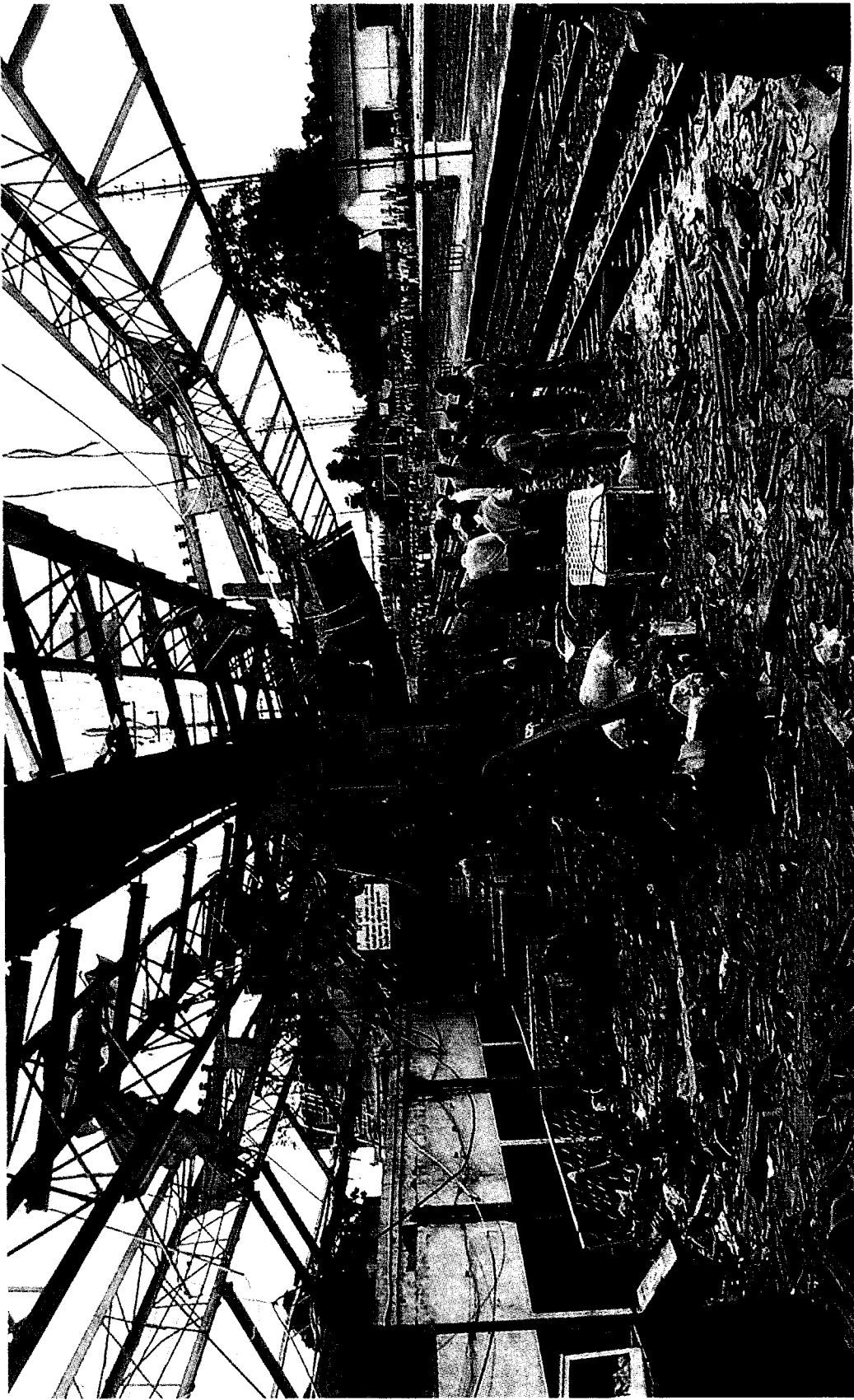
Patil briefs Manmohan

In New Delhi, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, briefed the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, about the situation arising out of the blasts in Dimapur. Mr. Patil will be visiting Dimapur tomorrow.

Dr. Singh expressed shock over the Dimapur blasts. In a message to the Nagaland Chief Minister, Nephui Rio, Dr. Singh said: "It was distressing that such violence broke out on the eve of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi."

Dr. Singh conveyed his condolence to the bereaved families of those killed. He expressed confidence that efforts would be made for the rehabilitation of the injured.

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FACE OF TERROR: The aftermath of a devastating blast at the railway station in Dimapur, Nagaland, on Saturday. — Reuters

Army to import helicopters for Siachen duty

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, OCT. 2. Even as India and Pakistan discuss the possibility of demilitarising the Siachen Glacier, called the highest battleground in the world, the Army is going ahead with long-term plans to ferri its troops and keep them replenished in the region with supplies of food and ammunition.

The Army has received helicopters, especially designed for operation in high altitude areas from three major manufacturers based in Russia, the United States and Europe. Based at an Army base in Punjab, these helicopters are being checked for technical specifications. They will be taken to Leh, which is flanked by the high altitude areas of Kargil and Siachen — after winter sets in for trials, said Army sources.

The Army's plans to import helicopters for high altitude operations could mean that it does not believe that the public sector Hindustan Aeronautics Limited would be able to deliver a similar helicopter in the near future. It also means that the HAL-built advanced light helicopter (ALH) is still not configured for high altitude

operations. The Army began looking for an imported alternative three years ago after an ALH prototype failed high altitude thrust and vibration tests. The Army is now using the Cheetah and Chetak helicopters for such purposes. Though they have been upgraded by the HAL, their design is 40 to 45 years old. The need for a new

chopper has been acutely felt, especially after the 1999 Kargil conflict when the Army's surveillance and casualty evacuation duties in the region increased manifold. Sources said the three foreign-manufactured helicopters in the race are the Bell 407, a Kamov version and the Eurocopter being manufactured by several countries. In fact, sensing the Army's need for imported choppers, a Bell 407 recently landed on a northern Nepal Himalayan mountain range at an altitude of over 22,000 feet, the same height as the Siachen Glacier, as if to prove that it would be the right choice. The Kamov-50 and the Eurocopter also claim a similar flight ceiling.

30 killed in Nagaland twin blasts

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Oct. 2. — At least 30 people were killed and over 50 injured as suspected extremists triggered twin explosions in Nagaland's commercial hub of Dimapur this morning. The toll is likely to go up with many of the seriously injured battling for their life in Dimapur hospitals.

Railway medical relief teams were rushed to Dimapur from Lumding in Assam, the nearest junction.

One of the explosions went off in the railway station around 9.35 a.m. when hundreds of passengers were waiting for the delayed Lumding-Tinsukia Passenger train on Platform No 1. The other blast occurred at the same time just 200 metre away in Hong Kong Market on Marwaripatny Road.

Police later found another IED near Hong Kong Market. They said that had the third device exploded as well, it

would have razed the entire market to the ground.

Nagaland chief minister Mr Neiphiu Rio, who rushed to Dimapur from Kohima within two hours of the blasts, has described the incident as "unfortunate" and promised that his government would leave no stone unturned in fighting terrorism. He ruled out involvement of any Naga rebel group. He said a three-member inquiry commission headed by a commissioner-level officer had been asked to probe into the incident and submit its report within 10 days.

Officials in Dimapur suspect terrorists' hand behind the twin blasts. Though the identity of the outfit involved in the incident is yet to be ascertained, possibility of fundamentalist outfits being involved hasn't been ruled out, considering that a large number of illegal Bangladeshi migrants were ousted from the state by the Naga Stu-



The victims at Dimapur station on Saturday. — EP

dents Federation in August. This is the first major explosion to rock any public place in strife-torn Nagaland in the last 10 years.

The Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, will visit Dimapur tomorrow. He spoke to the Nagaland chief minister over phone today and hoped that peace in the region would not be compromised.

NDFB killings

GUWAHATI, Oct. 2. — NDFB militants today struck in nine Assam districts killing 21 and injuring 48, on the eve of its 18th "raising day". Two of its cadre were shot. — **PTI**

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নাগাল্যান্ড, অসমে জঙ্গি হানায় হত ৪৯



বিস্ফোরণে বিধ্বস্ত ডিমাপুর স্টেশন। তল্লাশি চালাচ্ছেন সেনা জওয়ানেরা। শনিবার। — এ এফ পি

ডিমাপুরে হামলা রেলস্টেশন ও বহুতল বাজারে

প্রভাত ঘোষ ও জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল

২ অক্টোবর: মহাত্মা গান্ধীর জন্মদিনে রক্তাক্ত উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চল। বিস্ফোরণে ও জঙ্গিদের গুলিতে নাগাল্যান্ড ও অসমে ৪৯ জনের প্রাণ গিয়েছে। নিহতদের মধ্যে রয়েছে নারী, শিশুও। মৃতের সংখ্যা আরও বাড়তে পারে। ১৫ অগস্ট অসমের ধোমাজিতে নরমোখের পরে ২ অক্টোবর এই বড় মাপের আঘাত হানল জঙ্গিরা। নাগাল্যান্ডের ডিমাপুরে ও অসমের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় জঙ্গি হানার ঘটনা ঘটেছে।

সবচেয়ে বড় ঘটনাটি ঘটেছে ডিমাপুরে। সেখানে জোড়া বিস্ফোরণে এ পর্যন্ত নারী, শিশু-সহ ২৬ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। মৃতের সংখ্যা আরও বাড়বে বলে পুলিশেরই আশঙ্কা। বেসরকারি মতে, মৃতের সংখ্যা চল্লিশের কাছাকাছি। আহতের সংখ্যা ১৩০। পুলিশ জানায়, আহতদের মধ্যে ৩৮ জনের অবস্থা আশঙ্কাজনক। এ দিকে অসমে জঙ্গি হানায় মারা গিয়েছেন ২৩ জন, আহত হয়েছেন অন্ততপক্ষে ৪৮ জন। এর মধ্যে ধুবুরি জেলার মাকড়িঝোরা হাটে জঙ্গিদের গুলিতে মারা গিয়েছেন ১১ জন। এক সঙ্গে এতগুলি জায়গায় জঙ্গি হানার ঘটনার কোথাও একটি যোগসূত্র রয়েছে বলে গোয়েন্দারা মনে করছেন।

আজ সকাল সাড়ে ৯টা নাগাদ ডিমাপুর রেল স্টেশনে প্রথম বিস্ফোরণ হয়। তার কয়েক সেকেন্ডের মধ্যে দ্বিতীয় বিস্ফোরণটি ঘটে হংকং মার্কেট নামে বহুল পরিচিত বহুতল বাজারে। এই বাজার থেকে এদিন দুপুর অবধি ১১টি মৃতদেহ উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। বাকি ১৫ টি মৃতদেহ পাওয়া গিয়েছে রেল স্টেশনে। রেল স্টেশনের বোমাটি যখন ফাটে সেন্সময় প্ল্যাটফর্ম ছিল জনাকীর্ণ। বহুতল বাজারও ছিল ভিড়ে ঠাসা। এই জোড়া বিস্ফোরণের পিছনে কোন গোষ্ঠীর হাত রয়েছে, তা নিশ্চিত ভাবে বলতে পারেনি পুলিশ।

বিকালে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নেইফিউ রিও কোহিমা থেকে সড়কপথে ডিমাপুরে আসেন। তিনি দুটি ঘটনাস্থল পরিদর্শন করেন। পরে সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, বিস্ফোরণের পিছনে কোন জঙ্গি দল আছে, তা খুঁজে বের করতে রাজ্যের মুখ্যসচিব টি এন মাস্টারের নেতৃত্বে ৮ জনের একটি কমিটি গঠন করা হয়েছে। দশ দিনের মধ্যে এই কমিটি রিপোর্ট দেবে। তবে তিনি রাজ্যের দুটি বড় জঙ্গি দল এনএসসিএনের আই-এম এবং খাপলাং গোষ্ঠীকে সন্দেহের বাইরে রাখেননি। যদিও এই বিস্ফোরণের তীব্র নিন্দা করেছে উভয় গোষ্ঠীই। পুলিশের উচ্চস্তরে অবশ্য সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে, এই দুষ্কর্মের পিছনে অসমের আলফা এবং এনডিএফবি-র হাতও থাকতে পারে।

ডিমাপুরের বিস্ফোরণের ঘটনায় কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারও উদ্বিগ্ন। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল কাল ডিমাপুর পৌঁছাচ্ছেন। তাঁর সঙ্গে যাচ্ছেন নাগা শান্তি আলোচনার মধ্যস্থতাকারী কে পম্বনাভাইয়া। পাটিল এই ঘটনাকে ‘অমানবিক ও নৃশংস’ বলে উল্লেখ করেছেন। তিনি নাগাল্যান্ডের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে টেলিফোনে কথা বলেছেন। ঘটনার রিপোর্ট দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহকে। কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দারা এই বিস্ফোরণের পিছনে স্থানীয় জঙ্গি সংগঠন ছাড়াও বিদেশি শক্তিও থাকতে পারে বলে মনে করছেন। স্বরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শ্রীপ্রকাশ জওসওয়াল ঘটনার পিছনে পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আইএসআই-এর ভূমিকাও সম্পূর্ণ উড়িয়ে দিচ্ছেন না। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের ধারণা, এনএসসিএন-এর খাপলাং গোষ্ঠী শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠা বিঘ্নিত করার জন্য এই কাণ্ড ঘটিয়েছে।

অসমের কার্ভি আংলং জেলায় বন্য খাকার কারণে পাশেই ডিমাপুরের সঙ্গে সড়ক যোগাযোগের একমাত্র উপায় ট্রেন। এ দিন সকাল থেকেই রেলস্টেশনে যাত্রীদের ভিড় ছিল। বহু স্কুল ছাত্রও ছিল। বোমাটি রাখা ছিল স্টেশন মাস্টারের ঘরের সামনে এক নম্বর প্ল্যাটফর্মে। বিস্ফোরণে চূর্ণবিচূর্ণ হয়ে যায় স্টেশন মাস্টারের ঘর এবং প্ল্যাটফর্ম। উড়ে যায় প্ল্যাটফর্মের ছাউনি। গোটা চত্বর রক্তে, মাংস ছড়িয়ে যায়। আহত মানুষের আর্তনাদে বাতাস ভারী হয়ে ওঠে। রক্ষা পাওয়া মানুষদের আতঙ্ক ও ছোট্টাছুটিতে গোটা এলাকায় বিশৃঙ্খলা সৃষ্টি হয়। আধুনিক ও শক্তিশালী ল্যান্ডমাইনের সাহায্যেই জোড়া বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানো হয়েছে বলে পুলিশ প্রাথমিক তদন্ত জানতে পেরেছে।

পুলিশ সুপার জনার্দন সিংহ বিকালে টেলিফোনে বলেন, ‘স্টেশন মাস্টারের এ র পর সতেরোর পাতায়

ধুবুরিতে হাটে নির্বিচারে গুলি, ২ মহিলা-সহ হত ১১

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, ধুবুরি: নাগাল্যান্ডের মতো গান্ধী জয়ন্তীর দিনে অসমের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় জঙ্গি হামলায় মোট ২৩ জন নিহত হয়েছেন। আহত হয়েছেন ৪৮ জন। শনিবার বিকেলে ধুবুরি জেলার বগড়িবাড়ির মাকড়িঝোরা এলাকায় জমজমাট হাটের মধ্যে ঢুকে স্বয়ংক্রিয় রাইফেল থেকে গুলি চালিয়ে ২ মহিলা-সহ ১১ জন নিরীহ বাসিন্দাকে মারল সন্দেহভাজন বড়ো জঙ্গিরা। গুরুতর জখম হয়েছেন আরও ৫ জন। তাঁদের ধুবুরি জেলা সদর হাসপাতালে ভর্তি করানো হয়েছে। ওই ঘটনার মিনিট দশেক আগে বগড়িবাড়ির পাশ দিয়ে

যাওয়া জাতীয় সড়কে চলাচলকারী ট্রাক লক্ষ্য করে নির্বিচারে গুলি চালায় জঙ্গিরা। তাতে তিন জন জখম হন। তাঁদেরও আশঙ্কাজনক অবস্থায় ভর্তি করানো হয়েছে সদর হাসপাতালে। ধুবুরি জেলারই আম্ভারকাটায় বড়ো জঙ্গিদের গ্রেনেডে ৪ জন প্রাণ হারান। পাশাপাশি, জঙ্গিদের ছোড়া গ্রেনেডে তেল-শহর বঙ্গাইগাঁওয়ে ৩ জন, অভয়াপুরীতে ২ জন মোটর সাইকেল আরোহী মারা যান। চিরাং জেলার শান্তিপুর বাজারে জঙ্গিদের গ্রেনেড বিস্ফোরণে ২ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে ও ১৬ জন আহত হয়েছেন। এ ছাড়া জঙ্গিরা মরিগাঁও জেলার জাগি রোড

থানায় হামলা চালালে ১ জন প্রাণ হারান বলে পুলিশ জানিয়েছে। পুলিশ জানায়, হাটে নিহতদের মধ্যে ৪ জনের পরিচয় জানা গিয়েছে। তাঁরা হলেন, আশরফ আলি (৬০), বারিক আলি (৪৫), খাদেম আলি (২২), ও হায়াত আলি (২৫)। আলোচনায় বসার জন্য সরকারের উপরে নতুন করে চাপ সৃষ্টি করতেই জঙ্গিরা নির্বিচারে গুলি চালিয়ে নিরীহ বাসিন্দাদের হত্যা করছে বলে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে। ধুবুরির পুলিশ সুপার লজ্জারাম বিশনই জানান, ‘মাকড়িঝোরায় হাট চলাকালীন জঙ্গিরা আচমকা গুলি

চালালে ১১ জন গুলিবিদ্ধ হয়ে ঘটনাস্থলেই মারা যান। ৫ জন গুরুতর জখম। সন্দেহভাজন বড়ো জঙ্গিরা সংখ্যা ৩ জন ছিল বলে প্রাথমিক তদন্তে জানা গিয়েছে। বিস্তারিত জানার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। জঙ্গিদের খোঁজে চিকুপি তল্লাশি চলছে।’ হামলা চালানোর পরে জঙ্গিরা মাকড়িঝোরা লাগোয়া মহামায়া সরস্বতী বনাঞ্চলের গভীরে ঢুকে আত্মগোপন করেছে বলেও পুলিশের একটি মহল মনে করছে। মাকড়িঝোরায় শনিবার সকাল থেকে সন্ধ্যা পর্যন্ত হাটে ভিড় উপচে পড়ে। বগড়িবাড়ি, গৌরীপুর, বিলাসীপাড়ার বাসিন্দাদের কেনাকাটার

প্রধান জায়গা হল ওই হাট। দুপুর পর্যন্ত হাটে খুব বেশি লোকজন না-হলেও বিকালের দিকে হাটে তিল ধারণের জায়গা থাকে না। সে জন্যই ওই সময়ে জঙ্গিরা হামলা চালায় বলে পুলিশের ধারণা। কয়েকজন প্রত্যক্ষদর্শী জানান, হাটের মধ্যে হঠাৎ তিন জন যুবক বন্দুক বের করে গুলি চালাতে শুরু করে। সামনে থাকা কয়েকজন গুলিবিদ্ধ হয়ে লুটিয়ে পড়েন। হাটের মধ্যে ছোট্টাছুটি শুরু হয়ে যায়। আর্তনাদ করে ক্রেতা-বিক্রেতার দিগ্বিদিক জ্ঞান হারিয়ে পালাতে থাকেন। গুলি চালাতে চালাতেই জঙ্গিরা জঙ্গলের দিকে পালিয়ে যায়।