

Editorial

Saturday, January 20, 2018

Nagaland Election: another truth of NSCN-IM unfolded

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind himself had announced that the age old Naga issue will be sorted out soon, while delivering speech on the inaugural function of the Nagaland HornBill Festival. Earlier in September last year Governor of Nagaland PV Archarya had also assured the people of Nagaland that the issue will be solved in two months. The governor gave the statement in the presence of mediapersons two months before Christmas. RN Ravi, the interlocutor of the peace talk representing India had also convened meeting with almost all Nagaland based UGs except the NSCN-K. Rumours about a solution before Christmas or before the upcoming Nagaland state legislative assembly was the talk of the region even though, contents of the talk was never made public. Even the framework agreement signed between the collective leadership of the NSCN-IM and the Government of India in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Rajnath still is kept secret.

Now the Election Commission of India (ECI) yesterday announced the poll scheduled for Nagaland state along with two other states- Meghalaya and Tripura. The Code of conduct comes into force in the three states the moment ECI announced the poll date. Plea of the Nagaland based civil society organizations to solve the Naga issue before the election was not heard. The political parties including the NPF, which had once supported the Nagaland based civil society organizations had welcome the ECI announcement for conducting election of the Nagaland legislative assembly election on February 27. The kind of development taking place showed that the peace talk being underway between the NSCN-IM and the government of India for almost 21 years is likely to continue for more years.

Another interesting development that was already expected is the division among the various groups of people of Nagaland states on whether to allow the conduct of the state legislative assembly election without resolving the issue of the Naga problem.

Now, Naga Hoho, a powerful Naga civil body had openly comes out against the conduct of Nagaland State Assembly election before shorting out the Naga Problem. Soon after the announcement the apex body of the Naga Civil body had threaten to boycott the Nagaland state assembly election. On the other hand another powerful students' body the Naga Students' Federation is preparing to hold rally against the state assembly election under the banner "no solution, no election". On the other hand, departure of Neiphui Rio from the NPF may have different reason but left over party led by TR Zeliang is not going against this election. The party's alliance with BJP is also another fact that the party will go for poll. NPF is the brain child of the NSCN-IM and its refusal to go along with the Naga Hoho and Naga Students' Federation showed that something which has been expected with the delay in the solving of the aged old Naga issue is coming to the limelight.

The silence of the NSCN-IM is also a matter need to be pondered upon. Boycotting of the election will in no way do good of the rebel outfit which is undergoing peace talk with the government of India. It already had its experiences. In 1998, the NSCN-IM boycotted the Nagaland state assembly election. However, the boycott call turned out another obstacle for the NSCN-IM as the Congress led by SC Jamir won 60% of the seat and form government. Mr. Jamir had political differences with the rebel group NSCN-IM then.

This time too, either boycott or no boycott, the Election Commission of India will hold the election by any means. This is known to the NSCN-IM collective leadership too. And the result of the election might stand as another thorn to the strategy of the NSCN-IM.

This editorial had earlier opined that the solution to the issue of the NSCN-IM is still a far away dream and assurance by those in the government as well as those in the collective leadership about a possible solution before Nagaland state assembly election was just another trick to befool the ignore people of the region. This column had also suggested that those believing the collective leadership of the NSCN-IM need to ponder on whether it is wise decision to follow them or not as everyone knows that any deal made between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM is made secret. On the other hand every citizen also knows what the cadres of the NSCN-IM did in the last twenty years behind the so call peace talk. It's long that both parties are fooling the people. Now it's time that people in Nagaland wake up and make a decision to make Nagaland another paradise free from violence. Let the saying "you can fool some people for some times but you cannot fool all the people all the time", still stands true.

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Revealed: RSS Draft Plan for Nagaland Accord

By Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty
Courtesy: The Wire

Nearly two and a half years have passed since Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise announcement on social media that his government had cut a peace deal with the armed group Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah). Modi categorically stated that it marked "not merely the end of a problem but the beginning of a new future". The sum of it was to be a Naga Accord.

However, the framework agreement signed between the NSCN (I-M) and the Union ministry of home affairs (MHA) in New Delhi on August 3, 2015, to help arrive at the modalities of the Accord is still under wraps. The extended secrecy has only fuelled apprehensions in various sub-nationalist interest groups of Assam and Manipur with regard to the possible consequences in case the Centre realigns the borders of their states by conceding to the NSCN (I-M)'s longstanding demand for "Greater Nagalim".

The "Greater Nagalim" demand, based on the belief of "Naga ancestral land", comprises the Naga inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh besides the present state of Nagaland - a raw nerve for the people of the neighbouring states. Even as the common people in Nagaland were beginning to wonder what was causing the inordinate delay in finalising the Accord, the central government, in October last year, injected some hope in the people by widening the scope of the peace talks, which included six Naga political groups besides the NSCN (I-M).

The optimism galvanised by the talks (the Centre's interlocutor N. Ravi was accorded a public welcome in Dimapur) seems to be now firming up a demand for some concrete action, and quickly so. Early this week, some of the influential civil society groups of Nagaland, including the Naga Tribes Council, the Gaon Burah Federation of Nagaland and ACAUT (Against Corruption And Unabated Taxation), wrote to Modi, urging him to postpone the assembly polls due next month and demanding that the Accord be signed prior to it. The Naga groups even suggested "President's rule in the state instead of the elections till the issue is solved."

According to state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sources, the party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) support the stand of the civil society organisations "as it would clearly enhance BJP's goodwill in the state in the long run."

At such a juncture comes a "proposed draft agreement", put together by a veteran RSS pracharak active in Nagaland for over four decades.

Though Jagdamba Mall, a known face of the RSS in the Northeast, who has also been instrumental in BJP's electoral inroads into the region, categorically told *The Wire* that it was his "personal

effort" that emanated from his "study of the Naga issue for over 45 years", it is no secret that the Sangh supports what he has come up with to arrive at a peace deal as soon as possible.

Falling in line with the BJP-RSS stand, Mall's proposition says the "time limit" that the Centre should give to the negotiating partners should be "January 31, 2018 before the ensuing elections." (Incidentally, assembly elections were announced in three Northeastern states, including Nagaland, on Thursday, with the model code of conduct kicking off with immediate effect).

The proposed agreement names not just NSCN (I-M), the primary negotiator with the Centre, but also NSCN (Khaplang) and NSCN (Reformation), the two factions of Naga National Council (NNC) besides 12 other groups of people including the Naga Hoho, Naga Mothers' Association, Eastern Naga People's Organisation (ENPO) as proposed signatory to the "draft agreement".

Mall's proposal offers enough hints to the growing belief in Nagaland that Muivah alone might not be able to deliver the Naga Accord even if he wants "a solution at the earliest." The reasons cited in the 'draft agreement' are Muivah's Thangkul origin (Thangkul Nagas are not from Nagaland and Muivah is from Manipur), opposition within NSCN (I-M) and "foreign masters".

The RSS leader bunches together the possible reasons "for Naga youth's disenchantment with Naga terrorist organisations, present politicians and (the) church". These include expectations from PM Modi, termed "Modi Magic", the booklet, *The Bedrock of Naga Society*, authored by veteran Naga politician S. C. Jamir that created some controversy over Naga history, the "dishonest behaviour of Church - the mother of Naga insurgency, terrorist organisations and political leaders", and the "hollowness of Nagaland for Christ."

Among the prime features of Mall's "draft agreement", copies of which have been sent to some media houses in the Northeast for publication, are a union territory (UT) carved out of the five border districts of Nagaland. Named "Frontier Nagaland", the UT comprises Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire and Noklak districts bordering Myanmar.

Mall's proposal falls in line with the demand of ENPO since 2010 for a separate state of Frontier Nagaland. In fact, on December 27, 2017, ENPO reportedly took a resolution in Tuensang "asking its members to resign if their demand for a separate state of 'Frontier Nagaland' was not fulfilled by the Centre before the state general election."

The Modi government, a few weeks after announcing the Naga Framework Agreement with NSCN (I-M), held the first round of talks with ENPO in New Delhi on the statehood issue. In November

Jagdamba Mall, a known face of the RSS in the Northeast, who has also been instrumental in BJP's electoral inroads into the region, says the draft accord is his "personal effort", emanating from his "study of the Naga issue for over 45 years".

2016, addressing a public rally in Tuensang, Satyendra Garg, joint secretary (Northeast) at the MHA, reportedly said, "The demand of the ENPO for a separate state appears genuine".

A delegation of ENPO is presently in Delhi to meet Garg and press for its demand.

Another prime feature of the "draft agreement" of the RSS old-timer is aimed at addressing the "Greater Nagalim" aspect, which has sparked much anxiety among people, particularly in Manipur. This past December 28, a delegation of eight civil society groups from Manipur, opposed to the redrawing of the state's boundary, met Modi, besides discussing the issue with Union home minister Rajnath Singh.

Imphal-based media reports quoting Johnson Elangbam, chief of the United Committee Manipur leading the delegation, said, "If the framework agreement is only for Nagaland, give them whatever they want - sovereignty, flag, passport, whatever. But if it is going to be linked to Assam and Manipur, our voices must be heard. Or else, there could be a repeat of 2001 and the consequences will be on the Centre."

Johnson referred to the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government's ceasefire agreement with the NSCN (I-M) "without territorial limits" in June 2001, which triggered a violent backlash in Manipur as the majority Meitei community groups looked at the ceasefire as a precursor to slice out the Naga-inhabited areas from the rest of the state.

Mall's "draft agreement" has suggested "separate development authorities (to be) constituted for a period of ten years to execute the development programmes in seven Naga inhabited districts of Manipur," two Naga inhabited districts of Arunachal Pradesh, Changlang and Tirap" and "one in Assam, the Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills district)" as a possible antidote to it.

The Naga inhabited districts of Manipur named in it are Senapati, Tamenglong, Ukhrul, Chandel, Noney, Kamjong and Tengnoupal. Two other important segments of the draft, which, however doesn't mention a separate flag or passport, as has been speculated in a section of media, include rehabilitation of the "Naga Army" and a "ten-year time-framed economic package" of the central government for Nagaland.

It says, "All the top-ranking leaders of all Naga militant organisations

will be honoured by giving them the equivalent ranks/spots as governors, ambassadors, officials in the Army and other security forces provided they have requisite academic qualifications, sound health and above all, a will to serve the nation as a dignified soldier/central government officers."

"A Naga regiment shall be created to absorb the young surrenderers (sic)." Those who surrender would be paid an *ex-gratia* of Rs 10 lakh each besides the "general amnesty amount of Rs 5 lakh".

The economic package suggested in the "draft" comprises Rs 1 lakh crore meant "for industrialisation and overall development of the existing Nagaland".

The suggestions also include "a cell in the Prime Minister's Office" to monitor the implementation of the Naga agreement, Dima Halom Daoga Agreement in the Dima Hasao district of Assam, All Assam Students Union agreement (Assam Accord), the Bodo Agreement in Assam (2003) and the Chakma rehabilitation and repatriation in Mizoram."

This is to address "non-implementation or partial implementation of these agreements" leading to "loss of faith in central government and respective state governments."

It also suggests shifting the Department of North East Region (DONER) ministry to Guwahati from New Delhi and the North Eastern Council headquarters from Shillong to Guwahati with more budget allocations. "The DONER minister should sit in Guwahati."

There is also a clause that says, "There shall be 30% reservation for women in Nagaland Assembly and other political bodies in the state and Naga inhabited areas in adjoining States." In February 2017, Nagaland chief minister T.R. Zeliang had to give up his chair following opposition by various tribal organisations to his decision to hold the urban local body elections in the state with 33 % reservation as per a Supreme Court order. The decision led to a protracted bout of political instability in the frontier state.

The Wire sought a response on the proposed draft agreement from Anthony Shimray, the chief of the NSCN (I-M)'s armed wing and a part of the Centre's ongoing negotiations for the peace deal, but failed to get one.

The Wire also reached out to the Centre's interlocutor for the ongoing talks, R.N. Ravi, but failed to get a response.

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