

The Naga Accord: The road to peace?



(Source <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=naga+accord&FORM=HDRSC2>)

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The Naga Accord: The road to peace?

The Government of India has recently indicated that the long pending Naga Peace Accord is nearing its completion and might be placed before the Parliament during the monsoon session.¹ The agreement is seen as a major breakthrough in the 60 year old insurgency in the state. Faced with a complex issue of sub nationalism and assertion of an independent identity, the Indian government tried and failed several times to resolve the Naga movement. The 1950s to the mid-1990s was a turbulent period with insurgency and counterinsurgency resulting in civilian deaths. In 1960, a Sixteen Point Agreement was signed between members of the Naga People's Congress and the Government of India as part of which a new state of Nagaland was created in 1963. But even this failed to quell the movement as a majority of Naga inhabited areas was left outside the new state. In 1964, a Nagaland Peace Mission was formed which signed a ceasefire with Phizo, only to last till 1968. In 1975, the Shillong Accord was signed in which the NNC agreed to give up arms and accept the Indian Constitution. Muivah and Swu, who were then NNC members, revolted by terming the Accord as a 'sell out' on the Naga sovereignty demand and went on to form the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 with S. S. Khaplang. In 1988, the NSCN split due to leadership differences, into the NSCN (IM) and the NSCN (K).² As multiple insurgent groups emerged and the fight to protect the legacy and history of Nagas intensified, several ceasefire agreements faltered and the conflict remained an impasse. The central government has been talking to the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) since 1997 but the peace process would collapse each time after a ceasefire violation by one of the insurgent groups or with the change in government at the centre which would attempt to introduce new terms. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ascension to power, his strong drive to reach out to the North East gave an impetus to the peace dialogue and a Framework Agreement was signed one year later in 2015. Since then murmurs about an imminent resolution to the crisis have dominated Nagaland's political discourse. The new Framework Agreement, signed earlier in 2017, had claimed to bring all the major stakeholders to the discussion table and reach a consensus but no details of the same were made public and the deal remained unimplemented despite the hype.

Terms of the Accord

A formal announcement of the exact provisions and details of the current Accord are still awaited, although it is reported that once the accord is ready, the Naga armed groups will stand disbanded and the non-state armed militia who are eligible will be absorbed in central or state force or alternatively, will be rehabilitated. Also under discussion, according to ministers in the state Assembly, was a provision for increasing the number of Nagaland assembly seats from 60 to 80 and Lok Sabha seats from one to three. This would include a separate Lok Sabha seat for the four districts of Eastern Nagaland which had demanded a separate state carved out of Nagaland. While the Deputy Cm of Nagaland has stated that they would reiterate their request revoke AFSPA from the state, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr Kiren Rijiju said that it is unlikely to be removed before the peace agreement is finalised.³ The final draft also still needs to address and accommodate conflicting view points like a separate flag for the state and the demand for Nagalim (greater Nagaland) which

¹<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/naga-accord-is-nearly-final-no-change-in-state-boundary-removal-of-afspa-flag-last-hurdle-pm-modi-5152058/>

²https://idsa.in/idsacomments/TheNagaPeaceAccordWhyNow_NamrataGoswami_070815

³<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/afspa-will-continue-in-nagaland-rijiju/article23732912.ece>

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would include contiguous land in adjoining states.⁴ Although government reports as of now refutes any claims of compromise to the territory of other states, if these demands are accommodated, it is certain to rake up violent protests in the region as the other states allege that they have not been consulted despite being stakeholders in the Agreement. On the other hand, moving forward without acceding to these claims might result in stalling of the entire process all over again. When Mr Rijiju had claimed that the NSCN (IM) had given up the sovereignty issue and the territories of the neighbouring states would not be affected as an outcome of the peace talks, his response drew sharp criticism from the NSCN (IM), which dubbed Rijiju as someone not mandated to talk on such issues. The Nagaland State Assembly also displayed its insistence on the demand for a unified Nagaland when it had passed a resolution on July 27, 2015 endorsing five points, including the resumption of ceasefire with the NSCN (K) as well as integration of contiguous Naga inhabited areas. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Framework Agreement in 2015, it has been indicated that the NSCN-IM has been engaged in a focused manner on extending its influence over the entire Naga populace to bring it within the ambit of the Agreement, which has been viewed with suspicion by Manipur.⁵

According to news paper reports, the draft so far does not include any territorial modifications and only provides for autonomous Naga territorial councils to administer Naga-inhabited areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, a common cultural body for Nagas across states, specific institutions for Nagaland's development, integration and rehabilitation of non-state Naga militia and removal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Naga ministers also spoke of autonomous district councils in the Naga areas of states like Manipur. He also suggested there was no provision for a supra-legislature or overarching body governing all Naga regions, as was previously suggested in some quarters.

Another sensitive issue to be resolved as part of the Agreement to will be the status and welfare of Myanmarese Nagas which makes it necessary for the government of Aung San Su Kyi to be on board the Naga settlement, at least tacitly. This is because; there are nearly 120,000 Nagas in the self-administered zone in Myanmar, adjacent to Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Considering NSCN (K) has a substantial support base among the Nagas of these areas, some arrangement would have to be worked out that allows trade as well as cultural connectivity between Nagas on either side of the India-Myanmar border. While NSCN-IM has been actively trying to galvanise support and consensus for the negotiations on this Accord, the presence of sizeable cadres along the Indo-Myanmar border in Ukhrul and in Somra areas of Myanmar could cater for armed contingency scenarios.

Social consensus for a non territorial Framework

Post the breakup of NSCN, NSCN(K) lost much of its organisational structure and support base in India and further split into multiple small outfits while NSCN (IM) retained its popularity by gradually permeating the various Naga tribes based in different North Easter states as well as in Myanmar. The network of social support for the NSCN's political causes of establishing the uniqueness of Naga history, and Greater Nagalim struck a responsive chord in the Naga society that it aspires to represent and the outfit responded by recognising the voice of the people and echoing their desires most of the times. This was observed during one of the PCGs in 2007 where the civil society bodies and Naga individuals strongly influenced the NSCN (IM)'s political agenda and demanded a stricter Code of Conduct (CoC) for its cadres. With regard to political agenda, Muivah, speaking to a gathering of about 5000 people, asked their opinions on whether to abrogate or

⁴<https://scroll.in/latest/876940/naga-peace-pact-in-final-stage-but-centre-rebel-groups-still-differ-on-separate-flag-report>

⁵https://idsa.in/idsacomments/way-forward-to-a-final-naga-settlement_gsen_310717

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extend the ongoing cease-fire with the Indian government. The overall popular consensus was that the ceasefire should not be abrogated and that it should in fact be extended indefinitely, unlike the usual practice of extending it for six months or a year, in order to sustain some level of continuous peace in Naga areas. That year, on July 31, 2007, the ceasefire was indeed extended indefinitely.⁶ In the next few years, popular support tilted towards a lasting peace process and demands of the civil society shifted from sovereignty to acceptance of the Indian Constitution and a desire for autonomy and developmental privileges. The protracted Naga insurgency has given birth to several small outfits, some of which still insist on a framework based on territory. Naga politicians and the state assembly has also shifted view points according to prevailing political dispensation. However, the demands of civil society organisations have remained concentrated around achieving non territorial autonomy.

In 2012, former Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio along with all 60 Nagaland State Assembly Members including MLAs of the Opposition parties came out in support of a non territorial framework which will favour the Nagas as their core demands – such as recognition of their “unique history” and culture, Naga leverage over deciding the development path for the Naga inhabited areas, etc. – will be met through the grant of greater autonomy.⁷ This was considered to be an optimal solution that would address the concerns of all the relevant parties since the Indian government can grant recognition to the Naga’s “unique” history and culture within the territorial and sovereign framework of the Constitution while accommodating the aspirations of the Naga people. It was assumed that the other states would also accept it since it would enable them to maintain the territorial status quo while only giving up developmental privileges in their Naga inhabited areas to a new Naga non-territorial body. The fact that such a non-territorial resolution package had gained wide acceptance in Nagaland can be discerned from the fact that several politicians and majority of the civil society organisations supported it.

Conclusion

Naga history in recent years has witnessed several efforts by different governments in the Centre to reconcile the demands of the ethnic people within the framework of the Constitution. Most of these efforts have been unable to sustain a peace process or formulate a final solution. This has been in part due to the failure of the government to understand the nature of the Naga society, their complex history and their aspirations for the future and partly due to the insistence on territorial sovereignty or at the least an unified Naga state by certain parties to the peace process which government spokespersons have termed as ‘politically unacceptable’.⁸ It is important to understand that while certain outfits might subscribe to the concept of a unified Nagalim, majority of the Naga population based in different states have progressed from demands of independence or even a unified state to demands centred around protecting their history and traditions and maintaining autonomy in conducting their social and cultural aspects of their life.

The dynamics and political equation between Nagaland and its neighbours will also render the concept of a unified Naga state unfeasible. The success of the Accord will hinge on not disturbing the existing provincial territorial disposition and retaining the present inter-state boundaries in the region while setting up an

⁶https://idsa.in/idsacomments/TheNagaPeaceAccordWhyNow_NamrataGoswami_070815

⁷https://idsa.in/idsacomments/way-forward-to-a-final-naga-settlement_gsen_310717

⁸<https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/naga-peace-accord-the-test-lies-in-making-it-work/story-OYiu9oPxwLRmceGisrNtN.html>

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autonomous cultural collective body within the framework of the constitution.⁹ A resolution of one of the oldest armed ethnic conflicts in the Northeast will also offer a way forward to resolving many other ethnic conflicts in the region such as those involving Kukis, Meiteis, Bodos, Dimasas, Hmars, and Karbis. But as the Bodo violence in Assam against immigrant minority communities in 2015 highlighted the dangers of an ethnically slanted territorial council and its failure to safeguard the physical security of minorities in Bodo inhabited areas, a framework based on territorial divisions may not be the best way forward for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In that light, a non-territorial resolution framework is perhaps the only feasible outcome to the multiple ethnicity-driven conflicts in Northeast India. However, it is only after the government decides to publicly announce the specific details of the Accord that a conclusive analysis can be arrived at.

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⁹https://idsa.in/idsacomment/naga-framework-agreementand-its-aftermath_pschhonkar_010916

Headlines

Labor Ministry revives National Policy to increase wages for domestic help

Yogima Sharma, *Economic Times*, April 26, 2018

The Labour and Employment Ministry is planning to revive the National Policy in order to increase the wages for the domestic helps by forming a central board/trust where employers will have to register maids, drivers and all other household helps who will be paid equally. The ministry has been working on a national policy for domestic workers over past three years but could not implement it due to opposed views by the employers. With the help of this policy, the domestic workers will finally be able to get the legal status of labourers because of which they were neglected minimum wages, formal hours of work, and no protection from occupational hazards etc. As per 68th round survey (July, 2011-June, 2012) of National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), there were a total of 34.79 lakhs in the country and the numbers have been since then.

Read More: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/labour-ministry-revives-national-policy-for-hike-domestic-helps-wage/articleshow/63916750.cms>

Date Accessed: 02.05.2018

Economy

MGNREGA Funds Frozen? 99% of Wages Remain Unprocessed for April 2018

The Wire, April 11, 2018

Since its launch in 2006, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee MGNREGA has been facing several issues in its implementation phase. Starting from the disbursement of wages, to different wages in different states, the issue of rising rate of unemployment and decreasing beneficiaries, no hike in wages, poor rate of social audits with a limited number of assets, misuse of funds, as time passes by these hurdles seem to grow deeper and wider that seem like a never ending process. Recently, the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, an organisation that works for the rights of workers covered under MNREGA, highlighted in a letter how 99% of MGNREGA wages have still not been paid in April 2018. Further the organisation alleges that the National Electronic Fund Management System (NEFMS) that whose work was to streamline the process of MGNREGA wage payments has only tightened the Ministry's leash over MGNREGA funds.

Read More: <https://the.wire.in/labour/mgnrega-wages-unprocessed-april-2018>

Date Accessed: 02.05.2018

State Bank of India plans recast of stressed power assets

(PTI, The Economic Times, April 29, 2018)

The State Bank of India is preparing a major debt restructuring and takeover plan for stressed power assets, to improve valuations and attract new owners with incentives and a quick resolution process. While calling all power plant lenders in Mumbai for discussing the proposal – which has a direct bearing on loans adding up to Rs 1.77 lakh crore in 75,000 MW stressed capacity – the SBI also asked the power ministry to waive transmission penalties and grant early regulatory approvals to help new promoters. The bank further proposes to get debt of the stressed assets rated by credit rating agencies.

Read more: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/state-bank-of-india-plans-recast-of-stressed-power-assets/articleshow/63964234.cms>

Date accessed: 01.05.2018

1.3 million youth need jobs every month; 8 million a year: World Bank

(Chaitanya Mallapur, Indiaspend, May 2, 2018)

According to a World Bank report, 'Jobless Growth?' published on 15 April 2018, more than eight million jobs are required every year for India to keep its employment rate constant, as its working age population (above 15 years) is increasing by 1.3 million every month. While as many as 18.3 million Indians were unemployed in 2017, unemployment is projected to increase to 18.9 million by 2019, according to The World Employment and Social Outlook–Trends 2018 report by the International Labour Organization, released on January 22, 2018. The grimness of the situation can be gauged from the fact that over 28 million applicants are expected to appear for 90,000 jobs offered by the Indian Railways this year, the Times of India reported on March 31, 2018.

Read more: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/1-3-million-youth-need-jobs-every-month-8-million-a-year-world-bank-78702>

Date accessed: 01.05.2018

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Govt starts monthly job data, may junk labour bureau's quarterly survey

Somesh Jha, *Business Standard*, April 29, 2018

The government has initiated the process of releasing monthly payroll data for employment in the formal sector and doing away with the enterprise-based quarterly jobs survey, as a part of its efforts to overhaul the official employment estimates. The EPFO, ESIC and PFRDA issued payroll data recently, based on their month-wise subscriptions between September 2017 and February 2018 and as per the government estimates, about 3.53 million new payroll jobs were generated during six months in 2017-18. Apart from payroll data, field work for survey on jobs created by the Mudra scheme that aims to disburse unsecured loans of up to Rs 1 million to small enterprises with the objective of generating self-employment has also begun and the results may likely be released by the end of 2018. This proposal to replace the quarterly enterprise-level jobs survey has been put forward by after the Arvind Panagariya-led task force that had pointed out "serious limitations" in measuring jobs based on data from the EPFO, ESIC and PFRDA.

Read More: http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-starts-monthly-job-data-may-junk-labour-bureau-s-quarterly-survey-118042800649_1.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Date Accessed: 02.05.2018

As banks battle a loan crisis, they are also blocking more RTI pleas than most government bodies

Kumar Sambhav Srivastava, *Scroll.in*, May 1, 2018

As per a recent analysis conducted by the Access to Information Programme at the non-profit Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative maintained by the Central Information Commission, India's public-sector banks are rejecting more right to information applications than other Central government bodies. A total of 86,683 applications that were filed in 2016-2017 seeking information from the country's 25 public-sector banks and the Reserve Bank of India, banks denied information in 24,175, or 28%, cases; the applications rejected by banks make up 33% of all applications rejected by Central authorities. "Resistance to transparency in the banks seems to have increased during this period, particularly when the banking sector is going through a difficult phase," said Venkatesh Nayak of the Access to Information Programme.

Read More: <https://scroll.in/article/876640/as-banks-battle-a-loan-crisis-they-are-also-blocking-more-rti-pleas-than-most-government-bodies>

Date Accessed: 02.05.2018

HEALTH

Hole in a pocket: Story of Indian health spend

Ashok Alexander, *Livemint*, May 1, 2018

Nothing much has changed since 2002 with regard to how India spends on health; while the public health expenditure (PHE) accounted for 1.03% of India's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002, in 2014, WHO data showed that India's PHE as a percentage of GDP stood at 1.41%. Further, the government's own National Health Profile 2017 pegs this at 0.98% in 2014, rising to 1.18% in 2017 while the government's intended it to increase PHE to 2-3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002. Apart from low spending, even these funds are not utilized entirely. Even when, the Centre's share in public financing of the health sector increased steadily from 20.3% in 1990-91 to 28.3% in 2013-14, the Ministry of Health did not spend 3.32% and 10.09% of funds allocated to it in fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-17 respectively. In fact, utilization by states has been much worse; a study by Mita Choudhury and Ranjan Mohanty from the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) in 2017 revealed that only 55% of allocated funds were spent by the states.

Read More: <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/w1nCWf38UOVAGnykvdemdM/Hole-in-a-pocket-Story-of-Indian-health-spend.htmls>

Date Accessed: 02.05.2018

Governance & Development

AGRICULTURE

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana: Flagship crop insurance scheme runs into rough weather

(Harish Damodaran, *The Indian Express*, April 26, 2018)

The PMFBY has been marred with inordinate delays of various state governments in paying timely payments of premium subsidy, conducting crop cutting experiments (CCE) for assessment of yield losses, etc. For instance, the states should issue notifications incorporating relevant details – such as crops covered, operating companies, sum insured, actuarial premium rates, etc. – by March for kharif season and by September for rabi. However, Rajasthan issued the notification for kharif 2017 only on July 22, when the bulk of sowing was already completed. Even for the rabi season, the notification came on November 3, when farmers would have finished planting their main mustard crop, thus depriving them from seeking protection against losses due to failed/prevented sowing.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/pradhan-mantri-fasal-bima-yojana-flagship-crop-insurance-scheme-runs-into-rough-weather-5151805/>

Date accessed: 30.04.2018

LAW AND JUSTICE

Supreme Court asks High Courts to expedite child sexual assault cases

Scroll.in, May 1, 2018

The Supreme Court has recently issued a directive to the High Courts across the country with regard to trials in sexual assault cases involving children. A bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra ordered such cases to be fast-tracked and decided by special courts. It also asked the High Courts to form a committee of three judges to monitor and regulate such trials.

Read More: <https://scroll.in/latest/877516/supreme-court-asks-high-courts-to-expedite-child-sexual-assault-cases>

Date Accessed: 02.05.2018

Society

ELDERLY

India to require 9 lakh beds for elderly by 2027 against 97,000 now: Study

(TNN, *Times of India*, May 1, 2018)

A study conducted by Samarth, a not-for-profit organisation, in association with United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) and Tata Trust, reveals that India is expected to require nine lakh beds for senior citizens in old age homes in the next 10 years against 97,000 available at present. Further, by 2027, just one bed would be available for a population of 1,000 senior citizens against the requirement of six then, if the capacity is not enhanced. The study looked at both old age homes and senior living development in India with a sample set of over 480 old age homes and more than 60 senior living developments in 84 cities, towns and districts, cutting across geographies, size, cost, facilities offered, ownership and management.

Read more: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/india-to-require-9l-beds-for-elderly-by-2027-against-97000-now-study/articleshow/63978546.cms>

Date accessed: 01.05.2018

SOCIAL JUSTICE

SC faculty posts down by half, ST by 80 per cent: Banaras Hindu University alert

(Ritika Chopra, *The Indian Express*, May 2, 2018)

According to projections made by BHU, if the university were to implement the new UGC guidelines for calculating reservations in teaching jobs, the posts reserved for SC candidates will be reduced by half while those for ST candidates will be reduced by almost eighty percent. The new guidelines were notified by the UGC on 5 March 2018 announcing that the number of reserved faculty posts across universities and colleges shall be calculated department-wise and not based on the aggregate vacant posts in a university.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/education/sc-faculty-posts-down-by-half-st-by-80-per-cent-banaras-hindu-university-alert-5159320/>

Date accessed: 02.05.2018

India and the World

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

India, Nepal to conduct comprehensive review of bilateral trade treaty

(PTI, *The Economic Times*, April 29, 2018)

According to the commerce ministry, India and Nepal have agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing bilateral trade treaty to further boost two way commerce and investments between the countries. The two countries reached this agreement during the meeting of the India-Nepal Inter Government Committee (IGC) on Trade, Transit and Cooperation to Control Unauthorised Trade in Kathmandu. The committee provides a platform for discussing and reviewing bilateral trade and transit related issues. Both countries agreed on synchronised development of border trade infrastructure so as to ensure timely utilisation of the investment in border infrastructure. In order to enhance the volume of trade, the two countries emphasised on the need for bilateral harmonisation of standards.

Read more: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-nepal-to-conduct-comprehensive-review-of-bilateral-trade-treaty/articleshow/63963470.cms>

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