



# Non-State Actors in Nagaland

## Why in News

Recently, the **Governor of Nagaland R.N. Ravi** wrote a letter to the state's **Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio**.

- The letter highlighted that the **legitimacy of the constitutionally-established State government is being challenged** on a daily basis by **armed gangs** that question the sovereignty and integrity of the nation.
- Mr. Ravi was appointed as the **Centre's interlocutor for the Naga peace process** in August 2014 for his hold on the affairs of the northeast.

## Key Points

- **Various Taxes Imposed by Non-State Actors:**
  - The letter pointed out the **issue of 'taxes' levied by armed gangs or parallel governments** as well as the **cost escalation of development and infrastructure** projects in the state due to the system of handing over a part of the project cost to these armed gangs for the projects to be executed.
  - The extremist groups have been collecting **'taxes' or 'donations'** from people in their areas of operation **before and after the ceasefire agreement** with the NSCN (IM) in mid-1997.
- **Reactions:**
  - The Working Committee of the **Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs)**, a **conglomerate of seven extremist groups**, denied indulging in extortion.
  - **NSCN (IM) insisted that it does not extort people** but levies **'genuine taxes'** which have been the source of sustenance bringing the Naga political movement this far.
    - It held that it is the inherent right of any sovereign people and nation to collect taxes from the people and commercial establishments and the right was legitimately acknowledged by the earlier interlocutors and Indian authorities.
  - The Chief Minister objected to the Governor's reminder of **Article 371A (1)(b)** of the Constitution. He said that **terming the organisations as 'armed gangs' may not be congenial to the achievement of lasting peace**, which is the desire of both the Central and the state governments.

## Article 371A

- The **Acts of Parliament** relating to the following matters **would not apply to Nagaland unless decided by the State Legislative Assembly:**
  - Religious or social practices of the Nagas.
  - Naga customary law and procedure.
  - Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law.

- Ownership and transfer of land and its resources.
- **Article 371A (1)(b):** The Governor of Nagaland shall have **special responsibility for law and order in the state** so long as internal disturbances caused by the hostile Nagas continue. In the discharge of this responsibility, the Governor, after consulting the Council of Ministers, exercises his individual judgement and his decision is final. This special responsibility of the Governor **shall cease when the President so directs.**
- The Governor has to **ensure that the money provided** by the Central Government for any specific purpose **is included in the demand for a grant relating to that purpose** and not in any other demand moved in the State Legislative Assembly.

## Chronology

- **1917:** NSCN (IM) mostly **comprises the Nagas of Manipur** but it has its **roots** in the conscription of around **2,000 Nagas by the British as labourers and porters** for salvage work and road-building in **France** in 1917 during the times of **World War I** (1914-18).
- **1918:** The Nagas who returned in May-June 1918 formed the **Naga Club**, along with some educated locals in October that year. The club **aroused a sense of Naga nationalism.**
- **1929:** The club submitted a memorandum to the **Simon Commission**, stating that the Nagas should be left alone to 'determine for themselves as in ancient times'.
- **1946:** The club metamorphosed into a political organisation called the **Naga National Council (NNC)**, which campaigned for sovereignty and secession of the Naga Hills (then a district of Assam) from India.
- **1947:** Nagas declared **independence on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947.**
- **1951:** A **referendum** organised by the NNC in May 1951 showed that **99% people had supported an independent Nagaland.**
- **1952:** The NNC's movement intensified after it **boycotted the 1952 general election.**
- **1956:** In March 1956, it formed a **parallel government** and hoisted the flag of the republic.
- **1960:** The intensity of the armed movement lessened with the signing of the **16-Point Agreement** between the Centre and a group of the people's representatives in 1960.
- **1963:** Nagaland achieved **statehood in December 1963.**
  - Nagaland was formed out of the **Naga Hills district of Assam** and the **then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA)** province (now Arunachal Pradesh).
- **1975:** The movement was going on intermittently and hopes of peace were raised when the Centre signed the **Shillong Agreement** with a moderate faction of the NNC in 1975.
  - However, a dissident group led by Muivah, Swu and Khaplang, who had been trained in China, rejected the pact outright.
- **1980:** After going underground and spending their time in Myanmar, they formed the **National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)** in January 1980.
- **1988:** NSCN **split into the NSCN (IM) and the NSCN (K)** in April 1988 due to differences over initiating a dialogue process with the Indian government.
- **1997:** NSCN (IM) received a proposal from New Delhi for peace talks and a **ceasefire agreement was signed.**
- **2001:** NSCN (K) also followed the suit but it **unilaterally abrogated the ceasefire in 2015.**
  - However, at least three of its breakaway factions formed the NNPGs to join the peace process in 2017.

## Demand for Greater Nagalim

- The NSCN (IM), **dominated by the Tankhuls of Manipur**, has held more than 100 rounds of peace talks with the Centre within and outside the country.
- One of its most contentious demands was the **creation of a unified Naga homeland**, called **'Greater Nagalim'** by integrating the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal with Nagaland.

- The **other north-eastern States are opposed to the idea** of the pan-Naga homeland and are wary of the Framework Agreement the NSCN (IM) leaders **signed at the Prime Minister's residence in August 2015**.
  - The contents of the agreement have not been revealed.

## Way Forward

- Nagas are culturally heterogeneous groups of different communities/tribes having a different set of problems from the mainstream population.
- In order to achieve the long-lasting solution, their cultural, historical and territorial extent must be taken into consideration.
- Therefore, any arrangement to be worked out should lead to social and political harmony, economic prosperity and protection of the life and property of all tribes and citizens of the states.

[Source: TH](#)

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