

## TALKING TOUGH: ON THE NAGA ISSUE

### The Centre must re-engage with NSCN (I-M) without giving in to its arbitrary demands

Five years since the signing of a framework agreement between the Indian government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), the deadlock in the talks that came about in October 2019 persists with the emergence of bottlenecks. The NSCN (I-M) has demanded that Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi should be removed as the interlocutor for talks on the Naga accord. Talks were expanded in 2017 by including other Naga groups under the banner, the Naga National Political Groups (NMPGs). Clearly, the Governor's letter in June addressed to Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, alleging the collapse of law and order and that armed gangs "who question the sovereignty and integrity of the nation" were engaging in "blatant extortion", touched a sore spot for the NSCN (I-M). While the group defended the practice by terming it "tax collection", the letter was not entirely off the mark. Yet, this has become an issue for the peace process with the NSCN (I-M) going on to release details of the 2015 framework agreement that has not been shared in the public domain so far. While the other Naga groups also took exception to the Governor's remarks to the Chief Minister, they have differed with the NSCN (I-M) on the demand for Mr. Ravi's removal as interlocutor.

Since 2015, the engagement with other Naga groups has increased, even if the NSCN (I-M) is perceived as the major rebel organisation. The differences between the NMPGs and the NSCN (I-M) are not insignificant. The NSCN (I-M) still insists on a "Greater Nagalim" beyond the boundaries of Nagaland State besides seeking a flag and constitution. Most of the NMPGs based in Nagaland on the other hand have sought to settle the issue without disturbing the State boundaries while keeping the "Greater Nagalim" question in abeyance. Any moves to alter boundaries will intensify ethnic conflicts and insurgencies beyond Nagaland, especially in Manipur. The increasing support in Nagaland for a solution without affecting boundaries should have compelled the NSCN (I-M) to move away from its intransigent position. Instead, the rebel group has sought to redefine the talks process by expressing its lack of confidence in Mr. Ravi. The NMPGs, political parties and other civil society organisations also took exception to the Governor's stern letter that went beyond raising concerns over law and order; Mr. Ravi wrote that functions such as the "transfer and posting of officials" in charge of law and order above the district level would be done with his approval. But they have delineated clear differences with the NSCN (I-M) on the peace talks issue. The Central government needs to take their concerns on board and reiterate its commitment to finalising the Naga accord while seeking to re-engage with the NSCN (I-M) without giving in to its arbitrary demands.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **re-engage** (verb) – re-establish a contact/ connection with someone.
- ❖ **give in** (phrasal verb) – surrender, give way, yield, submit, capitulate.
- ❖ **framework agreement** (noun) – an agreement between two parties that recognizes that the parties have not come to a final agreement on all matters relevant to the relationship between them, but have come to agreement on enough matters to move forward with the relationship, with further details to be agreed to in the future.
- ❖ **arbitrary** (adjective) – random, unreasonable, irrational, illogical, discretionary.
- ❖ **deadlock** (noun) – stalemate, impasse, checkmate/stand-off.
- ❖ **come about** (phrasal verb) – happen/ occur, take place, transpire, appear/ surface.
- ❖ **persist** (verb) – continue, remain, linger.

- ❖ **bottleneck** (noun) – a condition which appears as not solvable and so delays the process; snag, difficulty/problem.
- ❖ **interlocutor** (noun) – a person who takes part in a dialogue or conversation.
- ❖ **accord** (noun) – agreement, pact, treaty.
- ❖ **address** (verb) – send, communicate, convey, forward.
- ❖ **allege** (verb) – claim, assert, accuse, charge.
- ❖ **sovereignty** (noun) – (self-governing/independent) authority, supreme power, rule.
- ❖ **integrity** (noun) – unity, solidarity, togetherness.
- ❖ **blatant** (adjective) – evident, flagrant, glaring, obvious.
- ❖ **extortion** (noun) – blackmail, demanding money (with threats), extraction.
- ❖ **sore** (adjective) – painful, hurting, aching.
- ❖ **touch a sore spot** (phrase) – to mention a matter which makes you upset or angry.
- ❖ **off the mark** (phrase) – inaccurate, incorrect, wrong; irrelevant, inapplicable, inappropriate.
- ❖ **go on to** (phrasal verb) – continue, proceed (to do something).
- ❖ **in the public domain** (phrase) – if something (e.g. information) is in the public domain, people generally know about it since it is not secret.
- ❖ **so far** (phrase) – until now, up to the present, up to this point.
- ❖ **take exception to** (phrase) – object/ oppose strongly, disagree with, protest against.
- ❖ **engagement** (noun) – participation, taking part, involvement.
- ❖ **perceive** (verb) – view, regard, consider, deem.
- ❖ **insist on** (verb) – demand forcefully, ask for, press/push for.
- ❖ **besides** (preposition) – apart from, in addition to.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try to find, try to obtain, aim for, look for.
- ❖ **keep/hold something in abeyance** (phrase) – suspend, reserve, discontinue, dissolve, terminate.
- ❖ **intensify** (verb) – escalate, raise/increase, aggravate, worsen.
- ❖ **ethnic** (adjective) – relating to a population subgroup (cultural, national, traditional/ folk) with a common national or cultural tradition.
- ❖ **insurgency** (noun) – uprising, revolt, rebellion.
- ❖ **move away from** (phrasal verb) – change /alter one's ideas/beliefs and so.
- ❖ **intransigent** (adjective) – uncompromising, inflexible, unwavering.
- ❖ **stern** (adjective) – strict, severe, stringent.
- ❖ **go beyond** (phrasal verb) – to go past something, to be more than something, exceed.
- ❖ **delineate** (verb) – describe, define, detail.
- ❖ **take something on board** (phrase) – understand, comprehend, work out, fathom out.
- ❖ **reiterate** (verb) – repeat, say again, restate.

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## LIMITED PEACE: ON UAE-ISRAEL PEACE AGREEMENT

**If the UAE does not push Israel to withdraw from occupied areas, their deal is of little value**

The peace agreement reached between Israel and the United Arab Emirates has formalised the thaw in Arab-Israeli relations that has been under way for a few years. As part of the deal announced by U.S. President Trump on Thursday, the UAE would recognise the state of Israel and establish formal diplomatic relations, while Israel would halt its controversial plan to annex swathes of the Palestinian West Bank. It is a landmark agreement given that the UAE is only the third Arab country and the first in the Gulf recognising Israel. It could pave the way for the region's Sunni Arab kingdoms and the Jewish-majority Israel enhancing regional cooperation against their common foe,

Shia Iran. Israel has said it would focus on “expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world”, while the U.S. has expressed hope that more Arab countries would follow the UAE’s lead — Arab-Israeli relations have largely been conflict-ridden ever since the state of Israel was declared in 1948. For Mr. Trump who played a critical role, it is a rare diplomatic victory just months before he seeks re-election. His other foreign policy bets — Iran, North Korea or Afghanistan — were either disastrous or inconclusive. But in the case of Israel and the UAE, both allies of the U.S., quiet diplomacy worked. The U.S. had arranged several meetings between Israeli and Emirati officials last year, which probably laid the foundations for the agreement.

While the deal has the potential to change Arab-Israeli relations for good, it also shows how the Arab countries are gradually decoupling themselves from the Palestine question. The UAE offered full diplomatic recognition in return for Israel’s suspension of a planned annexation, not for any relaxation of the actual occupation. As Prime Minister Netanyahu said, Israel made peace with an Arab country without “our returning to the 1967 borders”. The Arab Peace Initiative, a Saudi Arabia initiative endorsed by the Arab League, offered recognition to Israel in exchange for its full withdrawal from the occupied territories. Ironically, the UAE’s peace agreement comes close on the heels of the Trump administration’s back-to-back decisions to recognise Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and its sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights. Clearly, the UAE has moved away from the Arab initiative. The question now is whether the Emiratis would be able to press the Jewish state to relax its inhuman and illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and start talks between the occupier and the occupied. If it cannot, the UAE-Israel deal would be of little significance for the Palestinians. The Palestinian leadership, on its part, should understand the emerging reality in West Asia — the Arab-Israel conflict is coming to a close, but the Palestine-Israel conflict is to continue without any respite.

#### Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **of little value** (phrase) – worthless, of no use, meaningless/useless.
- ❖ **formalise** (verb) – legalize, legitimize, agree to (rules & regulations).
- ❖ **thaw** (noun) – an increase in friendliness.
- ❖ **under way** (phrase) – going on, continuing, in progress.
- ❖ **diplomatic** (adjective) – (delicate & sensitive) consular, foreign-policy, political.
- ❖ **annex** (verb) – attach, add, take over, expropriate.
- ❖ **swathe** (noun) – a wide area of something.
- ❖ **West Bank** (noun) – It is a significant amount of land located on the west bank of the River Jordan and surrounded by Israel to the north, west and south. Jordan lies to its east. The West Bank has been occupied by Israel since the 1967 Middle East war, but decades of difficult on-off talks between Israel and the Palestinians – both of whom assert rights there – have left its final status unresolved.
- ❖ **landmark** (noun modifier) – major (achievement), watershed (moment), historic (event/victory), milestone (event).
- ❖ **recognize** (verb) – to provide diplomatic recognition to a country.
- ❖ **Sunni** (adjective) – relating to Sunni branch/sect of Islam. The other branch/sect of Islam is Shia. These two sects have co-existed for centuries and share many fundamental beliefs and practices, but they differ in doctrine, ritual, law, theology and religious organisation. Ten to 13% are Shia Muslims, and 87 to 90% are Sunni Muslims in the world. Sunni Muslims live across the Arab world, as well as in countries like Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia. Shia Muslims are in the majority in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Azerbaijan. Saudi Arabia and Iran, the dominant Sunni and Shiite powers in the Middle East, often take opposing sides in regional conflicts.

- ❖ **pave the way for** (phrase) – clear the way for, create a situation to do something, precede, make provision for.
- ❖ **foe** (noun) – enemy, adversary, opponent, nemesis.
- ❖ **ties** (noun) – bond, association, relationship.
- ❖ **conflict-ridden** (adjective) – dominated/divided by conflict.
- ❖ **play a part/role** (phrase) – contribute to, be instrumental in, be a factor in.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try, attempt, aim.
- ❖ **bet** (noun) – option, choice, course of action; prediction, forecast.
- ❖ **disastrous** (adjective) – terrible/horrible, unfortunate, ill-fated, detrimental.
- ❖ **inconclusive** (adjective) – indecisive, unresolved, unsettled; debatable.
- ❖ **ally** (noun) – associate, confederate, partner, supporter.
- ❖ **quiet diplomacy** (noun) – it is a way of conduct of international relations (through the interaction of official representatives of governments or groups) to create conditions in which parties feel comfortable to act, in particular allowing parties calmly to evaluate positions and interests, to weigh options and consider independent and impartial advice.
- ❖ **probably** (adverb) – most likely, in all likelihood, all things considered, perhaps.
- ❖ **lay a/the foundation for** (phrase) – to make a start; to provide the base/ support for something to begin at first.
- ❖ **decouple** (verb) – separate, detach, disengage, dissociate.
- ❖ **in return** (phrase) – in exchange for, against.
- ❖ **suspension** (noun) – (temporary) removal, elimination, rejection.
- ❖ **annexation** (noun) – under international law, annexation is forcible acquisition of territory by one state at the expense of another state; seizure, occupation, takeover, appropriation (of territory).
- ❖ **close on the heels of** (phrase) – close behind, soon after, immediately after, following closely.
- ❖ **Arab Peace Initiative** (API) (noun) – The API aims to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, are offering to normalize relations with Israel in return for a full withdrawal to the pre-1967-war borders and a fair solution for the Palestinians.
- ❖ **Arab League** (noun) – The Arab League or the League of Arab States is a regional organization in the Arab world, which is located in Africa and Western Asia. The Arab League was formed in Cairo on 22 March 1945 initially with six members: Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria and now it has 22 member states.
- ❖ **recognition** (noun) – (diplomatic) recognition in international law is a unilateral political act whereby a state acknowledges an act or status of another state or government in control of a state (may be also a recognized state).
- ❖ **ironically** (adverb) – paradoxically, unexpectedly, strangely.
- ❖ **back-to-back** (adjective) – consecutive, successive, continuous.
- ❖ **sovereignty** (noun) – authority, supreme power, domination, rule.
- ❖ **Golan Heights** (noun) – Internationally recognized as Syrian territory occupied by Israel. Israel seized this Golan Plateau from Syria in 1967 and the status of this territory “remains unchanged”.
- ❖ **move away from** (phrasal verb) – change/ alter one’s ideas/beliefs and so.
- ❖ **inhuman** (adjective) – vicious/cruel, brutal, barbaric.
- ❖ **come to a close** (phrase) – come to an end; come to a climax; to end.
- ❖ **respite** (noun) – rest, break, interval, stop/halt.
- ❖ **endorse** (verb) – uphold, support, ratify, approve, justify.
- ❖ **relaxation** (noun) – moderation, modification.