

Hopes in Naga Peace Talks

Why in news?

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The interlocutor for Naga peace talks recently held talks with all the stakeholders, notably inside Nagaland for the first time.

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What is the Nagaland issue?

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- There is a sense among a few sections of the Naga people to form a separate new country, the **Greater Nagalim**.

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- It incorporates the entire Nagaland along with Naga-inhabited parts of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar.

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- **Peace talks** with the then most lethal insurgent group Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), NSCN(I-M) started in **1997** when their leaders agreed to a ceasefire.

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- As a culmination of over 80 rounds of negotiations over the years, a **Framework Agreement was signed in 2015**.

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- The agreement was signed by the **Centre's interlocutor** for Naga peace talks, RN Ravi and leader of the NSCN (I-M).

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- It aimed at facilitating stronger ties among Nagas across the region, without substantially changing the jurisdictional and administrative authority of neighbouring states.

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What is the reason for the delay in resolution?

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- The Naga people are a proud race and have held fast to their cultures, traditions and language.
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- There are 16 major tribes, each with a sense of nationality of its own.
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- And every tribe has its village republics which is a crucial part of their culture.
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- These diversities lead to many divergent narratives on the concept of 'nationality' and thus Naga nationalism is both a movement and a sentiment.
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- Besides, there is the issue of holding on to the Indian nation state.
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- For the Nagas, the dilemma is thus between nostalgia for its unique history and the promise of a better future without disturbing this past.
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- Given these, tribal loyalty often comes in the way of a collective discourse for the future of Nagaland.
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- The problem now is with the use of words in agreements which lend themselves to several interpretations depending on who the stakeholders are.
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What are the recent developments?

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- The Centre's Interlocutor for the Naga Peace talks is handling the issue with a more unconventional approach.
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- No other interlocutor has interacted with and met so many Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) and civil society groups.
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- For the first time, the interlocutor was able to create that integral space where all voices are heard with equal respect.
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- However, this is sometimes done at the risk of the NSCN (I-M) calling off the talks.
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- As, NSCN (I-M) feel that being signatories to the Framework Agreement they alone have the right to make major decisions.
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How does the future look?

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- The ongoing peace talks may have been initiated by the NSCN (I-M) but it has now become more inclusive.
- This perceivable political consensus and faith in the process as far as the Framework Agreement is concerned offers hope.
- For the Naga people at this juncture, the most pragmatic step is to take a balanced view of the past.

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Source: The Hindu

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