

Status of the Naga Accord

What is the issue?

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- “Naga Framework Agreement” was signed in 2015 between the Union Government and the “National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah)”.

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- But despite the initial euphoria, little has moved ahead in the deal.

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How has the framework agreement been received by the masses?

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- The exact details of the agreement aren't public yet, but the agreement has received a mixed response from various sections in the Northeast.

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- The agreement has raised expectations among the Naga people but also apprehension in neighbouring Assam, Arunachal and Manipur.

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- The apprehension are well founded as states have been created after due consideration of a number of factors.

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- Any alteration to state boundaries to satisfy Naga concerns might end up affecting the economy and finances of the neighbouring states.

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- As the framework remains secretive, a section of articulate Nagas who have asked for its terms to be made public to enable discussion and debate.

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What is the track record of NSCM-IM?

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- NSCM-(IM) emerged as the principal Naga rebel group in the 1980s, and

they entered into a peace accord with the union government in 1987.

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- They've been running a parallel government across vast swaths of Naga territory in addition to the state government.
- Negotiations for reaching a sustained solution for the Naga problem has been going on since and the agreement reached in 2015 was a significant event.
- But the organisation has come under criticism from some sections of the Nagas on multiple fronts - particularly their violent suppression of detractors.
- It has also tried to sabotage platforms such as the Forum for Naga Reconciliation for alternative discourses on the peace process.
- But to be fair to the NSCN-IM, its leaders have remained steadfast to the goal of wresting an "honourable settlement" for the Naga people from the Union.

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How has the Indian establishment reacted to the Naga cause?

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- Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) was the most prominent leader to have taken efforts to understand the Naga cause in the early decades of independence.
- He traversed across Nagaland and his interactions with the Nagas, are said to have showed incredible empathy about their history and origin.
- Notably, JP spoke for the diverse cultural landscape that made up India and demanded a cultural union even before a political union.
- Even today the tribes of this region are not influenced by the typified "Indian culture" but proudly inheritors of a unique tribal affinity.
- But after JP, India has failed to produce a statesman of his stature to take forward the aspirations of culturally significant tribal communities.
- Currently, in Indian establishment, there are deep prejudices against Naga demands, with some being completely dismissive of Naga's unique history.

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Are Naga demands constitutionally tenable?

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- Currently, Naga civil society and political leaders are working to nudge the union government towards a more pragmatic policy towards the Naga cause.
- But multiple governments have repeatedly cited constitutional constraints for meeting the Naga aspirations for autonomy.
- Contrarily, the Nagas vouch that unlike the Maharajas of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura, they never signed a formal instrument of accession with India.

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What is the way ahead?

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- Despite the tense and violent past, Nagas have journeyed a long way with the rest of India for almost 70 years now.
- A level of comfort has indeed developed between the Naga people and the larger Indian masses, which needs to be capitalised on to resolve the conflict.
- Hence, it would be desirable for both sides to pause political egos and be open minded to make compromises for future of younger and aspiring Nagas.
- The Indian dispensation too needs to realise that pluralism is a cornerstone of our constitution as long as it doesn't affect the greater good.
- Hence, the possibility of a settlement beyond the present ambit of the constitution should be kept open if needed to resolve the longstanding dispute.

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Source: The Hindu

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