

NSCN (I-M) seeks third-party intervention to break talks deadlock

Accusing the Centre of betraying the Framework Agreement of 2015, the Naga extremist group led by Thuingaleng Muivah threatened to return to violent ways

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The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland or NSCN (I-M) has sought "third-party intervention" to resolve the 27-year-old "Naga political issue", a euphemism for its conflict with the Centre.

The extremist group, which calls itself the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, also **threatened to resume its "armed resistance"** if the proposal is rejected and accused the Centre of betraying the "letter and spirit" of the Framework Agreement signed in 2015.

The "betrayal" alludes to the Centre's alleged refusal to recognise a separate Naga flag and Naga constitution the NSCN (I-M) demanded to end the conflict that began in the 1940s. The outfit claimed the Indian government agreed to recognise the "unique history" of the Nagas and the idea of "shared sovereignty". The Centre said it did not make such commitments.

"In order to conclude and realise an honourable political agreement, we rule out peaceful means against the ignominious betrayal of the letter and spirit of the Framework Agreement of August 3, 2015, by the Government of India," NSCN (I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah, also the chief political negotiator, said in a statement on Friday.

“However, in the first place, we propose a third-party intervention to resolve the betrayal of the letter and spirit of the Framework Agreement, but if such a political initiative is rejected by the GoI, NSCN shall resume the violent armed resistance against India for defending Nagalim unique history and her sovereign existence,” he said.

The NSCN (I-M) claims the Naga-inhabited areas of the northeast were made a part of India without the consent of the people. Naga groups declared “independence” on August 14, 1947, leading to decades of armed conflict with Indian security forces.

Formed in January 1980, the NSCN continued the conflict but split in 1988 into two groups—one led by Isak-Muivah and the other by S.S. Khaplang. The NSCN (I-M) declared a ceasefire with the Centre in July 1997, and its members have been living in their designated camps since.

After several rounds of talks, the Centre and the NSCN (I-M) signed the Framework Agreement in 2015 in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who called it a landmark development. This agreement was to have settled the conflict until the Centre signed the Agreed Position in 2017 with a conglomerate of Naga extremist groups opposed to the NSCN (I-M).

“The violent confrontation between India and Nagalim shall be purely on account of the deliberate betrayal and breach of commitment by India and its leadership to respect and honour the letter and spirit of the Framework Agreement... Therefore, India and its leadership shall be held responsible for the catastrophic and adverse situation that will arise out of the violent armed conflict between India and Nagalim,” Mr Muivah said.

He said the “Nagalim sovereign national flag and Nagalim sovereign constitution” must be officially recognised and acknowledged if the Centre desires an “honourable political agreement”.

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