

National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM)

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History

NSCN was formed on 31 January 1980 by Isak Chisi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and SS Khaplang opposing the Shillong Accord signed by the then NNC (Naga National Council) with the Indian government. Since then it has been carrying on an armed struggle to end Indian sovereignty over the Naga people and establish a People's Republic of Nagaland. The Indian government's persistent efforts to start a dialogue process created differences among the leadership of NSCN and this disagreement took its toll on the organisation. On 30 April 1988, after an attempt to assassinate Muivah failed, in which several of the cadres were killed, the NSCN split into two factions namely the NSCN (K) led by SS Khaplang, NSCN (IM) the NSCN led by Isak and Muivah. The former suspected Isak and Muivah of secretly initiating talks with the Indian government.

NSCN (IM), as the dominant insurgent group in Nagaland, has been active in violent activities to further its cause. In May 1994, it was believed to be responsible for the massacre of sixteen people in a church in Nagaland. In December 1996, NSCN guerrillas boarded a bus in Guwahati (Nagaland), killed thirty people and injured a further twenty-four, all of whom were Kuki tribesman. A ceasefire was agreed upon between the group and the government in 1997 and came into operation on 1 August 1997. But it ran into rough weather when the Indian government, in April 1998, alleged that the NSCN had killed eight soldiers. On 29 November 1999, an attempt was made on the life of the Chief Minister of Nagaland, SC Jamir who is

sympathetic towards the NSCN (K) faction. The organisation suffered a major set back in January 2000 when its General Secretary Muivah was arrested in Thailand while travelling on a false South Korean passport. He was released on bail, but he was arrested again when he tried to leave the country and was sentenced to one year in prison. (To date he continues to languish in prison. In addition, the trial process for the passport forgery case has begun. The cease-fire came to an end on 31 July 2000. In the meanwhile, the Indian government and the NSCN (IM) have agreed to extend the cease-fire for one more year after a meeting in Bangkok).

Objectives

The entire activity of the organisation is aimed at achieving three alternate objectives. The first alternative is about establishing an independent Nagaland comprising of the present territory of Nagaland and the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur and Myanmar. The second alternative aims at integrating the Naga inhabited districts of Manipur into a new state under the Indian constitution. The last alternative seeks to form a Southern Nagaland comprising the districts of Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong within the Indian Union.

NSCN (IM) aims to establish a People's Republic of Nagaland based on Mao's ideology. Its manifesto is based on the principle of socialism for economic development and a spiritual outlook Nagaland for Christ.

Strategy

NSCN (IM) tries to use the growing discontent among the different ethnic groups of the northeast region against the Indian state. This, it believes, will accelerate the disintegration of the latter and help the cause of Naga independence. With this objective in mind, it provides logistic support to other ethnic insurgent groups in the region like ULFA, NDFB, NLFT and PLA. It supports the militancy in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

In addition to providing logistic support, NSCN (IM) has been instrumental in propping up new insurgent organisations among different ethnic groups in the region. For example, the formation of the Garo insurgent organisation ALMA (A-Chik Liberation Matgrik Army) was a handiwork of the NSCN (IM). The same is the case with HNLC (Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council) and ANVC (A-Chik National Volunteers Council) in Meghalaya, NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura) in Tripura and HPCD (Hmar People's Convention [Democrat]) in Mizoram. NSCN (IM) coordinates the activities of these organisations. Its aim is, thus, to turn its war against the Indian state into a war of the nationalities of the region. Keeping this aim in mind NSCN (IM) formed the ULFSS (United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters) in 1993 and SDUFSEHR (Self-Defence United front of the South-East Himalayan Region) in November 1994.

The group has divided the entire region into several areas of operation with each of these militant outfits in charge of one. The NSCN (IM) plays the role of the coordinator and has tried to convert the whole northeastern region into an anti-India battle zone. Additionally the smaller ethnic insurgent groups have served to open up different sectors of confrontation as well as centres for resource mobilisation in areas beyond the NSCN (IM)'s sphere of influence.

Dialogue with the Government

A serious process of dialogue with the Indian government started in the mid-nineties. On 15 June 1995, Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao met both Isak and Muivah in Paris. It was decided to continue the process of dialogue to solve the problem. In 1996, Prime Minister Deve Gowda sent former Union Minister Rajesh Pilot on a secret mission to Bangkok to have a dialogue with the NSCN (IM) leadership. Later Deve Gowda met them on 3 February 1997 in Zurich. Following these meetings, a ceasefire came into force. While the army and other security forces complained that the group was using the ceasefire period to augment its stockpile of arms and is violating the truce conditions, the government stuck to its stand of holding negotiations. Several rounds of negotiations took place with Swaraj Kaushal as the chief interlocutor.

After the BJP government came to power installation in New Delhi, Prime Minister Vajpayee met the NSCN (IM) leadership in Paris in September 1998. Afterwards, the former Home Secretary, K. Padmanabhaiah acted as the centre's primary negotiator and met both Isak and Muivah in Bangkok for the first round of talks. The rebel leaders expressed unhappiness over the tardy progress in the negotiations. They stuck to the demand for a sovereign Nagaland, comprising many Naga-inhabited areas of neighbouring Assam and Manipur, besides the Nagaland State. Nothing concrete has emerged out of these meetings.

The peace process suffered a major setback with the arrest of Muivah in Bangkok on 19 January 2000. Padmanabhaiah was scheduled to meet Muivah in Bonn on 31 January and 1 February 2001 for another round of talks. With Muivah behind bars for one year, the dialogue process has come to a halt. While the NSCN (IM) demands that the Indian

government should pressurize the Thai authorities for Muivah's early release, the government has refused to interfere in the legal processes of another country.

In the ongoing trial in the passport forgery case, the NSCN (IM) has appealed to both the Thai and Indian governments to recognise Muivah as an essential participant in the peace process and effect his immediate release. In the meantime the talks between the central government and the representatives of the NSCN(I-M) has resulted in the extension of the ceasefire till 31 July 2001. The ceasefire had been monitored by a Ceasefire Monitoring Group based at Kohima. Headed by the Additional Secretary, Home Ministry, Dr P D Shenoy, this group comprises of representatives of the NSCN (IM), NGOs and the government. It meets at regular intervals and so far it has held twenty meetings.

Command Structure

The command structure of the NSCN (IM) is not known. But according to available sources, the top leadership comprises of Chairman Isak Chusi Swu and General Secretary Muivah. Below them are several kilonsers (ministers). Below them are senior members in charge of different regions. The organisation also maintains an army wing. It boasts an army of nearly 2,000 dedicated guerillas and enjoys a much wider support base.

External Linkages

NSCN (IM) has alliances with the Naga groups operating in Myanmar. It also has links with the Bodo Security Force. In addition, it promotes many insurgent organisations in almost all the northeastern states. It has links with Hynniltwrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and A'chik National Volunteers Council (ANVC) of Meghalaya, National Democratic Front of Bodoland in Assam, National Liberation Front of Tripura

(NLFT), A-Chik Liberation Matgrik Army (ALMA) in the Garo hills, and Hmar People's Convention (HPC) of Mizoram. It provides logistic support to insurgent groups such as the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), the NDFB (National Democratic Front for Bodoland), NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura), and PLA (People's Liberation Army).

Internationally, it has opened up contacts with organisations like the UN Human Rights Organisation in Geneva, Unrepresented Nations People's Organisation (UNPO) at the Hague and the UN Working Group on Indigenous People (UNWGIP).

Popular Support

NSCN (IM) mostly consists of Tangkhul Nagas who are in a majority in the hills of Manipur. Its influence inside Manipur is restricted to the four districts of Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong.

Funds

Drug trafficking from Myanmar is a major source of income for the NSCN (IM). Apart from that, it indulges in extortion, bank robberies and other criminal pursuits to obtain finances. The smaller ethnic insurgent groups floated by NSCN (IM) carry out their operations in coordination with the parent organisation. Seventy percent of the total income goes to the NSCN (IM) and the remaining thirty percent is left with the local groups.

In addition, the NSCN (IM) generates finances by international mobilisation. Till 1971, the USA was a major provider of arms, finance and intelligence information. Till the late 1980s, China also provided support to the organisation. Presently, Pakistan's ISI provides finance and arms to the NSCN (IM). Muivah was in Karachi before being arrested in

Bangkok. This provides an indication of the ISI's support network in the region.

Towards the end of World War II, the retreating Japanese army left behind dumps of arms and ammunition in Nagaland, which at a later period was used by the insurgents against the security forces. The erstwhile East Pakistan had also trained a large number of Naga insurgents and had provided them money and arms. Weapons are widely available in the region in the black markets. Some of them have been stolen from the Indian security forces.

Leaders

The top leaders of the NSCN (IM) are Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah. Apart from that, I Shimre is another top leader who was arrested along with Muivah. Ng Hungshi is the press and publicity secretary of the organisation. The army wing of the NSCN (IM) is headed by Ramting Thangkul and Peter Jajo.

Publications

NSCN (IM) does not have any regular publication, apart from the occasional papers it brings out. However, organizations such as Other Media in New Delhi publish materials sympathetic to their cause.