

# The Naga Rising and its position on the Indo-Naga political issue

As a platform of emerging voices, *The Naga Rising* (TNR) strives to reflect the concerns of the present and look to the aspirations of future generations.

At the heart of TNR's vision is our strong belief that the challenges confronting the Naga society can be resolved through the framework of inclusiveness and transparency guided by the principles of peaceful co-existence and democratic values.

With the objective of putting to use the platform for the larger good of Naga society however insignificant that may be, TNR took upon itself the responsibility to play a part in the Indo-Naga peace talks at a time when the political negotiations were at a critical juncture.

**TNR issued public statements on the Naga political negotiations between August 2019 and August 2020.** A summary of the positions we took, the concerns we expressed, the appeals we made, the clarifications we demanded and the ideas we offered are listed below.

## Our Positions

- In keeping with our vision statement, TNR took the stand that any resolution to the Naga political question must be through a broad-based inclusive framework.
- Drawing from the wisdom of A Z Phizo, **TNR was convinced that a give and take approach was the only way forward towards an honourable solution and for which India and the Nagas must understand each other's needs and aspirations.**
- Recognising the traditional norm and practice of the Naga political struggle, **TNR stood on the premise that the mandate for political negotiation with the Government of India rests with the Naga National Groups.**
- Guided by what we stand for in voicing the concerns of the present and motivated by the desire of the Naga people for an early conclusion of the peace talks, TNR supported a timely resolution of the Indo-Naga talks when opportunity existed for a peaceful resolution.
- Supporting the Naga negotiating parties' demand for the use of Naga flag, **TNR took the stance that the Naga flag is an expression of Naga identity and unity. It is a symbol of pride and resolve among the Naga people and a powerful rallying point to bring the Naga community together.**
- On the Naga Constitution, **TNR was of the view that a separate constitution or basic law (*Yehzabo*) cannot be fully derived from the Indian constitution alone, and hence it should emerge as a product of the Indo-Naga peace accord.**
- TNR considered the mention of "the two entities" in the Framework Agreement and the Agreed Position as claimed by the Naga Political Groups to be an achievement as it meant gaining something more than what the Nagas have today.
- TNR noted with gratitude the timely resolution of the Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization's (UNPO) for a peaceful settlement of the Indo-Naga issue and took the stand that the **UNPO resolution was a reminder of the international obligation for the Government of India to fulfil its commitment towards a peace agreement that is honourable, inclusive and mutually acceptable.**

## Our Concerns

- TNR raised its voice when a PMO order allocated the NSA to handle the Naga talk. It asked whether that would change the role and reporting-authority of the Government of India interlocutor. **TNR reminded Delhi, with concern, the dangers of downgrading the Naga issue from a political one to a law and order issue.**
- **TNR cautioned the Government of India to ensure that the political leadership take the lead in resolving the Naga issue and not let it be held hostage to the security and military establishment.**
- **TNR took note of the risks of the Government of India undermining the peace process and pointed out that any such move would be imprudent at a time when negotiations were in the final stages.**
- When public anxiety grew over the uncertainties, TNR expressed its concern and urged for peaceful atmosphere to prevail both in the run-up to the signing of the agreement, and thereafter.
- Articulating its apprehensions over the Naga negotiating parties taking the drastic step of deciding on 'all or nothing', **TNR suggested that accepting a mutually agreed settlement would demonstrate both magnanimity and statesmanship on the part of the**

## Nagas negotiators before the world.

- When the Interlocutor ridiculed Naga political groups as 'armed gangs' and conveniently blamed them of 'brazenly running their respective so-called Governments', TNR expressed concern over what kind of solution should people expect from the political talks under his watch.

## Our Demands

- When the negotiating parties interpreted the mutually agreed document differently and indulged in claims and counterclaims, TNR sought clarification and demanded for clarity and accountability so that the final political solution leaves no room for misinterpretation in future.
- Drawing lessons from past experiences of Indo-Naga negotiations, **TNR demanded written guarantees from the GoI to facilitate all 'unresolved issues' through a sustained and continuous political engagement within a reasonable time frame to hold Delhi to its commitments.**
- Taking into account the need for mechanisms and institutions to execute specific provisions of the agreement, TNR demanded clear timelines and institutional arrangements.

## Our Appeals

- TNR urged both the Government of India and the Naga negotiators to explore the full range of possibilities towards a peaceful agreement by exhibiting utmost flexibility and accommodation.

To ensure that an agreement is not forced upon the other, TNR appealed for a solution that was mutually agreed and that both sides were contended with the mutually agreed outcome.

- TNR called upon the Government of India to honour the political commitment and assurance it had given through recognition of 'the unique-history and position of the Nagas' and 'the historical and political rights of the Nagas to self-determine their future in consonance with their distinct identity.'
- **TNR appealed to Nagas elders, tribal hohos and civil society to explore innovative ideas to address the differences and divisions between the Naga negotiating parties.**
- **Keeping in mind the need to seek convergence of the parallel talks for an early conclusion, TNR urged the Naga negotiating parties to work with those mediating between them in finding a way out.**
- **When confusion about the peace process created wariness among the public, TNR sought clarification from the Government of India and insisted that it must come out with a clear roadmap on how it intended to sign and conclude the negotiations.**
- Driven by our vision for an inclusive framework, TNR urged the Government of India to convince Myanmar to agree for the Nagas across the border to be part of the Pan-Naga Cultural Body.

## Our Ideas

- TNR proposed the appointment of a Group of Naga Interlocutors to mediate between the different Naga warring groups that would facilitate convergence and conclusion of the talks.
- To ensure a smooth and peaceful transfer of power and competencies, TNR suggested the need for a power and responsibility sharing arrangement among the Naga political groups.
- Upholding the aspirations towards a shared belonging as one people, TNR offered the idea of creating the non-territorial arrangement to be the collective focus of the Nagas transcending physical boundaries.
- With BJP governments in the three crucial states of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, TNR suggested that it was the best time for a solution and an opportunity for Nagas outside Nagaland to self-govern themselves.
- TNR suggested that any agreement reached would be a step forward and a start in the step-by-step approach towards resolving the complexity of our political issue that required time and effort and approach it through peaceful and democratic means.
- TNR advocated that starts are important as it would form the base to begin the process of building and healing our land.
- TNR offered the view that the Nagas' ability to stand together today would create a new journey for us to take peaceful and democratic resolutions of all pending issues in their own time and that would be the best guarantee for our land and our identity as a people.

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