

PRESS RELEASE

August 07, 2015

“Indian National Congress has steadfastly championed and sacrificed for upholding India’s territorial integrity and finding lasting peaceful solutions within our constitutional framework. Peace, prosperity and social harmony in the North- Eastern States have always been an article of faith for the Congress Party.

Indian National Congress has not only tackled insurgency/militancy/naxalism strongly but has engaged with various insurgent groups/outfits with a sense of responsibility to bring them back into the National mainstream by building a National consensus around lasting solutions from one corner of the country to another i.e. Punjab to North-East.

This innate belief in the principles of unquestionable ‘territorial integrity’ of India, ‘cooperative federalism’ and ‘National consensus’ led the Congress Party headed by late Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi to sign the ‘**Assam Peace Accord**’ on 15th August, 1985 and ‘**Mizo Peace Accord**’ on 25th June, 1986.

Considering the unique history of Nagas, successive efforts at building lasting peace were made in shape of – (a) **June, 1947** – ‘Naga-Akbar Hydari Agreement; (b) **July, 1960** – ‘16 Points Peace Agreement’; (c) **01.12.1963** – Constitution of separate State of Nagaland and insertion of Article 371A in the Constitution; (d) **1964** – Ceasefire Agreement; (e) **11.11.1975** - Shillong Agreement; (f) **25.07.1997** – Temporary Ceasefire Agreement with NSCN(IM); (g) **2002** – Temporary Ceasefire Agreement with NSCN(K) and (h) **31.07.2007** – Indefinite continuance of the Temporary Ceasefire Agreement with NSCN(IM). A separate note containing brief description of the peace efforts is attached as **Annexure A-1** to this press release.

On 3rd August, 2015; BJP Government headed by Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi announced signing of a Peace Agreement with NSCN(IM) of Shri T. Muivah. A press statement in this regard was also issued by NSCN(IM) of Shri T. Muivah, copy of which is attached as **Annexure A-2** to this press release.

Indian National Congress fully supports finding a lasting peaceful solution to the Naga problem through the process of dialogue within our constitutional framework. Congress Party has, therefore, welcomed the initiative of government to a peace agreement with NSCN(IM). We also deprecate the attempt by certain elements within ruling establishment to view the peace agreement from the point of view of partisan politics.

As a responsible political opposition, Congress Party places the following fundamental issues in public domain on behalf of people of country in general and North-East in particular:-

1. ‘Cooperative Federalism’ runs through the veins of our constitutional scheme. It is, therefore, imperative that the stakeholders i.e. the elected governments of

Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal and Manipur are taken into confidence while signing a peace agreement. Needless to add that all these four States are special category States under Articles 371A, 371B, 371H and 371C of Constitution of India respectively.

Modi Government has chosen to keep the elected governments of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur in complete dark with no involvement either in the process of negotiation or finalization of terms of peace agreement. What is appalling is the fact that till date, elected governments of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur neither have knowledge of terms of accord nor have they been consulted.

Arrogance of Modi Government in breaching the principles of cooperative federalism with impunity is, thus, writ large.

2. Most dismaying is a deliberate attempt to mislead the Nation by Modi Government's minister – Smt. Nirmala Sita Raman yesterday. Smt. Nirmala Sita Raman told a patent lie that Chief Ministers were called for a meeting to discuss the peace agreement by Prime Minister but they refused to come. We would like to place on record unequivocally that the meeting being referred to happened on the day of the full Niti Aayog meeting where amendments to the Right to Fair Compensation Act, 2013 were discussed. Chief Ministers of the Congress-ruled States had made their stand clear and declared well in advance that they will not be attending the meeting. Purported meeting, now being cited by the government in hindsight, was on the same day when all Chief Ministers of North-Eastern States were asked to come. No agenda for the meeting was communicated, orally or in writing to the Chief Ministers, nor was there any intimation that the Naga Peace Agreement will be discussed. Congress Chief Ministers boycotted the meeting on account of complete indifference of Prime Minister to grant an audience for full six months on a demand to discuss the issue of special status for North-Eastern States. Nation cannot be hoodwinked in this fashion.
3. Peace Agreement was signed by Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 3rd August, 2015. Parliament is in session. Till date, Parliament has not been informed about the terms of the Peace Agreement.

Even Union Cabinet has not been informed about the Peace Agreement nor has it been approved by the Union Cabinet as per the established practice.

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has also chosen to not call an all-Party meeting to take them into confidence qua the terms of the Peace Agreement.

What is shocking is the fact that till minutes before signing of the Peace Agreement, even the concerned Ministry i.e. Home Ministry was in complete dark. What is most worrying and stunning is the fact that even Home Ministry is stated to have written to Prime Minister Office asking to be informed about

details of the Peace Agreement. Even more stunning are the news reports appearing today suggesting that Indian Army is also in complete dark vis-à-vis the details of the Peace Agreement and has written to Ministry of Home Affairs asking for its stand on the Peace agreement besides details of how it is going to affect the area of North-East. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/army-seeks-clarity-on-pact-asks-mha-what-it-means/>

Complete distrust and total disconnect on part of PMO in the entire Union Cabinet, particularly Home Ministry and the Armed forces are, thus, writ large.

4. Prime Minister has also violated the time tested and honoured practice of putting all such peace agreements for approval of the Union Cabinet besides taking all-political parties in confidence qua its terms, irrespective of agreement or disagreement.

On 15th August, 1985; Assam Peace Accord was signed by former Prime Minister, late Shri Rajiv Gandhi. On 16th August, 1986; the then Congress Government convened an all-party meeting as also submitted details of the Accord to Parliament. Many political parties including Left Front and Forward Block leaders had then opposed the Assam Peace Accord.

Similarly, on 25th June, 1986; Mizo Peace Accord was signed. The then Prime Minister, late Shri Rajiv Gandhi announced the Mizo Peace Accord on 30th June 1986 and its details were made public there and then. On 1st July, 1986; BJP and Janata Party had opposed the Mizo Peace Accord stating that the then Congress Prime Minister was going soft on militants. In August, 1986; Parliament passed two laws, i.e. one granting statehood to Mizoram and second, a special status for the State of Mizoram.

Despite opposition, complete details of the peace agreements were approved by the Union Cabinet, all political parties were taken into confidence and details were placed in Parliament as also in public domain.

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and BJP government have violated this cardinal principle of democracy.

5. Newsreports, statement of MOS Home and press release of NSCN(IM) (Annexure A-2) suggest that a framework agreement has been concluded between Government of India and NSCN(IM). Details of the framework agreement need to be shared with not only Union Cabinet, but also Parliament, all political parties and people of the country.

Reports, however, also suggest that 'a peaceful political solution will be worked out' later. Details of framework for agreeing to such subsequent political solution also need to be spelled out in National interest. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi owes it to the Nation to place these facts in public domain."