

Gol to Complete Talks with NSCN-IM This Year

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The Government of India has decided to complete the process of talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (I-M) within this year, and the leadership of the militant outfit has also agreed to the Government's decision. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), contrary to what has been reported in a section of the media, has not decided to withdraw the ceasefire agreement with the Khaplang faction of the NSCN.

Highly placed sources in the ministry said that immediately after assuming office, the present Government at the Centre decided to expedite the peace talks with the militant groups, which signed ceasefire pacts to solve their problems through talks. Sources said that after the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), RN Ravi was appointed as the Government's interlocutor for the Naga talks, the format of the talks has been changed. Instead of holding formal rounds of talks, now series of meetings are being held between the leaders of the NSCN (I-M) and the Centre's interlocutor. The leaders of the NSCN (I-M) can now meet the Centre's interlocutor any time to discuss any issue and that resulted in speeding up the process of talks.

Without going into the details, sources said that some issues are yet to be thrashed out between the Government and the NSCN (I-M) leaders. Sources however, expressed the hope that all the differences would be thrashed out for paving the way for signing of a formal agreement with the outfit within this year as the leaders of the outfit are also keen on early solution to the issues. It may be mentioned here that talks with NSCN (I-M) have been going on since 1997 and the slow progress of the talks had become a matter of serious concern.

Meanwhile, MHA sources revealed that the Centre is willing to extend the ceasefire agreement with the Khaplang faction of the NSCN, which expires on April 29. Sources, however, said that the Centre has expressed its displeasure to the NSCN (K) leaders on the outfit extending help, directly or indirectly, to different militant groups of North East. The issue will be taken up again when formal meeting is held between the Centre and NSCN (K) is held to discuss the issue of extending the ceasefire agreement.

A ceasefire agreement with the NSCN (K) was signed in the year 2000 but till today formal talks on political issues are yet to start. In the meantime, there have been reports that different militant groups of the North East including the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) are using the facilities of the NSCN (K) in Myanmar.

-Assam Tribune