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Full Text: ULFA's PEACE ACCORD FOR ASSAM

ASSAM / Assamese / Indigenous Peoples

by ARABINDA RABHA — December 30, 2023 in ASSAM, Indigenous Peoples, Justice, Politics Reading Time: 24 mins read

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ARABINDA RABHA



MoS with ULFA

1. Preamble

1 Assam is home to numerous indigenous communities having their distinct identities, socio-cultural traditions, languages, etc.

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These communities have immensely contributed to the rich heritage of Assam as well as diversity of the country. However, the problem of illegal influx posed serious challenges to the indigenous Assamese communities and adversely impacted the demographic composition, socio-cultural milieu, land and forest resources, and overall economic and political fabric of the State.

In order to secure their rights, Civil Society Organisations of Assam carried out democratic agitations from time to time.

The Government of India and the Government of Assam have been making concerted endeavour to protect the political, social and economic interests of the indigenous communities, preserve their cultural heritage, restore peace and ensure rapid economic development of the State.

Several legal and administrative measures were taken to this end in the past.

1.2 The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) was formed on April 7, 1979 as an armed group in Assam in the backdrop of serious politico-socio-economic disequilibrium in the society on account of large scale illegal influx over decades. ULFA launched armed campaign with the avowed objective of making Assam independent. However, after more than three decades of violent conflict with security forces, ULFA signed a tripartite Suspension of Operations (SoO) Agreement with Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam on September 3, 2011, which led to initiation of peace talks.

1.3 Notwithstanding a number of attempts in the past to address the demands of ULFA through peaceful dialogue, the issues remained unresolved. The Government of India and the Government of Assam recently held several rounds of talks with ULFA in furtherance of this objective, which culminated in the signing of this tripartite Memorandum of Settlement (MoS). While the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam remain committed to protect the interests of the indigenous communities, ULFA agreed to shun the path of violence, join the peaceful democratic process as established by the law of the land, and uphold the integrity of the country.

2. Political Demands

2.1 The Govt. of India agrees to maintain the territorial integrity of the State of Assam. However, the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam are committed to amicably resolve boundary disputes of Assam with neighbouring States.

2.2 The Govt. of India will consider recommending to the Election Commission of India to follow, as far as possible, the broad guidelines and methodology, which was adopted for the delimitation exercise held in Assam in 2023, in future delimitations as well. Some of these parameters used in the exercise are rate of growth of population, density of population, principles of historicity of areas and communities, geographical continuity, physical features, facilities of communication and public convenience.

2.3 The Govt. of Assam agrees to constitute a Committee to examine and recommend measures for implementation of political reservation for OBCs/MOBCs in the Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats in the State.

2.4 The issue of exemption for State of Assam from Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, 1955 is currently sub judice in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Further action, if necessary, will be taken on the basis of the decision by the apex Court.

2.5 A citizen of the country who is ordinarily resident in an Assembly Constituency shall only be entitled to be registered in the voter list of that Constituency. No person shall be registered in the voter list for more than one Constituency.

2.6 Effective measures will be taken to prevent enrolment of illegal migrants in the voter lists. All precautions will be taken to ensure thorough scrutiny of new voters at the time of revision of electoral rolls. The verification exercise should be carried out under the direct supervision of the District Electoral Registration Officer.

3. ST Status for Communities

The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2019 has been introduced by the Govt. of India in the Rajya Sabha to include certain communities in the list of the STs in relation to the State of Assam. The Govt. of Assam has constituted a Committee of Group of Ministers (CGoM) to examine and suggest on the different aspects of reservation of six communities in the State. The Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam will make efforts to expedite the process after signing of the MoS.

4. Reservation in Education/Employment

4.1 The Govt. of Assam agrees to consider initiating measures to divide OBCs/MOBCs into separate categories and specify quantum of reservation for each category for the purpose of reservation in educational institutions and employment under the State Govt. The State Govt. has already constituted the Assam Backward Classes Commission in April 2022 under the Assam Backward Classes Commission Act, 1993 towards this objective.

4.2 In order to advance the interests of the indigenous communities, the Govt. of Assam may review, from time to time, its policy for reservation in educational institutions and employment under the State Govt.

5. NRC/Illegal Immigration

5.1 Foreigners detected after preparation of the corrected and error-free NRC shall be dealt with as per the law of the land.

5.2 The issue pertaining to re-verification of NRC is currently sub judice in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Further action, if necessary, will be taken by the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam on the basis of the decision by the apex Court.

5.3 Effective measures, including use of latest state of the art technologies, will continue to be taken jointly by the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam to secure international borders to prevent fresh illegal influx into the country.

5.4 The State Govt. will take necessary steps to augment the capacity of Assam Police Border Organisation as a second line of defence

on the international border in order to effectively prevent illegal influx into the country.

6. Land/Forest

6.1 For efficient management of land resources, the Govt. of Assam will take steps to digitalise all land holdings, preferably within 3 years of signing of the MoS.

6.2 As per the recommendation of the Govt. of India towards establishment, administration and management of a system of Title registration of immovable properties, the Govt. of Assam will consider proposing suitable legislation to provide Conclusive Land Titles to members of indigenous communities who are genuine land holders.

6.3 The Govt. of Assam will take necessary steps to prevent shrinkage/decrease of prime agricultural land. No agricultural land will ordinarily be allotted or settled for any other purpose except when the State Govt. is of the view that the intended purpose is in public interest such as establishment of industry for employment generation, construction of public institution/office, hospital, dispensary, etc.

6.4 Newly created 'Char' (river islet) areas will be treated as government land. Necessary measures will be taken to prevent further encroachment in 'Char' areas and other government land including reserved land (PGR, VGR, Wet lands, etc.).

6.5 Encroachment in 'Char' areas as well as in other government land will be identified through satellite imagery in a time-bound manner. Effective measures will be taken to remove/evict such encroachments and prevent re-encroachment in the cleared areas. However, rights of indigenous people protected under the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 shall be respected in the process of eviction/removal.

6.6 The State Govt. will consider utilising 'Char' land for other purposes such as large scale plantations to increase the green cover.

6.7 Existing mechanisms at the State and District level will be strengthened to review the status of all land allotted/leased by the Govt. for various purposes in order to ascertain (i) if such land has been put to use for which it was allotted/leased, (ii) whether any of the terms and conditions has been violated by the allottee, and (iii) if any land in excess of allotment has been encroached by the allottee.

6.8 In order to preserve the sanctity of iconic/heritage locations, the Govt. of Assam will consider taking steps to identify all such locations and ensure, as far as possible, that land in and around such locations is transferred through sale/purchase only to local residents. Effective steps will be taken to protect surrounding areas of such locations from encroachment.

6.9 The Govt. of Assam will consider formulating suitable policy to take over land acquired through various anti-encroachment measures and set up a land bank thereupon to settle landless people.

6.10 The Govt. of Assam will take necessary steps to protect forest land from being encroached. Forest Department will co-opt local communities, who have emotional attachment with the forest and its flora/fauna, in such efforts.

7. Tea Gardens

7.1 The Govt. of Assam will consider constituting a Committee under the Chairmanship of a Cabinet Minister to examine the issue of sick tea gardens and recommend steps as to how to revive them. The Committee will also study various issues relating to welfare of the tea garden workers and recommend appropriate measures to address their grievances, in consultation with all stakeholders including the plantation owners.

7.2 Persons belonging to Tea and Ex-Tea garden community will be given preference in allotment of land acquired from Tea Estate under the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956, as amended from time to time.

7.3 Efforts will be made by the Govt. of India to re-locate the Office of Tea Board of India from Kolkata to a suitable location in Assam.

8. Identity, Culture, Heritage, etc.

8.1 The Govt. of India may consider facilitating acquisition of land at Delhi and provide financial assistance for construction of a Community Centre, which will inculcate the spirit of Srimanta Sankardev and Lachit Borphukhan, at the national level.

8.2 The Govt. of India may consider setting up a Visual Art University in Assam to promote film production, performing arts, animation etc.

8.3 The Govt. of India may consider establishing a Regional Centre of Lalit Kala Academy for the North East in Assam.

8.4 The Govt. of Assam will set up an Archaeology Research Centre at Tezpur.

8.5 An Ethnic Museum will be set up by the Govt. of Assam in Dhemaji, which was the second capital of Ahom kingdom (Dhemaji Habung).

8.6 A heritage centre will be set up by the Govt. of Assam at Jamugurihat (Sonitpur district) for preserving the "Bhaona Culture".

8.7 Cultural Academy and Research Centres will be set up by the Govt. of Assam in erstwhile Lakhimpur, Darrang, Goalpara (to be named after Pratima Pandey Baruah), Kamrup, Sivasagar, Cachar and Nagaon districts, which are known for their rich cultural tradition since pre-Independence days.

9. Rehabilitation and Resettlement of armed cadres

9.1 ULFA shall abjure the path of violence, give up all arms/ammunition and disband the armed organisation within one month of signing of the MoS. All designated camps/Nav Nirman Kendras occupied by ULFA armed cadres shall be vacated forthwith. Possession of *any* weapon after signing of the MoS shall be considered illegal.

9.2 ULFA shall submit a list of their cadres to Addl. DG, Special Branch, Assam within a week of signing of the MoS. The names of cadres shall be scrutinised and verified by the Screening

Committee headed by Addl. DG, Special Branch, Assam, before their rehabilitation. Unverified cadres shall not be given any rehabilitation benefit.

9.3 A Committee headed by Addl. DG, Special Branch, Assam shall assess the rehabilitation needs of individual cadres based on age profile, educational qualification, general area of residence etc. The Committee may also involve concerned Departments of the State Govt. and successful entrepreneurs/NGOs in the process. The Committee will function under the supervision of the Secretary, Home & Political Department, Govt. of Assam.

9.4 Necessary measures will be taken by the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam to rehabilitate the members of ULFA. Such measures shall include (i) lump sum payment of ex-gratia as per extant policy, (ii) funding economic activities through existing Govt. schemes relating to fisheries, piggery, organic farming, poultry farming, agro-based industries, tea/rubber/indigo plantation, etc. (iii) trade/vocational/skill development training based on locally available resources, and (iv) recruitment in appropriate Govt. jobs as per eligibility.

9.5 Efforts will be made to cover the members of ULFA under various ongoing Central/State Govt. schemes for employment generation and other benefits, as per norms. Land used for designated camps/Nav Nirman Kendras will be considered for allotment by the State Govt. to homeless ULFA members.

9.6 Criminal cases registered against cadres of ULFA for non-heinous offences will be withdrawn by Govt. of Assam as per procedure established by law. Criminal cases registered in connection with heinous offences will be reviewed on case to case basis according to the existing policy on the subject. Efforts will be made to complete the exercise preferably within six months of signing of the MoS.

9.7 Army/Paramilitary, Central Armed Police Forces and Assam Police will organise recruitment rallies for eligible cadres of ULFA as well as other youths in the State. Pre-recruitment training rallies will be organised by the agencies to facilitate the process.

9.8 The Govt. of Assam may consider reviewing from time to time the existing policy for recruitment in Police department with respect to reservation for former militants and recruitment of youth in militancy-affected districts.

9.9 The Govt. of India, Govt. of Assam and ULFA have made sincere efforts over the years to trace out the cadres of ULFA who went missing from time to time, but without much success. ULFA leaders reiterated the issue and submitted a list (31) of senior cadres who are missing for over last two decades. On compassionate grounds, the Govt. of Assam agrees to examine the issue and provide financial compensation of Rs. 10 Lakhs to the next of kith and kin of each of these missing cadres, based on due verification by Police. The State Govt. will also endeavour to provide a permanent source of livelihood to the wives (8) of missing cadres based on their eligibility.

10. Planned Development

10.1 The Govt. of India will take up a number of developmental projects in Assam in the next few years covering core infrastructure sectors such as Road Transport & Highways, Railways, Flood and Soil Erosion, Petroleum & Natural Gas, MSME, Textiles, MEITY, etc. A list of identified projects is at Annexure — I. 10.2 The Govt. of Assam will also take up a number of developmental projects in the State in the next few years covering various sectors such as Energy, Petroleum & Natural Gas, Roads & Bridges, Floods and Soil Erosion, Wetland Development, Education, Cottage Industry and Delivery of services to improve ease of living. A list of identified projects is at Annexure — II.

11. Special Development Package

11.1 A Special Development Package of Rs. 5000 Crores will be provided over a period of five years with matching contribution by the Govt. of India and the Govt. of Assam for various developmental initiatives in the State.

11.2 Illustrative list of projects which may be considered for implementation under the Special Development Package subject to feasibility and availability of funds is appended at Annexure — III. Specific projects to be implemented will be mutually decided by

the parties to the MoS.

12. Joint Monitoring Committee A Joint Monitoring Committee with representatives of Govt. of India (MHA), Chief Secretary/DGP of Govt. of Assam and ULFA shall be set up to periodically monitor implementation of the MoS. The Committee will also monitor progress of execution of various developmental projects undertaken under the Special Development Package. The above Agreement is signed on December 29, 2023 at New Delhi in the presence of Hon'ble Union Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, and Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sharma. Following representatives of ULFA append their signature to this Agreement :-

1. Rajib Rajkonwar 2. Pradip Gogoi

(Chairman) (Vice-Chairman)

3. Golap Baruah 4. Chitra Hazarika

(General Secretary) (Finance Secretary)

5. Pranati Deka Hazarika 6. Shashadhar Choudhury

(Cultural Secretary) (Foreign Secretary)

7. Hitesh Kalita 8. Deepak Daimary

(Deputy Commander-in-Chief) (Publicity Secretary)

Chief Secretary Addl. Secretary/NE

Govt. of Assam MHA, Gol

Dr. Himanta Biswa. Sharma

Chief Minister, Assam

Annexure-I

List of Developmental Projects to be taken up by Gol

A. ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

1. Highway from Diphu to West Karbi Anglong via Hamren

2. 4-lane Gauripur Bypass from Dumardohan to Baladmara via Khudimari, Fulkumari, Charaldanga, Sajuarkuti, Geramari

3. Two lane road from Majuli to Jorhat on NH-715K

4. Stage strengthening of NH-127C from Samthaibari to Dadgiri

5. New Bridge over River Gai on NH-15

6. River Training Work for New 2-Lane Major Bridge between Majuli and Jorhat

7. Construction & up-gradation of NH-127C from Samthaibari to Galengphu (Indo-Bhutan Border)

8. Widening of NH-329

9. Tamenglong – Mahur Road from Jiri River to Hangrum

10. 4-Laning of Bilasipara-Tulungia and Silchar-Jiribam

11. 4-Laning of Silchar ISBT of NH-37 and NH-6

12. 4-Laning of NH-37/NH-8 near Sutarkandi (Spur Connectivity to Indo/Bangladesh Border) and proposed Nilam bazar/ Cheragi Bypass on Silchar-Churaibari
13. 4-Laning of NH-8 (proposed Nilambazar/Cheragi Bypass near Chandkhira Village and near Churaibari Village (Assam/Tripura Border) on Silchar-Churaibari
14. 4-Laning of Malidor-Ratachera-Kalain-Badarpur
15. 4-Laning of Silchar-Jiribam
16. Construction of new highway from NH-37 near Pailapool to NH-137 connecting Jaipur, Harinagar, Kumarcherra, Zinam, Hagrum (Mahur-Tamenglong Road)
17. (a) 4-Lane Approach road from Numaligarh side to Brahmaputra Tunnel on South Bank
(b) 4-Laning of Brahmaputra Tunnel Connectivity across River Brahmaputra between Gohpur (on NH-15) and Numaligarh (on NH71)
(c) 4-Laning of Approach road from End of Brahmaputra River Tunnel to Gohpur side on North Bank
18. Guwahati Ring Road including Brahmaputra Bridge
19. Implementation of wild life friendly measures on Kaziranga National Park stretch of NH-715 Baihata to Sonapur section) and (Basistha to Jorabat section) on NH 37

B. Railways

20. World Class Station Building at Kamakhya Railway Station
21. New Railway line Salona-Khumtai
22. New Railway line Tezpur-Silghat
23. Saraighat Bridge doubling
24. Doubling of Kamakhya — New Guwahati — 3rd Line
25. Doubling of Lumding – Tinsukia Jn – Dibrugarh railway line
26. Multi-tracking of Azara- Tetelia
27. Multitracking from Khandikar- Kendukona (Rangia By-pass)
28. Chandranathpur — Agartala
29. Agthori – Dekargaon (New line)
30. New lines : Ledo – Jairampur- Kharsang; Gogamukh—Jorhat; Jowai-Khlieriat— Chandranathpur; Kokrajhar-Gelephu

C. FLOOD AND SOIL EROSION

31. Anti-erosion measures at different reaches of river Kushiya
32. Raising and strengthening of Dyke from Bahari to Baghbar
33. Anti-erosion measures at different reaches of river Garuphella
34. Anti-erosion measures at different reaches of river Longa
35. Protection of Majuli island from flood and erosion of river Brahmaputra

36. Integrated Water Resources Management of Buridehing Basin
37. Integrated flood and erosion management of Manas and Beki rivers in Baksa and Barpeta districts
38. Integrated flood and river bank erosion manaaement works at Rohmorla
39. Protection of Flood embankment along Kollong river from Raha to Jagi
40. Construction of Dyke along right bank of river Kollong from Dhankhunda to Gobardhan hill and sluice gate at Dhepujjan, Ghoramarajaan and Kajolijan
41. Protection of Kolbari and Lality area from the erosion of river Brahmaputra (Construction of three nos of spurs and a check dam)
42. Protection of various villages from the erosion of river Aie
43. Rejuvenation, bioremediation and conservation of Silsako Beel at Guwahati

D. PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS

44. Pipeline from Duliajan to Majuli
45. Laying of pipeline from Narayanpur, Assam to Banderdewa & Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh
46. Pipeline from Guwahati, Assam to Sandrup Jonkhar, Bhutan
47. Pipelines from Silchar, Assam to Imphal, Manipur via Jiribam
48. Pipeline from Baihata, Assam to Panikhaiti, Assam and from Sonapur, Assam to Tura & Mairang, Meghalaya.
49. Capacity augmentation of Bongaigaon LPG Plant
50. Laying of Guwahati-Silchar-Imphal Product Pipeline (GSIPL)
51. Bongaigaon Refinery Expansion
52. Geleki Redevelopment Project
53. Creation Of Captive Power Plant (CPP) at Geleki
54. Creation of Surface Facilities and Redevelopment of Geleki Field
55. Pipeline Network Project, Rudrasagar
56. Creation of Captive Power Plant (CPP) at Rudrasagar
57. Pilot implementation of Chemical Enhanced Oil Recovery (CEOR) in Rudrasagar, Lakwa, Lakhmani

E. MSME

58. Development of New Industrial Estate at Chenga, Bahari, District Barpeta
59. Setting up of a new industrial estate at 2, Dhemajibari, Biswanath Cherialx
60. Up-gradation of the Integrated Infrastructure Development
Centre IIDC, Silapathar, District Dhemaji
61. Development of New Industrial Estate at Maizgram, District
Karimganj

62. Up-gradation of the Integrated Infrastructure Development Centre, Titabor, Jorhat
63. Development of New Industrial Estate at Dighalichapari, District-Sonitpur
64. Infrastructure Development Facilities & Up-gradation in the existing Complex, Manja, Karbi Anglong, Assam.

F. TEXTILES

65. Eri and Muga Silk Development Project for creation of livelihood of forest communities
66. Integrated project for Eri Silk Industry
67. Project for empowering women from forest dependant communities in Soil to Silk value chain (Ava Creation – SPV)

G. MEITY

68. Research Centre for Nano-technology.

Annexure-!!

List of Developmental Projects to be taken up by Govt. of Assam

A. ENERGY

1. Development of 3000 MW Solar power projects in Assam
2. Increased Hydro-Power generation by expansion of KarbiLangpi Project with additional 50 MW
3. Develop Assam as a region hub by establishing 250 MW Battery Energy Storage.
4. Increased power supply in the State by exploiting green sources by developing 212 MW Solar Parks in the State
5. Development of anew 25 MW Namrup Solar Power Project
6. Development of 20 MW Sonbeel Solar Power Project at Karimganj

B. PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS

7. Increased oil and gas business in Assam in the midstream and downstream *by* expanding the capacity and diversification of NRL into 9 MMPTA

C. ROADS AND BRIDGES

8. Improved rural connectivity by construction of new and strengthening of Resilient Rural Bridges in the State
9. Improvement of communication by taking up of Assam Bridge project connecting Palashbari
10. Special focus and investment for development of Roads in Hill Areas in Assam with suitable designs for Disaster Resilience

D. FLOODS AND SOIL EROSION

11. Protection of lives and livelihoods of people of Assam in flood affected areas by taking up Integrated River Basin Management Projects
12. Long term and sustainable development of Brahmaputra riverine areas by taking up projects like Climate Resilient Brahmaputra Integrated Flood and River Erosion Risk Management Programme
13. Climate Resilient Brahmaputra Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Project in: (a) Assam-Dibrugrh and Tinsukia Sub Project (Zone-A) (b) Assam-Morigaon Nagaon Tezpur Sub project (Zone-B) (c) Assam-Guwahati West P:G.P Sub project (Zone-C) (d) Assam-Barpeta Goalpara Dhubri sub project (Zone D)

E. MISCELLANEOUS

14. Systemic transformation of Governance & Service Delivery in Assam to make it more pro-people and accountable by targeted investments
15. Focussed Investment to develop modern Urban Infrastructure and Urban Sector in Assam to promote Ease of Living
16. Develop and Implement time-bound program to cover all major towns of Assam with urban gas distribution to provide connections to all households in 5 years

F. WETLAND DEVELOPMENT

17. Eco-Conservation and Development of Assam Wetlands and Integrated Fisheries in a sustainable manner
18. Mission Mode and focused efforts and investments to support School education in Assam

H. COTTAGE INDUSTRY

19. Bell metal, Brass metal and charcoal depot based industries to be established in Sarthebari (Bajali District). State Govt. to look into the problems of easy availability of raw material to ensure survival of Bell based Assamese handicraft cottage industry.

Annexure-III

Illustrative list of developmental projects to, be implemented under Special Development Package,

A. EDUCATION

1. IIM at Guwahati subject to laid down govt. norms
2. School of Planning and Architecture subject to laid down govt. norms
3. Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER) subject to laid down govt. norms
4. A University in the name of Su-Ka-Pha in Charaideo district subject to laid down govt. norms
5. Education Park at Guwahati to impart interacting, demonstrative and physical education to youth on physical science, life and social sciences.
6. Training School for imparting hands on training in Oil and Gas operations

B. RAILWAYS

7. North Eastern Frontier Railways to be re-constituted to cover only the States of North East Region subject to laid down norms of Railway Board.
8. Railway equipment manufacturing plant at Bongaigaon

C. FLOOD AND SOIL EROSION

Flood and erosion problem will be treated as a national priority

D. INDUSTRY

10. Food processing Industrial park in Malinibari of Silchar District.
11. Special Economic Zone at Daranga Mela area of IndoBhutan border (Baksa District).
12. Industrial area for value added production from Banana in Goalpara district

13. Industrial area for value added production from Pineapple in Karbi Anglong district

14. A bamboo-based industry in Barak Valley

E. TOURISM

15. Development of Kaziranga as a high-end national level tourist attraction centre with various entertainment amenities, Botanical and Floral Garden, Orchid Centre, Eco Forest Museum and opportunities to showcase local culture, craft, cottage industry, etc.

16. Tea Museum at Dibrugarh

17. Development of tourist spots at .Rangghar, Talatalghar, Karengghar, Khaspur ruins, Brahmaputra waterfront at Guwahati, battlefield of Saraighat war and Bogeebil.

18. Development of water sports activities at Bogeebil (Dibrugarh District).

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18. Development of water sports activities at Bogeebil (Dibrugarh District).

F. SPORTS

19. A multi-facility sports complex with Centre of Excellence in Volleyball at Nalbari

20. Centre of Excellence for Football in Dibrugarh and Baksa districts

21. Multi-purpose sports complex at Darrang and Charaideo districts

22. Football Academy at Kailashbari (Nagaon District).

G. AGRICULTURE

23. An internationally accredited Organic Produce Certification

Centre to be set up in Assam Agriculture University.

24. A Regional Pesticide Testing laboratory to be set up at Guwahati.

25. Muga Parks at Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sivasagar and South Kamrup with special incentives to Muga producers. Rural areas (Dhakuakhana, Dhemaji, Charaideo and Boko) to be declared as eco-sensitive zone for survival of Muga silk culture.

26. Setting up of a Germplasm Bank in Horticulture College at Nalbari (Lokhopur) for development of indigenous varieties of flora and fauna and collection and preservation of indigenous/heirloom seeds.

27. Solar Cold Storage in Sadia

H. ACT EAST POLICY

28. An international cultural centre in Guwahati to promote people to people socio-cultural contact with neighbouring countries.

29. An International level amusement park to be set up near Mayang and Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary area in collaboration with private sector.

1. SKILL DEVELOPMENT

30. Skill Development Centres will be set up to function in close coordination with industry and impart specialised training to the youth for enhancing their capabilities in areas that are in demand overseas such as hospitality, healthcare, construction, manufacturing etc.

J. BIO-FUEL SECTOR

31. A Committee will be constituted to study and recommend on promotion of investment and formulation of policy in consultation with Niti Aayog to make Assam a hub for green energy.

32. Green Banks will be set up to provide financial assistance for green energy projects.

K. WETLAND DEVELOPMENT

33. Development of eco-tourism and state of the art water sports hub along with fresh water fisheries at Pahu-Garh (Sivasagar district), Kalang River (Nagaon district) and Deuri Silabandha bil (Kaliabar), From Bouta bil to Kapfa bil Wetland (hiafbariBarpeta district), Dheer Bill (Dhuburi district), MatapungMaguri bill (Tinsukia district) and Bagibill of Dibrugarh district.

L. ROADS AND BRIDGES

34. Bridges at (i) Boko-Mukalmua (ii) Disangmukh-Matmora (Sivasagar district-Lakhimpur district) (iii) Lahorighat (Morigaon district) – Udalguri (Udalguri district), and (iv) Mora Deopani-Amarpur Telia Bari to be constructed.

35. Construction of road from Khatkhati to Namrup Dilighat bridge along Assam-Nagaland boundary.

36. Reopening of road communication on Goalpara – Dalu – Nalitabari axis (road along Indo-Bangladesh boarder which links different border trade points).

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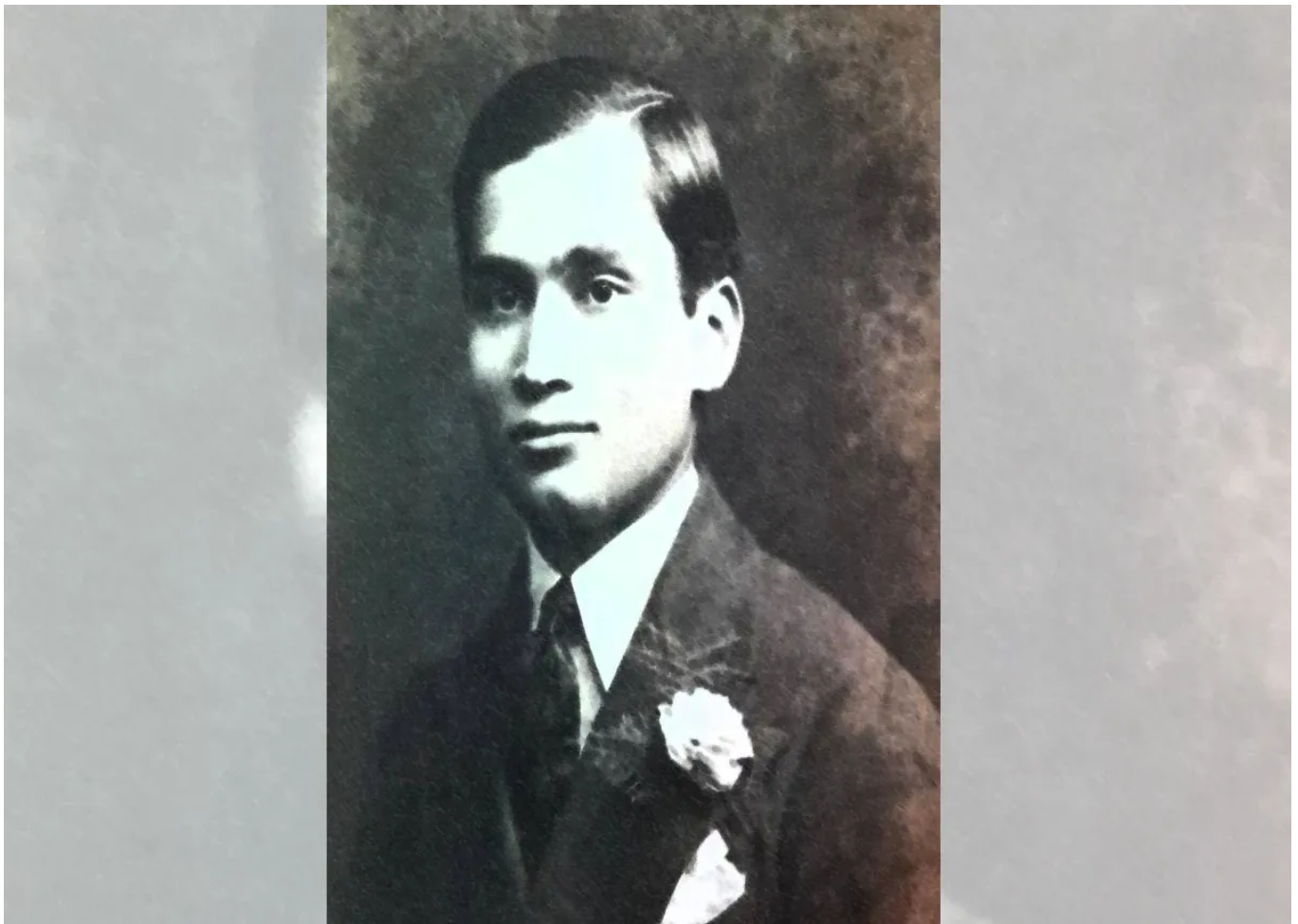
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by Dilip Daimary — December 30, 2023 in ASSAM, Indigenous Peoples, Politics Reading Time: 9 mins read

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Embracing Peace: The **ULFA** Peace Accord and **Assam** !!

DILIP DAIMARY



In a historic turn of events on December 29, 2023, Assam witnessed the signing of a momentous tripartite Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) between the pro-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Government of India, and the Government of Assam.

The signing ceremony, graced by the distinguished presence of Union Home Minister *Amit Shah*, Union Home Secretary *Ajay Kumar Bhalla*, I.B. Director *Tapan Deka* and Assam Chief Minister *Himanta Biswa Sarma*, marked a significant milestone in the history of a region that has grappled with insurgency for over four decades.

The ULFA Chronicles: The genesis of the ULFA can be traced back to 1979 when it emerged from the crucible of Assam's struggle against undocumented immigrants.

The demand for an independent state of Assam fueled a militant insurgency that persisted for years, resulting in violence, loss of lives, and a protracted struggle for autonomy.

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However, internal divisions within the group eventually led to the creation of the pro-talks faction, led by Arabinda Rajkhowa and Anup Chetia, and the ULFA (Independent) faction, under the leadership of the elusive Paresh Barua.

The peace talks gained momentum when leaders from the pro-talks faction, including Rajkhowa and Anup Chetia, decided to return to Assam from their foreign sanctuaries.

The signing of the peace accord on December 29 marked the culmination of 12 years of negotiations, offering a glimmer of hope for lasting peace in the insurgency-stricken state.

Elements of the Peace Accord

Renouncement of Violence: A pivotal departure from their militant past, the pro-talks faction committed to renouncing violence, surrendering arms and ammunition, and disbanding their armed organization. This commitment symbolized a turning point, signifying the group's dedication to a new era of peaceful coexistence.

Government Commitments: The Government of India pledged an economic package exceeding ₹1.5 lakh crore for Assam's comprehensive development. This package spans infrastructure, national highways, railway lines, industries, and various projects aimed at catalyzing holistic growth in the region.



United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) signed a tripartite Memorandum of Settlement pact with the Centre and the Assam government in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

Disbandment of ULFA: In adherence to the accord, the ULFA pro-talks faction will disband within two months of the signing. A two-member committee will oversee the agreement's implementation, emphasizing a commitment to the peace process.

Peace and Stability: Union Home Minister Amit Shah emphasized the government's commitment to establishing lasting peace in the Northeast, particularly Assam. The successful implementation of the agreement is expected to eliminate violent groups in Assam and foster an environment of stability and tranquility.



Sociopolitical Milestone: The peace accord is being hailed as a landmark development in Assam's sociopolitical landscape. It addresses the protracted issues related to insurgency, violence, and armed struggle that have persisted for over four decades, offering a ray of hope for a more peaceful future.

The Opposition's Skepticism: While the government views the accord as a significant achievement, there are voices of skepticism within the opposition. Some political leaders have referred to it as a "half-baked solution" and questioned the absence of certain key elements, such as a reference to the Assam Accord.

Delimitation and Indigenous Rights: The agreement tackles the delimitation of constituencies, assuring that the principles applied in recent exercises will be followed in the future. Promises have been made to safeguard the rights of indigenous people, protect land rights, and review the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to address irregularities.

Development Projects: The accord outlines a comprehensive development package, including projects related to education, culture, sports infrastructure, tourism, and economic initiatives. The government aims to invest in 60 projects, contributing to the overall development of the state.



Committee Formation: A time-bound program for the implementation of the agreement will be developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and a monitoring committee will be formed to oversee the fulfillment of the commitments.

The Exclusion of ULFA (Independent) Faction: Notably, the peace accord excludes the ULFA (Independent) faction led by Paresh Barua, which has sought discussions on the issue of “sovereignty.” The signing of the accord with the pro-talks faction is seen as a step toward creating conditions for broader peace in the region, including potential negotiations with the ULFA (Independent) faction.



The Socioeconomic Implications: Beyond the political and security dimensions, the ULFA Peace Accord holds significant socioeconomic implications for Assam. The economic package promised by the government, exceeding ₹1.5 lakh crore, is a testament to the commitment to address the developmental needs of the region comprehensively. This multifaceted investment spans crucial sectors such as infrastructure, industries, education, and tourism.

The infrastructure development projects, including national highways and railway lines, are poised to enhance connectivity and accessibility, laying the groundwork for economic growth. The creation of industries and the emphasis on economic initiatives are expected to generate employment opportunities, fostering prosperity and stability.



Arabinda Rajkhowa

Inclusivity and Indigenous Rights: The assurance to safeguard the rights of indigenous people and protect land rights addresses longstanding concerns related to demographic changes and illegal migration. The commitment to review the National Register of

Citizens (NRC) acknowledges the need for a comprehensive and accurate record of residents, mitigating concerns related to citizenship and identity.

The delimitation of constituencies, guided by principles such as the rate of population growth, density, historicity, and geographical continuity, is a step toward ensuring fair representation and political empowerment for indigenous communities. The emphasis on indigenous rights is crucial for preserving the unique cultural and demographic fabric of Assam.



Anup Chetia

Addressing Opposition Concerns: While the government celebrates the ULFA Peace Accord as a landmark achievement, opposition voices have raised valid concerns. The absence of explicit references to the Assam Accord in the peace agreement has sparked skepticism among political leaders who stress the importance of addressing historical agreements that have shaped the state's trajectory.

In a diverse and politically charged landscape, achieving broad-based acceptance of the accord requires transparent communication, inclusive dialogue, and a commitment to addressing the concerns of all stakeholders. The road to lasting peace is often fraught with challenges, and the success of the accord hinges on navigating these challenges effectively.



Paresh Barua

The Excluded ULFA (Independent) Faction: The exclusion of the ULFA (Independent) faction led by Paresh Barua raises critical questions about the inclusivity of the peace process. While the accord with the pro-talks faction marks a significant step forward, achieving comprehensive peace in Assam necessitates engaging with all relevant stakeholders.

The elusive Paresh Barua, who remains outside the peace agreement, continues to represent a potent challenge. His faction's insistence on discussions about "sovereignty" underscores the complex nature of the issues at stake. The government's ability to create conditions conducive to dialogue with the ULFA (Independent) faction will determine the comprehensiveness of the peace achieved.



So called 'Historic Assam Accord', 1985 signed with the Assam Agitation Leaders by Govt of India; still not implemented !

As Assam embarks on this transformative journey, the successful implementation of the ULFA Peace Accord will require sustained efforts, transparency, and collaboration between all stakeholders. The echoes of the peace accord are reverberating, and the hope is that they resonate with the dreams and aspirations of every citizen in Assam, paving the way for a brighter and more harmonious tomorrow.



Tapan Deka, Director IB

The ULFA Peace Accord represents a beacon of hope for a region that has borne the brunt of insurgency and violence for far too long. It is a testament to the power of dialogue, negotiation, and the collective will to forge a path toward peace and prosperity. The economic commitments, political assurances, and emphasis on indigenous rights signal a comprehensive approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges that have gripped Assam.

However, the journey toward lasting peace is inherently complex, and the success of the accord will depend on the ability to navigate the intricacies of Assam's sociopolitical landscape. Inclusivity, transparency, and a commitment to addressing historical agreements will be pivotal in ensuring that the dividends of peace reach every corner of the state.

As Assam turns the page on a new chapter, the hope is that the ULFA Peace Accord becomes a model for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in other regions facing similar challenges. The resilience of the people of Assam, coupled with the commitment of

leaders and stakeholders, has the potential to transform a region once marked by conflict into a beacon of harmony, development, and coexistence.

The journey ahead is undoubtedly challenging, but the pursuit of peace is a collective responsibility that transcends political affiliations and individual interests. As the sun sets on the era of insurgency, may it rise on a landscape illuminated by the promise of a peaceful and prosperous Assam.



30-12-2023

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