



Evolution of Naga Hills Tuensang Area : An overview of Eastern Nagaland

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Background :

The Eastern Nagaland area presently comprises of six districts namely; Tuensang, Mon, Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak and Shamator. The whole area is inhabited by seven major tribes such as, Sangtam, Chang, Konyak, Yimkhiung, Khiamniungan, Phom and Tikhirs and very little population of sumis. The Tuensang town serves as a nerve center of the eastern part of Nagaland. All this area remained totally unadministered in the pre-independence days and so the British had declared it as excluded area. The region was left outside the 'innerline', a bureaucratic division separating tea gardens and other areas of commercial interest for the colonial government in the Northeast from areas that were unadministered or partially administered. In 1948, for the first time, an administrative centre was established at Tuensang. In 1945 the entire Naga Hill areas including eastern Nagaland was brought under the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA). In 1957, the Tuensang Frontier Division (Eastern Region) was separated from the NEFA and merged with the Naga Hills District of Assam to form a new administrative unit called the Naga Hills Tuensang Area. The administration of NHTA was the responsibility of the Governor of Assam under the control of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. There were only three districts at that time in Nagaland i.e., Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang. It was under the banner of Naga Hills Tuensang Area, on 1st December 1963 a full-fledged state of 'Nagaland' was created as the 16th state of the Indian Union.

Special provisions were made for the then Tuensang District in view of its relative backwardness, under which the district would have a Regional Council of its own for a period of Ten years with the Deputy Commissioner as chairman. The Regional Council also nominated tribal representatives to be the member of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. There was a separate Ministry for Tuensang affairs from amongst the nominated members of the area. However in 1973, at the end of the ten year period the Regional Council was abolished and the people of Tuensang District began to participate in the elections to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly along with the rest of the state. The Region became just another part of state without any special provision and was subsequently divided into Districts like Tuensang, Mon, Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak and Shamator. (Arunabh Saikia, jan'03 2018)

Even in the legal point of view, the constitution of India 1949 under article 371 A speaks about special provision with respect to state of Nagaland. Article 371 clause 2(b), has a special mention that 'where any money is provided by the Government of India to the Government of Nagaland to meet the requirements of the state of Nagaland as a whole, the Governor shall in his discretion arrange for an equitable allocation of that money between the Tuensang district and the rest of the state. Has this provision really got implemented?

It is generally aware of the fact that the fruits of development have not reached the common men and women. This is true, in the areas under eastern Nagaland where the region is yet to see the light of the day. There is a big development gap and this is the core of the issue. While policies and programmes do exist, it is the 'governance deficit' which has contributed to the present day problem. It is not just that development programmes or government funds are lacking but simply the fact that these have not been implemented properly. Clearly, the present State (Nagaland) has failed to deliver the goods to the people. This is the verdict coming out of the Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organisation grievances. There is a growing demand for It is something for the State government to gloss over and try and find some answers quickly.

Nevertheless, the ENPO will also realize the fact about how successive governments in Nagaland have also given enough opportunities to the region in terms of fund allocation, development initiative, leadership position etc. In fact since Statehood, several public leaders from the region have been given the opportunity to serve as Member of Parliament. Quotas, funds, relaxations etc continue to be doled out although their implementation also needs to be improved upon. Much more could have also been done by leaders from the region to improve the lot of the people. But sadly, majority of leaders are from poor background driving them with a tendency for selfish gains at the cost of public benefit. Having said that, the genuine grievances presented by the ENPO merits immediate attention and correction. Separation from present Nagaland is however not the answer.

Socio-economic realities of Eastern Nagaland

The Eastern Nagas were almost half a century behind the other Naga brothers. The reason why the whole Eastern Nagas accepted the Christian Missionaries and embraced the Christian faith was solely out of hope and trust that Nagas as one Christian family will be able to work together and progress together in life. However in the process, the Eastern Naga tribes had to suffer a lot and is still suffering from that association. Eastern people have not received much benefits from that friendship with the advanced Naga tribes. Since the Nagas of NagaHills were advanced in the field of Education, even grade 1V jobs in the Eastern Naga areas were being filled up by the educated ones. The job that was created were all taken away by the advanced brothers. The educated leaders and Government bureaucrats took advantage of the eastern areas, which led to the wide disparity among the family. After the statehood, Tuensang was not under Nagaland State Assembly but had a Regional council of its own which was kept under External Affairs.

The huge amounts meant for the development of Eastern Areas are siphoned off by people in power. People who get posted in eastern areas takes it as an opportunity to give backward excuses, relax and then take away anything that is meant for the development of the villages. Even after sixty years of statehood there are many villages untouched by modernity. There are many who are yet to see the fruits of development of the present statehood. The employment in the state has grossed more than one lakh and the percentage of Eastern Nagas employed in the government sector is too less. The successive government keeps on creating vacant posts in the backward areas by allowing the government employees posted in the eastern villages to be transferred along with the posts to other towns. This is the major reason why the government schools in the villages are existing and running without sufficient teachers.

Those that have not ventured out of their hearth may say that all are being treated equally but those who visited the Eastern Areas get to see the reality being so appalled by the living conditions of the villagers. One can't even imagine that the eastern villagers are economically so poor even to feed their children forget about educating them. It is not surprising thing to see so many children from eastern areas working in others house to work as maids and servants. The data published by DUDA -department of state government under the Title "Eastern Nagaland at a glance " shows that there is a vast gap that exists between the eastern districts with the rest of the state on all the development metrics. The literacy rate are much lower and the unemployment rate is significantly high and the health infrastructure is in a very bad shape. It is a known fact that the funds meant for the development of the state is siphoned off by people in power of both the backward and advanced tribes for their own benefit. Despite all the circumstances stated above, there is still a ray of hope for the people of the region to govern themselves once a popular demand for creation of 'Frontier Nagaland state' is achieved.

Ref: THE NAGA HILLS TUENSANG AREA ACT 1957