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Naga Talks Move to Ministerial Level, While the NSCN-IM Splits

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Naga Talks Move to Ministerial Level, While the NSCN-IM Splits

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

At a press conference on **August 29, 2026**, Nagaland Chief Minister **Neiphiu Rio** said that Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** had **agreed to have the Union Ministers of State for Home Affairs engage with the Naga political groups** involved in negotiations. Rio said the decision **had been communicated** to the Naga negotiating groups and that the process was **currently underway**.

The Home Minister has **agreed**. The decision has been **communicated**. **No ministerial-level talk has been held**. In his Independence Day address on **August 15, 2026**, Rio was still urging the Centre to reach out to the negotiating parties **so that the committee could commence its work**. This is an announcement about a process, not an outcome.

WHAT NAGALAND HAS BEEN ASKING FOR

The demand has a precise origin. At a meeting of the **Political Affairs Committee** of the Nagaland government on **September 1, 2025** at Kohima, chaired by the Chief Minister and attended by the Deputy Chief Ministers, ministers, MPs, advisors and MLAs, the PAC resolved:

- that **peace talks be resumed at the political level** to expedite negotiations, and
- that the Government of India **elevate the dialogue to the highest political level by appointing an interlocutor of political or ministerial rank**, having the confidence and mandate of the government.

What has been offered so far is a committee headed by a Minister of State, not an interlocutor of ministerial rank. The PAC's actual demand remains outstanding. The two Ministers of State for Home Affairs are **Nityanand Rai** and **Bandi Sanjay Kumar**.

A CORRECTION YOU WILL NEED

A. K. Mishra, a retired IPS officer of the 1987 Rajasthan cadre and former Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau, served as the **Ministry of Home Affairs Adviser for the Northeast** and the Centre's Naga interlocutor from around **October 2021**. **His tenure ended in the first week of February 2026**.

The incumbent, in post since 2026, is Ajit Lal, a retired IPS officer of the 1974 Himachal Pradesh cadre, former Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau and former chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee in the National Security Council Secretariat, appointed, as the background above says, around **February 10, 2026**. The Naga Students' Federation met him in New Delhi in July 2026 on the peace process.

A second correction of the same kind. R. N. Ravi, a 1976-batch IPS officer of the Kerala cadre, was the Naga talks interlocutor from **2014 until September 2021**, when he resigned after Naga groups objected, and was Governor of Nagaland from 2019. He was sworn in as **Governor of Tamil Nadu on September 18, 2021** and held that office until **March 12, 2026**; he is now, as of 2026, **Governor of West Bengal**. Tamil Nadu's Governor is **Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar**.

THE DEVELOPMENT THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING, AND WHICH THE NEWS REPORTS OMIT

A Myanmar-based breakaway calling itself the "**Eastern Flank**", led by **Ikato Chishi Swu**, son of the late NSCN-IM chairman Isak Chishi Swu, declared a "**provisional government**" at an emergency meeting. It resolved that the spirit of the **1997 ceasefire** has "**ceased to exist**", and accused the leadership of **Thuingaleng Muivah** of abandoning the **sovereignty** demand and implicitly accepting the Indian Constitution.

Why this matters more than the ministerial announcement. For three decades the Centre's Naga strategy has rested on one assumption: that the NSCN-IM speaks for the armed Naga movement and that a settlement with it settles the question. A split means the Centre may now negotiate a final agreement with a party that a faction of its own cadre no longer accepts. It is the most serious disturbance to the process since the Framework Agreement of 2015.

Muivah, born **March 3, 1934** and now **92**, remains NSCN-IM General Secretary, styled **Ato Kilonser**. He personally hoisted the Naga flag at the group's headquarters, **Camp Hebron**, on **August 14, 2026**, the date Nagas have marked as their declaration of independence since 1947. **Isak Chishi Swu died on June 28, 2016**.

THE TWO AGREEMENTS, AND WHY NEITHER SETTLED ANYTHING

	FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT	AGREED POSITION
Date	August 3, 2015	November 17, 2017
Parties	Government of India and NSCN-IM	Government of India and the Working Committee of Naga National Political Groups
Signed by	R. N. Ravi and Th. Muivah , in the presence of the Prime Minister	GoI and the WC-NNPGs
Text public?	No. Never released.	Terms partially known

The unresolved core. The Framework Agreement refers to a “new relationship of peaceful co-existence of the **two entities**”. The NSCN-IM reads this as recognition of **shared sovereignty**. **The Government has never endorsed that reading.** In 2020 the NSCN-IM published its own copy and accused Ravi of circulating a modified version to the NNPGs. **Treat the interpretation as contested, never as agreed.**

The two Naga camps differ fundamentally. The **WC-NNPGs**, a conglomerate of seven groups formed in 2016 and a rival to the NSCN-IM, has publicly stated that **total Naga territorial integration is “not possible at this time”** and that self-determination must be balanced against contemporary political realities. The **NSCN-IM** holds flag, constitution and integration to be non-negotiable.

Flag and constitution

The NSCN-IM’s statements of **August 14 and 17, 2026**, issued against that background, reiterate that any final agreement must recognise the **Naga national flag and national constitution**, the **Yehzabo**. **The Government of India has rejected both and has never conceded them.** This is the stalemate, and it is live.

GREATER NAGALIM, AND WHY THREE STATES OBJECT

	AREA
NSCN-IM’s claimed Nagalim	About 1,20,000 sq km
Nagaland’s actual area	About 16,579 sq km

The claim covers Naga-inhabited areas of **Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**, and Naga areas of **Myanmar**. **Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh all oppose any transfer of territory.** The Nagaland Assembly has endorsed integration resolutions five times between 1964 and 2015.

The precedent that shows the stakes. When the ceasefire was extended “**without territorial limits**” in **June 2001**, Manipur erupted; its Assembly building was set on fire. Any territorial concession is therefore a question of public order in a neighbouring state, not only a negotiating position.

THE CEASEFIRE

The Government of India and NSCN-IM ceasefire was **announced on July 25, 1997** and took effect on **August 1, 1997**, initially for three months. It has been renewed since under **Ceasefire Ground Rules**, monitored by a Ceasefire Monitoring Group and a Joint Monitoring Group.

No 2026 extension of the NSCN-IM ceasefire is on record. *Write that it has been in force since 1997 and periodically renewed; do not assert a current extension. Through 2026 the NSCN-IM has repeatedly alleged ground-rule violations by security forces in Ukhrul district.*

THE OTHER TRACK: FRONTIER NAGALAND

The background agreement came on **February 5, 2026**, when the Centre, the Government of Nagaland and the **Eastern Nagaland People’s Organisation** signed a tripartite **Memorandum of Agreement**.

*ENPO’s original demand was a separate “Frontier Nagaland” state. What was agreed is the **Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority**, an autonomous authority within the State of Nagaland. The two are not interchangeable.*

The FNTA covers the six eastern districts of **Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak and Shamator**, with **46 subjects** devolved. The enabling **Bill was deferred in the March 2026 Assembly session** over concerns about delegating legislative powers, and in August 2026 ENPO accused the state government of trying to dilute the agreement’s core provisions. Rio said on **August 29** that the Bill would be tabled in the Assembly session beginning **September 1, 2026. It has not been passed.**

THE CONSTITUTIONAL BACKDROP

Article 371A was inserted by the **Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962** and came into force on **December 1, 1963**. No Act of Parliament applies to Nagaland in respect of:

- ① **religious or social practices of the Nagas,**
- ② **Naga customary law and procedure,**
- ③ **administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, and**
- ④ **ownership and transfer of land and its resources,**

unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides. The Article also gives the **Governor special responsibility for law and order** in the state, and provided for a **Regional Council for the Tuensang district.**

Its origin is the **16-Point Agreement of July 26, 1960** between the Government of India and the **Naga People's Convention. Nagaland became India's 16th state on December 1, 1963**, inaugurated by President **S. Radhakrishnan.**

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Federalism, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein. Article 371A and the FNTA together make a strong case study in asymmetric federalism, including the difficulty of devolving legislative power to a sub-state authority.

GS Paper 3: Linkages between development and spread of extremism; security challenges in border areas. The Naga process is the longest-running **insurgency** negotiation in India and the NSCN-IM split is a live illustration of how fragmentation complicates settlement.

GS Paper 2 again: Government policies and interventions. A negotiation that has produced a Framework Agreement in 2015, an Agreed Position in 2017, and no final settlement in eleven years is a precise example of implementation failure despite political agreement.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio said on August 29, 2026 that Union Ministers of State for Home will engage the Naga groups.

The ministerial-level talks have been agreed and communicated but have not yet been held.

The Centre's MHA Adviser for the Northeast and Naga interlocutor is Ajit Lal, appointed around February 10, 2026.

A. K. Mishra held that post from about October 2021 until early February 2026 and must be written in the past tense.

R. N. Ravi was Naga interlocutor from 2014 to September 2021 and is now Governor of West Bengal, from March 12, 2026.

The NSCN-IM split on July 21, 2026 when a Myanmar-based "Eastern Flank" under Ikato Chishi Swu declared a provisional government.

The Framework Agreement was signed on August 3, 2015 by R. N. Ravi and Th. Muivah before the Prime Minister; its text is unpublished.

The Agreed Position was signed on November 17, 2017 between the Centre and the Working Committee of NNPGs.

NSCN-IM demands a Naga flag and constitution, the Yehzabo; the Government of India has rejected both.

The GoI-NSCN-IM ceasefire was announced on July 25, 1997 and took effect on August 1, 1997, initially for three months.

NSCN-IM claims a Nagalim of about 1,20,000 sq km; Nagaland's own area is about 16,579 sq km.

Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh oppose Greater Nagalim; the claim also covers Naga areas in Myanmar.

Article 371A was inserted by the Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962 and came into force on December 1, 1963.

Article 371A shields Naga religious and social practices, customary law, customary justice, and land and resources.

Central Acts on those subjects apply in Nagaland only if its Legislative Assembly passes a resolution to that effect.

Nagaland became India's 16th state on December 1, 1963, inaugurated by President S. Radhakrishnan.

The 16-Point Agreement was signed on July 26, 1960 between the Centre and the Naga People's Convention.

The FNTA Memorandum of Agreement of February 5, 2026 covers Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak and Shamator.

Th. Muivah, born March 3, 1934, is NSCN-IM General Secretary; chairman Isak Chishi Swu died on June 28, 2016.

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