

VANTAGE POINT

A Newsletter on Non-Traditional Security



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ISSUE COMMENTARY - NARRATIVES FROM THE NORTH-EAST

Naga Peace Process – The Next Steps in 2025

Written By **Pratyush Pran Sarma**

Perhaps the most important ongoing conflict resolution in India, the Naga Peace Process has been protracted through several agreements and subsequent disagreements. However, 2024 was a year where significant steps were taken to advance the negotiations between the Central Government and several factions representing the values and demands of the Naga people.

Major Developments in 2024

1. The resumption of peace took place in October 2024 talks after the Central Government's invitation to the leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM). Despite the consultative meetings among the various tribal bodies and civil society organisations for prompt conflict resolution, several challenges persist such as the unification of several Naga factions and the demand for a separate flag and constitution.



Credit: PTI

2. The formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) in May 2024 by the Nagaland Government comprises the council ministers and leaders from all political parties within the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly. The major objective of the PAC is to ensure the facilitation of an acceptable resolution to the Naga issue by creating a more inclusive platform for the Naga peace process.

3. The Naga National Political Groups (NNPG) also appealed to the Central Government on 31 October 2024 to finalise the peace agreement in Nagaland following the terms agreed back in 2019. The NNPG has reiterated its demands for a separate page for the Naga people in the Indian passports and a bicameral legislature in Nagaland.

What to Expect for 2025:

The Nagaland Government so far has remained optimistic with caution since peace was promised long back by the Central Government. However, the government's representatives have been actively engaging with several Naga leaders including Thuingalen Muivah, the General Secretary of the NSCN (IM). While the year 2024 witnessed a renewed effort in the advancement of the peace process, several challenges remain.



1. The demand for a separate Naga flag and constitution has been insisted on by the NSCN-IM for a long time now. However, the rejection by the Indian government has been a bone of contention between the two sides, despite the cultural recognition of the Naga flag.

2. The Framework Agreement of 2015 signed between the NSCN-IM and the Central Government talks about “share sovereignty” but does not elaborate on the details and definition. Distrust prevails whenever there is such a lack of clarity between the two sides.

3. The creation of the “Greater Nagalim” demanded by the NSCN-IM talks about the integration of all the Naga-inhabited areas in Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Such a demand received strong opposition from the neighbouring states and could lead to violent border conflicts.

4. The fratricidal differences between the Naga people in the form of factions such as the NSCN-IM and the NNPGs further create issues of non-interaction and non-compliance and further downfall into insurgency. Whereas the NNPGs are keen on accepting a settlement without the Naga flag and constitution, the NSCN-IM is not agreeing to any peace process if these demands are not fulfilled by the Central Government.

5. Naga Civil Society Organizations such as the Naga Hoho, Naga Mother's Association and Naga Students' Federation have managed to put their voices across, some in favour of NSCN-IM and some just looking forward to a practical solution. There is also a general distrust among the civil society that such prolonged peace processes would not result in a peaceful Nagaland.

While the Central Government and the Naga side are willing to resolve the decades-old conflict, several challenges lay ahead. 2025 will be a crucial time period in assessing whether consensus can be established on the issues of Naga sovereignty and its territorial integration with the rest of Naga-inhabited regions.



The views expressed through this piece are personal.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human Trafficking - Menace & Nexus in India

Written by **Arsh Thorat**

Human trafficking is the illegal exploitation of humans for cheap labour, sexual exploitation, and criminal profits, an occupation for centuries that has added to the colonial agenda of subservience and meeting global cheap labour demands. The perpetrators include poverty, unemployment, corruption, conflict, and exploitation as motivation for the people to fall into their hands. Eradication of human trafficking involves awareness, education, enforcement, empowerment, and violence.

Sections 372 and 373 criminalise child sex trafficking through prostitution, while the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (IPTA), the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 and The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 are used for prosecution. The government's anti-trafficking bill, the 2023 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, has replaced the IPC through sections 95-99 & 144 & 143. Laws also include the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, one of the most debated legislations in Indian history. The monumental changes in this issue were further strengthened by cases such as the State of Uttarakhand v. Sartaj Khan on 7 December 2017 and the Bandua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India in 1997.



Police detain an activist during a November 2016 protest against child trafficking in Kolkata, India.

Credit: Bikas Das/AP Photo

Even though the Indian government is making significant efforts to eliminate trafficking along with the responsible governments of the States and union, the conviction remains low, protection efforts are inadequate, and courts rarely award restitution. The lack of accountability for government employees contributes to widespread impunity. The 2023 GSI estimates say that 11 million people are living in India with modern slavery. India reported 2,200 cases of Human Trafficking in 2022 (National Crime Records Bureau) where the victims often include children and women from the marginalised communities.

The challenges faced by the Government of India continue to emerge from the inefficiency of otherwise well-made laws. To maintain decentralisation in our federal democracy, the powers are divided between the States and the Centre through the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution and in such a case, a lack of coordination between them can create inefficiency. Apart from that, the socio-cultural norms that perpetuate vulnerabilities can be observed in certain communities where traditional beliefs and practices limit women's access to education and healthcare, thereby increasing their susceptibility to the reasons why they submit to being trafficked and enslaved.



Credit: Rachel La Corte/AP Photo

The root causes of the issue can be found in the issues of access to basic needs. The first issue considered is Poverty and Unemployment. It is seen how the economic hardships drive individuals to seek better opportunities but often fall prey to traffickers. The issue of Gender Inequality and the resultant discrimination against women and girls increases their vulnerability, which is a major reason for traffickers to approach them. Weak border control is another reason how the traffickers exploit India's porous Borders with Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

SECURITISING THE HUMAN

Creating Skilled Human Resources Through Governmental Policies: Challenges and the Way Ahead

Written by **N. T. Malavika**

India requires a skilled workforce for the economic development and global competitiveness. With a rapidly growing population, the importance in sealing the skill gap and enhancing employability has become urgent. To look into this, the government has launched several initiatives, such as the Skill India Mission, which aims to provide relevant industry training to the citizens.

Government Policies for Skill Development in India

The Skill India Mission which was launched in 2015, is a wide-ranging program which was designed to encourage skill development through schemes, such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). These initiatives emphasize on creating a group of skilled workers in fields such as manufacturing, services, and technology. Public-private partnerships are also encouraged to support training with market needs and improve the quality of education and employment outcomes. Furthermore, incorporating occupational training into education is a crucial strategy to ensure skill development at every level.



Challenges in Skill Development

At present, India faces major challenges in executing effective skill development programs. One main issue is the disparity between the skill

taught by the education system and the practical demands of the informal sector. Inadequacy of infrastructure, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, limits access to quality training centres. Moreover, funding shortages and resource allocation difficulties continue to affect the impact of these programs. Many rural and economically underprivileged populations lack access to online learning tools, therefore making it difficult to profit from technology-driven skill programs.

The Way Forward

To overcome these issues, India must work on firming professional education and training while focusing on regional skill development personalized for local industry needs. Utilizing technologies, such as AI-based learning platforms, can also improve the accessibility of training. Collaborations between industries, educational institutions, and the government should be further encouraged to enhance the quality of skill development and ensure job-ready candidates.



India's demographic dividend can be a powerful navigating tool for economic growth, but only if its youth are prepared with the right skills for the evolving job market. By addressing these challenges and focusing on strategic policy reforms, India can create a skilled workforce which is ready to compete globally.

COLUMN ON CYBER-SECURITY

The Indian Armed Forces: Cyber-Tech, Law, and National Defense

Written by **Meenakshi Rao**

The Indian Armed Forces are rapidly adapting to modern cyber warfare, reinforcing national security beyond traditional battlefields. With India ranking among the top five cyberattack targets globally in 2022, cyber defence has become a critical priority. The Defence Cyber Agency (DCA), established in 2019, leads efforts to counter threats such as ransomware, phishing, and state-sponsored espionage. A significant wake-up call was the 2020 cyberattack on Indian power grids, allegedly by Chinese hackers, prompting greater investment in AI-driven cybersecurity and quantum cryptography.

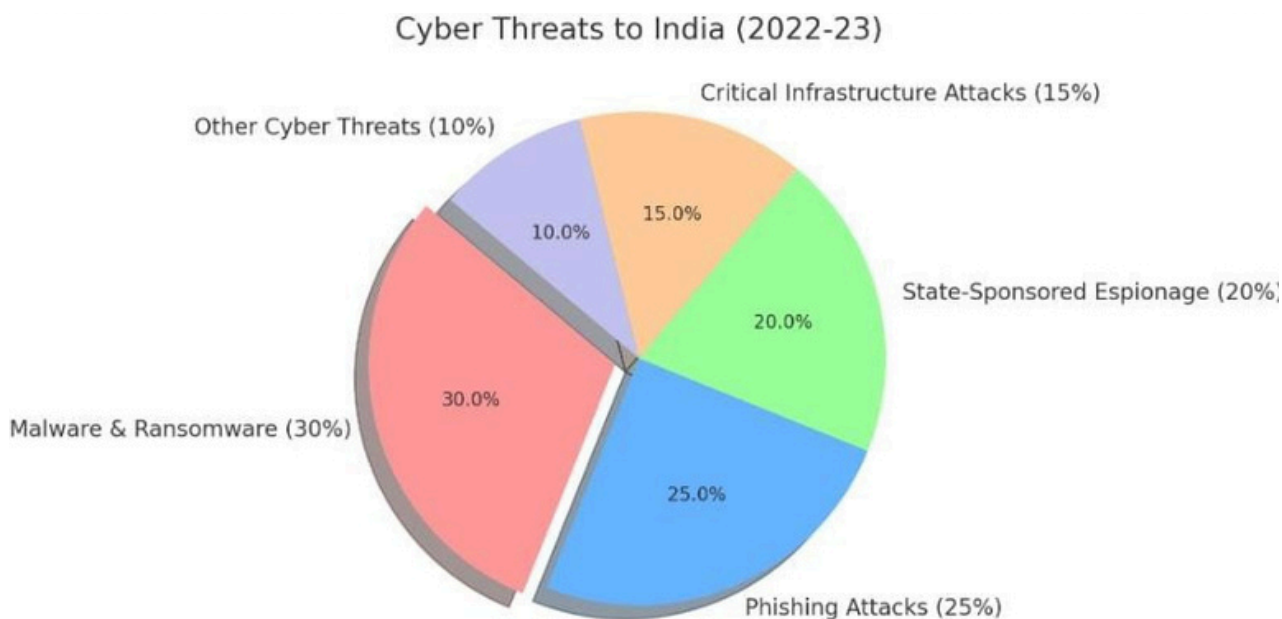
The ₹3,000 crore allocation in the 2023-24 defence budget underscores India's commitment to cyber resilience. International partnerships, such as the U.S.-India Cyber Framework Agreement and collaborations with Israel, enhance strategic cyber capabilities.

Legal frameworks, including the IT Act, 2000, the Budapest Convention, and international guidelines like the Tallinn Manual 2.0, ensure ethical cyber operations. Judge Advocate General (JAG) officers play a crucial role in shaping legal policies for cyber warfare.

As cyber threats evolve, India's armed forces are integrating technology, law, and strategy to secure the nation's digital frontiers. This synergy not only strengthens national security but also sets a global example in cyber resilience.



However, as threats still persist, it is better to analyze the specific issues that India might face in the coming time. The analyzed pie chart highlights the major threats based on the data available from 2022-23 in an attempt to have a better idea about these threats in the year 2025.



- **Malware & Ransomware (30%)** – The most common cyber threat, targeting businesses and defence networks.
- **Phishing Attacks (25%)** – A key method for espionage and financial fraud.
- **State-Sponsored Espionage (20%)** – Increasingly used in geopolitical conflicts.
- **Critical Infrastructure Attacks (15%)** – Like the 2020 power grid breach.
- **Other Cyber Threats (10%)** – Includes social engineering and emerging threats.

This breakdown further emphasizes the need for India's cybersecurity advancements and legal frameworks.

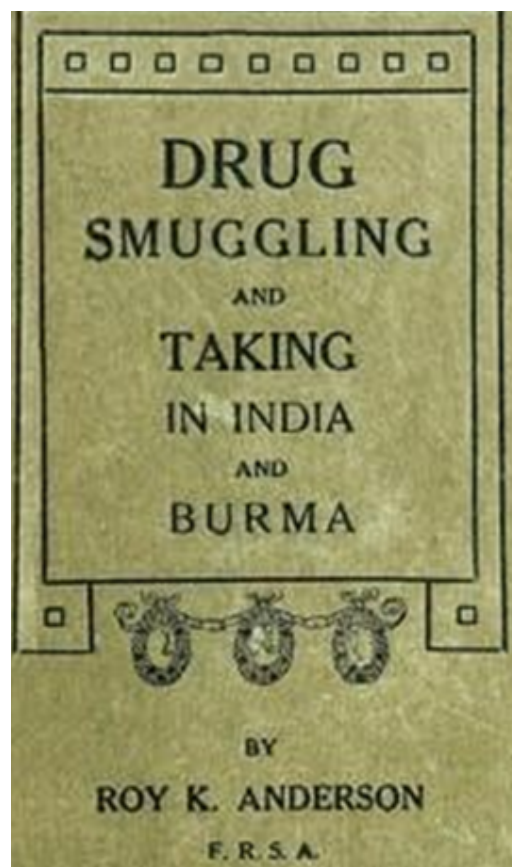
BOOK REVIEW

Drug Smuggling and Taking in India and Burma

Author: Roy K. Anderson

Written by **Lakshitha S**

Roy K. Anderson's *Drug Smuggling and Taking in India and Burma* investigates drug smuggling complexities while considering socio-economic, historical and moral aspects. The book examines how governmental policies and personal decisions along with taxation and prohibition laws shape societal perceptions of smuggling. The work positions smuggling as a complex moral and economic problem that challenges the typical perception of smugglers as simple criminals. The analysis points out that economic necessity becomes a primary motivator for smuggling activities in areas where basic resources are scarce. He advocates for a more nuanced approach to criminalization, which varies



between less harmful goods and dangerous narcotics including cocaine and opium. A major focus of the analysis is the contradiction in drug policies, while cocaine and morphia face total prohibition, opium remains heavily taxed. This disparities between taxation and prohibition generate financial motivations for black-market operations because smuggling becomes profitable despite its risks. Anderson points out government failures by comparing official drug prices to black-market rates.

The book also describes the impacts of opium, morphia, cocaine, and hemp. The ceremonial use of cocaine alongside serious health effects like nerve damage stands in contrast to opium which functions both as a painkiller and an addictive drug. He also argues that alcohol has a lower social impact compared to opium.

Colonial powers, particularly the British and Dutch administrations, play a very crucial role in Anderson's examination of the opium trade, the text investigates the British taxation mechanisms, The Malwa opium monopoly system and the harsh enforcement penalties like Burma's death penalty. Anderson also describes how corruption and informers maintain smuggling operations to demonstrate enforcement difficulties.

Ultimately ,this study offers a comprehensive analysis of smuggling's political and ethical aspects along with its economic implications for readers who follow socioeconomic history and public policy

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