

CONCLUSION

The continuous eruption of ethnic and communal violence in the North East strains the Indian democracy in the region. Vote bank politics based on tribe, religion and ethnicity are the norms. Representative politics has become parochial breeding despair in the minds of the minorities who then turn to the gun.

Experience suggests that granting more autonomy to tribal groups in the North East has not always led to better governance or cessation of conflict. If anything it has led to proliferation of conflict and poor governance in many cases. Many tribals have not been kind to their own minorities who merely had 'outsider' masters replaced by local ones. The politics of every state in the North East and mushrooming inter-tribal conflicts reflect this. The issue has come a full circle and the time has come to ask whether impartial neutrals would govern better and more fairly than the dominant tribe. The Hmars want a separate administration for their areas, as they claim, perhaps rightly that the Dimasa dominated council does not look after them. Given the nature of tribal politics it is highly debatable how they in turn would treat their minorities. These fissiparous tendencies based on tribal parochialism must be checked and discouraged as the solution lies in good governance and not in self-rule.

One of the major drawbacks of the government and security apparatus is the absence of an effective mechanism for identifying potential internal conflicts and taking pre-emptive steps. The early indicators of such conflict are conveniently ignored by successive regimes being politically awkward. When violence erupts, there are belated and frantic efforts at appeasement. A regional agency, which monitors the security situation in the region, formulates conflict prevention strategies and assists their implementation, is a prime requirement.

The Dimasa-Hmar conflict is symptomatic of a short sightedness in managing internal conflict. The failure to evolve a policy to deal with the tribal conflicts in the North East, apathy to the economic and social development of the region and the

manipulation of demography by local politicians has formed a deadly cocktail of ethnic violence. Sporadic attempts at ceasefire with different groups and a policy of appeasement has been followed with little success instead of setting right the ills of parochial politics. The flames of the Naga and Assam insurgency may seem to have dimmed, but have succeeded in setting alight previously peaceful regions. Unless a coherent policy to prevent and contain ethnic violence is formulated, the fire of insurgency will continue to burn in the North East.

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