

Indigenous Unity Call at Nibaran Bora Memorial Meet



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A strong call to unite the indigenous communities of Northeast India on a common platform was made at a roundtable discussion held on January 6 to mark the 21st death anniversary of noted nationalist leader **Nibaran Bora**. The discussion, titled *“Crisis of Indigenous Peoples of Northeast India and Its Solutions”*, resolved to carry forward Bora’s vision and ideology for safeguarding indigenous identity and rights.

The meeting was attended by representatives of several indigenous organisations from Assam and other Northeastern states.

Uncompromising nationalist leader **Hasibur Rahman**, a close associate of the late leader, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the growing threat to the existence of indigenous peoples due to the absence of constitutional recognition.

The session was jointly moderated by Hasibur Rahman and **Khagendrajit Thakuria** of the Koch Rajbongshi Sanmilani. **Rajkumar Baishya**, Editor of *Matir Manuh*, explained the objectives of the programme, while **Anup Arandhara**, General Secretary of *Moung-Dun-Chun-Kham, Assam*, presented the English translation. **Dr Kanika Dutta Barua** paid floral tributes and lit the ceremonial lamp before the portrait of Nibaran Bora.

During the meeting, Mr Dasarath Deb Barma, Organising Secretary of the Borok Peoples Human Rights Organization, was elected as the new Chairman of Indigenous Peoples of Moung-Dun-Chun-Kham, Assam, North East India.

Based on a concept paper submitted by Hasibur Rahman and deliberations by the participants, it was decided to publish a bulletin and initiate consultations among various indigenous communities across the region. A broader convention of indigenous leaders of Northeast India is proposed to be held in February. Rajkumar Baishya and Anup Arandhara were entrusted with the responsibility of making necessary arrangements.

Speakers recalled Bora's 1976 warning that indigenous communities of the Northeast would face an existential crisis, noting that his predictions are now proving true. They pointed out that despite India's written support to the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)**, the absence of its effective implementation has denied indigenous peoples their constitutional rights. It was also noted that while the Mizoram Legislative Assembly has twice unanimously urged the Centre to provide constitutional safeguards to indigenous peoples, no concrete action has followed.

The meeting reiterated that indigenous peoples are those whose ancestors inhabited the region prior to British colonial rule. Participants warned that without constitutional recognition and effective implementation of international safeguards, the future of indigenous communities in the Northeast would remain uncertain.

Key demands reiterated at the meet included constitutional definition of indigenous peoples of Northeast India, autonomous governance under Article 244(A), restoration of the Inner Line Permit system across the region, eviction of illegal settlers from tribal belts and blocks, protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, inclusion of all indigenous mother tongues in the Eighth Schedule, and declaration of Assam and Tripura as tribal states.

The meeting concluded with a renewed pledge to continue the movement envisioned by Nibaran Bora for unity, dignity and constitutional protection of the indigenous peoples of Northeast India.



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