

Talks Between Centre and KLO on Kamtapur Demands Spark Debate Among Koch Rajbongshi Community



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Reports of ongoing discussions between the Central Government and leaders of the insurgent group **Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO)** over long-standing demands of the Koch Rajbongshi community have generated considerable interest and debate across Assam, West Bengal and other regions where the community resides.

According to sources, the demands under discussion include the formation of a separate **Kamtapur state**, granting **Scheduled Tribe (ST) status** to the Koch Rajbongshi community, and official recognition of the community's mother tongue. These issues have been raised by various socio-cultural and non-political organisations representing the community for decades.

Sources familiar with the matter said that the Centre had initiated talks with KLO leaders as part of efforts to address long-pending constitutional and socio-political aspirations of the Koch Rajbongshi people. In January 2023, senior KLO leaders, including the outfit's chairman **Jibon Singha Koch**, were reportedly brought from camps in Myanmar through mediators and subsequently taken to Guwahati before being shifted to New Delhi for further engagement with authorities.

However, another faction of the organisation, reportedly led by **D.L. Koch** and known as **KLO (KN)**, is believed to remain active in Myanmar and has not joined the peace process. The existence of this faction has raised concerns about the future course of the insurgency and the prospects for a comprehensive settlement.

Meanwhile, a meeting of former KLO members and leaders who had surrendered or secured bail was held at the **Gossaigaon Press Club** in Kokrajhar district on Saturday. The meeting was chaired by KLO central president **Anteswar Roy**. Participants reportedly discussed the ongoing peace process and future organisational strategies.

The meeting resolved to convene a larger gathering at **Asom Sahitya Sabha Bhawan in Guwahati** on June 26. Sources said around 20 representatives are expected to be selected at the Guwahati meeting to participate in future consultations in New Delhi.

The reported progress in discussions has generated optimism among sections of the Koch Rajbongshi community, many of whom view the dialogue as a potential opportunity to address long-standing constitutional, linguistic and cultural concerns through peaceful means.

At the same time, the continued presence of an armed KLO faction outside the peace process has led to differing opinions within the community regarding the path forward.

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