

## ULFA Ready For Talks Through PCG



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Guwahati: The outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa on Sunday said the outfit was ready to hold peace talks with Indian Government to put an end the present impasse.

'We have all along been willing to hold talks for a respectable solution to the problem. We once again reiterate that if the Indian Government comes up with any proposal for a respectable solution to the problem and it is routed through the People's Consultative Group (PCG), we are ready to consider,' Rajkhowa said in a statement published in its fortnightly newsletter Swadhinata or Freedom.' The lack of any political solution has resulted in the conflict in Assam turning violent,' the ULFA leader said.

The ULFA in September 2005 constituted the PCG, a group of civil society leaders, to

begin exploratory talks with New Delhi aimed at facilitating direct negotiations between the rebel leadership and the government. Three rounds of talks between the PCG and New Delhi have taken place with the first meeting being chaired by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

The PCG became defunct as it withdrew itself from the peace process after the India government called off a six-week ceasefire with the ULFA in September last year and resumed military operations blaming the outfit of stepping up violence and extortions.

The ULFA had earlier set certain preconditions for holding talks with New Delhi - the main demand being that the government agrees to hold discussion on the issue of sovereignty or independence of Assam. The other two demands were to free the jailed ULFA leaders and give information on whereabouts of the leaders and workers of the outfit during operation in Bhutan. However, the India government had refused to talk on the issue of sovereignty and said that it would hold talk with the banned outfit without any pre condition. 'If the government really wants to see peace in Assam they can very well amend the constitution to discuss sovereignty with us. The government has all along been saying that nothing could be discussed outside the constitutional parameters,' the ULFA chairman said. The ULFA chairman also suggested a referendum on the issue on independence under UN supervision. 'Such a thing has happened elsewhere and so what is the problem to hold a referendum here?' he asked. The PCG became defunct as it withdrew itself from the peace process after the India government called off a six-week ceasefire with the ULFA in September last year and resumed military operations blaming the outfit of stepping up violence and extortions.

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