

Uphill task ahead for Biren government in negotiating UNC



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AT News Imphal 5 August 2017 6731 views

The United Naga Council (UNC) hopes that the next tripartite talks scheduled for August 11 at Senapati headquarters must come up with a solution to the nearly nine month-old issue on district creation.

The Ministry of [Home](#) Affairs (MoS) said the next meeting involving the [state](#) and central governments and UNC will be held at the “political [level](#).” The upcoming negotiation aims at finding a mutually agreeable solution to all concerned.

But the Nongthombam Biren Singh headed BJP government in [Manipur](#) still has to face the uphill task of maintaining the status quo of the “Naga-dominated districts” as demanded by UNC.

On December 9, 2016, the previous Okram [Ibobi](#) Singh headed [Congress](#) government issued a gazette notification creating seven new districts by bifurcating seven of the [state](#)’s existing nine districts, taking the number of districts in the [state](#) to 16.

Okram [Ibobi](#) Singh had stated that the creation of new districts was officially for reasons of administrative efficiency.

Incumbent Chief Minister Biren Singh recently said the government “will not consider reversal of the existing districts of the [state](#) which will remain the way they are.”

The 139-day long blockade call enforced by UNC to protest the district creation was lifted in March after negotiations initiated by the BJP government after it took office in [Manipur](#). The Naga body had hoped that the creation of the districts will be rolled back through talks.

The Naga body maintained that the [Congress](#) government did not consult the Hills Area Committee before taking the decision to create new districts that encroached upon the “ancestral land” of Nagas. It says the creation of districts was an attempt to divide the Naga people.

Under Article 371 (C) of Indian Constitution, the Hills Area Committee must be consulted on matter relating to the tribal people.

“The [Manipur](#) government is not considering any reversal of the decision on the creation of districts,” Chief Minister N Biren Singh said recently.

The issue is whether the Biren Singh government as well as the Centre will be able to bring a compromise solution with the apex Naga body UNC in the upcoming crucial tripartite meet.

Analysts said, “This meeting will put to the test of the will of Chief Minister Biren Singh headed government and the NDA government at the Centre as well.”

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