

# The 16-Point Agreement

The 16-Point Agreement was an agreement signed between the Naga People's Convention and the Government of India in 1960. The state of Nagaland was formed in 1963 following the signing of the agreement

This article will further give details about the 16-point Agreement within the context of the IAS Exam.

## Background of the 16-Point Agreement

Calls for greater autonomy by the Naga tribes within their domain had persisted well before the Indian independence. A delegation of the various Naga Tribes submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission which stated that they should be "left to their own devices as in ancient times". Taking into account the memorandum, British House of Commons decreed that the Naga Hills ought to be kept outside the purview of the New Constitution; the Government of India Act, 1935 and ordered Naga areas as Excluded Area; meaning outside the administration of British India government.

The Naga National Council which would be formed later began to discuss the possibility of an autonomous area within the province of Assam as India inched closer towards independence from the British Empire. A memorandum, submitted in 1946, that strongly protested against the grouping of Assam with Bengal and ascertained that the Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam, in a free India.

Jawaharlal Nehru (born on November 14, 1889) responded positively to the memorandum and invited the Naga people to join the union of India, promising to grant autonomy and a wide-range of administrative safeguards.

After India became independent in 1947, the Naga Hills were still a part of the state of Assam. It was during this time that Naga nationalism increased among a section of them. It led to a period of insurgency in which government officials, civilians lost their lives. The Indian Army was sent in 1955 to bring order to the region.

In 1957, an agreement was reached between Naga leaders and the Indian government, creating a single separate region of the Naga Hills. It became a Union territory directly administered by the Central government with a large degree of autonomy. This was not satisfactory to the tribes, however, and agitation with violence increased across the state.

In July 1960, following discussion between Prime Minister Nehru and the leaders of the Naga People Convention (NPC), a 16-point agreement was arrived at whereby the Government of India recognised the formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India.

## Salient Features of the 16-Point Agreement

Some of the features of the 16-point agreement are as follows:

1. The new Naga state, hence called Nagaland, would come under the Ministry of External Affairs of India
2. The Governor of Nagaland would be appointed by the President of India
3. A Council of Minister with a Chief Minister as its head would advise the Governor in carrying out his/her administrative duty.
4. Two Naga representatives would be elected to represent the Parliament of India in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
5. No act of law affecting the customary laws and the religious and social practices of the Nagas would be passed without the majority votes of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly
6. The possibility of raising a separate Naga regiment in the Indian Armed forces would be explored.
7. As per the agreement, the Government of India would provide financial assistance towards the economic upliftment of the Nagaland state
8. The agreement also called for greater local self-government by imploring the Naga tribes to appoint local bodies to resolve disputes and look into matters regarding the Naga Tribes.

## Developments after the 16-point Agreement

Despite the state of Nagaland being established following the signing of the 16-point agreement, other Naga groups alleged that the Naga People's Convention had no right to sign the agreement without proper consultation. They also allege that the agreement was too little too late and demanded further concessions such as a separate state flag and separate constitution. The demands having been refused, the Naga groups have still conducted a low-level insurgency in the state ever since the 1960s.

However, successive peace talks by the Government post 2015 had brought stability to the regions but they are still underway without either side having reached a concrete agreement.

