

THE NOXIOUS WEB

INSURGENCY
IN THE NORTH-EAST



KIRANSHANKAR MAITRA

In his previous book, *"The Nagas Rebel And Insurgency In The North-East"* the author has given a chronological account of the origin, growth and development of insurgency; background and history of insurrection in the north-east, especially in Nagaland, till the beginning of 1996.

The present volume, however, deals with various other relevant aspects in detail from 1996 onwards till the beginning of the new millennium.

If in the previous book the highlight was on the rebel Nagas, in the present volume the focus is on the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), besides NSCN (Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland) (Issac-Muivah and Khaplang Groups), and other insurgent and militant outfits like NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland), ATTF (All Tripura Tiger Force), NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura) etc.

"The Noxious Web", in any case, is a contemporary, comprehensive and complete disquisition on the subject.

While the research scholars and students of political history will find enough materials to study, ordinary readers as well many find the book immensely absorbing and interly stimulating.

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- Acknowledgement • Preface • Seven Sisters of the North-East • Father of the Secessionist Movement • Main Actors: The Milieu
- NSCN: The Noxious Web • Death-Knell of NNC (Naga National Council) • Perilous ISI Plague • Fire-arms for Insurgents: Easy Flow • Nexus Between Politicians and Insurgents • The Sanjay Ghose Tragedy
- ULFA Terrorises Traders • Tea and Terrorism • Rising Fang: Declining Hood
- The Bodo Movement • Trouble in Tripura • Mess in Manipur • NSCN at the Crossroads • Whither Insurgency?
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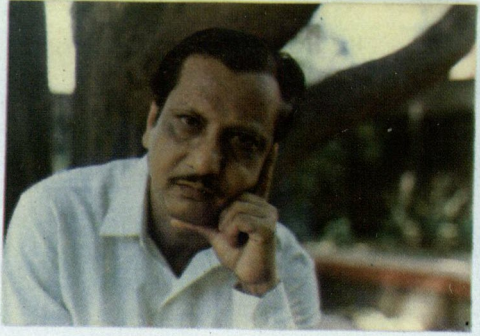
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Kiranshankar Maitra after having completed his academic education in the Presidency College and Calcutta University joined All India Radio as a Programme Executive. As he was promoted to the rank of Station Director and posted to different cities of India one after another, he travelled various parts of the country like Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Ladakh etc.

"Nagaland: Darling of the North-East" and *"Himalayan Dreamland: Journey to Kinnarlok"* authored by him earlier and his recent publications, *"The Twilight Zone: Ladies of the Night"* (Sterling Publications, New Delhi) and *"The Nagas Rebel And Insurgency In The North-East"* (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1998) are highly acclaimed.

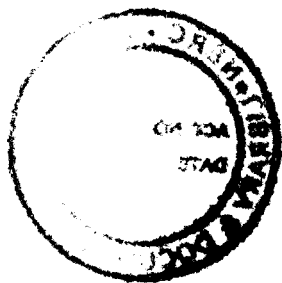
Maitra is an established poet and essayist in Bengali and English with two dozen books in Bengali, well received by the critics and readers. He has been writing in most of the top-ranking periodicals and magazines in English, Bengali and Hindi.

As an author, he has been noted in the **International Writers and Authors Who's Who** (Cambridge, London), **Biography International**, **Authors and Writers Who's Who** (Sahitya Academy, New Delhi) and many others.

The Author in his chequered career held many highly responsible posts in All India Radio and Doordarshan and lastly worked as a Senior Director in the office of the Director General, All India Radio, New Delhi.

The Noxious Web

Insurgency in the North-East



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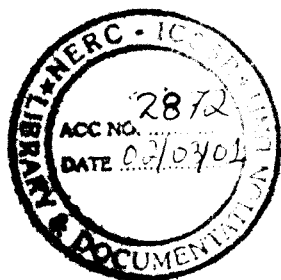
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For using the photograph of the two girl NSCM(IM) cadets on the cover of this book, we sincerely acknowledge our gratitude to Shri Bharat Bhushan, Executive Editor of the HINDUSTAN TIMES Delhi edition.

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1

Seven Sisters of the North-East

The North-East region of India is the most multi-coloured variegated clime. Prior to independence larger part of this area was generally known as Assam Province, but it was finally split into seven separate states which are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Due to proximity, similarity and cultural affinity these states are called 'Seven Sisters of the North-East'.

In many ways the entire region is quite unlike the rest of India which is predominantly tribal canvas and who speak different languages and dialects.

North-East is a sensitive border zone where India meets with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and which is remote from the main-Indian land. The region has of late developed into the most troubled part of India and the central government has been facing great difficulty in many ways, besides Jammu & Kashmir.

Let us describe the seven states separately in short. First-*Arunachal Pradesh* (Land of the Dawn). It is a land of ancient tradition, when the Ahom Kings started ruling Assam state in the 16th Century, Arunachal got a written history. After independence it became a part of NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency). It was

declared a union territory on January 20, 1972 and became a full fledged state on February 20, 1987.

The state is surrounded on three sides by the international border with Bhutan to the west, China to the north and Myanmar to the east and Assam to the South.

With an area of 83,743 sq. km. and the capital at Itanagar it has a predominantly tribal population of about 9 lakh and languages spoken are Monpa, Aka, Miji, Sherdukpen, Nishi, Apatani, Hill Miri, Tagin, Adi, Idu, Digaru, Khampti, Singpho, Tangsa, Nocte, Wancho.

There are thirteen districts: West Kameng, East Kameng, Lower Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, West Siang, Upper Siang, East Siang, Dibang Valley, Lohit, Tirap, Pauri Pare, Tawang and Changlang.

With remnants of the Ita fort the capital city is Itanagar. There is an ancient Buddhist monastery near Tawang, archaeological centers of Maliniton, Bismark Nagar and Nandapa Wildlife Sanctuary are notable.

Down below Arunachal Pradesh is *Assam*; the largest and most easily accessible of the north-east states. Assam is a major tea producing area (60% of India's tea comes from here), and also produces a large proportion of India's oil.

Bhutan and Arunachal are to the north, Nagaland and Manipur in the east, Meghalaya and Mizoram in the south and to the west are Bangladesh, Tripura and West Bengal.

Assam, once which had an area of over 2 lakh sq. km., excluding the then NEFA, the present Arunachal Pradesh; today hold the total area of only 78,438 sq. km. Due to political changes, Assam continued to lose its territory, step by step, Assam, as it today, is divided into two main important physical regions—the Barak Valley and the Brahmaputra Valley.

The history of Assam goes back to the mythological period, Guwahati, the pulsating centre of Assam is an ancient town and was known as Pragjyotishpur. It was believed to be founded by Narakasur, the mythological King. His son, Bhagadatta led a large elephant force to the battle-field of Kurukshetra and fell fighting on the side of the Kauravas.

An ideal meeting place for diverse races, Assam gave shelter to stream of various communities with their myriad distinct cultures and social milieu. Austro-Asiatics, Negritos, Dravidians, Alpines,

Indo-Mongolids, Tibeto-Burmese and Aryans ventured into Assam through various routes and contributed in their own way towards the unique fusion of a new community which is known as Assamese.

The 23 districts of Assam are : Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Jorhat, Kamrup, Karbi Anglog, Karimganj, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, North Cachar Hills, Nalbari, Pragjyotishpur, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Morigaon, Dhamaji, Bangai gaon, Hailakandi & Tinsukia, The Capital is at Dispur.

Literally meaning 'the abode of clouds', *Meghalaya* has an area of 22,429 sq. km. with its capital at Shillong. It is mainly a tribal state of the Khasi, the Jaintia and the Garo. The state is surrounded by Assam to its north and east and to the south and west is Bangladesh.

It has seven districts—East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills, Ri-Bhoi and Jaintia Hills.

Meghalaya, an autonomous state in April 2, 1970, was declared a full fledged state two years later on January 2, 1972.

With surging streams, verdant luxuriant hills, everchanging clouds, serpentine paths and various colourful tribes, *Nagaland* is one of the smallest states of India (only Sikkim is smaller). It was carved out on the Indian map as its sixteenth state on December 1, 1963.

The area of Nagaland is 16579 sq. km., on the south which is bounded by Manipur, Myanmar to east, to north Arunachal Pradesh and to west, Assam.

With fourteen main tribes like Ao, Angam, Sema, Lotha, Rengma, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Konyak, Phom, Chang, Zeliang, Kuki, Khiemnugan it has a population of nine lakh.

With its capital at Kohima, it has seven districts—Kohima, Phek, Mokochung, Zunheboto, Wokha, Tuensang and Mon.

Manipur became a full-fledged state in 1972 with its capital at Imphal. Geographically it is divided into two: Five districts in the hill area, and three in the plain land which are: Imphal, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur and Chandel.

It has an area of 22,327 sq. km. with a population of more than one lakh and a half.

The main language is Manipuri, but the script is Bengali. Dominated by Vaishnavism many people know Bengali in the state.

Mizoram occupies the north-east corner of India which is bounded in the north by Cachar district (Assam) and Manipur state, on the east and south by Chin Hills and Arakan (Myanmar), and Chittagong hill tracts (Bangladesh) and Tripura on the west.

Mizoram, in the local dialect means the land of Mizos ('Mi' means 'persons' and 'Zo' hills or high land). Mizoram is actually a land of hills with an average height of 900 meters. It has an area of 21,081 sq. km. with its capital at Aizawal. It has a population of about one lakh. Mizoram became the 23rd State of the Indian Union on February 20 in 1987.

The Mizos belong to Mongolian race. They, probably, were first to settle in the Shan state of Burma and then moved westwards into India.

Originally which was just a district of Assam, now has three districts, namely Aizawal, Lunglei and Chhingtuipei.

The Mizo language has no scripts of its own. The Christian missionaries introduced the Roman Script for the Mizo language and started teaching English with the result there is a high percentage of literacy i.e. 60%. And majority of them are Christians.

Tripura, the seventh sister in the north-east, is surrounded by Bangladesh on all sides, except for a narrow strip in the north-east where it meets Assam and Mizoram.

It has an area of 10,486 sq. km. with about three lakh population. With its capital at Agartala, Tripura was a Hindu state of great antiquity having been ruled by the Maharajas for more than a thousand years and a half. It has great cultural, literary and social affinity with Bengal as the majority of population are Bengalis.

Tripura is divided in three districts North, West and South Tripura.