APPENDIX - A

QUESTIONNAIRE/INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
WITH
HIS EXCELLENCY LT GEN (RETD) S K SINHA, PVSM
GOVERNOR OF ASSAM
CONDUCTED ON 17 DECEMBER 2000,
08 FEBRUARY 2001 AND 14 FEBRUARY 2001

His Excellency Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha, PVSM the Governor of Assam had been very kind enough to give three sittings and spend his valuable time of three hours in answering the questionnaire sent to him covering insurgency in the North-East to include Assam and how as Head of the State and Chairman of North Eastern Council, has planned various strategies for bringing back normalcy in the State of Assam.

FIRST SITTING - 17 DECEMBER 2000

QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWERS

Q. 1. In the past 50 years, insurgency which started with Nagaland, had spread up to Assam. It shows that next in the line are going to be the States of Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. What steps are being taken by Union and State Governments, especially the State of Assam (during your time) to arrest the situation?

Ans. Insurgency is a new type of warfare that has been practised extensively in the world during the 20th Century. In the previous centuries, wars were fought between two armies and the concept of people's war did not exist. If you look back into history, the fate of countries
was decided over a frontage of 2000 yards in a one day battle. This happened at Panipat and also at Waterloo.

In the 20th Century we had global wars - World War I and World War II, nuclear holocausts limited wars as in Korea and Kashmir and a series of People's wars. The latter is commonly referred to as insurgency. The Spanish people practised guerrilla warfare against the French in the 19th Century. The word guerrilla comes from the Spanish word 'gorillo' meaning hills. Insurgency is something more than guerrilla warfare. The latter may be the tactics adopted in the early stages of insurgency. After acquiring requisite strength the insurgent tries to fight a normal conventional war. The concept of insurgency was pioneered in India. Shivaji's campaign provides the model for insurgency. Mao Tse Tung in China and Ho Chi Minh in Indo-China successfully developed the strategy of insurgency, introduced by Shivaji.

Requirements of Insurgency. Now, what are the requirements of insurgency?

(a) **An Ideal**: The first requirement is an ideal which should be a strong motivating factor. In the case of China it was ideology - the Communist ideology. In the case Indo-China it was National Independence from the French and later freedom from US domination. The ideal chosen should be a strong motivating factor to unite the people.

(b) **Charismatic Leader**: The second requirement for an insurgency is the presence of a charismatic leader. It is only a charismatic leader who can mobilise popular support of the people.
(c) **Foreign Assistance**: The third requirement particularly in modern times, is foreign assistance. Weapons have to come from across the border. Other assistance like funds, training etc have to be made available.

(d) **Terrain - Domination over certain Areas**: The fourth requirement is to be able to develop domination over certain areas where insurgents can build up their military strength. These areas have to be such that they are not unduly interfered with by the SFs. Jungles and mountains provide good sanctuaries, where insurgents can exploit their muscular mobility as against the mechanical mobility of the SFs. They can develop their conventional military strength in those sanctuaries.

(e) **Last Stage**: The last stage is when the insurgents acquire necessary military strength to be able to fight a conventional battle with the SFs and defeat them.

The Chinese drove out the forces of Chang-Kai-Shek from Chinese territory and Ho Chi Minh defeated the French in a conventional battle at Dien Bien Phu and later when the Americans came in, the Vietnamese inflicted such heavy attrition on the Americans that they had to withdraw. This is the broad pattern of insurgency. **Why has insurgency become so common in the 20th Century?** The reason for this is, the mass awakening among the people all over the world. The people are prepared to fight for a cause dear to them. In the past the people got resigned to their fate after their armies lost to the invader.

Today, the people are more conscious the world over and they would not like their future to be decided just by one engagement. They want to strive for their cause, for their ideals and are prepared to fight for it. So, people's war has become common. Insurgency is closely linked to people's war. The other point is that the nuclear balance of terror that existed during the cold war period acted as a deterrent to conventional war. People's war was something safer to indulge in than regular war. Yet another point is that insurgency erupts in
areas which are economically undeveloped and where people have grievances. The Western
countries which are developed have not had insurgency. This is a general background of
insurgency. Let us relate it to conditions in India.

The first instance of insurgency in India was in Nagaland. No two insurgency
movements in India are exactly similar. There are differences in the character of each.
Nagaland insurgency met all the requirements of a successful insurgency. It had an ideal
which attracted the people. Nagas, even during British days were never fully integrated with
the rest of the Indian State. They had their separate cultural and civilisational identity.
Unlike the rest of India, their movement for Independence went back to pre 47 days. Nagas
had a charismatic leader in Phizo, whom all Nagas respected. They had an ideal terrain for
operations, in which the mechanical mobility of the SFs was countered by the muscular
mobility of the insurgent. With all these advantages, the Nagas had one big disadvantage in
terms of a small population. At the time of Independence the population of Nagaland was
only 4 lakhs. Today it is 12 lakhs. Outside support was available to the Nagas, initially from
East Pakistan and later from China. There is a long history of accords with Nagas, but
militancy has continued. Currently, there is a cease fire in vogue in Nagaland.

Now we take a look at Assam. The ideal of a sovereign Assam was popular and it
had quite a few takers amongst the people. But if you go deep into it, the attraction of a
sovereign Independent Assam was not deep enough. In fact, this idea soon started fading
away. Nevertheless, this was the ideal. As for the second requirement of a charismatic
leader, there was no one who can be called a charismatic leader in Assam, commanding
devotion of the people.

Interruption: His Excellency was interrupted and asked as to why there was no
charismatic leader in Assam for which he said that well it was a ground reality. Arbindo
Rajkhowa @ Rajkonwar has been the Chairman of ULFA. But can you call him a
charismatic leader respected all over Assam? He is not. The movement failed to throw up a charismatic leader commanding reverence among the people. This was a major handicap for the insurgents.

No doubt there was a widespread feeling in Assam of being neglected by the Centre. There was also a widely held view that Assam had enough resources like tea, oil and other raw materials to manage its affair on its own. The rest of India was exploiting Assam's resources. With this providing the breeding ground for separatism, the breaking point and the last straw on the camel's back was when they discovered in 1979 that the unabated influx of illegal migrant from Bangladesh was threatening the identity of the Assamese people. This provided the motivation for an insurgency movement leading to the birth of ULFA. There may not have been a charismatic leader in ULFA but the cause taken up by them had widespread support among the people. Thus, ULFA became a force to reckon with. They adopted new tactics. Fund raising tactics like extortion even with the connivance and support of the State Govt in the Eighties. The feeling of separateness from the rest of India was not deep enough. India has been a civilisation State long before it became a Nation State. The civilisational unity of Assam with the rest of India has been deeply embedded for thousands of years. What is a Nation State? It was a concept developed in Europe in 16/17th Century when people had a feeling of national unity wanted to have a State polity of their own. In Assam or in India, the concept of a Nation State developed only after 1947. Germany or Italy became Nation State only in 19th Century. India being ruled by the British had not become a Nation State till 1947. But there was one thing about India which had been remarkable and that is that India had always remained a civilization State.

The Indian civilization and culture spread all over the country including Assam. Assam has been an integral part of the Indian civilization. You go back to the epics. Guru Vashist was a Guru of Lord Rama. He had his Ashram in Pragiyotishpur, modern Guwahati. Even today there is a place called Basistha, perhaps site of the old Ashram, in Guwahati.
Lord Krishna, consort, Rukmini was from Sadiya in Assam. When I went to Dwarka a few months ago, I found a temple of Rukmini several centuries old. Dwarka, is the only place in India where there is a temple for Rukmini. All this underscores our civilizational unity. Our places of pilgrimage encompass our entire country. Badrinath, Kamakhya, Jagannath Puri, Rameshvaram and Dwarka. You put these places on the map and see how they cover the length and breadth of our country. The spiritual and cultural influence of Mahapurush Srimant Sankaradeva has been very dominant in Assam. He is the patron saint of Assam. He went on pilgrimage to different places like Jagannath Puri, Gaya, Varanasi and so on. He studied Sanskrit, translated them into Assamese. In his writings he often refers to Bharat Punya Bhumi. What does it mean? It stands for India, our sacred motherland. I am mentioning these facts to highlight that Assam has always been integral part of the Indian civilizational State. Civilizational bonds are stronger than political bonds. India may not have been a Nation State of the past, but there were certain periods of Indian history when our country despite its sub-continental dimensions, had achieved political unity covering almost the entire country.

The Mauryas were the first to provide political unity to India. The Mauryan Empire was bigger in size than the British Empire in India. It extended up to Afghanistan. Kabul and Kandahar were part of the Mauryan Empire. It so happened that Assam was not part of that empire. The next big Indian Empire was that of the Guptas. The inscription on the Allahabad Pillar of Samudra Gupta categorically mentions that Kamrup was a vassal frontier kingdom of the Gupta ruler. There are also certain periods in which Assam's rule extended to other parts of the country. Bhaskar Varman had a large empire, which spread from Pragjyotishpur (Guwahati) and covered present West Bengal, present Bangladesh and North Bihar.

The Chinese Pilgrim who came to the court of Harsh Vardhan also came to Guwahati and he refers to Bhaskar Varman as the ruler of the East. All that is part of our history. Thus for any one to say that Assam was never part of India, till the British conquered India and now
that the British have gone, Assam should be allowed to become Independent, is a meaningless historical argument. Of course in the medieval period politically Assam remained cut off from the rest of India which was under Islamic rule. What happened in this period? There were invasions from both West and East. In the West you had Mohammed Ghori coming and establishing Islamic rule. More or less the same time Ahoms came from the East and they established their kingdom in Assam. There was a time difference of 15 to 20 years. Hitherto all invaders who came to India and established their rule, got amalgamated with the rest of the people and they shed their separate identity. The Islamic invasion was different in that the invader retained his separate cultural and religious identity. Many locals got converted to the faith of their new rulers. Over a period, an attitude of co-existence developed. This is often referred to as the "Ganga-Jamuna" culture. In Assam the pattern was different. Ahoms became a part and parcel of Assamese culture. They adopted Indian religion and customs. This was significantly different from what happened in the West. Invading Muslim armies conquered every single State of India except Assam. In early 13th Century, Bakthiar Khilji conquered Bihar and Bengal and having done so invaded Assam with an Army of 12,000 horses. This invasion was defeated in Assam and Bhakthiar Khilji was killed. That was the first Muslim invasion. There were series of invasions thereafter. There were seventeen invasions in all and each invasion except the one by Mir Jumla was defeated. Terrain certainly helped the Assamese to resist the invasion but the fact is that they emerged victorious. The victorious army of Mir Jumla got defeated by monsoon, malaria and dysentry, like the French Army of Napoleon retreating from Moscow, it got largely decimated. Mir Jumla died during this retreat. The great victory of Lachit Borphukan over the Mughal Army was an outstanding example of Assamese military skill. As a result, when the rest of India came under Muslim rule Assam was the only State which did not come under Muslim rule. Persian became the official language of India. This was so both in North and South India. Assam was the only State in India which retained Sanskrit as its official language. In fact, the victory pillar of Lachit Borphukan is in Sanskrit written in Assamese script. The Vijaynagar Empire in the South withstood the Islamic challenge for 300 years and ultimately
succumbed to the Bahmani Sultans. Assam, however, held Muslim Armies at bay for 500 years. This cannot by any stretch be a justifiable reason to state that Assam was never a part of India.

Assam became a part of the British Empire in India after the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Thereafter, the people of Assam struggled for Independence from British rule like their other countrymen in India. They took part in the first war of Independence of 1857 and also in the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. This forged strong political bonds between Assam and the rest of India which got further strengthened with the formation of the Indian Republic.

The people of Assam may have for sometime got misled by the separatist propaganda of ULFA militants but they have now seen through how fallacious and false this approach has been. Today, as a result of various measures taken, the people of Assam have rejected the theory of separatism and of violence to break away from the rest of the country. The ground reality is that insurgency has become a thing of the past. It has been replaced by terrorism. In insurgency people support the militants. Terrorism implies the people being terrorised and not supporting the militants as such. Terrorism can be tackled more easily by SFs than insurgency. In the last 3 years SFs have been very successful in tackling militancy in Assam. In the last one month a new development took place - the massacres of Hindi speaking people. This menace has also been successfully tackled by the SFs. The ULFA's back has been broken due to the heavy attrition inflicted on them. In the last 4 years, 1000 militants have been killed, 3500 have surrendered and 3000 weapons have been recovered. Over one crore in cash has also been recovered. The ULFA continue to survive because they have sanctuaries in Bhutan, otherwise they would have collapse. From their sanctuaries in Bhutan, they have hit and run capability. Bhutan is a friendly State and we have been asking it to take action against the ULFA camps but they have not been able to do so. We have been able to
win the people over and the militants in desperation have been attacking soft targets. But what could be the reason for all this?

Desperation - They are acting in desperation and trying to assert their presence. They haven't got the capability to take on the SFs. So they attack soft targets. Another possibility is that, the present Government has taken very stern measures against them. Elections are coming. They want to do something which should discredit this Government and destroy its image. There is yet another reason for these killings. At the instance of the ISI, the ULFA tried to affect ethnic cleansing of Assam and drive out the Hindi speaking people from the State like the Kashmiri Pandits who were made to quit the valley. They wanted the spare vacated the Hindi speaking people to be taken over by the illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

Going back to insurgency in Assam, what has helped us in gaining success has been our three pronged strategy :

(a) **Containment of Violence**: This is the first prong. Through intensified and co-ordinated military operations, we have inflicted heavy attrition on the militants, greatly reducing their capability.

(b) **Psychological Initiatives**: The second prong has been psychological initiatives. We took various measures 'to win the hearts and minds of the people' of Assam. I sent in my report to the President of India dated 08 November 1998. That became a major issue. It was largely welcomed by the people of Assam. For the first time a non-Assamese, and a Governor at that, had officially taken up this issue so close to their heart. However, I also came in for a lot of criticism from the minorities and political groups relying on their vote bank. They burnt my effigies and urged the President to recall me. This did not deter me. I had taken up this issue after due deliberation in larger national interest.
The Army had become unpopular among the people as always happens when it is deployed in counter-insurgency operation. When I first came here, frequent demands were being made to withdraw the Army. I insisted that the Army must carry out people friendly operations. Harassment of the people should be avoided and they should be made to suffer minimum inconvenience. There were three or four instances of molestation and rape. We came down heavily on the individuals found guilty and within a matter of weeks they were dismissed and given up to 10 years rigorous imprisonment.

The Army has been carrying out extensive civic action programme like medical relief camps, renovation of schools and temples, running technical courses for unemployed youth, of motor mechanics, electricians, computers and so on.

This is basically the job of the civil administration and not that of SFs. His Excellency said that we should not forget that insurgency breaks out where there is lack of good governance. During counter-insurgency operations, SFs should assist in development work. The British set the pattern for this in Malaya. The Americans also tried doing so in Vietnam. However, by just running medical relief camps we cannot bring about a radical change in the people and win their hearts and minds. The basic issues affecting the peoples attitude have to be tackled, besides carrying out other people friendly activities. Two years ago, the Kamakhya temple complex had no water in the tanks. We got Army help and in a couple of days water was pumped into the tanks. This was greatly appreciated by the people. During floods, the Army was extensively employed on relief work. We tried out yet another aspect. I felt that we should make the people of Assam feel proud of their past history and the rest of India proud of Assam. With this in mind, I started projecting Lachit Borphukan as a National hero stressing that his genius extended the geographical boundaries of Assam. He was not a hero of Assam alone but of the entire Nation. I similarly
obtained recognition for Gopinath Bordoloi - getting a posthumous award of Bharat Ratna for him and naming of the Guwahati airport after him. These may be small gestures but they had considerable emotional impact. All this has led a change of heart of the people.

There have also been some contributing factors which have been of help. The militants got alienated from the people due to their criminal acts which made them lose popular support and sympathy. First, the killing of Sanjay Ghosh. He was a person with such a good background, educated at Oxford who had been doing social work which was highly appreciated by the local people. After having killed him, the militants started coming out with all sorts of different stories. That was the beginning of the downward slide of the image of the ULFA among the people. The rape and killing of a young Assamese girl, Rashmi Bora, was another crime committed by the ULFA militants, which alienated them from the people. During the Kargil war, the ULFA came out in support of Kashmiri Mujahideen urging the people of Assam to follow suit. This further alienated the people who were at that time in the grip of patriotic fervour like the rest of the country. So far as the Army was concerned this proved to be a watershed. There was now a great attitudinal change among the people. Our psychological initiatives and the criminal acts of ULFAs combined to bring about a complete attitudinal change among the people. Thus, we won the battle for the hearts and minds of the people.

(c) Economic Development: The third prong of our strategy has been economic development. Our shallow tube scheme has had a tremendous impact. With over 1,00,000 shallow tube wells, we ushered a Green Revolution in Assam. For the first time, in 50 years, today Assam has become self-sufficient in rice.
So the combined effect of co-ordinated military operations, well planned psychological initiatives and development activities has yielded a sea change and Assam is emerging out of tunnel of violence.

As regards insurgency spreading to the other States of India i.e. West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, His Excellency said, "In Bihar, Bengal and Orissa you can have chaos, you can have collapse of administration, leading to a revolution but it may be difficult for insurgency to sprout. They are so much part of the mainstream of the country it may not be possible for the people in these States to assert a separate identity and try to break away. However, such a situation may well arise in Tamil Nadu if LTTE is successful in establishing a Tamil Elam. In that case there may be a movement generated for a Greater Elam. UP is in the same category as Bihar. Uttaranchal borders with China, yet the civilizational bond, both linguistic and religious, binds it to the rest of the country. Eruption of insurgency in these areas is not likely.

Q. 2. There are various militant groups in the seven sister States. In Assam ULFA, NDFB, BLT etc are there. Nagaland has NSCN (IM), NSCN (K) and Manipur has PLA, PREPAK, UNLF etc. They all have a nexus with each other. What steps are being taken within the North-Eastern States against this situation?

Ans. You must appreciate that each militant group has its own motivating factors. ULFA is different from other militant groups in one respect and that is it is a non-tribal militant group. The others are tribal groups. The tribal groups have not got fully assimilated into the Indian mainstream. Their problems of separate identity are different and one tribe is often in conflict with the other tribe. To give an example NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) are groupings of different Naga tribes. There are two groups amongst the Bodos - the NDFB which is predominantly Christians and BLT, which is dominated by non-christians. Although all these outfits have taken up arms against the State and at some point of time they have had nexus
with NSCN the mother of insurgency in North-East, they are fighting their battles separately. Our strategy for dealing with them needs to take this into account. Some of these militant outfits are opposed to each other and have been resorting to mutual killings like NSCN (IM) and NSCN(K) or NDFB and BLT. ULFA has never defined the geographical boundaries for the State of so called "Independent Assam". Would they accept further bifurcation of Assam and grant of independence or Statehood to Bodoland? What will be ULFA's stand on NSCN's claim over Naga inhabited areas of Assam? In the case of Manipur militants the interests of Meiteis clash with those of Nagas in the hill areas of the State. Nagas want a greater Nagaland to include the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. The Meiteis are opposed to giving up any territory belonging to their State. All these problems are there. It is difficult to visualise a combined effort by all militant groups of the North-East even though some of them may have marriages of convenience. They may be getting the weapons through common agencies or organising training facilities on payment - ULFA has a lot of money and some of its militants have been trained by NSCN.

**Interruption:** A query was asked on comparison of NE militants to the Sri Lanka model, i.e. the LTTE eliminated all the other militant groups like TELO, EPRLF, ENDLF, PLOT and so on to establish their supremacy and are now still fighting against the Government.

His Excellency stated that in the case of Sri Lanka there is ethnic commonality. In NE we have ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. The geographical areas are also different. So the Sri Lankan pattern is not relevant for the NE.
Q. 3. The public opinion reveals that the SULFA have become a more troublesome organization than the ULFA. They resort to extortion not only in a big way but also in a protected way.

(a) What would you like to say about this as Head of the State?

(b) The management of surrendered militants is far from satisfactory. The promises made to them were not met by the Government. How can this be managed better?

Ans. There are two lots of surrendered militants or SULFA as follows:

(a) **First Lot of Surrendered Militants**: The first lot is those who surrendered in 1993-94. They surrendered enbloc about 3000 at a time. Each one was given Rupees two lakhs and allowed to retain their weapons. They were even provided PSOs. Some of them have been functioning like a mafia and have been indulging in extortion as also other criminal activities.

(b) **Second Lot of Surrendered Militants**: The second lot of surrendered militants who have surrendered in the last two years are in a different category. No one was allowed to keep weapons and nor were they given any cash. They have been surrendering individually or in batches. Some were given Government jobs, like BSF, CRPF and Railways. Later, we felt it may become counter-productive to get them jobs because this may encourage unemployed youth to join ULFA and after some time surrender to get a job. It was decided to provide them training which would help in their rehabilitation. Free accommodation, free messing and free training were
arranged for one year. During this period they get a stipend of Rs. 2,000/- per month. After the end of their training in a vocation of their choice, they are supposed to get self-employed. There are certain schemes under which they may run a co-operatives of their own. A person who was given accommodation and free messing can also save some money at the end of one year to the tune of say Rs. 12,000/- from his savings. Four or five can join together and invest about Rupees fifty to sixty thousand and start a business. It is possible that the implementation of this scheme may not be very satisfactory. There is a camp at Tamulpur and another at Sibsagar run by the Army. The camp at Goalpara is being run by the civil administration. I have visited the Army camps and found them running well.

**Interruption:** On interruption as to what do we do with those SULFAs who have the weapons and are using it for extortion, His Excellency said that the Government have to disarm them, book them for criminal activities. I understand that around 47 cases of this nature have been booked for criminal activities.

**Q. 4.** You had submitted a report dated 08 November 1998 to The President of India 'on illegal migration in Assam'. As head of the State please let us know as to what measures the Government should take for implementation of the same?

**Ans.** The crux of the problem is the abolition of the IM(DT) Act. So long as the IM(DT) Act remains, there is little that can be done because IM(DT) virtually protects the illegal migrant. It prevents action being taken against them. The border is porous and it is difficult to prevent infiltration. I have listed a whole lot of measures to be taken. The scrapping of IM(DT) is one of them. IM(DT) was lying as a dormant issue. People had forgotten about it. It has now come into national focus. Of course, it aroused a lot of hope amongst the Assamese people and they felt obliged to me for taking up this issue. As for this being brought into national focus, it is interesting that the CPM Government of West Bengal, has
for the first time raised their voice against illegal migration despite allegations in the part of their conniving with it to build a vote bank. Another significant development is that the Congress Chief Ministers of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland have also raised the issue of illegal migrants in their States. In Assam the Congress has of course taken a pro IM(DT) stand. So far as the Central Government is concerned, parliamentary arithmetic is against the scrapping of this Act. IM(DT) has been passed as an Act of the Parliament. Its repeal requires a majority both in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. In Rajya Sabha the Congress is in a majority and therefore the question of getting a bill on scrapping of IM(DT) cleared in Rajya Sabha, doesn't arise. In Lok Sabha, BJP is the dominant party of the NDA and wants IM(DT) to be scrapped but some of its alliance partners like Samata Party, National Conference and Trinamul Congress are opposed to doing so. Interestingly, some lawyers from Bengal have filed a suit in the Supreme Court on this issue. The Supreme Court asked for affidavits from all States bordering Bangladesh. It also asked for an affidavit from the Central Government. What cannot be resolved politically may get resolved legally. There are two things about IM(DT) Act. First, it is discriminatory as it applies only to Assam. Second, the right to citizenship has been defined in the Constitution. IM(DT) Act alters the provisions of the Constitution because it allows for all migrants before 25th Mar 1971 becoming citizens of India. A Constitutional provision cannot be amended by a normal legislation by the Parliament. IM(DT) Act should have been passed as a Constitutional amendment. A Constitutional amendment requires two third majority in the Parliament. IM(DT) Act not being a constitutional amendment can be struck down by the Supreme Court.

Q. 5. There is always a cry from the politicians that the Union Government is not giving enough of funds for improvement of the State. Can we have your views on the subject?

Ans. Dr. Jayanta Madhab a leading economist has stated that 42,000 crores was allotted by the Centre to the North-East in the last seven years but on the ground there is not much
evidence of proper utilisation of these funds. There is another problem. Funds are allocated by the Central Government with a proviso that there should be matching contribution by State Governments. The financial position of the State Governments in this region is not very sound. They are not in a position to provide matching funds. Moreover, governance all over India has got badly corroded. Rajiv Gandhi had said that out of every Rupee allocated for development, eighty-five paise got siphoned off. The NEC has accorded priority to two major areas. One is power and the other is roads.

Q. 6. North-East is bordered with four foreign countries i.e. Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Out of this, the first and the last are bordering Assam.

(a) What is our present state of relationship with these countries?

(b) What steps are being taken for improving the relationship?

Ans. Our relationship with Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh has been friendly but these countries have their own compulsions.

**Bhutan** :- Bhutan is not anti-India. It is friendly with India and is dependent on India. Yet it has not been in a position to evict the militant camps in its territory. They lack the capability of doing so and they fear that any action taken by them may lead to insurgency erupting in their State. They are sensitive about the large Nepalese population in South Bhutan. There is an anti establishment feeling among them. ULFA can exploit this explosive situation. Bhutan does not want Indian forces to take action against these militants inside Bhutan. Thus despite all what the King has been saying for the past few years there is stalemate on the ground and the militants continue to flourish in their Bhutan sanctuaries and operate from there in Assam.
**Myanmar** :- In Myanmar, there are camps of Indian militants. There have been inhibitions in India about the military regime in Myanmar. Lately, we have realised the compulsions of national security. We have been taking a realistic view and have begun dialogue with the military regime in that country. Last year the Myanmar Army co-operated and took action against Indian militants operating in Myanmar. Hopefully they would co-operate with us further in trying to flush out these militants from their country.

**Bangladesh** :- Sheikh Hasina is friendly towards India but she has also to deal with the opposition who keep criticising her for being an Indian agent. When she came to power the ULFA militants pulled out from Bangladesh and moved into Bhutan. Today the top leadership of ULFA is in Bangladesh and they have got lot of funds. They have invested them in Bangladesh. I do not know what the exact amount is but it is reported to be very substantial running into several hundred crores. The administration in Bangladesh at the lower level often display fundamentalist leanings. This creates problems. Sheikh Hasina has to face elections soon. At this stage she may not be inclined to do anything which may be seen to be pro-India. The opposition may exploit this and use it against her in the coming election.

**China** :- China is in a different category. Upto the 1970s China was actively involved in assisting the insurgency movements in the North-East. They have now held their hand back and there is no active involvement of the Chinese (This was also the view of Lt Gen (Retd) NIS Narhari, PVSM, Ex-GOC IV Corps). This is the position today but tomorrow things may change. However, there has been some improvement in our relations with China and lately our Northern borders have been peaceful and tension-free.
Q. 7. How far has the Unified Command Structure been successful in combating militancy in Assam? Why this philosophy is not existing in the other North-Eastern States like Meghalaya and Manipur?

Ans. A big problem in our country has been ego hassles. The Army, the Police and the Para Military Forces have to operate together. The Para Military Forces consider themselves a parallel Army. The Police has its own outlook and so has the Army. There should be unity of command for these forces operating together otherwise they tend to become competing rather than complimentary forces. The Army has more expertise and experience of dealing with large scale violence. Therefore, the British introduced this concept of unity of command of forces in Malaya under the Army. We have been handling insurgency for the past fifty years but we have not been able to introduce unity of command of our forces. In Assam we have unified command which is the nearest to unity of command. Unified command visualises that the GOC co-ordinates the operations and carry all elements with him. In terms of military terminology, one may say that unity of command is like being placed "under command" and unified command is like being "in direct support". This arrangement has worked well in Assam due to the attitude of various personalities involved in its functioning. Having an ex-Army Officer as Governor has also helped matters.

There have been some bad incidents of violence in Meghalaya but there is no evidence of insurgency in that State. Therefore, there is no requirement for any unified command in Meghalaya.

As regards Manipur, there is a crying need for a unified command. The State Government and the Police are opposed to this concept. There are also reports of nexus between politicians and insurgents.
Q.8. Why has the government failed to bring the various militant groups to the negotiating table?

Ans. Naga: Some progress has been made with the Nagas. For over three years a cease fire is operative and we have got a cease fire monitoring group. Some loopholes in the ground rules for cease fire have recently been plugged. The Nagas would not put up camps without informing the SFs and these will be the designated camps. The SFs will not move within one km of these designated camps. To an extent this shows some progress, otherwise the Nagas could be having camps all over.

The Nagas have also agreed that they will not move in uniform outside the camp. The Nagas have been wanting extension of the terms of cease fire to Naga inhabited areas outside Nagaland. Obviously, they are trying to prepare the ground for their claim for Greater Nagaland. Manipur will not agree to give up its hill districts nor will Arunachal like to give up the two districts of Changlang and Tirap. Assam has got no Naga districts as such. The boundary between Nagaland and Assam is in dispute and is sub judice in the Supreme Court. This issue continues to be a stumbling block. A formal cease fire has now also been agreed upon with NSCN (K).

ULFA: ULFA so far has been insisting on three pre-conditions for talks. Talks to be in a foreign country in the presence of UN observers and confined to Assam's sovereignty. These conditions cannot be accepted by any Government in India. The Government has been willing to have talks within the framework of the Constitution, but the ULFA has been insisting on all its three pre-conditions.
Q. 9. You had mentioned that Bangladesh should be helped economically to curb illegal migration. Can you please elaborate on this?

Ans. Migration of population, whether legal or illegal, is mostly for economic reasons. People move from one area to another area for green pastures where they hope to be economically better off. The Grameen Bank scheme launched by Mr. Younus in Bangladesh has been a great success. If we can assist the Grameen Bank we would be serving the interest of India. Improved economic conditions in Bangladesh will help in arresting the impetus for migration.

Interruption: On interruption, it was asked from His Excellency that on the various discussions by the research scholar from the senior Officers of the Army, it had come to light that it is very difficult to stop migration of those people who have ethnic affinity. Not withstanding this, it is felt that it is the fear of death of a man when he crosses the border is the one which will stop a man from illegal migration rather than anything else. The views of His Excellency was asked on this aspect.

The answer of His Excellency is as below:-

An obstacle doesn't by itself stop illegal migration. That is the history of mankind, whether it was the China wall, Berlin wall or barbed wire fencing that we have put up. However, even if it does not stop migration, it deters and reduces the volume of migration. No obstacle is of any use unless it is kept under surveillance. That means, patrolling of the obstacle. Along with barbed wire fencing we must also have effective patrolling. These together will largely reduce infiltration but may not be able to totally eliminate it.
Q.10 What steps are being taken by the Government to curb the role of ISI in the North-East particularly Assam? How can we create more awareness of this with the common citizen?

Ans. The Assam Police had a good lead and was able to apprehend important ISI operatives. We need to be ever vigilant. For the sake of political mileage some people start saying that the innocent minority is being harassed. There was a major breakthrough when four important ISI operatives were apprehended. Their case is in the High Court. Two of them are Pakistani nationals, and one is a Kashmiri. The people have to be made aware of this threat and they should be vigilant. Political parties should look at this problem from the point of view of national interests and not in terms of vote bank.

Q.11. What is your future plan as Chairman of the NEC to improve the economic conditions of the North-Eastern States?

Ans. The Power Sector particularly, hydroelectric projects have to be given priority. These projects cost thousands of crores and take time to complete. The benefits accruing from them are multipurpose. One gets more electric power, improved irrigation facilities become available and floods get controlled. North East Power Corporation and All India Power Corporation working together are evolving plans. Two major projects are in the process of being completed and more are planned. A network of roads of regional importance is also being constructed.

NEC looks after the mental hospital in Tezpur. The concept of a lunatic asylum where lunatics are held in custody has changed to one of trying to cure them and send them back to the society. While in the hospital, they have to be engaged in profitable activities. These are welfare oriented. There are various other medical institutions. There is the
Regional Institute of Medical Science in Imphal. A lot of money has been spent over it. There is also the B Baruah Cancer Institute at Guwahati, which is being looked after by NEC.

Apart from these health projects, NEC is also looking after the NE Regional Institute of Water and Land Management at Tezpur. There are several other projects for NE being financed by NEC.

Q.12 With all your experience in the Army as Vice-Chief of Army Staff and Head of the State

(a) What are the Challenges of the SFs operating in the counter-insurgency operations environment in Assam?

(b) What are the remedial measures for the same?

Ans. One needs to view this problem in its historical perspective. I would like to concentrate on the Army. The SFs are a combination of the Army, the Para Military and the Police. The Army has to play a major role when there is an outbreak of insurgency because of escalation in the level of violence. Before 1947 the Indian Army was not popular with the people because it was viewed as a colonial Army. It was considered as being meant to keep the people under subjugation and uphold the might of the British Empire. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was perpetrated by the Indian Army. The order to open fire was given by a British Officer, Brigadier General Dyer, but the fact remains that it was executed by Indian soldiers. The Army was not popular with the people. In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi, wrote when Indian independence was on the horizon, that the Army had only been used to open fire at the people. India was going to become Independent. The Army must change its attitude. It should help people in cultivation, in digging wells and even cleaning latrines. Only then it will be able to win the love of the people. Soon after this advice given by the Mahatma, India
became Independent. Overnight a colonial Army became a National Army. **How did this change come about?** It is because of the role played by the Army and without carrying out the tasks visualised by Mahatma Gandhi. There was a total breakdown of governance in North India at the time of Partition. The Army was the only institution which could bring about normalcy. There was total dependence on the Army. Apart from law and order, the Army ran refugee camps of lakhs of people at Kurukshetra. Soon after Independence, it was engaged in military operations in Junagarh, Kashmir and Hyderabad. There was an upsurge of patriotic feelings among the people and the Army became the most popular instrument of the Government. A pro-Army attitude prevailed even during the 1962 debacle. There was criticism of political and military leadership but not of the Army as such. While the Army could go through this sort of transformation, unfortunately the Police could not. The Police has remained unpopular with the people as it was in the colonial days. The reason is that the Police has to constantly interact with the people to enforce the law and it has continued with its old colonial ways. The Police has also got politicised because of interference by politicians. Thus the Army has been more popular than the Police. However, during counter-insurgency operations, the Army has to act against the people. When it is fighting a war it is protecting the people and naturally gets popular support but while operating in counter-insurgency role it arouses a feeling of animosity among the people. There are also occasions when soldiers show a lack of discipline getting involved in excesses, molestation of women and so on. The **big challenge facing the Army** in counter-insurgency operations is to ensure that it does not lose the goodwill of the people. This is a very challenging task and is easier said than done. Success in earning people's goodwill is a key factor which must never be lost sight of.

**Interruption :** On interruption, it was brought to the notice of His Excellency that in one of the seminars it was said that in an insurgency environment the basic battle is 'to win the hearts and minds of the people'.
His Excellency fully agreed with this proposition. This was the view expressed by Field Marshal Templer in Malaya. He was successful in doing so and insurgency in Malaya was defeated. The French and later, the Americans also tried to do so in Vietnam but they could not succeed. Both the French and the Americans suffered military reverses. No doubt the Americans did a whole lot of civic action but in the long run it did not have the desired effect. People do not get convinced so easily, particularly when there is a strong feeling for a particular ideology, whether that be Independence, or a particular way of life. By just having a few medical relief camps you cannot win the hearts and minds of the people.

We have been doing things in a sustained and co-ordinated manner in Assam and have been able to win the hearts and minds of the people. The Army is also operating in Kashmir, but the ground conditions are very different. In 1997 and 1998 newspapers and the people were demanding that the Army be returned to the barracks. Unified Command was painted as an infringement of the autonomy of the State and a sort of Military imposition. Matters were made worse by instances of excesses which the human rights organisation would exploit. I remember that during floods in 1997 when the Army was assisting the people, I visited a flood affected area. A Press correspondent asked me when will the Army go back to the barracks? I asked him at this juncture when the Army was engaged in flood relief how could anyone ask the Army to go back. He had no answer. In the last three to four years our sustained psychological initiatives have yielded results. We took up causes dear to the Assamese people. At an all India seminar of historians at Guwahati, in my inaugural address I asserted that historians had neglected Assam but history had not neglected Assam. My aim has been to make the Assamese people feel proud of their past and the rest of India to be proud of Assam. I tried to build up Lachit Borphukan and Gopinath Bordoloi as our great national heroes. As far as the Army is concerned, I insisted that come what may we will not spare those who commit human rights violations. We must maintain a very high standard of discipline and when there is a case of rape, we should not allow any Unit Commander to hush up things for the sake of the so called prestige of his Unit. The guilty must be awarded
prompt and deterrent punishment. There was a case of a soldier raping a woman. The GOC and his wife visited the victim's house to sympathise with her. The disciplinary proceedings against the guilty was completed within ten weeks. The individual was dismissed from service and given ten years rigorous imprisonment. This action was publicised. One or two other such cases were similarly dealt with. We have not only been running medical relief camps but doing whole lot of other things. The Army has been renovating school buildings and temples. When water tanks at Kamakhya dried up, the Army pumped up water from the Brahmaputra. It constructed high grounds in Kaziranga National Park to provide shelter for animals during floods. Viewpoints for tourist were also constructed. The Army has been running free coaching classes for unemployed youths in vehicle repair, TV and Radio repair, computer and so on. The Kargil war brought about a patriotic upsurge among the people. This manifested itself when bodybags of soldiers from Kargil started arriving in the State. The cumulative effect of all this has been that while the Army continues to be employed in CI Ops and clashes are taking place, people at large are no longer hostile to the Army. Our CI Ops are conducted in a people friendly manner. In counter-insurgency operations if we are able to win the people over to our side, more than half the battle is won. Mao Tse Tung aptly said "The people are the sea and the militants are the fish. Without water, the fish dies." When SFs gain the support of the people the insurgents get reduced to becoming like fish out of water. He cannot survive. The biggest challenge before the SFs is to win over the people and ensure that the militant gets isolated from them.