# Road to peace in abode of cloud

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The existence of the A'chik National Volunteers Council (ANVC) and its breakaway faction ANVC (B) came to a historic end with the disbanding of the two outfits at a solemn function held here to mark the occasion at the Dikki-Bandi Stadium, at Dakopgre. Chairmen of the two outfits, Dilash Marak and Bernard N. Marak surrendered their arms and signed the affirmation for disbandment with

Meghalaya Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma in the presence of Cabinet Ministers Ampareen Lyngdoh, A. L. Hek and Zenith Sangma, Parliamentary Secretaries, high- level officials of the State Government including Chief Secretary P.B.O Warjri, members and cadres of the two groups, church leaders, senior citizens and the public.

Addressing the gathering the Chief Minister expressed his pride and humility as the two outfits had shown exemplary maturity, courage and farsightedness in joining the peace process and finally returning back to the mainstream and said that this has reinforced the essential truth that violence can never be an option for finding solutions to any grievances.

He said that it was the perception that Garo Hills has been neglected by the government that led some of the youth to take the path of militancy in the “mistaken belief that through violence they would be able to set things right. However, it only led to further deterioration in the situation as developmental programmes suffered, he said, adding that the last two decades have been virtually the “lost decades” for us. “The disbanding of ANVC and ANVC-B rekindles the hope that the era of peace and stability will return to Garo Hills and together we will be able to re-plot the path of development and peace”, he said.

The Bishop of Tura, Rt. Rev. Andrew R. Marak led the gathering in prayer for cadres of the two outfits and spoke briefly on the text “Return Home”, while the Pastor of Hawakhana Baptist Church, Rev. F.D. Sangma.

The Deputy Commissioner, West Garo Hills, Pravin Bakshi, in his welcome address, gave a brief background note about the formation of ANVC and later, ANVC (B) and the subsequent processes that paved the way for the disbanding of the two outfits.

Chairmen of the two outfits, Dilash M. Marak and Bernard M. Marak, also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the causes that led to their armed struggle and also their intention to work in the interest of the people in understanding with the government both at the Centre and the State.

The extended ceasefire agreement was signed at Shillong on January 5, 2012. On September 18, 2013, the same commitment was reiterated and both the groups, ANVC and ANVC (B) were requested to submit the list of their cadres to the State Police Special Branch for further processing. Finally, a formal text for settlement was signed by the Union Home Ministry, the Chief Minister of Meghalaya, the leaders of ANVC and ANVC (B) at New Delhi on September 24, last paving the way for disbandment of the two militant outfits.

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