**India asks Myanmar to hand over NSCN(K) men responsible for Chandel ambush**

NEW DELHI: India has asked Myanmar to hand over four top leaders of Naga rebel outfit NSCN(Khaplang), including chairman S S Khaplang and top military adviser Nikki Sumi, for their alleged involvement in the June 4 ambush in Manipur that killed 18 Army personnel.   
  
The Union home ministry had written to the ministry of external affairs last month suggesting that the latter press for custody of the four NSCN(K) leaders during the first meeting of the Indo-Myanmar joint consultation commission here on July 16. While the Indian side was represented by external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, Myanmar foreign minister U Wunna Maung Lwin participated on behalf of Yangon.   
  
According to sources, Myanmar was requested to turn in the four NSCN(K) leaders suspected to have planned and overseen execution of the Chandel strikes. The home ministry argued that their interrogation would help NIA to work out the case. Besides, once the chargesheet was filed against the NSCN(K) leaders, they could face trial here.   
  
Incidentally, though home ministry sources said that their demand for custody of Khaplang and others was formally taken up with Myanmar, the joint statement put out at the end of the bilateral meeting makes no mention of the same. The two sides confined themselves to reaffirming "their shared commitment to fight the scourge of terrorism and insurgent activity in all its forms and manifestations".   
  
"Myanmar appeared non-committal on granting our request for handing over the four NSCN(K) leaders," said a home ministry officer. Incidentally, NSCN(K) is in a ceasefire arrangement with the Myanmarese authorities.   
  
Khaplang, a Myanmarese Naga who was in a Yangon hospital at the time of the Chandel attack, is now back at the NSCN(K) headquarters in Taga, Myanmar Naga Hills. The other three NSCN-K leaders are also believed to be in Myanmar, shuttling between Taga and the outfit's other camps.   
  
Barely five days after the June 4 attack, Indian Army commandos had carried out a retaliatory strike on NSCN-K camps along the border with Myanmar. Around a fortnight later, national security adviser Ajit Doval had travelled to Myanmar to press for better coordination in tackling insurgent outfits operating from its soil.