

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, December 8, 2015

Tightening the legal noose

The political scenario in the country is abuzz with news and views on the impending appearance of two of the most prominent political figures and arguably the first family of Indian politics- Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi in the trial court in the capital in connection with the National Herald Case where the mother-son duo, along with five others were accused for allegedly cheating and misappropriation of funds in taking control of the now-defunct paper. Regardless of the outcome of the case, which, if one is to draw references from the past, is poised for a long drawn affair, what has piqued the interest of the nation is the exceptional ferocity with which the congress is trying to prevent its president and vice president from personally appearing in the court. The congress president has publicly reassured her relationship with Indira Gandhi as well as her denial to be intimidated. Yet, in what can only be described as a stark contrast to her declaration, the reluctance to cooperate in the case and unwillingness to stand up and clear their names before the law of the land clearly indicates that the allegations just might have some substance to it. More importantly, despite the congress projecting the issue as a conspiracy theory and a political vendetta to malign the image of the party, nothing could have salvaged the prestige and image more than the courage of its leaders in offering themselves for scrutiny by the law.

Undoubtedly, the tremor of the political shakedown must have been felt by the rest of the country. Incidentally, in a state where the law of the land has been twisted and gagged for long such as ours, the development at the centre should be viewed with restrained positivity, especially in view of the increasingly frequent reports of misappropriations, favoritism and nepotism as well as corruption in every sphere of public domain in Manipur. The law and its arms, unfortunately, are evidently being twisted, or more frighteningly are hand in glove, and as a result, the public has been robbed and burgled in broad daylight with neither the means nor the support to have their grievances resolved. The unfolding drama holds out a beacon of hope for the countless people who have, against their better judgment, been forced to accept the system distorted by those in power and position to advance their narrow personal ends at the expense of the majority.

There is an emergent need for the upholders of law to assert their place in the system, and to expedite its functioning so that everyone whether it be the king, the common man, the pauper or the prince are met out the same treatment. Most important of all, the delicate parity between the judiciary and the executive must be maintained if the trust and support of the public is to be restored. The law needs to be blind to the position and power of its citizens but must keep its eyes wide open for any challenges or disturbances to the system. It is high time the law exercise its powers to tighten the noose around those who are threatening to usurp the system.

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National Herald Case

What is referred to as the "National Herald case" is based on Mr Swamy's allegation that Congress leaders gave Rs. 90 crore as loan from tax exempted money to National Herald and acquired the newspaper illegally for just Rs. 50 lakh with the aim of grabbing its properties in Delhi worth thousands of crores.

The National Herald was set up in 1938 by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and Rahul Gandhi's great-grandfather. In 2008, Sonia Gandhi decided to shut down the newspaper, which had been struggling for decades with mismanagement and poor earnings.

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Peace and Ethnic Conflict in Northeast India: Cultural Borderlands of Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Nagaland-Manipur Crisis

(Paper presented in ICSSR, N. Delhi sponsored International Seminar on Movements in Recent Past and Present Northeast India with special reference to Manipur, 27-29 Nov 2015, orgd. by Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University)

Contd from yesterday

Background to Nagaland-Manipur Crisis

How all these epoch making events of ethno-nationhood in the Northeast and engagement with the post-colonial nation state of India had an over-arching sub-text (of ethnic conflict between Nagas and Meeteis of Manipur) is however the theme of this paper. Side by side with the Nagas demand for independence was the essential connotation of sovereignty and territory. The Nagas, as per their deep rooted tradition were extremely tied to their land, and as an universal law, no nation on earth should exist without a concrete geographical land, and the Nagas, during the course of peace negotiations conceptualized the extent of the proposed sovereign geography of Nagalim (the land of the Nagas) which included Naga-inhabited areas in Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh in India and certain areas in Myanmar (this claim to Burmese territory was dropped during the course of the negotiations). Some 120,000 square kilometers of territory became the claim of the Naga nation during the peace negotiations. Earlier in armed confrontation and hectic violent engagements, it was not possible to formulate and change the Naga Independence discourse of the ensuing lebensraum. However when peace negotiations were started the first initial hurdle to be crossed was the establishment of trust amidst the protagonists and fixation of the ground rules for the ceasefire. The issues of the extent of geography to be covered by the presence of armed militaries of the Naga cadres became a controversial issue, when Indian diplomats and corporate bigwigs spoke about the universal extent of the ceasefire, that it had no specific territorial impediments. In the eyes of the people of the valley, the extension of the

territorial extent of the cease-fire to Manipur would signal the recognition of legitimacy to the territorial claims of the NSCN-IM to the four hill districts of Manipur namely, Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong to be incorporated into the proposed Nagalim. Civil society representatives in the plains of Manipur pledged on protecting the territorial integrity of the ancient Asiatic state of Manipur sensed this as a threat to dismantle the fabric of the multiethnic, multicultural state, which unfortunately had been merged forcibly into Indian Union in 1949. Massive rallies and agitations were held at the Imphal valley against the proposals of the cease-fire for Manipur's territorial integrity in 1997 and again in 2000. The announcement of the Cease-fire without 'territorial limits' between the NSCN-IM on June 14, 2001 at the Bangkok conference led to a massive insurrection at the Imphal valley on June 18, which destroyed and burnt the Manipur Legislative Assembly buildings, all national party offices in the urban complex, residences of the M.L.A.'s and Manipuri political representatives were dragged out from their offices and humiliated before the public. Amidst the firing by the Central Reserve Police Forces on to the crowd at the Chief Minister's official bungalow fourteen protesters were killed on the spot, and four others died at subsequent agitations to revoke the cease-fire without territorial limits. The eighteen Meetei protesters were later martyred by the valley people as having sacrificed lives on issues of the territorial integrity of Manipur with a mausoleum erected to honour them annually. The NDA Government was forced to cancel the clause 'without territorial limits' from the Bangkok agreement, announcement being made on June 28, 2001. Interestingly, in the violence that erupted in Manipur in the wake of cease-fire proposals, not a single Naga citizen was harmed,

which symbolized the non-communal nature of the agitation. This refusal by Meeteis to acknowledge the 'legitimate' claims of the Nagas to live within one administrative umbrella, which had 'historical' antecedents in former agreements and a movement for Naga unification that started peacefully in 1972 in Manipur with the merger of the Naga Integration Committee in the National Congress party, remained as a stumbling block to the smooth resolution of the Indo-Naga conflict. The anger and fury of the Naga leadership of the NSCN-IM towards the NDA Government on the withdrawal of the clause 'without territorial limits' was however assuaged with the assurance that the 'Scope of Negotiations' had not changed, thereby meaning that the NSCN-IM's proposals for the resolution of the Indo-Naga peace process included this issue of Naga integration as one of the thirty-one 'substantive points', and the discussions on this issue can continue.

Thus the last decade of the peace negotiations which centred on Naga sovereignty, future relationship between India and Nagalim and the unification of the Nagas, led to the necessity on the part of the NSCN-IM to increase mobilization of the Naga communities of Manipur for pursuance of the agenda of Naga integration, and since 2005 onwards, the unconditional talks between Gol and NSCN-IM foregrounded the agenda of Naga inhabited areas to be brought under one administrative roof as the most important factor to be addressed for the final solution to the Indo-Naga conflict. It became more and more vehement with the major Naga inhabitants of Manipur taking recourse to prolonged agitations which would culminate in the unification of Manipur Nagas into Nagaland. Civil society representatives, student bodies and

Government of Nagaland became a party to the unification movement which culminated in a major crisis when the Manipur State Police and Commandos fired and killed three persons recently in the northern hill town of Mao on 6th My 2010 in the midst of intense agitation. This incident of Police firing on Naga protestors were in the midst of constant economic blockades of the National Highways 39 & 53, which connected Manipur and the rest of India. The immediate provocation was on the pressure to allow the NSCN-IM leader Thuingaleng Muivah to visit his hometown in Ukhrul, which the Government of Manipur refused to allow, in spite of Government of India's permission to let the rebel leader enter Manipur.

The crisis was thus one of the severest in ethnic relations in Northeast India, where the two Governments of Nagaland and Manipur, the respective civil societies of the two states were locked in a struggle, where the role and function of the Centre was brought into focus, considering the tense nature of ethnic strife. Interestingly, the blockade, which was used by the Naga civil societies for all their grievances on any issue of their collective rights, also brought in intense suffering to the people of Manipur with continuous humanitarian crises on lack of essential commodities, food, oxygen, life-saving drugs, petrol, cooking gas etc. and black-marketing business thrived and prospered during the human predicament. One silver lining however was that in spite of the high strung tension between the two communities Naga & Meetei, there was no physical violence on the body of the other, which reflected some qualitative difference on questions of communal or ethnic cleavage within societies.

(Concluded)

Proposal for Smart City- letter from Thailand

We would like to include the following points for a modern city or so called Smart City.

- 1. Location:** First of all, we would like to propose a new location for new smart city because Imphal is already congested, unplanned, lacks land for construction and expansion of city, and to have characteristics of smart city, there will be more demolition work rather than construction in this old city. We need to choose a location that could be in an adjoining area of different districts. That will be easier to access from most districts.
- 2. Road & Transportation:** Well-planned architectural structure of roads and transportation are necessary. Design the roads that could be expanded easily over the next coming decades with long term city plan. Design MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) system for underground and sky train system as long term solution that can be implemented in the future. For now, design two types of highways, 1. Normal highway, 2. Elevated motor highway. Normal highway will serve as normal road while the elevated motor highway will be constructed as long over-bridge style for faster driving that authority should collect toll way tax at entry points or exit points. This will reduce traffic jam and generate income for government as well. Elevated motor highway will be completely under control of government authority, and this

- system will be out of danger from bands, economic blockades and general strikes that hamper the normal life of people.
- 3. Parking area:** Implement compulsory rule that businesses, offices, and any private or public buildings should have parking area for their own as well as visiting clients. No parking area, no vehicle license.
- 4. Power supply:** Make sure there is uninterrupted 24/7 power supply.
- 5. Water Supply:** Provide clean and hygienic water supply for 24/7.
- 6. Green city:** Grow trees and flowers in road dividers, on the roadsides, as well as surrounding buildings where possible areas are available and manage it carefully on a daily basis.
- 7. Garbage Management:** Arrange dust bins trash bins everywhere. Make it compulsory for every government or private office or business to arrange their own or public trash bins. Manage proper drainage system as well with proper management. Implement heavy fine for littering on the streets and as well as spitting (*kwah*).
- 8. Public Park or Recreational Area:** There should be clean and pollution free public park area for relaxing as well as exercising.
- 9. Bus waiting shed & mobile charge outlet:** Install proper bus waiting shed and install electric socket for mobile phone charging, probably USB outlets (*not for wall plugs*). Mobile phone is now

- everyone's necessary item.
- 10. Foot-bridge crossings:** Install footbridges for people to cross the road. This will avoid criss-cross street crossing as if there is no traffic rules.
- 11. Toilet:** Public toilet should be installed everywhere. This is very basic need at crowded area.
- 12. Communication:** Implement computerized system, internet and intranet service for any public service office to save time and manage the city more efficiently.
- 13. Security:** Install CCTV in every corner of the city, and make it compulsory for public and private buildings to have this facility as well.
- 14. Employment Avenues:** Job is very important part for income generation. Surrounded by poor and hunger cannot lead to smart city. Arrange employment avenues where all the information regarding hiring and employment should be available at that place. Focus on private sector/self-employment job information because government sector job is too limited and people cannot depend on only government jobs.
- 15. Industrial Park:** Include industrial park at the edge of the city where industrial products are easily accessible to the city for commercial purposes.
- 16. Guest House:** Arrange guest houses for those who come from outside or far villages who cannot return to their remote area, and also

- who got stuck during unpredictable times such as bands and strikes. Don't focus only guests for government officials but people too.
- 17. Awareness:** We need to include city civil sense lesson in school subject as compulsory topic. We need to properly train our officers and workers in our municipal authority as well as the city police and traffic police. No blow-horn rule for vehicle except in some emergency situations. This will be one of the characteristics of an ideal city.
- 18. Make it smart:** If we don't implement the rules properly, there will be no proper meaning of smart city. Law is law, rule is rule. Let the law breakers pay heavy price for their wrong deeds. People need to learn their lesson. Don't let anybody cross the line of acceptable rules and make it meaningful for everyone without any preference or discrimination-whether MLA, minister, Law makers' kins or any citizen whoever.

(All of these proposers are working as teachers at Thai government school.
1. Chingakham Dina
email: chingakham@yahoo.com
2. Arambam Karamjit
email: ramit9992008@gmail.com
3. Khwairakpam Sumita
email: sumita.khwairakpam@yahoo.com)