

Editorial

Imphal, Wednesday, October 28, 2015

Development for whom ???

The spurt in developmental activities in the state is a positive sign of the Government gearing up to meet the challenges of the increasing needs of the people in all spheres of life. But this quickening pace of development entails an inherent risk of doing more harm than good. Mindless removal and destruction of natural resources and altering the social setup through these activities could create an irreversible and permanent change to the very identity of this land. The results of this haphazard and impulsive rush towards development are beginning to show - roads littered with stones and dust, left untended for months with the resulting protests and roadblocks becoming an everyday affair - something that has entered the realm of a basic procedure. The steps that followed suit - that of laying the long neglected roads are even more frustratingly interesting, sometimes with even carpets of tar that can be rolled up, but more frequently turning out to be works of art - an illusion of a road with the same bumps and rolls that was there before the whole exercise began. The plight of the people residing along these roads while all these are happening, or rather not happening can only be imagined. Another manifestation of development can be better experienced with the nose. Garbage being dumped along roadsides, drainage systems being filled up even before they are completed and the peculiarity of the stench in different parts have actually served as a landmark of sorts. Zero garbage campaign turned out to be utter rubbish. Lack of proper waste management system have turned half of Langol and Lamphel area into a dumping ground that will one day spread out to cover even the Capitol building. With Imphal Municipality office embroiled in agitations and strikes, we all should be prepared for a long smelly haul. Parking, or the lack of it is another outcome of development - construction of malls and multi-storied markets without giving a thought about the facility who comes shopping to park their vehicles. Should we also add the lack of subways and footbridges along busy intersections and junctions, as a result of which everybody is using the landing of the flyover to cross over, playing the dodging game, the prize - one's limb and life intact. All these can be remedied and reversed, if the Government puts a holistic and sustainable plan of action and acts upon it in earnest. What is of greater concern is the danger of our ecosystem being changed irreversibly case in point - construction of Ithai Barrage. The tag of the largest freshwater lake in northeast India being given to Loktak Lake may soon be history, as is the threat to the last remaining natural habitat of the "Sangai" in the world - Keibul Lamjao being perished gradually. Development does not equate commercialization. We have a greater duty to preserve and build up our ecosystem. Development should complement and evolve around the unique natural identity of a place and not the other way round.

34 percent votes cast till 1 p.m. in third phase of Bihar polls

ANI Patna, Oct. 28: An estimated 34 percent votes were cast till 1 p.m. in the third phase of Bihar Assembly elections. Polling is underway in 50 constituencies, spread over six districts, amidst tight security arrangements. Re-polling is also being held at booth no.131 of Banka Assembly constituency and at booth no.188 of Chakai constituency. Polling on these booths was held on October 12 during the first phase of polling. Governor Ramnath Kovind, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav and former chief minister Rabri Devi exercised their right of franchise. Non-functioning EVMs have been reported from a few places in Nalanda, Bhojpur, Buxar and Siwan districts. Polling, which began at 7 a.m., will conclude at 5 p.m. in 40 constituencies, while it will end at 4 p.m. in the remaining 10 Naxal-affected seats. A total of 1.45 crore electors are eligible to decide the fate of over 800 candidates, 71 of whom are women. Of the total 14,170 polling stations, 6,747 have been declared as critical and 1,909 as Left Wing Extremist hit polling stations.

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One Man Created A Forest In Assam, Now A Whole Community Is Fighting To Protect It

By Shaheen S. Ahmed

A half an hour drive from Jorhat town in Assam takes you to the sleepy village called Kokilamukh. Nestled on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra, the village functions as the access point to people living in the middle of the river on sandbars, or *saporis* as the Assamese call them. A half an hour *bhut-bhut* (or crude steamer) ride from the banks of Kokilamukh village leads to one of the biggest sandbars called Aruna sapor. The "riverscape" is punctuated by several sandbars with wild vegetation and foliage, but largely uninhabited. Aruna sapor lies between the mainland and one of the largest river islands in Aruna sapor captured popular imagination of nature lovers and the global media recently because of Mulai Kathoni or Mulai's Forest. Mulai Kathoni is often regarded as the world's only human-made forest created by Jadav Payeng, a local resident. Way back in 1979, Payeng started planting trees on this barren sandy land, starting with bamboos. For the last 30 years, he has been planting one sapling every day and using indigenous methods to create the forest, including releasing red ants into the soil, which he transported from his village to the forest. Ants, along with earthworms and termites, work on the soil, and increase its fertility. Mulai Kathoni today covers an area of 1,000 hectares (ha). The

forest now has a wide variety of trees including arjun, teak and bamboo, the world Majuli. Payeng's ecological legacy is being carried forward by the Mishing community, a riverine plain tribe of Assam. Belonging to the Indo-Mongoloid family, the Mishings are the second largest group of Scheduled Tribes in Assam. They are also nomadic, setting up their habitations wherever feasible. This search brought the current inhabitants to Aruna sapor in the 1970s. The sandbar was almost barren then, and it is due to Payeng's efforts that the island now sustains a rich bio-diverse ecology. The forest hosts rich fauna, which includes a large number of rare migratory birds including pelicans, Himalayan Griffon vulture, Brown roofed turtle, sambar deer, wild pig, pythons and cobras. Even the Royal Bengal Tigers from the neighbouring Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary have made Mulai Kathoni their home. Payeng also created a 50-m riverine canal. The canal, which is about 2.13 m deep, serves as a water source for wild animals and cattle.

Sustaining Culture

The forest that Payeng created is now a wholesome ecosystem. There are around 600 Mishing families living on the island. They do not stay in one village, but live in clusters called *chubas*. There are

seven *chubas* located on the edge of Mulai Kathoni. Each *chuba* comprises 10-12 huts, and they are named after the titles of the local residents. The Mishings have built their lives around the new forest. So much so, that they live in elevated bamboo huts called *saang ghors*, which have been adapted to suit the topography of the land and also to protect themselves from floods. Floods, in fact, are a huge threat to the forest, bringing with it a host of problems, including soil erosion. When floods inundate the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary, animals find a refuge in Mulai Kathoni. Floods not only inundate the Mishing settlements, but also bring the threat of epidemics. The Mishing community conserves the rich forest ecology, despite having little access to basic amenities. There is no access to electricity in Mulai Kathoni, not even a primary healthcare centre. In case of a health emergency, the nearest hospital is in Jorhat, which is half-an-hour by boat and another half-an-hour by road. Mishing's new home has both advantages and disadvantages. In 2008, elephants attacked the villages and destroyed the houses. This prompted many residents, including Payeng, to move to the mainland. Poaching is another threat. In 2013, a rhino was poached at Mulai Kathoni. After this incident, the residents have

become more aware of the need to conserve the ecology of the forest. "In 2014, we formed 10 eco-conservation units and 33 search lights were distributed to the residents," says Palash Goswami of Seven Look, a local non-profit, which is one of the few organisations working with the Mishing community. When poachers attacked last year, they warded them off. They also informed the state Forest Department and mobilised themselves against future attacks. "There is a threat to rhinos in this forest. Lack of electricity works to our disadvantage and to the advantage of the poachers," rues Swapan Saikia, divisional forest officer, Jorhat. "If Mulai Kathoni is categorised as a reserved forest, it would help in protecting the forest and the community around it too," he adds. In June 2015, the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in association with Europäische Tierschutzstiftung (ETS), Seven Look and the Forest Department of Assam distributed 25 solar lanterns to help villagers. WTI is also planning to install solar street lights later this year after the monsoon. But no one is sure as to how long the Mishing community will continue to stay on Aruna sapor. The powerful Brahmaputra can swallow the forest any time. Still, the Mishings are putting up a brave face. (Courtesy: Youthkiawaj)

National & International News

China punishes Shanghai airport for flight delays

AFP Shanghai, Oct. 28: Nearly half the flights leaving the main international airport of China's commercial hub Shanghai were delayed in August, regulators said, punishing the facility by denying it new routes. Air travel in the world's most populous country has boomed as incomes rise, but the industry scores poorly for customer satisfaction and constant flight delays top the list of complaints. The phenomenon is often blamed on the military, which controls most of the skies over the country. Only 51.16 percent of departures from Shanghai Pudong airport left on time in August, according to figures from the Civil Aviation Administration of China. "If I leave from Pudong Airport on time it is like winning the jackpot. A two-hour delay is normal," a woman posting under the name

Jenny WoW said on her microblog. Another complained: "I just want to say that every time I fly from Pudong it is miserable, sitting for two or three hours doing nothing even on a clear day. I was always told it was air traffic control." The airports of Hangzhou, in Zhejiang province next to Shanghai, and Tianjin, the

northern port next to Beijing, were the second- and third-worst for delays, the CAAC said. As a sanction all three were this month denied increases in flights, including charters and applications for new routes, it said. According to the FlightStats website the average delay in August at Pudong — the world's 19th busiest airport last year by

passenger traffic — was 75.6 minutes. Chinese social media are regularly filled with tales of poor behaviour by travellers, sometimes the result of fury over lengthy delays. In January police detained 25 angry passengers who opened aircraft emergency exit doors before take-off after their departure was delayed by snow.

More State news

Assam Rifles conducts Pre recruitment rally

IGARS) Imphal, Oct. 28: In continuation with its welfare activities and depicting the true reflection of Assam Rifles Motto "Friends of the North East People" a Pre Recruitment Rally was conducted by 11 Assam Rifles of 26 Sector AR under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) at Moreh Football Ground. A total of 60 candidates appeared for the Pre Recruitment Rally. The documents of the individuals were checked and candidates were made to undergo physical and medical test in which 29 candidates were shortlisted. These kinds of



events will divert the youth from Anti national activities and further motivate the young generation to join Armed forces. The locals and the candidates appreciated the efforts of the 11 Assam Rifles.

Conduct of army recruitment rally at shillong (meghalaya) wef 16 nov 2015 to 18 nov 2015

PRO(DEFENCE) Imphal, Oct. 28: A massive Army Recruitment Rally will be held at Assam Regimental Centre, Shillong (Meghalaya) from 16Nov to 18 Nov 2015, for enrolment of male candidates into the Indian Army. A very large number of vacancies are available for Soldier Clerk/ Store Keeper Technical/ Inventory management and Soldier Technical categories for all NE States. The candidates of Nagaland and Manipur are advised to report at rally site on 16 Nov 2015. Candidates to

report even if not able to register themselves online for above rally. Candidates should be born between 16Nov 1992 to 17Nov 1998 for Clerk & Technical category. For soldier clerk/SKT/IM, 12th pass from any stream (Arts/Commerce/ Science) with minimum 50% aggregate and 40% in each subject. Candidate must have studied English and Maths/Accounts/ Book Keeping as compulsory subject at 10th or 12th standard with minimum 40% marks in each of these subjects. For soldier Technical, 10+2/Intermediate exam

simple pass in Science with Physics, Chemistry, Maths and English with minimum 45% marks in aggregate or 10 class pass with minimum 50% marks in aggregate if 3 years Diploma in Engineering from an AICTE recognized institute. For further information, candidates can contact Recruiting Office Headquarter, Shillong on telephone number 0364-2506581. Army Recruiting Office, Rangapahar on telephone No 03862-248845. The same is also displayed at Notice Board at M Sector.