

PM Modi, his Bhutanese counterpart Tshearing Tobgay discuss enhancing special friendship between India & Bhutan

Agency
New Delhi, July 6,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today met his Bhutanese counterpart, Tshearing Tobgay in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest and enhancing special friendship between the two countries. Mr Tobgay arrived in New Delhi yesterday on a three-day visit to India. Mr Tobgay will also call on President Ram Nath Kovind this evening.

Yesterday, External Affairs

Minister Sushma Swaraj called on the visiting dignitary. India and Bhutan enjoy unique ties of friendship and cooperation, which are characterized by utmost trust and mutual understanding. Prime Minister Narendra Modi today met his Bhutanese counterpart, Tshearing Tobgay in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest and enhancing special friendship between the two countries. The two leaders also led the

delegation talks. In a tweet, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, good discussion took place on further strengthening cooperation in development partnership. Mr Tobgay arrived in New Delhi yesterday on a three-day visit to India. Mr Tobgay will also call on President Ram Nath Kovind this evening. India and Bhutan enjoy unique ties of friendship and cooperation, which are characterized by utmost trust and mutual understanding.

Petroleum products to be brought under GST in stages, says finance secretary

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With the Goods and Services Tax completing one year this July, the one issue that has been the bone of contention is the inclusion of petroleum products under its ambit. However, Finance Secretary Hasmukh Adhia on Friday said in the second year, the GST Council would look at bringing petroleum products under GST in phases.

Adhia's views were seconded by Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs Chairman S Ramesh, who acknowledged that there was a demand from all quarters to include fuel products under the indirect tax regime, but said the modalities would have to be thrashed out by the GST Council as some states had divergent views. Currently, diesel, petrol, crude oil, natural gas and aviation turbine fuel are outside the purview of goods and services

tax. The Centre currently levies a total of Rs 19.48 per litre of excise duty on petrol and Rs 15.33 per litre on diesel. On top of this, states levy Value Added Tax (VAT). "One of the demands that are there before us, we will see... everything will happen in stages," Adhia said at an event here.

The civil aviation ministry has repeatedly voiced its concern on the high rate of taxes on aviation turbine fuel, which accounts for a chunk of an airline's operational costs and also has a bearing on fares. Earlier, the civil aviation ministry had also written to the finance ministry seeking the inclusion of jet fuel under the indirect tax regime with full input tax credit.

A senior finance ministry official said that natural gas and ATF were likely to be among the first entrants under GST. "We have done a lot but that it does not mean that there is no scope for the betterment

of the existing system. We still believe that we need to do a lot more and we are working in that direction," Adhia said. On the issue of automation of refund, the finance secretary said it was meant to be automated right from day one but unfortunately people made so many mistakes in filing return that the income-tax department had to get into manual mode at the last moment. "We are again trying to make it completely automatic, the entire refund process. This is the next thing. In terms of simplification of rates, slabs, we do understand the need for it but we did what was best in the given scenario. We could not have done anything other than this because we had to take care of revenue, we had to take care of concern of the poor. Certainly, we must move in that direction of something better than that," Adhia said.

Centre trying to make GST refund process fully automatic, says Finance Secretary

The government is working to further simplify the tax system in the country. Addressing a session on 'one year of GST implementation' in New Delhi, Finance Secretary Hasmukh Adhia said, the Centre is also trying to make GST refund

process fully automatic. He said, we have gained quite a bit by doing simplification. He said, the GST reform was needed for other economic reforms in the country. Mr. Adhia said, credit of bringing GST goes to a lot of people.

UN member states approve USD 6.69 billion for 13 peacekeeping operations in 2018-19

UN, July 6,

The UN member states have approved a 6.69 billion US Dollar budget for 13 peacekeeping operations for the year 2018-19. It is the second year in a row, the committee has made significant cuts to the overall peacekeeping budget.

The Committee also approved significant management reforms including creation of two new departments focused on political and peace building affairs and four stand-alone divisions for Africa.

The US Mission to the UN said the major reforms approved by the member states, the first in more than 40 years, will make the UN a more accountable, transparent, and efficient organisation.

Name changed

I, the undersigned, Khundrakpam Ningthibi Chanu, of Nonong Maning Leikai, Imphal East, Manipur do hereby declare that, I have wholly renounced, relinquished and abandoned the use of old name Sorokhaibam Ningthibi Devi, as I have assumed my new name Khundrakpam Ningthibi Chanu.

Sd/-
Khundrakpam Ningthibi Chanu

ETHNIC RESPONSES TO MERGER: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By-Gangumei Kamei

1. Historical Importance of the Reassessment of the Merger Question

The importance of a historical event is judged by the interest shown by the posterity, the historians and intellectuals or common people in the form of continuous assessment, critical examination and new interpretation in the light of the felt social needs of a nation, country or community. The views of a societal group on the particular historical event also changes according to the changing perception of the event on the part of the ruling group or the social groups or the historians. Thus the Merger of Manipur into India in 1949 assumes importance with the changing perception of the question in the mind of the present generation in the light of the present social and political realities and the aspirations of the people. The ongoing reassessment of the Merger question, on a massive scale, is unprecedented and is of historic importance which will have definite influence in shaping Manipur's polity and her relationship with mainland India. It has great relevance to historiography and nation building process in Manipur.

The Merger was a great landmark and a turning point in the history of Manipur. The Merger was a political decision forced on Manipur through the Maharaja, by the Government of India to merge into Dominion of India, in the wake of rising Indian nationalism after India's independence which had echo in the political life of Manipur during the period. The purpose of this brief note is to highlight Government of India's policy, either British or Indian towards the ethnic groups, specially the hill tribes during the post Second World War period, their participation in the democratic process in Manipur during the constitutional monarch and the impact of the Merger on the evolution of the political aspirations of the tribal people and their general attitude towards India and Manipur.

2. Two Trends in the Government of India's policy

The Second World War exposed Manipur and North East India to the outside world with its ravages and sufferings caused to the people. There were hopes and aspirations and at the same time of fear and apprehensions about the future of the hill people of north east India including Manipur. The Shillong based political leaders raised the demand of a separate hill state or province for the tribal areas of the region. Kohima based Nag National Council demanded independence for the Nagas. The Aizawl based Mizo Union submitted memorandum for integration of Mizo tribes in a single political unit. The ideas and opinions were not popular among the hill tribes of Manipur; though there grew up a number of tribal organizations which aimed at the protection of the tribal interest in the eventual withdrawal of the British from

India. Major tribal organizations were the Kabui Naga Association (later renamed Manipur Zeliangrong Union), the Tangkhul Long, the Kuki National Assembly (KNA), the Khuls Union, Gangle Tribal Union, Vaiphei National Union, Hmar National Union, Paite National Union etc. However, NNC's demand for Naga independence and Mizo Union's demand for Mizo integration were not welcomed generally except among some sections like the Hmar and Mao leaders.

There were two elements in the Government of British India's policy. First, they wanted the hill tribes of North East India to exclude themselves from any political arrangements that might be created after Independence. They made the proposal for A Crown colony covering hill North East India and upper Burma. At the same time they offered autonomy for the Nagas as indicated in the 9 point agreement between Naga National Council and Governor Sir Akbar Hydari of Assam in 1946. Second, in the case of Manipur, they encouraged the establishment of a representative form of government under a Constitutional monarchy. The maharajah and some leading political leaders including tribal leaders were involved in the introduction of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947. They had participated in the democratic political system of the state as MLAs and Ministers. There were MLAs from the hill areas, two ministers in the council of ministers. The tribal people were grateful to Maharajah Bodhachandra and his younger brother Chief Minister Priya Brata Singh for the 'gift of democracy' to them. The tribals who were for centuries neglected and downtrodden were hoping for new life. They wanted a successful working of the democratic system. There were two opinions among the tribals one represented by Mr. R. Khathing, the Hill Minister and Mr. T.C. Tiankham, the Speaker of the Assembly; the other represented by Mr. A. Daino, a young leader from Mao was for assertion of tribal rights and for independence.

There were three different trends in the policy of free India's attitude towards hill areas of North East India including Manipur. While Mahatma Gandhi's humanistic liberal approach was for that of non-violence and voluntary participation in the Indian union, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's policy was that of paternalism and autonomy for the hill people and for the protection of the political and cultural identity of Manipur within the Indian Union. On

Mahatma Gandhi's strong pressure and Pandit Nehru's strong support the safeguards for the tribal and VI Schedule autonomy was provided in Indian Constitution. On the other hand, Sardar Patel's policy was for 'integration' of the princely states with Dominion of India, which, in ultimate analysis, as far as north east India is concerned, was the extension of the 'Forward policy' of the British followed since the 19th century. He was of the opinion that the ethnic background of the region including Manipur was different from that of mainland India and he had deep suspicion of the loyalty of the people. Hence the strong Arm policy Patel was carried out by Governor Sri Prakash and Advisor Nari Rustomji. Paternalism, humanism and autonomy of Gandhi and Nehru were

represented by Sir Akbar Hydari. Nehru was not aware of the democratic process and the constitutional monarchy. So Patel had the last say on Manipur affairs. Pandit Nehru, of course made up, when he rejected the recommendation of the States Reorganization Commission for further merger of Manipur with the province of Assam and decided to keep the separate political entity of Manipur as a Union Territory a status the people of Manipur for obvious reasons did not like.

3. Reaction to the Merger : The Tribal Attitude

For the first time in the long history of struggle for survival and a life subjugation and oppression under the feudal rule of the monarchy and the British colonialism, the tribal people of Manipur were given the democratic right of franchise for selecting their representatives to the legislature of Manipur under the Manipur Constitution Act, 1947. They had participated in the democratic political system of the state as MLAs and Ministers. There were MLAs from the hill areas, two ministers in the council of ministers. The tribal people were grateful to Maharajah Bodhachandra and his younger brother Chief Minister Priya Brata Singh for the 'gift of democracy' to them. The tribals who were for centuries neglected and downtrodden were hoping for new life. They wanted a successful working of the democratic system. There were two opinions among the tribals one represented by Mr. R. Khathing, the Hill Minister and Mr. T.C. Tiankham, the Speaker of the Assembly; the other represented by Mr. A. Daino, a young leader from Mao was for assertion of tribal rights and for independence.

When the agitation for the abolition of monarchy and the merger of Manipur with India was going on, there were a lot of speculation and misgivings among the tribal leaders about the Government of India's attitude towards the future of Manipur. Mr. T.C. Tiankham, the Speaker of the Assembly expressed his apprehension in a letter to the Maharajah and stressed that the future of Manipur should be decided by the Assembly which represented the people of Manipur. The Merger came the tribal leaders were left in total disarray. They could not and did not react jointly. Mr. A. Daino was against merger. He was put into jail in connection with the Mao Agitation and released later on to become an Advisor to the Chief Commissioner. Mr. R. Khathing, the Hill Minister and a war hero went back to Civil services. Mr. T.C. Tiankham also joined the Manipur Government.

During the post-merger period, one does not notice and organised ethnic responses to it but there were sporadic reactions from the individual tribal leaders. Then came the all India political parties; the Congress had achieved their demand for merger with India with great relish. The Socialists (P.S.P.) which demanded further integration of Manipur into the province of Assam. Mr. A. Daino in 1954 made a proposal for a hill state comprising of Manipur, Naga Hills and Lushai Hill with a University. He incorporated this demand in a memorandum submitted to the States Reorganization Commission (SRC). Meanwhile, Mr. Rishang Keishing, a young Naga MP from Outer Manipur (1952) led a sizable section of the Hill people in the agitation for statehood for Manipur. While his party was for integration of Manipur with Assam, Mr. Rishang Keishing was for the maintenance for a separate entity of Manipur. Mr. Yangmasho Shaiza, another charismatic leader from Ukhru joined the Manipur Nationalist Party which demanded revocation of the Merger Agreement and independence of Manipur. Deprival of the tribal people of their democratic rights as given under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 (along with other people of Manipur) was a great loss for Manipur. Some sections of the tribals were pacified by the Commissioner's administration by offering them official jobs. But when, Mr. R. Suisa came into the political scene as MP from Outer Manipur (1957), he started to organize the Nagas of Manipur into a political union known as the Manipur Naga Council in 1960. The MNC made the preparation for the participation of the Nagas in Phizoo's Naga Nationalist Movement. He and his Secretary, Mr. Z. Ramy and other protégé Mr. Th. Muivah joined the NNC and the Naga Insurgent outfit while the Merger had ceased to be an issue in Manipur politics, the outcome of the Merger namely, the Central rule in Manipur which did not have any democratic base, created a political vacuum in the hills of Manipur. Naturally, the Nagas joined the Naga Nationalist Movement. He and his Secretary, Mr. Z. Ramy and other protégé Mr. Th. Muivah joined the NNC and the Naga Insurgent outfit while the Merger had ceased to be an issue in Manipur politics, the outcome of the Merger namely, the Central rule in Manipur which did not have any democratic base, created a political vacuum in the hills of Manipur. Naturally, the Nagas joined the Naga Nationalist Movement. However, the moderate elements among them, including congress and Socialist, both Naga and Kuki participated in the Political movement for democracy leading to the establishment of Union Territorial Council (1957), Territorial Assembly (1963) and Statehood (1972).

4. Conclusion

While there was no immediate ethnic response to the Merger, the Central Government's colonial attitude towards Manipur during the long central rule (1949-1971) was the major cause of the political turmoil's, economic backwardness and social tension in the hills of Manipur. Though 'if' history is a wishful thinking, none can deny the fact that had there been no merger of Manipur in a crude and imperialistic manner, reminiscent of the British conquest of Manipur in 1891 and had the internal autonomy under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 been allowed to continue without interference from India Government the painful course of the history of the last 44 years would have been different.

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