

Manipuri silk is world famous: CM

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N. Biren Singh has urged the officials and experts of the State Sericulture Department to explore means for cost reduction in the production of silk items without compromising the quality so that demands from different parts of the country and world may see an upsurge. Speaking as the Chief Guest at the inauguration of Cocoon Mela and Farmers Training Centre organised by the Department of Sericulture, Government of Manipur at Sangaipat in Imphal East District yesterday N. Biren Singh said that Manipuri silk is world famous but demand in the market is still not good enough due to high price.

Some foreign visitors once suggested him to cut down the price to attract more demands, he added. He also directed the officials of the Department to combine their technical expertise with farmers' practical experience to enhance production both in quality and quantity. The Chief Minister also urged them to put in best possible effort to bring economic development of the State and enhance farmers' income through large scale production of Sericulture items. Speaking at the occasion, the Chief Minister also strongly condemned the powerful bomb blast that occurred near the gate of 49 Bn. BSF camp at Koirengai. Maintaining that violence

would never bring any solution, the Chief Minister urged all concerned to extend co-operation to the Government in resolving all forms of discord and conflict through democratic and peaceful means. Manipur has already started making a good impression of being a beautiful and peaceful State to the world. As such, nobody should resort to any activity which may again spoil this hard earned condition, the Chief Minister said. Stating that situation has improved considerably and peace has returned to the State of late, the Chief Minister said that there is no point to target security personnel with an intention to create a chaotic situation again.

We should preserve our culture for future generation - Biswajit

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Culture encompasses our language, cuisine, dance, music and arts, etc. and we should preserve our culture for the future generation, said Works/Power/Commerce and Industries/Information and Public Relations/Rural Development and Panchayati Raj/AR & Training Minister Shri Thongam Biswajit Singh on Wednesday. Biswajit was speaking as the Chief Guest at the third day celebration of the Maring Paaryao-Thillai (A Cultural Festival) cum Indigenous Heritage Village Lil Thallung Bun at Lhikbung Machi,



Machi Sub-division. He said that Manipur is inhabited by different communities and we get to see unique cultures and traditions of the different

communities. He said that if of the Meitei community is known for its handloom products, the Maring tribe is also known for making 'Thumok' (cane and bamboo basketry).

Promoting the idea of unity among the different communities, the Minister said that we may have different languages, dialects, culture, tradition, religion, etc. but, we should always remember that "we belong to one human race". We should cooperate with one another to bring development in the State, he said.

Observing that there can be no peace without unity, the Minister said that we should bridge the gap of mistrust and communication amongst the communities residing together in the State.

"Today, we also get some fulfilment in knowing that the attempts of the government to bridge the gap have started showing positive results", he said.

Biswajit said that the State government cannot declare a Heritage Site, however, the State government can develop tourists spots in the area and convert the village into a Tourist destination.

He asked the concerned local authorities to submit a formal application for the same so that he may take up the issue with the Chief Minister and the

concerned Tourism department. Further in his speech, Biswajit Singh also asked whether the benefits of the government schemes implemented for the welfare of the people.

Expressing concern on the deforested hill slopes along the way to the village, the Minister said that crop plantation like maize can be taken up along the deforested hill slopes after properly identifying the suitable crops. He said that the plantation which could be undertaken under the buy-back policy of the government could help in improving the economy of the village and its people.

Biswajit also explained various government schemes including the UJALA Yojana, SAUBHAGYA, PMAY(G) etc. The celebration was also attended by Tengnoupal MLA Shri D. Korunghang, district officials, village leaders among others. Cultural dances and songs were also performed as part of the function. On their arrival at the village, the dignitaries were accorded a warm traditional welcome by the villagers.

AR conducts lecture on Hygiene Education

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A lecture on health and hygiene was conducted by Regimental Medical Officer of 6 Assam Rifles of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) at Laisaram Mani Memorial School. A total of 100 students attended the lecture where they were educated about prevention from water borne diseases, Malaria and Dengue. The school authorities appreciated the efforts of Assam Rifles in reaching out to them.

AR conducts employment generation drive through Afforestation

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11 Assam Rifles of 26 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) conducted a conference on its new initiative "Employment Generation through Afforestation" with chiefs all villages under its area and Civil Administration including Forest and Wildlife Department. Manipur, being one of the three 'Biological Hotspots' of India and one of thirty four 'Biological Hotspots' of the world has very rich biodiversity. Many rare species of plants, animals, fishes and birds have their shelter in the Jungles of Manipur. However, due to poverty and traditional poaching, this diverse biodiversity is witnessing a steep downfall. Committed to the welfare of locals, 11 Assam Rifles took a new initiative for 'Employment Generation through Afforestation' which serves both the purposes i.e.



Employment and Afforestation. Villagers were sensitized about the depleting biodiversity of Manipur and were briefed about how planting fruit bearing trees can solve this issue. Plan was discussed with representatives of Forest and Wildlife Department. Forest Department assured that they would provide maximum saplings of fruit bearing trees like Cashew nut, Orange, Beetles Nut, Banana, Lemon, Yanelak, Heiribok etc for each

village during "Van Mahotsav" which is celebrated every first week of July. Villagers were invited for the conference and over 43 villagers from Area of Responsibility of 11 Assam Rifles along with representative from Moreh College were in attendance. SDC, Wildlife Range Officer and Forest Range Officer of Moreh also participated in the event. Importance of afforestation and employment

was told to the villagers. Villagers were briefed about the concept of this new initiative. The complete project would be carried out in three phases. Firstly, pits will be prepared as advised by Forest Range Officer and will be inspected by the representatives of Forest Department. For this villagers will be given one month of time. In second phase, saplings will be distributed to the villagers as per their demand during 'Van

Mahotsav'. In third phase, a committee will be formed which will be run completely by local people. The committee will be monitoring the growth of these trees and will facilitate selling of fruits directly to the market (to curb the involvement of middleman).

Village chiefs were asked for their demand and after discussion with Forest Range Officer, Moreh and keeping in view the biodiversity of the respective areas, demand for saplings of each tree was given to Forest Department. Moreh College was included in the drive with aim of inculcating the essence of this drive to the youths studying at Moreh College.

Villagers appreciated the new initiative for the long term benefits of the locals and expressed their gratitude. The conference was conducted with the closing address by Colonel R S Rawat, Commandant, 11 Assam Rifles and lunch was served to all participants.

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The Kuki-Zomi Insurgency in Manipur Nearing Settlement

(KNO, UPF and the SoO: Long Walk to Talk', www.kanglaonline.com, assessed on 29 June 2010).

UPF's convener of the Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) TL Jacob Thaduo stated that the armed groups are adhering to the agreed conditions of the "Ground Rules" in good spirit. He said that the armed groups have been pragmatically engaged in a learning process that requires them to make peace, build confidence and resolve differences. Further he said, the preparations, thus far, have been held in a positive atmosphere with certain progress, though without definitive agreements for the political talks. Commander of 59 Mountain Brigade, stated on 27 November 2009 that the tripartite SoO pact signed between the Central Government, the State Government and Kuki militant groups were still in transitory phase and no political dialogue has been initiated as yet ('SoO in transitory phase', TSE, 27 November 2009).

Violation of SoO and Internecine Wars
The Kuki and Zomi ethnic armed outfits despite being in SoO with the State and the Union government continued to engage in extortion, fratricidal turf wars and internecine

factional clashes, kidnapping for ransom, intimidating the civilians, interference in developmental programmes, and influencing the outcome of the Autonomous District Council (ADC) election 2010 resulted through sheer coercion. An amount of Rs. 21,48,095 was released for the purpose of payment of compensations to the land owners affected by the land acquisition for the construction of the ICP at Moreh. From the compensation amount, KNA/KNO maintaining cease fire trust under SoO imposed diktat that they will cut 57 percent of the compensation amount received by the land owners. Out of the compensation amounts KNA/KNO had collected Rs 17,76,000 (Hueiyen Lanpao (HL), Imphal, 1 May 2010). In this connection the Integrated Check Post - Joint Action Committee (ICP-JAC) had earlier on 04 April 2010 demanded the Chandel district administration that distribution/ payment of compensation should be delayed until the KNA was permanently driven out from 'Moreh' and Chandel District. The KLA on 17 November 2009 while declaring its decision to no longer go along with the KNO/KNA alleged the later of repeatedly violating the ceasefire ground

rules in the name of KLA in the form of levying taxes, extortion, kidnapping, etc. to blacklist the KLA. (IFP, Wednesday, 18 November 2009).

On April 2010, there were reports of villagers of Bungbal Khullen, Seichang and Suongthel areas in Senapati District fleeing their respective villages following continued clashes between suspected rival Kuki militants under SoO. A particular outfit under SoO had on 27 May 2010 spelled out that contractors who have violated the outfit's instruction of seeking prior permission would not be entertained for undertaking works under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. The same outfit abducted the chief of Kom village, Thayong in the Senapati District and imposed a fine of Rs. 100000 for not attending a meeting of village chiefs of the area and eventually released on payment of Rs. 80,000. KLA despite in a SoO agreement locked up the Imphal-Guwahati passenger bus from outside at a place near Dimapur and set it on fire with 32 passengers still inside on October 2008 because of the bus owner's failure to pay their "tax" demand. It resulted in the death of two passengers (Inter-state bus services suspended over burning down of state bus in Assam; Two charred to death

inside locked bus, IFP, 25 October 2008). On 2 June 2008, the United Committee Manipur in a memorandum submitted to Manipur Governor, blamed the SoO agreement signed with the Kuki militant outfits for the rising crime and unchecked violence in some parts of the State. It stated that due to the improper implementation of the truce details there were unrestricted and open extortions being carried out along with abductions for ransom which had become routine further adding that the Imphal-Moreh Sumo service was suspended due to monetary demands imposed by the KNA on the transporters. Cadres of the Kuki and Zomi armed outfit under SoO was found in the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs.4.54 Crores of public fund in between 03-14 October 2010 from the Churachandpur branch of the United Bank of India ('SoO group found to be behind UBI bank fraud case: 57 Mt Div', IFP, Tuesday, 03 November 2009). KNA allegedly intimidated the voters belonging to Kom community in Sagang and Tuibung areas in Churachandpur District and at Moreh area in Chandel District and disrobe them of their right to vote in the Autonomous District Council (ADC) held in

May 2010. During the year 2013 to 2017 (till 01 October), internecine clashes involving the outfits under SoO have resulted to 19 death casualties and three injured (Compilation from 'Internecine Clashes among Kuki Outfits in Manipur: 2005-2017', <http://www.satp.org>, accessed on 26 October 2017).

SoO Groups coming to Common Political Objectives
On 25th November 2015, the KNO and UPF have unanimously decided to pursue common political objectives which would be nothing less than a 'State status' within the constitution of India. They also together forewarned against the formation of any new outfit and stated that any such move should be countered collectively ('KNO, UPF agree on common pol road map, warn divisive forces', TSE, Imphal, 30 November 2015). On 2nd March 2007, while speaking for the election meeting at 'Churachandpur' ('Union Home Minister, Shri Rajnath promises pol solution for SoO groups Assures integrity of Manipur' TSE, Imphal, 03 March 2017). 'Churachandpur' is the most populated hill district of Manipur and also the bastion of the 'state' demanded by both the conglomerate

groups under SoO. Union Home Minister, Shri Rajnath had assured of 'political solution' for the groups under SoO. The new Manipur Chief Minister, N Biren Singh, also gave his assurance in the floor of the assembly that both the Centre and State governments would start dialogue with Kuki militants under SoO agreement and finding a solution to the armed movement within a time frame. With it, the solution seems to be within sight. In connection with it, he stated, "The people of Manipur, particularly in hill districts, have had enough of the militant activities due to the prolonged extension of SoO or cease fire. So, we will make sure that a solution to the problem is brought at the earliest ...". The GoI also finally appointed former Director of IB, Dineshwar Sharma as interlocutor to expedite the early settlement (Leivon Jimmy, 'Kuki Armed Movement Nearing Settlement', *The Northeast Times*, Popular English Daily, Guwahati, 18 October 2017).

Conclusion
The state and the central government shall ensure that those Kuki and Zomi outfits under SoO did not inconvenience the civilians. The KNO as well as the UPF took SoO as a significant step in the right direction and a prerequisite

to the commencement of political dialogue. While engaging in SoO, grassroots democracy should be strengthened and the strong presence of state administration should be made felt which otherwise have for so long remained as ungovernable grey areas because of difficult geographical terrains and thriving Kuki and Zomi insurgency. It is hoped that holistic solutions which will not be in collision with the interest of the other communities that could potentially trigger another form of conflict would come into sight in the very near future. To add a caution, if any form of autonomy is to be granted, it should not be community exclusive as the guiding spirit should be that of peaceful co-existence and not of extending sovereignty to one particular ethnic group. Since SoO is the first ever peace initiative involving the state government, it should pave way for substantive dialogue towards durable solution of the Kuki and Zomi hydra-headed insurgencies. Successful resolution of the Kuki and Zomi insurgent problems through SoO would invite the willingness of other armed outfits which are still eluding the offer for peace talks.