

Editorial

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System failure: Why common man fails to show their courage for the public cause?

Manipur had witnessed cycle thief or vehicle lifter lynched by mob, a pick-pocket jailed or a police constable or a grade IV staff fired for bribing Rs. 10 to 100. These small time thieves sometimes lose their lives for a little amount of money which a high class bureaucrats or contractors spent in one night at luxurious Hotel. However, broad day light looters in front of our eyes get only backlash from helpless common people who were brave enough to lynch a cycle thieves. None of this brave common people dare to punish these looters of public money.

Something seems to be seriously wrong to the working of our society. Talks about a corrupt leader or government will be the topic of many people, but then the very group of people will have no problem with the leader or the government official, the moment he or she gives them a courtesy call. The topic will then goes in favour of them with few people starting supportive statement and then the conclusion will arrive - "what is wrong in taking bribe for the job after all the one who is paying should be punished". Someone from among them will ask - Can you provide any evidences of the charges levelled against them?

It is right; you can't blame or punish anybody until and unless you have a proper proof or evidences. Saying so how could a drug user be punished in public platform when it takes years to punish drug smugglers over failure to prove that the drugs that he or she was arrested was a substance containing intoxicants chemicals.

The same is with the cycle thief or vehicle lifter. The big looter who eats public money in front of our eyes will be offered all kinds of respect until he is proven but the cycle thief or the vehicle lifter will be punished the moment by the people who had seen big men looting the public money without actually understanding the reason for his becoming a small time thief.

Every literate people in the state knows that educated youths in the state are spoiled many times just because they have no jobs to do. Government had plan many schemes like granting them loan through banks so that they can start a business for their survival. These educated youths get frustrated because all they learnt from their books and the government procedure are not of use in real world. Almost all banks in the state of Manipur, don't give loan - that easily as the government had said. Even the beneficiaries who were assured loan by the Industry department of the state government under the Prime Minister Employment Generation Schemes (PMEGP) don't get loan that easily, if granted due to compulsion also get looted by the nature of the bank in giving them the loan. These banks violate government guidelines and the beneficiaries were compelled to follow strictures provided by the bank for the want of money. The interest and compound interest will be a curse for the beneficiaries as the loan amount were provided on instalment basis.

Well when these banks are giving too much problem to common men, they have no problem to big people who have connection with influential politicians and who can afford any amount of money that they asked.

One such incident was reported by Imphal Times yesterday under the heading "None Local runs Floor Mill granted Rs. 8 crore loan from SBI using fake documents". If one dig the ponder on the report, the said proprietor Mr. Mahendra Kumar Jain not only fooled the bank but also eat up over Rs. 200 crore of public money by not paying tax which every citizen should do.

The report not only pen-pictured the systematic destruction of common people but also highlights on how the system is underway. Different government in power makes no differences when it comes for the cause of the common people as the new government too have to follow the same system.

There is an urgent need for change of the system rather than replacing the ruler.

On International Day for Biological Diversity

By- M.Asnikumar Singh

In December 2000 the United Nation adopted 22nd of May as International Day for Biological Diversity. This day is often overlooked and it is understandable as people are busy trying to outdo each other in this age of rapid development and growth. But growth at what cost? The current trend and trajectory of developmental practices will have serious consequences for the diversity not just of the region but for the globe as a whole. Biological diversity of a region ensures natural sustainability of all life forms within the region. There is a saying 'we are what we make of ourselves'. Our state is blessed with numerous bio resources and I would not be wrong if I say the state's biological and economic future depends on it. The statement might seem oxymoronic at first but it is true. There is a greater need to utilise the state's resources in a bio economic context (this is not going to be easy but it is certainly possible). This would not only ensure better reliance on

ourselves but also reduce economic dependence on others. However it would be completely futile and meaningless if the strategy we follow in utilising our bio resources is not sustainable for the long run because it is the children and the younger generations we worry for. We have two options; either to rely on the outside world for economic avenues or utilise our own bio resources to sustain our people. The latter strategy would be sensible choice even though it won't be easy and would certainly come with accountability on our part. But it is certainly better than being dependent and indebted to the outside world. Environmentally ethical and sustainable techniques of utilising these bio resources should always be our top priority. It is our duty and responsibility as elders to leave an environmentally sustainable future for our children.

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Urban Assertion by North-East Immigrants in Delhi

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In February and March 2014 New Delhi witnessed a month long urban assertion by lower and lower middle class immigrants hailing from the Northeast region (henceforth immigrants), which subsequently spread to some of the Northeast states. The assertion in Delhi was led by leaders from NGOs, student and civil society organisations. They raised a couple of demands such as justice to the victims of racial assaults, security measures to prevent racial attacks, enactment of an anti-racial law, inclusion of the Northeast in the educational curriculum, reservation of seats in the Delhi Police, more hostels and measures to decrease room rents. The assertion was sparked off by the fatal assault of one Nido Tania, a student from Arunachal Pradesh at Lajpat Nagar area and the alleged media and police indifference to the issue. It has been charged that on 29 January 2014 Nido(18) was targeted by a group of Delhi denizens because of his different racial affiliation following an altercation. The Nido incident could suddenly arouse the sentiment and interplayed with 'anti-racial' perceptions of the Northeast people as the incident was preceded and followed by series of assaults on the immigrants. Perhaps, the poignant memory of the murder of Richard Loitam by hostel inmates in Bangalore and controversial suicide of Dana Sangma in 2012, the SMS threat and assaults leading to the mass fleeing of NE immigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra in August 2012, the mysterious death of Reingamphi Awangshi in her room in Chirag Delhi on 29 May 2013, series of sporadic attacks and the indifferent attitude of the police in these issues seemed to have created a sense of insecurity and some kind of pan-mongoloid solidarity, if not assertion for justice among the NE people. Interestingly the assertion, which had occurred at a time when the 16th Lok Sabha elections were a few months ahead, seemed to have attracted the attention of political parties such as the Aam Aadmi Party and the Indian National Congress and relatively there was widespread media coverage. The ruling United Progressive Alliance headed by the Indian National Congress intervened into the matter, which led to the formation of an Enquiry Committee vide Ministry of Home Affairs, Order No. 11012/110/2012 NE-IV, Dated 5th February 2014. The Committee became controversial as it was exclusively composed of retired bureaucrats. There was neither any judicial expert nor social leaders. As the students protested some persons from NGOs and student organisations were subsequently included. It invited student organisations and civil societies to place their concerns. What practical course the government will take based on the Committee Report is uncertain. Many felt that the government was merely devising a safety valve to defuse tension as it had not been able to come up with any mass appealing solution in the past.

The past suggests a lot about unfulfilled promises and the failure to deal with racial attacks. About a week back the Delhi Police vide D.O. No. /PA/P/PTC, dated 28 January 2014 had come up with a circular asking the Northeast immigrants to attend self-defence training with Hindi speaking classes to be jointly organised along with some NGOs. Logically, it was aimed an 'enabling' the immigrants to defend themselves on the one hand and to linguistically assimilate (familiarise) with the Hindi speaking Indians. About two

years back, in the wake of agitation against the alleged murder of Richard Loitam by hostel inmates in Bangalore and the controversial suicide by Dana Sangma in the National Capital Region of Delhi, the Ministry of Home Affairs vide F. No. 15011/34/2012-Sc/St-W, dated 10th May 2012 had issued a memorandum to the state governments regarding measures to curb discrimination and racial profiling faced by the immigrants in other states. Many believe that all these initiatives were cosmetic without any practical result. Racial profiling, physical assault and indifferent treatment have become a social practice and it has been continued till date.

The February/ March assertion had drawn the attention of the media in raising race/ racism question in India; a question that was denied by the Prime Minister to our delegate in May 2012 and by the media for several decades. Surprisingly, unlike in the past, the immigrants *per se* had also risen unanimously cutting across nations / communities and regional boundaries and had asserted for an anti-racial law. But the race question has been considered a problem of social assimilation/ accommodation and accordingly the demands and solutions are being sought within the legal framework. It constituted the predominant general perception. I would however like to shift away from this perception and argue that the race question needs to be addressed by theorising it in the larger context of the neo-liberal system which had brought about severe economic dislocations and dramatic changes in the urban social demography. Necessarily, one needs to explore the neo-liberal course of composing of India, the symmetrical objective relation between race and nation in some cases, and the perpetuation of 'racism' as a form of social expression between immigrants and host communities. I would like to assert:

Firstly, India is a multi-national entity created after 1947 under bourgeois initiatives. There are nations and nationalities whose predominant physical expressions or appearances are considered to be racially different from one another, e.g. the entire northeast is considered to be predominantly mongoloid in racial affiliation. These nations/ nationalities do not come together to form a common country on the principle of a voluntary union. On the contrary they are being mechanically bound under a political system alongside the dramatic superstructural imposition of the neo-liberal system. India still lacks common national psychological make-up across nations/ nationalities. Secondly, the neo-liberal system is not based on equality. The relative absence of equality fails to create the favourable conditions of building fraternal relation among nations on equal terms. With the exception of certain rentier bourgeois within nations who are in collusion with the Indian big bourgeoisie who constituted the Indian State, the system has created 'international' economic disparity within India. It resulted into the growth of the GDP of some metropolitan cities that are identified with one or other nations. But a vast chunk of nations remain dependent on the commodity supply of the market forces that belong to other nations. The economic disparities had social impact. It had sharpened social classification among nations; a nation is now socially defined on the basis general perception about the degree of its either economic

growth or dependence.

Thirdly, the economic disparity occurred alongside the objective parameter of *laissez faire*, a policy that promote 'inter-India' immigration of labour/employees, goods and commercial bourgeoisie, students and tourists. This policy has enabled the bourgeoisie from the metropolitan cities to become monopolist and exploiters in the subjected nations; where they became suspected and targeted by desperate sections among the oppressed nations. On the other hand underdevelopment of the oppressed nations had forced many to emigrate (petty traders, students, labour/ employees, job seeker); who became an object of being inferior in the eyes of others. As immigrants they had to find refuge in hotels, rented rooms (mostly in subaltern or lower middle class colonies some of which are predominantly owned by conservatives), private or institutional hostels, official quarters and owned flats (a microscopic section). They had to physically encounter with metro-Indians who believe in upholding Indian nationhood (henceforth Indians). The latter predominantly subscribe to the semi-feudal conservative outlook and blindly believes in the bourgeois counter-revolutionary propaganda about the Northeast as inferior-mongoloids, breeder of anti-India terrorists, disloyal citizens, traitors, atavistic and uncivilised. Against this backdrop, the bulk of the immigrants are neither being socially absorbed as their own nationhood is not treated on par and with respect by the Indians. The Indians objectified the immigrants as the inferior and immoral 'Orient' bulk, marked out socially and subjected to various forms of social discrimination, harassment, insult, humiliation, crime (at times rape and murder), with-holding of promotion or rank in institutions, and lack of official attention or timely intervention by the law enforcing agents. At times certain institutional measure were taken up with racist implications; such as the Security Tips for Northeast Students/ Visitors 2007 published by the Delhi Police in 2007 and statement by the Kirori Mal College asking women students from the Northeast to wear Salwar Kameez instead of trousers and skirts to prevent sexual attraction. The immigrants considered it integral to some kind of institutionalised racism. It would, however, be wrong to portray the Northeast as an innocent bulk absolutely neutral of racist arrogance towards the Indians. Many in Northeast are suspicious about the domination, if not appropriation of resources and opportunities by the Indian and Bangladeshi immigrants (job seekers, employees, businessmen, contractors, bureaucrats, labour, landlords, corporate stake holders, etc.). The 'go back foreigners' agitation in 1980s in Assam and Manipur, continuous implementation of Inner Line Permit (ILP) system in some of the 'tribal' states, riots and assaults directed against outsiders in Assam and Manipur, movement for the implementation of ILP in Manipur, etc. embodied some forms of racism. All these, however, have occurred sporadically at different point of times in different places. The entire Northeast had not been consistently united vis-à-vis the Indians or Bangladeshi. Therefore, it will be wrong to historically perceive the Northeast as a unified block having a consistent common linear economic and political agenda.

The concern at present is, that the lower and middle classes,

immigrant from the Northeast constitute a large bulk of the population that are determined to live in the Indian metropolitan cities for either education or economic opportunity. Every year thousands of new immigrant students are enrolled in Delhi. Over the last decade many migrants are employed in the private white colour jobs such as IT sector, call centres, hospitals and educational institutions. Many of them who belong to SC/ ST category have succeeded in outplaying the counterpart Indians in educational institutions and government jobs. Whether it is a sign of bourgeoisie integrity or it should be a harbinger of an expected neo-liberal crisis in the years to come may be separately discussed. But, in the long run the continuous immigration is likely to increase more pressure on the limited job opportunity available in the metropolitan cities. The constraints of neo-liberal crisis has been increasingly evident in the urban assertions and by workers for regularisation of job and economic incentives such as higher salary, facilities, insurances and accommodation. The immigrants may become a threat to the marginal Indians whose reserved seats the former are continuously appropriating. They co-exist and compete with the Indians in a political environment where right wing forces are increasingly attempting to arouse communal and sectarian sentiments for electoral gain and to divert away attention from revolutionary course. Logically, the Indian response (of the marginal sections) vis-à-vis the immigrants could adopt racist line in the same tenet of the 1980s anti-foreigner agitation and 2010s ILP demand in the Northeast. On the other hand the assault on immigrant in the Indian metropolitan cities could become a rallying point of articulating national liberation movement in the Northeast. Despite government promises, policing measures and legal proceedings the target on immigrants has been continued. On 25 March 2014 a couple from Manipur was brutally beaten in Munirkaat around 11pm by their landlord and hired goons. Initially there was altercation as the landlord refused to open the gate when the couple had to receive the mother who had just arrived from Manipur. In February there was an alleged decision by the Munirka residents to evict all the immigrants, a charge which the Khasi Panchayat and the Residents' Welfare Association had refuted at the police station. Between 5th February and 26th March there were series of stray incidences of assaults. The prejudice against the immigrants has been quite lively. Police responded half-heartedly only under extreme public pressure. Immigrant victims could not carry out prolong legal fights because of vulnerability due to intimidation outside the court premise, and due to time consuming and high cost nature of the court procedure. The targeting continues. Will the neo-liberal system be able to solve this crisis?

(Footnotes)

¹ Committee constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs to look into the various kinds of concerns of the persona hailing from the North Eastern States who are living in different parts of the country, especially the Metropolitan areas, and to suggest suitable remedial measures which could be taken by the Government.