

Editorial

Imphal, Saturday, April 30, 2016

Unrealized dream

Every member of a society aspires to lead a normal and progressive life, taking up jobs that enable them to provide for their loved ones. This ideal situation, however has remained an elusive dream for most of us, as those who are supposed to ensure the peace and security of a society is still being regarded with caution and distrust by the common public. The assertion by the Deputy Chief Minister who is also in charge of the Home department that the law and order situation in the State has improved considerably merits some credibility. The rise in the number of armed insurgent groups who are willing to lay down arms to try out a political solution to their grievances and visions are an encouraging indication of the growing acceptance and inclination towards mutually acceptable solutions to the myriad problems and hindrances afflicting our present day society. It would, however, be a bit too early and premature to gloat about the developments and to rest on the positive aspects of it all. It is true that there are a large number of armed personnel of the state who are dutifully and conscientiously discharging their sworn duties of protecting and securing the peace of the society, and yet a handful of disruptive and rowdy elements in the state armed personnel have caused a rift between the public and the police as a whole. While it is unfortunate and undesirable, yet the outcome couldn't have been any other way. The excessive and unnecessary use of force and show of power as practiced by a few State police personnel is the reason for the suspicious and hesitant mindset of the public when it comes to dealing with the Police. Only time and consistent efforts on the part of the concerned authorities can win back the trust and understanding of the public. Yet recent incident where a van driver was shot dead in broad daylight for which a lot of agitations and disruptions are being faced by the public is a clear indication of the redundant and indifferent law and order delivery system in the State. It is evident that the Government has neither learnt nor attempted to address such deviations and aberrations in the society. Meanwhile, the fear psychosis that has been deeply ingrained in the minds of the public, both for the State forces and the mushrooming groups of self proclaimed saviours of the downtrodden and the oppressed, will take a long and arduous climb back to be erased from their minds. The onus of endearing themselves to the public and to win their support and acceptance rests entirely on these parties whose trigger happy image as portrayed needs to be changed and altered significantly. But above all, a firm yet committed form of governance coupled with the capacity to see through the promises made, with the tenacity and an earnest attitude towards making a visible change in their approach towards alleviating the society and a willingness to admit and atone for the errors made is a prime requisite at the moment. After all, a great leader should be an astute follower of the wishes and aspirations of the common people. The present is just a glimpse of what can be achieved- how it should be achieved depends on those who are at the helm of affairs- those who are chosen for their promises and assurances. The growing awareness amongst the public will now decide if they really have what it takes to walk the talk.

Supreme Court bans diesel cabs in Delhi NCR from May 1

New Delhi, April 30: Supreme Court has banned plying of diesel cabs in the Delhi National Capital Region from May 1. It refused to extend the deadline for phasing out diesel cabs in NCR, saying that it has allowed enough extensions in the past. Earlier the Supreme Court had imposed a ban on plying diesel cabs in Delhi from April 1, but later extended the deadline by a month for private cab aggregators to switch to CNG vehicles. The deadline for phasing out diesel cabs ends on Saturday, April 30. The Court said that all radio, app-based cabs must switch to LNG by May 1. It also asked Delhi Police to pay 30% environmental compensation charge to buy special diesel vehicles over 200 cc,

however, gave Delhi Jal Board exemption from environment cess on its water tankers. Reportedly, cabs plying with an India permit will be exempted from the order to convert to LNG.

Prisoner dies, inquiry ordered

Muzaffarnagar, Apr 30: A 49-year-old inmate, serving jail term in a rape case, died in the district jail here following which a judicial inquiry has been ordered, police said. Gopal, who was suffering from diabetes, died yesterday and a judicial inquiry has been ordered in this connection, Jail Superintendent Rakesh Singh said. He was arrested in a rape case on February 14, 2013.

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National and International News

West Bengal Assembly Elections:

Polling begins in crucial fifth phase, 680 central forces companies deployed

Zee Media Bureau
Kolkata, April 30: Polling began for 53 constituencies in the fifth and penultimate phase on West Bengal assembly polls on Saturday. Voting began at 7am for 31 constituencies in South 24 Parganas and 18 in Hooghly districts besides four in South Kolkata. Today's 53 constituencies are considered very important as they spread over an area considered the citadel of the state's ruling party Trinamool Congress. Several crude bombs were found from different parts of the city yesterday during random check by Kolkata Police. Four persons have been detained in connection with the recoveries, a senior police officer had said yesterday. Nearly 1.24 crore (1,23,97,832) voters across 14,642 polling stations, including 77 auxiliary booths, are eligible to decide the fate of 349 candidates — 43 of them female. The Trinamool and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are contesting in all the seats in this phase. The Left Front, which has tied up with the Indian National Congress, is in the fray in 37 seats - CPI-M (31), All India

Forward Bloc (three). Revolutionary Socialist Party (two) and Communist Party of India (one). The Congress has nominated 14 candidates. The combine has lent support to the Nationalist Congress Party in one seat, and is backing an independent in another. Earlier, police seized ten crude bombs kept inside a bag lying in the backyard of a club in the Tiltjala area in the southern part of the city, a day before the fifth phase of Assembly polls. As per the Election Commission's directives, all clubs where likelihood of outsiders assembling and intimidating the voters have been identified and brought under strict vigilance. The Kolkata Police is maintaining strict vigil in and around the city to avert any incident during today's polling in the city and surrounding areas under its jurisdiction. Checking of vehicles at crucial places both at the entry and exit points of the city, increase of patrolling both at day and night at "sensitive areas" were continuing. Meanwhile, as many as 680 companies of central forces have been deployed in poll-bound districts of South 24 Parganas, Kolkata and Hooghly during

the fifth phase of polls today, besides thousands of city and state police personnel, quick response and night intervention teams and flying squads. According to additional chief electoral officer Dibendu Sarkar, central forces deployed in 1,064 sectors spread across the three districts will be significant in maintaining law and order in the fifth phase. **Trinamool faces Narada, alliance challenge in its citadel**
The fate of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee would be decided today alongside that of several Trinamool Congress leaders allegedly caught accepting illegal money in the Narada sting video. In the backdrop of the Calcutta High Court ordering on the poll eve a forensic test on the Narada sting tapes, 31 constituencies in South 24 Parganas, 18 in Hooghly district and four in Kolkata South, all known bastions of the Trinamool, are going to the hustings. In the 2011 assembly polls, the Trinamool - then an ally of the Congress and the Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) - had bulldozed all opposition to capture 46 seats. The SUCI-C had bagged one.

The Left Front had won only six, with the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) getting four, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the All India Forward Bloc one each. Over the past five years, the Trinamool has come up with spectacular electoral successes in the region, be it the assembly polls, or elections to the Lok Sabha, civic or rural bodies. However, the opposition Congress-Left Front is hoping to put up a better showing, on the strength of the alliance arithmetic and the furor created over the Narada videos. State ministers and party heavyweights Firhad Hakim, Subrata Mukherjee, city mayor Sovan Chatterjee and Iqbal Ahmed - all contesting the polls - were among the leaders allegedly shown taking money in return for doling out favours to a fictitious company. The Narada footage has dominated the election campaign, with the ruling party battling corruption charges levelled by the opposition, and seemingly jittery over the likely fallout in the urban areas, especially Kolkata. Besides, the alliance chemistry of the LF-Congress combine, has made a number of constituencies in Hooghly and South 24 Parganas a close call.

Contd. from yesterday

Destination North East: Can DONER and NEC go together?

By-Ningombam Bupenda Meitei

In both UPA-I & II Governments, DONER Secretary was hardly seen in the North Eastern states' capitals while NEC Secretary would do the needful of going from one state's capital to other to check and get the feedback of development related works, assignments, projects or issues of the region. But, in Modi's Government, there is a shift. The shift is the inter-change of the work between DONER Secretary and NEC Secretary. Now, DONER has its nodal officers in all the states' capitals of the region besides its engagement with the Chief Secretaries of all the 8 states. NEC Secretary, though takes tour of the region, is not viewed in the way that the post was looked at in UPA regime. The change in the delegation of authority and penetration of whose authority - NEC Secretary or DONER Secretary - could also not be considered as totally absent. In UPA regime, two DONER ministers were from Assam, one of the North Eastern States while in Modi government, the two DONER Ministers, so far chosen by Prime Minister Modi, are not from the region. While NEC Secretary is mostly an IAS officer whose domicile is one of the states of the North East while DONER Secretary is usually an IAS officer who is not from the North East. In my informal conversation with former Union Secretaries of India and policy makers of the region, there is also a view of the need to clarify the unnecessary overlapping of responsibilities between NEC and DONER Secretaries as such overlapping leads to not only confusion among the departments but also delays in effective implementation of policies and programmes sanctioned for the faster economic development of the region with social inclusion and environmental safeguard. In the present scenario, the present Modi government, with the formation of NITI Aayog, has already abolished the Special Category Status from the entire North Eastern States. The fundamental question is - Can Destination North East India succeed without the Special Category Status to the region? The next question is the effective implementation and penetrability of the funds from 10% Mandatory Earmarking of Funds for NER (North Eastern Region). The Ministry of DONER, in its website, states that in 10% Mandatory Earmarking of Funds for NER, Special attention has been given to the economic development of the region from the Eighth Plan period onwards. In October 1996, the Central Government's announcement of 'New Initiatives for the North Eastern Region' included a number of measures for the development of the NER which covered policy changes, special area development and development projects in key sectors. In order to mobilize financial resources, a policy decision was taken to earmark at least 10% of the Plan Budget(s) of the Central ministries/departments for development of the North Eastern states. Many in the states' capitals of NER ask about the actual percentage of 10%

which can reach the region from New Delhi. New Delhi will ask for the utilisation certificates from the respective states' secretariats but the point remains is whether the 100% completed work, shown in the utilisation certificate signed by the state's administration, is further crosschecked or not with the help of not the officers from the state's capital but the common villagers of the area where the work is said and stated, in writing, and signed to have been completed. Public accountability and direct ground monitoring with the help of the communities residing in the area can be the litmus test to check whether what is stated in utilisation certificate is actually true or how far it is projected to be true when it is indeed false. **Destination North East India**
The Ministry of DONER has initiated 'Destination North East 2016' in New Delhi. DONER Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh points out, "I personally do not subscribe to the idea of bringing northeast closer to mainstream India, but rather the rest of India needs to be brought closer to northeast." This mindset of the minister speaks louder than any other assurance of developmental funds for the NER. It is precisely, this very mindset, that India has been searching for since independence with regard to NER. As a cadet of N.C.C (National Cadet Corps), whenever I went for a camp, the word 'NER' (North East Region N.C.C Directorate) bonded quickly and deeply among the cadets from the region but when I grew up and start analysing the politico-economic-social systems of the region, I discover that the region is deeply diverse, though not divided, and hence, without the sense of respect for each other's diversity the development of any form in the region will take a long time. It is this honour of different diversities that not only unite the region but also define the living vibrant diversities in India as a whole. It is in this context, one can say without an iota of doubt that the idea of 'Unity in diversities' of India is not a dream or utopia but reality and daily affairs in the North Eastern Indian states. And this is what the region can give light to the whole country that to remain as a nation, there has to be not

merely an acceptance but celebration of 'Unity in diversities'. Thus, the rest of India must go to the North East to further strengthen the bond of Indians in its truest sense. **Destination North East India or '8 sisters'** are essentially to attract the world towards the region, but in today's 21st world economy, it must include and also mean more investments, minds and energies towards the region and for promoting economic growth and development of the people of the region, along with the region's human resources development. It also becomes platform to showcase the rich cultural heritage and different views of many worlds, bestowed by Mother Nature, of the region to the rest of the world. The idea is beautiful but the pragmatism of witnessing the economic growth, in particular, of the region by giving more employment, bringing more investments to the region, making the region a commercial linking point between the South Asian economy and South East Asian economy, etc. are yet to be seen on ground. Will Destination North East India be materialised in its truest sense? - is the question which needs to be asked by not only people in the North block or the South block of New Delhi, but also from all the capital cities of the North Eastern states, its people, besides the living cooperation between the two major participants - NEC and DONER. In the scenario of having non-BJP governments in majority of the states in the region, an attempt to have a cordial working relation between the state capitals and New Delhi can also not be excluded as not so significant. But, the larger question is also to talk and stress more on areas which have not been given such a deeper focus, and such areas are commerce, economic investments, IT related investments, hospitality industries, role of the region in climate change of the world and its potential revenue from carbon credits shares, making international airports in the region workable to act as a transit between South East Asian cities to other cities in India, strengthening and upgrading the

institutions like sports institutions, medical research institutions, technological research institutions and academia of higher research. Too much presentation of culture, dances, songs, music, foods, dresses, art, etc. - which are essentially, the soft world of the region - is understandable and appreciable, but the youths of today's generation need inclusive economic growth and development which will directly enable them to live on their own with dignity and self-reliance. The region needs a special focus on its commercial and trading potential which can link the economy of South Asia and that of South East Asia. This importance of commerce, trade and business is and will be the energy to also strengthen and promote the culture and heritage of the region to mankind. It appears that in the making of 'Destination North East India', the role of the NE states has been sidelined, and this is where Prime Minister Modi has to rethink. Merely advocating about the region by DONER alone will be ended only as a series of some celebrations in metros of the country. For the truer way of making 'Destination North East India' a grand success, the people of the region must be one of the significant stake holders, not only as a cultural dance performer on the stage of an event, in commerce, trade and business too. If New Delhi, which is DONER here, cannot take along with the state capitals of the region, then, how can DONER go along with the members of NEC, which comprises state Chief Ministers too? It is here that to go together between DONER and NEC, a larger fundamental query comes - Can DONER and NEC go together for Destination North East India? This question becomes much larger to a common man from the North East India, as to the common man's perspective, DONER is Delhi while NEC is North East, so when and how can Delhi (DONER) and North East (NEC) meet? Can NEC go to New Delhi while DONER shifts to Shillong? **(Concluded)**
(Ningombam Bupenda Meitei, educated at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, is a poet and author.)

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