

Editorial

Imphal, Friday, August 12, 2016

The enemies within

Tethered by the slim 26km long Siliguri Corridor, the Seven Sisters (excepting Sikkim which became a part of the North Eastern region in 2002) - the North Eastern States continues to be one of the poorest region in the country still heavily dependent on dole-outs from the centre with no particular source of substantial income worth talking about for as long as one cares to recollect.

Add to it the peculiar and disturbing situation still awaiting concrete remedial measure- that of the more than 400 kms of porous border with Myanmar which are poorly guarded and an open conduit for arms and drugs, not to mention the illegal immigrants.

The ground reality, as one is experiencing at present, is one of confusion, indecisiveness, ambiguity and increasing intolerance regarding customs, traditions, beliefs and religions.

The geopolitical positioning of the region has been blamed, and rightly so to a certain extent, for the backwardness and lack of economic opportunities for the inhabitants who indeed have to face obstacles that are not even imaginable or conceivable in the rest of the country.

The educated public of the region, world-weary and well-travelled, seem to have an inexplicable affinity for embracing the bright side of things while downplaying the multitude of vexing problems and irritants that combines to hold back the state and the region from keeping pace with the rest of the country despite its potentials which have been much publicized, discussed, deliberated upon and generally accepted. So what are the things holding back our state from picking up the pace of progress despite the burgeoning multitude of educated and experienced individuals?

For starters, the lack of conventional opportunities for economic development on an individual level leads to excessive and almost always unfair competition fuelling corruptive practices. For all the hue and cry about developing entrepreneurship in the state, the choice is still a very risky and demanding one, in more sense than one as a prospective entrepreneur have to start from scratch and overcome insensitive, ignorant and often indifferent officials in every step of one's entrepreneurial efforts.

We also have an acknowledged yet unofficial system of political favouritism where opportunities are provided not to the best candidate for a job or project, but rather to the ones who can win favours from those who matter, never mind the fact that the favoured ones are often the least qualified for the tasks at hand. Cronyism and contract-culture has proved to be a major hindrance to the march towards development. There is also the unexpressed resentment against the mushrooming vigilantism which invariably ends up with a cut of the loot, and once satiated, turns a blind eye to the blatant inefficiency, deliberate misappropriations and open disregard for public welfare as has become the norm rather than the exception when it comes to public development activities.

But the worst offenders and detractors of progress are the public themselves, for while baying for the blood of the high and mighty, it is the petty, almost ignorable deeds that adds up to become the behemoth that is standing in the path to progress. Offering bribes, accepting cash for votes, accepting less of their allotted share of benefits, failing to speak up on any irregularities all adds up to the present situation we are experiencing today. We need to change ourselves if we seek to change the state and society. We need to defeat the enemy within to realize a better future.

Major 7.2 magnitude earthquake strikes off Vanuatu: USGS

Sydney, Aug. 12: A major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 struck about 535 km (330 miles) southeast of the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu on Friday, the US Geological Survey said, briefly triggering a local tsunami warning.

There were no initial reports of casualties or damage.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued a warning for areas close to the quake, although there was no Pacific-wide threat of a

tsunami, the Hawaii-based centre said. The shallow quake was measured at a depth of about 10 km (6 miles).

The quake initially registered with a magnitude of 7.6 but was later downgraded. The tsunami warning, which had included coastal areas of Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji, including the Fijian capital, Suva, was later cancelled.

The powerful quake triggered at least one aftershock, with a magnitude of 5.4, the USGS said.

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Chandrashekhar Azad and the Soul of Freedom Movement

By : **Abhishek Doyal**

India's fight against colonial rule was a long and difficult one. Apart from the need to overcome the brutality of an alien regime, the national leaders of the time had the daunting challenge of preparing the poor and disorganized people of our sub-continent for this fight. The most significant aspect of our struggle against foreign domination was the ability of our leaders to lift the people out of their ignorance and the resultant resurgence of the idea of an Indian nation.

It is now well documented that the process of nation building preceded the actual, physical struggle of our freedom fighters, it continued through the most active phases of national movement and for that matter, continues even today - decades after Independence was won.

The fight to revive the soul of the nation was first taken up by the brave-hearts like Lion of Punjab - Lala Lajpat Rai, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and numerous early revolutionaries of Bengal. The basic idea of the revolutionaries was to stir the soul of the country, awaken the fighting spirit of the nation, and remind the people of their past glory and to show them that the time has come to stand up and be counted.

In this journey of awakening of India's pride and self-belief, the earnest and impatient youth took up the challenge thrown by the Jallianwallan Bagh (1919) and the setback of the first Gandhian movement (1922) by demonstrating

individual bravery of exceptional order. During this period one of the most momentous event was the coming together of many talented and brave revolutionaries under one organizational umbrella - the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association in October 1924 in Kanpur. This new organization saw the loose association of such great revolutionaries as Ramprasad Bismil, Jyotesh Chatterjee, Chandrashekhar Azad, Yogendra Shukla, Sachindranath Sanyal, Ashfaqullah Khan, Roshan Singh, Rajendra Lahiri, Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Sukhdev. Over the next decade, most of these names captured the imagination of the nation and stirred the conscience of the masses. That they could instil awe and fear in the heart of the British Raj is no mean achievement, considering the sheer strength of the colonial power which then was at its peak of global influence.

Even in this illustrious group of revolutionaries, the name of Chandrashekhar Azad shines through. In some senses, the image of moustache twirling youth from the heart of India struck cord with the people. Here was a young boy in his twenties who had the guts and the ability to bring down the powerful colonial police to its knees.

In a series of revolutionary acts through the twenties, Chandrashekhar Azad and his friends kept themselves in the news. At times when open civil disobedience programmes were not

possible due to police repression of highest degree, these revolutionaries kept the hopes alive of eventual victory for millions of Indians.

Three important aspects of work of Azad makes him unique - his ability to evade capture and remain a "free" man till his death is perhaps the most important. The very name - Azad or free - casts an aura of the post-independence Indian. His very name and his knack of being one arm away from the police made him the darling of the country. His final, solitary stand against a posse of policemen at Allahabad's Company Garden or Alfred Park - now aptly named Chandrashekhar Azad Park - represents the undaunted and free spirit of the man - an inspiration for generations to come. That he was betrayed by some of his colleagues adds to his mystique - for such treachery was all too common in those days. The message in his death was: living and dying a free man was worthy goal in life. Many have emulated him in making supreme sacrifice for the nation since then.

The second aspect of Azad's personality was that he was an iconic figure that rose above his caste or religious identity. Changing his surname name to Azad was but the starting point of that process. It is said that at the age of 15, when he was first detained by the police, he gave his name as Azad and his father's name as Swatantra. In all the facts, legends and folklore associated with him, nowhere does his religion or caste come into

picture. He was an Indian first and last. That was, and is, a very unique aspect of his personality.

The third aspect of Azad, shared by his friends in the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) was a clear vision of why they were doing what they were doing and what they wanted a free India to be.

Thus for instance, when Azad and his friends robbed government property to collect funds, the idea was always twofold - one, to undermine the authority of the British police and two, to build an organization that could stand up to the colonial rule. Aligned with their noble and selfless ideals of creating a just and equal India, these robberies were seen by the people in a similar light as Robin Hood - not as acts of criminality, but of rebellion against injustice. During the long periods when Azad lived undercover, mostly near Jhansi, he took on the role of teacher and taught children of the poor in the nearby villages.

Chandrashekhar Azad did not die. He lives on in our hearts. He can be seen, alive and confident, in Chandrashekhar Azad park, twirling his mustachios, musing with satisfaction at the great distance India has travelled since his times. However, looking closely at the iconic statue, one can also detect a hint of worry on his forehead. It seems as if he is wondering if we have become too complacent about our hard won freedom and about the work that still needs to be done to fulfil his dream of building a nation that is strong and just. **PIB Feature**

National & International News

Lok Sabha passes resolution on Kashmir, appeals for peace

PTI New Delhi, Aug. 12: Voicing concern over prolonged curfew, violence and loss of lives in Kashmir, Lok Sabha on Friday unanimously passed a resolution, appealing for urgent steps to restore order and peace in the valley while asserting that there can be no compromise with the country's integrity and security.

In the resolution read out by Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, the House appealed to all sections of the society in Jammu & Kashmir to restore the confidence among the people in general and youth in particular.

The House "conveys its deep sense of anguish and concern over the loss of lives and critical injuries caused by the deteriorating situation," it said.

Amid thumping of desks by

members from all sides, the resolution asserted that the House "is of the firm and considered view that there cannot be any compromise on unity, integrity and national security." It is equally an imperative that urgent steps are taken to restore order and peace for the alleviation of the sufferings of the people," it said.

The resolution was read out by the Speaker after Opposition parties suggested that she instead of Home Minister Rajnath Singh should propose it.

Earlier, leader of Congress Mallikarjun Kharge demanded that the House pass a resolution on Kashmir where the situation was turning complex and was deteriorating by the day.

The House should appeal that the whole nation is united on the issue, Kharge said which was promptly

agreed to by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

Earlier Congress chief whip Jyotiraditya Scindia was seen having some discussions with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Home Minister, apparently over the issue of adopting the resolution.

Earlier this week, the Rajya Sabha too had passed a resolution expressing its serious concern over the prolonged turbulence, violence and curfew in the Kashmir valley.

The Lok Sabha adopted the resolution unanimously shortly before the monsoon session was adjourned sine-die by the Speaker. After the resolution was adopted, TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay remarked that this is the second incident in a week when the House has shown unanimity. Earlier, such unanimity

was seen during passage of the long-pending Constitutional Amendment Bill on GST Monday.

The resolution asserted that the House "is of the firm and considered view that while there cannot be any compromise on national security, it is equally an imperative that urgent steps are taken to restore order and peace for the alleviation of the sufferings of the people."

The House "earnestly appeals to all sections of the society in Jammu and Kashmir and India, to work for the early restoration of normalcy and harmony and unanimously resolves to restore the confidence among the people in general and youth in particular," it said.

Before the House took up the resolution, Bandyopadhyay sought to raise the issue of early clearance of MGNREGA arrears. He was, however, not allowed by the Speaker.

Pakistan passes controversial cyber-crime law

Islamabad, Aug. 12: Pakistan has adopted a much-criticised cyber security law that grants sweeping powers to regulators to block private information they deem illegal.

The National Assembly approved the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill 2015 late on Thursday after the Senate had unanimously adopted it last month.

Government officials say internet restrictions under the new law are needed to ensure security against growing threats, such as terrorism. But the law has alarmed human rights and pro-democracy activists worried that its vague language could lead to curtailment of free speech and unfair prosecutions. "The overly broad language used in the bill ensures that innocent and ignorant Pakistani citizens, unaware of the ramifications of what the bill entails, can be ensnared and find themselves subject to very harsh penalties," said Nighat Daad, founder of a group called the Digital Rights Foundation.

"There have been no provisions set in place to protect sensitive data of Pakistani users. The state cannot police people's lives in this manner." The law provides for up

to seven years in prison for "recruiting, funding and planning of terrorism" online. It also allows "authorised officers" to require anyone to unlock any computer, mobile phone or other device during an investigation. Activists say the bill's vague language without well-defined descriptions for libel or defamation typical in other countries" could be used to prosecute any satirical website, including political ones. The law also carries a penalty of three years for "spoofing".

"Whoever with dishonest intention establishes a website or sends any information with a counterfeit source intended to be believed by the recipient or visitor of the website, to be an authentic source commits spoofing," the law says. Daad said the bill allowed the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority "unlimited powers" to decide what was illegal.

Governments around the world have been grappling with how to block online incitement to criminal activity, while major internet

services have stepped up campaigns to identify and remove Web postings that incite violence. Facebook, Google and Twitter are working more aggressively to combat online propaganda and recruiting by Islamist militants while trying to avoid the perception they are helping state authorities police the Web. More than 30 million of Pakistan's 190 million people use the internet, mainly on mobile telephones, according to digital rights organisation Bytes for All.

Mobile telephony services snapped in Kashmir

PTI Srinagar, Aug 12: Authorities today snapped mobile telephony services, except postpaid facility on state-run BSNL, in Kashmir as a precautionary measure in the wake of fierce clashes after Friday prayers last week. "Mobile telephony services have been snapped in the entire Valley. Only postpaid connections of BSNL are working, a police official said. He said the services were snapped across the Valley at midnight to maintain law and

order and to prevent rumour mongering.

Last Friday saw intense clashes between protesters and security forces at many places in the Valley after the congregational prayers.

The clashes left three people dead and several hundred others injured.

Mobile telephony services, except BSNL postpaid, were first snapped in the Valley on July 15 in the aftermath of violence following the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan

Wani in an encounter in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on July 8.

The authorities had snapped mobile internet facility in the entire Valley on July 9.

While the postpaid services were resumed on July 26, the incoming call facility on the prepaid numbers was restored a day later. However, the outgoing facility on such numbers continued to remain barred. Mobile internet also continued to remain snapped for the 35th day today.