

Editorial

Imphal, Wednesday, August 24, 2016

Facing the challenges

The greatest tragedy of our state is that nothing seems to move until and unless extreme measures are resorted to: be it implementing rules of law or conveying the aspirations and needs of the public. Add to it the fact that we, as a collective, have yet to realize the undeniable truth that the centre is evidently more concerned with preserving its national territory rather than improving the welfare of its citizens when it comes to affairs of the north east region of the country, in effect, reducing the importance of the region to that of a mere geographical entity. Death, destruction and tragedy continue to be the only means of drawing attention of the high and mighty at the centre to the region. None of the national media considers it relevant to highlight the improvements, or whatever activities and changes that can be attributed as such that has occurred in the state. Even the landmark decision by its government which led to the removal of AFSPA from Tripura was mentioned in the passing, even as the collective mind of the rest of the north east states still remain occupied and fascinated with the development, and the tantalizing possibility of it unfolding in their own states. Despite the blatant indifference and continued ignorance of the centre, it remains an intriguing issue as to the question of why the state government still remains a passive bystander at best and a perceived stooge for the centre, while pressing issues needing immediate attention has been put on the backburner or dismissed altogether. While it must be said in its defence that the governance of a volatile and inherently unpredictable state as Manipur is easier said than done, this very situation cannot be used as an excuse to shy away from the challenges that is staring it in the face. The peculiarity of the situations confronting Manipur: from its geopolitical to socio-economic conditions needs to be tackled in ways that involves innovative and unorthodox methods. This calls for a more alert, swifter and sterner government capable of dispensing its plans and proposals more smoothly and effectively. The frustrations being felt by the public for a long time now need to be addressed. Every aspect of public life and governance has been beset with corruptions, controversies, scandals, accusations of favoritism, despotism and cronyism. The sooner the present guardians of the state admit to the allegations and own up to such aberrations, the sooner it can address and rectify itself. Bringing in a system of governance that takes into confidence its people and their needs rather than dispensing administration by tweaking the system to suit its every whim will eventually prove to be the spark that lit up the fire of frustrations trampled expectations. The state government needs to stand with its people and work in synergy rather than to cloak its intentions and actions with the shroud of suspicion and mystery.

5 homegrown militants arrested in raids in B'desh

PTI Dhaka, Aug 24: Bangladesh today arrested five suspected militants of the banned homegrown JMB blamed for a series of deadly attacks, including the trainer of its women wing, in twin raids here during which firearms and explosives in large quantities were also recovered from their possession. Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) stormed two hideouts in Dhaka's Gazipur district, arresting Rasheduzzaman Rose, a Canadian expatriate who is also the acting southern-region chief of Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the Dhaka Tribune reported. Major Ajam, second-in-command of RAB-1, said a team conducted a drive in Tongi Station Road area around 12.30 AM. Rasheduzzaman, who took over as the JMB's regional chief recently, was among those arrested, reports quoted RAB's legal and media wing Director Mufti Mahmud Khan as saying. The other persons arrested were

identified as Sahabuddin, Firoz, and Saiful, members of the same outfit, and Abul Hye, a leader of another militant outfit Ahl al-Hadith. RAB have also seized a large number of explosives, firearms and improvised bombs from the hideouts, Khan added. Bangladesh police have blamed JMB for the two recent terror attacks, including the Dhaka cafe siege on July 1 in Gulshan area in which 22 people, including 17 foreigners, were killed in the brutal late-night attack. The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for the Gulshan attack, releasing photos from inside the cafe during the siege and of the five men who carried out the deadly assault and were shot dead at its finale. Bangladesh authorities had dismissed ISIS claims over the deadly assaults, saying international jihadist networks have no presence in the world's third largest Muslim majority nation.

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Timeframe Syndrome

So many politicians used to make promises at the time of elections that they would solve the Naga political issue if they were voted to power. We have seen how the Central leaders in the past even set timeframe to settle the Naga political issue during their tenures. Even Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in his second term as Prime Minister kept assuring that the Naga issue would be resolved during his tenure (his 2nd tenure as prime Minister) but he failed to fulfill what he had assured. Even then Union Home Secretary GK Pillai, while talking to the press after reviewing the "Special Attestation Parade" held at Assam Rifles Training Centre and School, Shukhovi, near Dimapur in 2010 said the Naga issue would be resolved in 12 to 24 months. But the solution did not come. He, however, cautioned that it was a "difficult problem requiring imaginative and innovative solution," while saying that no final settlement could come about by having talks with one Naga underground group. Narendra Modi, as soon as he became Prime Minister in 2014, also gave a timeframe of 18 months to find a solution to the Naga political issue. His timeframe of resolving the Naga issue was also quoted by none other than Nagaland Chief Minister TR Zeliang. RN Ravi, Interlocutor of the Center-NSCN

(IM) talks, however, denied that such timeframe was set by the Prime Minister. Interestingly, Modi completes 26 months in office. No surprising, all the political parties, regional or national, at the time of elections, would include the settlement of the Naga political issue as a top priority in their election manifestoes. On top of it, almost all the candidates, during their election campaigns, would promise at the top of their voice that they would resolve the issue if they were elected or their parties were voted to power. The political parties, which were rivals one another, would also indulge in mud-slinging and blame games for not seeing any tangible solution to the Naga political issue. So generally, the Naga political issue dominates every election in the State. The main Opposition Congress in Nagaland had been alleging that former Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had promised to resolve the Naga political issue within three months if the NPF was voted to power in the 2003 Assembly elections. But Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi at an election rally at Kohima in March 2014 criticized Rio of making an incapable promise of solving the Naga political issue within three months if the NPF was voted to power in the 2003 Assembly elections. "Whatever energy I have, I will put in for resolving the

Naga problem," he said. "But I cannot promise that it will be solved within three months. My heart is in trying to get peace and harmony back in the State." Rio, who is now the lone Lok Sabha MP from Nagaland, ruled Nagaland for eleven years but solution to the Naga issue still remains elusive. Today setting timeframe for resolving the Naga political issue or even mentioning the settlement of the issue as a top priority in future election manifestoes of any political parties will hardly create any attraction and enthusiasm for the masses. The political relevance of such exercises seems to be fast disappearing because of whatever promises made in every election become hollow slogans only to woo the electorates and not for actually finding a solution to the Naga political issue. In fact, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio was the luckiest and is also present Chief Minister TR Zeliang as they both became the Chief Ministers one after another from the same party under the same banner of Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) when the political talks between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) had been going on in full swing. They did not have much work on the Naga issue for the fact that almost all the Naga Political Groups (NPGs) had already been in truce with the Government of

By Oken Jeet Sandham

India. Unfortunately, the NSCN (K) walked away from the ceasefire with the Government of India in 2015. But one must know that the group had walked away from the ceasefire after maintaining it (truce) for 14 long years with the Government of India. During this long 14 years of truce, Delhi had not tried to give them even minimum opportunity to start even informal talks. Such situation actually forced them to walk away from the ceasefire agreement and now the whole world seems to be turning against them for actually no false of theirs. It is yet to see Delhi's next moves as to how their formula of "inclusiveness for a comprehensive solution" will be worked out. And since the elections are fast approaching to Manipur and Nagaland one after another, we will witness several leaders from national political parties including Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, coming in with so many timeframes for settling the Naga political issue and other developmental promises. Well, we will not be surprised to see many of our own State politicians who will also come with a lot of promises and timeframes again in the coming elections and one wonders whether the people will still enjoy listening to those clichéd gimmicks.

National & International News

Myanmar names Annan to head Rohingya panel

Yangon, Aug 24: Myanmar's government has set up an advisory panel headed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to find "lasting solutions" to the conflict in Rakhine state, where human rights groups have documented widespread abuses against the minority Rohingya Muslims. A statement yesterday by the office of State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi said an agreement will be signed between her office and the Kofi Annan Foundation to set up a nine-member advisory commission to resolve "protracted issues in the region." The council will comprise three international and six national experts. Rohingya Muslims have lived in the northwestern state of Rakhine for generations but are denied citizenship because they are

considered outsiders. More than 100 people, mostly Rohingya, were killed in clashes with members of Myanmar's Buddhist majority in 2012. Tens of thousands of Rohingya have fled in rickety boats to seek refuge in other Southeast Asian countries, and many have perished in the perilous journeys or fallen victim to human traffickers. Many displaced Rohingya are now sheltering in refugee camps within the country in squalid conditions with little medical care. In a reflection of how sensitive the Rohingya issue is, the statement did not name the community in the entire text, only describing it as "the complex and delicate issues in the Rakhine state." The closest it came to acknowledging the Rohingya was by saying that the

commission will "examine international aspects of the situation, including the background of those seeking refugee status abroad." It said the commission will "consider humanitarian and development issues, access to basic services, and the assurance of basic rights, and the security of the people of Rakhine." The commission will make recommendations on conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, rights and reconciliation, institution building and promotion of development of Rakhine state. The commission will submit its findings and recommendations within 12 months of its establishment. The recommendations will be given to Suu Kyi, who holds the dual titles of state counselor and foreign

minister. She is barred by the constitution from becoming president, but for all intent and purposes has been the country's leader since her party won elections in November 2015 and replaced a quasi-civilian government controlled by the military. Kofi Annan was the UN chief from 1997 to 2006, when he was replaced by Ban Ki-moon. He shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the United Nations in 2001.

Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw to visit India

PTI Nay Pyi Daw, Aug 24: Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw will visit India soon at the invitation of counterpart Pranab Mukherjee, according to an official announcement. "U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and wife Daw Su Su Lwin will pay a State Visit to the Republic of India in the near future at the invitation of His Excellency Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, President of the Republic of India," the President Office here said in a statement without specifying the date of his visit. The announcement came a day after External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's one-day visit to the country to hold talks with Myanmar leaders on key bilateral issues during which it was assured that Myanmar will not allow any insurgent group to use its territory against India. The assurance came in the backdrop of certain insurgent groups from northeastern states using Myanmar for launching attacks against India. In the first high-level visit from India after the civilian government assumed office here, Swaraj had called on the president and held extensive talks with State Counselor and Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi during which she conveyed India's commitment of "all help" to the new government.

Rajnath Singh in Kashmir to hold talks with stakeholders

PTI Srinagar, Aug 24: Home Minister Rajnath Singh today said he will hold talks with various stakeholders in Kashmir and invited all those who believe in 'Kashmiriyat, Insaniyat and Jamhooriyat' as he arrived here on a two-day visit under Centre's outreach in the Valley which has been hit by violence since July 9. Singh, who is accompanied by Home Secretary Rajiv Mehriishi, will review the situation in Kashmir where as many as 65 persons have been killed and over

8000 injured in clashes between protesters and security forces that broke out in the wake of killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani in an encounter. The Union Minister arrived at Srinagar airport at 11.30 AM in a special plane. "I will be staying at the Nehru Guest House. Those who believe in Kashmiriyat, Insaniyat and Jamhooriyat are welcome," he tweeted before heading for Kashmir. "Shall interact with civil society groups, political parties and other stakeholders," Singh said in his

tweets. The Minister's visit to Kashmir comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with a delegation of opposition parties led by former state chief minister Omar Abdullah in the national capital on Monday. Modi had expressed "deep concern and pain" over the situation there and had asked all political parties to work together to find a "permanent and lasting" solution to problems in Jammu and Kashmir. This is the second visit of Singh in a month to the Valley.

3 arrested for journalist's murder in Gujarat

PTI Ahmedabad, Aug 24: Three persons were today arrested in connection with the murder of a journalist at a newspaper office in Gujarat's Junagadh district with a police probe finding that dispute over money led to the crime. Kishore Dave (53), the bureau chief of Gujarati daily 'Jai Hind-Sanjh Samachar', published from Rajkot, was stabbed to death by sharp weapons at the newspaper's office in Vanjari chowk area of Junagadh on Monday night. "We have arrested three persons

involved in the murder of journalist Kishore Dave. "From investigation, it was revealed that Dave was a partner in transport business with the accused, and was murdered due to disputes arising out of payment of money," Junagadh B-division police inspector M M Makwana said. The arrested persons have been identified as - Firoz Kasambhai Hala, Sanjay Rama Rathod and Arif Alam Saiyed. Dave was involved in transport business along with the three accused since about last five years,

Makwana said. "They had purchased a mini bus and Dave had to make payment in that connection, and was murdered after he failed to make the payment," he said. Following the murder, separate teams of local police, local crime branch, and special operations group were formed to crack the case. They also took the help of a CCTV camera footage in which the murderers were apparently seen riding two motorcycles towards Dave's office, which assisted in solving the case, police said.