

Editorial

Imphal Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Why worry?

What would come as a bitter truth to swallow for many is the unfortunate fact that whoever in power regardless of the propounded ideologies will continue to engage in profiteering and nepotism, although the degree may vary. This is the ways of the world and in any transaction, whether financial or otherwise, there will always be one who has the upper hand who will stand to gain more, or everything for that matter. Absolute equality is a utopian idea impossible to achieve in the practical world, not so much for lack of trying but because of the basic differences of individuals. The sooner we realize and accept that, the better we will be. Does that mean we have to give in to the diktats or terms of those who are presumably more powerful than ourselves? The answer- absolutely not. On the contrary, by accepting the bitter truth of the human nature, we will be gaining the upper hand- an insurmountable advantage in our quest to lead a better life and strive towards higher ideals. Therefore, even the most serious of our problems can be classified into just two categories- one which we can solve or something that is inevitable and cannot be prevented. Any problem that can be solved is therefore cannot be termed as a real problem but must be treated rather as an inconvenience to be dealt with accordingly. Except for a few inescapable eventualities such as birth and death, most of the obstacles and drawbacks holding our society back can be solved, although some might take more effort and time than the others. The seemingly complex social strife and upheavals we are experiencing at present should therefore be regarded as an inconvenience that needs to be addressed rather than a vexing problem to live with, and we definitely can if everybody gives it a try. We need to look at the situation from a different angle- a new and more positive perspective.

What if we view the present man-made scarcity of essential commodities as an impetus to make greater efforts to produce more and be more self-reliant? What if we take the increasingly deepening communal divide as an opportunity to understand and appreciate the inherent feeling of preserving and upholding the myriad groups and their traditions? What if we view the increasingly polarizing political and social stands as a sign of greater political and social awareness amongst the public? What if we take the frustrations and deceived aspirations of the public as a lesson of the collective will in our choice of representatives and more importantly an eye-opener for the future wannabe social servants? What if we take the present social situation to take a long hard look at the agenda compelling the various groups and parties to act the way they do?

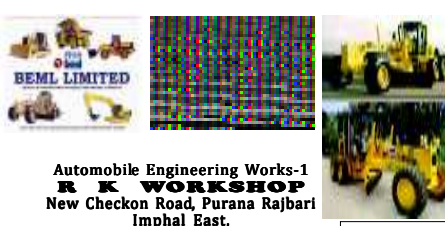
Every obstacle is also an opportunity. How we perceive and react makes it so. When we as a collective society come together and revel in our differences rather than repel each other, we can really overcome the petty scuffles and communal mindset. If a problem cannot be solved despite our best efforts and is inevitable, what is the use of worrying over it? On the other hand, if we perceive an obstacle as a problem that can be solved, why sit back and worry instead of making efforts to solving it?

SC to hear plea against appointment of Asthana as CBI interim chief on Dec 9

New Delhi, Dec.7: The Supreme Court today agreed to hear on December 9 a plea challenging the appointment of Gujarat cadre IPS officer Rakesh Asthana as the interim director of CBI. "Okay. It will come up on Friday," a bench comprising Chief Justice T S Thakur and Justices D Y Chandrachud and L Nageswara Rao said after advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for NGO Common Cause, mentioned the plea. The petition, filed by the NGO, alleged that the Centre took a series of steps in a "completely mala fide, arbitrary and illegal manner to ensure that Asthana was given the charge of CBI director". It has claimed that the government did not convene a meeting of the

selection committee comprising the Prime Minister, the leader of the largest opposition party and the Chief Justice of India, even though it was fully aware that Anil Sinha was going to demit the office of CBI director on December 2. Asthana, an IPS officer of 1984-batch, was elevated as the Additional Director in the agency on December 2 when CBI Special Director R K Dutta, who was reportedly among the frontrunners for the top post, was shifted to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as a Special Secretary. The PIL claimed that the government had "prematurely curtailed" the tenure and transferred Dutta to MHA on November 30 — just two days before Sinha was slated to demit office.

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By: Sarita Brara

According to the Census 2011, there are 2.68 crores (2.21%) persons with disabilities in India, though according to some estimates, the actual number may be as high as five per cent of our population. However, there has been a paradigm shift in the approach towards the persons with disabilities (PWDs) during last some years. The government's focus now is on rights based economic empowerment of PWDs as we observe the International Day for Persons with Disabilities on 3rd of December this year. In India the first step in moving towards rights based economic empowerment was taken when Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995 came into being. The second was India's ratification of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (U.N.C.R.P.D.) now a new bill introduced in Rajya Sabha that has provisions for accelerating this process, awaits nod from the Parliament.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2014

Now all eyes are on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill which will replace the 1995 Act. The provisions in the Bill fulfil a number of demands of the Disabled Rights Groups and Activists who have been pressing for its early passage in the parliament. Some of the significant provisions of the Bill include, making accessibility a mandatory requirement under the law, number of beneficiary categories proposed to be increased from 7 to 19, entitlement of some benefits to persons with at least 40% of a disability. It also provides disabled friendly access to all public

Rights based Empowerment

buildings, hospitals, modes of transport, polling stations, etc. Significantly it also stipulates, violation of any provision of the Act be made punishable under the law.

Apart from the proposed legislation, government has taken several measures towards empowerment of the persons living with disabilities.

Accessible India Campaign

The campaign was launched almost a year back on the 15th of December. A flagship programme of the government, it is aimed at achieving universal accessibility of persons with disabilities and to create an enabling and barrier free environment. It is focussed on three objectives, accessibility of built up environment, transport system accessibility and accessibility of knowledge and ICT ecosystem.

According to Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, audit of 1092 buildings out of 1098 across 31 cities has already been completed in order to convert them into fully accessible buildings.

Sugamaya Pustakalaya

In August this year, the government launched 'Sugamaya Pustakalaya' an online platform where a person with disabilities can access books in the library at a click of a button. He can read the publications on any device of his choice- mobile phones, tablets, computers, DAISY player or even in braille using refreshable braille displays. He can also request for a braille copy through member organizations that have braille presses.

The Secretary General of World Blind Union and President of All India confederation of the Blind, Mr A.K Mittal is of the view that

situation with regard to availability of basic writing material and mobility aides like canes for the visually challenged has improved significantly. Appreciating the government initiative with regard to liberal grants related to production of books in Braille, he told this author that if the scheme for modernization and setting up of new Braille presses is implemented properly this will increase and ease the production of books.

UIDID CARD

The government proposes to roll out a web-based unique disability identification (UIDID) card. The initiative will help in a big way in ensuring the authenticity of disability certificates and eliminate the hassle of having to carry certificates for different purposes, as various details, including the type of disability, would be made available online.

Scholarship Scheme

The government has also initiated scheme for pre matric, (46000 slots) post matric (16650 slots) and students seeking top class education (100 slots).

SWAVLAMBAN

A National Action Plan for Skill Training of Persons with Disabilities was launched last year. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with NSDC, proposes to set an ambitious target of skilling 5 lakh persons with disability in next 3 years (1 lakh in first year, 1.5 lakh in second year and 2.5 lakh in third year). The Action plan is aimed at skilling 25 lakh persons with disabilities by end 2022.

Samajik Adhikarita Shivir

The Department organizes Camps to distribute aides and appliances to the persons with disabilities (Divyangjans). Prime Minister Narendra Modi distributed Aids and

Assistive Devices to more than 11000 Divyangjans at one such camp in held September in Gujarat. Similar Camps have been organized across the country to meet the needs of Divyangjans residing in remote areas.

Areas of Concern

More than a decade after the first law on persons with disabilities came into effect, despite special recruitment drives from time to time, by government's own admission only a little over one per cent of the vacancies could be filled against three per cent reservation in jobs in government. Over 14,000 identified vacancies remain to be filled. The backlog for the visually challenged is about ten thousand.

A report by the International Labour Organization in 2011 said that over 73% of the disabled in India are still outside the labour force and those with mental disability, disabled women and those in rural areas are the most neglected.

More than half of the children with disabilities are out of school despite the fact that the government has taken a number of steps to encourage these children to be admitted to schools. Activists hope that if the Right to Education is implemented in letter and spirit, this situation is likely to improve considerably. Activists also plead for enhanced research and development with regard to aids and appliances for the PWDs to ensure that their accessibility to various facilities is made easy.

Hopes and Aspirations

With the fast-tracking of several schemes and programmes which have been initiated during last two years, the objective of creating an inclusive and equitable world could become a reality. (Courtesy PIB Feature)

National & International News

Indonesia's Army Chief says 54 killed in earthquake

Meureudu, Dec. 7: A strong undersea earthquake rocked Indonesia's Aceh province early on Wednesday, killing at least 54 people and causing dozens of buildings to collapse. Army Chief in Indonesia's Aceh province says that 54 people have been killed in the earthquake. A frantic rescue effort involving dozens of villagers, soldiers and police was underway in Meureudu, a severely affected town in Pidie Jaya district, which was closest to the quake's epicenter. Excavators and rescuers were trying to remove debris from shop and other buildings where people were believed buried. Pidie Jaya District chief Aiyub Abbas said 25 people were killed in that district alone. A local health agency said eight were young children. More than 40 buildings including

mosques, stores and homes were flattened in the district located 18 kilometers southwest of the epicenter, according to Abbas. Roads cracked and power poles toppled over. Abbas said there is an urgent need for excavation equipment to move heavy debris and emergency supplies. TV footage showed rescue personnel taking bodies in black bags away from the rubble. The US Geological Survey said the shallow 6.5 magnitude earthquake that struck at 5.03 am was centered about 10 kilometers north of Reuleut, a town in northern Aceh, at a depth of 17 kilometers. It did not generate a tsunami. For Acehness, the quake was another reminder of their region's vulnerability to natural disasters. More than 100,000 died in Aceh after the December 26 earthquake that triggered a devastating tsunami.

"It was very bad, the tremors felt even stronger than 2004 earthquake," said Musman Aziz, a Meureudu resident. "I was so scared the tsunami was coming." In the capital Jakarta, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo said he has ordered all government agencies to take part in the rescue efforts. Seaside resident Fitri Abidin in Pidie Jaya said she fled with her husband and wailing children to a nearby hill after the quake jolted the family awake early in the morning. They stayed there for several hours until authorities reassured them there was no tsunami risk. "It terrified me. I was having difficulty breathing or walking," said Abidin. She said her husband grabbed hold of her and carried her out of the house. The family's house didn't collapse,

but the homes of some neighbors did and Abidin is afraid three friends were buried in building collapses. In Pidie Jaya's neighboring district of Bireuen, a teacher at an Islamic building school died after being hit by falling debris, said health worker Achmad Taufiq. About 20 people were being treated at a health center and one person was moved to a hospital because of broken bones and a head injury, said Taufiq. Residents of the nearby town of Lhokseumawe ran out of their homes in panic during the quake and many people fled to higher ground. The world's largest archipelago, Indonesia is prone to earthquakes due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin. The 2004 tsunami killed a total of 230,000 people in a dozen countries.

Myanmar bans workers going to Malaysia as Rohingya crisis grows

Indonesia, Dec. 7: Myanmar has banned workers from going to Muslim-majority Malaysia as relations sour between the neighbours over a bloody military crackdown on the Buddhist country's Rohingya minority. The move came after Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak lashed out at Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi for allowing "genocide" on her watch during a rally Sunday in Kuala Lumpur that drew thousands of people. The crowds were protesting against a military crackdown in Myanmar's western Rakhine state that has pushed more than 20,000 Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh. Survivors have told AFP horrifying stories of gang rape, torture and murder at the hands of Myanmar security forces, while dozens have died trying to cross the river that separates the two countries. Buddhist-majority Myanmar has

long discriminated against the stateless Rohingya and the recent crisis has galvanised protests in Muslim countries around the region, including Malaysia. "We want to tell Aung San Suu Kyi, enough is enough... We must and we will defend Muslims and Islam," Najib said at Sunday's 5,000-strong rally. "The world cannot sit and watch genocide taking place." A Malaysian government minister has also called for a review of Myanmar's membership inside the regional ASEAN bloc. Myanmar officials have denied the allegations of abuse and Suu Kyi has told the international community to stop stoking the "fires of resentment". Late Tuesday Myanmar's immigration ministry said it had ceased issuing new licences for its nationals to work in wealthier Malaysia — for years a top destination for migrant labour.

"Myanmar has temporarily stopped sending workers to Malaysia from 6/12/2016 because of the current situation in Malaysia," it said in a statement, without elaborating. Malaysia already hosts tens of thousands of Myanmar workers, most of whom take on low-paid jobs in factories or in the food and hospitality industries. According to Malaysia, some 56,000 Rohingya have arrived on its shores

in recent years, many taking perilous boat journeys to flee poverty and discrimination in Rakhine state. But on Tuesday former UN chief Kofi Annan, who heads a commission on troubled Rakhine, told reporters he thought the crisis would not split the region apart. "I think it can be contained. There is a possibility here to contain what is going on," he told a news conference in Yangon at the end of a week-long visit.

2 killed as Capital Express jumps rail

PTI Alipurduar (WB), Dec 7: Two persons were killed and six others injured when two coaches and engine of Guwahati-bound Capital Express from Bihar's Rajendra Nagar Terminal derailed in North Bengal last night. NF Railway officials said two unidentified male bodies were found from the coaches while six

persons were injured in the derailment that occurred at around 9 PM last night near Shamuktala Road station, about 32 km from Alipurduar Railway Division headquarters. Initial reports had said that 10 persons were injured. Rail traffic has been stopped in both up and down lines in a diverted route, the officials said.