

Editorial

Imphal, Saturday, January 30, 2016

A reminder

- reproducing Imphal Times editorial

Although no written document about the history of Nagaland exists, medieval documents of the neighbouring Ahom in present Assam State mentioned that in 1816 Assam was invaded by the Burmese (ava) after which they controlled the place (1819-1826). After 1826, the British annexed the region and started ruling over it. By 1892, the entire Naga region excepting Tuensang came under the British rule thus bringing to an end the massive bloodshed and inter-regional conflict. Post independence, the district of Assam called Naga Hills and Tuensang were made to represent a single unit under Indian administration. At the Naga Peoples Convention in 1960, it was finally decided that Nagaland will be considered a full-fledged state of India and in 1963, Nagaland was finally declared a separate state. But political and factional conflicts continued all these while and even presidential rule was declared after which many anti-government leaders agreed to accept the administration of the Indian Government. This is the simplest version of the so called unique history of the Nagas. Cut to the present- the demand for an "alternative arrangement", according to the Committee on Alternative Arrangement, the proposed regions will have a political system independent of the Manipur Government- meaning- in simpler terms- freedom to do anything they like and wish without any government intervention (extortion, collection of illegal taxes from vehicles plying through the regions, looting and vandalizing of goods, battering of drivers to death, molesting women); otherwise why has the committee still adamant on sticking to their point of a separate region by disintegrating the state of Manipur, even when the Government has promised to review the working of the various development projects in all the hill districts of the State and to expedite ongoing ones. The contention of being neglected for decades is also one based on misinformation and lack of understanding of the past history of the state. It would bode well for the committee to ponder over the questions- how many decades in total has Mr. Rishang Keishing- the most prominent Tangkhul in the state, been the Chief Minister of the state and what were his achievements regarding development works in the hill districts of Manipur during his tenure? How many of the candidates from the NPF won the Manipur state assembly election? What was the message conveyed by that result? Which system will be more rational- allotment of constituencies according to the area covered or according to the density of population? Has the representatives of these group ever expressed concerns of inequalities or misappropriation over allocation of resources and benefits meant for their people? Before declaring their intention of handing over the decision for the course of action after the tripartite talks which is nothing but a veiled threat of inciting communal riot and mob laws, the matter should be looked at in an impartial and different perspective. Threats of resorting to violence and disruptions as a means to achieve their end will only result in regression of development in their region and alienation by the neighbouring states. The flagbearers of this non-issue should instead draw up a pragmatic plan of action to bring development and prosperity for their people if they are genuinely interested in their welfare and advancement instead of pushing the unwary people to conflicts and confrontations. Rest assured that every group, whether minority or majority, will extend their helping hand in their endeavour. One cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.

History of Manipur as reflected in the socio-cultural ties of hills & plain

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Introduction:
We may examine as to how far are the people of Manipur who can be broadly divided into Meitei, Kuki and Naga, living in the valley and the hills surrounding it are related or otherwise in consideration of their culture, tradition, customs, etc., more particularly so in view of the fact that while the Meiteis living in the valley profess Hinduism, the Kukis and the Nagas living in the hills surrounding the valley embrace Christianity.

Origin and Ethnic Affinity:
Grierson (1904), in his *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III, 1904* stated that the Meiteis, Kukis and Nagas are all of Mongoloid stock belonging to the Tibeto-Burman Family, and their language is clubbed in the Kuki-Chin group which would have been a better appellation had it been given the Meitei-Chin linguistic group. This will enable the whole group divided into two sub-groups, the Meiteis and the various tribes which are known under the names of Kuki and Chin. By this, it only proves that the Meiteis and the Kukis and the Nagas are linguistically very close. All the same, the Kachin connection has been proved by the linguistic affinity between the Meitei and the Kachin.

McCulloch's *The Valley of Manipur* (1859) stated that in view of striking affinity in the language and culture of the people of Meiteis and the hill tribes of Manipur including their folklore, prompted to advance a theory that the Meiteis are descendants of the Kukis and Nagas. (R. Brown: *A Statistical Account of Manipur, 1874*) also subscribed to this view of tribal origin of the Meiteis and speculated that "should it be a correct view that the valley of Manipur was at not very

distant period almost covered entirely by water, the origin of the Manipurees from the surrounding hills is the proper and only conclusion to be arrived". Similarly, Hudson was bold enough to say, "Two hundred years ago, in the internal organization in village, in habits and manners the Meiteis were as the hill people now are. The successive courses of foreign invasions, Shan, Burmese, Hindu and English, each left permanent marks on the civilization of the people so that they have passed finally away from the stage of relatively primitive culture with one of comparative civilization but their ultimate homogeneity with the Nagas and Kukis of the hills is undoubted".

An important feature is the indispensable Customary Law elements in regard to the parts played by each 'Salai' and to ensure participation of several ethnic and tribal groups in bringing and contributing different kinds of wood available in their regions which were used in the construction of halls in Kolang. Their participation in coronation-ceremony was essential. It was customary to collect water from different pools belonging to the seven different 'Salais'. Use of different designs and colours on clothes both among the seven Salais of Meiteis and the tribal groups, a practice followed since the reign of Pamheiba, reveal the divergent cultural base. Wearing of Tangkhul customary dress by the King during the coronation ceremony was a demonstrative impact factor that the people to integrate. These are seen as attempts to depict characteristics of the occasion to project the King as supreme authority of all the people living, both in the Valley and the hills, in expression of solidarity and integration of societies. To light the most important fact about the origin of the Manipur, the Kukis, the Meiteis and the Nagas as having a common origin. A folk song often sung

at the Laiharoba - a festival of the Meiteis reveals - that whether it be the settlers of the hills or that of the valley, both are of the same stock. "CHINGDA TABA MAHAIGE, TAMDA TABA MAHAIGE, WAKON TANOI NOI ..."

When sung in its indigenous and primeval tune significantly expresses inseparable "oneness" and deep relationship that existed between these groups of people.

That the Kingdom of Manipur, a segmentary state, had been in existence since the early Christian era constituted of the people belonging to the hills and the valley, cannot be denied the indigenous groups of people categorised as the TAM-MI (the people who settled in the valley) and the CHING-MI (the people of all groups irrespective of their indigenous ethnic divisions settled in the valley or those who remained in the hills) because of their customary laws and socio-political common terminology found in their respective administrative units is also a fact.

Meitei, Kuki and Naga Ethnonyms:
Jhalajit, (R.K. Jhalajit: *A Short History of Manipur, 1964*) said that whatever be the genesis of its derivation, the ethnonym, Meitei, was historically found to have been applied to the Ningthouja clan-dynasty founded by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba and other groups absorbed by this dynasty politically and integrated into its social structure.

It is interesting to note what Shimray has maintained, regarding the term, MEITHEI, it is derived from the Tangkhul dialect Meitei (Mei = fire, Thei = saw) (W.A. Sothing Shimray, *The Tangkhuls, Imphal, 2000*). The Tangkhul legend indicates that at one point of time, one younger brother from the Tangkhul country retreated back to the valley. He departed from the hill the elder brother asked to signal his existence in the valley

by lighting up a fire. So whenever the elder brother looked down from the hill and saw the fire in the valley he used to think of his brother and knew that his younger brother still existed in the valley. And in course of time, the elder brother nick-named the people of his younger brother MEITHEI people.

The origin of these Meitei tribes is still obscured and complicated due to lack of information regarding their migration before their arrival in Manipur Valley. However, clan genealogies prepared by the Ningthouja royal court, shows common origin from a single divine personality. This may be a later interpolation to create a myth of common origin of the Meiteis which was a necessary ingredient of nation building, said Gangmumei Kabui. As a matter of fact, sociologically, the Meiteis have absorbed many foreign elements and completely assimilated into their social milieu. Over and above this strong political and social pressure of assimilation, there is the dynamic and all absorbing Meitei language which turned out to be the backbone of the process of the Meiteinisation of indigenous elements. It is likely that the Meitei as distinct ethnic, linguistic, cultural and social entity was formed in Manipur valley which was a melting pot of culture. "The Kuki tribes of Manipur are a branch of the great Kuki Chin family of people. They are linguistically related to Meiteis. Ptolemy's Tildade is identified with the Kukis by Gerini; and Kukis were included among the Kiratas. Kuki is a generic terminology. Some Kuki tribes perhaps the Chothe, Maring, Anal, etc. migrated in Manipur hills in the pre-historic times along with or after the Meitei advent in Manipur valley. Greater migration occurred in the 18th century onwards due to the great Kuki exodus which affected the demographic landscape of the hills of Manipur and adjoining areas, said, Gangmumei Kabui.

National & International News

Senior Taliban leader arrested in Pakistan

ANI Lahore, Jan. 30: Pakistan's Sindh Rangers Chief Major Gen Bilal Akbar disclosed on Friday about the arrest of a senior Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader in a raid by the paramilitary force.

According to the Dawn, his announcement was made to establish his claim about the success by the

paramilitary forces in restoring peace to some extent in Karachi, however, he rejected the idea of direct role in governance, saying "it's not our job". "We are here with a purpose. Our job is to provide security and enforce law. Governance is not our job," he said.

The Rangers Chief stressed on the role of his force, the "successful results" achieved and challenges of the Karachi

operation.

"Even political parties have recognised the fact that the ratio of crime in Karachi has gone incredibly down due to this operation. We have busted criminal gangs and arrested a number of assassins and dozens of militants during the operation which led to peace in the city. Only recently we have arrested a key leader of Taliban who was operating

under three fake identities. His arrest is a big achievement and it suggests our strong ground intelligence and operational capability," the Rangers Chief was quoted as saying.

The Rangers DG shared two names - Dawood Mehsood and Bilal Mehsood - of the Taliban leader who had multiple identities to deceive law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

6 injured in suicide attack on army facility in Pak

PTI Karachi, Jan. 29: A Taliban suicide bomber today rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the gate of an army facility in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, injuring at least six persons including two children.

A home-made bomb was used in the blast that occurred near Zhob Cant

area, injuring four personnel as well as two children, security sources were quoted as saying by The Express Tribune.

The suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into the gate of the military compound, Dunya News reported, adding that the intensity of the blast spread fear and panic among residents.

Friday prayers were going on in a nearby mosque near the compound at the time of the blast, sources said. Heavy contingents of law enforcement agencies rushed to the scene following the incident to cordon off the area. The injured were shifted to Civil Hospital Zhob. The frequency of targeted attacks on policemen has increased in the

troubled province of Balochistan. Earlier this month, a suicide bomber blew himself outside a police centre in Quetta's satellite town area, killing 15 people, including 12 policemen.

Yesterday, four police personnel were killed in Quetta by suspected Taliban militants at a gas station in Satellite Town.

Centre criticises Rahul Gandhi for joining Hyderabad hunger strike

ANI New Delhi, Jan. 30: The Centre on Saturday criticised Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi for joining the mass hunger strike at the University of Hyderabad campus to express solidarity with hunger-striking students over the suicide of Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula.

"The Congress, Communist and other parties are trying to make it a political issue forgetting that nine such incidents took place during the Congress regime, he never bothered to go there. Now, they are shedding crocodile tears to gain political mileage, polluting atmosphere of Universities" Union Urban Development Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu told ANI.

"This is a part of their anti-Modi campaign. All this is cheap politics," he added.

Naidu further said that the Government of India has constituted a commission of enquiry headed by a former judge of Allahabad High Court.

"Let the enquiry commission complete its job and let us know the truth behind the suicide, so that the preventive action can be taken for the future," he added.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi also accused the Congress vice-president of attempting to make the University "a shelter of caste politics". "Rahul Gandhi is trying to make the University campus a shelter of caste

politics. But, this won't be successful. This is done for political mileage. It won't benefit him in anyway," he added.

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi today joined the mass hunger strike at the Hyderabad University campus to express solidarity with the students protesting against the suicide of Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula who would have turned 27 today.

The Hyderabad Central University (HCU) changed its interim vice-chancellor late Friday night, as Dr Vipin Srivastava went on leave just hours before Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi reached the university.

Interim VC Vipin Srivastava went on a leave for four days and in his absence, M Periasamy, the next senior-most professor, will take charge.

7.0 magnitude quake rocks Russia's eastern peninsula

ANI Moscow, Jan 30: A strong earthquake measuring 7.0 on the richter scale hit Russia's far eastern Kamchatka peninsula on Saturday, the US Geological Survey said.

The quake hit 106 kilometres north of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, the capital city of Russia's Kamchatka Region, Russian Television network reports.

There have been no immediate reports of serious damage or casualties.

Terrified shoppers quickly evacuated one of the local malls when people felt tremors from the quake.

One militant killed in Jammu and Kashmir encounter

Agencies Srinagar, Jan. 30: A militant was killed in a gunfight with the security forces in Kashmir's Kupwara district on Saturday, Police said.

The 28 Rashtriya Rifles and special operations group (SOG) of state police launched an operation against militants in Dardpora (Lolab) area of Kupwara district yesterday (Friday). "...one militant has been killed so far," a police official said here.

"Initial reports said two to three militants were hiding in the area. The operation is still going on."

One militant killed in an encounter & arms & ammunitions recovered in Kupwara (J&K). Search operations underway.

BKU to block Delhi-Dehradun national highway on Feb 1

PTI Muzaffarnagar, Jan 30: Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) activists would block the Delhi Dehradun National Highway at Nawla village on Monday demanding dues and upward revision of cane price.

BKU President Naresh Tikait, addressing a BKU panchayat at the headquarters in Sisoli near here last evening, appealed to his followers to reach the spot on February 1 for blocking the highway.

He said that the activists would launch a procession from Sisoli to Nawla village for the agitation.

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