

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, June 21, 2016

On shaky grounds

What the 6.8 magnitude earthquake early this year failed to topple, the increasing rigidity of opposing stands on the three Bills passed by the state legislative assembly is most likely to achieve. The inexplicable impasse arising out of the difference in interpretations of the provisions of the Bills have made the society to almost grind to a halt, with almost routine activities becoming uncertain and difficult, and with it, the temperament and indiscernible suspicions have risen. A group of like minded individuals belonging to different faiths and regions of the state came together through a social media site and submitted memorandums to both the opposing groups to come together and iron out the differences across the table, while a memorandum was also submitted to the state government to initiate the much needed dialogue and mediate on the contentious issue threatening to irrevocably tear the fragile social fabric of the society. Surprisingly, both the opposing parties have expressed their readiness to enter into a dialogue / debate / discussion as the case may warrant, but have not been intimidated for the same from any authority as yet. The initiative has been appreciated from all quarters, and by the looks of it, holds promise for a positive turnaround from the present sense of doom and gloom pervading in the society. That the incessant disruptions to normalcy have affected the people of the state wherever they are, and are about to reach the tipping point is a foregone conclusion. One point of caution though - the initiative should not be allowed to flounder and fade away as it will only stoke the fire of separatist interests amongst the protestors on both sides. As it is, there is a perceptible shift from the real issue of creating a mechanism which will ensure the protection of the rights and interests of the indigenous people of the state. There should also be a positive motive to the whole exercise from both the parties as any suspicion on either side of the intentions of the talk/discussion will prove the whole hard work an exercise in futility. The whole effort is easier said than done, for with any contentious issue, there will be hardliners holding their grounds, unwilling to concede and consider any other alternatives. A thorough knowledge of the issue in contention is a must, and for things to move in the right direction, resource persons with in-depth knowledge about the customs, cultures and history of the different communities needs to be consulted and get involved in the process which will be long and tedious. With the state government failing to keep the trust of every group in the state, the present initiative presents the only and plausible alternative to the protracted issue with the grim prospect of tearing up the state and its history beyond repair or redemption. The implementation might not be perfect or acceptable to everyone, but the approach is one in the right direction and the society as a whole must come together and support the effort for a better future. We cannot allow the unwarranted hatred and delusional past shape our future. We have to leave a society more tolerant, understanding and better than the one we are experiencing. We owe that much to our children.

National News

1 dead, 3 injured in firing at Bhajanpura

ANI
New Delhi, June 21: At least one person was killed and three others injured after an unidentified person opened fire at Bhajanpura area of New Delhi on Tuesday. A biker, who was supposedly the main target, was shot dead, while his son, a tea-shop owner, sustained injuries apart from two other passerbys and were admitted to the GTB Hospital for treatment. According to sources, property dispute is said to be the cause of the firing. The police have reached the spot and investigations are currently underway.

Top LeT militant arrested

PTI
Srinagar, June 21: A top Lashkar-e-Toiba commander has been arrested by security forces from Kupwara district of north Kashmir, police said today. Abu Ukasha, also known as Hanzullah, was apprehended by security forces during an operation in Sogam area of Kupwara last evening, a police official said. He said on Ukasha's disclosure, the security forces launched a search operation in the nearby forests to track down another LeT militant Abu Bakar. The search operation was still in progress when reports last came in. Ukasha, a resident of Pakistan, is being questioned for information about the militant network in north Kashmir region where he was active for several years now, the official said.

WHENEVER YOU SEE CONSTRUCTION AND MINING EQUIPMENTS, JUST THINK OF US

A SOLUTION FOR EVERY CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT



Automobile Engineering Works-1
R K WORKSHOP
New Checkon Road, Purana Rajbari
Imphal East,
Manipur - 795 001

ALL KINDS OF SPARE PARTS AVAILABLE
AFTER SALES SERVICE TO YOUR SATISFACTION

Authorised dealer **BEML Limited**
(A Government of India Mini Ratna Company under Ministry of Defence)

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail: imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (0)

LOCATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY

By- Siamchingthang Tungpa

Conflicts in Manipur tended to center around land. Land is a valuable asset and a source of identity. Due to its economic, social, and emotional importance, land is also an important source of power. Perceived threats to security, livelihoods or identity can mobilize people to engage in conflict (United Nations 2012). However, apart from land, there are other causes of conflict. Land is often used interchangeably with territory. Territory is land that has been identified and claimed by a person or people. Its contents include terrain, flora and fauna, resources and human inhabitants and their ways of life (Knight 1982: 517). The territory is the product of human agency, and this agency is usually referred to as territoriality (Penrose 2002: 278-279). The concept of territoriality encompasses not just geographic space but also mechanisms of authority and rights. Territory is a crucial component of ethnicity because the ethnic group is usually attached to a specific territory. Territorial attachments and people's willingness to fight for territory appear to have much less to do with the material value of land and much more to do with symbolic role the land plays in constituting people's identities and providing a sense of security and belonging (Walter 2006: 288). Thus the territory lies somewhere between nature and culture, in a dual dimension that is both material (geographic) and ideological (Mellac 2010: 123). The spatial distribution of ethnic groups can affect both the capability and the legitimacy of how ethnic groups mobilize for political action. The spatial distribution has four broad settlement patterns: concentrated majority, concentrated minority, urban groups, and dispersed groups. The concentrated groups live almost exclusively in a single region. They are either minorities (less than 50 per cent) or majorities (equal to or greater than 50 per cent). The urban groups are those concentrated in one or several towns or cities while the dispersed groups are those whose members are scattered across many regions. According to Monica Toft's study the urban groups are endowed with the highest capability for political action followed by the concentrated majorities, while the capability of the concentrated minorities are indeterminate and the weakest for the dispersed groups (2001: 9-10). Intermixed groups are less likely to be in a state of all-out war than those that are territorially separated from one another. Territorial claims and self-determination claims are more difficult to invoke when groups are widely dispersed and intermixed with

each other. In such situations, group mobilization around issues such as civil or group rights and economic access is likely to be more prevalent (Reilly and Reynolds 1999: 15). According to May Lim et al (2007: 1541-42) "highly mixed regions do not engage in violence, and neither do well-segregated groups ... In highly mixed regions, groups of the same type are not large enough to develop strong collective identities, or to identify public spaces as associated with one or another cultural group. They are neither imposed upon nor impose upon other groups, and are not perceived as a threat to the cultural values or social/political self-determination of other groups. Partial separation with poorly defined boundaries fosters conflict. Violence arises when groups are of a size that they are able to impose cultural norms on public spaces, but where there are still intermittent violations of these rules due to the overlap of cultural domains. When groups are larger than the critical size, they typically form self-sufficient entities that enjoy local sovereignty. Hence, we expect violence to arise when groups of a certain characteristic size are formed, and not when groups are much smaller or larger than this size ... Geography is an important aspect of the dimensions of social space."

Territory is invariably tied to the ethnic group's identity. Control over territory means a secure identity (Toft 2001: 3). Ethnic groups will seek to rule territory in which they are geographically concentrated, especially if that region is an historic homeland. They will show little interest in controlling territory when they are either widely dispersed, or are concentrated only in cities. For ethnic groups, territory is often a defining attribute of a group's identity, inseparable from its past and vital to its continued existence as a distinct group (Smith 1986: 22-31). The territory becomes a homeland because members of an ethnic group share similar obligations for its protection and because it defines who "we" are (Goemans 2006: 27).

The territory that specifies group membership is defined by four focal principles: natural frontiers, common culture, prior historical formation, and cartography (Goemans 2006: 232). Thus a homeland is a special category of territory: it is not an object that can be exchanged, but an indivisible attribute of group identity. This feature explains why ethnic groups rationally view the right to control their homeland as a survival issue, regardless of a territory's objective value in terms

of natural or man-made resources. Homeland control ensures that a group's language can be spoken, its culture expressed, and its faith practiced (Toft 2001: 6-7). Territory is accepted as a "source of conflict" and a "facilitating condition for conflict" (Diehl 1991). The first approach sees geography as a source of conflict because territory is an indivisible issue, which makes disputes over territory likely to escalate into violent conflict (Fearon 1995). Geography can be the motivation for fighting. It can also provide opportunities for fighting in civil war. Lichbach (1995, 159) emphasizes geographic proximity as an important factor that fosters coordination. In doing so the essay examines the significance of location and distribution of ethnic groups in sustaining and compounding politicization of ethnicity and conflict in Manipur.

With land area of 22,327 sq km, Manipur consists of two geographical regions: the hill and the plain (valley). The hill region occupies about 90 per cent (20,089 sq km) of the land while the plain region constitutes just about 10 per cent (2,238 sq km). There are differences in land use patterns between the two regions. In the plain region, settlements account for more than 10 per cent of the area whereas for the hill region settlements account for less than 1 per cent of the area. Agricultural land in plain region is more than 40 per cent of the area, while for the hill region it is less than 2 per cent.

The hill region is predominantly inhabited by the Nagas and the Thadoukukis and the Zomis, while the plain region is predominantly inhabited by the Meiteis and the Meitei-Muslims. The Nagas reside the mountains of north while the Zos peoples reside in the mountains of south (see, Arora and Kipgen 2012). The permanent cultivation is prevalent in plain region while terrace and jhuming/shifting cultivation is practiced in the hill region. Thus, ethnic groups occupy a distinct territory in Manipur.

Manipur has a population of about 2.7 million (2011 India's Census). The plain region is home to about 62 per cent of the total population, the rest, about 38 per cent, live in the hill region. As a result, the plain region is thickly populated with a density of about 733 persons per sq km as against 54 persons per sq km in the hill region. Meiteis and other non-tribal groups constitute about 66.57 per cent of total population. The Nagas constitute about 18.7 per cent, while Kukis constitute about 15.71 per cent (1991 India's Census). They are officially recognized as the

schedule tribes, and 92.4 per cent of the scheduled tribes' populations live in the hill region, the rest (8 per cent) lives in the plain region (2001 India's Census). Meiteis and Meitei-Muslims are denied the benefits given to the scheduled tribes since they are considered more advanced. There are various types of land ownership. In the hill region, most land is managed and used communally according to the traditional practices, while in the plain region land is privately owned. In order to bring about uniformity in distribution of land, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 was enacted by the India's parliament. But it is effective only in the plain region only. The Act prohibits the transfer of land belonging to the scheduled tribes to the non-scheduled tribes like the Meiteis. It says, "no transfer of land by a person who is a member of scheduled tribes shall be valid unless—(a) the transfer is to another member of scheduled tribes; or (b) where the transfer is to another person who is not a member of any such tribes, it is made with the previous permission in writing of deputy commissioner provided that the deputy commissioner shall not give such permission unless he has secured the consent thereto of the district council within whose jurisdiction the land lies; or (c) the transfer is by way of mortgage to a co-operative society."

The purported reason is to protect the land owned by the scheduled tribes from encroachment by the non-scheduled tribes. With the passage of time, it has become a bone of contention between the scheduled tribes and the non-scheduled tribes. Since the Meiteis and the Meitei-Muslims are not recognized as the scheduled tribes they cannot buy and own land, and permanently settle in the hill region whereas the Nagas or the Zomis being the scheduled tribes can settle in the plain region. As a result, the hill region is exclusively reserved for them whereas the plain region is open to all. Thus, the land-and-people relationship is extremely unequal (see, Oinam 2003). This is unacceptable to the Meiteis and the Meitei-Muslims, however, the Nagas and the Zos people want to maintain the status quo. The Nagas and the Kukis fear that if the Meiteis and other non-scheduled tribes are allowed to buy and own land in the hill they will lose the ownership of their traditional land. And yet, they are worried that the state government would try to amend the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 legislation to cover the hill region.

(To be contd.)

Contd. from page 1

PM says Yoga provides health assurance with Zero-spending.....

In Uttar Pradesh, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh participated in Yoga session along with thousands others in Lucknow this morning. Thousands of Yoga camps are being organised at various districts in the state where Yoga lovers have gathered with much enthusiasm to learn and perform Yogasanas for betterment of their health and spirit. It started raining heavily in Lucknow and in several other districts since early this morning which somewhat disrupted the programme of International Yoga Day. But even the heavy downpour could not deter the Yoga lovers to perform various Asana which they did under covered places instead of open space of KD Singh Babu Stadium of Lucknow. News is pouring in from all over the state of UP including Bijnore, Varanasi, Kanpur, Meerut, Agra and Allahabad among other places that people in lakhs of number are heartedly taking part in Yoga sessions.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the main functions were held at MA Stadium in Jammu and Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar. Minister of State in PMO

Jitendra Singh participated in the event at Jammu. Jammu and Kashmir Ministers Bali Bhagat, Chandra Prakash Ganga, Jammu MP Jugul Kishor Sharma were present on the occasion.

In Himachal Pradesh the Yoga Day was celebrated with full enthusiasm. Several Yoga camps were organised throughout in the state. In the Palampur town BJP MP Shanta Kumar while in Dharmsala BJP MP Anurag Thakur took part in the yoga camps.

In Assam, International Yoga Day is being celebrated across the state with much enthusiasm. Chief Minister Sarbanand Sonowal performed yoga at Majuli in presence of Health minister and Chief Secretary. Mr Sonowal said that yoga helps in creating a good body and mind.

Health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that state government will set up Yoga Vikash Kendra in each block of the state. Along with Yoga, seminars, various competitions and blood donation camps have been organized today.

Various school students, government officials, police and para military personnel, senior citizens along with several ministers participated in the yoga day in the state.

In Goa, main programme was organised in Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium at Bambolim near Panaji which was attended by Chief Minister Lakshmanikant Parsekar among others.

Yoga is the greatest gift the country has given the world, said Puducherry Lt. Gov Kiran Bedi. It is the greatest gift that we can give ourselves, she said. Ms. Bedi was speaking after participating in the mass Yoga programme in Puducherry. She thanked PM Modi for taking up the cause of Yoga. Yoga is that unites humanity and pave way for World Peace.

In Chennai, all prominent public places like the famous Marina Beach, Elliott's Beach and parks witnessed mass scale yoga practices in view of the International Yoga Day. Union Minister Gen VK Singh inaugurated the yoga session at the Elliott's

Beach, Besant Nagar.

The southern area commanding officer of Indian Army Lt Gen Jagbir Singh led his troops to stage an impressive yoga session at the Defence Golf Course in the city. The Navy, the students of Madras Medical College, Stanley Medical College and many other educational institutions are also organizing yoga events and public awareness rallies. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Governor ESL Narasimhan took part in a yoga programme specially held at Rajbhavan in Hyderabad. Union Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya took part at a mass yoga demonstration programme held at Sanjeevaiah Park on the banks of the Hussain Sagar.

Several striking images of complex Yoga postures including Surya Namaskar, illuminated the UN Headquarters as the world body gears up to celebrate the International Yoga Day. India's Permanent Mission to the UN in association with UN Department of Public Information will commemorate the day at the world body headquarters today.