

Editorial

Imphal, Friday, June 24, 2016

Macabre messiahs

Is it the time of the year, the sweltering weather or the apprehensions and the uncertainties that has been slowly but perceptibly creeping into our everyday lives like an unwelcome guest staying on for dinner that has everybody visibly agitated and on the edge? Amidst the increasingly hardening stances of the two diametrically opposing parties to the three Bills passed in the house of the state legislative assembly last year which has the frightening potential of tearing the fragile social fabric beyond repair, yet another unfortunate issue adding fuel to the increasing social tension is a video doing the rounds of the Anjuman Islahi Maa-sarrah Aim, Lilong more popularly known as Anjuman meeting out punishment to a muslim lady alleged to have eloped with her lover from a different community. More than the brutal physical beatings and abuse being hurled at the cringing figure writhing in apparent agony, it is the relentless coaxing and extreme verbal instigations by the person wielding the rod, even while putting his everything into every strike he could lay on the hapless lady was abusing and denouncing the faith of the lady's lover. The hatred and vindictiveness of the person who is obviously a religious authority, at least within the organisation is palpable. The Anjuman, by the way has already been in the eye of the storm for the death of a person who was picked up by the organisation on May 4 this year in connection with an allegation of theft. Incidentally, a video clip of the Anjuman punishing the person had gone viral in a social media site.

Faith or religion is an intensely personal matter and should remain so. Forcing one's beliefs and pedagogy on another tantamount to coercion, and while the enforcer in the video clip can be heard threatening the lady with death as, according to him, islam sanctions various grave forms of punishment- even death- to non-believers or 'Kafirs', the venomous declarations and vindictive attitude caught the attention of every viewer. While it is beyond the purview of this article to argue the validity of his statements, the hatred and evident contempt he spews for another faith brings up the question of the much contended question of religious intolerance or respect for another belief. The rising religious fanaticism does not apply or is representative only of the Anjuman of course.

Rationality dictates that every religion is based on love, righteousness, discipline, sympathy, empathy and tolerance- not necessarily in that order. There has been a rising trend of instances where intolerance, ignorance, vigilantism, violence and impatience have come to manifest at the slightest provocation. Hatred, cynicism and skepticism will lead us nowhere except towards death, destruction and damnation for everyone. We need to reign in our impulses and control our urges while displaying more empathy, understanding and tolerance for the beliefs and opinions of others. There are more humane and civilized ways of ironing out differences and misunderstandings. There are already more than enough messiahs of hatred amidst us. It is time to learn to live and let others live as well.

An Open Letter to the Concerned Leaders

Dear Concerned Leaders,

At the outset, I'd like to appreciate you for your intervention into the crisis Manipur has been going through; and it is even more remarkable that your gathering was not a typical 'All-Manipur' convention that would include only the Meiteis.

Nobody has ever admitted that the people have a problem but thanks to your creative and intellectual involvement, it is now commendable that you have, in your own words, 'recognised' it. For such a definitive consultation programme, as gratitude, I'd suggest you should meet next time at the original Classic Hotel, which is essentially more posh than the Hotel Imphal by Classic or whatever the latter's name is.

Let me also join you kindly in resolving that 'misunderstanding and miscommunication occurred as a result of the current situation'. Previously we used to coexist with fraternal bonds, based on our eternal spirit of 'chingmee-tamee', yet the current situation has resulted in grave confusion amongst us. As your follower I'd also like to share a secret: when you talk about the "engineered conflict" by vested elements for political gains I cannot help myself but curse because it is so true and shows the innocence of the masses in Manipur. How I wish the problems vanish as soon as you make another acknowledgement or resolution!

All of us have a shared history and a shared destiny but how do we, as a Meitei I beg, make the Meitei, Naga and Kuki leaders—particularly those who were not present in the gathering and those who are not your old colleagues who go everywhere along with you with 'shared' olive branches—understand this fact about the holy

relationships that all of us share? And if we solve this problem, how are the civil society organisations and NGOs going to survive? But I believe these matters would not be a problem as long as you are guiding us.

On a totally different level, as you resolved 'to refrain from disturbing the education of children for any demands', the next two days have been a 48-hour general strike against the legal discrimination of a leader but it affects everybody and not only the students, so it's tolerable.

Meanwhile, congratulations to the formation of the new women-centric group, The Women Solidarity Forum for Peaceful Co-existence, what an ideal name! Please accept my sincere compliments. It is a cliché still unity is strength. From my scant knowledge of organisational behaviour it would be great if someone from any of the existing CSOs and NGOs with a working experience of 350-500 years could lead the organisation.

Some people say that Manipuri leaders, or who aspire to be leaders, tend to be incestuous and have genetic defects that hinder them from getting trust from the people. They say this is evident in 'mainstream' leaders, who would even sell their spouses and children to amass wealth from everywhere they can.

How can people say anything they want? For that matter, you are not after wealth but occupied with your passion to live for a cause and that has been our inspiration. And how can they speak about your past and incestuous families when your impeccable leadership qualities are a legacy of a civilisation that dates back to two millennia?

Ignore them but these same people do believe that indigenous people should discuss things like human beings just like you have accepted and acknowledged and resolved and agreed and declared and endorsed. As of now we are behaving only like a troop of monkeys at the Sajenthong right out of the Mahabali grove and existentially torn apart between the decision to hop towards Konung Mamang or Keishampat. Never mind now, for we have leaders, all sorts of your kind of leaders to show us the way and sometimes the number is overwhelming. Take politics, we have 60 elected leaders including a chief minister who is still going strong in his third term. Only stupid people say we have no leader.

Take the civil society. In each locality we have two leaders by default: the Meira Paibi and leikai-club general secretaries. Besides, we have fraternal organisations, student organisations, ethnic organisations, community organisations, women organisations, political organisations, human rights organisations, schoolchildren's parents' organisations, dehumanised people's organisations, 500,000 joint action committees and another 300,000

joint committees without 'action'—all of them with a competent leader at the helm of affairs.

We have also well-established civil society organisations though ironically that are the least civil, with each organisation representing a specific community but nevertheless administered by capable leaders, who are as kind, empathic and concerned as you are.

In 2005, the United Committee Manipur had published a survey on the 'Influx of Migrants in Manipur'; albeit it is encouraging that you also endorse 'proper survey and fact finding'; after all even the 2011 Census is now a half decade old. While rectifying the grand historical and policy errors, I also request the newspaper/s who report/s your story or your PR writer to rectify the style of writing a person's name. I have never heard of, for instance, Ema Ramani but I do have of Ema Thokchom Ramani from the Nupi Samaj or the All Manipur Reformation Development Samaj. Lastly, I have just one little 'mortal' problem with you. I consider the Manipur Gorkha community as Manipuri as anybody in the state but they are not a citizen of Manipur. I must also add that they cannot be a citizen of a state but of India, the country; you like it or not. Please do share some concern for the senior advocates and professors from Manipur University who were present in your gathering. The State might poke fingers at their back for being politically dumb.

To conclude, I believe, with your naive political correctness, the governments of Manipur and India will listen to your clarion call. As the Bible says, obedience is better than sacrifice. May the force be with you! Regards, Kapil Arambam

National & International News

1 more militant killed in Kupwara, IED detected

PTI Srinagar, June 24: An unidentified militant was killed in a gunbattle with security forces in north Kashmir's Kupwara today, the seventh ultra to be killed in three encounters in the district since yesterday.

The fresh encounter broke out in Petha Wadar forest area of Handwara this morning, an army

official said. A search operation was launched by a joint team of police and army after receiving specific inputs about the presence of militants in the area. The hiding militants fired upon them, triggering an encounter in which the militant was killed.

He said the operation was on when reports last came in. Today's encounter is the third in

Kupwara district since yesterday in which a total of seven militants have been killed so far. Yesterday, three militants were killed in an encounter in Dobwan forests of Lolab area of the district. In another gunfight last evening in Waterkhani forests of Drugmulla area of the district, another three militants were killed by the security forces.

Meanwhile, security forces today averted a tragedy after detecting and defusing an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) here. An IED weighing five kgs, planted in a rice cooker, was detected by police near a flyover at Hyderpora in Srinagar this morning, a police official said. He said the IED was destroyed by a bomb disposal squad.

UN Security Council 'Strongly Condemns' North Korea Missile Launches

United States, June 24: The UN Security Council on Thursday rebuked North Korea for its latest missile tests, calling for redoubled enforcement of sanctions imposed after Pyongyang's fourth nuclear test earlier this year.

The council "strongly condemned" the back-to-back June 21 intermediate-range missile tests, characterizing them as "grave violations" of a string of resolutions dating to 2006. "The members of the Security

Council deplore all DPRK ballistic missile activities noting that such activities contribute to the DPRK's development of nuclear weapons delivery systems and increase tension," the Security Council said in a statement.

North Korea's formal name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "The members of the Security Council further regretted that the DPRK is diverting resources to the pursuit of ballistic missiles while

DPRK citizens have great unmet needs," the statement said. In calling for redoubled enforcement of sanctions, the Security Council urged member states to report on concrete measures they have taken in that regard. The sanctions — the toughest yet against North Korea — were imposed after it conducted a fourth nuclear test on January 6, followed by a long-range rocket test February 7. After a series failures in recent

months, North Korea tested two intermediate range Musudan missiles on Wednesday, one of which flew 400 kilometers into the Sea of Japan (East Sea). North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un boasted that the tests significantly bolstered the North's preemptive attack capabilities in the Pacific. "We have the sure capability to attack in an overall and practical way the Americans in the Pacific operation theater," the KCNA news agency quoted him as saying.

Tornado and hailstorm kill 98; rescuers search rubble

Yancheng, June 24: Rescuers in eastern China searched Friday for survivors of a tornado and hailstorm that killed at least 98 people as it swept over a city's outskirts, destroying buildings, smashing trees and flipping vehicles on their roofs.

The tornado hit a densely populated area of farms and factories Thursday near the city of Yancheng in Jiangsu province, about 800 kilometers (500 miles) south of Beijing. Jiangsu Governor Shi Taifeng said Friday that the death toll had risen to 98 people, with 800 others injured, according to the official China News Service. Earlier, the state-run Xinhua News Agency had said 200 people were critically injured.

On Friday, rescuers worked to carry injured villagers into ambulances and deliver food and water to others. Xinhua reported, although state

broadcaster CCTV said that roads were blocked with trees, downed power lines and other debris. Heavy rain and the possibility of further hailstorms and more tornadoes complicated rescue efforts.

In badly hit Xintu village, survivors grieved over lost relatives and surveyed the damage wrought on their homes. "The people inside tried to run outside, but the wind was too strong so they couldn't," villager Wang Shuqing told an Associated Press reporter. "My family members were all inside, they all died. The police then came and took the bodies out, I can't bear it."

The disaster has been declared a national-level emergency, and on a trip to Uzbekistan, Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered central government bodies to provide all necessary assistance.

Jaitley says wait for full results of Brexit referendum

PTI Beijing, June 24: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley today declined to comment on the current trends of 'Brexit' and said that he would prefer to wait till the full results are out. "I think when the counting is on and you have close margin of results coming in you can not expect me to comment at this state," he said, adding that he would rather wait for the full results.

Jaitley was replying to a question on how concerned India is about the 'Brexit' results at a business seminar. Counting is underway today across the UK after millions of Britons cast their votes in the historic referendum that would decide whether the country will stay in or leave the European Union (EU). Both sides of the campaign have

urged the nearly 46,499,537 registered voters, including 1.2 million British Indians, for a big turnout as Prime Minister David Cameron made his final appeal to "get out there and vote Remain" and reject the "untruths" of the camp in favour of 'Brexit' or Britain's exit from the EU.

The Finance Minister yesterday began his five-day China visit by meeting top Chinese bankers and wealth fund managers pitching for more investments in India's infrastructure sector. Soon after his arrival in Beijing, Jaitley met Bank of China Chairman Tian Guoli and addressed a closed roundtable meeting of heads of sovereign wealth funds, institutional investors and banks.

Maoists blow up building, torch vehicles in Jharkhand

PTI Jamshedpur, June 24: Maoists blew up a guest house of the Jharkhand forest department and set afire eight vehicles of a construction company at Hurungda in Seraikela-Kharswan district today. A group of Maoists came to the spot in the wee hours and blew up a forest department's guest house lying abandoned for years till renovation began ten months ago, before setting ablaze eight vehicles of a construction company working in nearby area, Superintendent of Police Underjeet Mahatha said. Some leaflets of the Maoists were found on the spot. The incident occurred when

most of the security personnel, deployed in the area for the past several months, left for an anti-Maoist operation last night, Mahatha said. The company has been engaged in construction of canals under Suru dam project. Mahatha said major portion of the canal was completed under tight security arrangements by the district administration. The construction work of the project remained stalled for decades, but the administration has decided to complete it by providing adequate security, he said. A hunt was launched in the nearby jungles to flush out the Maoists involved in the incident, he said.

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