

Short Story

Cunning Rojit and the barber

By: Ashinikumar Mutum

The protest for introduction of Inner Line Permit system reached its peak here in valley district of Manipur. And anti ILPS protest at Hill area is creating serious impact in hill districts of Manipur. No matter the ILPS protest continue, outsiders still continue to dominate at various works sectors like running saloon, mistry, labours and almost all trading activities in the state. There is no dearth of work of outsiders especially from state like Bihar, UP and neighbouring Bangladesh. I don't know how it works or how they are unable to dominant in the work space where indigenous Meitei people could have replace it. May be they have something special quality to convince the people that some of the job like running a hair cutting saloon is hard to be replaced by local people.

Some people are very much concern about the ILPS but many among us still does not understand the urgent needs for the kind of legislation. This is perhaps the reason that people still encourage outsiders run shop particularly the hair cutting saloon. Well this is about a saloon run by a Bihari somewhere at Meitei Leikai in Imphal. 10 customers is the minimum in his saloon in a day. The Barber Rajesh Mishra is popular in the area and almost all the people of the locality supported him. He stayed at a rented house, about 200 meters from the place he run his saloon. When his saloon was closed for few weeks some months back for getting married at his home town, people of the area missed him very much as he is the only one friendly and experience in hair cutting.

It was 3 months back he returned home with his new bride. He was so careful that he never allowed coming his wife to his shop. So he allowed her to stay indoor at his rented room when he went for work.

Rojit, a young guy of near 25 came every morning to the saloon and waited for some minutes. After seeing many customer in queue he asked how many more customer. Rajesh said, "Wait for some minutes there are around 12 customers waiting".

"Okay, I will come after some time", Rojit will leave and will never come back.

Next day too Rojit came the same timing in the morning and asked the saloon question. But as there are customers waiting in line he would leave saying that he would come back again.

For almost ten days Rojit came and asked about the customers and would go back without cutting his hair. And he never came back. Rajesh Mishra having experience about the situation in Manipur started worrying about his behaviour. He started worrying as there are news about militants targeting non locals. After coming across such behaviour of the youth, Rajesh narrated the whole story to his wife Meena.

"Dear, I am worried, one person aged about 25 always come and asked about the customers and went, I think he is waiting for a chance to attacked me", Rajesh told giving description of how the youth looks.

Meena said, "don't worry dear, I know that guy, he stays very near to our house, he will do no such kind of thing".

"Where?", Rajesh asked.

"See that house", Meena pointed at the southern side and said, "that is his house and his name is Rojit".

"May be he wanted to cut his hair and perhaps he is in a hurry", Meena said.

Meena also said to her husband that the person always supported them whenever somebody talk against them.

"OK ok I will cut his hair if he comes tomorrow", Rajesh said and both went to sleep.

The next day too Rajit came and started asking the same question. There were many customers but Rajesh Mishra told him that he can skipped other customers waiting.

"No no bhaya, its all right I will cut when you a are free", Rojit answered and went.

It was almost 15 days that the similar thing happened. One day, after Rojit left due to emergency called for shutting of all shops, Rajesh had to close the saloon. He returned back very early. As he was returning to his rented room he saw Rojit going to his room. As he approached he again noticed his wife Meena greeting and welcoming the young chap inside his room.

Rajesh didn't said a word but slowly went at the side of his room and listened.

"Honey, he will come back only in the evening, we have a lot time to talk".

After Rajesh heard this Meena talking to the young guy, Rajesh was so angry that he want to cut Rojit into pieces. He then went back to his shop again thinking of telling the local meira paibi to let them know what exactly happen.

On the way he heard many people standing and shouting "We want ILPS".

National & International News

Jawan Dies In Northeast Unit, Army Denies Reports Of 'Mutiny'

New Delhi, May 15: A jawan of the Indian Army in a frontline unit in the Northeast has died, possibly of a heart attack, after the entire unit was sent on a 10 kilometre march. The incident sparked an angry outburst among 4-5 jawans in the area which resulted in a fight between soldiers and officers who were dealing with the situation. The Army has confirmed that this fight has resulted in injuries. In a statement to the media, the Indian Army has said, "A case of death of a jawan during routine

training activity has taken place in an infantry unit in the North East. It is NOT a case of any mutiny. The Jawan complained of chest pain prior to route march - was checked by unit MO (Medical Officer) and found fit. The jawan later collapsed during route march - was brought to the Field Ambulance where he succumbed." The Army statement was issued after reports emerged on social media of a "mutiny-like" situation involving officers and jawans in the area.

According to these reports, the 10-km march was a punishment drill which was ordered on the unit after a physical confrontation between a Captain and a jawan. In this clash, a Captain and three officers were badly injured. The Captain reportedly is in critical condition with skull injuries. Army Headquarters in Delhi, while confirming the death of a jawan in the subsequent 10-km march, have denied that any other individual has been seriously injured. The Army has also denied that

reinforcement units have moved into the area with the situation getting out of hand. In 2012, in another instance of indiscipline, soldiers of the Army attacked their officers in Nyoma in Ladakh in an incident that the Army had dismissed as a "scuffle in an artillery unit during field firing". However, subsequent reports revealed that soldiers in the unit went out of control after senior officers severely assaulted one of their colleagues and their Commanding Officer.

Heat wave grips Nagpur, throws life out of gear

ANI Nagpur, May 15: The people in Maharashtra's Nagpur city continue to bear the brunt of scorching heat as temperature soars to over 45 degrees Celsius.

"We are in distress. It is now even difficult to go out as you start sweating the moment you step out in the sun. It has become difficult to go outside. We don't even feel like going out of the AC or cooler fitted rooms," said Himesh Apte, a local resident. The roadside vendors and drinks kiosks have been doing brisk business as the people queue up to keep themselves hydrated in the sizzling heat.

Another resident, Subhash Gatonde, hoped for an early monsoon so that the people could get some respite from the excruciating heat.

"The weather is very torrid. We are hoping for monsoon to arrive soon," said Gatonde.

Nagpur sizzled under the torrid sun as the people were seen taking protective measures.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences has

attributed the hotter climate to the El Nino effect.

Suicide attacks at factory north of Baghdad kill 11 - police sources

Reuters Baghdad, May 15: Bomb attacks against a state-run cooking gas factory in Baghdad's northern outskirts on Sunday killed at least 11 people, including policemen, and wounded 21 others, police sources said. A suicide car bomb went off at the entrance of the facility in Taji at around 0600 local time (0300 GMT), allowing another vehicle carrying at least six attackers with explosive vests to enter the facility where they clashed with security forces, the sources said. A spokesman for Baghdad Operations Command said three of the facility's gas storages were set alight amid the violence before security forces were able to bring the situation under control.

4.4 magnitude quake strikes Nepal's Sindhupalchok district

Kathmandu, May 15: A fresh tremor of local magnitude 4.4 struck Nepal's Sindhupalchok district on Sunday morning. Nepal's National Seismological Centre (NSC) recorded the tremor as an aftershock of the last year's 7.6 earthquake that struck Barpak of Gorkha district, reports Himalayan Times.

The tremor was recorded at 4:30 a.m. and the epicentre was close to Ichok of the district, with its coordinates of given as 27.93°N, 85.50°E. National Seismological Centre has recorded more than 30,000 aftershocks in the country since last year's earthquake, but only 453 significant aftershocks were processed to alert the public.

Arunachal: EC defers bye-election to Kanubari Assembly Constituency

ANI Itanagar, May 15: The Election Commission has deferred the bye-election to Kanubari Assembly Constituency in Arunachal Pradesh which was scheduled to be held tomorrow. The enforcement of Model Code of Conduct in relation to the bye-election would remain in abeyance until further direction of Election Commission, informed the Chief Electoral Officer. The Supreme Court few days back

had passed stay order on the resignation matter of MLA Gabriel D. Wangsu thus dismissing the probability of the voting tomorrow. Gabriel's resignation was accepted by previous speaker Nabam Rebia in a controversial circumstance. He had alleged that he was made to resign under duress and had written to Governor seeking his intervention. He took the matter to the court and has been fighting a lengthy battle therein.

Contd. from previous issue

Reflections on the Conflicts of our Times : Attempt at Common Sense reading of the Manipur Experience

The suggestion would however remain as wishful thinking since the issue of Naga integration under one administrative roof is a very strong demand of the NSCN (IM) and their supporters. Naga civil society groups in Manipur believe it as an act of faith that the Naga National movement is inexorably connected with the unison of territory with identity. Sanjib Baruah, an Assamese intellectual once remarked on 'The emerging inclusivity of Naga identity with geography coming into clash with the territorially embodied identities of states like Assam and Manipur! For the Nagas, to bring together all the Nagas and the areas inhabited by them under one political roof is a driving force of the Nagas (Now there are opponents of this idea in Nagaland itself). The fundamental rights and aspirations of the Naga people as expounded by their leaders incorporate this fond belief. The constitution of the Naga National Council, the initiator of the Naga political struggle endorses this principle. Many prior agreements between the representatives of the Naga movement, and the officials of the Dominion of India in the wake of the Independence of India reflect this possibility.

"Naga integration implies explicitly that it is an issue of removing all the arbitrary boundaries created without the free and informed consent of the Naga people by the Government of British India, Burma and India. Therefore, for the integration of all Naga areas, under one political roof, the partition made in the past must be removed. The total geographical area of the land which is desired to be integrated is approximately 1,00,000 sq. Km. The division of their territory is one of the greatest wounds that has been inflicted on the Naga people by the power that is including the Naga opportunist elements who have more faith in the dominant system than the Naga people. It is clear that the Naga people did not decide to be part of Assam or Arunachal Pradesh or Manipur". (White paper on Naga Integration by Naga Hoho 2002).² Civil society groups of Nagas in

Manipur and Nagaland expressed deep sense of hurt when mass movements in the plains of Manipur were organized to oppose threats to the disintegration of the state, which they feared was being negotiated in the ongoing talks between the GoI and the NSCN (IM). In 1997, Nagas derided the Meetei lady, 'as it was purportedly organized on apprehension of the Manipur Territorial integrity in the light of the ongoing talks between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM). The Nagas of Manipur along with the rest of other Nagas have been combating the mighty India for the last 50 years for Naga sovereignty and this long struggle by shedding blood of thousands of men, women and children cannot be easily sacrificed for the sake of Mammoth territorial integrity. The Naga political struggle is not without historical facts. The voice of the Meiteis should not be allowed to prevail upon the settlement of 50 years long political struggle of the Nagas in any manner'. (M. Dili et al - Naga Territorial Integrity Vs Manipur Territorial Integrity 14-9-97).²

The tense dynamics of the ethnic relationships in Manipur and its contours are often defined by their very relationships with the Indian Government, for the Indian state is the ultimate arbiter and dispenser of ethnic justice. The future of the ethnoes in Northeast India seem to heavily lie with the decisions being made in the corridors of power in New Delhi. The equations of the proximity with and distance from the Centres of power therefore were critical factors in assessing the environment of distrust and mutual suspicion over moves and manoeuvres being made by the representatives of Indian authority, their nearness with respective political groups, and the very secretacies and hush-hush methods of the intent and actions of their higher officials. There seems to be no room for transparencies where the Central authority could be seen as being impartial and just in the eyes of the contending groups or ethnicities. Ethnic suspicions or distrust amongst

themselves were thus heightened by the seeming behaviour and actions of the Central Government. This moral universe which is being tensely watched by the ethnoes in NE-India does not seem to impact on the national political parties vying for power in the five yearly exercise of electoral politics. The rivalries between the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party, and their opposing views and attitudes over the peripheral others of the Northeast does not portend any kind of democratic justice over conflictual issues in the Northeast. For the North-easterners view themselves as equals in their relationship with the Centre, and a slight tilt in favour of one ethnos against other ethnoes is regarded as sheer favouritism. The NDA government is mistrusted as being nearer to the Nagas than to the others in the Northeast.

Anomalies of Incomparability - The Kukli Upheaval! Another second difficulty in the contemporary tensions of the day is the recent explosion of ethnic hostility and recurrence of state violence, with its deeper ramifications in all aspects of the life-world of the Manipur people. The decision of the February 6 public meeting to collectively declare that the people of Manipur belong to the same mother - Ima amatangi machanti, perhaps alluding to reference to the state as a common birthplace, or of the communities having been of common autochthonous origins, was no doubt a sentimental declaration. However, the declaration seemed to carry a painful burden of nation-memory, cherished more by the Meiteis of the valley, of having been continuously threatened of disaster, disintegration throughout the state's unfortunate history, that of invasions, or humiliations through defeat, or internal as well as external conspiracies out to destabilize the traditional equilibrium of the polity. The pre-colonial status of the state in the international community had a character and identity, constituted by the experience of collective participation of its varied citizenry, having fought

successfully against the imperial Burmese in the 18th century, and valiant sacrifices in defeat against the Western imperial power of the British in the 19th. This nation-memory forged by the experiences of the sacrifices of the pre-colonial ethnoes are not yet dimmed, but are being ruptured by factors of endogenous failures of contemporary distributive justice, as well as silent exogenous, sinister pressures to destabilize this hapless, corrupt post-colonial polity. Let us attempt to summarise the concrete evidence of this kind of rupture. Last August in 2015, the Manipur Legislative Assembly passed three bills, namely the Protection of Manipur Peoples Bill 2015, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh Amendment) Bill 2015, and the Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill 2015, as a result of prolonged agitation by the people in the valley, where one young school student was killed through police firing and more than 400 people were injured in the melee, and loss of public properties were unaccounted. Having learnt bitter historical experiences of immigrants becoming master of the land and government in Northeast states like Tripura and Sikkim, and having been informed about the complexities of demographic imbalances like in Assam, the Manipur civil organizations in the valley pursued implementations of safeguarding laws for the indigenous peoples, similar to the ones-enjoyed by Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Their slogan for a similar law began feverishly from 2012 when 32 organizations formed the Joint Committee for Inner Line Permit System in Manipur. They followed certain historical antecedents of that nature back to the 1980s when the students came into agreement on the demographic threat, acknowledged by the then ruling Congress Government, also re-endorsed and ratified the Central Government representatives when Manipur was under President's rule in 1994.

(To be contd.....)

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