

Editorial

Imphal, Thursday, May 26, 2016

Scouring the social scourge

Many moons have passed since the state was shocked into spontaneous indignation and abrupt action by an incredibly huge haul of drugs from the Imphal Tullihal Airport with indications of the connivance of a very influential and ruthless cartel. The incident proved to be the tipping point whence various other evidences and actual cache of drugs started to be unearthed, and along with it the evidence of involvement of the high and mighty became crystal clear. The euphoria of the public over the spurt in the security and intelligence activities in intercepting and apprehending the smugglers was short-lived as the rulers, in a frantic bid to erase the increasingly clear trail of the murky deals and dangerous liaisons, disbanded the Special Intelligence Unit which was making amazing headway into revealing the kingpin in the whole drug smuggling operations in the state. The incident also amply displayed the ruthless and vindictive character of the state government in no uncertain manner when it comes to protecting the self interest of those in power. The mockery of public opinion and sensitivity of the people have reached another level, and if the present is any indication, the once infuriated public have but forgotten the matter altogether. Perhaps those peddling power and pelf knew the pulse of the public way more than anticipated or expected, and that the perfunctory denials and pretence of concern was a studied ploy to lull the public anger, secure in the knowledge of the predictability and naivety of the common man.

Money mellows the minds of the cynics and the critics- or at least almost always. The likelihood of many a detractors and investigators having their objectives swayed by wads of currencies and incentives has kept the public on tenterhooks about the outcome of the whole disturbing drama. However, with the passage of time, the once horrifying incident has begun to be distanced from the sort public memory, and will eventually fade into oblivion. More frighteningly, those who were considered as parasites of the society poisoning the youths and destroying the future of the state will eventually shore up enough resources and manpower, probably the only way they ever knew, and emerge as social activists and self- projected philanthropists out to take the state towards progress and prosperity. There will always be a coterie of hangers on diligently following such affluent public enemies for the occasional leftover crumbs thrown their way to keep them suitably interested and tranquil.

If the public is to see positive changes, witness justice delivered and enable those harming the society to serve their just sentence, then it is time to realize that the power they are trying to fight against are the very power they have entrusted their representatives, and that it is ultimately in their hands to shape the destiny and the future of the society. The only golden rule one must follow to ensure that the invaluable universal suffrage is transformed into an enabling force, is to vote with the mind and not the heart. It is time to unleash the power of the common man and clear the scourge from the society for good.

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Uphill task getting steeper for

The Inner Line Permit System (ILPS) issue is the most important issue that should be seriously taken as the three bills passed by the assembly last year has created a significant divide amongst residents of the people living in the hills and the valley. The three bills were passed by the assembly August last year which the tribal community feels they are anti tribal should also be taken into account. Nine lost their lives in remonstrance against the bills passed by the assembly, bodies which still lay without their rituals being performed at Churachandpur. Sections of the majority Meitei community, demanding ST status while some of the same community opposing it, should also be taken into account. Manipur is inhabited by over 30 communities having distinct customs and languages. The BJP already has two MLAs in their booty and dissidence in the

congress may further heighten their tally by the next election, given their expertise in toppling governments, especially the small states as they are easy to disintegrate due their lesser number of elected representatives. Still then it would still be an uphill task getting ever steeper, if the RSS can on conveying proclamation of their own ideologies creating vertigo between their own sister organisations. The ILP, anti ILP, ST demand and AFSPA are the issues BJP Manipur needs to handle with utmost care. Differences between the BJP and RSS may prove dear, especially in Manipur where everyone is horrostruck with AFSPA, the army who is safeguarded by this act to cover up their illegitimate activities, ongoing ILP and anti ILP and ST demand may prove BJP's dream of getting more states in the northeast ineffectual.

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National News

Tripura Forest Minister declares to make state free of jhum, bamboo huts

ANI
Ambassa, May 26: Tripura Forest Minister Naresh Jamatia has said that the state could achieve the highest literacy rate in the country, but first it needs to get free from jhum cultivation, open defecation and bamboo huts. Speaking on the occasion of "Women's Role in Bringing Changes" by Indo German Development Cooperation (IGDC), the Forest Minister said till now there is a small section of people living in the forest areas who earn their living by practicing shifting cultivation or jhum and shifting cultivation is our enemy therefore, we have to make Tripura free from shifting cultivation. "First I said shifting cultivation less Tripura, second is bamboo hut free Tripura. We shall distribute free houses to everyone under the IAY (Indira Awaas Yojna) but just getting house is not enough, everyone has to make arrangements for earning in the land surrounding their house and IGDC along with ADC, Agriculture and various other departments will help for that. We are trying for bringing together 30 to 40 families in cluster villages so that we can provide them electricity, water etc. There is no crunch of fund but this will only be possible if the women come forward and participate in it," he added. More than three hundred women, belonging to the tribal community from remote areas, participated in the workshop organised on "Women's Role in Bringing Changes" by Indo

German Development Cooperation (IGDC) in assistance with Tripura Biodiversity Board at the Ambassa Panchayat Raj Training Institute here. Jamatia inaugurated the workshop in presence of Monika Datta Roy, Chairperson Tripura Commission for Women, Dr. A. K. Gupta, CEO and Project Director of IGDC and other dignitaries. Meanwhile, A. K. Gupta discussed on how under the IGDC project a big section women belonging to the tribal jhumia families got skill development training on various trade and through community participation. "planning and executing various self-employment schemes for value addition utilizing the locally available resources has not only started earning at their home places but are also saving the forest of Tripura by keeping themselves away from the traditional practice of jhuming which not only destroys forest and environment but also is not profitable," he said. Gupta said, "In Dhalai and North Tripura district we have gone for socio-economic development of 28,500 jhumia families under the IGDC project. Here not only male but right from the initiation of the project we have given much importance to empowerment of women". Gupta further said that they have provided various vocational training and in those training 46 percent of the trainees were women participants.

State News

Red Shield Division conduct literacy & awareness drive



PIBDEFENCE
Imphal, May 26: Noney Battalion under Red Shield Division welcomed back the students and teacher on 25 May 2016 at Battalion Headquarters. Noney who were sent for attending the Fourth International Convention held at IIT, Guwahati from 8th May to 15th May 2016 under the Literacy & Awareness Drive programme being undertaken for the betterment of the

local populace. The events held at IIT Guwahati constituted various cultural performances, intensive workshops, theatre performances and informative talks to name a few with the day starting with three hours of Yoga to calm the mind and body. The teacher & students were very grateful for this opportunity provided to them and said they will cherish this moment lifelong.

Monetary assistance to compassion grace orphanage, Senapati

PIBDEFENCE
Imphal, May 26: Regional President, Army Wife Welfare Association, Spear Corps, Mrs. Bibha Krishna, in a humane gesture, provided monetary assistance to the children residing at Compassion Grace Orphanage, Senapati for their better future and development. The cheque along with best wishes received from the regional president, was handed over to children by

Commandant, Jwalamukhi Battalion in a ceremony organised at the orphanage campus. Essential commodities, to include items for daily use and stationary for school going children, were also distributed during this occasion. The event was attended by a large number of civil and social dignitaries. The children expressed their heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Bibha Krishna, for rendering the help.

Contd. from yesterday issue

Hijam Irawat and political movements in Manipur and the Surma valley

Irawat went to all Manipuri villages in Cachar district as well as Sylhet district. Staying at Silchar, he did a lot of work to strengthen the Kisan Sabha. His mass influence grew as Irawat took up kisan work in Cachar. In 1943 Irawat attended the seventh All India Kisan Conference at Bhakna Kalan in the Punjab Province (2-4 April 1943) as a member of delegation of the Surma Valley Kisan Sabha. Among many resolutions the seventh Conference offered greetings to the heroic Red Army of the Soviet Union and pledged its support to the people of China in their war against Japanese imperialism. The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) called upon all the kisans (a) to unite in a campaign for Gandhi's release, (b) to strive for a common effort to solve the food crisis and to organize a campaign for unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. In respect of tenancy, the AIKS demanded that uniform legislation be adopted by all provincial government to prevent harassment and exploitation of tenants. The Bhakna Kalan session also passed a resolution on the war-time situation in Manipur, manifestly on the initiative of Irawat. The AIKS referred to the intense suffering faced by the Manipuri people resulting from the Japanese bombings, evacuation of civil populations without arrangement of settlements, closure of local markets, steep rise in the price of rice, threat of death of bullock owing to large-scale purchase of cattle for the Army. In order to alleviate the sufferings of the kisans and the people of Manipur State, the AIKS demanded that immediate remedial measures be adopted and urged on United Powers to see that this was done so that the popular rear of their troops facing the Japanese might be strengthened. Being invited by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Irawat attended the First Congress of the CPI held in Bombay on 23 May-1 June 1943. During the Congress itself he offered his application for membership of the Party. After returning from the Bombay Congress, Irawat stayed in the

Patharkandi region of Karimganj Sub-Division and built up the kisan organization. Men and women in large numbers thronged to hear the messages of awakening and struggle from him. In a very short period the entire region seemed prepared for greater struggle. Beginning with local demonstrations in the Patharkandi region, struggles were unfolded in the entire Karimganj Sub-Division. In the early part of 1944 Irawat left Patharkandi for Silchar. Staying in the party office of Silchar, he organized the Kisan Sabha in the Barak Valley and started building the peasants' movement. In the Cachar District Conference at Katakhal village, Irawat was elected President of the Cachar District Kisan Sabha. Irawat attended the eighth session of the AIKS held in Bezpada (now Vijayawada) in Andhra Pradesh in March 1944. The Bezpada session demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress Working Committee. Resolutions were also passed on Grow-More-Food, food procurement policy, extensive transfer of land leading to landlessness and destitution of kisans in the famine-affected areas and its restoration to them etc. After the Bezpada conference, Irawat was deeply engaged in the Anti-fascist and Anti-Japanese campaign as also Grow-More-Food campaign in the Cachar district in accordance with the resolutions of the said session. However, the British government harboured suspicion on Irawat and other leaders on the basis of a rumour spread by the Japanese agents that they collaborated with Netaji Subhaschandra Bose who allied with the Japanese. In September 1944 he was arrested and detained at Silchar jail for four months. Ten of his co-workers were also arrested and detained. The Central Kisan Council held at Calcutta on 30 November-3 December 1944 demanded the release of Irawat, the veteran kisan leader of Manipuri both in the Surma Valley land in his home state of Manipur, who was then in detention without trial.

After release from the Silchar jail, Irawat was elected President of the Surma Valley Kisan Sabha (SVKS). As President he led a delegation of the SVKS to the ninth session of the AIKS held in Netrakona (now in Bangladesh) on 5-9 April 1945. He participated in the deliberations during daytime and at night he took part in the cultural programme. In February 1946 a general election to the Assam Provincial Legislature was held. The Assam CPI contested in three general seats and one tea-labour seat situated in the Surma Valley. Irawat contested in the Silchar General Seat. Though he lost to the Congress candidate, Irawat won a large chunk of votes in spite of riding against the Congress wave. It established the Communists as a political force in Cachar. In the early part of 1946 the Tebhaga movement started in the Cachar district under the leadership of Irawat. Many Manipuri peasants participated whole-heartedly in the Tebhaga movement in the Surma Valley. Though Irawat returned to Manipur in March 1946, the Tebhaga movement continued in the Cachar district. The Tebhaga movement reached its epitome in November 1949 when five peasants, four Manipuris and one Hindusthani, fell martyrs to the bullets of the police during the movement at the Borkhola area.

(ii) Cultural Activities
 Irawat was not only a political leader, but also a cultural leader. In 1943, after being released from the Sylhet jail, Irawat stayed sometime in the Communist Party commune of Sylhet. There he met Hemango Biswas who was also putting up at the time. Irawat got intensely interested in the progressive writers and the people theatre movements, which Hemango Biswas and others were then organizing in Sylhet and Cachar. In his work as a peasant organizer in the Barak Valley, he also mobilised the village artistes. Being himself an artist of versatile talent, perhaps he found it easier to work simultaneously at the political and the cultural level. It was due to his influences that Guru Kamini, the leading exponent of Manipuri dance joined the people's theatre

movement. Irawat built up some cultural squads in the villages, singing songs about the peasants' struggle for land and other rights. He composed songs in Manipuri narrating struggles of the people for freedom from the yoke of British domination and for resistance against the Fascist invaders. These squads were composed not only of the Manipuris alone. Some ex-tea garden labourers and Bengali boys and girls were also there in these squads. Patriotic and democratic songs in Manipuri, Bengali and spoken dialects of the ex-tea garden labourers were sung by these squads, which used to hold shows particularly in the rural areas and rouse the people to liberate themselves from the shackles of feudal and other oppressions. These squads commonly known as "Swadeshi Goner Dal" were very popular among the masses. In the Sylhet district also the party had some cultural squads singing patriotic as well as class struggle-based songs which were organized under the guidance of Hemango Biswas. When the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) was founded in the Surma Valley, all the cultural squads of Sylhet and Cachar districts were incorporated in a single unit. Hemango Biswas and Irawat together took the helms of this unit. The epitome of Irawat's achievement as a cultural leader was his performance at the All India Kisan Conference at Netrakona. Irawat virtually shone at Netrakona (now in Bangladesh) where he led a delegation of the SVKS consisting of a cultural troupe from the Cachar region. In the openly rally he presented his vigorous dance composition "Thangol Adu" along with his troupe inspiring the memorable gathering of about two lakh. While a wide variety of cultural activists from Bengal and Assam came to Netrakona, according to P.C. Joshi vide the People's War (6-13 May 1945), "Dancing honours went to the Manipuri squad." P.C. Joshi, General Secretary of the CPI highly appreciated and encouraged the cultural programme prepared under the guidance of Irawat in which he himself also participated.

(To be contd.....)