

Editorial

Imphal, Thursday, May 5, 2016

Of separation and survival

The prolonged social tensions and manifestations of discontents have taken various shades and hues with the course of time. What is becoming more apparent with each passing day is not the clarity for the expressed demands, but for the implications of such agitations. The increasing rigidity of the stances of the opposing parties has increased the necessity for an effective and speedy intervention. The state government however, having found itself caught in the middle as always, has started the process of implementing its tried and tested formula of dumping the whole issue with the centre, or at least making it seem like so. Meanwhile, the adamancy of the extremists in sticking to their ends of the issue has elevated the present imbroglio up another notch in complexity. But for all the wise talks and fervent campaigns, the very fact remains that political boundaries and areas are never constant, and can be changed. Separation of East Timor from Indonesian occupation and, closer home, formation of Telangana state from Andhra Pradesh drives home the point. What is also an undeniable fact is that these separations have been at huge costs to lives and properties. Choosing to ignore the fact would be living in self denial and will eventually cost us more than we can afford to lose. There still is, however, a faint ray of hope for the beleaguered people of the state. History bears witness to the fact that the people of the state have endured unimaginable sufferings and extreme torments in the hands of the neighbouring Burmese invaders. That the very reason for the survival and continued existence of the people of the state irrespective of their community, customs, language or beliefs was the cooperation, support and solace extended and exchanged during the darkest days without the consideration for caste or creed. Are we ready to discard the very attribute which ensured the collective survival of our varied communities and cultures in the most trying of times? The history of Manipur is one which is made up of the myriad cultures and customs being practiced in various forms and regions. It would indeed be a great insult to our forefathers in whose name we are preparing to take up the cudgel, if we are to part ways for the sake of our different cultures and customs. But if ever things have to come to such a pass, the prospect of bidding loving farewell is a distant dream. For those who are hatching the plots, there is more to life than a few acres of land or a few thousands worth of freebies. Who knows, the rest of the world might even leave their countries with us for more prospective planets while we are still drawing and redrawing our claims.

Congress Actions Making Them Look More Suspect: Finance Minister

Frankfurt, May 5: By deriding new suggestions that its top leaders were part of the AgustaWestland helicopter scam, the Congress is "giving rise to a second suspicion that the cap fits", said Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to NDTV. Parliament today debated the Agusta scandal - a deal for helicopters worth 3,600 crores was acquired through bribes in 2010 by the Anglo-Italian firm. Before the Congress was removed from power, it accepted that bribes were paid, cancelled the deal, and ordered a CBI inquiry, which has made no headway. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has said today in Parliament that the investigation will focus on the names mentioned in an Italian court which has just convicted Agusta executives for corruption. The names are a roster of the Congress' most powerful leaders including president Sonia Gandhi. The Congress says the notes of middlemen that mention her and her colleagues are loose talk. But "the notings in diaries are enough reason to suspect" wrongdoing, said the Finance Minister to NDTV, adding that the Italian trial and verdict are "a good ground and launching pad for a proper investigation". He also said that while the government "is clear there is no one in particular we want to target", it's now committed to uncovering who was bribed. "Bribe givers have been convicted, transactions cancelled, middlemen on both sides identified-who received the benefit is the only question," the minister said. "I am not saying we have enough proof to nail somebody yet," he said.

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Can Manipur be inclusively developed without ST status to Meitei-Pangals?

By : Ningombam Bupenda Meitei
 Meitei-Pangals are unique community whose genetics and hereditary, for at least a few centuries of years, can not be accepted as not related with some population of the Meiteis because if there is no such biological relationship between Meiteis and Meitei-Pangals, then the scientific explanation of prefixing the word 'Meitei' before 'Pangal' needs to be restudied. The mere assumption that all Meiteis are Hindus and all Meitei-Pangals are Muslims can be not so worthy to discuss in today's world of secularism and modern science because there could be Meiteis whose religion is not only their own indigenous religion or Hindu Vaishnavism as there are Meiteis who practice Christianity, Buddhism, etc. Similarly, there could be Meitei-Pangals whose religion may be other than Islam. In a secular India, and in today's world of rationalism and scientism, not only a human can change his or her religion but also he or she needs not even have a formal and institutional religion and instead believes in spiritualism or agnosticism or atheism. The argument, here, is to stress that no community has a single religion to bind that very same community, as a religion is different from a community because the term 'religion' is not synonymous with the other term 'community'. Therefore, as a community, Meitei-Pangals, too, can demand for Scheduled Tribe - and their valid demand can not be overruled on the basis of a religion as Scheduled Tribe is not based on a criterion of religion, and if so, then how can a person who practices Christianity be listed under Scheduled Tribe

category? - under the Indian Constitution. The question is - how can Meitei-Pangals demand Scheduled Tribe? The answer lies almost similar, perhaps may not be same, to that of the question when raised against Meitei-Bamon/Meitei-brahmins whether Meitei-Bamon can also be included in Scheduled Tribe. The argumentative question is - if Meitei-Bamon can be ST, then why should not and what stops Meitei-Pangal to be also ST in Manipur under the same Indian Constitution? The argument, here, is not that - if Meitei-Bamon 'is' ST, then why 'is not' also ST for Meitei-Pangal? Instead, the argument, is - if Meitei-Bamon 'can' be ST, then why 'can not' Meitei-Pangal be also ST? The distinction between 'is' vs 'can' needs to be understood, here. There are Meitei-Pangals whose surnames are in Meiteilon (Manipur) and not in Arabic surname, and such existing surnames show that Meitei-Pangals are unique and special when it comes to their sense of being a part of Manipuri society which is heavily influenced by 32,000 years of Meitei civilization. In a function of Meitei-Pangal students held in New Delhi, I, on an invitation, attended it and was honoured on a stage which was also shared by the present Member of Parliament in Rajya Sabha and MLA, who is also a Meitei-Pangal, from Manipur's Congress Party. I went to the function wearing a Karakul hat/Karakuli (or Jinnah cap), which was bought from Jama Masjid's entrance, and sat, side by side, next to the MLA, whose identity was not known to me at that time. The MLA too did not know me either. My impression was that the MLA must

be a Meitei for his physical features. As I sat there, the MLA asked me - a Meitei wearing the Karakuli on his head - in my ears, "Are you a Maulvi?" I replied, instantly, "I am not. I am a Meitei." The conversation though did take place in Meiteilon (Manipur). The reason why I write Meiteilon instead of Manipuri is because I, also being a student of Linguistics, have come across that the linguists of the world do not recognize Manipuri as a language but rather it is only Meiteilon in which researches have been done in all major Departments of Linguistics of the world universities. The Meitei-Pangal MLA thought I was a Maulvi, the learned Muslim religious scholar or doctor of Islamic Law, while I, as a Meitei, thought that that Meitei-Pangal MLA was a Meitei. That mutual confusion is the classic presentation of a beautiful co-existence of Meiteis and Meitei-Pangals that both find deeply difficult event to differentiate not only between the two but also among themselves. The MLA is none other than Parliamentary Secretary Md. Amin Shah. In my speech at the function, I stressed on the urgent necessity of establishing the "Meitei-Pangal University", on the lines like Aligarh Muslim University or Jamia Islamia University, in Manipur. Prior to the function, I was also invited, a few years back, in a similar event in New Delhi by the Meitei-Pangal students. At Sora village of Thoubal district of Manipur, I was invited to give a talk to motivate the Meitei-Pangal school students at Sora bazaar. I accepted the invitation and went for the talk wearing the same Karakul hat in a car being driven by my friend who is a Meitei-Bamon. We went at Sora because the invitation came

from none other than our close friend, who is a Meitei-Pangal, and with whom we studied together in school. I and my Meitei-Pangal friend from Sora, together, went to the same school, which is considered to be the best school in the North East India - Sainik School Imphal - and the college, St. Stephen's College, Delhi. I, being a Meitei whose religion is not Christianity, and he, being a Meitei-Pangal whose religion is also not Christianity, went to study at the country's best college not through a reservation but purely on our own merit in our college, which is a Christian minority college. But, the reality is that the majority of the Meitei-Pangal youths are not like my close friend who, without a reservation, got admitted in the topmost college of the country. I discovered that reality while having lunch with Meitei-Pangal youths and students after the event. At Sora, while interacting with the school young students and college students, who are mostly Meitei-Pangals, I have genuinely realised that without the reservation of Scheduled Tribe being extended to Meitei-Pangals, not to talk about Manipur as a tribal state, in fact, Manipur can never be an inclusively developed state. Therefore, Meitei-Pangals' demand for Scheduled Tribe status is logical, valid, legal and constitutional and hence, not only the Congress government led by Okram Ibobi Singh in Manipur but also the BJP Government, at the centre, led by Narendra Modi must seriously commit to the inclusion of Meitei-Pangals in Scheduled Tribe category.

Ningombam Bupenda Meitei is a poet, author and orator.
 (To be contd.....)

National and International News

IRCTC website 'hacked', personal details of lakhs feared stolen

Agencies
New Delhi, May 5: Personal data of around 1 crore customers is feared to have been stolen from the server of the e-ticketing portal Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), thus raising fears of safety and security. IRCTC is India's largest e-commerce website, lakhs of transactions are conducted every day. Customers provide details like Pan Card numbers while filling up online reservation forms. According to a report in India Today, IRCTC officials also fear that details including phone numbers, date of

birth and other such information "have been sold in a CD for Rs 15,000 for whoever was interested." An IRCTC source said. "The data is a valuable asset and can be sold to corporations who may use it for targeting potential consumers." There are also reports that the Maharashtra state government has identified the hackers who were selling these details. AK Manocha, managing director of IRCTC, told Mumbai Mirror that though there has been no official complaint regarding data hacking he has written to Delhi police's cyber cell to inquire into the matter.

When asked why there was no complaint, Manocha said, "We got some information from our internal sources. So we decided to crosscheck." The IRCTC (Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation) website has a user base of over 1 crore, and at least 5 lakh tickets are booked on daily basis. To log in and book tickets, each user has to create an account, parting with information of his email id and mobile number. The fear among the authorities is that the hacker could have access to at least 1 crore email IDs and mobile numbers. The data will command a huge price among

companies in the era of aggressive tele-marketing. Sources said that it is unlikely that credit card or bank data would have been compromised, since the payment gateway takes one out of the IRCTC website to the sites of the banks, which have water tight firewalls. The state's additional chief secretary (home), KP Bakshi, earlier confirmed to TOI that the state police had alerted the railways, but refused to give any more details. IRCTC website is maintained by Centre for Railway Information Systems, which is part of the railway ministry.

Make PM Modi's Degree Public, Arvind Kejriwal Writes To Delhi University

New Delhi, May 5: Arvind Kejriwal has written to the Delhi University asking that details of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's college degree be put up on its website and shared with the public. The Delhi Chief Minister has also urged the university to keep the documents safe. "We request you to take the necessary steps to protect these documents. It will be even better if all the documents are immediately put up on your website," Mr Kejriwal wrote in a letter to Vice

Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi. "The people of this country have the right to know how educated their prime minister is. And if there are such serious allegations over the PM's degree, then the truth should come out," he said. Referring to allegations that the prime minister never got a graduation degree, Mr Kejriwal quoted sources as saying that his admission form, mark-sheet and other details are not in the university's records. "If he hasn't done his BA

(Bachelor of Arts), then how did he do his Masters? It raises suspicion that his MA degree is fake," Mr Kejriwal wrote in his letter. Mr Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have been doggedly pursuing the questions raised on the education of PM Modi, who had said in his 2014 poll affidavit that he had done his BA from Delhi University and MA from the Gujarat University. Yesterday, Mr Kejriwal alleged that images of PM Modi's degrees published by some newspapers

were "forged". "DU refuses to show records of PM's degree. Why? My info- he did not do BA from DU," he tweeted. Treating his demand as an RTI inquiry, the Central Information Commission last week directed the Delhi University and Gujarat University to search and provide information on PM Modi's degrees. The Gujarat University on Sunday said PM Modi had scored 62.3 percent in his masters as an external student.

Ban on diesel taxis could hit BPO sector, cost India \$1.2 billion, Centre tells SC

New Delhi, May 5: The Centre told the Supreme Court on Thursday that a blanket ban on diesel taxis in the Delhi-NCR region could cost the country \$1.2 billion because it would badly hit the flourishing BPO sector. The solicitor general Ranjith Kumar also told the court that the BPOs may consider moving their operations out of India if the ban adversely affected their work. "The ban would affect the business generated by inter-city cabs engaged by the BPOs to ferry employees and this could cost India \$1.2 billion," the solicitor general told a bench headed by Chief Justice TS Thakur. He also

said the Centre will soon be filing an application on the issue because it also pertains to the safety of the BPO employees. On Saturday, a Supreme Court bench led by Justice Thakur banned taxis that run on diesel from plying on NCR's roads. Diesel cab operators had been given a deadline of April 30 to convert their vehicles into ones that run on CNG. When the court asked why BPOs can't engage CNG buses to ferry employees, the Centre said CNG buses can't enter small lanes and by-lanes so they can't be used to ferry women employees to their doorstep at night.

The Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA) told the top court that diesel taxis could be allowed to phase out over the next five years. Its counsel informed the court that it is discussing the issue arising out of the ban on diesel taxis with the Delhi government. The EPCA said that diesel cabs, which are not permitted to ply in Delhi and NCR, are also being affected by the ban as they have an all-India permit to travel to destinations across the country where CNG is not available. The green body also suggested that from now only petrol and CNG cabs

should be registered. The apex court had on May 3 given two days to the Delhi government to file a detailed plan on phasing out diesel taxis from the city after it had moved the court seeking the same. The AAP government had said that in the wake of the Supreme Court's order, around 30,000 diesel taxis have stopped plying in the national capital which is causing a lot of inconvenience and creating a law and order situation. The Supreme Court will hear the matter on Monday and has asked all parties to come ready with suggestions and plans for a phase out.