

# Editorial

Imphal Wednesday, November 2, 2016

## Is 'Sincerity' and 'transparency' deleted from Manipur Govt. Dictionary?

Though incomplete the inaugural spree by the present government when election is just about 100 days to go by showed that how important it is to take up developmental project if they want people to support them. Inaugurations of various government projects in the last few days is an indication of the Government realizing the need to keep in pace with the rest of the country if they want peoples' support to let them continue the government for another year.

Not everything went wrong as we see various spheres of public utilities being changes and one can feel the impact of these changes. What remains a matter of deep concern for the general public is the hasty attempt of the Chief Minister Ibobi to inaugurate government structures (some incomplete) and the reports and news of underutilization of funds being written about with increasing regularity. The recent oppositions of inaugural attempt of a 50 bedded Hospital in Ukhrul district and the reaction from civil society organizations in Jiribam showed lack of sincerity to the side of the government. And the directives of the Union Home Affairs Ministry to send details of the utilization of fund under 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission is something which is showing the true picture of the government which is completing its third term.

The authorities may well have their valid reasons for not being able to utilize these funds or take up certain activities, but these reasons and circumstances should be made known to the general public. Various mechanisms have been formulated to make governance more transparent and accountable, yet much remain to be cleared about regarding these activities. The government, being representatives of the public should always be responsible and accountable to the public. Sanctions and aids, whatever be the amount, means little if not utilized to the optimum. Another aspect of all these activities are the integrity and resoluteness of the government in seeing to the timely completion of these ventures with the specified quality. The achievements of the government in this regard is rather miniscule, the delayed and scrapped projects and cost overruns overshadowing the little successes. Adding to the mayhem are the "organisations" purportedly working for the public good while pursuing personal gains through means foul and fair all in the name of serving the society, disrupting these development activities when their wishes are not catered to. The sign of a good and fair government is in the trust and support the people displays towards it. Adopting an elitist attitude and flaunting and abusing the powers bestowed upon them by the people will only alienate them from the same people who put them in their exalted positions in the first place. Only an earnest pursuit for the welfare of the public and an open approach in their working will ensure their position in the public domain. Maintaining and building on the already existing works is what the public is eagerly waiting and watching out for. Unless diligence is displayed in right earnest, it will only be a matter of time before the Government becomes "for few people, by the people and off the people".

## Abducted Assam traders released unharmed in Meghalaya

**PTI Shillong, Nov 2:** Ten traders of Assam who were abducted by militants from Meghalaya last week were today released unharmed at a place in South Garo Hills following as police launched an operation against the ultras. "Today morning all the 10

traders were released in a Meghalaya forest area near Gasupara unconditionally," district SP Anand Mishra said. The traders were presently at Gasupara outpost and in good health. They will be escorted to their residences after being examined, he said.

### MANIPUR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT NOTIFICATION

Dated, the 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2016

No. 1/13/(11)2016-LA(E) Pt.: Result of the Interview/viva-voce for the post of Under Secretary in the Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretariat held on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 has been declared. Result can be found at the notice board of the Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

Sd/-  
(G. Tapankumar Sharma)  
Deputy Secretary (Admn)  
Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretariat

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## Horti-pasture system: Strengthening livelihoods to reduce disaster risks in Thar

Ghewar Ram and Gauri Devi, who live in the western Rajasthan, own just a one-and-a half bigha plot of land. They used to migrate in search of livelihood every time a drought struck. Not anymore. They have now adopted horti-pasture techniques. The family first planted local species such as *ber*, *goonda*, *karonda* and lemon, created a rain water harvesting tank and a boundary for the farm to prevent stray animals from destroying the crop. Next year, Gauri Devi introduced *guvar* on her farm as a part of intercropping. By the end of the second year, the farm turned profitable. While her family has to put about two extra hours of work on the farm, inter-cropping has benefited them immensely in terms of fodder, fruits, vegetables and other produce. Ghewar Ram is jubilant when he says that the income from the plot has increased ten times.

Similar stories of hope and revival have started to emerge across the desert of western Rajasthan. With sustained efforts by the government to strengthen the financial resilience of vulnerable communities, and proactive role of non-governmental organisations such as Unnati, a gradual but noticeable change has been brought about by strengthening livelihoods in these drought-prone areas. Working towards substantially reducing disaster risks and losses in livelihoods is entrenched in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SDFRR), adopted at the third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan in March, 2015. India is a signatory to this first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and is thus committed to work towards making those choices for its environment, livelihoods and economic development that make it resilient to disasters.

The pain and suffering of people inhabiting the hostile terrain of western Rajasthan is a part of its folklore. 'Saatkala, saattaijamaana,

*trisathkuriakacha: teen kaal, aispapadela, maapoot mile napacha*', goes a local saying. It means that out of every 100 years, only 27 years are good. There are seven years of drought, 63 years of severe drought and three years of so much distress that a mother and her children get separated. Traditional survival strategies used to revolve around effective water management, animal husbandry, mixed agriculture and collective will. 'Das hove chaukhibakriyaan, eksaanataron oont, das hove khejdala, to kaalkaad doo koot' - A family can survive a drought if it has ten goats, a camel and ten *khejdi* trees. (*Khejdi* is a multipurpose legume with its parts used as food, fodder for the livestock, and raw material for constructing houses).

The primary source of livelihood for small and marginal farmers, who constitute about 78 per cent of the farming community and depend on rain for irrigation, is livestock. They traditionally relied on common community land and resources to maintain them. Common Property Resources (CPRs), particularly the *oran* and *gauchar* (community grazing land) and *nadi* (village pond), which used to be managed by the community had been declining as bigger farmers moved towards mechanization of agriculture coupled with individualized water supply. This meant growing food and fodder insecurity, poverty and migration for the marginalized population.

With an increase in the frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards, there has been an increase in the incidences of drought post-1961. Almost 80 per cent of agriculture is rain-fed. The Thar desert region receives an average annual rainfall between 100 and 300 mm. Add to that the fact that the highly erodible desert soil is deficient in nutrients, has a high infiltration rate and a low moisture holding capacity.

Reviving CPRs thus was of utmost importance for strengthening

community resilience against drought. Unnati has been helping small and marginal farmers in western Rajasthan in developing horti-pasture plots and rain water harvesting tanks. It is also helping them in providing veterinary care to reduce animal morbidity and mortality, as well as prevention of malaria.

There was a strong belief that horticulture cannot be promoted in the desert ecology. However, with examples such as Ghewar Ram and Gauri Devi, villagers are now willing to try it out. The credit goes to experiments and trainings done by Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) and other Kisan Vikas Kendras. They have provided expertise and training to the farmers on a continuous basis. They also provide an interface to the plot owners so that they can easily seek advice on plant varieties and combinations.

Over the years, many volunteers have been trained for functioning as local resource persons who can support farmers as well as local government functionaries on various aspects of horti-pasture system, grafting and choice of seeds. This has helped the disadvantaged farmers, especially women, in the initial years of switching to farming and livestock rearing techniques that make them resilient to droughts.

Plantation and fencing increases soil fertility providing better yield from inter-cropping. It has led to the regeneration of 21 local grass and shrub varieties that are used as fodder for the livestock. Some are also used as vegetables by people. They also contribute to soil nutrients and prevent soil erosion.

Making rain water harvesting structures, horti-pasture plots, specialized animal care, fodder banks and malaria prevention and cure accessible to small and marginalized farmers has proved to be of great use in building resilience to drought in desert areas of

Rajasthan. It improves the adaptation capacity of small and marginal farmers by improving their fodder and livelihood security.

Many village and block level functionaries of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which aims at enhancing livelihood security of our rural population, now want to include horti-pasture plot development in their annual plans. This is a good example of how the goals of Disaster Risk Reduction can be interwoven with the goals of other social security schemes to result in sustainable and inclusive development. Works such as green fencing and construction of water harvesting tanks have also been approved under the MGNREGS in Rajasthan. This has helped horti-pasture system gain wider acceptance across the State with more and more small farmers switching to this form of agriculture.

These small but substantial gender and class sensitive measures are a step towards the 'all-society approach' as envisaged in the Sendai Framework.

While India is surely inching towards resilience to disasters, there is a long way to go. Since disasters don't respect national boundaries, there is a greater need to move ahead on the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Asia-Pacific region.

To realise this, the Government of India is organising the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) 2016 in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). The Conference, which will be held from November 3-5, 2016 in New Delhi, will see the participation of Asian nations and disaster management experts to come out with the roadmap to a stronger, safer and disaster-resilient Asia.

- contributed by Shri Binoy Acharya, Director, UNNATI

## National & International News

### Supreme Court grants pension to 'fake freedom fighters'

**New Delhi, Nov. 2:** The Supreme Court, on the one hand, ordered inquiry into alleged forging of freedom fighter certificates to claim pension and on the other, when the pensions were cancelled, it restored them on humanitarian grounds. In August 2005, the SC had appointed the Justice A B Palkar Commission to examine the case of a large number of people claiming pension as freedom fighters by allegedly forging certificates in Beed

district. It had said those falsely claiming to have participated in the freedom struggle should be dealt with sternly as they were "traitors".

It had directed the Palkar panel to complete the inquiry into claims of 354 people for freedom fighter pension and submit a report to the Maharashtra government. The panel had rejected the claims of 298 of 354 people and termed their documents "bogus".

When the state government cancelled their pensions relying on the Palkar commission report, the elderly people moved the Bombay HC and pleaded, "We are all senior citizens. At this ripe age, if we are deprived of pensionary benefits, we will not be in a position to eke out a livelihood."

Given the SC's stern mandate in 2005 to separate the genuine freedom fighters from the impersonators, the HC refused to give relief. They made a final dash to the SC and pleaded before a bench of Justices Kurian Joseph and RF Nariman that withdrawal of pensions would mean starvation. The Justice Joseph-headed bench was caught in a situation where being legally correct would mean starvation for the petitioners.

What came to the bench's rescue was a 2013 judgment of the apex court which had dealt with similar

pleas. It had said, "In our opinion, keeping in view the fact that at this old age, if small benefit that was already granted to them is withdrawn, it may be difficult for them to sustain themselves. In that view of the matter, in the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case, we set aside the order of the Bombay HC."

However, the court had said pensions would stop with the death of the false freedom fighters. Justices Joseph and Nariman were quick to adopt the same stand.

They said, "We find force in the submissions made by the counsel for Maharashtra that in many of these cases, the appellants have actually not participated in any freedom struggle. However, taking note of the only fact that these cases arise out of the same batch of appeals, we feel that it may not be proper to take a different view (than that taken in 2013)."

### All 33 trapped in China coal mine explosion killed

**PTI Beijing, Nov. 2:** All 33 people trapped underground after an explosion rocked a coal mine in southwest China were today declared dead as bodies of the remaining 15 missing miners in the latest mine accident to hit the world's top coal producing nation were retrieved in the wee hours. A total of 35 miners were working underground at the privately-owned Jinshangou Coal Mine in Laisu Town in Chongqing Municipality's Yongchuan District, when an explosion shook the mine around 11.30 am on Monday.

While two escaped unharmed, the rest 33 were trapped in the pit following which rescuers had launched an all-out bid to search them. Over 80 rescuers found the bodies in a pit at Jinshangou Coal Mine, Yongchuan District, at around 2 am (local time) and lifted them out of the shaft two hours later, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, quoting the local rescue headquarters.

An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway and is being supervised by the State Administration of Work Safety. Local governmental workers are identifying the dead and handling the aftermath. The bodies of 18 miners were recovered yesterday.



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