

Editorial

Imphal Thursday, November 24, 2016

The non-existent plan

Just like the pieces of a frustrating zigsaw puzzle that has eluded solution for so long finally starting to fall into place, the real reason for the protracted sufferings and often unnecessary social and communal strains that have so far defined the life of the people of the state have slowly started to emerge. Allowing for doubts of political conspiracy or fallacy, if the statement issued by the BJP Manipur media secretary regarding the absence of any formal communication for assistance from the centre by the state government in connection with the economic blockades along the national highways connecting the state with the rest of the country contains even an iota of truth, then the people of the state as a whole have a very big issue to deal with, and soon. The startling disclosure by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh of the lack of any concrete proposal by the Ibbi-led state government despite the two having met on more than one occasion and the Chief Minister even submitting a report on the economic blockade to him have more to it than meets the eye. What should one infer about the nature of administration and governance when the headlines of newspapers and trending news even on social media are about the schedule for distribution of Petrol or LPG Cylinders in the state? While the situation might possibly sound ironic and even comic for those residing outside the state, for the people in the state, the question is all about survival. Perhaps the advertisement offering a litre of petrol as incentive for buying a laptop a few years back sums up the situation beautifully.

Successive governments have waxed eloquent about their achievements and stressed on the extra efforts they have put in to bring prosperity to the state, and yet the unfortunate truth remains that in this age and day, the general public still have to scramble for the barest minimum of facilities for survival. Half the year or more is still lost to bandhs, blockades, general strikes, public curfews with unfailling regularity year in, year out. The smoothest roads, the widest highways or the 'most modern bridge' over a nullah holds little excitement for those who constantly have had to worry about the next petrol pump with enough stock or the grocery with the required provisions on offer. The phenomena of 'Economic Blockade' is nothing new or strange, and despite the u told hardships and innumerable frustrations still continuing to be borne by the people of the state, yet the visible lack of a sustainable plan of action or initiative from the state government to put an end to the menace is a clear indication that for those in power and connection, the present predicament of the public over the availability of basic and essential commodities is of little concern or consequence.

The state government owes it to the people of the state to come out with the truth regarding its inaction on the economic blockade issue. Half-truths, concocted situations and ad-hoc measures will not cut ice with the informed public anymore. The incumbent government and any other following that will be holding the reign in the state will do well to keep in mind that the people of the state is more resilient and resourceful than they can ever imagine. The way the general public see it, economic blockade is but a few incorrigible souls holding the state government by the balls rather than being strangled by the scruff of the neck as these souls would have everyone believe.

Lok Sabha Speaker accepts resignation of Amarinder Singh

PTI New Delhi, Nov 24: Speaker Sumitra Mahajan today accepted the resignation of Amarinder Singh, the Deputy Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha.

"I have accepted his resignation with effect from November 23," she said. Singh had met the Speaker yesterday and tendered his resignation from the House.

Singh had announced his resignation in protest against the "injustice" meted out to the people of Punjab following the November 10 Supreme Court verdict on the Sutej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal water sharing agreement which he

and most other state parties have been opposing.

The SYL agreement has become a major political issue in the poll-bound state in which Singh, a former Chief Minister, is leading his party's campaign to capture the power from the SAD-BJP alliance, which has been ruling for a decade. He had said that he decided to quit the Lok Sabha "as a mark of protest against the deprivation of the people of my state of the much-needed Sutej river water."

Singh was elected to Parliament defeating BJP heavyweight and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley from the prestigious Amritsar Lok Sabha seat.

What An Emergency Actually Looks Like

By: Aravindan Neelakandan

Courtesy: Swarajyamag.com

Suddenly the Old Media is talking about the days of Emergency. They compare themselves with those who fought for the freedom of press when the nation was gravitating towards fascism under the socialist leadership of the dynasty. Many brave souls fought and suffered irreparable damages in their personal lives. The fortunate among many students and youths lost their career, others, their lives after cruel torture. Yet they kept the flame glowing. Majority of them were not professional journalists or even club reporters of the media. They were ordinary people who went to extraordinary lengths to save the freedom of press and expression. Here we shall glimpse of those dark times for the Indian democracy. Many brave souls suffered and have fought back... Whenever one talks about Emergency and 'freedom of press', one of the iconic memories which come to mind for most Tamils who went through the travails of that era is the Tamil magazine 'Thuglak' run by actor-political satirist - 'Cho' Ramaswamy, who was not a professional journalist but rather a journalist by accident. When 'Emergency' was announced that fortnight the magazine simply carried a black cover. Cho then was known as one of the harshest critics of the DMK government. However in the first issue of the magazine which came after the declaration of 'Emergency' Cho wrote: 'Press censorship has come into operation. When I have been stripped off the rights to criticize the Central Government, to criticize the state DMK government (which the Press

censorship allows), is nothing but stark naked double standard. So I vow not to criticize DMK until the Press Censorship is in place. The content of the magazine and a study of subsequent issues reveal how exactly the 'freedom of press' operated during the Congress rule in 1975. Here is a typical political report in 'Thuglak', dated 15 July 1975: "Headline: 'Resolutions passed at the DMK convention on 27-6-1975' Content: 'While the press censor official has given permission to publish the above headline, we do not have the permission to state whether or not the officials gave us permission to publish the content subsequent to the above headline.' The dangerous war that Thuglak in Tamil Nadu was facing and fighting back with ingenious sarcasm, had been originally declared from the residence of the prime minister in New Delhi. The first attack on press interestingly came on a magazine associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Consequently the first person to be arrested in Delhi was K.R. Malkani, the editor of Sangh-affiliated Motherland newspaper which had actually disclosed as early as 30 January 1975 that there was a plan to wage a war against the opposition in the press. The last complete issue of Motherland had described an Indira Gandhi rally thus: 'The prima donna stood there on a makeshift dais, keeping the evening sun away by clutching an umbrella. She was the master of all she surveyed - the debris of the moral and political core of her regime. A power failure was arranged on the night of 25-26 June, 1975, which prevented most newspapers from publishing the next morning.

Motherland came out with its report on hundreds of arrests. Most newspapers in the capital meekly resumed publishing. But not the Motherland' reported Eric Pace of the New York Times, as it 'has been shut down by the Abide by the censorship and press guidelines that the Government rushed out hours after the crackdown began...'. Eminent journalists like Minoo Masani and Y.D. Lokurkar fought brave legal battles for the freedom of press. Meanwhile the underground press was run by a nationwide network of volunteers from RSS. More than 7000 were arrested for the sole 'crime' of running the underground press and the punishment meted out to them was a cruel throwback to the days of colonial torture where, heavy printing roles were run over the thighs of the captured cadre crushing their muscles. And many crawled... However not all were that brave. Most editors meekly complied to use the news from two agencies - the Press Trust of India and United News of India - because censors sat in the offices of those organizations and approved dispatches'. Editors who sought to avoid submitting their editorials to censors observed the government guidelines and wrote on 'harmless subjects'. A submissive press 'crawled' and sang the merits of not just the Emergency and Indira Gandhi but also the then princeling, Sanjay Gandhi. Here is a sample piece: 'Significantly and happily, Sanjay Gandhi today has left out of the wings ... and raced to centre of Indian political theatre. He is ensconced today in a position of political leadership which comes

naturally to him. ... (India Today, Sept.1-15, 1976) Journalists like Vinod Mehta meekly submitted to censorship and sent their content to the commissar before publishing. The contents were of course approved. Khushwant Singh, who was then the editor of the Illustrated Weekly of India also supported the Emergency. When he was given pre-censorship for an article, he dutifully phoned Sharada Prasad, Indira Gandhi's press advisor and got his skin covered. Mr. Singh had pointed out that the offending article did not appear in his journal but in Femina. One of the ironies of Indian society is that often the fruits of hard sacrifices are enjoyed by those who never left the comforts of their lives when situations demanded. Yet, the arm-chair establishment media has perfected the art of parroting the choicest words in the most eloquent manner in favour of the values they never care to save. The present attempt by the establishment media barons to don for them the same glory that the fighters of the Emergency earned through their bath in the fire, demeans the sacrifices those youths did, the suffering they went through - expecting nothing but freedom for the nation. Epilogue After the Emergency was over and Indira was vanquished by the Janata experiment, the same Indira started shedding tears for freedom of press. A loyal section of the media started echoing her voice. Then a reader again asked Cho to comment and he said: 'Now there is enough freedom of the press that Indira Gandhi can scream about danger to the freedom of the press and a section of the press can shamelessly highlight it!' Does it not feel like action replay?

National & International News

Tribals celebrate Wangala harvest festival in Meghalaya

ANI Guwahati, Nov. 24: Hundreds of Garo tribals gathered here recently to celebrate the harvest festival of Wangala with much fervour here. The festival marks the end of a period of toil for farmers wanting a good output from their fields. Dressed in their traditional fineries, farmers of the tribe gathered together to dance in honour of

Saljong, the spirit of the Sun and fertility. "We celebrate this Wangala festival each year, to commemorate the post harvest season and in this festival we mainly include fun, merriment and joy, to... and we invoke the blessing of the goddess (unclear) Saljong who is also the deity of the Garos. He is the Sun god, he is regarded is the deity of fulfillment

and prosperity," said Sanjeev G. Momen, General Secretary (Administration) of Garos Union Nagaland zone. The popular dance, known as the Wangala Dance or 100-drum Festival, is an intrinsic part of the post-harvest festival of the region. As per tradition, on the first day of the festival, the dancers offer their

agriculture produce to the Sun God, while on the second day, known as Kakkat, it is a time for both dancing and merriment. While the men play the drums during the festival, women perform the traditional dance, moving their feet to the rhythmic beat of drums. Every year, the popular festival draws huge crowd, including tourists.

Air India Express plane lands under emergency conditions

PTI Kochi, Nov. 24: A Damman-bound Air India Express plane from Mangaluru with 131 passengers and crew onboard landed under emergency conditions at Kochi after sparks were seen by the Air Traffic Control as the aircraft got airborne.

The Boeing 737-800 aircraft landed safely and there was no harm to any passenger or crew, an Air India Express spokesperson said, adding that after an inspection the aircraft was cleared for onward journey. The flight IXE 885 took off at 1813 hours yesterday from Mangaluru airport for Damman in Saudi Arabia.

"However, Mangaluru Air Traffic Control noticed sparks in the aircraft and reported the same to the flight commander. "The aircraft was subsequently diverted to Kochi following permission from the ATC there," the spokesperson said. The flight made a "precautionary"

landing at Kochi International airport at 1930 hours, he said. Air India Express engineers carried out a thorough inspection of the aircraft upon its arrival at Kochi but did not find any "snag" in it, the spokesperson said adding the aircraft departed for its destination at 1030 hours from Kochi.

At least 40 killed in east China scaffolding collapse

Beijing, Nov. 24: At least 40 people were killed in a scaffolding collapse Thursday morning at a construction site in the eastern Chinese province of Jiangxi, state media reported. A work platform at a power plant cooling tower being built in the city of Fengcheng came tumbling down at about 7:30 a.m., an official with the local Work Safety Administration said by telephone.

He put the confirmed death toll at 22 but the official Xinhua News Agency said that figure had risen to at least 40 by midday. Xinhua did not cite its source for the information and calls to local government information offices rang unanswered. Xinhua said an unknown number of others were still trapped in the debris. Television footage and photographs from the site showed iron pipes and wooden planks strewn across the floor of the massive concrete cooling tower. China has suffered a series of major industrial accidents over recent months blamed on corruption, disregard for safety and pressure to boost production amid a slowing economy. The head of a logistics company was

recently handed a suspended death sentence over a massive explosion at an illegal chemical warehouse in the northern port of Tianjin last year that killed 173 people, most of them firefighters and police officers. In June 2015, 442 people were killed in the capsizing on the Yangtze River of a modified cruise ship blamed on poor decisions made by the captain and crew, while 81 people were killed in December when an enormous, man-made mountain of soil and waste collapsed on nearly three dozen buildings in the southern manufacturing center of Shenzhen.

Snow falls in November in Tokyo for first time in 54 years


Tokyo, Nov. 24: Tokyo residents woke up Thursday to the first November snowfall in more than 50 years. And the Japan Meteorological Agency said it was the first time fallen snow on the ground was observed in November since such records started to be taken in 1875. An unusually cold air mass brought wet snow to Japan's capital. Above-freezing temperatures kept the snow from sticking in most places, though it did accumulate on sidewalks and cars in Tokyo's far western suburbs. Meteorologists forecast up to 2 centimeters (1 inch) would fall, and more in the mountains northwest of Tokyo. The snow caused minor train delays during the morning commute. The last time it snowed in central Tokyo in November was 1962. Prior to Thursday, the earliest time that snow had accumulated on the ground in the winter season was on Dec. 6, 1987, according to the agency.

Explosion in Southern Turkish City kills 2, wounds 16

Ankara, Nov. 24: At least two people were killed and 16 others wounded in an explosion on Thursday in the car park of a government building in the southern city of Adana, officials said. Omer Celik, the minister in charge of European Union affairs, said on his Twitter account that the explosion in front of the Adana governor's office was a "terror" attack. Hurriyet newspaper reported that the attack was believed to be caused by a car bomb. "This damnable terror is continuing to target our people," Celik said. "We shall continue our struggle against terrorism until the end in the name of humanity."

Mahmut Demirtas, the governor for Adana, said the blast killed two people and wounded 16 others. He told the state-run Anadolu Agency that the explosion occurred close to the entrance to his office and suggested it may have been a suicide attack carried out by a woman. The attack was the latest in a string of deadly bombings that have rocked Turkey in more than a year. The attacks were carried out by Kurdish militants or the ISIS group. Several cars in the parking lot caught fire after the blast, video footage showed. The blast also caused damage to the government building, Anadolu Agency said.

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