

Editorial

Imphal, Thursday, September 8, 2016

Democracy at stake

The charms of democracy seem to have vanished with the ongoing trend of electoral politics in the country particularly in the state of Manipur. What more could have been a blessing to a common people to have a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by the elected agents under free electoral system. But not every hopes resulted what is being expected. Politics by super game players taking advantage to the existence of multi ethnic people is running the beauty of democracy. The supposedly peoples' mandate is turning to be a rummy game for those who could made themselves find a seat in the table.

It is only few months left now. The game which had started playing by the few opportunists able to reach the rummy table will showed its reality. Yesterday marks the day as today's newspapers carries report of how the big players had started inciting act of vandalism to let them support in their struggle for getting elected them. The more the Election Day approaches it will not be exaggerated saying that more such game will be played using the common people on petty matters.

The kind of happenings and games being played in relation to the upcoming election make us shame. With information technology reaching its peak, communication between two persons staying at the opposite end of Globe can now get in touch in a fraction of second. People no need to wait for hours to find out what is happening across the globe.

Yesterday incident at Thoubal district at which supporters of an elected representative and supporters of an aspirant candidate ensued in a deadly clashed cannot be taken lightly. It predicts how dirty the upcoming electoral politics will be. It's assumptive.

Little drops of water makes the mighty ocean, the saying is universal. Similarly little leakage in the water pot will make it empty no matter how long it takes. Point bringing here is to recall that the present day crisis, which of course is a political in nature is the outcome of the small small crisis that are being engineered by the so call candidate of election either it may be for the local bodies or for the state Assembly or for the parliament.

Division among people was at its peak at the time of state Assembly election. From segregation agenda to assurances of demands (possible or impossible) or what not the candidates of today contesting the general assembly election utilized. Much has been seen and witness. The promises, the each of them assured during election time still remain unfulfilled even today when the next election if just at the doorstep.

The way we see or are going to witness in this election is in no way giving this erstwhile Asiatic nation a bright future. No matter how sincere is the candidate or nationalist is the one contesting; as long as the system remain the same fate of Manipur will remain in state of uncertainty.

In Manipur, democracy certainly is giving a bad taste. Something has seriously gone wrong in adopting it. It is time now for people to rethink over the matter to clean the dirt paints in the face of democracy.

National & International News

PM Modi proposes Joint Task Force on extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway

Vientiane, Sept. 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday proposed a joint task force on connectivity to work on extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, while also proposing to enhance the ASEAN-India Fund with an additional grant of US\$ 50 million. Speaking at the 14th ASEAN India Summit in Vientiane, Laos, Prime Minister Modi declared that

India supports the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). "Sea lanes are life lines of global trade. India supports freedom of navigation based on UNCLOS," he added. He also emphasized on New Delhi's will to work on cyber security. "We are willing to take concrete steps to enhance coop in cyber security, de-radicalization and Counter Terrorism," he said.

Stating natural disasters as common challenge and joint priority, Prime Minister Modi said that India will host the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in November. "Engagement of India-ASEAN is of 'economic optimism'. We continue to expand and deepen our economic engagements," he declared. Prime Minister Modi also offered to host India-ASEAN Youth Summit laying foundation of future

cooperation. He also proposed documenting civilizational ties, by commissioning project for mapping Indian inscriptions along Mekong river. The Prime Minister also invited the ASEAN as the Guest of Honour for the International Buddhist Conclave in October. He concluded reiterating that India is willing to march with ASEAN to fulfill promise and potential of its strategic engagement.

At Delhi Station, and then Ludhiana, Arvind Kejriwal encounters protests

New Delhi, Sept. 8: Angry protests book-ended Arvind Kejriwal's journey today from Delhi to Punjab, with women from opposition parties heckling him over a sex scandal in his party, and others insisting he should "go back." Mr Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi, was pushed by a crowd of women protesters as he boarded a Shatabdi train in Delhi this morning. The women shouted slogans against Sandeep Kumar, a minister who was sacked by Mr Kejriwal after he was seen in a sex video. The woman filmed with him has accused him of rape and Mr Kumar was arrested on the weekend. The encounter at Delhi proves that the city's police force is leaking his itinerary to compromise his safety,

Mr Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party or AAP alleged. "Why did this happen despite the police being informed about the Chief Minister's schedule? He is pushed around in the presence of the police, and they were silent spectators. TV cameras had been called. It is obvious that this was planned," tweeted Mr Kejriwal's deputy, Manish Sisodia. AAP has also objected to the Delhi Police refusing to provide security for Mr Kejriwal in Punjab. The police says once the Chief Minister crosses into another state, it cannot guard him. Mr Kejriwal is to spend three days in Punjab where his party has been short-circuiting with a series of scandals about candidates for the

coming elections allegedly bribing top party leaders. In the 2014 general election, AAP won a surprise four seats, and the party's brand was surging in recent months Punjab on account of Mr Kejriwal's frequent visits to the state, where he hopes to displace the ruling BJP-Akali Dal coalition. As he arrived at Ludhiana, women members of the Congress flung bangles against him to protest against the sex scandal, and youth members of the Akali Dal separately shouted that he is not welcome in the state.

Militants decamp with rifles of policemen in Kulgam

PTI Srinagar, Sept 8: Militants attacked the guard post at the residence of a political leader in Kulgam district of Kashmir and decamped with rifles of policemen after disarming them, police said today. The ultras barged into the residential compound of Abdul Rashid Khanday, who was earlier associated with National Conference, at Begom in Kulgam late last night and took away four service rifles of the cops posted on guard duty of the political leader, a police official said. Earlier, police had said that Khanday is a block president of National Conference but a spokesman of the principal opposition party said he had severed ties with the party in 2002.

"The matter has been formally communicated to the police by party's district president Kulgam that Khanday is not associated with the National Conference," NC spokesman Junaid Azim Matuu said. The official said the militants decamped with two INSAS rifles, one SLR rifle and a 303 rifle from the cops. While a departmental inquiry has been set up to probe the incident, security forces have alerted in south Kashmir to track the militants who carried out the attack, he said. Meanwhile, militants also fired a few rounds towards police station Pulwama last night but there was no damage due to the incident, the official said.

China shuns Seoul security dialogue amid missile row

Beijing, Sept 8: China is shunning a security dialogue in Seoul amid an ongoing row over South Korea's decision to deploy a powerful US missile defense system. The official newspaper Global Times today quoted an unidentified Defense Ministry spokesman as saying China was not sending a delegation to this week's Seoul Defense Dialogue because of "reasons of work arrangement." It offered no other details. China has angrily denounced plans for the deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area

Defense, or THAAD system, whose radars it says will allow the US military to peer deep into northeastern China. Seoul and Washington say the system is intended solely to defend against North Korea's missile threat. China elevated the issue on Monday, with President Xi Jinping expressing China's opposition directly in a meeting with his South Korean counterpart Park Geun-hye. Xi said that "mishandling the issue is not conducive to strategic stability in the region, and could intensify disputes."

Government extends LTC facility for J&K

New Delhi, Sept. 8: In a step aimed at boosting tourism in Jammu and Kashmir, the central government has decided to extend the facility to travel by air on Leave Travel Concession (LTC) for its employees for two years, it was announced on Thursday. "To boost the tourism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the government has decided to extend the facility to travel by air on LTC," an official statement here said. The concession can be availed under the special dispensation scheme for central government employees for a period of two years beyond September 25, 2016, the statement added.

Contd. from previous issue

Manipur in the Backdrop of AFSPA and Irom Sharmila

This write up was presented by Yumnam Rupachandra, Editor-in-Chief, Impact News (Manipur), Secretary General, Editors' Guild Manipur in the late Harendra Nath Barua Memorial Lecture, in Guwahati August 31, 2016

This brings us to the issue and question—are we truly a democratic nation? Is regular elections with increasing participation the only determinant of a true democracy? Though India is run by a civilian government which is heavily inspired by principles of our founding father, the Mahatma Gandhi, 16 years of Sharmila's non-violent struggle and the state's response to it has exposed how the civilian government is dependent on the Army and in name of the National security the army can get away undermining even a Prime Minister of this country. How can that be when we are truly democratic if our army dictates the civilian government. And then what about our media, the so called fourth pillar. Just as Manipur and rest of the North east states are far from the policymakers in Delhi, the national media—the patriotic national media, are far from us. News coming out of the region is about the killings and bombing but never about why. The national media which para-drops, in its (NE's) many theatre of wars disappears along with the firefighters waiting for the local

news media to break fresh wars for its Delhi bureau to command them to take flights. The National electronic media with its agenda setting talk shows have just skimmed the surface even as North East has been categorised as non-TRP region. I am told Guwahati now only one "national TV Channel" reporter. Similar is the case with rest of the states where part time stringers who are placed on "per story payments" act as "fixers" and landing pad for the paratroopers. The print media seems to be doing better but the trend, I am afraid remains same. Assam & Manipur and rest of the states of NE share a unique relationship. Yet we are as strangers to one another as we are to many so called "mainland" communities. Because, Sharmila fasted for a cause that impacts all of us in the North east, there is need for all of us to understand one another. Historical engagements are rather used to support hostilities than to bring harmony. History has that Assam and Manipur suffered similar fate in the Hands of the Burmese. We had our "Seven years devastation" and you had your "Maanor Din" –

the dark days. It is also our shared history that Manipuri princess became one of your queen and landmarks like the "Manipuri Basti" are proof of those relationship. Yet today in days of "information technology" and far reaching mass media, we hardly understand each others pains and problems. Can our media and and keepers of our ways of life and culture - like the Assam Sahitya Sabha and their counterparts in different NE states do something about? I am told the Assam Sahitya Sabha is celebrating 2017 as its centenary year. May be you could engage with different literary bodies of the north East in this year long celebration-because Assam with its "big brotherly" position in the North East needs to take a lead in bringing about a collective change in how we think and face a great challenge that is about to come to all of us—the ACT East policy. Sharmila may have ended her fast and those supporting her may have vanished. But because AFSPA remains with all its "draconian" facets to be used on its citizens, Indian citizens and people of North East still need to be on our toes.

Every weapon is considered good when used against our foes but when it is turned on you, it is another case. After 70 years of independence, India's march towards a mature democracy is tested by likes of Sharmila and this nations has no answer but to incarcerate voices like her and paint her anti national because she finds support of those fighting the very notion of the nation called India. It is with this foreboding that I present this paper, for anyone speaking against this act -AFSPA, if not from the position of a Prime Minister like Dr Manmohan Singh or former Home Minister P Chidambaram, you are likely to called an anti national. Sharmila was anti national when she fasted but now that she has embraced Politics, she has join what is popularly called "mainstream." So be it. However just as Manipur has contributed a mighty lot in national sports, let her 16 years of fast be a contribution to this nation in making it a stronger and more matured democracy. (0.23% of 1.2 billion contributes 8 out of 118 Olympic 7% (nearly) (Concluded)

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