

Editorial

Imphal Saturday, April 15, 2017

Don't make it just another Publicity stunt

Being a man with concrete knowledge of Mass Media, Chief Minister N. Biren does really know how to make a publicity stunt. Leaving aside much of the appreciative activities by his nearly 30 days old government two issue which received both criticism and appreciation is the establishment of Anti-Corruption Cell and then his recent announcement to make compulsory of all government employees to sent their wards to government run school.

The two decisions is indeed a bold step taken up by N. Biren government to make people live a life free from corruption. When we talk of wiping out corruption we also need to change the mindset of the people and the only way to change the mindset is through proper effective education.

Everything that Chief Minister N Biren and his team have been taking up in just around 30 days is worth praising. Some of the activities touched our heart and we do sometime felt that he should have been chosen to the top post long time back. The kind of work taken up seems to be coming out with full of frustration and anger and such an act should not be done by person like the Chief Minister. After all he should understand that the oppositions are always waiting to strike at the right time.

It is an appreciating step of the government to establish an anti corruption Cell, however, why our chief Minister who had a strong background of journalism failed to notice that there are numerous agency like the State Information Commission, Manipur Human Rights Commission etc etc, besides the state vigilance department.

These commissions and the government department are also effective tools for checking corruption. However, even though it is too early to comment, the government is not spelling out a single words for reviving the commissions by appointing the competent authority. And more over the kind of corruption which is ruining the state is of high class corruption, a peon accepting Rs. 10 from the visitor for a cup of tea need not checked but it is those big shot accepting Rs. 30 Lakhs from company by a bureaucrat officer of the state government for getting approval of the tender applied for Transmission of raw water from Mapithel Dam to Chingkhelching. Imphal Times have detail evidences of how the bureaucrats accept the Rs. 30 lakhs and it is pity that the state government is targeting a peon which accept Rs. 10 from a visitor.

Wiping out of corruption also require change of mindsets. And it is through proper education that the mindset of the people will be change. To tell the fact, somewhere, some area, the education system is completely failed. It is failed because there are no updated curriculums in the syllabus moreover government cannot properly check the teachers appointed by them.

When Chief Minister announced that his government will make policy to make all wards of the government employees compulsory to government school is perhaps a speech spoken from the mouth and not by consulting his brain. When one bureaucrat officers open a government model school at Keishamthong Elangbam Leikai, many students and parents have to wait in queue to admit their children. It is history now, but what is wanted to focus is that government should change the school by utilizing various method to make sure that people started believing in them.

An earnest request to our Hon'ble Minister - "Please think at least thrice, and consult with your advisor before making any such announcement".

Constable commits suicide in Baghpat

PTI Baghpat (UP), April 15: A 45-year-old constable has allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself on the head while on duty here, police said. Jitendra Pal Singh Raghav, who was posted in the Police Lines, shot himself from his service rifle

yesterday, police said. The constable had returned from his home in Aligarh two days ago and is said to be disturbed over some family matter, police said, adding investigations are on. The body has been handed over to the family after post mortem examination.

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Ensuring Equal Right to HIV/AIDS infected people

By : Savita Verma

Parliament has passed a crucial Bill to ensure equal rights to the people infected with HIV and AIDS in getting treatment and prevent discrimination of any kind. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome - AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2017 was passed by the Lok Sabha on 11th April and by the Rajya Sabha on March 21 this year.

HIV infection in India was first detected in 1986 amongst female sex workers in Chennai. Though the prevalence of HIV has been decreasing over the last decade, the country still has the third largest HIV epidemic in the world only after South Africa and Nigeria. India's newly passed HIV bill is the first of its kind in south Asia. South Africa and Nigeria have also passed laws banning some forms of discrimination. There are approximately 21 lakh people estimated to be living with HIV in India. The country reported around 86000 new HIV infections in 2015, showing 66 per cent decline from 2000. Around 68000 people died of AIDS related causes in 2015. The Bill would support National AIDS Control Programme in arresting new infections and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals target of ending the epidemic by 2030.

One of the main reasons such a law was required in the country is that HIV/AIDS has been associated with a lot of stigma and discrimination. Though discrimination has diminished over the years due to government efforts and contribution of civil society, it continues still. The new law will go a long way in ending this discrimination. The Bill defines

discrimination as denial or discontinuation of employment, education, healthcare services, renting or residing property, public or private office, insurance and public facilities. Unfair treatment in any of these categories by State or any person will be seen as discrimination, inviting action. The Bill states that nobody should be tested for HIV as a pre-requisite for securing a job, accessing health care or education. It prohibits publishing of information or advocating of feelings of hatred against HIV positive persons by anybody. For ensuring privacy, the Bill prohibits HIV testing or medical treatment without informed consent. However, informed consent does not include screening by licensed blood banks, medical research or any such purpose where the test is anonymous and not meant to determine the person's HIV status. An HIV positive person will be required to disclose his/her HIV status only if required by a court order.

There are also penal provisions for discrimination and breach of confidentiality. "Whosoever does not adhere to the provisions of the bill, will be penalised. Civil and criminal proceedings will be launched against such persons," Health Minister J P Nadra, said. Action would also be taken against those who attempt to block the implementation of the bill. Violating the confidentiality of HIV positive persons could lead to imprisonment of upto two years and a fine of upto Rs one lakh.

Though treatment for AIDS or anti-retroviral therapy is currently free in government hospitals, the Bill goes a step further by making treatment a legal right of infected people. "Every person in the care

and custody of the state shall have right to HIV prevention, testing, treatment and counselling services," it says. Therefore, the central and state governments will provide treatment for AIDS and opportunistic infections along with infection management services. The central and state governments will also have to take measures to prevent the spread of HIV or AIDS and facilitate access of persons with HIV or AIDS to welfare schemes especially for women and children. The government spent Rs 2, 000 crore on anti retroviral therapy last year.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 11, 2014 by the then Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Ghulam Nabi Azad. The amendments to this Bill were introduced by the current government in July last year. Since then there have been several changes to the original Bill. For instance, the Bill has adopted "test and treat" policy which means any person testing positive will be entitled for free treatment by the state and central government.

The newly passed Bill has provisions to safeguard the property rights of HIV positive people. Every HIV infected person below the age of 18 years has the right to reside in a shared household and enjoy the facilities of the household. It also states that cases relating to HIV positive persons should be disposed of by courts on a priority basis. If, an HIV infected or affected person is a party in any legal proceeding, the court may pass orders that the proceedings be conducted by suppressing the

identity of the person, in camera, and to restrain any person from publishing information that discloses the identity of the applicant. When passing any order with regard to a maintenance application filed by an HIV infected or affected person, the court shall take into account the medical expenses incurred by the applicant. The Bill requires appointment of ombudsmen by each state government to inquire into complaints related to the violation of the Act and the provision of health care services. The Ombudsman shall submit a report to the state government every six months stating the number and nature of complaints received, the actions taken and orders passed. There is also a provision of penalty of Rs 10,000 if the ombudsman's order is not complied with.

The process of drafting the Bill had started in 2002, when the need for a law was recognised by civil society members, people living with HIV and the government. The Bill is an initiative of the Lawyers Collective, a non-governmental organization. It was presented to the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) in 2006. The Bill was drafted after nationwide consultations with stakeholders including people living with HIV, communities most vulnerable to HIV infection such as sex workers, men having sex with men, transgenders, and drug users, healthcare workers, children's organisations, women's groups, trade unions, lawyers, and state AIDS control societies.

Author is a senior science and health journalist with over 18 years of experience. Now an independent journalist, earlier she had worked with PTI and some other major newspapers.

National and International News

Telangana Chief Minister's Son KT Rama Rao Sold Ice-Cream. He Made A Cool 7.5 Lakh

NTDV Hyderabad, April 15: When he told his ministers, leaders and workers to work as a "coolie" for two days to raise money for a grand party convention, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had promised to lead by example. On Friday, his son and the powerful IT Minister KT Rama Rao took the hint and turned up at an ice-cream parlour, borrowed an apron from the helper and got down to the job. Reports said he was out of Suchitra ice-cream parlour along the Hyderabad-Nagpur National Highway in less than an hour and yet, had made a cool Rs. 7.5 lakh.

That is lot more than what the parlour makes in a month. But he had some pretty rich customers, mostly party politicians. For one, the 63-year-old Malla Reddy who didn't go to college in his younger days but owns a chain of engineering colleges in the state. Mr Reddy is a lawmaker in parliament, elected on the rival TDP ticket, who switched sides last year. He spent a whopping Rs. 5 lakhs for an ice-cream, and he isn't complaining. Lawmakers from the Andhra-Telangana belt are among the richest in the country; the education baron had declared

assets worth Rs. 48 crore in 2014. There will be more such gestures within the next week that Chief Minister, also known as KCR, calls "Gulaabi Cooli Dinale" or "Pink Labourer Days" (pink is the colour of the TRS). Ads by ZINC For someone who spent Rs. 5.5 crores of taxpayers' money for his Rs. 5-crore gift to Lord Venkateshwara at Tirumala, KCR's initiative is curious. According to the Chief Minister, the money that the party leaders earn during their two-days of hard labour will be used to meet the expenses of the grand annual

convention of the Telangana Rashtriya Samiti or TRS on April 21, followed by a public meeting to be held at Warangal next Friday. He had added that the party had already collected "nearly 35 crore rupees in membership fee and that is reaching our party bank account". That is almost four times the Rs. 8.9 crore that the TRS had declared as its income in 2015-16 to the Election Commission. In 2015, it had declared an income of Rs. 24.6 crore. In both years, according to its statement of accounts, it spent every penny that it earned during the year.

Number of ISIS Terrorists killed by US bomb jumps to 90: Afghan officials

Jalalabad, April 15: The death toll from the American military's largest non-nuclear bomb nearly tripled Saturday, with Afghan officials saying at least 90 Islamic State terrorists were killed, as US-led forces conducted clean-up operations over the rugged terrain. The GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb — dubbed the "Mother Of All Bombs" — was unleashed in combat for the first time, hitting ISIS positions in eastern Nangarhar province on Thursday.

The bombing triggered shock waves in Afghanistan, with some condemning the use of Afghanistan as what they called a testing ground for the weapon, and against a militant group that is not considered a threat as big as the resurgent Taliban.

"At least 92 Daesh (ISIS) terrorists were killed in the bombing," Achin district governor Esmael Shinwari told AFP on Saturday. Nangarhar provincial spokesman Attullah Khogyani gave a toll of 90. Afghan officials had earlier said the bombing had killed 36 ISIS terrorists.

The bomb smashed the ISIS's remote mountain hideouts, a tunnel-and-cave complex that had been mined against conventional ground attacks, engulfing the remote area in a huge mushroom cloud and showering flames. Shinwari insisted there were "no military and civilian casualties at all". Security experts say ISIS had built their redoubts close to civilian homes, but the government said thousands of local families had already fled the area in recent months of fighting.

The massive bomb was dropped after fighting intensified over the past week and US-backed ground forces struggled to advance on the area. An American special forces soldier was killed last Saturday in Nangarhar while conducting anti-ISIS operations. President Ashraf Ghani threw his support behind the bombardment, saying it was "designed to support the efforts of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and US forces conducting clearance operations in the region." But some analysts called the action

"disproportionate". "The Trump administration made a lot of noise with this bomb, but the general state of play on the ground remains the same: The Taliban continues to wage a formidable and ferocious insurgency. ISIS, by comparison, is a sideshow," Michael Kugelman of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington told AFP, using an alternative acronym for IS.

"Still, from a strategic standpoint, there is an unsettling takeaway here: The US pulled off a huge shock and

awe mission against an enemy that isn't even the top threat to the US in Afghanistan. The Taliban continues to sit pretty." ISIS, notorious for its reign of terror in Syria and Iraq, has made inroads into Afghanistan in recent years, attracting disaffected members of the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban as well as Uzbek Islamists. But the group has been steadily losing ground in the face of heavy pressure both from US air strikes and a ground offensive led by Afghan forces.

8 coaches of Rajya Rani Exp derail near Rampur, 2 injured

PTI New Delhi, April 15: Eight coaches of Meerut-Lucknow Rajya Rani Express derailed near Rampur in Uttar Pradesh today leaving at least two passengers injured, railway officials said. The accident happened between Mundapandey and Rampur railway stations, Northern railway spokesperson Neeraj Sharma said. He said while two passengers have

been injured there was no casualty in the accident. Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu ordered an enquiry to ascertain causes behind the accident. "Personally monitoring situation. Directed senior officers to rush to the spot. Ensure speedy relief and rescue operations (sic)," he wrote on twitter. He said strict action will be taken against those found guilty.