

Editorial

Imphal Monday, April 17, 2017

Action appreciative but fishy in replacement

Even as the Chief Minister of Manipur denies any information regarding tendering of resignation by health Minister L Jyentakumar, it is now public that the Health Minister from NPP in the BJP led coalition government has tendered resignation to the Chief Minister. As per his statement to the media the matter at which he tendered resignation is confidential, but it is open secret that the resignation was tendered over the suspension of Health Director Dr. Okram Ibomcha. L. Jyentakumar was not happy because he was not consulted being the Minister of the department.

At one way, L. Jyentakumar may be right, if the chief minister N. Biren did not consult him at the time of taking action against the director. After all it is his department.

Every body knows that there may be perfect reason for taking action to some government official. The former health director who has been suspended is now not a matter of concern for the general public except the worry about cracks in the coalition government. If by chance the NPP pull out then the BJP led government will lose majority in the state assembly.

Another matter which people felt a sense of suspicion to the way the government acted is the appointment of AYUSH Director Dr. K Lokendro Singh in charge director of Health. The question is being arise as people are keeping bird eye to the functioning of the N Biren Singh led government.

There are certain criteria for appointment of a Director, either it may be in health department, Commerce and Industries department or any other government department. If fulfilled the criteria those in the senior most category are often chosen for the post.

Something fishy is going on to the appointment of Dr. K Lokendro as the director in charge health instead of Dr. K Rajjo Singh which is more senior to him besides being in the special grade category.

The suspension of Health Director Dr. O Ibomcha is perhaps the first action taken up by the N. Biren Singh led government. And it would be more appreciative if the government followed proper guideline to the replacement of the suspended director.

More State News

'Public participation is a must'



IT News
Imphal, April 17: Art & Culture Minister, Shri L. Jayentakumar Singh has expressed his deep concern over the present scenario of art and cultural aspects of the state.

Attending the inaugural function of the 5th All Manipur Folk Drama Festival-2017 organised by Manipur Dramatic Union at MDU Hall at Yaiskul Police Line, Imphal, as Chief Guest, the Minister expressed his desire to develop and promote the rich cultural heritage of the state. He said art and culture plays a vital role in a society. It is also the reflection of our identity and standard of life, he added.

Shri L. Jayentakumar Singh also mentioned about the initiatives of the State Government to develop its culture. He appealed the public to co-operate with the government in its steps to develop art & culture in the state. Minister also released a Souvenir of the festival.

President MDU Shri A. Ksheergopal Singh, Sangeet Natak Academi Awardee Shri E. Joychandra Singh & Director Manipuri Ensemble Shri Kshetri Jugindro Singh attended the function as Special Guest, President and Guest of Honour respectively.

Director DIPR, Manipur Shri Meghachandra Kongbam and many renowned theatre personalities were also present at the function. The festival is being organised under the financial assistance from Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, New Delhi

Do farmers disturb credit culture more than industry?

By: Prabhakar Kulkarni

The Marathi agriculture daily *Agrowon* has criticized both the RBI governor Urjit Patel and State Bank of India's Arundhati Bhattacharya who have objected to the farm loan waiver in Uttar Pradesh and similar demands elsewhere. The paper's line is quite different from that of the mainstream English press which has been sharply critical of Yogi Adityanath's Rs 36,359 crore mifficence.

Patel is quoted as having said, "I think it (loan waiver schemes) undermines an honest credit culture. It impacts credit discipline. It (impacts) incentives for future borrowers to repay. In another words, waivers engender moral hazard," he said after announcing the first bi-monthly monetary policy for 2017-18.

He added that debt waivers also entail transfers from taxpayers to borrowers. Then there was more. "If on account of this overall government borrowing goes up, yields on government bonds also get impacted. Thereafter, it can also lead to crowding of the private borrowers as higher government borrowing can lead to increasing cost of borrowing for others."

Agrowon responded in an editorial: "The chief of the State Bank of India Arundhati Bhattacharya has made a statement against the farmers' loan waiver saying that farmers' should not be given loan waiver because that disturbs the credit discipline. Following this the Governor of Reserve Bank of India Urjit Patel has also opposed the farmers' loan waiver saying that would disturb the honest credit culture. These high level persons are opposing the move when at the highest level pro-farmer considerations are going on and demand for loan waiver is being put forth in many states.

It adds, "In fact banks which were formerly limited for serving big industrialists were twice nationalized in order to provide benefits to farmers and common citizens. But these banks are providing credit to big industrialists

while disturbing the very spirit of nationalization. The banks have two-fold policy of doing favour to big borrowers and disregarding any relief or due credit to farmers."

The paper adds that banks have followed one criteria while providing credit and waiver of loans to big industrialists and the other negative one for farmers and this amounts to double standards on the part of the banks. "There are large number of cases in the country wherein crores of rupees loans are given by banks sidetracking due rules and regulations. When these loans are not repaid they are shown as NPAs and later they are written off to clear the balance sheets. This process is going on every year. These written off cases are nothing but clear loan waivers."

It goes on to say that this 'writing off' process reduces dividend of banks' shares and incurs loss to the government. On the contrary when farmers are given loan waiver the amount is paid by the government without any loss to the banks and on the contrary their profits are increased.

Agrowon ends by saying that it should "therefore be noted that farmers are repaying their loans and only due to natural calamities and also some anti-farm government policies their monetary conditions are perturbed resulting in crisis."

Apart from the editorial the paper has responded to the first tirade against the loan waiver by SBI chairperson Arundhati Bhattacharya by publishing a few articles disclosing the futility of the statements by those who know nothing of Indian agriculture. For instance in one article it is pointed out that the statement by Arundhati Bhattacharya is based on ignorance of the farm sector and farmers' transactions in rural economy.

Going into her personal background, the article points out that Arundhati Bhattacharya is a Bengali who spent her childhood in Bhilai where her father worked at the Bhilai Steel Plant. Her mother,

was a homeopathy consultant in Bokaro. She is married to a former IIT Kharagpur professor. "This background clearly indicates that she is not in a position to know the farm sector nor can have any idea about how farmers live in villages and how their transactions are going on in their rural households."

The article says her statement resulted in agitations against her and her effigy was burnt by the member of Parliament Raju Shetty in front of a State Bank branch at Nagpur. It quotes her saying, "Credit discipline breaks when you waive off farm loans. Money will come in today because government will pay but when we will give loan in future, farmers will wait for next elections. Support to the farmers is necessary but not at the cost of credit discipline."

It goes to make a couple of valid points. One, that her statement is based on the presumption that farmers normally do not repay loans which it says is not true. While only crop loans are given to farmers, that loan is recovered directly from the bills received from the sugar co-operatives which send the cane bill amount directly to the farmers' accounts in banks. Thus the link recovery system clears the disbursed loans. In case of *Jirait* lands, farmers do not get any credit facility. If they get loans they pay after selling their produce in the market. But as they do not get adequate rate for the produce they are cash-starved and cannot repay according to bankers' expectation.

The article also stresses the farm sector's dependence on nature, and its vulnerability to natural calamities such as unseasonal rains, drought or crop infestation, as well as inadequate water and power supply.

That the distressed farmers or even common consumers facing difficulties should be helped is the government policy. That is why the RBI has issued the

specific circular dedicating power to banks to provide credit and if necessary waive off loans of the distressed bank consumers including farmers. (It quoted the said circular No.BPOD.BPBC.81/21.01.040.95 dt.28th July 1995).

The English press has criticized the loan waiver by pointing out that it cannot help marginal farmers who took loans from non-institutional sources, so the most vulnerable will not benefit. The same article in *Mint* underscores the SBI and RBI's credit culture point by saying, also, as is the case with any loan waiver, those who paid back their loans despite facing hardships would end up as losers.

A writer in *The Times of India* made the additional point that "As per the WB (World Bank) research, most banks preferred to move away from districts where bailout percentage was higher to other districts with relatively lower percentages. Most banks shied away because of the fear that loan waivers increase tendency of the borrower not to repay in the hope of the next government bailing them out."

The Indian Express was also critical, in an editorial and in a comment piece.

Interestingly, the *Financial Express* was more sympathetic. "Those claiming that farm loan waiver is bad economics tend to treat agriculture at par with other industrial sectors. But then, considering agriculture as an industrial sector has its own pitfalls. For example: Farmers of the country do not get benefits at par with industrial workers. They have been a neglected lot for decades. Imagine the chaos that would ensue if farmers decide to go on a strike for even a single crop season. Loan waiver, hence, needs to be seen as a small contribution towards the agriculture workers."

The paper added, "Secondly, it also needs to be seen as a small one-time investment, or even as a bonus, for a vast section of society that keeps our kitchens running." (Courtesy- The Hoot)

National and International News

Narendra Modi govt may make rules for doctors to prescribe generic drugs soon

Source First Post
Surat, April 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday indicated that his government may bring in a legal framework under which doctors will have to prescribe generic medicines, which are cheaper than equivalent branded drugs, to patients. Modi said his government brought in a health policy after 15 years and capped the prices of medicines and stents, which has angered some pharmaceutical companies.

Speaking at the inauguration of a charitable hospital here, he exhorted the wealthy people to come forward and contribute towards health care of the needy people. This country has not been built by the kings and leaders alone but by the power of the people, he said. "Doctors write prescriptions in such a way that poor people do not understand the handwriting, and he has to buy that medicine from private stores at high prices," Modi said.

"We will bring in a legal framework by which if a doctor writes a prescription, he has to write in it that it will be enough for patients to buy generic medicine and he need not buy any other medicine," he said. "In our country doctors are less, hospitals are less and medicines are expensive. If one person falls ill in a middle class family, then the financial health of the family gets wrecked. He cannot buy a house, cannot conduct the marriage of daughter," he pointed out.

"It is the government's responsibility that

everybody should get health services at a minimal price," the PM said. "We have recently declared a health policy. The health policy has been brought in after 15 years," he said. "Earlier, the health policy was brought when Atalji (AB Vajpayee) was the Prime Minister. Nothing happened in between (in health sector), which I have to do (now)." Modi said targeting the previous UPA government led by the Congress.

"When I was in Gujarat, I used to attract the wrath of many (by my decisions). Now when I have gone to Delhi, I have been instrumental in making many people angry, everyday I do some work which makes some or other person sulk," he said. "See these companies which are manufacturing medicines, they used to charge Rs 1,200 for an injection. We called everyone (pharma companies) and ensured that the prices are reduced. "The prices of 700 medicines were capped so that poor people get medicines at reasonable rates when they face grave diseases," Modi said. "We have also capped the prices of stents used in heart ailments," he said. "We have done this work, and you can imagine how angry the manufacturers of medicines will be. Despite the wrath of a very powerful lobby, the government is taking one step after another so that poor people and middle class get quality health services," the Prime Minister said.

He said the government has implemented the 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Pariyojna', where

people get generic medicines from stores at reasonable rates. Modi also stressed on preventive health care saying if people adopt it, they will not have to visit hospitals. "Preventive health care is very important. My Swachhta Abhiyan (cleanliness campaign) is aimed at preventive healthcare as it has been proved that many diseases are contracted if we live in an unclean environment," he said. "Yoga is also very important for wellness and I am running a campaign to make it popular across the world," he said. He exhorted the well-off people to come forward and provide health care to the poor and middle class people. "We require a jan andolan, jan shakti to provide effective healthcare to every person in the country," he said. "Our country has a different mentality, our country was not made by governments, our country was not made by kings, neither by leaders, our country was built by the service-oriented approach of our countrymen," he said.

"Seva permo dharma" has been the motto of our people," the PM said. "You tell me the dharma shalms outside every important pilgrim town, were they built by the government? Who used to build wells and lakes in villages? Did the government build it? he asked. "The cow shelters in villages are not built by the government, libraries are not built by government," he said asking people to come forward to build and run hospitals in the rural areas.

President Pranab Mukherjee felicitates freedom fighters in Patna

Patna, April 17: President Pranab Mukherjee today felicitated freedom fighters across the country at Patna on occasion of centenary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha.

Besides Governor Ram Nath Kovind and Chief Minister Nitish RJD Chief Lalu Prasad and Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi were also present on the occasion.

President Mukherjee honoured freedom fighters of Bihar Jharkhand Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, West Bengal and other states. Women freedom fighters were also felicitated.

The state government had decided to honour those freedom fighters who could not attend the function due to health or other reasons. Governor Ram Nath Kovind said Gandhi thought is pertinent today. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said it is a pride moment to felicitate freedom fighters.

Mr. Kumar said all places related to Mahatma Gandhi in Bihar will be developed. He said the state government will spread views of Gandhi ji among people of the state

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