

Editorial

Imphal Tuesday, April 4, 2017

A thought on healthier future

Manipur is basically an agrarian economy, with more than 70 percent of its population engaging in and earning their livelihood from agricultural related activities. This is not to say that the economy is flourishing or self-dependent as a result. The ground reality cannot be further from the assumptions and official projections which portray a well-supported and managed sector. In fact, most of the people engaged in agriculture and other allied activities in the state are marginal farmers, who, for want of a better and more profitable economic activity, have resorted to farming to supplement their earnings. That the agricultural policy of the state is in shambles and is in urgent need of a revamp would be a serious understatement. And to make things worse, the state has unerringly failed to provide the much needed subsidized fertilizers and other resources for the farmers in time and in adequate quantity, the increasingly unpredictable climate adding to the woes. Tales of unavailability of raw materials like fertilizers, seeds and equipments when needed the most have been a common and regular occurrence in the state for the past many years. This year also will be no different, if one goes by the experiences of the past, in 2015 the then state cabinet resolved to stock up 15,000 MT of urea fertilizers as buffer stock for the summer crops, an amount which is estimated to fulfil the requirements of the state. Incidentally, a similar resolution was taken by the cabinet in 2014 for which an amount of '4.48 crores were sanctioned, the same as in the year 2015. Ironically, only about 13,000 MT were brought in by the transporters, out of which only around 10,000 MT were distributed to the farmers under the Government subsidy scheme. The discrepancies in transportation and subsidies thereof made available to the transporters were noted. If it is to ensure timely and adequate availability of fertilizers to the farmers, have still to tackle various other issues including, amongst others, transportation charges, safety of the transporters etc. in the light of these overwhelming obstacles being faced by the state in bringing in such essential resources year after year, it is perplexing to see that the state Government is still not ready, or rather unable to think out of the box and draw up options which could mitigate such perennial problems for good. The most obvious option would be to set up fertilizer plants, more specifically organic fertilizer plants in the state. This will not only solve the problem of timely availability, but also kick start a new industrial sector enabling at the very least, a few thousands of educated unemployed talents to be gainfully occupied, while simultaneously reducing the increasing dependence of the farmers on chemical fertilizers which has been proven to be harmful to our health. Another added benefit would be the utilization of organic wastes into the production of beneficial fertilizers, thus reducing garbage in the state. Such a move will also induce the public to take up family level production of organic fertilizers and increase their awareness of the impact of such products on their health. But most importantly, this step, if implemented, can prove to be the game changer by ushering in a sustainable and never-ending organic green revolution in the state. What remains to be seen is the earnest effort and willingness of the present Government to take up the challenge.

Two engineering students found dead in Lonavla

PTI
Pune, April 4: Two students of an engineering college were found dead at a forest area in Lonavla hill station of the district, police said today. The deceased, a 22-year-old boy and a girl aged 21, were allegedly stripped and hit on the back of their heads with a blunt object. There were injuries on their other body parts also, they said. The girl's hands were tied at the back and she was gagged, an officer at Lonavla city police station said. "A local resident, who spotted the bodies yesterday in the forest area located near INS Shivaji Naval station here, alerted the police," he said. The police rushed to the spot and

sent the bodies for postmortem, he said.

"Both the deceased were students of a third year engineering course at a college in Lonavla. The girl hailed from Ootir in Pune district. The boy hailed from Rahuri in Ahmednagar," the officer said.

The girl used to stay in the college hostel, while the boy lived at a private accommodation in Lonavla, which is located about 100 km from the Pune district headquarters.

Both of them were friends and had gone out together on Sunday, the police officer said.

A murder case has been registered, he said.

"We are investigating the case from all angles and waiting for the postmortem report," the officer said.

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NSS: An Opportunity for Youth to Contribute in Nation Building

By : Alok Deshwal

National Service Scheme (NSS) was introduced in 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service. Initially it was launched in 37 Universities involving about 40,000 volunteers. However, with the passage of time and as a Pan Indian programme, the number of educational institutions covered under NSS has been increasing year after year. Currently more than 36.5 lakh volunteers are enrolled in 39,695 NSS units spread over 391 Universities/ +2 Councils, 16,278 Colleges and Technical Institutions and 12,483 Senior Secondary Schools. Since its inception, over 4.78 crore students have benefited from NSS.

Each NSS volunteer is required to put in minimum 120 hours of service per year for two years, i.e., total 240 hours. This work is undertaken in villages/ slums adopted by NSS unit or in school/ college campuses, usually after study hours or during weekends/ vacations. Besides, Each NSS unit organises a Special Camp of 7 days' duration in adopted villages or urban slums during vacations, with some specific projects, by involving the local communities. Each volunteer is required to participate in the Special Camp once during the 2-year period. Thus, about 50 percent of the NSS volunteers in a Unit participate in a particular Special Camp.

NSS units can take up any activity that is relevant to the community.

The activities continue to evolve in response to the needs of the community. The core activities could be in the field of education and literacy, health, family welfare and nutrition, sanitation and cleanliness, environment conservation, social service programmes, programmes

for improving status of women, production-oriented programmes, disaster relief and rehabilitation, campaigning against social evils, creating awareness about Flagship Programmes of the Government like Digital India, Skill India, Promotion of Yoga etc.

NSS is a Central government programme, yet the Central government, the States/UTs and the Educational Institutions are the 3 pillars of this Programme. It would have been impossible to effectively run a programme directly from the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, dealing with over 29,000 educational institutions across the country. The implementation of the programme has been possible due to effective collaboration/partnership between the Centre and the States on the one hand and the States and Educational Institutions on the other.

As mentioned earlier, NSS was introduced with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through *voluntary community service*. 'Education through Service' is the purpose of the NSS. The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Very appropriately, the motto of NSS is "NOT ME, BUT YOU". An NSS volunteer places the 'community' before 'self'. This is part of the *third dimension of education*, namely, *value education*, which is becoming increasingly important.

NSS volunteers have been making very valuable contribution to the Society, besides developing their own personality. During the previous year, NSS units organised 12,628 special camps in adopted villages/ slums across the country. NSS volunteers undertook 91 lakh volunteer-hours of Shramadaan,

donated 1.98 lakh units of blood and planted over 13.27 lakh saplings. The volunteers were instrumental in organising about 7,051 Health, Eye and Immunization camps and also 30,011 awareness programmes through rallies and campaigns on various important government programmes and social issues. NSS volunteers facilitated pulse polio immunization of about 6 lakh children. The volunteers have been playing key role in Swachh Bharat Mission, spreading digital literacy and in popularization of Yoga. On the occasion of International Day of Yoga last year, about 11.19 lakh NSS volunteers participated in yoga programmes across the country.

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is committed to expand NSS in a big way. So far, the NSS covers less than 10% of the students eligible to join it. Efforts are being made to increase funding support for NSS and meanwhile, setting up of Self-Financing Units of NSS has also been permitted. To encourage students to take up NSS, UGC has issued an Advisory to all Universities to introduce NSS as an Elective subject with credits. The Ministry has been rewarding good work done by NSS volunteers by conferring Annual NSS Awards at national level, by providing opportunities to NSS volunteers to participate in Republic Day Parade, International Youth Delegations, Adventure Camps, etc.

While a lot of good work is being done under NSS, there is potential to do much more. The students and NSS volunteers are young Indians and they represent the most dynamic and vibrant section of the Society. These are exciting times in India. The Government of India, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has embarked on the mission of

building a united, strong and modern India – "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat", following the principle of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". A number of path-breaking initiatives have been taken. 'Make in India' campaign has been launched to develop India as a global manufacturing hub. 'Digital India' initiative seeks to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. A nation-wide campaign to promote Digital Payments is underway. 'Skill India' has been launched to impart necessary skills to prepare Indians for the opportunities in Indian economy as also the opportunities abroad.

A number of initiatives, including Smart Cities Project, have been launched for developing infrastructure. 'Swachh Bharat Mission' and 'Clean Ganga' Mission have been launched for building a clean and green India. A sustained and determined campaign is underway to eliminate the black money and to clean up our Society. NSS volunteers can be contributors as well as beneficiaries of these initiatives. The programme design of NSS needs to constantly evolve to reflect the priorities of the Government and the nation.

The importance of NSS was underlined in an Evaluation Study conducted through Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). In their Study Report, TISS concluded that NSS has been a well-intentioned and an ideologically motivated scheme of the Government of India and that NSS is one of the greatest experiments in the field of youth work in the world. In fact, TISS recommended that NSS should be made mandatory for all public and private funded universities, colleges and institutions and should be integrated as part of the curriculum.

National & International News

Pakistan violates ceasefire in Rajouri, second incident of unprovoked firing in two days

TOI

New Delhi, April 3: Pakistani troops on Tuesday resorted to mortar shelling and firing by automatic weapons along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, prompting the Army to retaliate.

The Indian side was hit by 82 mm mortar shells fired by the Pakistan Army in second incident of 'unprovoked' ceasefire violation in the last two days.

"There was unprovoked ceasefire

violation by Pakistan Army in Rajouri today, using 82 mm mortars, automatic weapons," a defence spokesman said.

Indian Army personnel took positions and responded

befittingly to the Pakistani firing, the spokesman said, adding that intermittent firing was going on.

There is no casualty on Indian side, he said.

On Monday, the Pakistani Army

had violated the ceasefire in Digwari sector of Poonch district.

Meanwhile, UN observers in the

state are investigating allegations of ceasefire violations across the LoC, a spokesperson for Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said.

"We've seen the alleged ceasefire violations over the Line of Control, which are currently being investigated by the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (Unmogip), in the Pakistani-administered side of the LoC at Domel, Kotli and Bhimber,

where the security situation has, indeed been tense," Dujaric said when asked about the situation in the state.

"We continue to underline the need for the parties to find a peaceful solution through engagement and dialogue," he added.

CBI registers FIR in Shravan Sahu murder of Lucknowa

PTI

New Delhi, April 4: The CBI has started its probe into the murder of trader Shravan Sahu who was shot dead outside his residence allegedly for pursuing the case of his son's killing by a gangster.

The 61-year-old trader had been gunned down by bike-borne assailants near his residence in Daalmandi locality under Saadatganj police station. He was pursuing the murder case of his son Ayush who had allegedly been gunned down in October 2013 in Thakurganj area by gangster Aqeel, who had threatened the trader to stop pursuing the case.

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court, comprising justices Amreshwar Pratap Sahi and Sanjay Harkauli, had also asked the agency to probe why no security was given to Sahu. The then state government under Akhilesh Yadav had told the court it has no objection to the CBI probing the case.

Within 15 days, the Lucknow police had claimed to have solved the case by identifying seven sharpshooters including Aqeel who was the mastermind. The agency has now registered an FIR in the case under charges of criminal conspiracy and murder.

St Petersburg metro bombing: Kyrgyzstan-born Russian citizen likely suspect

Reuters

Bishkek, April 4: The likely suspect in a deadly blast in the Russian city of St. Petersburg was a Kyrgyz-born Russian citizen, Kyrgyzstan's security service said on Tuesday.

A spokesman for the GKNB security service identified the suspect as Akbarzhan Jalilov, born in the city of Osh in 1995. He provided no other details.

Kyrgyzstan, a predominantly Muslim Central Asian nation of six million, is Russia's close political ally and hosts a Russian military airbase.

Monday's blast on board a metro train in St Petersburg killed 11 people and wounded 45.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was in the city when the blast struck, visited the scene of the explosion late on Monday night and laid a bunch of red flowers at a makeshift shrine to the victims.

Witnesses said they saw passengers who were bloodied and burned spilling out of the train, whose door was buckled by the force of the explosion, and lying on a platform while smoke filled the station.

CONSIDERING ALL CAUSES: PUTIN

Putin said on Monday the government

was considering all possible causes for the blasts in St Petersburg's metro system, including terrorism.

"I have already spoken to the head of our special services, they are working to ascertain the cause (of the blasts),"

Putin, at a meeting with Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, said. "The causes are not clear, it's too early. We will look at all possible causes, terrorism as well as common crime," he added.

BLOODYFACES

Soon after the blast happened at 2:40 p.m., ambulances and fire engines descended on the concrete-and-glass Sennaya Ploshchad station. One helicopter hovered overhead and then landed on a broad avenue to take away an injured passenger.

"I saw a lot of smoke, a crowd making its way to the escalators, people with blood and other people's insides on their clothes, bloody faces," St Petersburg resident Leonid Chaika, who said he was at the station when the blast happened, told Reuters by phone. "Many were crying."

The National Anti-Terrorist Committee said an explosive device had been found at another station, hidden in a fire extinguisher, but had been defused. The blast raised security fears beyond

Russian frontiers. France, which has itself suffered a series of attacks, announced additional security measures in Paris.

Video from the scene showed injured people lying bleeding on a platform, some being treated by emergency services and fellow passengers. Others ran away from the platform amid clouds of smoke, some screaming or holding their hands to their faces.

A huge hole was blasted in the side of a carriage and the door blown off, with metal wreckage strewn across the platform. Passengers were seen hammering at the windows of one closed carriage after the train had pulled into the station.

Russian TV said many had suffered lacerations from glass shards and metal, the force of the explosion amplified by the confines of the carriage and the tunnel.

Anna Sventik, a St Petersburg resident, was traveling on a metro train that passed through the same station moments after the blast.

"Our train slowed down a bit, and one woman started having hysterics when she saw the people lying on the platform, blackened, in some places with no clothes, burned," she told Reuters. "It was very scary."