

Editorial

Darkening shadows of doubt

The dust that was kicked up during the general election held at the beginning of the current year has finally settled and the euphoria generated by the change of guard has given way to more sobering experiences. The picture emerging now is one which is slowly yet surely starting to resemble the very system which the people of the state have shown their disdain for in no uncertain terms, even though the final result of the polls failed to reflect the depth of loathing for then ruling party who have come to symbolize the worst of cronyism, corruption and nepotism practiced with an audacity which can only be developed after three consecutive terms in power.

While due credit must be given to the present Biren-led BJP government in the state for going out of its way to bridge the massive communication gap deliberately initiated by the previous government for reasons best known to themselves, numerous loopholes and inexplicable anomalies that belie the promises and assurances as well as the evidently proactive efforts of the state government to undo or realign the priorities of the government have started to surface. Case in point : reports of an absentee IFOs officer being given permission by the state government for joining and posting. The attitude of the officer who reportedly visits the state only to pass and draw salary once every month for the last six-odd years points to a deeper rot that is infecting the system and the brazen display of irresponsibility which is being overlooked for reasons not known to the public. That the issue has been discussed during the state assembly session in 2016 clearly indicates the degree of seriousness, and yet despite the assurance of the then CM Ilobi of investigating into the matter, the same person who has been shirking his duty for more than six and half years have reportedly been allowed the joining and posting a few days back by the new Biren-led state government.

Has the seemingly upright and decisive state government been arm-twisted and made to tread the line drawn by powerful forces at the centre? Has the state government succumbed to the insistence of its parent party from the national capital thereby relinquishing the right to govern the state according to its ideologies and experiences as well as the expressed aspirations of the public who have come to see the new government as a symbol of positive change and a force to turn their dreams into reality? Is the state bureaucracy still running the show despite claims of the state government to the contrary? Does the state government not feel the responsibility to clear the air for the public and pursue the matter to its logical conclusion so that the increasing malaise of the general public is put to rest. The very issue has come to represent the challenges that the government have blatantly overlooked and failed to address in spite of its glaring anomalies. The public still awaits the response from the government. Hope the Biren-led government can come up with a more convincing and acceptable one.

India's Changing Transport Landscape

By : Nitin Gadkari

The progress of a country is closely linked to the efficiency with which it transports its man and material. A good transport system aids economic growth by providing essential connectivity between available resources, centres of production and the market. It is also a vital factor in promoting balanced regional growth by ensuring the delivery of goods and services to the last man in the remotest part of the country.

Despite having one of the most extensive transport networks in the world, India has, for long, been plagued by very slow and inefficient movement of passenger and freight. The sector is faced with many challenges. The penetration of the transport network in remote areas and difficult terrains is inadequate. Highways are narrow, congested, and poorly maintained, leading to slow movement of traffic, valuable loss of time and a heavy burden of pollution. Accidents are rampant , leading to the loss of nearly 1.5 lakh lives every year. A very high percentage of the freight moves on roads even though it has been established that this is the costliest mode of transport, with the highest pollution burden. Rail transport is cheaper and more environment friendly than road transport, but the network is slow and inadequate, while the waterways which are the cheapest and most environment friendly of the three are grossly underdeveloped. The result of this unfavourable modal mix is high logistics costs that make our goods non competitive in the international market.

This narrative has, however, started changing since the last three four years. The government has made it a major priority to build a world class transport infrastructure in the country, that is cost effective, easily accessible to everyone, safe, creates minimum load of pollutants and relies on indigenous inputs to the maximum possible extent. This has involved strengthening the available infrastructure by leveraging world class technology, building new infrastructure and modernizing the legislative framework to support this work. This has also involved partnering with the private sector and creating and nurturing an enabling environment for such partnership. National highways constitute just two percent of the country's road network but carry 40 percent of the traffic load. The government is working hard to augment this infrastructure both in terms of length and quality. Having started with about 96,000 km of national highways in 2014, we now have over 1.5 kms and soon hope to reach 2 lakh kms. The upcoming Bharatmala

Programme will link border and international connectivity roads, develop economic corridors, inter corridors and feeder routes, improve connectivity of national corridors, build coastal and port connectivity roads, and greenfield expressways. This means that all areas of the country will have easy access to national highways.

The North East region, naxal affected areas, backward and interior areas are being given special attention in terms of building road connectivity. Bridges like the Dholu Sadia in Assam and state of the art tunnels like Chenani Nashri in Jammu and Kashmir are coming up to shorten distances in difficult terrains and make remote areas more easily accessible. High density traffic corridors like the Vadodara-Mumbai, Bangalore-Chennai and Delhi-Meerut routes can look forward to world class, access controlled expressways, while travel to places of religious and tourist importance like the Char Dham and the Buddhist Circuit will get faster and more convenient.

Apart from adding kilometers, we are also committed to make the highways safe for travel. For this, a multi-pronged approach has been adopted that includes incorporating safety features in road designs, rectifying known accident black spots, proper road signages, more effective legislation, improved vehicular safety standards, training of drivers, improved trauma care and enhanced public awareness. Under the Setu Bharatam programmes all railway level crossings are to be replaced with over bridges or under passes and an inventory with structural rating of all bridges on national highways is being created so that timely repair or rebuilding actions can be undertaken.

The Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill has been passed by the Lok Sabha, and awaits passing by Rajya Sabha. The Bill addresses road safety issues by providing for stiffer penalties, making fitness certification of vehicles and issue of drivers licenses transparent by computerizing it and minimizing human intervention, statutory provisions for protection of good Samaritans and recognition of IT enabled enforcement systems. The issue of reducing pollution is being addressed through a programme for replacement of old vehicles, adopting BS-VI emission norms from 1st April 2020, developing plantations along highways by involving the local participation and Electronic Toll Collection based on RFID tags called FASTags that will reduce waiting time at toll plazas. The use of alternate fuel like Ethanol, Bio-CNG, Bio-Diesel, Methanol and electricity is being promoted and some of these are already running in some cities on an experimental basis.

Looking at the cheaper and greener water transportation, efforts are underway to utilize the navigational potential of India's 7500 km long coastline and over 14,000 km of inland waterways through the Sagarmala programme and by declaring 111 waterways as National Waterways. Sagarmala envisages developing ports as engines of growth. The idea is to industrialize the port areas by developing 14 coastal economic zones. This would be supported by modernization and augmentation of the port infrastructure, improving connectivity of ports with the hinterland through road, rail and waterways, and development of the coastal community. It is expected that besides saving Rs 35000-Rs 40,000 crores as logistics cost annually, boosting exports by about USD 110 billion and generating one crore new jobs,

Sagarmala will also double the share of domestic waterways in the modal mix in the next ten years.

In addition to the above, work is already in progress on several waterways including Ganga and Brahmaputra to develop their navigational potential. The World Bank aided Jal Marg Vikas project on Ganga aims to develop the river stretch from Haldia to Allahabad to allow navigation of 1500-2000 tonne ships. Work on building multi modal terminals at Varanasi, Sahibganj and Haldia and other necessary infrastructure on this stretch is progressing rapidly. With this, much of the cargo movement to the eastern and north eastern parts of the country can be done through waterways, resulting in lowering of the price of commodities. Thirty seven more waterways will be developed in the next three years.

While the highways and waterways sectors are being modernized rapidly, work is also underway for developing an integrated transport system based on an optimal modal mix and seamless intermodal connectivity. In this context a Logistic Efficiency Enhancement Programme (LEEP) has been envisaged to enhance the efficiency of freight transportation in the country. This would include construction of fifty economic corridors, upgrading feeder routes, developing thirty-five multimodal logistics parks with storage and warehousing facilities and constructing ten inter-modal stations to integrate various transportation modes.

The transport sector in India is definitely transforming rapidly, and is poised to become the biggest enabler for the country's growth. As this revolution unfolds over the Indian landscape, we can not only hope to see the country developing faster, but also see the benefits of progress embracing regions and people who are still out of its bounds today. (Courtesy PIB Feature)

More State News

Minister Radheshyam inspects Chandel College and District Hospital

Imphal, August 9: Education Minister Th. Radheshyam said the Education department works as a team of teachers and students and works for the betterment of the society.

"We have certain shortages in the department, but we should work together to utilise the available resources in the best ways". The Minister made this statement during a visit to Chandel District to inspect the prevailing conditions of the governmental institutions of education, health and infrastructure on Tuesday.

During the visit Th. Radheshyam met teachers and student of the Union College, Lambung, Chandel. He said good leaders or the best managers are those who make the most of the available limited resources. It is important and the need of hour that as whole we proceed towards qualitative approach rather than looking for quantity.

Regarding shortcomings of teachers in the college, the Education Minister said he will try to send the required teachers at the earliest. He added there is a recruitment procedure underway to fill up the vacant post of teachers in colleges. He said that, there is a need to conduct a rational survey to find out the subjects/stream having high demand of job employment and which subject would benefit the student most and even in pursuing higher education.

Such subject or streams need to be strengthened, he added. The market is all about demand and supply. Everyone has limited time to be able to achieve their goals in life. So, the teachers should mentor and guide the students along the right path.

For this the teachers should teach the students how to make the right choice, he said. He assured all possible help to the school college authority in improving the condition of the college. He said however, demands should be made on a need base and with a holistic approach. He also made a visit to Maha Union Higher Secondary School, Chandel. Later, during a visit to the District Hospital Chandel, the Minister assured all help to upgrade the 50-

bedded hospital to a 100-bedded hospital. The Minister was also accompanied by PDA chairman Shri T. Robin Singh, district administration officials including DC Krishna Kumar among others.

Meanwhile, in the morning on his way to Chandel, the Minister attended a Eureka Day cum Felicitation Function at Eureka Academy, Thounaoujam. During the function, High School Leaving Certificate Examination position holders of the school were feted.

Min Biswajit assures office for Editors Guild Manipur

Imphal, August, 8: Information and Public Relations Minister Thongam Biswajit Singh today assured a temporary office for the Editors Guild Manipur at the DIPR Complex, Moirangkhom. The EGM office will be provided an office at DIPR building at Keishampat once construction of the building is complete.

The Minister made the assurance during a meeting with a team of EGM held at his New Secretariat conference hall yesterday afternoon. The EGM team led by president A. Mubi submitted a charter of demand to the Minister.

During the meeting, Minister Biswajit also assured a Transit Rest House at the Manipur Press Club for any journalist visiting the State capital. The Transit Rest House will have a dormitory and two three separate rooms.

Regarding clearance of pending government bills for advertisement through DIPR, the Minister

instructed IPR Director Meghachandra Kongbam to do the needful at the earliest.

During discussion on the EGM's appeal for adoption of the Manipur Government Advertisement Policy where every programs/policies/achievement of the government is advertised to the media, the Minister instructed the concerned authorities attending the meeting to do the needful.

Regarding another appeal of the EGM for amendment of the accreditation card rules of DIPR and increasing the number of accreditation card per media house to three to seven per media house, it was agreed that the issue will be placed for discussion before the committee headed by the Commissioner at the earliest.

The meeting also discussed the journalist pension scheme established by the DIPR and also okayed a one-time exemption and enrolment for the pension scheme after proper verification and screening of applicants

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National News

China earthquake: Death toll rises to

Beijing, Aug 9: A powerful 7.0 magnitude earthquake has jolted a popular tourist destination in China's southwest Sichuan province, killing 13 people and injuring 175 others, officials said today.

Authorities fear that the toll may rise. The massive earthquake struck at 9:19 PM (local time) yesterday and the epicentre was monitored at a depth of 20 km, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Jiuzhaigou, or Jiuzhai Valley, is a national park known for spectacular waterfalls and karst formations. More than 34,000 people visited the tourist attraction yesterday. So far 13 people were killed and 175 others injured in the Sichuan quake, the provincial government said. The injured included a French man and a Canadian woman.

Maxence Vallon, 18, was wounded in both legs; while the Canadian woman, who declined to be named, suffered slight injury in the head, the report said. Both were being treated at a hospital of Jiuzhaigou county.