

Editorial

Earning our keeps

The rising sense of desperation in the state as a result of the increasing scarcity of day today need is threatening to spill over into agitations and unrest. Studies have shown a direct connection of rising crime rates with the rise in temperature, and the people in the state is indeed reeling under the wilting rays of the sun, while everyone is hoping for even the briefest of respite with their eyes on the sky. Various organizations and civil society bodies have started conducting seminars, discussions and conferences to try and find a sustainable solution to the problem which is poised to get worse in the future. While it would be easy and seemingly natural to put the blame squarely on the Government, the fact stays that we, as a society have played a large part in making the situation what it is today.

The civic sense of the society or the lack of it has been for everyone to see and experience. The overwhelming stench of the drains and gutters, the liberally littered roads and lanes, the over polluted rivers-evidence of a collective mentality that does not consider cleanliness as important or necessary as proper personal grooming or constructing resplendent residential buildings. The result, as expected although undesirable, is the receding green areas and shrinking percentage of the water bodies which are usable and safe in the state, once abundant.

While it cannot be denied that the efforts of the Government to address the present situation is neither sufficient nor timely, it would do ourselves more harm to sit back and whine about it. There is still enough opportunity and resources with us to make the change. It is time for us to take the initiative and realize the power of collective effort. Cleaning up our sources of water such as the rivers, lakes and ponds which are still in abundance and making them fit for use, making sure that the drains and rivers are connected to ensure that precious water is collected and stored properly and not let go to waste etc are some of the basic steps we all can take up to ensure that the scarcity of water is reduced. Rain Water Harvesting is another practice that can ensure availability of water all year round. The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), the Government body entrusted with carrying out activities relating to distribution and management of water resources in the State can play a big role in the effort by ensuring that the consumers keep their taps properly closed when not in use, and by ensuring that the water for distribution are properly treated to prevent diseases to the consumers. Proper disposal of waste products also decreases the chance of spreading of wildfire and prevents spreading of diseases and reduces stench.

These seemingly inconsequential steps can definitely add up to making a big difference in our own lives. We should make all possible efforts before taking to the streets demanding for things we have taken for granted. We need to learn to earn our rights and privileges.

The Moreh effect on policy



By : Sanjoo Thangjam

Moreh is commonly known as "Smugglers' Village", a boom town with a parallel township called Prem Nagar, that has grown up alongside it over the past four decades. It is the "frontline post" for a massive two-way smuggling process and Intelligence sources believe the main bases for these operations are Imphal, 150 km away on the Indian side, and Tamu, 10 km across the border in Myanmar.

There is no doubt that India is working on plans of building economic corridors in its North-east neighbourhood to boost foreign trade and give the economy the much-needed leap forward. However, does New Delhi know that the opening up of Southeast Asia carries a double-edged sword vis-à-vis the launching of the "Act East Policy"?

The Centre promises "development and investments" on the one hand and it invites "the danger of a rapid flow of illicit drugs and arms" on the other hand. The populace of Moreh comprises carriers and small-time promoters who work on small commissions.

A town of outsiders, its populace includes 6,000 people are from South India (mainly Kerala), 4,000 are Mizos and other tribals, 3,000 are Manipuris (including a large number of Pangals, or Muslim Manipuris), while the rest are a mixture of Nepalis, Biharis, Sikhs and Marwaris. "And almost 90 per cent of them are smugglers or promoters," said an Intelligence officer who has been working in this area for the past three years. The Centre is only too aware that the North-east can develop, prosper and eventually overcome its troubles by engaging its eastern foreign neighbours. Especially with the recent agreement on the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar economic corridor blueprint, India can access markets in China's west and southwest through the North-eastern borders.

Yunnan province in China is the network hub for trade and connectivity with the rest of the country. Equally important for North-east India is regional connectivity under the sub regional and regional cooperation such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Greater Mekong Sub-region cooperation. That said, a word of caution is appropriate to understand the ugly behemoth of narcotics trafficking intertwined with ethnic insurgency in the neighbouring Golden Triangle.

The use of **Yaba** or **WY** — a tablet containing a mixture of

methamphetamine and caffeine — is increasing by the day, particularly among Manipuri youth. Precursors like pseudoephedrine and ephedrine are smuggled into the state, as also huge amounts of WY tablets, that are brightly coloured in red, orange or lime green and carry logos like "R" or "WY". These are small, round and roughly six millimetres in diameter.

A user who consumes five to 20 WY tablets a day is capable of running, jumping and doing any tiresome work without feeling the least tiredness for two-three days, and that too without even a nap. This narcotic increases the strength and confidence of its users and there is no gainsaying its effect on the rate of crime, which would be hard to control.

Moreover, these tablets have the wherewithal of creating ecstasy in its users, so a rise in incidents of rape cannot be overlooked. It is said that the immediate feeling after consuming a tablet is one of light-headedness (and one of potential dizziness), followed by euphoria, increased physical activity, heightened alertness and increased wakefulness as a result of the central nervous system being affected.

After several hours, the user experiences a comedown that results in decreased appetite and increased respiration and hypothermia that lead to irritability, insomnia, confusion, tremors, convulsions, anxiety, paranoia and aggressiveness. Other reported symptoms include lower back pain, possibly from damage to the liver or kidneys. While many countries have banned the sale of this tablet and its kind, Manipur is facing the menace for the first time.

Huge quantities of illicit narcotics can easily ride the new access routes of greater connectivity and blow up already existing issues of secured human health and wellbeing of society. **It is believed that Myanmar is the largest**

producer of methamphetamine in the world, with the majority of Yaba found in Thailand being produced in Myanmar, particularly in the Golden Triangle and northeastern Shan state that borders Thailand, Laos and China.

Yaba is called **bhulbhuliya** in India and is typically prepared in pill form, which means these can be **packed inside a plastic soda straw for easy transportation or in reusable "mint" containers.** WY or Yaba is commonly known among users as "**World is yours**". These tablets contain **25-35 mg of methamphetamine, a very addictive stimulant, along with 45-65 mg of caffeine.** At comparable doses, the effects of methamphetamine are far more potent, longer lasting and more harmful than amphetamine to the cardiovascular and central nervous system.

WY can be ingested, snorted, smoked or injected. Myanmar is the highest illegal production centre of WY and supplies the maximum amount of easily available precursors like ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Manipur, with access to the international border through Moreh town and thereby to Myanmar, is now becoming the targeted smuggling centre for WY, which should be a major cause for concern. Bordering Myanmar to the east are Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Each state's data from National Aids Control Organisation reports show high numbers of HIV-related diseases and volumes of drug trafficking.

Narcotics and contraband firearms are regularly trafficked across the unmanned border as the routes of western Myanmar are controlled by India's North-east insurgents. In recent years, Manipur has witnessed huge quantities of contraband Pseudoephedrine Hydrochloride-content drugs, manufactured in India, being trafficked into Myanmar for processing narcotics, especially heroin.

The thriving ethnic insurgency in

Manipur, with its "tax structure" helps to exacerbate the problem. Pseudoephedrine is smuggled from New Delhi to Myanmar and China via Guwahati by conduits based in Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Traditionally, the Golden Triangle is a region between the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand; a region famous for its opium production. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's latest Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2013, opium cultivation in the Golden Triangle went up by 22 per cent in 2013 propelled by a 13 per cent growth in Myanmar. This registered a 26 per cent rise from 2012 in opium cultivation and yield.

A decade ago, the Golden Triangle supplied half the world's heroin, but drug barons backed by ethnic militias in Myanmar have turned to trafficking massive quantities of amphetamines and methamphetamines — which can be produced cheaply in small, hidden laboratories, without the need for acres of exposed land — and these narcotics now dominate the Myanmar part of the Triangle.

Insurgency in Myanmar has been funded by narcotics trafficking and cease-fires with the civilian government there have left rebel groups free to continue their manufacturing and smuggling without interference. Since insurgency based on purely ethnic issues is on the way out, high profits and access to the lucrative Thai and foreign markets now drive narcotics production and trafficking. **The Myanmar government can do little to counter drug trafficking in the Golden Triangle as the traffickers are well organised Chinese syndicates operating from outside Myanmar.**

Therefore, the first and foremost step that needs to be taken by India is to have an effective drug control mechanism that can guarantee this illicit trade is kept to the minimum so as to control adverse (illicit drugs) consequences. And if this control mechanism isn't resorted to well in time, one can well imagine the long-term negative effects.

Even as the state police, narcotics, excise and other civil society organisations have been trying their level best to combat the menace of various intoxicants like Heroin, Cannabis, Spasmo Proxoyon capsules, N-10 and other similar psychoactive substances that contain amphetamine, of late the new menace created by the infamous WY tablets has begun to haunt the people of Manipur, not to forget serious implications for the rest of the North-east.

Courtesy : *The Statesman*

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National & International News

High security as Afghanistan marks Independence Day

Kabul, Aug 19: Afghan security forces were on high alert today as the war-weary country, reeling from a number of high-profile deadly attacks, prepared to mark its independence day with muted celebrations.

There was an increased police presence in the capital Kabul where pop star Aryana Sayeed had vowed to give a concert and President Ashraf Ghani was due to host a private ceremony for Afghan dignitaries.

"All of our police units are on the highest state of alert and they are placed everywhere across the city," Kabul police spokesman Abdul Basir Mujahid told AFP. "We have increased the number of police checkpoints in and around the diplomatic quarters (too)," he added, amid fears that the Taliban would mark the anniversary with a large-scale attack. August 19 commemorates the signing of the Treaty of Rawalpindi in 1919, which granted Afghanistan

full independence from Britain, although the country was never part of the British empire, after three bloody wars.

While Afghanistan's red, black and green tricolour flag adorned many Kabul streets, the day will largely go unobserved by ordinary Afghans, who are frustrated by the deteriorating security situation and the lack of progress by the US-led international coalition forces.

As in recent years there are no public ceremonies planned in the capital. The city has been on edge since a massive truck bomb ripped through its diplomatic quarter during morning rush hour on May 31, killing about 150 and wounding around 400 people, mostly civilians, in an unclaimed attack. Taliban insurgents are currently at the peak of their summer fighting season and have launched several deadly assaults around the country in recent weeks. Ghani is scheduled to welcome dozens of Afghan officials for a

morning ceremony at the presidential palace.

He will deliver a speech and lay a wreath at the independence minaret inside the defence ministry compound, defence ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri told AFP. While some Afghans changed their Facebook profile pictures to the Afghan flag or to Amanullah Khan, the king who secured Afghanistan's independence, others lamented that the fight against the Taliban, now in its 16th year, meant there was little to celebrate.

"What independence day are we

talking about when we are still at war with terrorism and don't seem to be winning against it?" one user wrote on the social media site.

Afghan singer Sayeed, who has been linked to Kim Kardashian for her skin-tight clothing and selfies posted on her Instagram page, has said she will hold a gig despite threats from conservatives who oppose women performing in public.

"The concert will one hundred percent be held on Saturday evening," she told Tolo News late yesterday.

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