

Editorial

Imphal Friday, February 10, 2017

Need for alternative options

The valley areas of Manipur including the state capital which constitute a meagre 10 percent of the total area of the state have the unique and unenviable distinction of sheltering almost 90 percent of the entire population of Manipur. The resulting increase in pressure for land, food and amenities can only escalate further, and while the population in the state has been crying for amendments and reforms in the land use policies which will allow settlers to own and utilize land in the hills whereby vast areas of still unutilized wastelands and forests will be sustainably tapped and developed to generate economic benefits in a sustainable manner, the unrelenting pace of progress have magnified the pressure with demands for land and resources which are already stretched to the limit. The situation is not peculiar to Manipur only, as almost every landlocked and hilly region everywhere is struggling with the same dilemma for ages. The present turmoil in the state caused by the prolonged indefinite economic blockade called by the UNC is perhaps the most vivid manifestation of the actual need to draw up a pragmatic and realistic roadmap to ease the transition from the archaic decrees and declarations of preventing valley dwellers from owning and utilizing the hill areas so that the people and the myriad communities can embrace the inevitable change which is bound to happen, either through confrontations or consultations. What one also finds worrisome, however is the abrupt and hasty acquisition of lands for various development projects in Manipur which are more of 'Pride Projects' rather than practically implemented and well-maintained efforts. While it may be argued that there is an increasing lack of options or "alternative options", given the shrinking availability of alternative land for taking up these vital development projects which are aimed at uplifting the standard of life of the public, there remains the fact that there are still yet to be developed patches of unutilized spaces which might have served the very purpose better while leaving these fertile lands for producing food. While the spontaneity and positivity of the intent deserves commendation, it also indicates the lack of a long term vision and concern for the common man. Also, while lands and resources for various developmental projects are allocated with alacrity, the progress and workmanship of these projects leaves much to be desired. In a state as ours where moving a file, opening a door or even initiating a communication requires financial considerations, every and any so called public development work is destined to fail, only for the very simple reason that there is still no mechanism in place to ensure its speedy and successful implementation. The government, in all its collective wisdom, would fare much better if and when it adopts a radical approach which emphasizes on the actual implementation and completion rather than on planning and inaugurating projects and schemes. And while the collective think tank of the elected representatives are at it, the most important aspect of bringing about the inevitable radical change in land holding laws should be given the greatest priority if the continuity of the state as a distinct entity is to be ensured.

Would pass women quota bill when we have majority in RS: M Venkaiah Naidu

Amaravati, Feb. 10: The NDA government would pass the long-pending legislation providing 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures "once we get majority in Rajya Sabha", Union Urban Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu announced here today. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has this in mind and the day is not far when Parliament will pass the law providing women reservation through consensus. Once we (NDA) get majority in Rajya Sabha, we will get the Bill passed," Naidu said, addressing the National Women's Parliament here today. "A mere Bill is not sufficient. What is needed is political will and administrative skill. Political parties should show conviction in this regard," he said. Noting that gender inequality was having a serious impact on economic development, Venkaiah said focus should be on gender empowerment to end inequalities. "On a scale of 0-1 in gender inequality index, India ranked 0.54. Gender inequality is having a serious impact on economic development and it has become a pressing concern across the world. Hence, there is a global demand for women empowerment," the Union Minister said. The three-day National Women's Parliament, being organised by Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly with the theme of 'Empowering Women - Strengthening Democracy', began today in the state capital of Amaravati.

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National & International News

SC declines urgent hearing on PIL against Sasikala

PIL New Delhi, Feb 10: The Supreme Court today refused to give an urgent hearing on a PIL seeking to restrain AIADMK leader V K Sasikala from being sworn in as Tamil Nadu chief minister till it decides the disproportionate assets case against her. "Sorry. Declined," a bench comprising Chief Justice JS Khehar and justices N V Ramana and D Y Chandrachud said when the lawyer sought urgent listing and hearing. Advocate G S Mani, who is representing Chennai-resident Senthil Kumar, General Secretary of NGO Satta Panchayat Iyakkam, pleaded that the matter be heard on urgent basis. The PIL was filed on February 6 seeking a stay on the swearing-in

of Sasikala as Tamil Nadu chief minister as there was speculation that she would be taking the oath the next day. The petitioner has sought a restrain on her swearing-in after an apex court bench had on February 6 said that it would pronounce within a week the judgement in a 19-year-old disproportionate assets case in which Sasikala and late CM J Jayalalitha were accused. Kumar has sought a stay on Sasikala's swearing-in contending that if she was convicted and forced to resign, there could be a "possibility of riots erupting all over Tamil Nadu". He has said the law and order situation may worsen in such an eventuality as the state is already facing a "desperate situation" due

to cyclone, demonetisation and death of Jayalalitha. The petitioner has claimed that in case the appeal against her acquittal results in conviction, the AIADMK workers may once again protest and disturb normal life in Tamil Nadu. He has said that he filed the plea in the interest of the people of Tamil Nadu and for maintenance of peace in the state. After Jayalalitha passed away on December 5, 2016, Sasikala, who was her shadow for nearly three decades, was made General Secretary of AIADMK on December 29 and elected as the Leader of the Legislature Party on February 5. Jayalalitha, along with her aides Sasikala, V N Sudhakaran and J

Elavarasi, was booked under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and IPC for allegedly amassing wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income in 1997. The trial of the case was shifted by the Supreme Court to Bengaluru on a petition filed by a DMK leader and the court there had convicted them on September 27, 2014. However, the Karnataka High Court had reversed the special court's judgment on May 11, 2015. The Karnataka government had filed an appeal against it in the Supreme Court. The apex court had last year, before the demise of Jayalalitha, reserved its verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the Karnataka HC order.

Row over food: HC to hear plea of BSF jawan's wife to trace him

PIL New Delhi, Feb 10: The Delhi High Court today agreed to give an urgent hearing on a habeas corpus plea filed by the wife of a BSF jawan, who had posted video on social media alleging that poor quality food was being served to soldiers. The woman has claimed that her husband, Tej Bahadur Yadav, is untraceable and the family has been unable to contact him for last three days. The plea for urgent hearing was mentioned before a bench of justices B D Ahmed and Ashutosh Kumar, who listed it for hearing this afternoon. Advocate Manish Tewari, appearing for the jawan's wife, submitted that the soldier whereabouts are not known for last

few days, so the court should look into the issue. Accepting the urgency, the bench said, "All right it (the petition) will be heard today". Yadav had on January 9 posted a video on Facebook which showed a meal box comprising a watery soup-like dal, which he said had only turmeric and salt and a burnt chapatti. He had said this is what jawans were served at mealtime on duty at places including the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan and that they often went to bed on empty stomach. Pursuant to the video going viral on the social media, the Prime Minister's Office had sought a detailed factual report on it from the Union Home Ministry and BSF. A PIL was also filed in the Delhi

High Court seeking a direction to the government to depute higher officers to supervise cooking of proper healthy food and its distribution. It sought a status report regarding the quality of food served to soldiers along the LoC. The high court had issued notice on the petition to various paramilitary forces, including the Border Security Force (BSF), seeking their stand on the allegation of poor quality food being served to the troops. It had also directed BSF to produce before it the investigation report and the steps taken with regard to the allegations levelled by the BSF jawan. Now, less than a month after the PIL was filed, Yadav's wife, Sharmila,

and his family are claiming that the soldier is untraceable and that they have not been able to reach him. She has sought a high-level inquiry into his disappearance as well as the recent rejection of his plea for voluntary retirement. Yadav's wife Sharmila, through her counsel, told the court that she and her elder brother had met the BSF director general who had assured them that a "fair inquiry as per procedure" will be conducted in the case. The counsel also said that the BSF DG told them that the jawan was hospitalised. Earlier, BSF had said that Yadav's plea under the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) was cancelled as a Court of Inquiry (CoI) was pending against him.

China created ill-will with India by sporting Pak terrorism: Defence expert on Masood Azhar

China, Feb. 10: A day after India issue a demarche to China over blocking the proposal to designate Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, defence expert DS Grewal said China has created an ill-will between two countries by sporting Pakistan terrorism. "Though US, UK, France and others were vehemently asking for it, China was consistent of not passing the resolution which has created an ill-will between two countries and as a result demarche has been issued by India to China. Two countries have to survive together for better

development and peace," DS Grewal told ANI. Asserting that the insistence of China to sport Pakistan terrorism is against the universal peace, Grewal added the neighbour country must understand that India is also powerful and cannot be cower down by such pressure tactics. "China does not even consider Azhar as the global terrorist who has been behind the Mumbai and Pathankot attacks where lots of lives of national and international citizens were lost. It is a great damage to the peace of the world.

The way China is proceeding these days it is dangerous for its own country," he added. India has issued a demarche to China for blocking the US-backed proposal to ban Pathankot mastermind Azhar and designate him as the global citizen in the UN security council. Refuting China's stand that India and Pakistan should talk to each other over Masood Azhar issue, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said the joint proposal by India, U.S., UK and France was a classic counter-terrorism proposal to proscribe the

JeM chief. "The proposal wasn't moved by India but by three UNSC members US, UK and France. It was classic counter-terror proposal meant to proscribe Masood Azhar," MEA official spokesperson Vikas Swarup told the media. The MEA also confirmed that the matter has been taken up by both Chinese embassy in New Delhi and in the foreign office in Beijing by the Indian embassy and that demarches have been served in the same. On January 19, China once again blocked the proposal to proscribe Azhar.

ISIS continues to recruit from Af-Pak border region: UN report

PIL United Nations, Feb 10: The ISIS continues to recruit from the restive Af-Pak border region even as the terror outfit is struggling financially in Afghanistan and has resorted to extortion, according to a UN report. The 19th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team about the terror group was submitted to the Security Council Sanctions Committee this week. The report noted that a UN Member State reported that ISIS had around 2,000 to 3,500 fighters overall in Afghanistan but that number had not fallen significantly despite heavy losses sustained in 2016. "ISIS (also known as ISIL) continues to be able to recruit from the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region, and the increasing refugee population in Afghanistan may provide a fertile recruitment group. ISIL was aware of that possibility," the report said. Member States also confirmed that ISIS leader in Afghanistan Hafiz Saeed Khan had been killed by an air strike in July 2016. Khan was not listed as a terrorist under the UN. "Al-Qaida core leaders in the region had been decimated over the past nine years and reduced to acting as figureheads. The Al-Qaida leader, Aiman

Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri is not sending people or money to affiliates and finds it very hard to communicate with them. "While the Al-Qaida core knows that it cannot leave the area, it remains hopeful that the Taliban will be successful and that it can 'piggyback' on that success," it said. The report said that ISIS is struggling financially in Afghanistan, where it has resorted to extortion of the local population and has had to stop paying its fighters at times but the lack of funds has not impacted its ambition. "Nonetheless, the lack of funds does

not appear to hamper its ambition, with Member States noting that it appears to be well equipped and uses military-grade explosives for improvised explosive device attacks in Kabul," it said. The report, however, added that during the past 12 months, the group had lost a considerable amount of territory in eastern Afghanistan and its ability to take and hold territory was also affected by clashes with Taliban fighters competing for local influence, especially for resources, funding and manpower. It added that Al-Qaida fighters and in particular "cells identifying

themselves as loyal to Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent have taken on a more active supporting role in Afghanistan for Taliban groups." Fighters loyal to al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, including Lashkar-e-Taayyiba and Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, who had relocated into Afghanistan, continue to fight within Taliban groups, it said. A member state reported that the outfit Harakat-ul Jihad Islami was active in areas bordering Bangladesh and that it cooperated with al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent and Lashkar-e-Taayyiba within the region.

Surajkund Crafts Mela sees significant participation of foreign nations

ANI Surajkund, Feb.10: This year's annual Surajkund Mela saw the significant presence and participation of a number of foreign nations. The fair showcased the richness of handicrafts, handlooms and traditions of India as well. "Because of the Surajkund Mela, we got a platform to showcase our culture through handicrafts, arts and food. All Indian states and several countries participated in the fair. So, it was a great chance for us to showcase our traditional clothes and

products and get commercial benefit out of it," said Jiten Bora of the Assam stall. The fair was upgraded to an international level in 2013. This year more than 20 countries participated in the fair, including various SAARC and European countries. From Afghanistan, Ishaq Timorzada brought Afghan carpets. He has been a regular at the Surajkund Mela for the past four years and loves doing business in India. Ishaq said, "We travel all around the world and to different cities of India.

We put up different kinds of shops and exhibitions at different places like trade fairs etc. We, as traders, make money and earn good business in all these places, but this Surajkund Mela is very different from others. The Indian government has invited us, we come here as guests, and the kind of respect we are receiving from people over here is tremendous". With over 1,000 stalls, the popular fair has witnessed over a million footfalls this year, including thousands of foreigners. Several countries like Egypt, Uzbekistan,