

Editorial

Imphal Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Playing with fire, a fear factor

The recent sequence of events witness either in term of political circus and the struggle for protection of Manipuri identity is indeed a worrisome for all people.

The idea of nation having one identity, one religion, one culture, one language promulgated by some self style son of mother India has created fear psychosis to various ethnic communities in the country. At a time when chauvinistic idealism of creating a nation of only one community is seen marching ahead, it is natural that each and every ethnic communities of the nation have reason to be feared. Because it is family first then come the society then it is the nation.

India was and is a nation of diverse people. The beauty of India is the existences of different ethnic people with diverse cultural people. It is important that if India has to prove the world as the most successful democratic country, the leaders and the so called self style son of the soil should tried to become real son of the soil by accepting that the concept of one religion, one culture and one language should not be followed in the Nation called India.

During Kargil war, two soldier from this region, that too from a border village between Myanmar and India in the state of Manipur were martyred while fighting the Pakistani troops. Family of the two did not know the common language that their sons spoke with their fellow soldiers and moreover, the villagers of the two soldiers are fighting tough safeguarding their villages from intruders of the neighbouring villages. Yet they pray for the success of India.

The Indian administrators of the time was not the one which brought victory to the Kargil war, but it was the prayers of those thousand parents, whose sons were fighting for the country, but who never see Delhi, or who never understood the common language (Hindi) that make India success. Indeed, many critics are of the views that India is still in the process of nation building. But the reality is that India is already a nation. A nation of imagine community living under the same roof.

The peaceful co existence and communal harmony was put in dead danger with the rise of communal centric feudalism classes. They spew venom of hate feeling among the various communities for their mere selfish gain. Last few decades showed rise of many such feudalists and the rise of this class raises the feeling of enmity among the various community.

Coming back to the state of Manipur, the problem facing right now has similar roots. The force annexation is often pin point as the root of all sort of trouble here, but the reality is that the root of the entire problem facing in the state of Manipur is the chauvinistic attitude of the ruling government in the mainland India.

Instead of looking on the problem, the then ruler of the mainland India had sideline the real issue submitted by the then expert officials deputed by their government, they never tried anything to put a halt to the rise of the armed opposition group. But rather the then government incited hate feeling among various communities thinking that the same technique adopted the British ruler can suppress any movement in the region.

Instead of taking into consideration and finding a means to end all sort of violent activism a Scheme called Surrendered Rehabilitation Schemes had been introduced and the result - people now suffered double the problem that they had faced before the coming of the scheme.

Well Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the last President of USSR had understood the important of safeguarding each community and USSR was separated into various independent nations. Problem will be there as long as human kind exists. Because they think and act and those act are sometime negative from one's view point even if he or she thought it right from his viewpoints.

The fear factor right now is felt to everyone. Man dies and sacrifices for their children and nation. If the fear factor grows no one can guarantee any untoward incident at which the fear factor was challenge and wipe out completely to restore the once upon a time nation state called Manipur.

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National & International News

Uttarakhand polls: The odds of a new chief minister

Uttarakhand, Feb. 15: Amid tight security, the polling for the single-phase Uttarakhand assembly elections began today and the one question in everyone's mind is whether this Himalayan state, which was carved out from Uttar Pradesh in 2000, is going to have a new chief minister or will the state continue to see incumbent's rule.

The rebel party leaders certainly hold the key in the outcome in the hilly state where two prominent parties - the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and the Congress - are trying every bit to seek the favour of every section of voters. Both parties expelled many leaders ahead of the elections, who then walked into the rival camps. While the BJP has fielded candidates, who have served the Congress, from 13 seats, the grand old party is trying its luck with seven erstwhile-BJP MLAs. In the last leg of the election campaign, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi asked the BJP to waive off loans worth crores which, according to him, were taken by some 50 rich families, instead of an initiative against black money as Prime Minister Narendra Modi projected.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Modi, in his last rally in Pithoragarh, tried to strike an emotional chord where the majority of people are in the Army and other security forces.

Starting from OROP and surgical strikes, he went on to announce many schemes for the welfare of Army personnel. Reports of the cold war between Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat and Pradesh Congress Committee chief Kishore Upadhyay also emerged as the polls drew near. Although he has refuted reports saying there is no discord between him and Upadhyaya, the point that cannot be missed is that in the last eight months, 11 Congress legislators in Uttarakhand have left the party to join the BJP. The major leaders leaving the party could be one of the reasons for the fall of the Congress in Uttarakhand.

In the last election in 2012, the BJP won 31 seats as against 32 won by the Congress.

In the 2007 polls, the BJP came out as the largest party with 35 seats, while the Congress received 21 seats.

The BJP has not yet unveiled the chief ministerial candidate in Uttarakhand. Highlighting the reason, party's state-level president Ajay Bhatt said the political strategy changes from time to time depending on the circumstances and the BJP has opted for collective leadership for the polls in Uttarakhand.

"The BJP, sometimes, projects a face and sometimes we do not and work under a collective leadership. We have

examples of both types. In Haryana, we did not project any face and results were favorable," he said.

"This time, the party has not projected any face in Uttarakhand and we have adopted the strategy of collective leadership. On the other hand, we have our Prime Minister

Narendra Modi who is a great leader and has no parallel. He covers all faces," he added.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has previously received 10 to 14 per cent of total vote share, having won three, eight and seven seats in the last three elections respectively.

SC wants Shahabuddin shifted from Siwan prison to Tihar jail

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 15: The Supreme Court on Wednesday has directed that controversial RJD leader Mohammad Shahabuddin be shifted to Tihar Jail here from a prison in Bihar to ensure "free and fair trial" in the cases lodged against him.

A bench of Justices Dipak Misra and Amitava Roy asked the Bihar government to transfer Shahabuddin to Tihar Jail within a week, saying "it is the obligation and duty of this court to ensure free and fair trial".

The apex court has said that trial in the cases registered against Shahabuddin will be conducted through video conferencing from Tihar Jail. "We direct the state of Bihar to transfer Mohammad Shahabuddin from district jail Siwan to Tihar jail Delhi," the bench said.

The order came on the pleas by Siwabased Chandrakeswar Prasad, whose three sons were killed in two separate incidents, and Asha Ranjan, the wife of scribe Rajdeo Ranjan who was murdered in Siwan, seeking shifting of the RJD leader from the Siwan jail.

The petitioners told the apex court that Shahabuddin should be transferred from Siwan jail to any other jail outside the state for free and fair trial in the cases that were pending against him.

The Bihar government had earlier told the apex court that it is not "averse" to shifting Shahabuddin from Siwan prison to Tihar Jail here. The state government had told the apex court that Shahabuddin is facing trial in 45 cases, including one in Jharkhand.

Contd. from yesterday issue

Luingaini and Naga Integration movement in Manipur

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The genesis of the ethnonym 'Naga' is still shrouded in mystery. Tracing the genesis of the term 'Naga' from the Assamese word 'Naga', meaning 'mountain' or the word 'Naga' meaning 'naked' by the colonial historiographers are all rejected by the Naga scholars. E.W. Dun observed that Nagas have no generic name but used their respective tribal names only. He identified only five tribal sub-groups of Naga tribes in Manipur namely Luhupa, Tangkhul, Koyla(Khoirao), Kaupui, and Maring in the Census of 1881. Naga scholars who do not accept the colonial ethnography on Naga identity came up with two proposed theories. One, Naga is derived from the Kachari word 'Nok', meaning warriors or fighters as the 'Kacharis' came into violent conflicts with the Naga tribes like the Angamis and Zeliangrong. Two, RR Shimray in his work 'Origin and Culture of the Naga (1985)', opines that Naga is derived from the Burmese word 'Naka' meaning 'pierced ears'. This is also accepted by Isak Chisti Swu, a leader of the naga rebel faction group, in his book, *From generation to generation: stories of origin and Migration of the Nagas*, 2001) as the most accepted and authentic version.

In the attempt to fashion an identity and history suitable to the political agenda of the present generation, the Naga Students Federation (NSF) put a ban on researches into Naga history and identity by the non-Nagas. It was in the first quarter of the twentieth century that the process of pan-Naga identity was experienced among some of the sub tribes in erstwhile Naga Hills. It was said that a great realization that they belonged to the same racial stock with cultural affinity, and consequent decision to come together as one people took place while they (Lothas, Rengmas, Aos, Changs, etc.) were sojourning in Paris as Labour Corps during World War-I. In 1918, a group of Nagas who had returned from military service in France met to form the Naga Club. The Club submitted a memorandum signed by 20 different signatories who claimed to represent all tribes belonging to Angamis, Kachas Nagas, Kukis, Semas, Lothas and Rengmas when the Simon Commission came to Kohima in 1929 to seek opinions on the future of India. One Kuki was also there among the signatories, but no tribes from Manipur who are afterwards to be identified as Naga. The memorandum expressed its desire to the British government when they requested the later to continue to safeguard their rights against all encroachments from other people who were more advanced than them. The club also wanted their (Naga) country

to be placed directly under the protection of the British. The territories so claimed as Naga country doesn't include any part of present day Manipur.

There is confusion as to the actual number of Naga Tribes. The memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission in 1929, by the Naga Club, mentions eight tribes within the administered area. The view of the Naga insurgent outfits is also important as more often than not their agenda becomes the agenda of the Naga mainstream politics and pursued vigorously to achieve through (Indian) Constitutional means. V. Sumi and K. Timothy's compilation *Cry for Justice*, published and brought out by GPRN, NSCN (IM) in the later part of 1990s mentioned 38 tribes living in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Eastern Myanmar as belonging to the Naga. Out of that, 18 of them belonged to Manipur, namely, Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Kharam, Koireng, Kom, Maring, Mayon, Monshang, Lamkang, Mao and Maram, Thangal, Poumai, Tangkhul, Tarao, and Zeliangrong.

According to Prof. Gangmumei Kamei, identification with the Nagas has been a process of pan-Naga identity. The term 'Any Kuki Tribe' was deleted from the list of Scheduled Tribes of Manipur in 1956. In the years that followed, there was a deep internal crisis of identity amongst the Kuki-Chin speaking tribal population. A number of the bridge-buffer communities that were oscillating between the Naga and the Kuki-Chin constellations were converted into the Naga fold by the Nagaisation process and they joined the Naga movement. The Nagaisation process was also greatly strengthened by the Naga insurgency. Marings have come to identify themselves as Naga at the instance of Church leaders and the Naga hostiles.

In the early part of 2002, the NSCN-IM suggests a number of tribes in the Naga fold as 43. Instances of tribes being encompassed within the Naga fold is still an ongoing process. The simple example of it is the Peace Process Annual Calendar, 2008, *MIP, Government of the Peoples Republic of Nagalim*, in which the number was expanded to 68. Among those, tribes from Manipur are: 1. Anal; 2. Angami; 3. Ao; 4. Aimol; 5. Chiru; 6. Chothe; 7. Inpu; 8. Kharam; 9. Kom; 10. Lamkang; 11. Liangmai; 12. Maram; 13. Mao; 14. Maring; 15. Mayon; 16. Monshang; 17. Poumai; 18. Rongmei; 19. Tarao; 20. Wang Tangkhul; 21. Thangal; 22. Zeme. Sajal Naga (Naga Identity: Formation, Constructing Expansionism, eds., Thomas, C.J., *Dimension of Development in Nagaland*, Delhi, 2002) stated that the Naga identity in the 1940s included the Karbis and Nepalis

but excluded all the sub-tribes of Manipur. The present Naga tribes of Manipur did not know the term Naga as late as 1940s, Shimray stated. He recorded his boyhood experience when he and his father were called Naga by a retreating Japanese troop during World War II. He and his father told the Japanese troop that they were Tangkhuls and not Naga. The Nagas in Manipur did not take part in the 1951 plebiscite, which was considered as the bedrock of the Naga independence movement. In 25 January 1952, the Nagas in Nagaland under the banner of Naga National Council (NNC) launched civil disobedience movement. As a part of it, the first Indian elections of 1952 were successfully boycotted. On the other hand, in Manipur all the ethnic groups took active part in the said elections and a Tangkhul was elected from the Outer Parliamentary Constituency. Later, the GoI made an agreement with the Naga People's Convention (NPC) in 1960 and subsequently formed Nagaland as the sixteenth state of the India in 1963. It is noteworthy that many of the prominent leaders of the tribes who were later to be identified as Nagas stuck to the stand of remaining with Manipur instead of acceding to Nagaland. The All Tribal Delegation went to Delhi in May 1970 demanding statehood of Manipur. The members of the said delegation include:

- 1). Daiho, Ex-Finance Minister, Manipur Assembly, 1948
- 2). Stephen Angkang, Ex-President, Tangkhul Long
- 3). K. Kalanlung, President, Zeliangrong Regional Council
- 4). Shoukthong Ashon, Ex-MLA. Nagaisation process, according to Gangmumei Kamei is still ongoing. Considering the diversity in the emergent Naga Nationhood, there has been remark that Naga Nationhood is more like a marriage of convenience rather than socio-historical process. Divorce can follow any time. Zeliangrong is a nomenclature of the three sub-tribes, Zeme, Liangmei and Rongmei. This nomenclature is formed by the initials of the three sub-tribes, Ze for Zeme, Liang for Liangmei, and Rong represent Rongmei. But Puimei who were included as the sub tribe of Kabui in the scheduled tribes list of Manipur asserted that they cannot be identified as 'Zeliangrong' as Puimei had not been represented in the nomenclature. Zeliangrong has aspiration for exclusive ethnic homeland of its own. But the Puimeis who together with the Rongmeis formed main groups within the Kabui did not take part in it. They now prefer the ethnonym, "Inpu" instead of Zeliangrong. Among the constituent Naga tribes, the Naga identity has

shown fragmentation at the intra-tribal level. It is evident when the Puimeis wanted to break away from Zeliangrong and the Khoibus from Marings.

Lui-Ngai-Ni represents only the three biggest communities in the present Naga fold, that also in head-tail-tail order, the head represented by Tangkhul, as usual in other life-world of the Manipur Nagas. Lui-Ngai-Ni, in public notice, remains a political festival, observed only at the district headquarters where Naga Communities based lobby groups used its festive ambience to further their political machinations like severing of ties with state government, separate administration, or even hate campaign during the yesteryears ethnic conflict days etc. In this year 2016 also TR Zeliang and Lal Tahawla respectively the Chief Minister of Nagaland and Mizoram took part in it with the former going overboard explicitly with the agenda of Nag integration politics. It started with invocation in Tangkhul dialect by Tangkhul Headman of Ukhrul/Hunphun village. Social-gatherings, songs, colorful dances, glittering fashion shows and rejoicing continually passes on to be the highlight of the Lui-Ngai-Ni. Even then, the festival in this present layout is no tribute to those who are now in heavenly abode or on their twilight years being in advancing old age, but in their prime time 30 years before or so, have contributed all what they have, their head, heart and hard labor in assembling Lui-Ngai-Ni so that the Manipur Nagas of the present generation joins the comity of nations with a common festival which will be the 'national festival'. Why because? It has not been filtered down to and no community at the present Naga fold observes it at the village level. The countdown of this festival begins from 1987 as this festival, though not with its present name, was first observed in the year 1987 in its proto format as 'Naga Seed Sowing Day'. The festival doesn't in anyway help in concretizing the Naga identity which is still at the abstract level. With only three communities being represented in the etymology of Lui-Ngai-Ni, the issue of exclusion and inclusion is very much there. Correspondingly, it doesn't seem to serve any purpose in boosting the morale and strengthening the bond of Naga solidarity. Therefore, our fellow native brethren, the Manipur Nagas as people with unique history needs to review and scrutinize whether the present form of Lui-Ngai-Ni requires redefinition, reconfiguration or a reinvention of altogether new festival, with all the qualities of uniqueness so that all the tribes in the colorful Naga identity will not feel left out and collectively share and cherish an encompassing and inclusive feeling. (Concluded)