

Editorial

Imphal Tuesday, January 3, 2016

Sunny side up

The alacrity with which the gloomy and despondent mood of the public in the state gave way to spontaneous celebrations and revelry with the turn of another new year once again demonstrates the innate positivity of the human mind. The loud cheers, the gregarious chatters and magnanimous wishes would have anyone who have been in the state just recently believe that there has been a major shift or quantum improvement in the situation prevailing for the last two months. Unfortunately, but for the buoyant moods, nothing have changed and if the past is any indication, the standoff is set to continue for a lot longer than anyone would have cared to wish. But just for once, leaving the intricacies of solving the protracted and cathartic show of one-upmanship between different players to experienced hands, it would be a worthwhile exercise to count the blessings in disguise the present social development brings to our fore. Starting on a positive note in keeping with the moods at present, an all-out confrontation between different communities, while being a distant possibility, can be ruled out for the present since there are more than enough individuals and groups on either side of the communal and ideological divide that understand and are capable of comprehending the irreversible damage such conflicts would definitely inflict not only in terms of human lives but on the very identities and traditions each is seeking to protect and propagate. These voices of sanity will broke forth to maintain ties of cordiality irrespective of the differing views and opinions. And hopefully, such initiatives will strengthen the bond of trust amongst the different communities and ethnic groups despite varying ideologies, needs and aspirations so that an enduring arrangement for peaceful coexistence may be arrived at.

Perhaps such escalations of social tensions are healthy indications of the need to change the system or to fix some glaring errors in administration and governance. Parallel may be drawn to the 1950s and 1960s when the entire world was shrouded with the overarching fear of an imminent nuclear war breaking out due to the intensifying cold war fuelled by the increasing stockpiles of nuclear armaments amongst the nuclear powers. Yet instead of the nuclear war that was considered inevitable, the world realized the holocaust such war would cause, and consequently the whole system by which international politics and interactions were conducted underwent a radical change for the better.

Closer home, the present 'siege' by the UNC has produced some positive outcome in the society. Realization for the need of increasing local production and self-reliance has spurred the people to action and thereby initiating a mini-revolution towards self-sustainability. The lessons in austerity this 'blockade' has enforced on the people of this generally spendthrift society to revise and readjust are just priceless and couldn't have come at a more appropriate time. The public have learnt the value of the things they took for granted all along till now. But most of all, the drastic drop in vehicular traffic has managed to reduce carbon emission as well as fatalities due to road accidents. Alternative means of transport such as bicycles and even walking short distances were seen to be on an increase. Parents were also forced to look into the academic activities of their children thereby strengthening the bond and bringing back the much required attention back to their wards.

Although such outcomes in the society will definitely be unintentional on the part of UNC, we still owe a big THANKS, being the civilized kind that we are - so THANKS. Now that we are even, life goes on and the celebration continues.

By: Monica Ingudum
FindingTheVoices

I started the New year with such strong hope, the much needed hope for Manipur after hearing the voices of the people of Manipur as I watched Impact TV's Mega Manung Hutna show on the idea of Manipur and bridging the gap. Firstly I want to thank and appreciate the team of Impact TV Manipur in getting such eloquent Panelists. This is one of the best initiative of discussion which included different ethnic groups creating a platform for everyone to express their views in a very civil way with words. Such discussions including all the groups are much needed to understand the views and issues of Manipur. The choice of Panelists to include representations from different segment of Manipur considering ethnicity, backgrounds and Institutions is very much appreciated. The questioning,

presentation and moderation was very well executed. This will go a long way to peace and progress for Manipur. Thanks to Impact TV for stepping up and taking ownership to fill in this big gap to bring the people of Manipur together. Secondly a big thanks to each and everyone amongst the Panelists for sharing historical events, experiences, your thoughts and views. I could feel the voices coming from the heart giving goose bump at times. I could feel the sadness of the idea of disintegration of Manipur in each voice spoken. They spoke with such love for Manipur, for peace and reconciliation leaving me inspired, empowered and enriched with their sharings. Love the reinforcing story shared of how Muslims got assimilated into the Manipuri society and the then King's approach to protect and respect, giving the religious and cultural freedom to the

Manipuri Muslim community. It was interesting to learn about the Royal feast and value sharing platform between the valley and hill people of Manipur much earlier keeping the peace and love amongst the people. The personal experiences shared by the Panelist members of the Valley and hill people coming together were touching. These experiences may be small but it goes a long way to connecting us.

Also the lack of good governance, corruption, the feeling of alienation of tribals in Manipur, misunderstanding of the word Manipuri (language or the people) and lots more were covered. You have to watch the discussion and be informed.

Sir Amu Kamei remains my star of the discussion. His response is awesome, love the way he spoke and expressed, straight and direct. I would love to meet him someday.

I invite all of you to listen to the full discussion of Impact TV's Mega Manung Hutna. For those who can't understand Manipuri and is asking for subtitle, you should ask the Indian National TV Channels to feature such discussions bringing up the voices of the people of Manipur, and the North East at the National level.

When we have such strong voices with such good intent and thoughts for unity, peace and progress of Manipur, Who says there is no hope for Manipur?

Now everyone of us have a responsibility and ownership to contribute in the idea of Manipur. There are many takeaways from this discussion which needs to be addressed. Ask yourself how are you going to contribute? Let's focus on your individual contribution.

Happy New Year 2017. To love, peace and progress for Manipur.

Contd. from previous issue

Intensifying Global Crisis and Conflict

(This paper was presented by Malcolm Guy on 6th Ojha Sanajaoba Memorial lecture held at VC's Court room on Dec. 30, 2016)

While burning obscene for war, an estimated US\$ trillion for the war on Iraq alone, the US government denies needed social services in health and education for the American people and to come to the aid of refugees fleeing from US wars and policies. Young Americans, especially people of color and the unemployed have been sacrificed in these wars of aggression overseas. The US government has admitted that 4,448 US soldiers died and 32,221 of them were injured in the Iraq war. Many of the US soldiers who survive these wars suffer from post-traumatic brain injury and post trauma disability.

Washington's European NATO allies, meanwhile, have suffered the blowback from their support of the US wars of aggression in the Middle-East/West Asia with the terrorist bombings in Paris and Brussels that have victimized civilians and created an atmosphere of terror among the people.

As the terrorism that imperialist countries have exported comes home to roost, these states also become even more repressive at home by enacting more laws and regulations that curtail civil liberties, increasing mass surveillance and militarizing the police and border controls. Across the US, for example, heavily armed Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams are forcing their way into working people's homes in the middle of the night, often deploying explosive devices such as flashbang grenades to temporarily blind and deafen residents, simply to serve a search warrant on the suspicion that someone may be in possession of a small amount of drugs.

US expands global military hoot print

Despite the massive military setbacks and growing resistance, US militarism is now further intensifying as it sets its aim at other imperialist powers, placing humanity in ever-greater peril. The US is expanding its global military boot print by establishing a new network of bases in countries stretching from Africa to East Asia. There are now more than 88 US bases overseas in more than 70 countries - compared to no more than 30 foreign military bases for all other countries combined, mostly owned by US allies such as France and the UK. US overseas facilities include at least four new large-scale bases or "hubs" plus a greater number

of smaller camps and "lily pads" which serve as "spokes" to house drones surveillance aircraft or pre-positioned weaponry and supplies for US troops and other military personnel present in about 160 foreign countries and territories. The new bases network - along with the US Navy's 11 aircraft carriers - will provides more launching pads for US military intervention destabilization and aggression as well as intelligence activities and counter-insurgency operations in all corners of the planet.

Even before Hillary Clinton announced the US' Strategic Pivot to Asia in 2011, the US navy has been stepping up military exercises as well as provocative air and sea-based surveillance and patrol activities near Chinese borders - raising the risk of direct confrontations and war escalation in the Asia-Pacific region. It has also imposed blockades and military provocation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

While targeting DPRK's (North Korea) nuclear program, the US continues to stock nuclear weapons in South Korea. The US was the first-user of atomic weapons against civilian populations in Japan at the close of World War II and President Obama refused to issue an "unequivocal no-first-use pledge." (Counterpunch) The US is using South Korea as the launch pad for the Pentagon's Terminal High Altitude Air Defense system, known as THAAD, ostensibly aimed at North Korea, but really targeting China.

In The Coming War China, John Pilger writes: "Across the East China Sea lies the Korean island of Jeju, a semi-tropical sanctuary and World Heritage Site declared 'an island of world peace'. On this island of world peace has been built one of the most provocative military bases in South Korean naval base purpose-built for US aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and destroyers equipped with the Aegis missile system, aimed at China."

The nearby Japanese island of Okinawa has 32 military installations, from which Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan and Iraq have previously been attacked by the United States. Today, the principal target in China.

No room for progressive governments in the US backyard
In Latin America, the US has been

supporting local oligarchs and right-wing politicians since 2002 in their relentless campaign to overthrow the Bolivarian government in Venezuela. It has directed or sponsored coup d'etats in Haiti, Bolivia, Honduras, Ecuador, Paraguay and Brazil to reassert its control over the Americas and reverse the advances of "leftist" or progressive governments in the region since the turn of the century.

With Fidel Castro gone, the US will step up its ongoing attempt to overthrow the socialist government in Havana, which provides a beacon of hope throughout the Americas and the world and stands as proof that you can stand up to the monster. The US was forced to admit its deadly decades-long embargo has been unsuccessful. The US has thus been forced to start negotiating and opening up ties with the Cuban government, but to date has refused to remove the embargo.

Despite US policies, Cuba provides quality healthcare and education to its people, unlike the US where both are a privilege of income. Castro's legacy has been to put the needs of working people first and to provide a quality of life far beyond that of the neighbouring island nations of Jamaica the Dominican Republic and Haiti, each of which has been subjected to devastating imperialist intervention.

This is why Obama's pronouncements during his trip to the island and Trump's parroting of the same mantras of "democracy and human rights", reveals astounding arrogance. They are the incoming and outgoing Presidents of the No. 1 imperialist country which at war with the world's working peoples, that continues to occupy Cuban territory through the US base and prison at Guantanamo and which imprisons a full quarter of the entire world's prison populations, disproportionately comprising blacks and other minorities. Protracted crisis, which erupted in 2007-2008, has persisted. Even bourgeois economists and financial analysts now acknowledge that the global economy has not really recovered.

The present third wave of the crisis is centered in the so-called "emerging economies" with the end of debt-driven growth in China the end of the commodities boom for raw material exporting countries such as Brazil and South

Africa and capital flight from developing countries as a whole. The results of the measures taken in relations to the crisis are paving the way to greater and more dangerous convulsions. Bank bailouts and the ultra-loose monetary policy adopted by the imperialist central banks have put more money in the hands of the financial oligarchy but has inflated global debt by US\$ 57 trillion in just eight years from 2007. Global debt is the ticking time bomb that is inevitably going to explode and plunge the world into another and more severe financial seizure.

Meanwhile, the richest 62 monopoly capitalists in the world have increased their stock of wealth by US\$ 542 billion since 2010 while the most exploited 3.6 billion people have lost US\$ 1 trillion over the same period. The official figures show joblessness is at an all-time high of 200 million people globally, with another three million expected to join the ranks of the unemployed over the next two years.

Among those employed precarious conditions of work are now the norm even in the biggest and wealthiest monopoly firms. For instance, only 6% of the total workforce of the top 50 global corporations is recognized as direct employees while the rest are hired as short-term contractual workers or informed workers. More workers are also forced to seek employment abroad, adding to the 150 million plus global migrant work-force. Monopoly capitalists are dismantling workers' rights previously won through the heroic struggles of the labor movement, including the right to a living wage, social benefits, job security, the eight-hour workday and safe working conditions.

Never satisfied, the monopoly bourgeoisie is carrying out a new wave of neoliberal offensives aiming to increase profits amidst crisis conditions. They are implementing more severe austerity measures and labor flexibilisation; privatizing the public sector and the commons most prominently in the form of land grabs; deepening the denationalization and commodification of third world economies by extending the global supply chains of their monopoly firms; and strengthening protections for monopoly-capitalist property and profits, especially by extending intellectual property rights over technologies and knowledge.

(To be contd.....)

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