

Editorial

Imphal, Thursday, June 29, 2017

Anti-corruption Cell: concerns and connotations

On 24th March this year, the newly elected BJP-led state government launched the Anti Corruption Cell in an apparent effort to bring down the growing menace of corruption that has been hampering developmental and progressive moves being planned and implemented in Manipur. The decision itself on the part of the government is significant for it clearly demonstrated that the depth and reach of the menace of corruption has finally been acknowledged by the government and is taking up steps to check it.

Corruption affects everyone in the society in ways big and small. It goes without saying that the tide of opinion has turned against corruption and the public cutting across communities and faiths is today far more intolerant of the pervasive practice as there has been unanimity on the fact that corruption is detrimental to the interests of the society in general and the poor in particular. It impedes development and economic progress, undermines democracy and the law of the land and worse of all erodes public trust in the system which invariably leads to the widening of a psychological divide between the government and the public which in turn facilitates dissent, terrorism and all sorts of crimes- organized or otherwise.

While the efficiency of the unit is still too early to be assessed objectively, there emerged certain unfavorable reports of those personnel given charge to handle the matter giving the cold shoulder to complainants approaching the cell for relief. The disturbing reports and the changing public perception on the whole exercise accordingly does not bode well for the efforts of the state government which is still in its very nascent stage. No doubt, the people chosen to run the Cell must be highly qualified and knowledgeable, and yet in the absence of empathy and understanding in dealing with the cases, the whole effort could very well turn into an exercise in futility as those seeking the assistance and help of the Cell are people who already have their grievances against the functionaries of the government, and any show of negligence or carelessness, intentionally or otherwise, on the part of the officials will undoubtedly be amplified.

Setting up of the Anti-Corruption Cell is a welcome move, but one which must not be considered an end in itself. What should matter more is the manner in which the unit is operating. Corruption in itself is a very sensitive issue, and those handling the matters should do so with tact and understanding. Developments on the complaints should be made public regularly and any charges, when proven true, should be dealt with severely and without any undue delay. Sacrificing a few small fries to stall genuine cases will incur the anger of the informed public and is sure to backfire. An independent body should ideally be entrusted to handle the cases and follow-ups should be made. There is no dearth of laws to handle corruption in the country. The most important aspect in the fight against corruption is the implementation of the mechanisms available to the officials and authorized personnel. Participation and proactive monitoring by the public will ultimately decide the success or failure of such a public endeavor.

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National and International News

GST midnight bash:

To attend or not to attend? Sonia Gandhi to meet Manmohan Singh to decide today

By: Supriya Bhardwaj
Courtesy: India Today
New Delhi, June 29: Congress President Sonia Gandhi will meet former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today to decide whether her party will take part in the June 30 event where the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime will be officially launched, a senior Congress leader said.

"What these two leaders decide, will seal the fate whether Congress will join the GST roll out celebration event or not. Other senior leaders are of the view that keeping traders' sentiments in mind, one should avoid going to GST midnight event," a senior Congress leader said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) and M Karunanidhi's Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) have already boycotted the event.

Sources say many in the Congress feel the principal Opposition party should boycott the event. But since Manmohan Singh has been invited as a special guest - which mean's he'll share the dais with President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi - the Congress finds itself in a catch-22 situation. Congress sources add that they're

weighing the pros and cons of attending the event, as some within the party fear a fallout like demonetisation.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FINAL DECISION TODAY

The Congress will announce its final decision at a special press conference later today.

The party isn't reaching out to other political outfits, like it usually does to take consensus decisions on issues.

Meanwhile, Haryana Congress leaders, led by former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, will join textile traders protesting against GST in Rohtak, home to the biggest cloth market in the region.

OPPOSITION PARTIES CALL MEETINGS TO FINALISE STRATEGIES

Other Opposition parties, too, are wondering whether they should skip the event.

The Nationalist Congress Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party and Samthriya Janata Dal have called meetings of their respective party leaders on Thursday, to finalise their strategies.

Meanwhile, MP TKS Elangovan, of the DMK, said his party "feels it is just another important legislation so why this show off."

NSCN-IM observes late Swu's death anniversary

NENA

Dimapur, June 29: The NSCN-IM observed the first death anniversary of its late leader, Isak Chishi Swu on June 28 at camp Hebron, the group's Council Headquarters about 35 km away from Dimapur.

In ceasefire with the GoI, the NSCN-IM's chairman passed away last year following age-related complications at a hospital in New Delhi.

Hailed as a "man of prayer" during his lifetime, senior NSCN-IM functionaries paid glowing tributes to Swu, his contribution and legacy at the commemoration service.

"Gen' (ret'd) V.S. Atem, member of Collective Leadership said, "Late Isak gave everything for the Nagaland and at this critical juncture we need a man like him. Who else can replace him? He was an unparalleled leader."

On the reconciliation efforts of Swu, Atem said it was their bounden duty to uphold the path of reconciliation and made a call to all to "tenaciously" follow the path of their leaders.

"Lt. Col." (ret'd) Kiqheto Awomi, Member of Steering Committee described the departed leader as "a star of the Nagas" who did everything in his capacity for the sake of the Nagas. Awomi added that the imprints left behind by the leader would continue to inspire many people.

Lt. Gen' Ningkhon Shimray, Political Commissar said, "We say we



respect Late Isak, his sacrifice, and follow but we fail to honour and vision his vision."

Shimray said even as Swu was no more, the seeds of vision and love for the Nagas people sown by him remained alive in their hearts.

Rev. Puni Mao, Member of Collective Leadership spoke about the reconciliatory efforts made by Swu, his God fearing nature and the services he rendered to the Nagas cause.

Rh. Raising, Convenor, Steering Committee, NSCN (IM) released a video DVD/CD on 'Chairman Isak's Last Journey'. It was informed during the programme that the video would be available free of cost from July 15, 2017 at the office of MIP NSCN (IM).

Eustar Chishi Swu, wife of the late Naga leader, Hukavi Yephomi, kilo kilonser, NSCN (IM) and a host of civil society leaders also spoke on the occasion.

Tension at trijunction: India-China standoff over Bhutan clash

By: Praveen Swami, Apurva
New Delhi, June 29: Face-offs between Chinese and Indian troops over road construction on the borders of a 269-sq km plateau in Bhutan claimed by China has sparked off what experts are describing as the worst crisis in relations between New Delhi and Beijing since troops from the two countries confronted each other at Daulat Beg Oldi in 2013, diplomatic sources told The Indian Express.

The clash on the Doklam plateau, which overlooks the strategic Chumbi Valley, Indian diplomatic sources said, involved troops serving with India's Brigade-sized mission at Ha — a formation meant to train Bhutan's armed forces, but which also deploys alongside the Royal Bhutan Army to patrol its frontiers against China.

"Even though India has long had a presence along the Bhutan-China border, it has never acted in defence of its ally's interests. The Chinese are very upset by the Indian assertion, and are seeking to push back against what they see as a line having been crossed," a senior Indian official said. (APTI report said Army chief General Bipin Rawat will visit Sikkim Thursday to take stock of operational matters and interact with top commanders in the formation headquarters. The agency also quoted Vetsop Namgyel, Bhutan's ambassador to India, saying his country had issued a demarche to China over the construction of a road towards its Army camp in Zomprli area of Doklam and asked Beijing to restore status quo by stopping work immediately.)

Meanwhile, Beijing upped the ante, telling New Delhi to "correct its errors" before reopening of the Nathu La Pass for Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims can be considered. China also described the construction of the border road as "legitimate", maintaining that it was being built on Chinese territory that does not belong to India or Bhutan and no other country had the right to interfere.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang indicated that the point of friction was in the Donglong (Doklam) region, which he

stressed belonged to China. "It is reported that the incidents happened at Donglong, (that it) is part of the disputed territory between China and Bhutan. The region is part of China and is indisputable. China's construction is a legitimate activity. If India wants to raise an issue about it, I would say that it doesn't belong to India and neither does it belong to Bhutan," he said.

According to Lu, Indian troops crossed the boundary on the Sikkim side into Chinese territory. "This is different to what was before in India-China boundary. Bhutan is an internationally recognised country and its sovereignty is to be respected. Even if the boundary is delimited, no third party should interfere and make irresponsible comments," he said.

Few details have emerged on the clash but two Indian officials said that Beijing has privately complained that Indian troops attacked a road-construction unit on the night of June 4-5, leading to an unarmed brawl in which two Chinese personnel sustained minor injuries.

Later, on the morning of June 5, Chinese troops retaliated in strength, destroying Indian sangars, or simple rock-and-earth bunkers, built on the Bhutan side of the de-facto border, near an Indian-guarded position identified by the code-name Laltain, or Lantern.

Neither country has officially admitted to the clash having taken place, but an opaquely worded June 26 statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Indian troops had crossed "the China-India boundary at the Sikkim section and entered the Chinese territory, obstructing Chinese border troops' normal activities in Doklam".

The Foreign Ministry did not explain how Indian troops had succeeded in traversing several dozen kilometres of mountain terrain required to move from Sikkim to Doklam — wording Indian diplomats said was likely intended to avoid drawing Bhutan into the controversy.

Beijing's strategic equities in the Doklam plateau have multiplied in recent years, with the upgrading of the road from Lhasa to Yadong, which allows the 500-km journey to

be made in just seven hours. The road, which passes through Bhutan's territory, has significantly enhanced China's military logistics in the region, which faces out on to India's defences in the so-called Chicken's Neck, through which all roads to the North-East must pass. In addition, China is now in the process of extending the Beijing-Lhasa high speed railway line to Yadong, and is expected to begin test runs in less than two years. Beijing had, in 1996, offered to renounce its claims over the Pasam-Lung and Jakar-Lung valleys in northern Bhutan, 495 sq km, in return for Thimphu ceding its claims to the Doklam plateau. It was reported to have also pressured Thimphu by saying it would not agree to a border deal until Bhutan allowed it to open a diplomatic mission in that country. Former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon had travelled to Thimphu in 2013, amidst rumours that Bhutan was considering such an arrangement. However, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhutan in 2014, its Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay, moved to quell the rumours, saying "We don't even have diplomatic relations. How can you open an embassy without diplomatic relations?"

The genesis of the Doklam plateau crisis date back to the 1950, as tensions between China and India began to rise. Even in 1959, a Chinese Ministry Foreign Affairs document issued on December 26 that year records, "concerning the boundary between China and Bhutan, there is only a certain discrepancy between the delineation on the maps of the

two sides in the sector south of the so-called McMahon Line."

In other words, China agreed that there were no discrepancies between its maps and those of Bhutan in the country's west, where the Doklam plateau lies. But in 1960, China's leadership sparked off panic in Bhutan by asserting, in a statement, that the "Bhutanese, Sikkimese and Ladakhis form a united family in Tibet. They have always been subject to Tibet and to the great motherland of China". Then, in 1966, Tibetan nomads entered the pastures of the Doklam plateau, escorted by People's Liberation Army guards, provoking fears of an attempt to occupy the territory.

In 1988, things came to a head when the PLA crossed into Bhutan and took control of the Chumbi Valley, below the Doklam plateau. In the years since, PLA troops have been reported to have regularly threatened Royal Bhutan Army guards on the plateau, and sometimes occupying their posts for several hours or even days.

With the standoff continuing, an opinion article in China's state-run Global Times stated that India needed to be "taught rules" of handling boundary disputes. "China avoids making an issue of border disputes which has indulged India's unruly provocations. This time the Indian side needs to be taught the rules. India cannot afford a showdown with China on border issues. It lags far behind China in terms of national strength and the so-called strategic support for it from the US is superficial," the article stated.

Amarnath Yatra begins

Srinagar, June 29: The annual Amarnath Yatra began today simultaneously from both Baltal in Sonamarg and Chandanwari in south Kashmir's Pahalgam. State Governor, who is also Chairman of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), reached the Holy Amarnath Cave early in the morning and participated in the customary Pratham (Initial) Pooja to kick off the annual 40 day Yatra. The convoy of the first batch of pilgrims, including 1,811 men, 422

females and 47 sadhus, reached Valley late yesterday evening. While 698 left for the Baltal base camp, 1,535 pilgrims and 47 sadhus left for Pahalgam base camp.

The authorities have made a multi-layered security arrangement manned by the Army, CRPF, Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB), BSF and the Jammu and Kashmir Police, from entry point to J&K in Lakanpur to the Yatra base camps. The Yatra will conclude on 7th of August on the day of Shrawan Purnima.