

Editorial

Imphal Sunday, May 21, 2017

Timely acted, but need to rethink to find better way

Times keep on marching and the society transforms with the changing of time. There is no way that human society rolls back; it is a natural phenomenon that the society marches. However, the fate of a society depends on the wisdom of the leaders of that society.

The state cabinet decisions to review the surrenderee rehabilitation scheme is timely and perhaps the need of the hour. But it is unfortunate that the state continue to believe in the tools that have not proved feed to tackle the situation even after 17 or more years.

For years Manipur has been reeling under insurgency problems. The story of the rise of insurgency in the state during late 1970s and early 1980s is much needed chapter that every ruling government in the state needs to revisit. And then it is also worth remembering the momentum of the insurgency during early 90s and the various efforts of the respective government both at center and the state in the late 1990s in their effort to resolve the crisis.

Well there are no differences among any members of the society including those ruling the state when the impact of insurgency is discussed. Insurgency problem is always a throne on the way towards development and it is a much that this throne is plucked out for a better future.

Much had been tried by respective governments. The granting of amnesty to the rebel leaders during the mid 1970s by the then government is perhaps one excellent work taken up to contain the movement.

Then the change of policy during the early 80s was noticed with the introduction of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, as an instrument to fight the movement had made the problem of the state landed into catastrophe. Since the time that the controversial act has been used in the state the momentum of the movement too raised.

It was perhaps one good move of the then Central government when it signed cease fire agreement with a rebel group of the region (NSCN-IM) in late 90s. Those years witnessed serious concern of the movement and the state witnessed many package and policy being taken up to contain the movement. Among the few policies - Surrenderee Rehabilitation schemes and Suspension of Operation with various outfits are worth mentioning.

The rehabilitation schemes and the SoO are mere tools to contain the movement and it is agreed by even the government that until a proper dialogue is held with the rebel groups there is no way that the problem is solved.

These arguments stands true as it is a fact that even after around 17 years, after the Surrenderee Rehabilitation Schemes and the SoO was introduced, the state still fails to find any absolute solution.

It is now perfect time that both the government of India and the State government now think of another way to resolve the crisis by introducing a new strategy other than the SoO or the Surrenderee policy.

Lets' make a better Manipur.

Rural transformation through inclusive development

By : Vinod Behl

Despite fiscal constraints, NDA government is relentlessly focusing on energizing rural economy as engine of growth and uplifting rural poor through a number of key initiatives/revamped policies related to rural housing & infrastructure, farm income, job creation and entrepreneurship promotion.

Modi government's rural development agenda revolves around its development mantra- "Sabka saath, sabka vikas" (inclusive development), ensuring that the benefits of development reach poor and under privileged. Significantly, the people put their stamp of approval on government's development model in recently held assembly elections.

The government's intent to rejuvenate rural economy by giving a fillip to rural development, was clearly demonstrated through pro-poor budget theme and massive allocation for rural development. Against budgetary allocation of Rs 80194 crore for rural development in 2013-14 budget during UPA regime, the NDA government hiked it to Rs 87765 crore in FY 17 and for FY18, rural, agriculture and allied sectors are to get Rs 1.87 lakh crore of allocation.

Fully recognising that housing and infrastructure are the main drivers of economic development, the NDA government put budgetary focus on it, right from its interim budget in 2014-15 when allocation for National Housing Bank (NHB), was increased to Rs 8000 crore to support rural housing as part of government's flagship programme of 'Housing for All by 2022'.

As per the Working Group on Rural Housing for 12th Five Year Plan, there's a shortage of 14.8 million houses as in 2015. Signalling government's priority for rural housing, budgetary allocation under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), was raised from Rs 15000 crore to Rs 23000 crore and a target of completing one crore houses for homeless, has been fixed for 2017-18. A special interest subsidy provided under PM scheme, is bound to give further boost to

housing, especially EWS and low-cost housing, favourably impacting rural India.

To boost rural infrastructure, Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rubran Mission has been launched for creating integrated project based infrastructure in rural areas, with a separate budgetary allocation of Rs 14389 crore under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), to augment road connectivity of villages.

Modi government is lighting up the lives of people with a dedicated Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jyoti Yojana to augment power supply with an aim to provide round the clock power at affordable rates through energy reforms focusing on green, clean energy. In 2017-18 budget, there is a target of electrification of all villages by May 2018. The government has made a remarkable achievement of crossing 50 GW of installed capacity in green energy in 2016-17, almost at par with thermal energy. There is a target to have 175000 MW of installed capacity of renewable energy by end 2022.

Affordable energy being the key theme of the government, over two crore BPL families have already been provided LPG connections within one year of the launch of pro-poor scheme - Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and by March 2019, almost entire BPL population will get covered.

In addition to tackling the problem of homelessness, the government is making all out efforts to meet the serious challenge of rural distress caused by agrarian crisis, fully realizing that agricultural development is key to tackle poverty. A 2016 Rural Development Report by International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) says that price incentives for agriculture can act as a catalyst in farm income, leading to poverty elimination. Keeping this in mind, Ministry of Agriculture & Allied Services, with a record allocation of Rs 187223 crore for 2017-18, is working on e-National Agriculture Market (eNAM), to create a unified national market to help farmers get

better price for their crop, with a target to double farmers income by 2022. A number of other related measures include providing comprehensive crop insurance to farmers and increasing crop coverage area from 30 percent in 2016-17 to 40 percent in 2017-18 to 50 percent by 2018-19 under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, besides increasing farm productivity by improving soil health, use of technology, undertaking water conservation programme in 50000 gram panchayats and by raising outlay for Long-Term Irrigation Fund to Rs 40000 crore in 2017-18. Under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), the target is to provide water to every field in 5 years.

As the root cause of rural distress is income deficit, the government has attached greater priority to several programmes related to job creation, skill development and entrepreneurship, with a view to enhance income. Under the new target-specific (2019) plan, 'National Rural Livelihood Mission', the government is putting strong focus on sustainable livelihood by targeting women self help groups and reaching out to all 7 crore rural BPL families and linking them to sustainable livelihood opportunities, in order to come out of poverty and lead a decent life. MGNREGA, in its revamped form, with record allocation of Rs 48000 crore for FY 17, is being used as an efficient tool to support incomes for marginal farmers and landless labourers. On an average, 25-30 lakh works were completed annually till FY 2013-14 whereas 51.3 lakh works got completed in FY 2016-17. Rural Development Ministry is also making use of satellite based geo-tagging to check any leakages and assess actual asset creation under MGNREGA. With mass scale opening of Jandhan bank accounts of urban and rural poor, 96 percent MGNREGA wages are now being directly transferred to their accounts under Direct Benefit Scheme, compared to just 13 percent in 2013-14 under UPA government.

The skill development programme, covering 45 lakh households, has been making a significant contribution to give a boost to Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), the flagship programme to provide loans to promote rural entrepreneurship. The success of this scheme, aimed at unorganised sector, can be gauged from the fact that in FY 18, a record Rs 1.80 lakh crore of loans have been sanctioned, immensely benefiting entrepreneurs. Alternate employment is being provided to youth by providing cheaper passenger vehicles to rural entrepreneurs. And under National Rural Livelihood Mission, government is planning more rural women led Ajeewika stores to provide them outlet to sell products produced by self help groups, directly to consumers.

To ensure inclusive development, the government is promoting digital inclusion by providing mobile connectivity to over 55000 villages by March 2019 and initiating measures like Jandhan accounts debit cards, Aadhar Pay, Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), to put an end to middle men and ensure that benefits of various government schemes directly reach beneficiaries through digital transactions that touched 1569.3 crore in FY 17 till January. There is a target of 2500 crore digital transactions in 2017-18.

Obviously, the government has shown its commitment to improve the lot of 22 crore rural people by way of providing shelter, livelihood, affordable power supply, clean drinking water, affordable healthcare, sanitation (including toilets) and cooking gas. PM Modi has put greater focus on governance by starting monthly review meetings with bureaucracy with a view to tune up delivery system by plugging any loopholes and leakages, thereby ensuring effective implementation so that rural people can reap the benefits of all pro-poor and pro-rural schemes launched by the government.

(Courtesy PIB Feature)

North Korea declares medium-range missile ready for deployment

Seoul, May 22: North Korea on Monday declared its medium-range Pukgukong-2 missile ready for deployment after a weekend test, the latest step in its quest to defy UN sanctions and develop an intercontinental rocket capable of striking US targets.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency said the North's leader Kim Jong-Un oversaw Sunday's launch, which sparked a fresh chorus of international condemnation and threats of tougher sanctions.

The missile tested was the Pukgukong-2, which uses solid fuel that allows for immediate firing, KCNA said.

So far almost all the North's missiles have been liquid-fuelled,

which have to be painstakingly filled with propellant before launch, while solid fuel missiles can be fired far more rapidly.

That would dramatically shorten the time available for any attempt to intervene and prevent a launch, requiring any such decision to be taken much more quickly.

Seoul military officials have previously said the Pukgukong-2 — a land-based version of Pyongyang's submarine-launched weapon — uses solid fuel.

Kim said "with pride" that the Pukgukong-2 was a "very accurate" missile and a "successful strategic weapon", KCNA said, adding he "approved the deployment of this weapon system for action".

National and International News

Mercury on the rise in Kashmir and near LoC: Army gears up to stop militant infiltration during summer

Kupwara, May 22: As summers start setting in Jammu and Kashmir, security forces expect more encounters and gun fights in the Valley as militants, waiting across the Line of Control, gear up for the snow to melt so that they infiltrate on the Indian side. This year, compared to the last, will witness relatively less infiltration bids. On Saturday, the army engaged a group of militants, who were trying to infiltrate, and cornered them around Kisan post in Naugam sector of Kupwara district. The encounter, which lasted more than 24 hours, ended on Sunday evening and left seven people dead, including three soldiers.

"Two soldiers were martyred on Saturday afternoon and one terrorist was also killed but by the evening the firing stopped. It resumed on Sunday and two more terrorists were killed and one soldier was martyred," defence spokesman Rajesh Kalita told Firstpost.

"They (infiltrators) were trying to enter our side and we stopped them right at the LoC and a gunfight ensued," he added. "The search operations have been called off." The intelligence apparatus in Kashmir has warned that there is a likely possibility of an increased presence of militants (from Pakistan side) along the LoC this summer. The security agencies, according to sources, have sought help from the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) to track the militants who are waiting to infiltrate the LoC.

The Indian Army strengthened the technical intelligence gathering infrastructure, supported by NTRO, to track the movement of the militants and stop them from entering the Valley. It has, so far, yielded tremendous results. It has also made infiltration harder for the militants and an army officer told Firstpost that "only a human error can make it possible for them to enter the Valley". As the likelihood of infiltration bids continue, the gunfights along the LoC are likely to increase.

Of the 371 attempts made by the militants to infiltrate the Valley in 2016, only 119 were successful. The numbers have drastically gone down this year, with not even two dozen militants attempting infiltration in the first four months. However, Lieutenant General JS Sandhu, Commander of Srinagar-based 15 Corps, recently said there are more militants waiting at launch pads in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir in the areas facing Poonch and Rajouri district in Jammu than in Kashmir. About 150 militants, Sandhu said, are waiting near the LoC in PoK to sneak into the Valley. Interestingly, there have been attempts by militants to infiltrate from South of the Pir Panjal range this year, and there have been more than 60 attempts of ceasefire violations till April. The army has been taking preemptive action to prevent infiltration. This has led to an increase in the number of ceasefire violations this year in that area.

It is an unusual shift as most of the infiltration bids used to happen from either Baramulla or Kupwara district, which together share a good part of the treacherous 740-km-long LoC, which has witnessed major tensions following the beheading of two soldiers allegedly by Pakistan army's Border Action Team (BAT) on 1 May. Defence minister Arun Jaitley last week asked troops to maintain "tight vigil" along the LoC

to thwart attempts of infiltration and give "strong and befitting" reply to any misadventure from across by Pakistan. He was on a visit of the LoC in Rampur sector of Baramulla district.

With temperatures expected to rise in Kashmir in coming days, there is going to be even more heat at the borders as Pakistan pushes more militants into the already simmering Valley.

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