

Editorial

Imphal, Wednesday May 31, 2017

On World No Tobacco Day

Researchers or psychologist may have certain explanation on why people smokes or chews tobacco products even after knowing that those are hazardous to health. But most laymen don't why anyone smokes and chews tobacco products. If the ghastly health risk isn't enough of a deterrent, there's the wallet-draining cost, the smell that fouls one's breath, hair and clothes, and the second-hand smoke that threatens the well-being of loved ones and anyone else who happens to be nearby. Nonetheless, we hesitate to endorse all of the Tobacco control Programme recommendations for the country particularly in the state of Manipur in its latest State of Tobacco Control report.

The introduction plain (standardized) packaging of tobacco products with danger levelled was supposed to save lives by reducing demand for tobacco products, according to WHO and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat (WHO FCTC).

"Plain packaging with health hazard logo reduces the attractiveness of tobacco products. It kills the glamour, which is appropriate for a product that kills people," said, WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan.

In India there is no hard rule or legislation to prohibit production of tobacco products including cigarette. The only thing that is being taken up is restriction of using tobacco product at public places or to pack the items with health hazard labelled. When it comes to the state of Manipur tobacco items which were smuggled from the Neighbouring country Myanmar don't bother to mark the health hazard labelled.

Manipur today joined the world community in observing the World no tobacco day. For the state observation of such important programme is rather a fashion and about funds. Every year the day is being observed by the concerned department of the state government. But no concrete measures is seen taken up to restrict the use of tobacco product.

Except in the Imphal Airport, how many offices or public places have smokers room. How many have been so far fined or punished for smoking in public places? How many shops have been cancelled licences for selling tobacco products including cigarette to minor girls or boys.

It's time that government now take up some measures to restrict use of tobacco so that the observance of World Tobacco Day is fruitful.

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Contd. from previous issue

Speech presented by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh at the 66th NEC meeting held at New Delhi

8. TOURISM:

As our Hon'ble Prime Minister has emphasised in the 65th Plenary of North Eastern Council, North Eastern Region is blessed with natural scenic beauty, distinct historical cultural and ethnic heritage offering tremendous scope for tourism in the region. If developed and promoted well, tourism can emerge as the biggest employer in the region. This will add growth and income of the region. I agree that the region has tremendous potential for both employment generation and revenue generation by harnessing tourism potential. I understand that North East Tourism Development Council (NETDC) is being established, which will identify and promote regional and international circuits, identify tourist product for promotion, etc and NETDC will be nodal agency for coordination with concerned Ministries and Tourism Department of the States. My appeal is that all stakeholders and Deptt of all NE States should be consulted and taken into confidence in identification of circuits and tourist product for promotion. Unique features like Shiroi lily, Sangai deer, Polo and pony of Manipur, INA Memorial and Loktak Lake are a few examples which we are promoting through Sangai festival and International Polo, etc. A pool of trained human resource in the field of Tourism and hospitality under Skill development programme is needed to provide supporting services in this sector. My state proposes to develop a few eco-tourism park with modern public amenities/ infrastructure facilities for promotion of tourism under NEC.

9. CONNECTIVITY:

9.1. ROAD CONNECTIVITY:
The total length of National Highways in Manipur is 1459.995 Km out of which the State PWD is looking after 350.815 Km. The balance by Central Agencies. The National Highways-02 (Mao to Imphal) and National Highway-37 (Imphal to Jiribam) are the two lifelines of Manipur and therefore it is very essential to improve these highways so that these roads can be depended upon throughout the year. Moreover the National Highways 102 connecting the country with Myanmar, being part of Asian Highway No 1 needs to be developed to the international standard. Bailey bridge and baily suspension bridge at Irang, Barak, Makru on NH 37 have been a hindrance to the proper utilisation of Imphal Jiribam road. My Government has taken up maintenance work on these NH 37 to keep the bad stretch of roads

to traffic worthy condition. Ministry of Transport and Highways may grant adequate maintenance funds in time considering the importance and priority of these roads to the State and also the cost involved due to high rainfall and difficult terrain.

9.2. RAILWAY CONNECTIVITY:
Sir, our people are waiting eagerly for the day when Imphal-Jiribam railway line will be completed and railway train will reach Manipur. I appeal to the Ministry of Railways for completion of the project early. My Government will extend all possible support needed.

9.3. AIR CONNECTIVITY:
As you are aware, there is no direct flight between Delhi and Imphal, and flights via Guwahati or Kolkata take 4-6 hours to reach Imphal. This has been one of reasons for unwillingness of the tourists/investors to come to Manipur. May I request you to consider emphasizing upon the Ministry of Civil Aviation to ask Air India to start operating direct flights between Delhi and Imphal and also to resume Imphal-Silchar flight.

I am informed that the capacity of present passenger terminal building at Imphal Airport is inadequate to meet the growing air traffic demand. Construction of boundary wall for Imphal airport has been completed and construction of hanger, associated apron & link taxiways works is targeted for completion by March 2019. Planning for construction of new terminal building and allied facilities at Imphal airport is in process at AAI HQRs, New Delhi. This may be supported.

10. 7th PAY COMMISSION:
Manipur is facing acute fiscal imbalance. The gap between receipts and expenditures have widened over the past 1-2 years. During 2016-17 State Government had to frequently resort to ways and means advances facility to fill the gap. The gap has risen primarily on account of huge growth in revenue expenditure due to the mismanagement by the previous Government. The State Government is yet to implement the 7th Pay Commission award for the State Government employees and the Joint Administrative Council of All Manipur Government Employees Organisation (AMGEO) are demanding immediate implementation of the 7th Pay Commission recommendation since some other State Government have already implemented the same in their State. The revenue transfer under

the 14th FC have not been and will not be able to support the present level/future level of revenue expenditures. The total gap in revenue expenditure is about Rs 3716 crores. In view of the above, may I appeal to Hon'ble Prime Minister and Finance Minister through this August House to provide additional resources to fill in the gap in revenue expenditures.

11. SETTING UP OF MOBILE DISPENSARY/AMBULANCE FOR HILL AND REMOTE AREAS:

Sir, I would like to place on record my appreciation of your innovative initiative for introduction of Mobile Ambulance / Helicopter-based "Air Clinics" for Northeast. This will provide the much needed emergency health services to injured or old aged people who require immediate health care on the spot and help in setting up makeshift OPDs of different specialties in remote and inaccessible areas by specialised doctors. This will also be useful in transporting patients to the hospital during its return sortie from very remote places. You would appreciate that many-a-times due to difficult geographical terrain, many people lose their chance of survival during "golden hour" due to non-availability of doctors/hospitals immediately. In Manipur, as in other parts of NE region, good health facilities are very far and few and hence to save human lives some emergency air-ambulance services are very much required. In order to be useful for the entire region, two such emergency ambulance services can be thought of. One to be served from North East India Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGHIMS), Shillong and another from RIMS, Imphal. The State Government of Manipur will provide any assistance (in the form of doctors etc.) that may be required to make this service operational. Necessary funding may be provided under NHM.

12. STARTING A SCHEME ON THE LINES OF HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (HADP):

I would like to highlight the need for the speedy development of hill areas in Manipur which requires special attention due to unique topography of the State as well as for the welfare of tribal people of Manipur. As you aware, earlier Hill Area Development Programme was designed for socio-economic development of the hills and people living there in harmony with ecological development. Under this programme, suitable location

specific solutions to address crucial environment problems of the hills like De-forestation due to indiscriminate felling of trees for commercial purposes, soil erosion, flash floods due to high rainfall, intensive human and livestock pressures were taken up. Similar problem still exists in the North East States including hill district of Manipur. If such a programme is again started, it will address extra cost, investment required for taking up programme in the topographically difficult hilly terrains, as there is a need to take up infrastructure development programmes in hilly areas based topographical need based budgeting. This is otherwise is not permitted under the existing schemes of Government of India for the reasons like thin and sparse population and differential cost due to difficult terrain and high rainfall. For instance, due to population in many of the Manipur's towns being lesser than one lakh, these towns do not qualify for funding under AMRUT. Further, in many of the remote small villages in the hill areas proper road connectivity could not be provided under the scheme of Ministry of RD where minimum census population is a requisite criteria. Whereas maintenance cost of roads is much higher in these areas. I seek your kind intervention for implementation of Hill Area Development Programme in the States like Manipur, Assam & Tripura where topography consists of hill and valley both. This will go a long way in addressing the welfare of poor and needy tribal people of Manipur and other States.

13. ENHANCEMENT OF ALLOCATION UNDER SDF:

Under the UPA Government during 2008-09, Union Finance Minister had announced and provided special package of Rs. 500 crore for the NER under Social and Infrastructure Development Fund (SIDF) to address the special problems that cannot be tackled in the usual course or through normal schemes. As you are aware, there are numerous small villages in Manipur along the Indo-Myanmar border where multi ethnic tribal people habited. Providing connectivity to each village, particularly those located in the border areas irrespective of its location and population size, is the objective to provide the essential services and benefits of welfare schemes to the people besides promoting social harmony, integration and emotional bonding of all people irrespective of the multi ethnic origin or geographical location. However, proper connectivity cannot be provided to these villagers under popular existing schemes of Govt. of India where census population is a requisite criteria. Ever since the new BJP led Government has come to power in Manipur, there is a high expectation of people. This has led to huge demand in infrastructure even in the remote areas of Manipur. The current allocation of SIDF is not able to cater to such a demand. In order to deliver on these expectations from the first ever BJP led Government in Manipur, I would like to request you to kindly enhance the budgetary support under Social Infrastructure Development Fund (SIDF). This will enable us to take up new projects of specific needs in the State of Manipur.

14. I thank the Ministry of DoNER and North Eastern Council for giving this opportunity to share some of views and concern.

JAI HIND

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