

## Editorial

### High Ways perspective: Govt. needs seriousness

November 13 accident, at which a cement loaded truck felt at the River near Nungdolan in Tamenglong district after a Bailey Bridge collapsed, has once more draw the attention to the public to the condition of the National Highways in the state.

In the last couple of decades, no words of appreciation is heard from any sections of people to any authority responsible for maintenance of the Highways- either it may be the Imphal-Jiribam road stretch or the Imphal-Mao stretch or the Imphal-Moreh stretch. Leaving aside the 'once upon time' frequent bandh blockade and looting, deteriorated road conditions of High ways in the state was what the public outcry many times. After Central government agency BRO took over the charge of maintaining and construction of the Imphal Jiribam Road stretch people had some expectation but was soon shattered with the government organisation under the Defense Ministry could not proved its credential by failing to maintain the 222 kilometers road in over one decade.

The road stretch had also been politicized by vested interested political parties to use as tool for their election. But one thing that was not heard spelled out is that - had some underground outfit have some mutual understanding with the BRO authority not to make this road convenient for motor users. May be a rumours but there is logical explanation in believing so.

Perhaps this is one reason that the Union Ministry of Road and Surface Transport had decided to take over by it.

April 1, 2017 - maintenance work as well as newly proposed upgradation work for National Highway 37, Imphal-Jiribam stretch has been handed over to the National Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NIDCL). According to Works Minister Th. Bishwajit, a sum of Rs. 400 crores has been sanction for the development of this road stretch.

Its now seven months and some development has been seen taken up, but the actual work that has to be carried out is still yet to be seen. Bridges build on this section of highways are outdated and limited for only 24 tons at one time. No work is seen taken up up for upgradation of the portion into four lane.

Upgrading this portion of road to at least four lane is important because India government has promised and is preparing to make the Trans Asia Highway, perhaps during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It's already known that the projected Trans Asian Highway from Porbandar in Gujarat to Shilchar in Assam have already reached upto its mark with 4 lane as the smallest portion. When dream about 4 lane in Imphal-Jiribam road stretch is still very very far. On the other hand neighbouring state Assam had already completed constructing road infrastructure to hold the mark. Even neighbouring state Nagaland has also started converting the Kohima Dimapur road stretch to a four lane.

The country's keen interest to materialize the Act East Policy will come across all obstacles using any means which means that any delay to the part of the state government will only means India government skipping this portion of the Indian region.

The expectation of the Manipuri people over the expected changes towards development of the region with the materialization of the Act East Policy will remain as a dream if the infrastructures are not completed and if the state government is not prepared to face the outcome.

Now there is no shortage of money for upgradation or maintenance of the National Highways. What is required now is the commitment and integrity of the state government.

Let's hope a change Manipur in the coming days.

### 5.4-Magnitude Earthquake Hits Southern South Korea

**NDTV**  
Seoul, Nov. 15: A rare 5.4-magnitude earthquake hit South Korea's southeast Wednesday afternoon, the second most powerful quake on record, in a country that seldom experiences significant tremors. The quake, which was felt across much of the country including in the capital Seoul, struck at the shallow depth of nine kilometres (six miles) near the southeastern industrial city of Pohang at around 2:30 pm (05:30 GMT), the Korea Meteorological Administration said. The Korean peninsula rarely has to worry about significant quakes.

### WHENEVER YOU SEE CONSTRUCTION AND MINING EQUIPMENTS, JUST THINK OF US



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## Statement by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation Mr. Léo Heller

As the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, I address you today at the conclusion of my official visit to India, which I undertook at the invitation of the Government from 27 October to 10 November 2017.

India is a country with historical gaps regarding the access of its population to adequate water and sanitation services. It is reported that 40 per cent of India's population practiced open defecation in 2015, one of the highest proportions among all countries. The situation of water and sanitation in the country has resulted in a disturbing impact on human health: diarrhoea-related deaths in India attributable to inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene corresponded to 40 per cent of the total number in all low and middle-income countries in 2012. And, to my surprise, this situation is not explained only by the level of development of the country: the Human Development Index of India is higher than that of dozens of other countries.

In recent years, the efforts of the country in addressing these problems, mainly access to sanitation services, have been recognized as an "unprecedented commitment".

These circumstances motivated me to undertake this visit to the country in order to identify the main obstacles hindering the full realization of the rights to safe

drinking water and sanitation. Firstly, I would like to thank the Government of India for the invitation and organisation of the visit, and for the dialogues that took place. I am grateful to the central, state and local Government representatives that I met and I appreciate the spirit of openness with which I was able to engage with the authorities. During the visit, I also met with various civil society and community organisations, and residents. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to meet with me and who generously shared their personal experiences, testimonies and living conditions with me. Their contributions were vital to the success of this visit. I would also like to thank the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in India for facilitating the visit. (See information about the visit at the end of the statement).

At the outset, I would like to clarify that this statement outlines my preliminary findings and recommendations based on the information gathered prior to and during the visit. My final and more complete report will be presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council at its 39th session in September 2018.

At the end of this two-week visit in India, my impression of India's water and sanitation sector and how the Government of India is addressing its human rights obligations regarding the rights to

water and sanitation is largely mixed. My first impression is greatly positive.

India's case law on the human rights to water and sanitation are internationally recognized as progressive. While the Indian Constitution does not explicitly stipulate the human rights to drinking water and sanitation, article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life, which has on several occasions been interpreted by the courts to include the right to drinking water. As early as the 1990's, the Indian judiciary has formally recognized the right to water as derived from the right to life. Most recently, in 2014, the Mumbai High Court held that the slum dwellers who occupied illegal huts cannot be deprived of their fundamental right to water. In another case, in 2014, the Supreme Court affirmed transgender persons' right to their self-identified gender and directed the Government to provide them separate public toilets.

At the policy level, the Government of India is in the process of implementing several national programmes that aim to improve access to drinking water and sanitation. Notably, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) was the most frequently discussed topic during my interactions with both the government and civil society. I

warmly commend the Prime Minister for his personal motivation and push in building political will from the central government to the most basic unit of administrative body (gram panchayat) and to all persons in India to eliminate open defecation. The main goal of the programme is to end this practice by October 2019 through the massive installation of millions of toilets across the country and an impressive budget. This is a unique effort of a country in the contemporary world to face its challenges related to sanitation in an extremely short time span. Surely, this is a large step towards the progressive realization of the Indian population's human right to sanitation.

However, through my dialogues and interaction with the several tiers of the Government, civil society and community members, my outlook on the way that water and sanitation services are being provided and scaled up throughout the country became more nuanced. My impression is that policy and programme initiatives in India's water and sanitation sector, and the related implementation measures, lack a clear and holistic human rights-based approach. The national programmes do not incorporate the human rights to drinking water and sanitation as a whole but rather in a piecemeal manner.

(To be contd.....)

### National and International News

## Demonetisation has caused a loss of Rs 3.75 lakh crore, economy standing on one leg: Yashwant Sinha

**Express News Service**  
Ahmedabad, Nov. 15: Claiming that demonetisation and its after-effects might have cost a Rs 3.75 lakh crore loss to the nation, former finance minister and veteran BJP leader Yashwant Sinha on Tuesday likened the termination of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes to the one implemented 700 years ago by Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq, the Sultan from Tughlaq dynasty who ruled Delhi from 1325-1351 AD.

"In history, a number of emperors, monarchs and kings have conducted demonetisation... About 700 years ago, there was an emperor in this country, who introduced his currency and ended the circulation of the older one. Demonetisation happened 700 years ago. The emperor's name was Muhammed-Bin-Tughlaq. He is infamous in history for shifting the capital of his empire from Delhi to Daulatabad," Sinha said referring to Tughlaq's move to replace gold and silver coins with token currencies made of copper and bronze.

Speaking at an event organised by 'Lokshahi Bachao Abhiyan', where former Gujarat chief minister Suresh Mehta was also present, Sinha said, "Demonetisation was considered so important that the PM decided that he himself will announce it, instead of allowing the RBI Governor or the Finance

Minister to do it. While announcing it through an hour-long speech, he mentioned black money 74 or 75 times. Fake currency and terrorism were also mentioned, but no where was digital and cashless economy mentioned."

The veteran BJP leader said when Modi felt the targets of demonetisation were not being achieved, he started talking about cashless economy. "Nobody had cash then. The country had already turned cashless," said Sinha as the audience, largely consisting of senior citizens in Thakorbhai Desai, Hall applauded.

Sinha said Modi himself had said 18 lakh deposits were being probed after demonetisation. "A message is going across the world that India is a nation of thieves; we all are involved in illegal activities; there is nobody honest here," said Sinha, while claiming that the entire process of demonetisation and the dip in economic activity together had caused a loss of Rs 3.75 lakh crore to the nation.

"These days, a there is a new tradition. Everything is a media event. Nobody has done anything before us is a remark that has become common. Atal Bihari Vajpayee ruled the nation for six years. If you say, nothing has been done for the last 70 years, then has Vajpayee ji done anything that was

worth taking note of? If that is so, then why was Bharat Ratna given to AB Vajpayee," Sinha said, adding that the stand taken that "only I am right, and nobody else is" cannot work.

He also narrated how Vajpayee emphasised on reaching a "consensus" with the opposition parties about United States when the Iraq war broke out. "I learnt a very important lesson from Vajpayeeji. Consensus should be created... Opposition (parties) is not an enemy," he remarked. Sinha said that the deadlines of every promise that the government made before ascending power in May 2014 had been extended to 2022. "We have to tell the people of this country what all we did in 2019," he quipped.

**Economy standing on one leg**  
Talking about the state of the economy, the former finance minister said, "Today the finance minister claims that our economic fundamentals are strong... Our fiscal deficit is under control at around 3 per cent, our current account deficit is around 1.25 per cent, inflation is under control, stock markets are booming and there is an atmosphere of happiness and peace all around. Now, we also have a certificate from US President (Donald) Trump." Sinha said all this was due to the low prices of

international crude, which fell from \$110 per barrel in May 2014 to \$29 in the subsequent months after the NDA government took charge in New Delhi.

"This (the fall of crude prices) did not happen because of us. It was not that the lion of Gujarat roared and all the oil exporting countries got scared and decided to lower the prices," Sinha remarked. He said the government had failed to take advantage of the fallen crude prices and did little to boost domestic economy.

"What we are seeing today is the silence before the storm. Now the prices of crude has increased to \$60 per barrel, the stock markets have turned volatile, the rupee has weakened against the US dollar and the feeling of comfort that existed, now seems to be ending... I do not want to be a prophet of doom," Sinha said, adding that the rise in crude prices could destabilise the economy.

"Today our economy is standing on a single leg," Sinha said. He said the economy's lone support was low prices of international crude and nobody could predict how much longer the prices would remain subdued. "Domestic demand and domestic savings will be the guiding principles of Indian economy, not foreign demand and investment," he added.

## Army seizes control in Zimbabwe, says Mugabe safe

**Reuters**  
Harare, Nov. 15: Zimbabwe's military said it had seized power in a targeted assault on "criminals" around President Robert Mugabe who were causing social and economic suffering, but gave assurances the 93-year-old leader and his family were "safe and sound". Zimbabwean soldiers and armoured vehicles blocked roads to the main government offices, parliament and the courts in central Harare, a Reuters witness said on Wednesday.

While nearby, Zimbabweans queued for cash outside banks as public taxis ferried commuters to work. "We are only targeting criminals

around him (Mugabe) who are committing crimes that are causing social and economic suffering in the country in order to bring them to justice," Zimbabwe Major General S.B. Moyo, Chief of Staff Logistics, said on national television on November 15. "As soon as we have accomplished our mission, we expect that the situation will return to normalcy."

The military detained Finance Minister Ignatius Chombo on November 15, a government source said. Mr. Chombo was a leading member of the so-called 'G40' faction of the ruling ZANU-PF party, led by Mr. Mugabe's wife Grace, that had

been vying to succeed Mr. Mugabe. Soldiers deployed across the Zimbabwe capital Harare on November 14 and seized the state broadcaster after Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party accused the head of the military of treason, prompting frenzied speculation of a coup. Just 24 hours after military chief General Constantino Chiwenga threatened to intervene to end a purge of his allies in Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF, a Reuters reporter saw armoured personnel carriers on main roads around the capital.

Two hours later, soldiers overran the headquarters of the ZBC, Zimbabwe's state broadcaster and a principal

Mugabe mouthpiece, and ordered staff to leave. Several ZBC workers were manhandled, two members of staff and a human rights activist said. Shortly afterwards, three explosions rocked the centre of the southern African nation's capital, Reuters witnesses said.

Mr. Mugabe, the self-styled 'Grand Old Man' of African politics, has led Zimbabwe for the last 37 years. In contrast to his elevated status on the continent, Mr. Mugabe is reviled in the West as a despot whose disastrous handling of the economy and willingness to resort to violence to maintain power destroyed one of Africa's most promising states.