

Editorial

Looking out for possible measures

Two activists- a student and one civil society leader have begun fast unto death protest since 3 pm yesterday. Their demands - 1) framing of a legislation to safeguard the indigenous people, 2) Constitutional protection for the territorial integrity of the state and 3) Punishment of those responsible in the hijacking of common peoples' share. Of the three demands, the last is under the purview of the state government while the other two - that is legislation regarding indigenous people and about constitutional protection for the territorial boundary of the state is beyond the limit of the state government.

The apprehension of the two leaders about the future of this state need appreciations from all sections of the people but as Manipur is presently at the cross road with threat perception from the Frame Work agreement which has been nearing solution between the government of India and the NSCN-IM, a sentimental protest will be not enough. On the other hand the issue of protecting the indigenous people of the state is a long pending one. Already the then government of Manipur had attempted by passing three bills in the state assembly under the pressure of the civil society organization of the state. However, not everything went well as sections of peoples from Chirachandpur district upraised against the passing of the bill. After all the Bills could not be converted into Act until it gets approval of the President of India.

About the demands for punishment of those responsible in the looting of public property, it is in the hand of the state government. The demand is genuine, if the Chief Minister of Manipur is not under political pressure to protect those culprits, there is no need for putting up this specific demand. After all Imphal city has witness many hoardings with promises of Chief Minister and the Prime Minister of India to make the country free from corruption.

What is needed is to produce some specific documents or evidences that prove that the peoples' properties are being hijacked by some vested interested people.

So, of the three, the two is not in the purview of the state government. Saying so it is the state government that has to stand firm with their commitment of protecting the boundary of the state as well as saving the indigenous people of the state.

Well every Manipuri felt it their duty to protect the boundary and emotional integrity of the state. But at the moment it is late to demand amendment of constitution of India. Every literate individuals knows that Article 3 of the Indian Constitution allows redrawing of existing state by bifurcating it. If the people of the state demands for amendment of this article it would be definitely opposed by many sections of people from across the country. So something that will get support from other fellow citizens of the country need to be considered. For example, the division of Manipur between hills and plain by incorporating article 371 C in the constitution of India can be amended by not affecting the rights of the tribal people. A provision that would grant special autonomy to NSCN-IM can be challenged with the kind of mistakes that is seen in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Any modification under Presidential order without presenting it on the floor of the parliament should be objected as it would become an obstacle to the strengthening of the Indian nation. This we have seen from the case of Jammu and Kashmir and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will never want another Kashmir in North East India.

As for protection of the indigenous people of the state, it is the need of the hour as there are evidences of people from Bangladesh and neighbouring country already occupying the region. It is a threat to not only Manipur but also to India. So India government should immediately prepare a legislation for the indigenous people or the Meitei people who has been protecting the prestige of the Indian Nation.

Government of Manipur should properly explain the Union government about the outcome if it felt that India should be strong nation.

Challenges before Media: A glance from the hills of Manipur

By : Sothing Shimray

About 20 years ago radio was the most important source of information media for the hill people. As in the valley also, what was informed through radio was like 'God's voice' seemingly devoid of any flaw. Of course, the outlooks still prevails as more than 70 percent of villages in the hill districts still do not receive News papers. A copy of News papers in the village were read and discussed by almost all the literates for over a week. Illiterates come to know of the happenings around the world through such discussions. Frankly, I do not know about the situation in the valley, but this is the situation at the hill areas. This year I happen to came across an interesting situation of news crazy citizens at Tamenglong town. It was around 12 noon I saw more than 20 peoples, old and young, sitting at a makeshift bench near one book store. My curiosity piques and I was told that it is a usual scene at Tamenglong every day. What surprise me as it will be to all of you is, they were waiting for the arrival of news paper from Imphal. This clearly reveals their thirst to read the news papers publish from the State capital. They were waiting for the news papers expectantly. Well, What do they expect from the content of that day's issue? This is a million dollar question indeed.

The concept of media is now more or less well defined comparing to those days 20 or 30 years ago. Those were the days where prefixing or suffixing the name of their respective community were common phenomena i.e Mr. X Paitte, Mr. Y. Tangkhul, Mr. A. Meitei and so on. Those days the contents of news in the news papers and radio were dominated by outside happenings. Even the very mention of one's village name in the media was the 'talk of the town'. Those were the days of 'one way traffic' where the consumers or listeners just listen without any feedback.

Gone are those days of silent listeners and readers. Now, every listeners and readers are very reactive and the challenges before the media has also increase by leaps and bound. The speed of technological development s in the field of communication has no doubt changed the face of media and society i.e from simple to complex. In fact the developments are so fast that even journalists are finding it difficult to access, assess, assimilate, understand and interpret. Amidst this adaptive inability every citizens has now become more

rationalized and sensible as well as sensitive. Manipur is a multi-community and multi-religious state. Every community and religion has their own interest. Of course, understandably it is a hard task for the Editors to maintain a balance role.

To me the biggest challenge before the media in Manipur is the inability of media people to understand their greater social responsibility, their inability to come out of their respective family tradition, their community influence and so on. Of course, they are all human being and I am not blaming any one in particular. Frankly speaking, lakhs and lakhs of Manipur population are dancing at the tune of some hundreds of journalists. Experience has clearly shown that hyping an issue by the conventional media, forget about other social media viz facebook, WhatsApp etc. is very common in Manipur. Any slight issues involving different communities were sensationalised and hyped in favour of their respective communities. Ethical journalistic guidelines usually take a backseat when it comes to communal tone. This is a serious betrayal of Journalistic profession and to the social fabric of the State. As the code of ethics is usually a moral issue, the breach of which does not attracts legal remedies. This is why the regulator like the Press Council of India can't take any legal action, and that no journalist is seemingly doing wrong even when the state is burning. Standardizing the profession of journalism is the key here, but no doubt a hard task, as this involved many factors.

Talking about principles and ethics of journalism, there are some people swerving from one media house to another or form one media organization to another in an effort to escape from their unethical or anti social practices. I am aware that every media houses have certain code of conduct against bribe or paid news so is also the media organization. But there are some journalists who openly take bribes or indulge in anti social activities. And when confronted those person just quit and joins another media house and media organization. Unfortunately, he or she was readily accepted by the other media house or media organizations. This shows that media houses and media organizations don't give a damn to principles and ethical codes of journalism. This is very sad. Media houses and media organizations in

the State need to have a common understanding in this issue.

Journalism has come a long way in Manipur but most us are yet to know whether we are really informed or manipulated. To me the people of Manipur are being controlled by the media. And this is where, I think the media has overstepped. This is another big challenge to the future of media and its relationship with the society.

There has been lots of talk about media's from mainland India sidelining the happenings of North eastern states. It's a fact, I am sure you agree. Similarly, the hill districts fumed a lot about being sidelined by the mainland Manipur media. This is also true. I hope you will also agree with me too. How do we bridge this gap is also another big challenge.

In Manipur, apart from the vernaculars, all the major media houses are located at the State Capital area. In respect of staffing pattern also 95 percent are from the one community (I am not questioning about the staffing pattern at all but the just showing the configuration). But over 70 percent of readership of the popular English dailies are from the hill Districts (correct me if I am wrong). The gap has been appreciably largely bridged these days with every media houses keeping Correspondents at the respective District Hqrs - a Correspondent with a consolidative meagre salary of Rs. 4000/5000 or even less a month with about 5000/6000 sq.kms geographical area as his or her beat. How on earth do you think will the Correspondent perform his or her duty? In fact this is sheer unimaginable. Irrational payment of salaries, behind the Majithia wage board, is big challenge for District Correspondents. In most case also, the Correspondents are simply kept aloof as non-accounted staff except the story they filled. As they are seemingly non-accounted, their mistakes were left uncorrected, they failed to accustom with the in-house style of writing too. And they continue to grow old with the same mistakes without reaching the mark. This gives bad reputation to the media house which he works. At the same time his chance to grow in the profession was suffocated.

In democracy, right of the majority prevails, but how do we determined this majority is another big challenge for the media. Does it mean media has the right to sideline the minority? In a true sense of term here comes the question of

empathy. Lack of empathic exercise amongst the various media persons in Manipur is a big challenge to the sanctity of journalism as the most neutral body on earth. Looking at social issues from a seemingly pre-determined view point of one's interest only usually results 'hurt feeling' the so-called most dangerous emotion on earth, to another.

In Manipur there are many instances of portraying non issues as main issues. We all know that communal harmony is the most important need of Manipur. But reporting on such activities was given a back seat while militant ambushes were giving a front seat. Rather, we should be exploring stories of those people which work hard to mend the broken thread, the activities of those neighbours which continue to maintain friendly atmospheres amidst the conflict. We need to remember that it is not everyone which are firing the guns or pulling the trigger.

Instead of giving front page to car thieves, smugglers, rape accused etc. It will be much better to focus on the adoption of a village by our MP and MLAs and so on. In other word we need to focus more on positive things rather than the negative things.

Manipur government being a welfare government has indeed been very benevolent to media. This is indeed a laudable effort of people's government. The government through DIPR has also been giving out government information everyday at Imphal. However, failure of District information offices at the respective District Hqrs is a great set back. Almost all the Districts have vernacular dailies.

To conclude I would like to come to term that it is easier said than done, I myself being a journalist understand the ground difficulties, may be who knows I am the worse, but what I meant by this presentation is to call on every journalist to start practicing the positive, to cut down our ego, to learn on walking the tight rope, to have more empathic sense and to maintain the sanctity of journalistic principles and ethics.

Let us all work to make journalism for solution and not for problem.

(This paper was presented by Sothing Shimray, Ex-President, Manipur Hills Journalists' Union, on the seminar organised by DIPR on occasion of National Press Day, at 1st MR Banquet Hall on Nov. 16, 2017)

Contd. from yesterday

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

While India achieved the Millennium Development Goals for sustainable access to safe drinking water, I would like to highlight that the way in which Indian people currently access water services is far from meeting requirements established by the SDG 6.1 target and indicator, namely, through the already mentioned concept of "safely managed service". This standard requires that water is accessible on premises, meaning that public water points are not considered as "safely managed service". The concept also states that water should be available when needed, which will require that water in urban and rural areas is provided continuously. Further, "safely managed service" also means that water should be free from faecal contamination and hazardous levels of arsenic and fluoride. In connection with this, the relevant bodies at all levels require appropriate processes to monitor and survey drinking water quality, and to properly remove chemical and microbiological contamination. In 2015, 92 per cent of India population was reported to have

access to improved sources of water. When we use the stricter definition adopted under the SDGs, this proportion reduces dramatically: only 49 per cent of the rural population receive water meeting this standard. For the urban areas, 73 per cent of the population have water accessible on premises and 86 per cent have it available when needed. I No consolidated information for drinking water quality in Indian urban areas are available in the SDG baseline report.

Drinking water quality is a matter of concern. In the country, 85 per cent of rural drinking water supply and 50 per cent of urban drinking water supply come from groundwater sources. Accessing groundwater may be a serious concern in different parts of India, considering the known problems of water contamination by arsenic and fluoride, but also by pathogens. According to the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, 38 per cent of the groundwater in the State is contaminated with arsenic and fluoride. This is a huge problem,

because approximately 84 per cent of the rural population in West Bengal depends on groundwater sources for drinking water. Although the central and state governments have been adopting different measures to control this chemical contamination, those measures have not been entirely effective and the problem worryingly persists, causing serious health effects. For instance, I met a man living at Gobindapur village near the Bangladesh border, who was suffering from chronic arsenicosis and who show me the effects of this disease on different parts of his skin. His brother has passed away due to arsenic contamination and his family members also suffer similar negative health impact.

Another key issue related to water quality is faecal contamination. The general state of surface waters in the country, considering the conditions of access to adequate sanitation services, particularly the deficits in wastewater treatment, poses severe threats to a high microbiological standard of the

water consumed. The Joint Monitoring Programme WHO/ UNICEF, for the Sustainable Development Goals, reports that more than one third of the water consumed by rural populations are contaminated. Different studies are showing doubtful microbiological drinking water quality in different parts of India. One additional relevant remark, related to health risks due to drinking water ingestion, is that many households do not treat water before consumption.

To my understanding, affordability should be treated as an integral part of the indicator's definition of "safely managed" services. In general, access to water services by the population provided by formal systems in India, including urban population connected to the piped systems, is relatively affordable. However, I have witnessed several situations where users are forced to rely on informal providers who sell water at an extremely higher price than the formal provision.

(To be contd....)

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



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