

Editorial

Bamboo- our green treasure

“World Bamboo Day” was observed throughout the world yesterday. Manipur too joined in celebrating the day in a grand way.

In an ever increasing need to replace and supplement the man-made materials that is being utilized to fuel the constructions and creation of infrastructures, newer avenues and innovative use of natural resources are being taken up in a big way.

One of the most promising and abundantly available natural resource of building material being bamboo, the world is taking a renewed look at this ubiquitous grass to sustain and fuel buildings and other infrastructures of the future.

The inherent advantages of this unique material has only been starting to be appreciated- from the climate friendly and relatively economic attributes to the added aesthetics and versatility, not to mention its unique ability to sustain and thrive in diverse climatic conditions. Yet so far, apart from celebrating the day and waxing eloquence on the subject once a year, precious little have been done by the State authorities, nor has there been any support or visible effort by the Government to infuse the private entrepreneurs to work with this wonderful material and develop commercially viable products.

The most glaring point being the lack of any facility for treatment of bamboo- a prerequisite step for development of any product using bamboo due to its propensity to attract termites otherwise. Manipur is naturally endowed with an abundant supply of huge varieties of bamboo, and cultivating them commercially will not be a formidable task, given the conducive climatic conditions, yet the lack of infrastructures coupled with the lackadaisical attitude of the Government in making these infrastructures available as well as the indifference shown in taking the initiative in promoting and encouraging the individuals and organizations in their efforts to develop and popularize bamboo products has so far resulted in the precious and versatile material being relegated to temporary substitutes for fencing and as makeshift scaffolding- a huge waste of efforts.

For a fund-starved State with very limited opportunities for gainful employment such as Manipur, the humble bamboo grass presents the perfect opportunity to enable the society to pole-vault itself out of the pit of misery and trouble it is in at present. A sustainable system for value addition and marketing the products with a planned approach towards the development of artisans and adequate raw materials will ensure that our naturally endowed State benefits from such a venture.

POT ON THE BOIL

(Courtesy: The Statesman)

In the early hours of 13 September when the villagers of Makhian, Kamjong district, not far from the Indo-Myanmar border, heard the sound of gunfire they must have thought it was yet another ambush by militants on an Assam Rifles column. But, after the daybreak when the villagers went to the site of firing, they found five bodies, four of Meiteis and one of Tangkhul, to which community NSCN (I-M) general secretary, Thuingaleng Muivah belongs. Their bodies lay on a raised platform in a hut and about 200 empty bullet shells were found scattered on the ground. None of them was wearing the familiar camouflaged fatigues. By the time the news trickled into Imphal it was late in the day and the initial information was that four members of the valley-based banned People's Liberation Army and one belonging to the Manipur Naga People's Front had been shot dead in an ambush by cadres of the NSCN (I-M), whose leaders are on the verge of signing a final settlement with the Government of India. It took three days for personnel of the Kamjong thana to retrieve the bodies and bring them to Imphal for autopsy.

Kamjong was the happy hunting ground of Muivah's cadres and it was here that leaders like Livingstone and Atem made their mark as master tacticians of ambushes. I visited Nambisha in 1994 after Livingstone led an ambush on the 9-Grenadiers of the Indian Army, killing 14. Some parts of their bodies were mutilated and it was Livingstone's reply to the rape

of Tangkhul women by personnel of the Indian Army. Lt-General Chiman Singh, then Army commander at Fort William, came to Imphal by helicopter the next day. I overheard him instructing his junior officers "don't let these gentlemen (press squad) stay too long." Two of them had come from Delhi.

Ever since the start of the peace parleys between the NSCN (I-M) and the Government of India, following the July 1997 ceasefire agreement, the guns had, more or less, been silent as the militants no longer viewed jawans as their enemies. Then about four years ago the ambushes on the Assam Rifles resumed, followed by IED bomb blasts and the like. Then it became clear the vacuum left by the NSCN (IM), the bulk of which has converged at the Hebron designated camp near Dimapur, was being taken over by the valley insurgents, namely the PLA, camped just across the border in Myanmar.

Then came the creation of the MNPF, comprising mostly Tangkhuls who are opposed to Muivah's tactics. It has a united Manipur on its agenda as opposed to the plans of Muivah for a greater Nagaland comprising his own home district of Ukhrul apart from Tamenglong, Senapati and Chandul. And although on paper there are no designated camps of the NSCN (IM) in Manipur there had been instances of them clashing with the Zeliangrong United Front in Tamenglong district. The latter's demand for autonomy of the Zeliangrong people runs counter to that of the NSCN's dreams of a

greater Nagaland. There has been skirmishes between the NSCN (I-M) and the MNPF with the latter accusing the leaders at Hebron of cornering all the developmental contract works in the Naga areas of Manipur.

But the latest ambush cannot be viewed as just another piece of statistics in this troubled region. As a matter of fact, relations between the NSCN (I-M) and the PLA were cordial and at one point of time they even shared the general headquarters in the Somra Tract of Myanmar, with the PLA guarding the western gates to ward off attacks by the Myanmar army. Their top leaders were provided shelter by the PLA when they ventured out into the valley areas. This was some time in the 1980s. But the new ambush has shown that the NSCN (I-M) is unwilling to part with any area of their former dominance.

The PLA is also not likely to take things lightly and could be putting pressure on the NSCN (I-M) as operations in the valley region, mostly in terms of collecting taxes from the business community, runs into hundreds of crores a year.

The assistant secretary, publicity of the Revolutionary People's Front, the political organisation of the PLA, Bangkim and Thomas Numai of the Manipur Naga People's Front, in a press communiqué, made available on 14 September, have confirmed the death of sergeant major Richard (A-3075), Sergeant Lalloi (A-2878), privates Sinthouba (A-3292) and Nanao (A-3290) of the PLA and

Private Raikhan Jajon of the MNPF in the early hours of 13 September. They accused the NSCN (I-M) of colluding with the Assam Rifles to start striking out at their fellow kinsmen who are still struggling for "independence" in the Western South East Asian region and have thus exposed their true character.

Sergeant Major Richards was first recruited in 2008 and was a battle hardened veteran and was attached to the 252 Mobile Battalion of the PLA and the rest were attached to the general headquarters. Raikhan Jajo is also from Nongdam Tangkhul village. The communiqué also charged that a combined force of the NSCN (I-M) and the Assam Rifles had laid an ambush on the team when they were on a mission. But judging from the photographs it appears that they were all gunned down as they lay resting in a jhum cultivation hut. The assailants were said to have decamped with four automatic weapons from the deceased.

While the PLA cadres paid their respects to those killed, at all its units speculations are rife of a possible fratricidal war between the NSCN (I-M) and the PLA. The latter is also a member of the CoCom - the apex body of the valley-based insurgent groups. And the rest are not likely to stand as mute spectators.

Perhaps the NSCN (I-M)'s longdrawn-out war with the Indian Army is finally going to be over and a new one, with the other rebel groups, seems to be in the offing. The Chanakyas in New Delhi's North Block must be smiling thinking that the indigenous rebel groups will finish each other off now.

(The writer is The Statesman's special representative based in Imphal)

National & International News

India seeks investigations into North Korea's proliferation linkages

New Delhi Sept 19: External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met leaders of various countries, including Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, last night on the sidelines of the ongoing UN General Assembly session in New York. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar told reporters that Mrs Swaraj paid a courtesy call on the Bangladesh Prime Minister and the ongoing Rohingya crisis did not come up for discussion. He said, the deliberations were purely bilateral. Mrs Swaraj also held a meeting with

US President Donald Trump's daughter and adviser Ivanka Trump. They discussed women empowerment and Ivanka's visit to India in November to attend the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. The External Affairs Minister also met the Foreign Ministers of UAE, Bahrain, Denmark, Latvia and Tunisia and discussed issues of mutual interest. Mrs Swaraj also held a trilateral meeting with her American and Japanese counterparts. Mrs Swaraj will address the General Assembly on Saturday.

PM to meet FM today to take stock of economy

New Delhi, Sept 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and other top officials today to take stock of the situation and discuss remedial measures to bolster growth. According to PTI, Mr Modi will threadbare analyse the economic situation with Mr Jaitley and secretaries of the finance ministry and explore options to stimulate the economy. The meeting comes days

after government data showed GDP growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal slumping to a three-year low of 5.7 per cent, from 7.9 per cent in April- June of 2016 and 6.1 per cent of January-March. The teething troubles with the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), after-effects of demonetisation and the fiscal space available is likely to figure during the meeting.

NOW IT IS THE TURN OF BABA RAMDEV!!!

Lady journalist has exposed the secret behind the journey of Baba from Godman to tycoon

By Rajesh Ghadge (Time Mail)
When something controversial gets published about people who are either celebrities or politicians, it ends up getting banned or a defamation case is filed against the authors and publishers, and in this case, the book published by this lady journalist on Baba Ramdev had a similar fate. The followers of Baba and Baba himself did not take a liking towards this book and approached the court for an injunction on the sale of this book. Here in this article, we will tell you as to why this book has become a vehicle for so much controversy, and what dark secrets has the author revealed in her book titled "Godman to Tycoon" - The Untold Story of Baba Ramdev by journalist Priyanka Pathak-Narain.

According to Priyanka, while gathering the evidence for her book she realised that mysterious incidents constantly followed Baba and his journey from rags to riches was only possible due to these chain of incidents that have taken place during his journey. She claims that whichever Swami that Baba Ramdev has learned from had soon disappeared from his life.

To prove her point here she gave an example of Swami Shankar Dev who mentored Baba Ramdev and one day suddenly disappeared. His whereabouts are not known to anyone which makes it even more mysterious. According to the reports, Swami Shankar Dev went missing while he was on his morning walk. It was Swami Shankar who had donated the land belonging to Divya Mandir Trust worth crores of rupees to Baba Ramdev.

The most surprising thing here is, when Swami Shankar Dev had disappeared in July of 2007, Baba Ramdev was out of India for a period

of one month and the writer Priyanka mentions that despite such a drastic incident, Ramdev did not come back to India and decided to stay abroad. As usual, the police could not manage to find out the mystery behind Swami Shankar's disappearance and the case was transferred to CBI who are still in the investigation but no information has surfaced to date.

Another incident the writer mentions in her book is about the mysterious death of Swami Yoganand. Swami Yoganand was a close friend of Baba Ramdev and he himself was famous in the field of Ayurveda. According to the reports, Swami Yoganand gave the licence of Ayurveda to Ramdev in the year 1995 and thereafter until 2003 (almost 8 years) Baba Ramdev made use of Swami's license to manufacture the Ayurveda Medicines and in the year 2003, Baba terminated the contract with Swami Yoganand and after one year the body of Swami Yoganand was recovered from his house lying in the pool of blood. As usual, the police could not solve the murder case of Swami and the file was closed in the year 2005.

Another incident that Priyanka mentions in her book is the mysterious death of Rajiv Dikshit. Rajiv Dikshit was the guiding star for Baba's Swadeshi mission. The book of Priyanka Pathak reveals all the secrets connected with Baba's life. Priyanka writes in her book that, Rajiv Dikshit was the mentor of Baba Ramdev on his journey from Ayurveda till Swadeshi Mission. The blueprint of the business that Baba runs today was designed by Rajiv Dikshit. There is a mystery surrounding the death of Dikshit who was present at an event on the day he died. According to the reports, Rajiv died due to a heart

EVERY SUCCESS STORY HAS DARK SECRETS HIDDEN BEHIND IT, AND NONE OF THEM ARE COMPLETE WITHOUT IT. THE STORY OF BABA RAMDEV IS NO DIFFERENT. ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS, A FEMALE JOURNALIST HAS EXPOSED SOME DARK SECRETS OF RAMDEV IN A BOOK WRITTEN BY HERSELF, AND THE BOOK HAS BECOME SO CONTROVERSIAL THAT BABA RAMDEV HAD TO APPROACH THE COURTS TO GET AN INJUNCTION ON THE SELLING OF THIS BOOK IN INDIA....

attack in the washroom after finishing the program. But the next day when the color of body started changing, his supporters demanded that post-mortem take place but that did not happen and his body was turned to ashes as per the Hindu rituals.

Another person that Priyanka mentioned in her book is Maharaj Karamveer. According to her, Karamveer was the director of Divya Mandir Trust and in the year 2005 due to some differences between him and Baba, separated from the trust. In a similar fashion, Baba also had a dispute with the co-founder of Astha Channel Mr. Mehta in the year 2009. It was the efforts of Mehta's Astha Channel that gave Baba name and fame he has today, she says.

In one of the interviews given to an international website, the author says that there are hundreds of such mysterious cases that have been piled under the multi-crore business empire that Baba runs today, and only

Baba Ramdev and his partner Balkrishna know about it.

Whatever may be the secrets behind the success of Baba Ramdev, one thing is clear that today Baba is the brand image of Yoga and Ayurveda in India and his journey from Bicycle to Charter plane is not any less surprising than the success story of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The study of Baba by the author goes back to the year 2008 when she first had an opportunity to meet him. According to one report, Pathak-Narain first encountered Baba Ramdev when he along with some others launched the Ganga Raksha Andolan in Kanpur in 2008. "That's where I met him and got to know him better. The reason I got roped in was that my sources in the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) and RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) told me that I should meet him and I get to know him better. This way I realized that he was willing to shed his role as merely a yoga Swami and take on something bigger. It was a very palpable sentiment you could pick up on," she says.

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