

# Editorial

Thursday August 16, 2018

## Independence Day - for whom

The nation celebrated its 72nd years of independence on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August this year with much fervor and fanfare, as has been done every year since India attained independence from the British rule in 1947.

The occasion was initially observed to remind and redeem the pledge of rebuilding and redirecting the nation towards the path of development and progress from the state of despair and disarray in which the British rulers left it in.

Seventy two years on, what we are actually experiencing is a far cry from the dreams and visions which every citizen of this country hoped to see unfold into reality. There has been a perceptible loss of foresight and vision amongst the so called leaders who have grown to take their positions and the powers entrusted to them for granted, making a mockery of the democratic set up that was designed to aid in the speedy and judicious dispense of duties and justice. The law and order situation in almost every part of the country leaves much to be desired and development index seems to be going southwards.

There has not been any significant increase in the basic amenities for a very large number of citizens who are struggling to make ends meet in the rural areas and in the far flung villages. In this day and age when space travel is no longer a figment of the imagination, a substantial percentage of the population still dreams about electricity. Roads still remain basic and unpaved and social upliftment measures like the Public Distribution System has been proving to be a colossal waste of precious food grains, being manipulated by those entrusted to ensure their proper implementation in order to aid the underprivileged and the needy. Perhaps these people have taken the slogan "Public property is our property" to mean that they are thereby authorized to hoard them and use them for their personal purposes.

Social unrest and agitations are on the rise, and the governments are taking undue advantage of these to fill their own coffers instead of looking for measures to address these unrest and upheaval. The nation is rather regressing into a vortex of chaos and unrest, while the leaders and officials are busy giving lip service without the will or the temper to carry out their empty promises. The symptoms of social ills are pretty evident closer home.

The police personnel, trained to protect the public are in total disconnect with the common public, their very presence causing panic and concern rather than reassurance and safe. The representative of the people are unreachable once they assume power, and amidst all these mayhem, various unrest and social chaos, amassing wealth through hesitation kill or be killed, justifying their actions and deeds by citing noble ideals and espousing selfless sacrifice with their fingers on the triggers of their guns all the while. The altruistic meaning of Independence has been lost in the chaos. The maddening rush for survival and personal enrichment has caught the public and the powerful alike in its wake.

Development and progress are concepts that have been relegated to the dark corners. Unless we come to our senses and redeem ourselves now, it would be too late to salvage whatever little we have achieved as a society and as progressive humans. It is in us all to change things. It is in us to stand up and start working on it.

# ITHAI BARRAGE AND POPULAR RESISTANCE

By - N. Lokendra Singh

Water management has been a subject of much concern and attention for contemporary Manipur Society. Loktak and other lakes in Manipur have been serving historically as the reservoir of heavy monsoon rain and the Imphal River which is known by different name, a different stage of its entire course serves as the only channel which drains the excess water from Manipur valley. Thus, it is through a complex mechanism of the balance of natural forces and delicate and efficient handling of the river and canal system that a unique socio economic system emerged in the valley as well as the hill areas of Manipur. Any disturbance in the given balance and any careless manipulation in the delicate system without proper precautions would naturally create a lot of distortions in the process. The Loktak Hydro-electric Project and its integral part, Ithai Barrage reflects a case of uncritical and over simplified attempt to harness the large mass of water resources in Manipur.

The Ithai Barrage constructed with the purpose of regulating the required volume of water at Loktak Lake for the working of Loktak Hydro Electric Project had created tremendous socio-economic problems for a large number of Manipuri peasants in as many as 15 Assembly Constituencies in Thoubal, Bishenpur and part of Imphal district. Out of about 100 villages listed by S. Ibomcha (S. Ibomcha: Ithai Damgi Ithil Imphal, 1992), some of the villages which have been seriously affected are in the constituencies of Mayang Imphal, Hiyanglam, Wangjing Tenth and Sugunnu. Due to the possible at this stage of the study to quantify the exact nature and amount of damages done by the after effects of Ithai Barrage, although available literature and information on Loktak Hydro Electric Project and Ithai Barrage, throw sufficient light on the disastrous socio-economic problems created by the Barrage. As is a generally known, Ithai Barrage is closed during 8 months of the year, from October to February when the water resources are limited and open only in the four rainy month i.e. June, July, August and September to release the excess rain water. Contrary to the ideas of the planners and architects of Loktak Project many unnoticed and unexpected problems have emerged creating havoc for many of the Manipuri peasants who have been used to a pre-modern Agro-fishing based economic way of life. More than 90% of the people in the villages earn their livelihood by growing paddy and vegetable,

fishing in the rivers, ponds, lakes and other shallow water and also collection of edible aquatic plants grown in the lakes. The Manipuri peasants also used extensively 'Singnuts', 'Singnages', 'Charots', thatch etc. for construction of houses. All these sources of livelihood are, however, gradually destroyed by the constant inundation of paddy fields and increase of the water level in the Lakes. Heavy siltation is being carried on in Loktak Lake in the last 8/9 years because of denudation in the catchment areas of the lake. Distortions in the natural courses of water currents have also filled up the bottom of the lake, resulting to an automatic extension of the deluged area. The question of how such excessive siltation could be prevented is for the specialist of lake management science and policy planners to examine. To a student of social science, however, what basically concerns him is the ever increasing threat of the extension of flooded area around the lake, submerging more and more areas of agricultural land and thereby disturbing its traditional ecological and socio-economic system. What were originally thought and cherished as the harbinger of a new life of people for many of the Manipuri peasants in terms of supply of electricity and sufficient water supply and also possible reclamation of 25,000 hectares of cultivable land have turned out to be an absolute fiasco. The most acute problem is the severe inundation of a large amount of cultivable land, the estimate ranging from 20 thousand hectares to 83 thousand hectares. The former estimate made by the Government is certainly an understatement whereas the estimate of 83 thousand hectares made by S. Ibomcha seems to be a slightly exaggerated one. The sustenance of a large number of peasant family in the villages particularly many of the farmer peasant proprietors and tenants who depended on land are uprooted from their traditional sources of livelihood. The shrinking of total cultivable land in these regions further compounded of total cultivable land in these regions further compounded their problem. Even if many of such peasant wanted to their problem. Even if many of such peasants wanted to become tenant of some landlord, they could not do so, because of the unavailability of land. As a result, many of the farmers were

depeasantised and wage basis like landless labourers. During the off season many of such farmers would come to urban areas and work as manual worker, on daily wage basis. The majority of the Rickshaw pullers registered in Imphal Municipality Office represents a section of the depeasantised farmers. Female workers of many such villages have come out as vegetable vendors in Imphal market. Child labour particularly young boys and girls working in well-to-do houses as helpers has become a visible trend. Because of worsening economic condition, children education has been considerably ignored and the general socio-economic and cultural life has been to a great extent adversely affected. Thus, a rapid process of social differentiation is being taken place in many villages in Manipur. Social differentiation in terms of modern agricultural development is understandable but rural proletarianisation because of a faulty project is uncalled for.

A notable economic change that is being taking place in water affected villages is the beginning of a number of fisheries. A lot of investment is being made for commercial fishing, but much are still to be achieved because production has not even succeeded in meeting the local demands. A negative effect of Ithai Barrage in this regard however is the gradual disappearance of a large number of nutritious local fishes and these should be of immense concern to the Zoologist and Ecologist. A large number of important flora and fauna have also disappeared and even the Keibul Lamjao national park is being threatened because of dramatic changes in the environment and ecology. It has been in view of the worsening socio-economic life of the peasants that both the common people as well as the local leaders of the affected raised to the problem. The elected MLAs of 51 constituencies in the Imphal, Thoubal and Bishenpur districts formed a 'Loktak Flood Control Demand Committee' in July 1985 to initiate ways and means of solving the inundation of cultivable land. In response to the popular demands as well as the initiative of the LFCDC, the Government of Manipur constituted 'Loktak Development Authority (LDA) in 1986 with a fairly sizeable financial allocation to make ways and means of solving the problems of the water affected areas. Under the initiative of the LDA a number of measures have been taken up. An assessment of the siltation at Loktak and Pumlun lakes have been made by WAPCOS (Water and Power Consultant) and

one dredging machine has been acquired. So far about 2.5 lakhs cubic metres have been dredged and a weed harvester to remove weed and reeds has so far removed about 1.8 million sq.m of phum from Loktak Lake.

Despite such measure taken up by the Govt. of Manipur as well as the LDA the gravity of the problem increased and on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1990 representatives of some of the voluntary association of Thoubal, Bishenpur and parts of Imphal district submitted a representation to the Governor of Manipur to take corrective measures of the continuing inundation of paddy fields. The increasing awareness of the eroding traditional ecology of Loktak lake, the indispensable between Loktak and the people of Manipur also made some of the social scientist and social activists to organize 'Loktak Day' for 3 days between 21-23 October, 1991. The programme constituted talks and cultural activities to popularise the necessity of preserving the Loktak Lake. Pressed by the ever persisting socio-economic problems of the peasants an organization called "Action Committee-Loktak Project effected areas, Manipur" was also formed to demand due compensation for the affected farmers. The fishing community of Thanga Village also formed an association called "The Loktak Khanpok Fishermen Association" in 1992 to protect the social economic and cultural life of the inhabitants at Thanga. Since the socio-economic problems of the affected people deteriorated, the youths and local clubs of the affected areas in 15 Assembly Constituencies in collaboration with some of the social activists of Manipur University held a joint meeting at the premises of the University at Canchipur in July 1992, and the meeting resolved to form an organisation called 'All Manipur Ithai Barrage People's Organisation (AMIBPO) to mobilise public opinion on the problem and to formulate ways and means of combating the issue. In the last 7 months the members of the AMIBPO conducted intensive campaign by organising local meetings in the villages and also by interacting with a number of media men and social activists. Realising the strong momentum of the movement, the Government of Manipur discussed the issue on the floor of the assembly and constituted a committee to examine the various issues involved in the problem. However, much is still left to be achieved.

## Ease of Living Index to Empower Citizens in Aspiring for a Better Quality of Life from their City Authorities

**PIB**  
Ease of Living Index launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018 has attracted wide public enthusiasm and provided an opportunity to Urban Planners, Municipal Authorities and public at large a baseline data for wider public debate. It is expected that the baseline data will fulfill the demands of cross section of people in aspiring for a better quality of life from their city administration. This is a unique exercise and is based on an open and participatory assessment of cities along with physical audit of urban metrics in a transparent manner. The assessment, certainly, is more than just a ranking exercise. It marks the beginning of the creation of a robust baseline along 78 urban metrics and seeks to drive evidence-based thinking on urban planning and development. It has also initiated a healthy competition between the cities based on the rankings and

generated acute interest, comparisons, critiques and analysis by citizens and experts in the public domain.  
**Process Overview**  
Through an international bidding process, M/s IPSOS Research Private Limited in consortium with M/s Athena Infonomics India Private Limited and Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) were selected for assessment of liveability indices. The implementation of the assessment commenced formally on 19 January, 2018. Transparency and neutrality are critical attributes that define the success of this exercise. The assessment is open and participatory and started with a nation-wide drive to encourage cities to provide data online through a dedicated data entry portal. Two rounds of quality control and excel-based audit were performed on the data provided by the cities and errors were identified. Every

city was given an opportunity to fix the errors and update their data sheets. This was followed by a round of document-based audit by a set of independent professionals to validate the veracity of the data. This was done by comparing data from supporting documents (in the form of published plan documents, administrative reports etc.) with the information presented by cities in the data entry portal. Finally, a physical audit was conducted for selected parameters which could be physically verified (for example, availability of passenger information systems) through a network of trained field staff.  
**Defining features that influence the assessment outcomes and Rankings:**  
**1. Indicators and Weightages**  
The foremost aspect that influences a city's performance is the set of indicators that the city is being assessed on and weightages assigned to them. In the current

assessment, the physical infrastructure pillar receives the highest weightage of 45%, with several of the indicators focusing on universalization of services (Sanitation, Power, Water, Sewer, Transport, Public Services etc.). Thus, cities that are observed to be doing better in terms of service coverage stand to gain significantly. The other feature is the differential weights associated with indicators based on whether they are classified as supporting or core. A core indicator receives a weightage of 70% while a supporting indicator only receives a weightage of 30%. For example, a city that has taken significant efforts to restore ecologically sensitive areas (core indicator) within its jurisdiction stands to gain more on the theme of 'identity and culture' vis-à-vis its performance on an indicator such as number of cultural/sports events hosted (supporting indicator).

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### MANIPUR PINEAPPLE QUEEN 2018

The Manipur Pineapple Festival Committee, Manipur will be organizing the Manipur Pineapple Queen Contest as part of the XIth State Level Manipur Pineapple Festival to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at Khousabung DCC Headquarters in Churachandpur District. The contest is open to all unmarried girls above the age of 18 years. Interested contestants may collect Entry Form from the following centres. Entry fee of Rs. 500/per form is to be paid on the day of screening:  
1) DOVE'S, Keshlshampat CCBP Bus Parking, Imphal ii) Somamani Mobiles, Moirang Bazar  
iii) Donna Pharmacy, New Lambulane, Imphal  
iv) Hope's Computer, Tuibuong, Churachandpur v) Bright Pharmacy, Motbung, Kangpokpl District  
Entry Forms shall also be available at the spot on the day of screening at Kukl Inn, near Civil Secretariat, Imphal on 18<sup>th</sup> August from 11:00 AM onwards.  
Further Information may be had from Mobile No 7005573861 | 8787351593. Information 8: Publicity Wing Man' Pur Pineapple Festival Committee, Manipur

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