

Editorial

Monday, August 27, 2018

The truth unfolded

Behavioural experts have, time and again, extolled the virtues of positive reinforcement- of the benefits of appreciating a right move or action, however small, over the detrimental effects of criticism and discouraging remarks. The same views have increasingly been used in the fields of education and different forms of therapeutic practices.

The same idea would undoubtedly work, if the experts are to be believed, for our much maligned and harassed government. Looking at the bright side to start with, the ruling government had been able to stabilize the fiscal deficits. Progress has been made, and is still making strides towards development in various fields including power, public amenities, water and other necessary public infrastructures in the state. All these efforts are worth appreciating, and have been felicitated by various social organizations and groups on many occasions.

Getting the consensus of the entire population of the state is an almost impossible task, given the different and often contrasting views and opinions professed by each group of people or community. Nevertheless, efforts are still apparently being made to cater to the greater good of everyone. This unenviable task being borne by those in governance should be something everyone of us should bear in mind while dispelling our opinions and views on matters relating to public governance.

Yet, having said that, it is a sign of human adaptability and progress that one should learn from mistakes- the sooner the better. It is also another unique human trait- perhaps the most important one that distinguish ourselves from the rest of the animals is the ability to rationalize and control our emotions and thoughts.

The present scenario unfolding in front of the public regarding the handling of public affairs by the representatives of the people as well as some top authorities still leaves much to be desired. The collective dilemma of the present government is obvious in the confusing and often self-contradictory ways things are being handled. There is a visible lack of transparency and responsibility in all spheres of public service, while the law and order issue still plagues the common people no end despite the assurances from the government of making remarkable strides in this regard. The recent being the uprising by farmers yesterday over none distribution of subsidise fertilizers. What surprises everyone is that the fertilizers were not distributed for reason best known to the government authority as there were no dearth of fertilizers as it was found abundant at store room. For those of us who cannot afford personal escorts or unworthy of state-sponsored security measures, the ground reality is still frightening and fraught with danger- from both sides of the ideological and political divide.

The most disconcerting questions plaguing the minds of the general public is: why is there still an apparent lack of cohesion and coordination between the different departments and sections of the government? Why has the general public been unable to shed the uneasy, insecure and suspicious feelings for the state and central security forces ostensibly deployed to safeguard the common public? What earnest and sustainable measures have the government taken up till date to address the burgeoning educated unemployed and qualified people in the state? How much of the long-drawn plans and policies regarding the development of commerce and industries have been implemented so far? Are there any plans and policies to guide and support the pioneering entrepreneurs and industrialists whose endeavours will decide the future industrial and commercial prospects of the land? Why couldn't or shouldn't the state government open a dedicated grievance cell to entertain and address genuine complaints and issues concerning the various departments from the distanced general public if its much publicized claims of the ongoing efforts to improve governance is sincere?

The bewildered public is still seeking an explanation to these and many more apparent discrepancies in our society, and still hoping that perhaps the government would be earnest enough to answer these nagging questions, and own up to its mistakes and blunders. The entire population of Manipur will whole-heartedly appreciate such a bold gesture.

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FIVE DECADES OF AMSU IN MANIPUR

(Atribute to Hunger Marchers of 1965)

BY: SERAMNEKEN



(Photo Archive from LeihaothabamSharatchandra Sharma)

It was on Friday, the 27th day of August 1965 that students protesting against the artificial famine created by the then government were brutally charged and some of them even killed inside the compound of the then Chief Commissioner. OinamNabakumar, WaikhomNilamani, and NongmeikapamPromodini sacrificed their lives on the spot for the cause of the people. LaishramChaothal Singh succumbed to his injuries a month later. Among those who sustained bullet injuries were LaishramMangi, Kumar and budhi, while N. Ibohah Singh was seriously injured in lathi charge by the government forces. The rightful demands of the students for foodwas responded with bullets by the then government. The unfortunate event gave birth to the apex body of students in Manipur under the banner "All Manipur Students Union (AMSU).

Birth of AMSU

On 28th August 1965, a meeting of student leaders presided over by NameirakpamMadhusudan Singh was held at 2 PM at Keishampat LaishomLeirak (Sega Road) Imphal, which led to the formation of AMSU. In the meeting, the students paid homage to the souls of the three martyrs who were killed in the tragic incident of the previous day. The gathering resolved to pursue the government with demands for judicial inquiry on the incident of 27 August, to ensure availability of adequate rice, to demand release of students arrested, to provide assistance to the bereaved families, and to form an apex body of students in Manipur.

Next day, the first Executive Council of AMSU was constituted at a meeting held at UripokTourangbamLeikai (residence of GurumayumLatishwar Sharma) and presided over by N. Birendrakumar. ShriThiyamGambhir and LoitongbamTombi Singh were elected as the President, and the General Secretary of the 36-Member Executive body of AMSU. Seven teams with three members each were also elected to hold the charge of Joint Secretaries:

- (1) N. Birendrakumar, H. Joykumar and M. Manikumar
- (2) Y Brojen, Pukhrabam Kullachandra and SeramMangi Singh
- (3) L. Ibohah, Y. Dijen and Ng. Sankar
- (4) L.Sharatchandra, Shyamkumar and S. Mangi
- (5) LoitongbamKanhai, K Damudor Sharma and RK Lakshana
- (6) KshTiken, P. Ibohah and KhwairakpamSubash
- (7) N. Sarat, KshNabakumar and G. Yaima

Among those who played active role in the formation of the Union were: Md. Abdul Shah, M. Sanajaoba, L. Kaminikumar, O. Nabakumar, Gokul Singh, Salam Ibohah, A Basudev, P. Ibohah, S. Kirankumar, Shyamsumdar, A. Yaima and L. Ibohah.

The main agenda before the first Executive Council were the institution of Judicial Enquiry on the 27th August incident and release of the arrested student activists by the government. Meanwhile, records reveal that a meeting of Action Committee of students held at Singjamei LeikhomsanaMandop on 30 August 1965 under the Chairmanship of RK Laksanaalso resolved to press the government for a judicial probe into the incident of 27 August with a Judge of High Court as its head.

On 9 September 1965, a meeting of all students of Manipur was held at Manipur Dramatic Union Hall, Yaikul with Shri N. Ibohah as President. 17 student leaders who were released from jail on that day were also present in the meeting. ShriSanajaobaNaoriya and ShriGurumayumJoykumar Sharma

(both from D.M. College) were elected as the President and the General Secretary respectively of the Union.

Later on, another meeting held at the residence of ShriThiyamGambhir on 19 September at 8 PM with ShriKullachandra in the Chair, co-opted ThiyamGambhir Singh as Vice-President of the Union. Besides inducting student of GP. College Kh. Jyoysakhi as Executive Member, the meeting in its Resolution No. 2 formed a 4-Member Advisory Board of AMSU with KN Singh, S. Ibotombi Singh and N. Birendrakumar Singh.

In order to enlighten the people in the wake of Indo-Pak War, the meeting in its Resolution No. 3 constituted a 5-Member Civil Defence Board with SeramMangi Singh (Manipur College) as Chairman and L. Sharatchandra Sharma (D.M. College) as Secretary. Shri H. Joykumar Singh, Kh.Subash Singh and Kh.Ibetombi Devi were the other members. A Publicity Board headed by the MeinamManikumar (DM College) was also formed. ShriLoitongbamIboyaimea was entrusted as Finance Secretary. L o i t o n g b a m T o m b i, SoyamLokendrajit, Y. Rajen Singh, LaitonjamIbopishak, Th. Ibohah Singh, L. Raghunani Singh, Ksh. Iboyaimea Singh, LaishramJugobala Devi, Ch. Devola Devi, Ksh. Kunjalata Devi and A.K. Santi Devi were also members of the Council.

Constitution of AMSU

On 10 February 1966, at a meeting held at the office of Boy Scouts Union, Singjamei with N. Sanajaoba in the Chair, a Constitution Drafting Committee of AMSU was formed with seven members namely ThiyamGambhir, Y. Rajen, A. Birendra, Kh. Jyoysakhi, Jadumani, N. Ibohah and Ksh. Iboyaimea. Thereafter, the Constitution of AMSU was adopted at the 20th Executive Council Meeting of the AMSU held at Paradise Club, Wangkhei on 26 December 1966. Under the provisions of the new Constitution, first ever election to AMSU was held, and Shri Leihaothabam Sharatchandra Sharma (D.M. College), HuidromYaima and SeramMangi Singh (Manipur College) were duly elected as the President, the Vice-President and the General Secretary of the Union.

Other elected members were L. Khurailema Devi (GP. College) as Finance Secretary, Moirangthem Santikumar as Publicity and Information Secretary, Kullachandra Singh as Secretary-at-large, L. Mangi Singh (Imphal College) as Auditor General and SanjenbamSangita Devi as Assistant General Secretary, while G. Gunamani Sharma (Modern College), R.K. Memsana Devi (Tera Girls), R.K. Premalata Devi, Momon Devi (Singjamei Girls School), Y. Sabitri (T.G. School), Bormani (Sarbodaya High School) and Sobita (Wangkhei Girls School) remained Executive Members.

Hunger Marchers' Day

The 16th Executive Council Meeting of AMSU held under the

Chairmanship of Th. Gambhir on 17 June 1966 at 10 AM at City Junior High School discussed threadbare the matters related to observance of the memorial for 27 August incident. Later on, the 17th Executive Council meeting held at D.M. College Campus on 4 August with N. Sanajaoba in the Chair, resolved to bring out a publication on 27 August. A Publication Committee with G. Joykumar Sharma as Convenor of the Committee were N. Ibohah Singh, H. Joykumar Singh, L. Iboyaimea Singh, W. Ibempishak Devi, Y. Sabitri Devi, G. Sobita Devi and S. Lokendra Singh.

The 18th Executive Council meeting of AMSU was held at Singjamei LaitonjamMandap in the morning of 7 August, 1966. In the meeting, four different names of the observance were proposed. They were: (1) Hunger Marchers' Day, (2) Awakening Day, (3) Hunger Martyrs' Day, and (4) Heroes' Day. After thorough discussion, the meeting decided to observe the day as Hunger marchers' day in its Resolution No.10(c). The meeting also put up three proposals for the venue of the observance: (1) the lawn on the northern side of Chief Commissioner's compound, (2) lawn at the northern gate of Palace, and (3) PishumChinga. Finally, the meeting selected 'PishumChinga' as the right venue for the observance and erection of a Memorial for the martyrs. With the formation of a Monument Construction Committee comprising LoitongbamIboyaimea, N. Ibohah and Heisnam Joy, a Memorial Pillar was erected at PishumChingamacha.

Thus the first observance of Hunger Marchers' Day as held with a mammoth rally in Imphal, in which the portraits of the martyred students arranged at Singjamei LaitonjamMandop were brought on floral palanquin to the Memorial Site and were given due honour by the participants.

Naga Issue & State's Integrity

As an apex body of students of Manipur, and as a pressure group protecting the indigenous rights of its people, AMSU has been involved in various reformations and development works. On 28 July 1967, a conference of all students (both hills and valley) held at D.M. College raised issues such as emotional integrity among the students of Manipur, role of students in social development, and grievances of the students. Representatives from Paite, Gangte, Zeliangrong and other Naga students' bodies participated in the conference.

In 1968, AMSU strongly condemned the efforts of some Naga leaders for unification of Naga inhabited areas into Nagaland, and its endorsement by the then Nagaland Chief minister T.N. Angami. The Union submitted its memorandum to the then Prima Minister of India with its rigid decision to safeguard the territorial integrity of Manipur. In the memorandum, the then President of AMSU LeihaothabamSharatchandra Sharma categorically stated, "From time immemorial, Manipur had its separate entity with the existing natural and geographical boundary remaining uninterrupted

and its identity unblurred. No Manipuri would tolerate this sort of interference in the internal affairs of Manipur. Any attempt for balkanization of Manipur would have serious consequences."

Later on, the AMSU again raised the Naga Ceasefire issue during a Conference held at Johnston School in July 1997. The Union took a major role in organizing the Integrity Rally of 4 August 1997 under the banner of COPTIM (Committee on Protection of Territorial Integrity of Manipur), which was then a conglomeration of various civil society organisations.

In almost all communal clashes occurred in Manipur during the last fifty years, AMSU played a significant role in mediating between opposing groups. The present generation must remember the efforts made by AMSU in dealing with Naga-Kuki clashes, Kuki-Paite clashes, Meitei-Meitei Panggal clashes in recent history. As pursued by AMSU, the state government in 1997 declared the celebration of 'MeraHouchongba' on the full moon day of Meitei month 'Mera' as State Holiday every year. This celebration is a symbol and ritual of integrity among the peoples of hills and valley.

In 2001, AMSU being a component body of United Committee Manipur (UCM) took a major role in demanding Greater Autonomy for Manipur. During this period, UCM submitted a Charter of demands to the then President of India and also published a report entitled "Influx of Migrants". AMSU took a collaborative role in such initiatives.

Foreigners' Issue

AMSU and AMSCOC launched a strong agitation in February 1980 demanding identification and deportation of foreigners from Manipur. During the protests, two student martyrs namely PotshangbamPremananda (Lukhoi) and HuidromLokendro were killed by the government forces. The day on which the two precious lives martyred has been being observed as Realisation Day on 17 April every year.

In the aftermath of a prolonged protest on the Foreigners' Issue during the period 1979-80, the AMSU could come to an understanding with the then state government in the form of an agreement signed between the state government represented by Chief Minister of Manipur R.K. Deorendro Singh and Minister of Sports and PHED M. Kumar Singh on the one side, and the students represented by the then AMSU President L. DilipMeitei and President of AMSCOC W. Deben on 22 July 1980.

Among others, the 16-point Agreement categorically mentioned that the government would start the process of identification and detection of foreigners on the basis of the Census Report of 1951, National Register of Citizens 1951, and Village Directory 1951. It was also agreed that a specific subsection be inserted in Manipur Land Revenue & Land Reforms Act 1960 (under section 158) as a preventive measure to check transfer of immovable properties from Manipuri to non-Manipuri in the erstwhile Central district on the ground of economic backwardness of Manipuris. However, the points of Agreement have remained only on papers till date.

The second phase of Foreigners' Issue was again taken up by AMSU in 1994, which came to an end with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the state government represented by Manipur Chief secretary K.K. Sethi and the AMSU represented by its President NaoremMohilalMeitei on 9 November 1994 in presence of the then Governor Lt. Gen. VK Nayyar. (..Contd. on page 3)