

Editorial

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Understanding nature's gift

Crimes against humanity deserve the worst form of punishment. Different nations have different legal system to protect the interests of their country. The enforcement of certain laws - like capital punishment; Special powers act to armed forces may have strong and supportive argument as it is about the security of their respective nations. Gross violation of human rights at certain parts of the country and other parts of the world may receive severe criticisms from many who are concerned for Human values. Arguments may continue for certain human causes permitting each sides to stand tight with their act. But what about some issues like global warming, water scarcity and deforestation?

There is no wrong in saying that environment has no boundary. A massive destruction of forest or extraction of crude oil or mismanagement of natural water is among the issues which no nations could give reasonable arguments as it affect regions beyond politically drawn boundaries. After all, these issues are about human beings across the globe.

Reports about the scarcity of usable water have been top news at almost all newspaper in Manipur. As for the state of Manipur there is adequate rainfall every year but faced acute shortage of water almost every year in the last couple of decades. Interestingly, during rainy season the state also witnessed flood almost every time. In short the state suffers the ugly face of flood during rainy season while they had to bear drought in the remaining days. In view of the arising situation that we are facing right now, there is an urgent matter that needs to be pondered on what went wrong?

Is it the people or is it the government who is responsible for the present crisis?

Deforestation that has been taking place illegally at different parts of the state has been often blamed - both by government and the many social activists which is universally accepted by all. One thing we at Imphal Times suggest is that we cannot completely blame the people who are responsible for cutting the trees for their livelihood. It is the government which is responsible and why shouldn't it be? It was all about their survival and mind it some people do not have any alternative for survival. On paper government had passed many schemes to substitute the livelihood but it is an open secret that none of this schemes meant for the poor people had never been benefitted by the targeted beneficiaries as the money meant for them had been pocketed by government authorities who were assigned for implementation of the projects.

Another matter, which we at IMPHAL TIMES is concerned is the poor understanding of the government department about the need for storage of natural water underneath the earth. There seems to be complete lack of knowledge by the government authority about the need to let the earth absorb any source of water. Clear example is the drain constructed under huge funding from the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM). The cubicle shaped drainage construction has no mechanism to let the drain water absorb underneath the earth. This is not only the case with any government infrastructural development work there is no sign of the government authority showing concern about the importance of harvesting the rain water. Harvesting rain water does not mean that it should be stored in a tank or some man-made water storage tank. It is about harvesting inside the earth core which can be reused using other means.

For a state endowed with resources, such abject failure to utilize and benefit from the gifts of nature only undermines the apathy and complacency of the state government.

Racism in India: Mysterious body of Pravish Chanam

Bijo Francis, Executive Director.
Courtesy - Beyond the Horizon

Various forms of oppression and discrimination are persistent in India. Although to argue for racism may invoke a different debate, there cannot be denying of the existence of a predominant presumption about nationalities in Northeast as marked by difference from the rest of India in physical appearance, language and cultural expression. Many from North East India have registered complaints against racial discrimination and hate crimes upon them in Indian metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, etc. Either fortunately or due to compulsive factors these metropolitan cities attract tourists, business visitors, traders, and migrants from North East. It appears that policy factors imposed compulsions upon minority nations and nationalities in 'Northeast' to export migrant students and white collar workers who are in search of opportunity in metropolitan cities. They are settled in cheaper hotels and rented rooms, private or institutional hostels, official quarters and owned flats (a microscopic section). Social integration and cultural conformity between these migrants and host communities could not progress beyond certain limits because of various interplaying factors. The host communities fail to either socially absorb the North East migrants as their own or treated them on par with equal respect. Instead, it is perceived, they are being objectified as inferior and immoral 'Orient' bulk; marked out socially and subjected to various forms of social discrimination, harassment, insult, humiliation, crime (at times rape and murder), withholding of promotion or rank in institutions, and lack of official attention and timely intervention by the law enforcing agents. The government, though refute racism in India, is aware of this alarming situation.

Over the past few years Delhi Government had taken up some 'special' measures to protect and empower these migrants. However, many from North East continue to complain against 'institutionalised racism' as their problems are deemed ineffectively handled by law enforcing agents. Following is a compilation based on the narratives of the relatives of a Manipuri youth Pravish Chanam whose mysterious death and institutional failure in dealing with the case had aroused public sentiment and protests in Manipur.

guards of the concert brought Pravish

in the medical room near gate number 1. His heart beat rate was unusually fast.

At around 10:29 p.m. he was brought into Bhim Rao Ambedkar Hospital on a stretcher and admitted at around 10:30 p.m. There were no visible signs of injury on the body. On 9th September, at 6:30 a.m., Pravish walked alive out of the hospital. The following day, on 9th September, at around 3 - 4 p.m. Pravish was seen boarding on an erickshaw, and suddenly came out of it in a slightly uncomfortable manner. He walked and conversed for a short while at a nearby street stall. Suddenly he collapsed. The Police Chowki at Nithari received an unknown call, informing about a resumed dead body lying nearby Raj Motors, Murga Market, Nithari, Sector 31, Noida. The body was 'brought death' at Bhim Rao Ambedkar Hospital at around 5:30 p.m. Postmortem of the body was conducted on 11th September 2017. On enquiry the family of Pravish were shown a 'cremation certificate' of the body. It was found out that the mortal remains of Pravish were cremated on 13th September 2017.

Police Response

9th September 2017: Police officer at Knowledge Park Police Station refused to file a missing complaint until, only around 6 p.m., after much insistence by family and friends.

10th September 2017: As late as around 2 p.m. police had not disseminated information about the case to expedite a proper search.

11th September 2017: Police had not taken up any action against the complaint. After much insistence they prepared a 'Gumshuda Talash Gasti' for wider circulation. The family and friends had to bear the cost of 200 photocopies of the 'Gumshuda Talash Gasti'. When insisted for speedy search the concerned SHO responded in the most unparliamentary manner.

He remarked, "kahi pee ke parha hoga, aajayega, intezar kar lena" (he must be lying drunk some place, he will come back, just wait). For him, "Aap North East wale bobot peete ho" (You North-Eastern people drink a lot). When responded that it was not just the North-eastern people who drank, he retorted, "nahi madam, aap mere sath South Ex chaliye, dikhata hun", (No madam, you come with me to South Ex, I'll show you).

12th September 2017: The SHO of Knowledge Park Police Station began official recording of the statements of the family and friends of Pravish.

13th September 2017: The SHO

conveyed an information about a boy being taken to B. R Ambedkar Hospital. At the Nithari Police Chowki, however, till late night, there was no information. The family went to different police stations in Noida. None of them had any information to share. At Sector 20 Noida Police station, after having shown the

Mysterious Body

On 8th September 2017, a youth from Manipur Pravish Chanam along with his friends in Delhi attended a night concert at Greater Noida. But he was never to be seen again from the concert venue after around 9 p.m. After series of search, inquiries, analysis of 10 beyond the horizon March 2018 March 2018 beyond the horizon 11 'Gumshuda Talash Gasti' along with Pravish's photographs, the family tried to file another missing complaint. The police officers refused to accept it and taunted by saying "hum bewakooof hai kya" (are we stupid?). The anguished family pasted the 'Gumshuda Talash Gasti' on the pillar of the PS and came back to the hospital.

14th September 2017: The family went several times to and fro from Sector 20 Noida PS to Nithari Police Chowki. Information by police confirmed the death of Pravish.

Institutional Lapses

1. After lodging the missing complaint on 9th September, the 'Gasti Talash Gumshuda' was prepared only on 11th September by I.O Raman Upadhyay of the Knowledge Park Police Station in Greater Noida.

2. No active effort was made by the concerned police to find Pravish, despite timely lodging of a missing complaint and frequent visits to police station.

3. Despite preparing the Gasti Talash Gumshuda on 11th September, the IO failed to circulate it immediately to the rest of the zilla police stations, chowkies and media.

4. Details of the lodged complaint were not shared with either Noida Sector-20 Police Station or police chowki at Nithari.

5. The officer in-charge of Nithari Police Station failed to check with the nearby police stations about any missing complaints after they had recovered a body.

6. The officer in-charge of Nithari Police Station failed to publish the information of an unclaimed body in any newspaper.

7. Because of sheer negligence (dereliction of duty) by the police, the mortal remains could not be claimed on time.

8. There was negligence on the part of the Hospital (Bhim Rao Ambedkar

Hospital) authorities. They had let Pravish to walk away without being discharged. They also concealed the information of an unclaimed body though the aggrieved parties had visited and approached them for any unclaimed body.

9. It is shocking to find that suspended police officers were continually assigned official duty to work on the same case.

10. It is disheartening to find that the police cremated the body of Pravish without coordinating with nearby police stations to find if there were any missing complaint.

11. According to post-mortem report, the cause of the death of Pravish was "shock & hemorrhage due to head injury." There were 'abraded contusions' on the body. All these suggest criminal intent leading to murder. However, police, without investigating it, went ahead with cremation. This arouse suspicion about an attempt to cover up any probability of illegal 'organ removal'.

12. According to two witnesses, Pravish did not have any visible injuries on his body except for a bandage wrapped on his leg. Post mortem report and photographs revealed several visible physical injuries. Who is answerable for these lapses? 13. On 13th September, 2017, Sector 20 Noida Police Station denied having any information of an unclaimed body. But the body was indeed cremated on the same day by police officials of the same police station.

14. There were negligence and inefficiency of the concert organisers at India Expo Centre and Mart. Though a medical team of the concert were aware of the admission of Pravish to hospital, this matter was not followed up by the organisers.

15. Gross negligence were also found on the part of the friends who reportedly kept in themselves Pravish's phone and wallet during the time of concert. They did not immediately inform the family or organisers about the missing.

Demands

Considering mysterious nature of his death and the above mentioned institutional lapses by law enforcing agents, the family, friends and various individuals and organisations demanded:

1. A CBI Inquiry to bring justice to late Mr. Pravish Chanam. 2. Speedy investigation on the death of Mr. Pravish Chanam.

3. Strict action against all the officials/people responsible for the aforementioned lapses

NIPCO ON THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF MANIPUR

In Manipur there is an apprehension by a bulk of people who consider that collective identity of Manipur, culture and peace are threatened due to external forces and internal dissension. Many believe that the material foundation of unity, harmony and peace among indigenous *ethnies* is getting eroded due to lack of common progressive outlook and constructive efforts. In response to such an overwhelming apprehension several organisations came into existence to address the issues in their respective manner. National Identity Protection Council (NIPCO) is one such organisation that endeavours to protecting, preserving and promoting what it believes "national identity" of Manipur.

Beyond the Horizon takes this opportunity to interview the President of NIPCO Mr. Premjit Oinam, to share his thought on the organisational objectives and work among the masses. Editor: Beyond the Horizon is grateful to National Identity Protection Council for this opportunity to interact and learn the thought of the organisation. Can you share some opinions on the incorporation of the phrases such as National Identity and Protection Council in the name of your organisation?

NIPCO: The National Identity Protection Council (NIPCO) is formed

with a conviction to protect, preserve and promote the national identity of Manipur that had been pre-existing annexation of Manipur by India on 15th October 1949. Before the annexation, Manipur was a sovereign nation in South East Asia. That identity, a composite of socio-cultural and political identities of the indigenes of Manipur, was acknowledged by British. As a result, though Manipur was defeated in the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, it was not merged into British India but ruled upon as a separate princely state. However, in the period after the annexation by India in the most treacherous manner, the threat to the national identity of Manipur has been surmounting. The situation demanded a conviction to protect, preserve and promote the threatened national identity of Manipur. Editor: When was NIPCO established and by whom? NIPCO: The genesis of NIPCO can be traced in the formation of a National Identity and Protection Committee [Sanglup] on 13th September 2000. The Committee was collectively formed by like-minded organisations, associations, clubs of several *leikais* [neighbourhoods], villages or localities in the Manipur valley. At the general assembly of the Committee in 2017, a unanimous resolution rechristened the Committee as National Identity Protection

Council. By this time the organization had fully developed functional structures with several district and local councils.

Editor: As you have pointed out, fulfilling the objectives of your programme would require systematic planning, commitment and consistency. In this regards, what are the main programmes of the organisation? NIPCO: The main activities of NIPCO are focussed on: a. Protection, preservation and promotion of the integrity of Manipur.

b. Initiatives towards communal harmony and peace amongst the coexisting *ethnies*.

c. Campaign for ethnic harmony to buttress collective prosperity and development.

Editor: Your suggestion for communal harmony and peace are relevant in the context of the escalating communal mistrusts and sectarian claims and reactions. At the same time, your campaign appears to give due emphasise on the unity and harmony among presumed indigenous *ethnie*. May you share what according to NIPCO are the communities that had to be recognised as indigenes of Manipur?

NIPCO: All the *ethnies* that were historically co-existing in the precolonial past and contributing in some way or other to the evolution of Manipur nation

are the indigenes of Manipur.

Editor: Do you consider that the communities are interlocked beyond separation and isolation? NIPCO: NIPCO firmly believes that all the indigenous *ethnies* of Manipur are interrelated, inseparable, co-existing and interdependent since the time immemorial. There are three main reasons that bound them together, viz., a. Close racial, social and cultural affinities. b. Economic interdependence and cohesion.

c. Historical and geographical interconnection. Editor: Despite the presumed affinities, cohesion and interconnections, it is apparent, that certain political processes have dragged the people into communal unrest in various forms. What is NIPCO's stand on this? NIPCO: Yes, there is racial affinity of the indigenes and they are co-existing. Unfortunately, certain political groups with sectarian political aspirations have been active, which are continuing to invest in creating communal mistrust and inter-ethnic tensions. This model, we believe, is parochial and politically myopic. This politics have dragged many into open clashes and bloodshed from time to time. This is very unfortunate. It poses challenge to peace and a progressive common future of the people. Editor: Many correctly or (To be Contd.....)

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