

Editorial

Wednesday, January 10, 2018

Making democracy peoples' participatory: Thank you Mr. CM

The real of taste of democracy is finally felt to the people of the state. Perhaps for the first time in the history of Manipur, people from across the state irrespective of their status can now exchange their views with that of Chief Minister of Manipur. Participatory form of government which was only heard in books now is reality with the kind of Chief Minister's initiative to get in touch almost every day through social networking site in today's world of internet.

For almost 15 years, media in the state did not get so much attention from any of the ruling government. Criticisms on the administrations, policy and public services were just another waste writings earlier. Surprisingly, the present government led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh showed his serious concerns to every news report as well as editorial that criticized his government. The way the Chief Minister's response is through open platform where every citizen can participate and expressed whatever feeling they have.

Imphal Times editorial, published yesterday did not have any negative intention neither it tried to malign the image of the two extraordinary leaders - Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister N. Biren Singh. What has been expressed in the editorial was to point out the desires of many people of the state. Controversial Act AFSPA, which has been protesting by the people of the region for many years has never been a matter that is being discussed at the Prime Minister's level, even though it stands as a fact that the act is a legislation imposed by the British colonial ruler to suppress the freedom struggle of the country.

Imphal Times wanted to draw the attention of the Prime Minister on this specific legislation which we in the region considered it as draconian, as we in the Imphal Times sees his virtue of patriotism and his love for the country. The writing was just a reminder to make his dream of making India a strong nation comes true. We, in the Imphal Times believe that India can never become a strong nation if all the people of the nation are not treated equally. Everybody knows imposing AFSPA at some region and opposing its imposition to some places like those Maoist affected region of Northern India is nothing but discrimination towards its own citizens. The editorial is an indirect protest demanding repeal of the Act. If one justifies AFSPA let it be there in all the country.

On the matter, regarding Chief Minister of Manipur, Imphal Times' real motive was to make our vibrant Chief Minister realize that some of the works and promises that he made were not converting into action. Chief Minister's direct clarification on the non implementation of the packages he announced indeed is appreciable.

What is more interesting is the seriousness of the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to media report or views expressed in editorial which is seen by the people of the state for the first time in the history of Manipur after merger to Indian Union. To be frank, no chief minister, had ever reacted to any criticism - either constructive or destructive to the citizens of the state. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh is perhaps the first Chief Minister who valued reports and views expressed in mass media besides his hectic scheduled.

In the success of democracy, people's participation is a much. The definition of people's participation may be different, but Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's government is one where people irrespective of their position can take part.

Imphal Times is a small newspaper which completes 6 years yesterday. Its hard copy reached not many people but is trying to reach as much readers as it can by using various medium available today.

The courage of our Chief Minister to say that most of the packages he announced during his visit at the hill districts of Manipur have been implemented needs to be appreciated. But one thing need to remind is that some of the work being implemented does not reach the mark expected.

Name changed

I, the undersigned, **Narengbam Nonibala** of Keishamthong Moirang Ningthou Leirak, Imphal West, Pin - 795001, Manipur, do hereby declare that, I have wholly renounced, relinquished and abandoned the use of old name **Narengbam Nonibala Devi**, as I have assumed my new name **Narengbam Nonibala**.

Sd/-
Narengbam Nonibala

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Section 377, bigotry and why the constitution is neither heterosexual or homosexual

By : Sharif Rangnekar

Nearly every time Section 377 comes up for discussion, particularly when a court or a group of people state it should be read down to legalise the naturalness of homosexual sex, narrow-minded hard-liners commoditise the LGBTQ community as an import from another nation, implying such behaviour was 'smuggled' into India.

This consistent baseless contention has lost its way as the focus shifts to the Indian constitution and logic - a sort of a battle between fact and fiction. Back in August, when the Supreme Court spelt out its view on privacy, questioning the existence of Section 377 and its over-reaching interference over sexuality, and now through its latest decision to revisit the law, the focus has shifted to the constitution, to fundamental rights and the importance of 'dignity' and 'privacy'.

Yet, even as logic seems to slowly prevail in this long-drawn battle, it is alarming how many leaders take to television and other forums to

claim that homosexuality has no place in the Indian constitution. As one such person, Pandit Ajay Gautam, told a national television channel, the constitution does not mention homosexuals.

What he never said and what is often left out of any such debate, is that the constitution does not mention the word heterosexual either.

Gautam is part of a circle that is not merely biased, but is no different from a large section of society who see themselves as 'obvious' and 'regular' to a system, as well as in charge of it. Hence, anyone else is a beneficiary of what they dole out. Therefore, the constitution to them is heterosexual in nature and any person wishing to be included in that constitution need to be identified and defined as accepted within the parameters that they state. In short, they are the benchmark of everything, and all else has to fall in line.

However, the constitution, without a doubt, was written keeping in mind diversity and inclusion for every citizen, whatever shape, size, colour, religious belief, sexuality,

language they may be. This brings it down to individual choices and the many individuals that make up communities, regions or the nation at large. It was never one or the other.

What is forgotten conveniently is that the laws that were made, or are to be made, are a reflection of this constitution. When the constitution refers to citizens and their fundamental rights, it includes us all. Having said that, the laws that follow, be it to protect women or children, are aimed at interpreting the larger purpose of fundamental rights even when none of them are defined as heterosexual or homosexual or if no specific gender binary is emphasised.

People like the Gautam are representative of a feudal mindset soaked in patriarchy that wishes to control the system and a narrative that makes them so powerful where their sense of morality overrides the constitution and its ethos. The legacy created by such a mix is such that even victims don't see the crimes committed against them and this is best represented by the acceptance of domestic violence

and forced marriages.

It's not difficult for people like Gautam to build a following as there is a growing tendency to mix sin and religious beliefs with criminality. There is also no effort to even understand the irrelevance of the law or a law that is a result of a perceived 'threat' to a religious belief. Section 377 falls bang in the middle of such a reality. This, unfortunately, gives irrational minds and voices a place in what should be a logical, human rights debate.

However upset and irritated one might be by the views of people like Gautam, most of us are truly liberals: ready to listen, engage, share our stories, draw similarities, invoke nature, define our identity, enjoy privacy and share spaces. When we seek our rights, we don't wish to infringe on other people's rights.

As the SC said: "What is natural to one may not be natural to the other." That is the charm of nature and the beauty of diversity that frees everyone to feel secure in themselves - so free that one doesn't need to control anyone else. *Courtesy The Wire.in*

National & International News

Massive fire on 4 coaches of Patna-Mokama passenger train; No one was injured

NDTV

Patna, Jan. 10: Flames engulfed four coaches of Patna-Mokama passenger train last night; no one was injured in the fire. The train was stationed at Mokama railway yard, 90 kilometers east of Patna, when fire was spotted in two coaches at 1 am, the Railways spokesperson said. He added that an attempt was made to extinguish the fire but unfortunately it spread to two more coaches resulting in four coaches

being completely gutted. The spokesperson said fire did not affect railway operations in that sector. The Additional Divisional Railway Manager reached the spot to take stock of the situation. Railway officials said the reason behind the fire is being looked into.

Just over two months ago, on October 23, 2017, in Bihar's Munger district, an intercity train ran over five women, four of whom died on the spot. The accident took place

early morning when the women were crossing rail tracks near Adapur Halt. Police said the women possibly couldn't see the Bhagalpur-Danapur Intercity train approaching due to thick fog.

Chairman of the Railway Board, Ashwani Lohani told Press Trust of India, that train accidents have come down by 40-45 per cent in the current financial year as compared to last year. Hoping that train mishaps would further decrease, Mr Lohani

said prime focus this year was to address safety, maintenance and cleanliness of trains and railway premises. By June, 500 railway stations would get Wi-Fi facility as part of the Union government's Digital India initiative. Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has set a target of track renewal for the current fiscal at 3,600 km, an 80 per cent jump over the average 2,000 km of tracks renewed by railways every financial year.

7.6 magnitude earthquake in Caribbean Sea shakes Honduras, Mexico and Belize, no tsunami

Agencies

Tegucigalpa, Jan 10: An earthquake of magnitude 7.6 that struck near remote islands belonging to Honduras on Tuesday was felt across northern Central America but there were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage.

The quake rattled windows in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa roughly 519 kilometres to the east and was felt at least as far north as the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, but no damage was immediately reported.

Rodrigo Anaya Rodriguez was in a hammock inside his house near the popular tourist site of Bacalar Lake near Mexico's Caribbean coast when he felt three tremors.

"It felt like a bulldozer was driving past," he said. "It didn't last long but was very violent."

He ran to his balcony and saw electricity posts and cables swaying.

In Honduras, firefighters said some residents in southern neighbourhoods fled their homes after feeling the shaking.

The country operates a small naval base on Great Swan Island, about 44 kilometres west of the quake's epicentre, but it was not immediately clear how the tremors affected the station.

"We have reports that it was felt in the majority of the country, but we don't have reports of damage," said Lizandro Rosales, director of Honduras' contingencies commission.

The US Geological Survey said the quake, initially reported as a magnitude 7.8, was centered 202 kilometres northeast of Barra Patuca in Honduras and 307 kilometres

southwest of George Town in the Cayman Islands.

The quake was very shallow, at only 10 kilometres, which would have amplified its effect.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center initially warned that tsunami waves up to 1 meter (3 feet) above tide level could hit parts of Honduras, Belize and Puerto Rico along with the US and British Virgin Islands.

About two hours after the quake, the center said the threat had passed, withdrawing all tsunami advisories connected with the quake.

The tremors were felt in Belize's capital, Belize City, but there were no immediate reports of damage. Belize's minister in charge of emergency management, Edmond Castro, spoke on local radio to urge people living in low lying coastal

areas and islands to stay alert for potentially dangerous waves.

Srinagar shivers under season's lowest temperature

PTI

Srinagar, Jan 10: Fringes of the famous Dal Lake and other water bodies in Srinagar - the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir - have frozen this morning as the mercury continued its free fall and the city clocked the season's lowest night temperature.

Srinagar recorded its coldest night this winter as the minimum temperature settled at minus 6.3 degrees Celsius - marginally down from minus 6.2 degrees Celsius recorded the previous night, an official of the MET department said.

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