

Editorial

Thursday, January 4, 2018

Understanding the indices of life

The world over, with advancements made in various spheres encompassing the whole spectrum of life be it social, technological, economic, political, educational, health and medicine or arts and culture; traditional measures of different aspects of life- both personal and social- have come up short of truly expressing the changes and the factors effecting those changes. In today's evolved world characterized by heightened awareness of one's surroundings and social implications, increasing attempts are being made to measure and analyse different aspects of life in order to create as perfect a society as humanly possible. Social thinkers, psychologists and analysts, and even concerned heads of states have come up with different yardsticks to try and uncover the real situation and the reasons behind it. Indices such as The Satisfaction with Life Index, created by Adrian G. White, an analytic social psychologist at the University of Leicester, using data from a metestudy is an attempt to show life satisfaction in different nations by calculating subjective well being which correlates most strongly with health, wealth and access to basic education. Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a phrase coined in 1972 by Bhutan's fourth Dragon King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. It represents a commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan's culture based on Buddhist spiritual values broadly categorized under four heads: Sustainable development, Preservation and promotion of cultural values, Conservation of the natural environment and Establishment of good governance instead of western material development gauged by gross domestic product (GDP). The GNH concept has inspired a modern political happiness movement. Through the contribution of several scholars from around the globe, economists and politicians, the concept evolved into a socioeconomic development model, and in July 2011, the United Nations passed Resolution 65/309, that was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in July 2011 placing "happiness" on the global development agenda. Another set of criteria, The Social Progress Index published by the nonprofit Social Progress Imperative measures the extent to which countries provide for the social and environmental needs of their citizens and the well-being of a society by observing social and environmental outcomes directly rather than the economic factors. The social and environmental factors include wellness (including health, shelter and sanitation), equality, inclusion, sustainability and personal freedom and safety. Our part of the world has evidently not started warming up to these concerns that promulgate the holistic development and progress of life. Right now, we are still struggling to make do each passing day without having to have our vehicles and belongings stolen or snatched, standing in serpentine queues to avail services rendered with grudging incompetence, running after officials to expedite routine work as favours, keeping ourselves and our family safe from the violent whims of the state security, the volatile mob and the swarming vigilantes. Quantity of life still takes precedence over quality of life. It is high time to burst the bubble of self-accorded greatness as a collective society and embrace the reality. The rest, as is often said, is bound to follow.

Natl. & Intl News

BSF kills intruder along IB; destroys 2 Pak posts

PTI Jammu, Jan 4: BSF troops today foiled an infiltration bid and killed an intruder along the International Border in Jammu district. Troops observed movement of two-three persons along the IB near Nikowal Border Out Post (BoP) in Arnia sector around 0545 hours, IG BSF, Jammu frontier, Ram Awat told PTI. They challenged them and opened fire resulting in the death of one intruder, he said adding, the deceased was in his thirties. The other intruders managed to

escape, he said. The force also destroyed two Pakistani posts in retaliation to the killing of its jawan in unprovoked firing. Two Pakistani mortar positions were "located, targeted and destroyed by BSF troopers yesterday night only. The coordinated precision fire of BSF troopers silenced Pakistani guns," a BSF spokesman said. Yesterday, a BSF jawan was killed in unprovoked firing by Pakistan, the first this year, in Samba sector of Jammu and the force had since then launched retaliatory fire.

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Use Swachhata App to Make Imphal No. 1 For Swachh Survekshan 2018

By : Sanjoo Thangjam

Mahatma Gandhi said, "The lethargy of government has for too long allowed us to be inured to unhygienic spaces outside our immediate homes, although every Indian must accept the blame for his own slovenliness in public spaces. The garbage bag, the dumpster trucks and landfills can be better monitored to ensure better results. To give the next generation a cleaner India is a task we cannot duck anymore. The time for action began the minute the photo opportunities with politicians and bureaucrats got over."

In all probability, because of the above statements of Mahatma Gandhi, Tomar had criticised the previous governments' approach towards cleanliness saying if they had not "neglected" this aspect of governance, he would not have been talking about it even after 70 years of Independence.

A SWACHH BHARAT IS THE GREATEST GIFT WE CAN GIVE TO MAHATMA GANDHI and perhaps because of his statements, a one day media sensitization workshop was done on 27th December, 2017 so as to give an effort to Mahatma's dream and further support the government's initiative for achieving Imphal city's continuous target and also to secure the top position in the upcoming "SWACHH SURVEKSHAN 2018".

Imphal will be taking part in ranking competition of 500 cities with more than 1 lakh population of the country while the remaining 27 towns in the state among 3041 towns with less than 1 lakh population, Swachh Survekshan is a ranking exercise undertaken to assess rural and urban areas for their levels of cleanliness and active implementation of Swachhata work in a timely and in an ground-breaking compartment. The ranking will be conducted from January-March 2018.

The media sensitization workshop was held at City Convention Centre in Imphal, Palace Compound, jointly organised by Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) and Municipal Administration, Housing and Urban Development (MAHUD). Journalists from both print and electronic media including editors of local vernaculars attended both the day's inaugural session of the workshop and its discussion session. MAHUD Minister Thounaojam Shyamkumar, Director Meghachandra Kongbam of DIPR and Director Nepram Girkumar Singh of MAHUD attended the function as Chief guest, President and Guest of Honour of the formal inauguration of the workshop respectively.

However, it is worth recalling that on 2nd October 2014, Shri Narendra Modi had at all times explicitly lauded the participation of people via social media of what the Father of Nation once said - "But the greatest fear about the Swachh Bharat events of October 2, Gandhi Jayanti, in which more than three million government employees are said have taken the "Swachhata Shapath (cleanliness pledge)", is that the mass movement may lose momentum once the grand tokenism of leaders wielding brooms

disappears. However it did not happen when Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi did and said, "A CLEAN INDIA WOULD BE THE BEST TRIBUTE INDIA COULD PAY TO MAHATMA GANDHI ON HIS 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY IN 2019".

And thus on 2nd October 2014, leading the mass movement for cleanliness, the Prime Minister exhorted people to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a clean and hygienic India and along these lines launched the Swachh Bharat Mission at Rajpath in New Delhi and throughout length and breadth of the country as a National Movement.

In the course of the first survey held in 2016, amazingly, Imphal was ranked 15th position among other cities of India and topped among the North Eastern India. However, the ranking slipped to 122nd position in comparison to other cities of India yet again among the North Eastern States, the state slipped to 3rd position during 2017 survey.

And in view of the above premises, the Municipal Administration, Housing and Urban Development (MAHUD) Minister appealed to the media persons to spread awareness a propos the survey so that the state can attain top ranking among the total number of 27 towns of Manipur participating in the third survey, i.e., "SWACHH SURVEKSHAN 2018". It discussed on Swachh Survekshan (cleanliness inspection), which is a survey conducted to rank cities on various sanitation and cleanliness parameters.

And another interesting addendum the Minister added was re the social media linked to the survey where the populace of Manipur can use mobile application called "SWACHHATA APP" to instantly lodge any complaint by uploading a picture of littered areas which can be viewed without more ado by the officials. After cleaning the specific location, the status report will be available on the SWACHHATA APP. Though the officials had said that the app can be downloaded from Google Play Store till 31st December 2017, I presume the APP can still be downloaded. The usage of this app will also help our State in securing marks in the survey.

MAHUD Director Girkumar and DIPR Director Meghachandra also spoke on the occasion wherein the cash awards for 'Mission Imphal Keibul', a cleanliness competition of the urban local bodies during the recently concluded Manipur Sangai Festival in November end this year, were given away to Municipal Councils of Kumbi, a sum of Rs 80,000, Nambol, Rs 50,000 and Moirang Rs 30,000. And three consolation awards containing a cash prize of Rs 10,000 each were also given to Municipal Councils of Bishnupur, Ningthoukhong and Oinam respectively. Speaking on the occasion minister Shyamkumar reiterated that licence would not be issued to the shops without dustbins, starting from 2018 and sought help from the masses in making Imphal as one of the cleanest cities in the country.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), formerly ministry

of urban development, had conducted Swachh Survekshan 2016 among 73 top cities of India followed by Swachh Survekshan 2017 covering 434 cities. MoHUA now proposes to conduct its third survey "Swachh Survekshan 2018" to rank all 4,041 statutory towns of India - competition among 500 AMRUT cities under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U). The survey will be conducted anytime by a third party within 4th January 2018 to 31st March 2018.

The cleanliness survey was launched in 2016 as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Under the first survey, Swachh Survekshan-2016, 73 cities with over 10 lakh population and all the state capitals were ranked. Mysore had topped the list.

A reliable source said that huge negative marking will be introduced this time to ensure that cities do not make false claims about improvement in sanitation infrastructure. If claims of a city government about any parameter are found to be incorrect by independent assessors, it will get zero marks for that parameters. Also, it will attract 33 percent negative marking on the total obtained marks. The 2018 survey will be the first such pan-India exercise and is the largest in the world, Tomar said as he stressed on making Swachh Bharat Mission a people's movement. Detailing the changes in assessment weightages, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said the weightage of citizen feedback has been increased to 35 per cent in the 2018 survey from 30 per cent in the last one. Similarly, the weightage of direct observation is also increased to 30 per cent from 25 per cent in previous survey. However, 'service level progress' has been reduced from 45 to 35 per cent.

The source further mentioned that for 2018, a new element of 'innovation' has been introduced with a weightage of 5 per cent to encourage cities to take up innovative sanitation practices and solutions. The weightage of 'processing and disposal' component has been increased from 20 to 25 per cent. The weightage of 'Open-Defecation Free' component will remain unchanged at 30 per cent, while 'information, education and communication (IEC)' and capacity-building components were kept same at 5 per cent each. The collection and transportation component has been reduced from 40 to 30 per cent in this survey. The results of the survey will be announced in March next year.

The source also said that the script for "Swachhata Ki Jyot Jagi Hai" song has already been written by renowned lyricist Praseon Joshi and visuals have been provided by producer Mukesh Bhatt. Shankar Mahadevan has given music and the singers will range from Supriyo himself, Udit Narayan, Shreya Ghoshal, Alka Yagnik, Akriti Kakar and Shann Banerjee among others. The song features messages from Amitabh Bachchan and Sachin Tendulkar. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has become a "Mass Movement"

receiving tremendous support from the people. Citizens too have turned out in large numbers and pledged for a neat and cleaner India. Taking the broom to sweep the streets, cleaning up the garbage, focussing on sanitation and maintaining a hygienic environment have become a practice after the launch of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. People have started to take part and are helping spread the message of 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.' An anecdote from the Gandhian era will be quite relevant here. In 1925 Mira Behn, the daughter of a British admiral Sir Edmund Slade joined Mahatma Gandhi in his Satyagraha Ashram, on the banks of river Sabarmati.

In 1936 Gandhi shifted to Segao in Wardha where he set up another Ashram known as Sevagram. The Ashram was located in the midst of very backward villages. This was Gandhi's way of drawing the attention of the people towards the pitiable state of our villages. He encouraged the inmates of the Sevagram Ashram to work in the surrounding villages to help mitigate the misery of the village folks. Teaching cleanliness was a top priority. Mira Behn, too, adopted a village close by and started work there. Few months passed by when she requested Gandhi to visit her village to see her work. One day Gandhi decided to go and see the village. But it so happened that Mira Behn was out of Wardha on some urgent mission. When Gandhi entered the village he was shocked to find the lanes and by-lanes littered with garbage. He enquired from the villagers why the streets have not been cleaned - they replied, "Mira Behn has not come for the past couple of days." When Mira Behn returned Gandhi pulled her up and said "You have only been working for the villagers and not working with them."

This anecdote has a lesson for all of us. A true transformation of society is possible if the government can put its ideas together and then rope in the private sector civil society, trusts, individuals and social activists to drive the campaign.

Mahatma Gandhi may have run his cleanliness drives by wielding the broom himself to break the caste system ingrained in centuries of social life in India, but his successors must bring in the sweeping reform in order to promise every Indian a better life, regardless of caste and creed. Towards this, there is much to be done. Rivers must not be dirtied by using them as drains to carry waste. The air we breathe must be cleaner and devoid of organisms from stealthy dumping or burning of hospital waste. And such abominable practices as human beings going down drains to clean them and carrying night soil must stop. This is where technology can help most.

The writer is a lay Buddhist & Human Rights Activist for People Who Use Drugs (PUD).

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