

Editorial

Friday, June 15, 2018

MU debacle:

Why would it be left unnoticed?

The present crisis at Manipur University, which is at its most crucial stage is slightly diverted from the peoples' attention by the recent flash flood which submerged almost all part of Imphal Valley leaving thousands compelled to take shelter at relief camp. Power supply is still working at some places but failed at many places where the present flood has affected. Big media houses, which had the capability of reaching out almost all the corners of the state has not carried much detailed news on what are being happened in the Manipur University and small media and electronic media as well as the social networking site and internet medium which carry news about the happenings at Manipur University could not reach out to the majority people. The present natural calamity needs to be tackled to protect and ensured safety of all those people affected, but then it is also essential that the present crisis at Manipur University be considered with extreme seriousness at least by the present government. The ongoing crisis if it goes out of hand will mean a Manipur which has no future.

We all know that the needs for higher education in every state as well as across the globe is just not for getting certificate by a student to join government service, but it is also for sorting out social and economic issues besides National Security.

Knowledge that are being learned from the University through research is the only option for building a civilised society. That is why, every society consider University as a temple of knowledge for building a better society and for this reason every government always gives free hand without interfering into the matter for any political gains to the temple of Knowledge.

It is now over thirteen days, the crisis at the Manipur University remains unsettled and the momentum of the agitation is rising with teachers' body joining the agitation after the present Vice Chancellor showed no respect to the community.

The genesis of the present impasse is the frequent leave by the Vice Chancellor. This newspaper reported that the VC since he assumed office in 2016 had not remained in the office more than 10 days a month, and the way the VC took leave violated the protocol of the University as he never mentioned date of his joining at the time of taking leave. This paper also reported that expenses for his travel to outside the state - whether or not related to the University has been bored by the University exchequer. A source had informed to this newspaper that the total expenditure he spent for his travel outside the state is around 8 crore rupees, which is yet to be verified. However, this paper stands with the source as the matter has not been replied when enquired through Right to Information Act. Information with the Imphal Times is that - the official quarter of the VC located at Babupara near Sanjenthong has been renovated at the cost of Rs. 40 lakhs. When the quarter the VC renovated for such a huge amount is not the property of the University and at the time he leaves it will be the state government's property, which means that the University had unnecessarily spent Rs. 40 lakhs.

Leave aside these matters, what is more worrying is the fate of the students of this state. Those who could afford money to go outside might have no problem but those studying in the University and those undergraduates studying at colleges affiliated to the Manipur University are at stake. For students who wanted to go outside the state for further study are also facing problem as the Administrative block has been shut down for around 13 days.

Now as this newspaper has reported today about the resignations of the Deans of academic affairs, which means the crisis at Manipur University, is nearly reaching its catastrophe. Without Deans, academic activities will not be able to function properly and if the ongoing impasse is not solved.

Well, it is not late to begin something good, and the Chief Rector of the Manipur University, Dr. Najma Heptulla should immediately intervene and the state government particularly the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh should also intimate the Union HRD Ministry regarding the development at Manipur University as this is a matter of Manipur and its future. The present natural calamity caused by incessant rain need to be looked with extra seriousness to ensure safety of all the people of the state but than a little time on the issue arising at Manipur University should not be left aside.

Legal Clinic

Section 336 in The Indian Penal Code

336. Act endangering life or personal safety of others.—Whoever does any act so rashly or negligently as to endanger human life or the personal safety of others, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to two hundred and fifty rupees, or with both.

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The Manipur Nagas

The Naga: its ethno genesis

The genesis of the ethnonym 'Naga' is still shrouded in mystery. In the words of Grierson, the term Naga was said to be derived from the Assamese word 'Noga', applied by the to the hill tribes of the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. (G. GRIERSON, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. iii. Part ii. P. 194, cited in T.C. Hudson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, (Delhi: LPP Publications, First eds., 1911, Rp., 1996), P.1.). The theory that Naga is derived from the Assamese word 'Nog' meaning 'mountain' was also rejected on the ground that the term is not applied to all the people living in the hills or at least in the Naga hills. (GANGMUMEI KABUI; Genesis of the Ethnoses of Manipur, in eds., N.Sanajoba, *Manipur: Past and Present*, Vol.iii, (N. Delhi:Mittal, 1995), P.22.). E.W. Dun speculated that it may be derived from the word 'Naga' meaning 'naked'. The basis of his speculation was drawn from the writings of James Johnstone (1885). James Johnstone spoke of the origin of the 'Nagas' in the following ways (*Johnstone Diary*, 1885 E.W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Delhi:Manas , First eds.,1886 Rp. 1992, P.28): "The Assamese word for Naga is naked and they called the Nagas so, because in the olden days, most if not all of them were naked. The word as a tribal name certainly came from Assam." E.W. Dun further observed that they have no generic name but used the tribal names only. (E.W. DUN, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, (Delhi:Manas , First eds.,1886 Rp. 1992), P.28.). Naga scholars who do not accept the colonial historiography on Naga identity came up with two proposed theories. One is that Naga was derived from the Kachari word 'Nok', meaning warriors or fighters as the Kacharis came into violent conflicts with the Naga tribes like the Angamis and Zeliangrong. The Second proposal was made by R.R.Shimray in his work 'Origin and Culture of the Naga'. According to him it was derived from the Burmese word 'Naka' meaning 'pierced ears'. (R.R.SHIMRAY, *Origin and Culture of Nagas*, N.Delhi: Samsok, 1985, P.278). This contention was also accepted by Isak Chisi Swu, the Chairman of NSCN-IM faction, as the most accepted and authentic version of the origin of the word 'Naga'. (ISAK CHISI SWU, *From Generation to generation-stories of origin and Migration of the Nagas*,

Dimapur, Nagaland :Kushe Humanity Foundation, 2001.) Gangmumei Kamei was certain that the term Naga was popularized and enforced by the colonial administrators after it was given by the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra and the Barak valleys to mean the Nagas. (GANGMUMEI KABUI; Genesis of the Ethnoses of Manipur, in eds., N.Sanajoba, *Manipur: Past and Present*, Vol.iii, N. Delhi:Mittal, 1995, P.24) Prof. Gangmumei Kamei contended that the Nagas had traversed from South West China to Burma and eastern Thailand and to South East Asia and moved north again and finally entered into the present habitat in Northeastern India and some areas of upper Burma. (LAL DENA, *The Kuki-Naga conflict: Juxtaposed in the Colonial Context*, in eds., Kailash. S. Aggarwal, *Dynamics of Identity and Inter-Group Relations in North East India*, (Shimla : Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1999), P.183.) Efforts to trace the Naga history and identity remain predominantly contextual and primarily constitutes of juggling and recycling of the records and notes left behind by the British administrators. In their (the Nagas) attempt to fashion an identity and history suitable to the political agenda of the present generation, the Naga Students Federation (NSF) put a ban on researchers into Naga history and identity by the non-Nagas. (The Imphal Free Press Editorial, Imphal , May 17, 2005).

The process of Nagaisation

It was in the first quarter of the twentieth century that the process of pan-Naga identity was experienced among some of the sub tribes in Nagaland. It was said that a great realization took place while they (belonging to various tribal groups, viz, Semas, Lothas, Rengmas, Aos, Changs, etc.) were sojourning in Paris as Labour Corps during World War-I. The realization was that they belonged to the same racial stock with cultural affinity, and so they decided to come together as one people. (Naga Hoho Federal Assembly, *White paper for Naga Integration*). In 1918, a group of Nagas who had returned from military service in France met to form the Naga Club. The members of the club were Christian educated government officials and a numbers of headmen from around the two principal villages namely Kohima and Makokchung. The local British administrators informally supported

the Club. They ran a co-operative store and held several meetings and discussions. (JULIAN JACOBS with ALAN MACFARLANE, Sarah Harrison and Anita Herle, *The Nagas- Society, Culture and the Colonial Encounter*, London: Thomas and Hudson Ltd, 1998, Pp 150-154).

When the Simon Commission came to Kohima in 1929 to seek opinions on the future of India, the Club submitted a memorandum signed by 20 different signatories who claimed to represent all those tribes that belong to Angamis, Kacha Nagas, Kukis, Semas, Lothas and Rengmas. One Kuki was also there among the signatories. In the said memorandum, the Naga Club requested the Naga Club expressed its desire British government when they requested the later to continue to safeguard their rights against all encroachments from other people who were more advanced than them. The club also wanted their (Naga) country to be placed directly under the protection of the British. The newly formed Naga Club did not hide from their aspiration of expanding the political sense of solidarity. It was visibly clear when they said that "there are more tribes outside the administered area which are not known at present." The cultural markers they used to uniquely identify themselves from the people they want to be distinguished, that is, the Hindus and the Muslims, was their non-vegetarian food habits (of having pork and beef for their diet). They also differentiated themselves from the Hindus and Muslims on the basis of their lack of education and poverty.

After the formation of the Naga Club, several tribal councils were also subsequently formed, the first two being a Lhota Council (LC) in 1923 and the Ao Council (AC) in 1928. Shortly after the war, an overall Naga Hills District Tribal Council (NHDTC) was formed in April 1945. In 1946, it became the Naga National Council (NNC). The sudden shift from tribal (in 1945) to Nation (in 1946) was dictated by the possible political benefits that might have been accrued from the event of the British leaving the country. Such a possibility dawned upon the elites of the tribes and their tribal consolidation effort suddenly shifted as 'National aspiration'. But the primordial feeling among them was so strong that as late as 1954 people of Teunshang rarely spoke

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of themselves as Nagas but as Konyaks, Changs, Rhome, etcetera. (CF. V. ELWIN, Nagaland Research Dept. Advisers' Secretary Shillong , 1961, P.4).

The Second World War was also a significant event in the process of Nagaisation.

Improved communications, increased availability of material resources and a large number of weapons were all concomitants of the war. It gave a new impetus to the process. Sajal Nag stated that the construction of Naga identity went through perpetual shifts. Further he elaborated that the Naga identity in the 1940s included even the Karbis and Nepalis but excluded all the sub-tribes of Manipur. (SAJAL NAG, *Naga Identity: Formation, Constructing, Expansion*, in eds. C.J. Thomas, *Dimension of Development in Nagaland*, Delhi 2002.). E.W. Dun has identified five tribal sub-groups of Manipur in the Census of 1881 as the Naga tribes. They are Luhupa, Tangkhul, Koyla(Khoirao), Kaupui, and Maring. The present Naga tribes of Manipur did not know the term Naga as late as 1940's, Shimray stated. He recorded his boyhood experience when he and his father were called Naga by a retreating Japanese troop during World War II. He and his father were struck with wonder when the Major of the Japanese troop who entered their house. They told the Japanese troop that they were Tangkhuls and not Naga. (R.R.SHIMRAY), Gangmumei Kamei, while referring to the writings of R. Pemberton, contended that in Manipur, the identification of the tribes as Nagas started during the colonial period. Whatever the British officials applied to the Naga Hills was also applied to the Manipur tribes. For the first time, the Naga National Council (NNC) embraced some of the tribes of Manipur in 1947 when it said that "the Naga tribes are not a single tribe, but a whole group of them. Angami, Rengma, Sengma, Tangkhul, Mao, Sangtam, Chang, Zemi, Kabui, etc., each different from the others in custom and dialect, but all closely related in forming a distinct block". So, the Tangkhul Mao and Kabui were the first to be identified as Nagas among the Non-Kuki tribes in Manipur by the Nagaisation campaign spearheaded from Nagaland.

(To be continued on next issue)

Continuation from previous issue

Manipur and Development: Political Economy of Collusion

The write up produced here is the continuation of the lecture delivered by Prof. Amar Yumnam on Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture held on 10th June, 2018 at Lamyamba Shanglen Palace Compound

First, the locus of knowledge of the region is not the region, but somewhere else in India. Second, the cost of knowledge acquisition has unavoidably been made costlier than required.

Third, the imperative for appreciating the dynamics of TransBorder areas has been fully subverted by the militaristic approach to protection of boundary. Fourth, in these circumstances and given the low level of development, the relationship - within Manipur and without - has been made to base on interests rather than ideas. Any interest-based relationship cannot be generalised at the societal level. If the powers that be at the provincial level desire to achieve something, it necessarily has to be founded on a collusion with the powers that be at the Centre. Since the intra-provincial relationship cannot be independent of the Centre-Province relationship, the same collusion-based dynamics gets replicated here as well. Overall, the milieu has become one where Ecological Rationality, evolved more by conveniences, predominates over the conscious and

conscientious application of Constructive Rationality over choices. Any governance intervention has invariably been made to converge with the interests - not ideas - of the powers that be either at the Centre or province. The same pit-falls dwell the Look East/ Act East Policy as well. Manipur and for that matter the Northeast is still an ideationally missing element in India's development policy-making. Governance - in both the Central and the provincial dimensions - is something like undertaking a long journey without destination. Any governance in any societal context should necessarily exercise the exclusive power of the state and possess the capability to effect relevant reforms in order to take the economy forward. This is the only means to ensure the emergence of an institutional framework capable of ensuring, in turn, a higher level of well-being for the population. Such an institutional framework should also possess a justice enhancing feature so that the resultant distribution pattern does not harm the interests of the poorer sections

of the population. Besides, such a framework should be able to establish an increasingly efficient mechanism so that the society and economy is able to perform two things: one, an existing function in a less costly way both in terms of money and time, and two, a new task earlier unthought-of but having positive welfare implications for the population. In a context like Manipur's, the framework should be such as to generate multi-community understanding and scope for mutual advancement across geographic spaces. This is why we need to repeatedly go back to the issue of governance and search for why and where we have gone wrong. All the prevailing realities have however resulted in a low-trust relationship between the government and the governed in Manipur. The populace feel that both the governments at the Centre and the province do not cultivate fair practices while dealing with the population. Let me end with a quote from "Why Nations Fail" by Acemoglu and Robinson. Political and economic institutions, which are ultimately the choice of

society, can be inclusive and encourage economic growth. Or they can be extractive and become impediments to economic growth. Nations fail when they have extractive economic institutions, supported by extractive political institutions that impede and even block economic growth. But this means that the choice of institutions - that is, the politics of institutions - is central to our quest for understanding the reasons for the success and failure of nations. We have to understand why the politics of some societies lead to inclusive institutions that foster economic growth, while the politics of the vast majority of societies throughout history has led, and still leads today, to extractive institutions that hamper growth. I leave it to everybody to imagine where Manipur is or has been made to be. For me the biggest challenge facing Manipur today is decoupling interests from governance and couple it with ideas based on understanding of context.

(Concluded)