

# Editorial

Saturday, June 2, 2018

## Daylight robbery: Will the govt. waits for evidences?

This newspaper had time and again drawn the attention of the government on various issues of daylight robbery in front of the public eyes. So far no effective actions against the so call looters of public money have been taken up as per the law of the land.

On May 21, 2018, Imphal Times carried a news story about how the proprietor of M/S M.R. Roller Flour Mill located at Mantripukhri here in Imphal had taken loan amount of Rs. 8 crore from the State Bank of India, MG Avenue using fake documents. The report also highlighted on the failure of the firm to file tax return for some specific period. A day after this newspaper broke the story, civil society body reacted and demanded clarification from the side of the SBI on how a person could be granted loan amount of Rs. 8 crore using fake document. The State Bank of India authority responded nothing regarding the matter, instead, the proprietor of the M.R. Roller Flour Mill convened a press conference saying that documents he submitted to the bank were genuine and allegation levelled against him were baseless. He also showed some document to support his clarification.

The proprietor while trying to defend himself once more cheated the media people as the document he submitted to the SBI M.G Avenue for the loan application is with the Imphal Times. The following day Imphal Times published another news story countering Mr. Mahendra's clarification by publishing two different Jamabandi - one the fake Jamabandi which he submitted to the bank and the other which is with the Settlement department. So far no action is seen initiated against the proprietor neither inquiry is conducted against such fraudulence by any of the concern government authority.

Imphal Times also reported on how the M.R. Flour Mill had cheated the taxation department by not filing tax return since the financial year 2015-16, and also about two bounce cheque he issued to his staffs.

This is not only the case of cheating the public in broad daylight. Some happenings in front of our eyes which needed no evidences have been left without any checking.

Talks about quality works by the state government under the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh appeared to be a mere joke to fool the public. Concerns Ministers' actions were seen to be for media stunt proposes.

Right at the moment any person who do not even have the knowledge of how black topping are done will easily find the differences of two black topping works in two neighbouring lane of two Assembly segments - Singjamei and Langthabal.

Black topping works are being underway at Aheibam Leirak also called Jaganath leirak in Singjamei Assembly Constituency. Similarly, the same kind of black topping is also underway at Oniam Leirak and Motum Leirak of Langthabal Assembly constituency. This two lanes where the black topping works are being taken up are neighbours and locals of the area know how differently the works being carried out even though they have no knowledge on how black topping should be done as per the Public Works Department guidelines, but people know one among the two contractors working is cheating the public money in front of our eyes.

The one Jaganath Leirak is being done in quite a satisfactory way that people started asking whether he will have any profit in doing the contract work. While the other being underway at Oniam leirak and Mutum leirak appeared to be something which he thought people are fool and will have any idea of what he has been doing.

Works Ministers Th Biswajit had many times directed for control of quality in black topping work to his department authorities, but so far none of the officials had come and inspected how the works are being carried out.

Developmental works taking up in the state are from the tax money that we the common man paid. Not every citizen may be direct tax payers but every citizen pay tax indirectly. Every commodities we buy everyday includes tax and it was from the tax that the developmental works are planned and taken up.

This tax money we paid is being looted in front of our own eyes and we remain quiet even after knowing that they are looting us. The government authority are also doing nothing to punish. A mere clarification like we can't check each and every work will not be justified as there are full strength staffs to perform their duty.

A cycle thief, or a small time pick pocket often died in the hand of mob violence but those looting huge amount of our money are left without complaining anything. A Grade IV employee will be suspended for taking tips of Rs. 100/ but people who looted in lakhs and crore of rupees are left free.

Do we need evidences for taking action or conducting enquiry to the way that public money are being looted in front of our own eyes.

## The Pitfalls of Identity Politics

The write up reproduce here is an excerpt from the lecture delivered by renowned Journalist SUBIR BHAUMIK under the title **Northeast: A Thousand Assertive Ethnicities** on the **Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture** on June 10, 2012.

The ethnic imbalance in power-sharing has often caused re-tribalization which, in turn, has limited the growth of local nationalisms that could challenge the Indian state. After fighting India for forty years, Naga nationalism remains an incomplete process, its growth retarded by at least three major splits within the separatist movement, mostly along tribal lines. Even a China-trained leader like Muivah, a Tangkhul Naga from Manipur, has no hesitation branding Angamis as 'reactionary traitors' and his own tribe, the Tangkhuls (who form the bulk of the NSCN), as 'revolutionary patriots'. On the other hand, the Tangkhuls are seen in Nagaland as 'Kaccha Nagas' (impure Nagas). Only when an emotive issue like 'Greater Nagaland' surfaces, pitting the Nagas against the Meiteis or the Assamese, do the conflicts within the Naga identity evaporate for a while, only to surface at a later stage.

The Naga National Council, once the strongest ethnic rebel organization in India's Northeast, was weakened not as much by Indian counter-insurgency operations as by the tribal splits that Delhi was quick to exploit. In the 1960s, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi exploited the growing schism between the Semas and the Angamis, two of the most dominant Naga tribes that provided the bulk of the fighting force in the Naga Army. Indian intelligence weaned the Semas away from the movement, with the help of some loyalists like Hokishe Sema. The Revolutionary Government of Nagaland (RGN), which was formed by the Sema rebels of the Naga National Council, worked in tandem with the Indian administration and the army throughout the late 1960s. When 'General' Mowu Angami returned home in 1969 at the head of the second wave of China-trained Naga rebels, he walked into a trap set by the RGN and the Indian army near the border town of Kiphire. The Semas handed Mowu over to the Indian troops along with the fighters he was leading. This was the first major split in the Naga movement.

The second split, which also had a tribal dimension to it, occurred around the 1975 Shillong Accord. The Angamis and the major Naga tribes of Nagaland largely went with the Accord and came into Indian-style ballot-box politics to lay claim to a share of political power and economic bounty, while the smaller and relatively fringe Naga tribes like the Tangkhuls in Manipur and the Konyaks of the Mon-Tuensang area remained in the jungles, along with the Hemi Nagas of Burma, to form the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). But the NSCN itself was split in 1988 with the Konyaks and the Hemi breaking away from the Tangkhuls and the 'Nagaland Nagas'. The trend has been no different in Mizoram or Manipur. The Kuki demand for a separate homeland that has pitted them against the Nagas has driven some smaller clans away and led to the emergence of a separate Zomi identity. The Hmars, Lais and the Maras have joined the Chakmas and the Reangs to challenge the Mizos. In Manipur, the Meitei identity has been reinforced through the rich Manipuri language and culture, but the Meitei refuse to recognize the Bishnupriyas as Manipuris. When the leftist government in Tripura recognized the Bishnupriya's right to primary education in their own mother tongue, the Meiteis in Tripura and Manipur came out in the streets to protest against it.

In Tripura, the Mizos in the

northern Jampui hills demand a regional council within the Tribal Areas Autonomous Council of Tripura to preserve their 'distinct identity', whereas their ethnic kinsmen in Mizoram are wary of similar demands by smaller ethnicities. The Reangs in Tripura resent attempts by the Tripuris to impose the Kokborok language on them. And they look back at the brutal suppression of Reang rebellions by the Tripuri kings as 'evidence of ethnic domination

the ULFA's politics has changed. Sheltered in Bangladesh, Burma and Bhutan, and having to face the military might of the Indian state, the ULFA has denounced the Assam movement as 'one that was led by juveniles, who failed to understand that migration per se was not bad and had helped many countries like the USA to become what they are today'. The ULFA claims that Bengalis - Hindus and Muslims alike - have 'immensely contributed to Assam' and that

populations supportive of the colonial rule'.

The ULFA's growing lack of faith in ethnicity as the basis for its political militancy stems from a realization that there could be no 'pure ethnic homeland' in Assam or anywhere else in northeast India. A broad-based Assamese nationalism, unless it caters to the distinct ethnic aspirations of the tribes and other communities in Assam, is a non-starter. The ULFA therefore, shrewdly enough, projects a future independent Assam as a federal Assam, where Bodo, Karbi, Dimasas, Rabha, Lalung or Mishong, or even Bengali homelands can coexist, so long as the 'basic values of Assamese society and culture are accepted'. According to a security adviser to the Assam government, this is 'a clever ploy to broaden the support base of the ULFA insurgency against India.' But Assam's political leadership now speak the same language, of the need to accept the polyglot character of Assam, of satisfying the aspirations of the ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, if only to stave off another breakup of the state. It is time that others in the region realize the limitations of ethnicity as a viable basis for politics and social organisation in the Northeast. The ULFA claims that, in the Northeast, ethnicity has 'promoted more divisions within the revolutionary struggles and provided India's ruling classes with more and more opportunity to crush them'. Other nationality struggles need to realise that over emphasis on ethnicity may narrow the political base of the movement and offer Delhi the opportunity to divide and rule in an ethnically fragmented political and territorial space. And rebel groups grown on ethnicity may also fail to strike a long term understanding despite their efforts to create a united front in the jungles of Burma, as has indeed been reported by our paper.

Indeed, though ethnicity has been the mainstay of the region's separatist movements and often has formed the basis for creation of political-administrative units there, its self-corrosive properties have restricted the growth of local nationalisms strong enough to confront Delhi. It can create a Lebanon or a Bosnia out of Northeast India but never a Bangladesh or an East Timor capable of breaking away from the larger post-colonial nation-state. All the states in the Northeast, most of which were created on the basis of ethnic distinctiveness, have failed to resolve their ethnic issues, thus demonstrating the illusionary nature of the notion of a 'pure ethnic homeland'.

### Hard Choices Ahead

India's powerful regional diplomacy in recent years, that forced Bhutan and Bangladesh to act against its rebel groups of Northeast India, is now focused on getting Burma's new government to act against the rebel bases in the Sagaing-Kachin region, which is surely the last big sanctuary of the Northeastern rebel groups. It is too early to say whether the Burmese will act, though it is for sure that after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Burma, the pressure will rise manifold. The choice before the rebel groups is therefore clear. They have three options - joining a dialogue with India, seeking and getting Chinese support and sanctuary, or returning to fight within their own state like the Maoists do and risk military and political annihilation. For the last captains of the Northeastern rebellions, there is not much time before they have to make a difficult choice.

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that cannot be accepted anymore.' The tensions within the tribes, as much caused by the oral and written traditions of conflict between them as by contemporary tussles for power and influence, have weakened efforts to promote a compact 'Borok' or tribal identity against perceived Bengali domination. At times, several tribes sharing the same religion have tried to promote a common identity on this basis, albeit with little success. The separatist National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) has tried aggressively to promote the Borok identity reinforced by Christianity, taking a cue from the Mizo and Naga rebel groups. The animist Reangs and the Vaishnavite Jamatias, however, resent imposition of the Borok identity and many of them have broken away from the NLFT.

Once India carved out the state of Nagaland in 1963, Assam's role as a sub-regional hegemon was threatened and its position as India's political sub-contractor in the northeast was destined to end. Within a decade of the creation of Nagaland, Delhi effected a political reorganisation of the whole region, through which three new administrative units were formed. All these three became full-fledged states in the 1980s, as India desperately sought to control violent ethnic insurgencies in the area. On the other hand, the breakup of Assam not only produced fresh demands for ethnic homelands within what has remained of it, but also drove a section of the ethnic Assamese to insurgency. With the hills gone, the Assamese turned to his valleys to find he was fast becoming a minority there. The anti-foreigner movement rocked Assam between 1979 and 1985 and led to large-scale free-for-all ethnic riots. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), now the leading separatist organisation in Assam, was born out of that movement. Its initial credo was ethnic cleansing - it sought by the force of arms to drive the 'foreigners' (mostly migrants from Bangladesh) out of Assam. Over a period of time, however,

'those of them who feel themselves as part of Assam should be treated as its legitimate dwellers'. It is difficult to ascertain how much of this policy shift on the part of the ULFA - projecting itself as the representative of the 'Asombashis' (dwellers of Assam) rather than the 'Asomiyas' or ethnic Assamese - stems from tactical considerations, such as finding shelter in Bangladesh and gaining the support of Assam's large Bengali population, and how much of it is a genuine attempt to rise above the ethnic considerations to forge a secular, multi-ethnic identity. But once the ULFA got thrown out of Bangladesh by the Sheikh Hasina government, ULFA military wing chief Paresh Barua has started making critical references to Bengalis and chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa has now demanded from Delhi "concrete measures to protect the indigenous peoples and preserve their culture".

The ULFA is only being pragmatic in trying to project territory and a multi-ethnic credo as the basis for a future independent Assam. It is merely acknowledging the polyglot nature of the state of Assam and of the rest of the region. Despite its racial difference from the Indian heartland, the Northeast is an ethnic mosaic, which is ironically reminiscent of India's own multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic polity. The ULFA seeks to restore the multi-ethnic and assimilative nature of the Assamese nationality formation process that was disrupted by racial-linguistic chauvinism on the part of the upper-caste Assamese elites in the 1960s, as a result of which tribe after tribe elected to abandon Assam, fuelling demands for an ever-increasing number of ethnicity-based states in the Northeast. Significantly, though the ULFA targeted Hindi-speaking populations for large-scale attacks after 1999, it has avoided any attack on Bengalis, Nepalis or tribal groups that it regards as potential allies in the struggle against 'Indian colonialism'. Indeed, Hindi-speakers have been seen as 'Indian

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