

Editorial

Monday, June 25, 2018

MU Imbroglio: Power games now

After 25 days of unrest and chaos, which hampered all sort of academic activities in the Manipur University, Vice Chancellor Prof. Aditya Prasad Pandey finally reveals to the press clarifying that all allegations levelled against him were baseless.

When one goes through both the allegations and the clarifications, it shows a clear sign of igniting a power games in the prevailing crisis - between those for the VC and those against VC. One thing that both those for and against the VC left aside behind the curtain is the appointment of nearly 20 contract staffs during the last two months for reason best known to both the party.

Another interesting event that took place is the postponement of the PG Course examination at JNIMS. The exam was supposed to be held on May 9, 2018 without the presence of any inspector of the Medical Council of India (MCI). The MCI instructed the JNIMS authority to defer the same exams by 20 days or one month - reasons - the Manipur University authority failed to intimate the MCI regarding the sending of one MCI inspector as no proceeding was initiated as the VC was out of station.

To a news report carried by Imphal Times about intimation to the HRD Ministry and PMO by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the resignation of the 5 Deans, Prof. Pandey said that he had never written to any Ministry regarding nexus between UGs and the MUSU, but his straight words on the resignation of deans were due to pressure again raised the curtain and exposed the fact which literally proves the Imphal Times report as true. After all everyone knows Veena Pandey, the wife of AP Pandey is a close associate of the Home Minister Mr. Rajnath and has long hand in the affairs of the BJP which is heading the NDA government at the center as well as in the state.

Prof. Pandey's clarification regarding his absence from the University does not justify nor convincing to the allegations as he failed to produce the total expenditure as well as the total number days about his stay outside the state. Well the professor didn't run away from the question raised by the reporter but still then he did not give any time frame to produce the required documents of the expenditure sought by the reporters.

A press statement signed by 5 office bearers of the Manipur University Students' Union (MUSU) strongly refuted to the clarifications of the VC and said that there will be no U-turn to the demand for removal of the VC. Yet, the VC Prof. Aditya Prasad Pandey stands tough saying that he will not resign as he has come to serve the University. But How? A big question to everyone.

Well reopening the annals of events that had some times put the Manipur University into total chaos, it is worth recalling how Prof. Ng. Bijoy solved the issue, after MUTA strongly objected his appointment as the VC. The MUSU, the MUSA were not part of the agitation at that time and it was a state University which means that the state government can interfere into the matters. There is no record on the way that Prof. Ng. Bijoy handled the issue but talks about the tactful utilization of dividing policies are still at large in the university. And moreover the law and order conditions during the time also had also favoured the then professor in becoming the VC.

Now the present issue at Manipur University is not by the MUSU alone. MUTA and MUSA which are the main stakeholders of the University have come up with the same demand. A power game to MUSU will not work if MUTA and MUSA are left aside. Refusal of the Joint Secretary of the Union HRD Ministry who visited the state to take stock of the prevailing situation has already fueled anger to the MUTA. The MUSU denial to the invitation by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, who is known for his experience in solving crisis, showed that - the ongoing impasse is going to continue as long as the VC is remains in the University.

Divisive policy now is the only option left and these were somehow reflected in a newsreport of the news paper. Some students' body had openly warned hampering of the academic atmosphere of the students. But again these students' body did not justify the VC neither criticised the students' uproar in the University.

The stalemate to the functioning of the Manipur University has not only affected the students of the University but also to all the students doing graduate and undergraduate course at various colleges affiliated to the University.

25 days of impasse putting a complete halt to the academic activities and the Union HRD Ministry taking no measures for a solution is unacceptable. This shows that the Union HRD Ministry has no interest for the welfare of the people of Manipur.

Legal Clinic

Section 309 in The Indian Penal Cod.

309. Attempt to commit suicide.—Whoever attempts to commit suicide and does any act towards the commission of such offence, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year [or with fine, or with both].

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MANIPUR AS SEEN BY MEITEIS, NAGAS, AND ZO PEOPLES

By- Siamchinthang Tunepo

Manipur is a multi-ethnic place in which different ethnic groups have lived in harmony. In recent times the relationships between them have dramatically changed. Now, Manipur stands an example of a severely divided society. Ethnicity has occupied the center-stage of local politics. It finds expression into education policy, land policy, employment, cultural policy and development plans.

At the outset, many Meitei's alleged that Manipur had unwillingly joined India after coercing their king. Thereafter, it was directly ruled by the central government, and the bureaucrats who came to Manipur from other parts of the country were not trusted by the local population (Ram Mohan 2005: 155). Subsequently, they launched a movement resisting the merger which further transformed into an armed conflict. Twenty three years after the merger Manipur became a state of India in 1972. But, it failed to end the conflict. The movement is confined largely to the Meiteis. In addition, the Meiteis wanted to promote their language, Meiteilon. It is not only the language of the Meiteis, but is used for internal communication in the state. It was recognized in 1992 by the central government, and included in the eighth schedule of India's constitution. As a result, they wanted to introduce Meiteilon in school education and administration. This has become a concern in the relationship between Meiteis, on the one hand, and Nagas and Kukis, on the other.

On the other hand, in order to materialize the formation of Nagalim, the Nagas wanted to detach part of Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, and integrate to the adjacent state of Nagaland. The movement is presently spearheaded by National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), an insurgent group. According to them, Nagalim occupies land area of about 120,000 sq km. It also claimed that Nagalim was historically an independent country of the Naga people. The NSCN-IM alleged that Nagalim was divided, during the British colonial rule, into two parts in which one part was allocated to India and another part to Burma (Myanmar). The portion of Nagalim allocated to India includes Nagaland and part of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur, while the portion allocated to Myanmar constitutes part of Kachin and Sagaing division. The demand for Nagalim intensified after NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement with the central government in 1997. Although the Nagas wanted Nagalim to be a country with full sovereignty, India's nonnegotiable position has forced them to focus to the integration of Naga-concentrated areas of India into a state within the framework of India's federalism.

Finally, the Zo people also wanted to integrate the Zomi-concentrated areas of India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh under one homeland known as Zale'n-gam. The United Peoples Front (UPF) or Kuki National Organisation (KNO), the insurgent group advocating Autonomous Hills State or Zale'n-gam, contended that AHS or Zale'n-gam comprises part of Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, and Manipur in India, part of Sagaing in Myanmar, and part of Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. It also claimed that prior to the advent of British colonial rule Zale'n-gam was an independent nation. The movement is not so active, and also confine to Manipur where the Zo people constitute a large ethnic group. In addition, the Zo people have been demanding the formation of a state to be known as Autonomous Hill State, or Kukiland within the framework of India's federalism.

The proposed state covers more than half of Manipur's land, viz. Churachandpur and Chandel districts, and part of Senapati,

Tamenglong, and Ukhrul districts. The supporters of formation of Kukiland have resorted to agitations in order draw the attention of the central government. The creation of Kangpokpi district is strongly opposed by the NSCN-IM and its frontal body. The Nagas claimed that Sadar hills have been historically an integral part of Nagalim. They alleged that the area was given to the Kukis in order to act as a buffer between Meiteis and Nagas (Shimray 2001: 3677).

Thus we understand that the three ethnic groups have widely divergent political interests. What has gone wrong? There are no easy answers. However, in developing countries like India there are some commonalities. Atul Kohli (1998: 9) has asserted that the "state-society traits" of developing country democracies have significantly contributed to the political conflicts. The reasons: (a) their cultural conditions do not readily mesh with the imported model of democracy; (b) considerable state intervention is inherent in the overall design of "late development" but this structural trait generate problems when democracy is introduced; (c) democratic institutions are weak in most follower democracies; and (d) the introduction of competitive elections and mass suffrage amidst weak institutions generates more pressures towards more equal distribution of power in society. Rajat Ganguly (2009: 49) underlines four sets of causal conditions which have combined in different ways to produce ethnic conflict in India. They are: (a) the fear that assimilation could lead to cultural dilution and the unfulfilled national aspirations; (b) the process of modernization; (c) the unequal development, poverty, exploitation, lack of opportunity, and threats to the existing group privileges; and (d) the political factors such as endemic bad governance, anti-secular forces, institutional decay, and vote-bank politics. Susan Olzak and Joane Nagel (1986: 3-4) underlines four basis propositions for ethnic mobilization. They are: (a) urbanization increases contact and competition between ethnic populations; (b) expansion of industrial and services sectors of the economy increase competition for jobs; (c) development of peripheral regions or the discovery of resources in a periphery occupied by an ethnic population; and (d) processes of state building (including those following colonial independence) that implement policies targeting specific ethnic population increase the likelihood of ethnic collective action (quoted in Barton, 1998: 224).

Ethnic groups use ethnicity to make demands in the political arena for alteration in their status, economic well-being, civil rights and educational opportunities are indeed engaged in a form of interest group politics (Brass 1991: 19), and can sometimes constitute "a kind of implicit bargaining, even if the participants do not think of their actions in such terms" (Barton 1998: 222). For Brass the key factor creating ethnic consciousness is not emotional or psychological, but political, and ethnic mobilization focus on territory, resources, and power (see, Basu 1998: 248).

The territory occupy by the ethnic group is crucial to the formation of ethnic identity. In broader term, identity is "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" (Hogg and Abrams 1988: 2). Identity can be a source of pride and joy but it can also kill (Sen 2006: 1-2), and many of the conflicts are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choice less identity (Sen 2006: xv). Identity is a powerful ingredient in the development of nationalism and ethnic conflict. There are five distinct types of identity: ethnic and religious identities, political identities, vocations and avocations, personal relationships, and stigmatized

groups (Deaux 2001: 2). James Manor (1996: 461-462) identifies five different types of identities in India: religious identities, linguistic identities, tribal identities among the adivasis; tribal identities among people in Himalayan or Northeast areas; and (e) Aryan and Dravidian identities. Ethnic identity leads to political action, and when ethnic identity is highly salient, it is likely to be the basis for political mobilization (Gurr 2002: 6). The salience of a people's ethnic identity is due mainly to three factors: the extent to which they differ culturally from other groups with whom they interact, the extent to which they are advantaged or disadvantaged relative to other groups, and the intensity of their past and ongoing conflicts with rival groups and the state (Gurr 2002: 68-69). The incentives that prompt political action by identity groups can be categorized into three main types: resentment about losses suffered in the past, fear of future losses, and hopes for relative gains. The relative importance of each these factors depends on a group's changing position in relation to other groups and to the state (Gurr 2002: 69). According to Paul Brass (1991: 347) the ethnic group formation involves three sets of struggle. The first set of struggle takes place within the ethnic group itself for control over its material and symbolic resources, which in turn involves defining the group's boundaries and its rules for inclusion and exclusion. The second set of struggle takes place between ethnic groups as a competition for rights, privileges, and resources. The third takes place between the state [nation state] and the groups that dominate it, on the one hand, and the populations that inhabit its territory on the other.

The subsequent sections of the essay analyze the ethnic movements—those of Meiteis, Zo peoples, [iv] and Nagas, or Kukis—so as to understand how and why they view Manipur so differently, and the significance of the location and distribution of ethnic groups in sustaining and compounding the conflict. According to Milton J. Esman (1975: 392) the proportion and the quality of conflict and cooperation depend on the relative resources at the disposition of each group. The resources are demographic (relative numbers); organizational (degree of mobilization and capacity to put resources to political uses); economic (control of finance, means of production or trade channels); technological (possession of modern skills); locational (control of natural resources and strategic territory); political (control or influence over the instrumentalities of the state); and ideological (the normative basis for group objectives). In addition to these objective determinants of power, the quality of inter-communal relations depends on the congruity or disparity in goals between those who control the state apparatus and the leaders of the constituent groups. If the goals are the same, the outcome is likely to be consensual. If the goals are incompatible, the consequences will be tension and conflict, and the outcome will be determined by the relative resources controlled by the parties. This introduces to a third determining factor—the conventions, rules, procedures, and structures, the institutions for conflict management. Without such institution there can be no predictability in intergroup relations and no framework for channeling group demands or for regulating outcomes. Likewise, the clustering of factors that cause conflict in Manipur is so diverse. The situation is such that the political dominance of majority Meiteis can be challenge by the Nagas or Zopeople because location and distribution of ethnic groups matters.

The United Committee Manipur, the group which opposes Nagalim, remembers the June 18th 2001 as "Great June Uprising Day" in honor of 18 strikers killed in Imphal in 2001 while demonstrating against the extension of the ceasefire between

the NSCN-IM and the Government of India to Manipur. To make matters worse, the state government of Manipur had declared June 18 of every year as the "Manipur Integrity Day" in 2005. It was done in memory of 18 strikers killed in Imphal. The Manipur's legislative assembly had adopted several resolutions against the division of Manipur into different parts. The Meiteis had threatened to revive the movement for the restoration of the pre-1949 political status of Manipur in case Government of India failed to protect Manipur's land.

Opposing the declaration of June 18 of every year as "Manipur Integrity Day," the All Naga Students' Union Manipur (ANSAM), a student group, set ablaze government offices and imposed curfew on a main highway connecting Manipur with rest of India for 52 days (June 19 - August 11, 2005). During those days, the good-laden trucks were prevented from entering Manipur, and hence the prices of staple goods sharply risen due to their shortage. To show their distrust to state government of Manipur and Meiteis, the Nagas sought to registers private schools situated in their areas of concentration to the Nagaland Board of Secondary Education, the agency responsible for the conduct of final examination for class X in Nagaland. It was summarily rejected by the government of Manipur. In 2010, Th. Muivah, the NSCN-IM leader, who wanted to visit his birth place in Manipur's Ukhrul district was debarred from entering Manipur by the government of Manipur. Muivah's supporters came out to protest in large number, in which two strikers were killed in police firing at Mao, the town located along Manipur-Nagaland border. In addition, the United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of Nagas, has started a campaign to sever all political ties with the state government of Manipur.

The UNC wanted to set up an "alternative administrative arrangement" for Nagas of Manipur. The UNC maintained the Nagas have suffered social, economic, and political deprivations. Interestingly, those Nagas who have settled down in the plain region were not impressed by such campaign. Further, the Naga People's Front, the political party that runs state government of Nagaland, has entered the electoral politics in Manipur. It is clearly a Naga party, its membership open only to the Nagas. In the legislative assembly election held in 2012, it tried to woo Naga electorates on the issues of protecting the land of the Nagas, expediting the political talks between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM, and establishment of an alternative administrative arrangement for the Nagas. It won from four territorial constituencies. The animosity between them is so profound that a small incident can turn into a big issue. The alleged assault of a Meitei film actress by a NSCN-IM insurgent at the town of Chandel in 2012 led to a series of strikes in Meitei-concentrated areas demanding appropriate action against the alleged culprit. However, the state government of Manipur couldn't take any action. Although the ceasefire between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India is officially limited to Nagaland, but in practice it extends to all Naga-concentrated areas. The Meiteis alleges that the central government of deliberately appeases the Nagas, and hence has compromise the interests of other ethnic groups. As pressure mounted from the Meiteis, the state government of Manipur sent leaders of various political parties to Delhi to put pressure on the central government to take action against the said insurgent. On the other side of the divide, the Nagas accused the Meiteis of blowing a small incident out of proportion. They claimed that the incident was a matter of discord between two individuals.

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