

Editorial

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Rohingya problem: Another humanitarian crisis

As many as 11 Rohingyas are presently at the custody of the state law enforcers. Source said, among these Rohingya one or two of them have document of refugees provided by the United Nation. This report about detained Rohingya possessing Refugee status document from the United nation is subject to correction. But the fact is that 11 of them have been detained by the state law enforcers, among which eight were caught from a rented room and three while entering the state at Jiribam Check post.

Under the strict directives of the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh led state government, the law enforcers had doubled their duty and are performing excellent job in keeping under control the influx of illegal immigrants. But being a civilise society which follows democratic form of government, the state need to follow certain rules of law in either arresting, detention or deporting illegal foreigners to their respective countries. It will be inhuman to throw them at anywhere violating provisions under the country's foreigners' act.

This column had earlier highlighted over the issue of deporting the Rohingyas, who have no recognised country of its own. India denied granting asylum to them as the country is already facing problem of migrants. And after all the Rohingyas are Muslim by religion at the government ruling the country have their own agenda on the issue. A critical look on the contents of the citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 will certainly make one understand the agenda of the Central government headed by BJP.

Those illegal foreigners (Rohingyas) currently under the custody of the state police will be certainly sent to prison and later the government or the law enforcers will not have any option to once more detain in custody as there is no option left. It is at this point that Imphal Times argued the passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, as the Bill is about granting of citizenship to non muslim illegal immigrants if they stayed in any part of the country for over 6 years. If in case the Bill is passed the Rohingyas who are looking for a place for survival will certainly have no problem in converting to any religion which the country will accept as citizen of the country.

The issue did not end here, every literate persons knows that in Manipur, there are many people who cares nothing about the future of the state as long as they can make 'quick and easy money'. Stringent laws are there to deals drug smugglers, criminal activities, etc., etc. Records of drug smuggling or criminal activities revealed that there is no dearth for anti social elements who are ready to do anything if it will make them rich overnight.

The apprehension lies here. Recently, three Rohingyas girl were caught while trying to enter the state at Jiribam Foreigner Check post. They have no legal document to prove either their age of residence. But they produced some fake Adhaar cards which the police easily recognised it. The way these Rohingya girls – all in their early twenties or late teens were brought in he state showed that something fishy is going on as they are being brought by some persons from the state.

Easy money, quick money can also be made from flesh trade – a phenomena being practice across the globe.

It is likely that many of these illegal foreigners who are fighting for survival had entered the state. This will only be known after seeing the changes that is expected in the state in just 2 to 3 years.

Arrest or detention will not be a solution as there are loopholes in deporting them.

The more the Rohingyas are arrested the more the problem will be with the government. And when the number grows then there will be international attention. Some humanitarian organisation will certainly move on to frame some laws to protect the minority.

A policy on how to tackle such problem is the need of the hour, as the present scenario have potential of creating another humanitarian crisis in the state.

Is Freedom of speech absolute?

By Lora Hunt,

There is no such thing as unlimited free speech. Freedom of speech is something that the government has to give you. As in: they are not allowed to make laws to hinder people in their free speech. That does not mean that nobody else is allowed to hinder you in your free speech either. The free speech that way too many people insists on is not actually free speech as it is written about in the Constitution, but the sort of free speech that says "but I WANT to be able to say hateful things and I DON'T want anybody to get mad about that." That is, unfortunately for those people but fortunately for everyone else, not the sort of free speech the Constitution talks about. On the other hand, the people who like to say hateful things do not like to be contradicted. THEIR "freedom of speech" is way more important than the freedom of speech of the people who do not agree. How do I know that? Because the hateful people don't mind killing people who contradict them. With a five minute search I can make this answer five times as long with acts of violence of hateful people towards people that didn't agree with them. And with half an hour search I may be able to find a few cases of the reverse. But OUR side gets blamed for being "intolerant" if we speak up against hate speech. Lastly, a point that other answers already addressed: even if free speech means that you can say anything that you want wherever and whenever you want, then still it does not mean that nobody is allowed to break off any contact with you. That is the ultimate wet dream. I understand, that you get to say what you want no matter how hateful and STILL get to keep your friends, but in the real world being an asshole leads to losing friends. Sorry not sorry.

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Enduring Theatre of Guerrilla War

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

I salute the memory of the man who meant and did so much for Manipur. As we drive into Manipur through the national highway, we are reminded by boards that we are traveling on a "historic road, the battleground of Second World War". The Second World War was over a long, long time ago but war has not ended in Manipur or in India's troubled Northeast. For more than fifty years, the Northeast has been seen as the problem child of the Indian republic. It has also been South Asia's most enduring theatre of separatist guerrilla war, a region where armed action has usually been the first, rather than the last, option of political protest. But none of these guerrilla campaigns have led to secession – like East Pakistan breaking off to become Bangladesh in 1971 or East Timor shedding off Indonesian yoke in 1999. Nor have these conflicts been as intensely violent as the separatist movements in Indian Kashmir and Punjab. Sixty years after the British departed from South Asia, none of the separatist movements in the Northeast appear anywhere near their proclaimed goal of liberation from Indian rule. Nor does the separatist violence in the region threaten to spin out of control. But neither do the conflicts go away – and despite a slew of accords with some of them, the Indian state has had to brace for more and more armed groups surfacing in the region – some to fight for separation, others to fight for autonomy, still others to contest the homeland claim of some other battling ethnicity.

The internal conflict in the Northeast has not only festered endlessly, they have spread to new areas of the region, leading to sustained deployment of Indian army and federal paramilitary forces on "internal security duties" against well-armed and relatively well-trained insurgents adept at the use of the hill terrain and often willing to use modern urban terror tactics for the shock effect. The military deployment, however, has aimed at neutralizing the strike power of the insurgents to force them to the table, but have never sought their complete destruction. So the rebel groups have also not been forced to launch an all-out do-or-die secessionist campaign, as the Awami League was compelled to do in East Pakistan in 1971. The space for accommodation, resource transfer and power-sharing that the Indian state offered to recalcitrant groups has helped control the insurgencies and co-opt their leadership.

Such a trans-regional process is now on, with Delhi appointing separate interlocutors to negotiate with the Naga rebel factions and for those active in Assam. Some rebel factions like the Paresh Barua faction of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Manipur insurgent groups such as the Somorendra-founded UNLF or the RPF-PLA have ruled out negotiations with Delhi. While Barua has said he will talk only if Assam's sovereignty is included in the agenda for negotiations, the UNLF has said India should conduct an UN-assisted plebiscite in Manipur to ascertain whether its inhabitants want to stay in India or not. Both Paresh Barua and UNLF chief Rajkhowa Meghen alias Sanayaima have given long interviews to the Seven Sisters Post that I edit. Now look at how Delhi decides on who to talk to. ULFA chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa and UNLF supremo R K Meghen were both nabbed in Bangladesh and were later handed over to India. Meghen's detention was not initially revealed until an expose in

the BBC by this author. Now, both Rajkhowa and Meghen stand accused of waging war against India. Both were offered release and a free life if they agreed to negotiate with India by dropping the demand for secession. Meghen refused, so he stays in jail and faces trial. Rajkhowa agrees, so he and his colleagues walk out free and start negotiations with Delhi. But this differential treatment has only encouraged insurgencies. Those who see their voice not reaching Delhi because of paucity of numbers have found that, if they challenged the Indian state by force of arms, they stood a reasonable chance of being invited for talks; and, if cooption was the price, they were ready for it. So, the insurgents

soon there was a Khaplang to challenge Muivah and now a Khole and Khitovi to challenge Khaplang. If Dasarath Dev walked straight into the Indian parliament from the Communist tribal guerrilla bases in Tripura, elected in absentia, there was a Bijoy Hrangkhawh to take his place in the jungle, alleging Communist betrayal of the tribal cause. And when Hrangkhawh called it a day after ten years of blood-letting, there was a Ranjit Debbarma and a Biswamohan Debbarma, ready to take his place. Many of the Manipuri ojas who went to Lhasa for training and returned to start the PLA are either dead or retired to a comfortable life, but for a dead Bisheswar Singh or Kunjabehari Singh or a retired Chirom Ranjit

But unlike in many other post-colonial states like military-ruled Pakistan and Burma, the Indian government has used the initial military operation in the Northeast only to take the sting out of a rebel movement. An "Operation Bajrang" or an "Operation Rhino" or an "Operation Khengjoi" has been quickly followed up by offers of negotiations and liberal doses of federal largesse, all aimed at co-option. If nothing worked, intelligence agencies have quickly moved in to divide the rebel groups. But with draconian laws like the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act always available to security forces for handling a breakdown of public order, the architecture of militarization remained in place. Covert intelligence operations only made the scenario more sinister.

So when the Naga National Council (NNC) split in 1968, the Indian security forces were quick to use the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland (RGN) against it. Then when the NNC leaders signed the 1975 Shillong Accord, they were used against the nascent National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). Now both factions of NSCN accuse each other of being used by "Indian agencies". In neighbouring Assam, the SULFA was created, not as alternate political platform to the ULFA, but as a tactical counter-insurgency plank, as a force multiplier for the Indian military machine. Engineering desertion and use of the surrendered militants against their former colleagues has remained a favourite tactic for authorities in the Northeast.

The China Factor

But for an entire generation of post-colonial Indians, the little wars of the Northeast remained a distant thunder, a collection of conflicts not worth the bother. That is, until someone's brother was kidnapped by the rebels, while working in a tea estate or in an oil platform or, until someone's relative was shot in an encounter with them while leading a military patrol through the leech-infested jungles of the region. Despite the 'prairie fires' spreading in the Northeast, the sole encounter with this frontier region – albeit an ersatz one – that most Indians can lay claim to was confined to the tableau of tribal dancers in their colourful traditional kits paraded at Raj Path in Delhi on Republic Day. The national media reinforced the 'girl-guitar-gun' stereotype of the region's rebellious youth, while politicians and bureaucrats

pandered to preconceived notions while formulating ad hoc policies. The border war with China, however, changed everything. As the Chinese army appeared on the outskirts of Tezpur, the distant oilfields and tea gardens of Assam, so crucial to India's economy, seemed all but lost. Then came the two wars with Pakistan and Bangladesh was born. In a historic move, the Northeast itself was reorganized into several new states, mostly carved out of Assam. While these momentous developments drew more attention towards the Northeast, the powerful anti-foreigner agitation in Assam forced the rest of the country to sit up and take notice of the crisis of identity in the region. What began as Assam's cry in the wilderness quickly became the concern of the whole country. Illegal migration from over populated neighbouring countries came to be seen as a threat to national security. And since then the Northeast has never again been the same. Just became more complex.

Divide and Rule

Throughout the last six decades, the same drama has been repeated in state after state. Even in Mizoram, where no Mizo rebel leader took to the jungles after the 1986 accord, smaller ethnic groups like the Brus and the Hmars have taken to armed struggle in the last two decades, looking for their own acre of green grass. Throughout the last six decades, the same drama has been repeated in state after state. As successive Indian governments tried to nationalise the political space in the Northeast by pushing ahead with mainstreaming efforts, the struggling ethnicities of the region continued to challenge the "nation-building processes", stretching the limits of constitutional politics. But these ethnic groups also fought amongst themselves, often as viciously as they fought India, drawing daggers over scarce resources and conflicting visions of homelands. In such a situation, where crisis also provided opportunity, the Indian state continued to use the four principles of statecraft propounded by the great Kautilya, the man who helped Chandragupta build India's first trans-regional empire just after Alexander's invasion. Sham (Reconciliation), Dam (Monetary Inducement), Danda (Force) and Bhed (Split) – the four principles of Kautilyan statecraft have been used in varying mix to control and contain the violent movements in the Northeast.

have surrendered and given up armed movements but insurgencies have only multiplied in northeast India. Thus, whenever a rebel group has signed an accord with the Indian government in a particular state, the void has been quickly filled by other groups, reviving the familiar allegations of neglect and alienation. The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) in 2006 counted 109 rebel groups in Northeast India – only the state of Arunachal Pradesh was found to be without one, though Naga rebel groups were active in the state. Now a former sharpshooter of Dawood Ibrahim has returned to his ancestral Arunachal Pradesh and started a new rebel group. Interestingly, only a few of these rebel groups are officially banned. Of the 40 rebel groups in Manipur, only six were banned under India's Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. And of the 34 in the neighbouring state of Assam, only two were banned. A good number of these groups are described as "inactive" but some such groups have been revived from time to time. Since post-colonial India has been ever willing to create new states or autonomous units to fulfill the aspirations of the battling ethnicities, the quest for an "ethnic homeland" and insurgent radicalism as a means to achieve it has become the political grammar of the region. So they say, in India's Northeast, insurgents peter out but insurgencies don't. Phizo faded away to make way for a Muivah in the Naga rebel space, but