

Editorial

Thursday, October 11, 2018

Forsaken farmers- food for thought

While the state has been witnessing more than its fair share of protests, agitations and campaigns for issues ranging the spectrum of human needs and then some, it is not often that the farmers of the state take to the streets to highlight their plights and make public their concerns. For unlike the rest of the agitators/ protestors who can prolong their stand to push for their demands, farming is a very time dependent activity and one practiced by a majority who has limited approach and influence in the political sphere. And when these farmers put their tools down to take to the streets and raise a concern risking the damages of inattention to their crops, everybody should not just listen but understand that a very genuine and immediate point is needed to be made. It is for this very reason that the sit-in-protest staged by a group of farmers yesterday needs to be given the required attention of each and every one who has anything to do with farming in the state, including the consumers.

So what was the point they were trying to make? First off, the vagaries of nature have already done the damage and total product of paddy is expected to fall by at least fifty percent if not more. They are in need of resources including cash which have been used up to keep their crop from drying up due to the worsening shortage of water in the fields which have reached an alarming level in the hills for a while now. The farmers are in need of compensation as an immediate relief measure to try and salvage their crops or what is still left of it. But more than anything, what concerns the farmers of the state is the absence of a long term practical policy for implementing progressive farming practices and measures to counter the rising uncertainties of nature as well as climate change which is here to stay. While the state government and respective department have declared that canals and irrigations facilities have been made available to the majority of farmers with efforts to expand the operation to reach maximum coverage, the reality on the ground presents a different picture and farmers are still shouting themselves hoarse to provide irrigation facilities of a sustainable nature. Unavailability of fertilizers and other vital agricultural inputs in time to the farmers still pose an insurmountable puzzle for the government officials entrusted with the task. Schemes and projects under which farming equipments are distributed remains accessible to those farmers with connections and are in the know of officials while the really needy ones remains out of focus from the whole exercise.

As one farmer puts it succinctly, identifying of real farmers through a process of registration and subsequent issue of documents such as Kishan Credit cards will go a long way in streamlining the distribution of various benefits and assistances designed to help the farmers to improve their activities. However, all these exercise and efforts will come to naught if a system of effective assessment and redressal is in place. Caring for the farmers is caring for the health of the people of the state.

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RAJKUMAR MAIPAKSANA: An eminent Political Activist, Journalist, Revolutionary & Teacher

By: Seram Neken

A few years ahead of the end of British rule in Manipur in 1947, some conscious and educated youths of Manipur came out strongly against the anti-people policies of the Kingship under the British India regime. From the late 1930s to the period of Manipur's merger into Indian union in 1949, numerous twists and turns were witnessed in Manipur politics. During this period, leading social thinkers and political activists turned up to decide the fate of Manipur.

Those who defied the atrocious governance of the King under British India wished for having a democratic and responsible government for Manipur. One of the options was to grasp 'Democracy' in line with the propogations of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress party in India. Rajkumar Maipaksana was one such youth who had worked earnestly for bringing in democratic and responsible governance in Manipur during this transition period.

However, frustrated over the attitude of India government after Manipur's merger into India in 1949, on one occasion he took the initiative for the formation of 'Revolutionary Nationalist Party of Manipur' in 1953 (April 19) to demand for an 'independent buffer state', if the Indian Union did not grant responsible government to Manipur.

Consequently, Maipaksana along with erstwhile leaders Sagolsem Indramani, Yangmasho Saiza and Wahengbam Prahlada were arrested and put in 6 months rigorous imprisonment. Born on 11th October, 1924 to Rajkumar Sanahai @ Aminsana @ Guneshore and Haobam Ningol Bidhumukhi Shija of Singjamei Mathak Chongtham Leikai, Imphal, RK Maipaksana popularly known by the present generation as 'Matangi Wapham Writer' for Imphal Radio station, was an ardent political activist and journalist during the period of Manipur's transition from kingship under British hegemony to establishment of democratic form of government before its final merger into Indian union.

He took a commendable role in the conversion of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha formed in 1934 with Churachand Maharaj as its chairman into Manipur State Congress Party in 1946. He became an important member not only of the Manipur State Congress but also the in-charge of its Student

volunteers. Since the late 1930s, Maipaksana during his school days joined political activities in association with erstwhile prominent leaders like Hijam Irabot and Elangbam Tompok. RK Maipaksana passed B.A. degree from Churachand High School under Calcutta University in 1942, during

which Manipur was in complete turmoil for being an important battleground of the World War -II. (On 11th May 1942, Imphal witnessed the first bombing by the Japanese forces). In '1948, Maipaksana passed IA and in 1950 he got the BA degree from Calcutta University in Economics and Philosophy.

Following a reception programme for the Indian National Army (INA) members of Manipur at the residence of RK Maipaksana at Singjamei Chongtham Leikai in June 1946, the 'INA Relief Committee' was formed with him as the secretary. He was also the secretary of INA Volunteers' Corps for which Ex-INA Thokchom Angou was the president.

On October 4, 1946, a meeting was held at Aryan Theatre Hall at Imphal to form a political party called "Manipur State Congress", which actually had no relation/connection with the erstwhile Indian National Congress, although the name was taken from it. Rajkumar Bhuonsana and Yumnam Khoimacha were the president and General Secretary of the party. Rajkumar Maipaksana, who happened to be one of the six youths who took active role in organizing the meeting, became the member of the working committee of 'Manipur State Congress'

Manipur State Congress had its mouthpiece local newspaper called 'Prajananta' since 1946 with Keisham Kunjabihari as its editor. During 1948-49, RK Maipaksana became its editor as well as Publicity in charge of the Congress. He also served as vice-president of Manipur State Students' Congress during 1948. After around 2 years, he parted himself from the publication and became the editor of Manipuri Daily 'Janmabumi' published at Chingmathak Bijoy



Press during 1949-1951.

As an eminent journalist, Maipaksana served as the Imphal Correspondent of Shillong Times published in Shillong (1948-50), Hindustan Standard (Calcutta) (1949-50) and Assam Tribune (Guwahati).

Considering his skills in journalistic profession and its rising need for a publicity institution, Manipur Government appointed RK Maipaksana as the first Publicity Officer of Manipur on 1st November 1949. The charge of publicity officer had been earlier held by Laishram Gopal who was superintendent of Government Press and later allotted to Rajkumar Sanahai (B Com) who was the Taxation Officer. However, Maipaksana resigned from the post on 3rd December the same year, as he thought of serving independently in newspaper establishments with which he was associated.

The day on which RK Maipaksana was appointed Publicity Officer of Manipur Government (November 1) has been observed every year as 'Information & Public Relations Day' by the Government since in 1991. In the year, 1992, RK Maipaksana along with Keisham Kunjabihari, and Thiyam Meghachandra were honoured by the Government with the State Journalist Award for their commendable works in the field.

Thinking that the expectations of the Manipuris for a responsible government under the Indian democratic set-up were derailed by the Congress Party rule in India, RK Maipaksana departed himself from the State Congress party, and along with Elangbam Tompok formed the Gandhi Sevak Sabha in 1951. He became the General Secretary of 'Gandhi Sevak Sabha', of which Elangbam Tompok was the President. Representing the new party, RK Maipaksana contested the State Electoral College elections in 1952 and elected as a member of 30-member Electoral College from Singjamei constituency. Elangbam Tompok, who contested for the Lok Sabha seat under Gandhi

Sevak Samaj, was however defeated in the election held the same year. The Electoral College, of which Maipaksana became a member, was to nominate a member to Rajya Sabha.

Numerous significant events which occurred in the year 1952 became a turning point in the political history of Manipur. In the midst of the first ever election in Manipur under Indian Constitution, drastic famine due to rampant export of rice, and the visit of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to Manipur, frustration haunted the visionary politicians of the erstwhile Part-C state of Manipur, including RK Maipaksana for non-establishment of responsible governance in the state. Accordingly, the 'Manipur Democratic Front' was formed by amalgamating four non-congress parties namely Praja Shanti, National Union, Gandhi Sevak Sabha and Communist Party to oppose the Chief Commissioner's one-man rule instead of the democratically elected government and appointment of non-Manipuri officials with communalistic outlook as heads of departments. Later in 1953, RK Maipaksana took the initiative for the formation of 'Revolutionary Nationalist Party of Manipur' to demand for an 'independent buffer state', if the Indian Union did not grant responsible government to Manipur.

Consequently, Maipaksana as General Secretary of the Revolutionary Nationalist Party of Manipur along with erstwhile leaders Sagolsem Indramani, Yangmasho Saiza and Wahengbam Prahlada were arrested and put in 6 months rigorous imprisonment. Thereafter, RK Maipaksana gradually distanced himself from active politics, while deciding to remain in the teaching profession. Maipaksana was the teacher in Churachand High English school, Head Master of 'New Girls and Adult Night High School' (1954-55), teacher in Residential High school (1957-58) etc. During the last part of his life, RK Maipaksana worked in the News Section of All India Radio Imphal. His appealing and forceful 'Matangi Wapham' episodes are still lingering the ears of the contemporary generations. On 18th October 1983, the eminent political activist, revolutionary, teacher and journalist breathed his last, leaving his indelible imprint on social and political history of Manipur.

(This write-up is published in connection with the 94th Birth Anniversary of RK Maipaksana)

Meetei Tribe won't grab land and reservation quota of Hill Tribes

By- Dr. Thangjam Ranjit

Indigenous or indigenous people, according to a common definition, are those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later become dominant through occupation, settlement or other. The term indigenous has prevailed as a generic term for many years. In many countries, the term is synonymously used as tribes, first peoples/nations, aboriginals, ethnic groups, Adivasis or Janajati. According to the Supreme Court of India, in one of its landmark judgments, it has been stated that the present STs are the descendants of the original, first settlers' aborigines or adivashi of the country.

Meetei is one of the Principal indigenous tribes of Manipur and N.E. India. When Meetei community returns to its original

fold/tribal status by enlisting in the scheduled tribe list of the country, the land and reservation quota of the present scheduled tribes of the state will never affect at all. Many people, including the well known leaders of prominent civil societies/ organization as well as individuals, both in the valley and hill districts of the state, who do not know much about Scheduled Tribe' and Human Migration Theory' are circulating malicious rumours to the simple and innocent people, particularly of the Hill Districts that the land and reservation quota of hill tribes (scheduled tribes) will be grabbed once Meetei community is included in the scheduled tribe list under Article 342(1) of the Indian Constitution. It is unfortunate that some organizations based, both in the valley and hill, are instigating people to counter this popular demand of the Meetei community. Many people, both in the valley and hill districts of the state believe in

this canard being spread by pseudo scholars, pseudo leaders, or hypocrites. In reality, the rumours are unfounded and are engineered by some who have vested interests, and some who want to throw the seeds of mistrust, disunity and disharmony among the consanguineous ethnic communities, who have been living in love, understanding and harmony since time immemorial. The very theory that the land and reservation quota of our brethren in the highlands will be grabbed by Meetei is out of the question. After inclusion of Meetei tribe in the ST list of the country, the state will have two separate reservation quotas under two different names/ nomenclatures. Meetei ST will be known as Plain ST, New ST, Backward ST, Advanced ST or any other name; whereas, the present STs as Hill ST, Old ST, Backward ST, Advanced ST or any other name suitable to make distinction

between the two STs. The existence of reservation quotas within quota in a state or union Territory UT is empowered by the constitution of India under Article 16 (4). In a new and pragmatic approach to quotas within quota of ST in the state, bigger STs like Tangkhul, Rongmei, Mao, Paite, Hmar, etc, may have separate quota and the smaller STs like Koirang, Kom, Monsang, Chothe, etc. in another quota, in the way Nagaland State is doing, for uniform growth and development of the indigenous communities in the state. Under the same Article, in Assam state, Scheduled Tribes are categorized as Plain Tribes and Hill Tribes with corresponding reservation quota of 10% and 5%. Similarly, in Meghalaya state, different ethnic tribes have separate quota based on their population. Thus Khasi and Jaintia, 40% Garo, 40% and others, 5%. In Nagaland state, there

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