

# Editorial

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## Responsibility required- not restriction

In an effort to keep up with the increasing pace of development and advancement in every sphere, our lives are being forced to conform and keep pace with these progressions. The comings of various electronic gazettes which enable us to communicate with any person, at any moment, at any place make this world a village. Issues vary and lifestyle differs. The perception of the once upon a time generation which felt that only those who blessed with opportunity could live a King size lifestyle has changed in today's world. Every person around the world now knew that there are Americans or British or the Chinese who don't like the superiority thinking perception of their older generation. As we see the changing trend we the people across the globe today sees youths which coming up as human, no matter how poor he or she was brought up. A daughter of this soil, Binalaksmi Nepam is honoured with a global award (2018 Anna Politkovskaya Award) for her bravery in speaking out and in defying injustice, violence. A 22 years old youth Birkarnelzelit Zhiyam, born and brought up by a parents who live on hand to mouth now become one of the best Motivational orator. Young Manipuri at the age of 25 now established a company that give jobs to over 500 youths of the state. There is reason to believe that amidst the storm from the northern block Manipur cannot be stop from marching ahead toward development as long as Young entrepreneur like Sanasam Jacky, the Chairman of Lamjingba Group exist. A youth of today's Manipur now successfully started expanded his business across the globe by opening office at world most expensive city like Singapore and Dubai. Manipur today is changing so should the perception of guiding to understand their responsibility is the need of the hour than restricting them or giving punishment.

An inevitable change is taking place- what is now being accepted as the "quick-fix" mantra or instant gratification- instant food, instant drink, instant relationships and instant solutions.

Such changes, borne out of necessity rather than a fad, bring with it various radical changes that cater to the needs and conveniences, most remarkable being the spawning of a whole new sector of packaged foods and drinks that can be used in an instant.

The seemingly like preconceived mode to bringing up their children in Manipur society should be changed. As a restriction might misguide your children no matter what you are doing is for the good the motive will give frustration, anger and hate all his or her live. But if the dealing with your children is with love and understanding or by making him or her understand how things should be than the bondage of love and respect will grow.

Its family that is important, but the more important is the society or politically a state or nation. The rulers who ruled are more like father or mother. The people are the children and forcing the people to do things that you people want will be a disaster. What is happening in the state of Manipur is like having a strict parent who punishes their children every time over failure to follow what the parents think were right.

The unanimous condemnations and protests, while understandable and desirable, could also spell a premature demise of a nascent industrial movement in the State. We should spare a moment to delve deeper into the actual trials and tribulations that a few of our pioneering people from the State are facing to bring about a revolution of sorts by fighting against almost insurmountable odds to turn their dreams into reality.

Taking the untrodden path has always been fraught with dangers and uncertainties, especially in a State like ours where only negativity and pessimism thrives, not to mention the teeming parasites lurking in the shadows, waiting for any vulnerabilities and weaknesses of fellow beings to take advantage of. The Government should take proactive steps and help out these struggling start-ups to flourish and show the way to an industrialized society instead of taking a negative and punitive stand. It would be stating the obvious to mention the fact that the laws, measures, plans and steps of the Government at present is not conducive for the growth of industry- from investment and financing problems to the utter absence of support and encouragement which is vital for a sustainable and viable industrial atmosphere.

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# Nation and State-Building, Self-Determination and Conflict Resolution in Southeast Asia

By- KAMARULZAMAN ASKANDAR

Mr. President Dr. Debabrata Roy, Chairman of the Arambam Somorendra Trust Dr. Arambam Lokendra, my friends Pradip Phanjouam and Dr. Immanuel Varte, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be in Manipur to participate in the 14<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of late Arambam Somorendra and pay my respect to him by delivering the 9<sup>th</sup> Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture.

Let me take you to the world of the Southeast Asians who are close to the people of this region. We are living in the year 2014. Malaysia is still struggling with the nation-building process, even if she gained her independence in 1957 and has six years to go to achieve her Vision 2020 of becoming a developed nation. Many people in Singapore, most of whom are descendants of migrants themselves, are complaining that the city-state is being over-run by "unacceptable" new migrants. Hate speeches on the internet, blogs and discussion rooms show the intolerance of many citizens against peoples brought in to do things, which normal Singaporeans would not do.

Indonesia being the largest country (with the highest number of ethnic groups) is not spared and has to constantly remind its population of the Bhineka Tunggal Ika - "unity in diversity" concept and prevent another Timor Leste from being created within its boundaries. The Aceh war of independence is over. But self-determination issues are still being discussed between the capital Jakarta and the province Aceh. Timor Leste on its part is still very much struggling not only with nation-building but more importantly in the state-building process and survivability.

Thailand has not only the 'colourful' yellow-red power struggle to contend with but also one of the longest running self-determination struggles in the 'far' south involving the Malays of Patani fighting for peace, justice and resolution of the conflict punctuated with almost daily doses of shootings and bombings. These are happening under the shadow of uncertainty permeating the future of the nation amidst question of survivability of the monarchy.

All these, though, pale in comparison with the situation in Myanmar - a nation going through a phase of "guided transition" in its transformation from war to peace; towards the direction of a 'national dialogue' and constitutional reform which promises an end to their problems, if they can pass through the quagmire of the peace process with the 14 ethnic-states demanding self-determination, justice, and peace. Then, in this country, there is also the need to overcome the dire situation of the Rohingyas, one of the most if not the most persecuted ethnic groups in the world today.

The Indochinese sub-region is not spared as the countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos are still trying to overcome the sufferings and legacies of their fight for independence and the pains of this struggle. All have suffered a lot and nationbuilding has been a painful and laborious process. They have the advantage though of 'determined' leaderships not willing to compromise on their goals.

Lastly, the Philippines, too, went through difficult times in overcoming the pains of nation-building with groups in the southern part of the country mounting their own demands for a separate nationhood based on their identity and history. Together with the Patanis of Southern Thailand, the Bangsamoros of Southern Philippines claim the prize for being the longest running self-determination struggles in the region, going back about 400 years

when they first fought against the Spanish invaders, to be followed by the Americans and Manila in subsequent years. However, while the Patani struggle rages on, the Bangsamoros have been involved in peace processes since the 1970s to secure peace for their region, culminating in the 2012 Framework Agreement for the Bangsamoro (FAB) and recent Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed between the Philippines Government and the torchbearers of the Bangsamoro people, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

As peace can finally see the light of day in Mindanao, it is good to reflect upon the question of why it has been so difficult to attain peace in Southeast Asia. Why the issues that have caused these conflicts, which have their roots in history and are legacies of colonialism, have been so difficult to resolve. And finally, what lessons can be learnt from these examples. In this memorial lecture, I will argue that these struggles are part of the legacy of colonialism and unfinished decolonisation processes in the Southeast Asian region, and to finally resolve them would be tantamount to putting the final touches to the picture of peace in the region.

Nationhood and Self-determination A nation-state is a State that is dominated by a single, majority or dominant nation. This is in contrast with the 'state-nation' which is reflective of most of what we have in multi-ethnic societies today - a State with many nations. The fond dreams of many nationalists and national liberation movements have been to create a nation-state where a national identity is forged via the consolidation of interests and identities at the end of a long struggle for independence. Whatever differences that they might have during the process of achieving independence, the outcome should be one that celebrates a particular national identity such as a Malaysian identity, a Singaporean identity, a Burmese identity, a Filipino identity and so on. The belief is that a national identity will enhance cohesiveness and make it easier for the fledgling nation to move forward as one.

While differences are acknowledged and even celebrated (tolerated?), they are constantly monitored for potential problems and ways are constantly being searched to bridge the gaps. The State for a newly independent nation is used as the instrument, tool or apparatus not only for ruling the country but also for forging this national identity.

Power in the system is lodged with the dominant group or groups giving them the advantage over others. In many cases, the dominant group will try to impose its own characters onto the nation. Even if the original intention was to embrace the existing diversity, the outcomes at times would differ. For example, despite the 'Unity in diversity' slogan in Indonesia, the national identity is closely associated with the Javanese culture. This in return is also translated into national development resulting in uneven development between Java and the other islands. Outer islands and regions then complain about the uneven development between the islands, with Java being the most developed island in the country.

Malaysia started out as country that celebrated diversity, too, but minorities have registered their grievances complaining about preferential treatment given to the Bumiputera group, despite arguments saying that these are needed to correct socioeconomic imbalances between the different ethnic groups. Singapore too celebrated diversity in the country, even designating the four main spoken languages as the national languages of the country. The

national anthem is sung in the Malay language. But it soon became clear that English is the main language sidelining the local languages and that the majority Chinese group would be dominant in all aspects of this small city-state.

Centralisation of power within the systems in the countries of Southeast Asia added more problems. Almost all the countries, with the exception of Malaysia, prefer the centralised or unitary mode of government. Power is concentrated in the capital and resides with the dominant group. Decision is made on the basis of national interests and sovereignty lies with the State, not the people. The bureaucracy is not only for administering the implementation of national policies but also acts as a tool to consolidate powers of the national government.

This is the flaw of many decolonisation processes. The struggle for independence between the colonies (except Thailand) and their colonial masters is soon transformed into a struggle between the new sovereign nation and the newly independent peoples. The struggle is also between proponents of State's rights and the collective group rights, which was then illuminated into a struggle for self-determination. This is especially evident in countries that harbor groups that have vehemently resisted inclusion into this new state-nation in the aftermath of an independence struggle.

The existence of such groups is not a surprise in a situation of multi-ethnicity in a new State. Among the reasons that have been given for their existence include the history of self-rule in the past; a history of antagonism with and struggle against the dominant group which can include too a history of violent actions against them; a clear ethnic or religious identity that differs the aggrieved minority from the rest of the country and especially the dominant majority ruling the country; uneven social, political and economic development between the centre and the periphery, and between the majority and the minority; and existence of kin groups across the border in adjacent countries.

Self-determination Struggles as Unfinished Decolonisation Processes

This section will look at some examples of self-determination struggles from around the region.

### Thailand

Thailand is the only country in the region that has never been colonised. In fact Thailand or Siam as it was known before was the one that terrorised neighbors in the region. One such former neighbour was the Malay Muslim Sultanate of Patani in what is now known as Southern Thailand. The Patani Sultanate was invaded by Siam in 1786 and vassals were installed to rule the area on behalf of the King in Bangkok.

The annexation of Patani was formalised with the London Treaty in 1909 between Siam and the British. This treaty gave international recognition to the annexation of the Sultanate. The five provinces, which were annexed into Siam, were a Muslim majority area. Thus, they were clearly distinct from the rest of the country and are now becoming a minority group in a country dominated by the Buddhist Thais.

Phases of anti Thai movements were carried out. Initially, the royalist elites led the movement, which was followed by the Muslim Ulamas and finally by broad ideologically-based pro-independence groups. The last category consist of several groups

such as the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN - National Revolutionary Front), Islamic Front for the Liberation of Patani (BIPP), the Bersatu, and many others.

These groups, most of which were established in the 1960s are still present to this day, having increased their prominence and the intensity of the conflict since 2004. Demands have been on achieving independence for their region, and to a lesser extent autonomy, self rule and the control of development in the area. A peace process was started in 2013, facilitated by Malaysia, but was derailed by the instability and eventual collapse of the Central Government in Bangkok and infighting within the Patani groups.

### The Philippines

The Bangsamoro of Southern Philippines is a Muslim minority group living in a country dominated by the Christian Filipinos. Bangsamoro is divided into 13 ethnolinguistic groups and are spread out throughout the mid and western Mindanao, as well as in the smaller islands of Sulu, Basilan, Tawi Tawi and Palawan. They have fought the Spanish invaders since the 17th century only to be included as part of the Philippines by the Americans in the late 19th century and eventually by Manila.

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determination struggle in Southern Philippines.

While the MNLF started negotiating with Manila in 1976, culminating in the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) of 1996, MILF started their talks with the government in 1997. Indonesia represented the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the MNLF talks, while Malaysia facilitated the MILF talks.

The MNLF talks resulted in the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which consisted of five provinces and a city. It was a failed experiment with autonomy for the MNLF.

MILF signed a few notable agreements - the most important being, as mentioned above, FAB in 2012 and CAB in 2014. CAB laid out provisions for a new Bangsamoro Basic Law, power and wealth sharing between Manila and the Bangsamoro, and what they termed 'normalisation' of relations.

The conflict is poised to be resolved with the creation of the Bangsamoro Government and parliament scheduled for 2016. This will be the climax of the self-determination struggle of the Bangsamoro people of Southern Philippines.

### Aceh

Aceh used to have its own Sultanate ruling over the Acehese people. The Acehese fought against the Dutch valiantly during the colonial period and are proud to say that they have never lost their independence to the Dutch. After the independence of Indonesia in 1949, Aceh was incorporated into the new nation under promises of Islamic solidarity and nationhood.

They were also promised a province of their own and self rule within Indonesia. The promises were not fulfilled resulting in the first phase of Aceh self-determination struggle in the 1950s led by the Ulamas. The conflict ended when they were given special autonomy status and freedom of religion in the late 50s.

The second phase of conflict was more secular in nature and started with the formation of the Free Aceh Movement in 1976 to fight against economic and political injustices. The war was bloody and protracted and ended only in 1998 when President Suharto was ousted.

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