

Editorial

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Abrogation of Article 370: Gateway for Settler Colonialism - An Existing Phenomenon in Manipur

Recently, the government of India revoked Article 370, resulting in Jammu and Kashmir losing its special status of autonomous internal administration. With the scrapping of this Article came a plethora of hue and cry over Government of India forcefully seizing the power to govern Jammu and Kashmir in addition to the fear established in the state about its demographic transformation.

A state that is now Muslim majority can turn into one with Hindu majority, given the fact that anyone from other parts of India can now buy land and settle in Jammu and Kashmir. The buying and settling are not coming with peace and prosperity, instead it is going to bring settler colonialism. In fact, scrapping Article 370 has opened the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir for Indian (Hindu) settler colonialism. Settler colonialism functions in a way of erasing and replacing the indigenous population by constantly pouring in of a settler society.

Such invasion does not have a specific date or time. It functions as a structure and not as an event. Unlike other forms of colonialism where one can see the visible violence and recognize it, settler colonialism acts like a slow poison right under one's nose. One does not see the result immediately, but by the time the indigenous people realizes, the erasure and replacement of the indigenous population must have gone way too far. Unlike exploitation colonialism, settler colonialism does not prioritize on profiting off of resources or exploitation of labour. Settlers come to stay and grab the land, followed by slowly controlling the socio-economic and political situation, which eventually results in profiting off of the resources and exploitation of labour.

In case of Jammu and Kashmir, it is possible that most Hindus will start settling and buying lands, gradually taking over the economic control and social structure of the then-state-now-UT, Jammu and Kashmir. Such a situation must sound familiar to the people of Manipur. The people of Manipur have been witnessing the invasion of mayang settlers over the years, who have been buying lands and properties as well as gradually taking over the economic control. The fear of getting erased and losing ourselves to the mayang settlers have also ignited the fire of resistance amongst the indigenous population as well. Look at Thangal Bazaar and the non-indigenous population of 7% in Manipur by 2011, for instance. Apart from this, the growing mayang settler population has even paved a way for one of them to be elected as an MLA from Jiribam. With settler colonialism, the mayang representatives in Manipur state assembly might increase as its population influx grows, to the extent that they might takeover the state governance. All of these is the reason Manipur resisted aggressively against the Citizenship Amendment Bill. The settler colonialism has already initiated way back, but the bill is going to accelerate the process of settler colonialism as CAB allows the mayang settlers from outside India to gain citizenship in just 6 years compared to what was 11 years earlier. Sooner they become citizens, higher is the chance of them buying and occupying lands and resources.

Finally, resulting in them taking over the land - the most important aspect of settler colonialism. On the other hand, before the announcement of abrogation of Article 370, GOI created an environment of fear and chaos by announcing a false alarm of terror attack, in order to impose a military control by sending troops in addition to the existing troops, followed by cutting off all forms of communication (cellular and internet). The decision clearly showed that the GOI was aware that the people will strongly resist, given the history of resistance in Jammu and Kashmir against Indian occupation.

It was just a ploy to suppress the resisting voices and silence them into submission. Similarly, GOI can act in such a way to impose CAB by creating some kind of fear and chaos, given the history of resistance by the people of Manipur, especially the aggressive resistance against CAB last time. Shutting off internet in such a time, is not new as well. The false alarm set before the sudden announcement of abrogation of Article 370 can happen at the time of passing the CAB, since the BJP is in absolute majority this time and considering it was in their manifesto as well. At least, the opposition had a good number to reject the Bill last time, but it is a clear sweep this time. In order to contain and suppress the resisting voices of the people of Manipur, the GOI alongwith the Manipur government might cook up something. Just like the abrogation of Article 370 opens the gateway for settler colonialism in Jammu and Kashmir, the CAB helps India and its mayang settlers to gain momentum in the existing settler colonialism in Manipur.

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Leverage Technology to build SMART Villages in the country along with developing SMART Cities

: Conrad Sangma

PIB Feature

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Departments of Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the 22nd National Conference on e-Governance 2019 (NCEG), the first ever in North East region, in Shillong, Meghalaya today. Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Conrad K. Sangma also presided over the event as Chief Guest. The Conference is being attended by senior government officers from across India, researchers and eminent personalities from IT industry.

Addressing the Inaugural session of the Conference, Dr. Jitendra Singh congratulated the State Government of Meghalaya for organizing such an elaborate and successful National Conference on e-Governance. 28 states and all Union Territories have participated in this Conference, which itself is a testimony of the commitment shown by state Governments across the country towards e-Governance, he said. He proposed that the Conference adopts a 'Shillong Declaration on e-Governance' so that the importance takeaways from the sessions may be referred to and developed upon, in the future.

Highlighting the importance of the citizen-centric approach in service delivery, Dr. Singh said that after the current Government first came into power in 2014, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, in his early speeches, had urged to move beyond *Vigyan Bhawan*. We at DARP have been religiously following PM's vision and holding this Conference across the country. The PM had earlier defined e-governance as easy, effective, economical and environmental-friendly governance. The ease of governance would only be possible by 'Minimum Government and Maximum Governance', he said. Government of India, under the leadership of Modi, has been focussing on this aspect especially in the remotest corners of the country, Dr. Singh added.

Talking about important reforms taken by Ministries/Departments under his charge Dr. Singh detailed different initiatives. He said that this Government did away with the need to certify documents by government officials, a legacy of British empire. By doing this the Government demonstrated the resolve that it trusted the youth of India, the Dr. Singh said. Over 1500 obsolete rules and regulations have been done away

with, which makes government functioning efficient and citizen friendly. Under Prime Minister's guidance, many initiatives have also been undertaken by Government of India and projects like IRCTC Rail connect app and UMANG app of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) have been rolled out. Other initiatives like Jeevan Pramaan retired civil servant won't have to travel to bank for submitting life certificate or common citizens can get to know about various schemes being implemented in their area through mobile app.

The Minister mentioned that CPGRAMS, the grievance redressal portal of DARP, is witnessing a significant jump in citizen complaints from what it was five years earlier. This is not because people are not happy with the government, but it is the faith that the people repose in the efficient grievance redressal mechanism. The increase in efficiency of the Government can be analysed by comparing figures of disposal of grievances which has gone up to over 95%. This proves the responsiveness of Government, he said.

Dr. Singh highlighted the importance of increasing awareness among the common people about new citizen-friendly initiatives taken by the Government. Dashboards, portals and apps have been set up by the Government to establish citizen friendly governance. The most striking example is revolutionizing the format of Prime Minister's Excellence Awards. Because of the adoption of new format, 682 districts across the country are competing for these awards. Also, PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration became an occasion for a country wide competition, particularly among young Collectors of the country and has given a boost to implementation of various flagship programmes of the Government.

The Minister said that Ministry of DoNER is keeping up with the pace of digitization and service delivery through electronic means. It has constantly engaged itself with promoting e-governance initiatives that are being taken up by the North Eastern states. It has extended its support to various externally aided projects proposed by different NE States in the field of Health (*Telemedicine*), Education (*Digitization of Classrooms*) etc.

Further, the Minister added that for the last 5 years, the Government has made significant progress in the direction of achieving e-Governance mandate being discussed at the highest level. For making digital literacy universal, the Government has taken key initiatives like Aadhaar and Jan-Dhan

Yojana and has laid down the target completion by 2022, i.e. the 75th Independence year of India. Addressing the Conference, Conrad K. Sangma described how application of technology is close to his heart and how important it is for achieving effective citizen centric governance. It is not the best technology that matters, but it is how best the available technology is applied for the larger good of the masses. Sangma talked about the challenges of digital connectivity in the North East, especially Meghalaya. He thanked the Union Government for sanctioning new mobile towers for the State, which would help reducing the challenges of connectivity. Sangma said that conferences like this facilitate pooling of great experience and best practices, that go a long way in addressing traditional challenges using new age technologies.

Sangma also focussed on another aspect which is the data that the government collects for public service delivery. He noted that effective decision making depends upon the quality of data collected. It is a very important aspect of good governance. The kind of impact it can have at the grassroots is immense. He gave the example of the successful model of how technology is being used in

Meghalaya in creating a database of expectant mothers, details of health infrastructure available and using that effectively to increase institutional deliveries in the state, without incurring a huge cost. This has gone a long way in improving the figures of maternal mortality rates in the state, he said. Sangma also talked about the e-initiatives being initiated by the Meghalaya government for revolutionising the farming and entrepreneurship sectors in the state. Sangma stressed on the need for focussing on villages and leveraging technology to make them SMART, in addition to creating SMART CITIES. During his address, Hamletson Dohling, Minister for IT and Communications, Government of Meghalaya noted that information and communication technology is a powerful tool to bring the Government and public together and ensure efficient public service delivery. He said that NCEG is an important platform to realise the huge potential of 'Digital Dividend' across the country. He enlisted the citizen centric initiatives taken by the Government of Meghalaya, like e-Districts; sponsoring students and local companies to increase digital literacy in the state, among others. He

requested the Union Minister to continue providing Central Government's support to realise the dream of Meghalaya establishing an IT hub in the North East.

K.V. Eapen, Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), thanked the Government of Meghalaya for hosting the National Conference, a first in the North East. Talking about the importance of such large scale conferences, he said NCEG is a platform for Government officials, industry stalwarts and researchers to interact and share best practices in the field of e-Governance. Such conferences are a stepping stone towards the Government's vision to bridge the Digital Divide, enhance citizen satisfaction and participation in service delivery and bringing in more transparency to reduce corruption. Shri Eapen added that digital literacy and data security are important constituents of achieving the above vision. This conference would deliberate on these important aspects besides the importance of convergence of the efforts of the Union and State Governments in achieving 'Digital India', he added. The Secretary also gave a brief overview of the e-governance initiatives being taken in DARPG.

Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary, MeitY gave a presentation on how public digital platforms have been utilised for value creation and how it has transformed the nature of Government public service delivery in the country. The presentation focussed on 'Government becoming a Service Enabler from a Service Provider'. He gave the example of Direct Benefit Transfer saving about Rs. 1 Lakh Crore of taxpayers' money since its inception; how digital payments have been revolutionised by BHIM UPI App; how Government procurement has been made transparent by the Government e-Market (GEM) platform. P.S. Thangkhiew, Chief Secretary, Government of Meghalaya, during his address, focussed on binding Government programmes together by breaking the silos based working and using enterprise architecture approach. He stressed on the need of strengthening the digital backbone for achieving the vision of a digitally integrated service delivery architecture in the country.

The details of the agenda of NCEG 2019 may be accessed on the Curtain Raiser Press Release for the event, on the link <http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1581328>

What's NEXT for the NMC Bill? Confusion.

Courtesy The Wire
By: Sambit Dash

The National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill was passed by both houses of parliament this week. The NMC is set to replace the Medical Council of India (MCI), the regulator for medical education in the country, which once earned the infamous epithet of 'den of corruption' by the Delhi high court. Aiming to completely revamp medical education in India, the NMC Bill introduces a slew of changes beginning from having a lean administrative body and four separate boards to a reduction in the number of inspections and an exit exam for MBBS graduates. Of the many contentious issues in the Bill, the proposed National Exit Exam (NEXT) is one which is clouded in confusion.

With aspersions cast on the quality of doctors in the country, the NEXT aims to ensure a minimum standard for MBBS graduates from the 529 government and private medical colleges. Drafted as the National Licensing Exam in the first draft of the NMC Bill, opposition for a separate licensure exam made the Union cabinet decide in March 2018 to make the final year MBBS exam serve the purpose while

also functioning to be the qualifying exam for medical postgraduate seats. Not just that, the NEXT is also proposed to replace the Foreign Medical Graduate Entrance Exam (FMGE), which allows MBBS students who graduated abroad to practice in India. *Prima facie*, the NEXT appears to be biting off much more than it can chew. It is thus important to go back to the fundamental tenet that a test is as good as its intended purpose, and see where NEXT fits.

In the current scheme of things, an MBBS graduate studies for 5.5 years and upon passing the final year exam, which tests theory and practical skills in four broad subjects (medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, and paediatrics), is able to register with a state medical council and be eligible to practice. However, the quality of a huge number of such graduates is poor and affects the healthcare delivery system. Any licensing exam to ensure the quality of MBBS graduates should check for knowledge, skills to treat non-complicated commonly encountered disease conditions and an attitude of empathy and propriety. If it is going to be the same final year MBBS examination

as before, how NEXT will ensure these objectives is unknown.

It gets trickier with NEXT being slated to serve as an entrance exam for medical postgraduate seats. Any entrance, and in this case for a commodity in shortage, should provide a uniform playing field to all aspirants. It is very hard to fathom how the NMC intends to make the final year MBBS exam uniform across scores of universities and hundreds of medical colleges in this vast country. Apart from that, the utility of an exam that tests only a few of the many MBBS subjects, and has a practical component which may have inherent bias built in, is questionable. What will happen to someone who fails to secure a postgraduate seat and wishes to take the exam again is another huge concern. While the intent of allowing Indian students who have completed an MBBS abroad to add to the healthcare workforce is welcome, NEXT being a licensing exam for them does not add up. The concern about a foreign MBBS graduate hinges on quality, and the current FMGE which tests only for knowledge does not serve the intended purpose. While testing for skills and attitude can be taken care of by the

NEXT, logistical challenges like which university's exam they will appear for are sure to crop up.

Apart from the matter of NEXT, the role of the community health worker, a fee or lack thereof, the composition of the NMC executive body and many such issues have stirred controversies. Given that this is a matter of national importance, clarity is required.

As far as the NEXT is concerned, it has a short three-year period of implementation after the Bill becomes an Act. The concept of an exit exam to ensure minimum standard quality of a doctor is laudable and finds wide acceptance. Because of the positive spinoffs such an exam would provide, the NMC should call for expert consultation, learn from successful examples like the United States Medical Licensing Examination and create test architectures while taking all states into confidence. This would facilitate the realisation of the stated goals of a multipurpose exit exam.

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