

# Editorial

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## The shattered dream: Can we expect something from the government

As many as 8 projects have been inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and 4 other have been laid foundation stone on Jan 4 during his visit here in Imphal. Well and good but notwithstanding the plethora of development measures being taken up by the State Government aimed at improving the quality of life of its residents, the sense of satisfaction and achievement has been lacking in everything that has happened here in the collective minds of the majority of the population.

A slew of promises have also been made on an increasing frequency, the ultimate fate of which has not yet been ascertained. The trend is not one of recent origin. Successive parties and Governments, without any exception, have carried out the same modus operandi of garnering votes and ditching the promises made afterwards. The question here is not how much the Government has done for its people, as it is a given that the Government is there for the very purpose of providing governance, utilizing the resources at its disposal for the betterment of its people.

A more important and pressing question pertains to the manner in which the precious resources at the disposal of the State Government are being utilized to maximize the rate of development and progress. It is no secret that the heads of state, entrusted with the task of overseeing and regulating the development of the state as a whole, has been playing hide and seek with their responsibilities while utilizing more than their fair share of the rights.

They have evidently lost their connection with the real world, cocooned inside their own safety arrangements. The everyday travails of the common man being a thing of make belief.

The ever increasing congestion and traffic snarls being faced by the common man does not concern them, as their way has been cleared and guarded by their cronies and security guards and insulated from the grime and dirt, not to mention the deafening sound of vehicles jostling for space in the narrow roads on which shoddy repair works have been carried out in fits and starts. Even though Electric signals have been used at two important traffic junctions, there are inconveniences compounded by the perennially flashing orange lights at some intersections and junctions, serving nothing in particular. The everyday ordeal does not end when an ordinary person reaches home after a hard day.

Traffic still is a haunt and a nightmare for almost all citizen, struggle for getting drinking water, cleaning up plastic bottles has been life for the people not matters which political parties came to power in the center. And the whole cycle starts from the very moment one wakes up, with the efforts to collect the precious water which the PHED so generously provides every other day for a few minutes, the quality of which is better left unsaid. And these inconveniences are for the city dwellers.

Imagine the plight of those who could only dream of being in such a place as Imphal. Without going into the details of the deficits the government has so prominently and frequently vocalized, it should be made clear that the most important thing lacking with the present government is the political will to make things happen. Providing clean water, adequate and fair distribution of available power to the people and upgradation of road and other basic infrastructures does not call for someone with qualifications of a rocket scientist. More than anything, a proactive and transparent approach with a genuine concern for the betterment of the common man will work wonders in making a visible and positive change. That will be the greatest gift the government can give its embittered people.

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# Cause and Impact of Anglo Manipur War 1891

By Khurajam Athouba  
Convener,  
Justice Committee for Anglo-Manipur War 1891  
Martyrs and Victims of Kangleipak (Manipur)

War of a nation has always been an act of violence with their might of military capabilities with an objective either to secure or defend the sovereignty, to protect the life and property of its citizen no matter what. This principle has prevailed since time immemorial across various wars of the nations. The Anglo-Manipur War or Manipur British War as given in the theme of this Seminar is no different from the given reality and situation which led to the break out of most significant War in the history of Manipur and British Colonial period. To win or lose a war depends extremely on the might of the military power they possess, therefore that the Military Power, Economic Power and Political Stability define the status/position of a nation is absolutely true. Manipur, despite being a small sovereign state has a complete Political system with the three main entities with a written constitution that has been in existence for 1000s of years as an Asiatic sovereign power. Manipur's decline of political position in the later part of the era was due to the weakening of its military strength and political instability due to conflict of interest among the ruling royal families and hence they faced defeat at the aggression of the Ava/Awa which led to the terrific Seven year Devastation (1891-1826'AD). Post Seven years devastation, as the Manipur kingdom return to its throne again with the help of the British. With the first Anglo Manipuri Treaty on 14 September, 1762 was stamped between Jai Singh, the King of Manipur and the British Empire through East India Company. The Article of the treaty between Haridas Gossain (on behalf of Jain Singh) and Mr. Harry Verelst, Chief of Chittagong factory (on behalf of the British) clearly indicates the intent of the British to use the king, his power, land and military for and on behalf of the British against the Burmese and even to all the enemies of the British with a time period of forever logically shows the intent of the British to breach in the sovereignty of Manipur. Such mode of the British agreement can never be considered as a mutual agreement, it was rather a compelling or conditional deal which would definitely amount to a conflict situation between Manipur and British in due course of time. Oja N. Sanajoba quoted the only two treaties between the British and Manipuri as "Manipur's love hate and war relationship commenced with a treaty in 1762 and was put to test in two successive wars in 1891, which created storm in British public opinion in Britain". Many scholars observe and share common opinion about the causes of Anglo-Manipur War/Manipur British War as follows:

1. The treaty of 1762 and 1833 (Jiri Treaty) followed by opening of a Political Agency in Manipur in 1835 post Treaty of Yandaboo (1826).

The main aim of 1762 Treaty by King Jai Singh of Manipur was to get military assistance from the East India Company against the Burmese. But it was abandoned as both the party had a reason of their own interest to not proceed with it. They found it expensive and unfruitful whereas Court of Directors of East threatened the British District of Sylhet, then a part of Bengal. With reports of Burmese overrunning of Manipur and Assam, the panic seized population of Sylhet made immediate call for action and at this critical moment Gambhir Singh, son of Jai Singh made an

alliance with the East India Company and defeated the Burmese and drove out them from the Manipur soil and pursued them till beyond the Chindwin River taking control of the Kabaw Valley. Under the Charter Act of 1833, the East India Company ceded Jiribam in perpetuity to Manipur. But when the Supreme Government of British India opened a Political Agency in Manipur even though the objective was preservation of a friendly intercourse and to prevent border feuds and disturbances which might lead to hostilities between the Manipur and the Burmese, it marks the breach in the Sovereignty and Security of Manipur Kingdom and which could never remain forever. Manipur never accepted Subsidiary Alliance and never paid tribute to the British anytime before 1891 nor ceded any territory to them even if the 1762 agreement exposed the intent of the British towards Manipur. As the kingdom of Manipur was very much sovereign post 1835, the existence of British Political Agent in Manipur it was a time bomb ticking to explode any conflict of interest that might erupt in due course of time and situation. No doubt the 1762 treaty was signed between two sovereign powers, but due to the prevailing political situation, the Maharaja of Manipur was too much submissive to the British and hence the much advanced British got an opportunity to pave the way for interference in the internal and sovereign affairs of Manipur. In the initial period of the establishment of the Political agent in Manipur, the power and function of the agent was strictly, limited and its participation in the internal affairs also did not occur much. But in course of time the British enhanced their role and activity day by day. Later when the Royal brothers in constant confrontation for the throne increased and the members of the royal family started approaching the Political Agent for it, the British got its strength in involving in the internal politics of Manipur. By the time, the British began to feel that the existence of Manipur as a buffer state between British India and Burma is no longer required, they started waiting for an opportune time to annex Manipur, and the time was given by Surchandra when he approached the Viceroy Lord Lansdown during the chaotic political crisis among the Princes. As the groupism and rivalry among the heirs in the Royal family escalated, the British took sides and since Surchandra ascended the throne in 1886, on September 21, 1890 a revolt attack took place in the palace and as a result of this revolt, Maharaja Surchandra and his brother fled from the palace and took shelter in the residency of the British and later went to Vrindaban. Kullachandra Dhaja succeeded to the throne of Manipur. When Surchandra requested the British to extend support in regaining his lost throne, the Governor of India decided not to reinstate Surchandra but to recognize Kullanchandra as the King of Manipur with a condition to deport Koirengsana (Tikendrajit) from Manipur as he was the main factor behind and who would create obstacles in the smooth functioning of the policy

of the British in Manipur via its king. The final order was explicitly written as they would recognize Kullachandra as the King of Manipur if he accepted the following terms and conditions.

1. Kullachandra should allow the Political agent to keep 300 soldiers in the Residency.  
2. He should administer the country according to the advice of the Political Agent.

3. He should agree to the examination of Koirengsana (Tikendrajit) from Manipur and help the British Govt. in this respect.

Post Palace revolt, with the infallible order of the government of India, Mr. Quinton, Chief Commissioner of Assam's arrival with 400 sepoy at Manipur on 22 March, 1890, loaded with arms was a psychological threat to the Manipur sovereignty and that such threat perceptions would not be tolerated by the brave Manipuri soldiers was a fact as the Manipuris had lived in complete freedom for ages. On the other hand Maharaja Kullachandra, in the way in which he had been made the king, was in no position to raise any objection to the Chief Commissioner's proposal to hold a durbar in Residency, the hidden purpose of which was to arrest Koirengsana. But the plan failed repeatedly and the frustrated, but arrogant and over confident Chief Commissioner Quinton attacked the house of Koirengsana to arrest him but failed. As retaliation to the attack heavy fighting took place, the British troops destroyed many structures including temples and killed many innocent people including women and children. Following that, anxious Maharaja ordered and attacked the British residency under the leadership of Yaishkul-Lakpa and Wangkheirakpa and the British failed in defending the attack of the Manipuri Army due to which they were compelled to declare a ceasefire by 8pm and the Chief Commissioner wanted to make a peace deal. In response to the violent act that took place, the king wrote a letter to the British Chief Commissioner clarifying that the Manipuri are not waging war against the British and they fought only to protect themselves and the action of their (British) attack to the Palace was an illegal act.

An emergency Durbar was called and held in front of the Durbar Hall where the furious near and dear ones of the midnight British attack were also present. On the side of Manipur, Tikendrajit Jubaraj, Thangal General, Colonel Shamu, Giriidhari Singh, Angom Ningthou, Haobam Devan, Chongtha Mia and many others including Pukhrabam Kajao were present. As the incidents resulted in death of innocent lives and loss of huge properties, the two parties could not come to an agreement and the Durbar was postponed till next morning. At the moment furious crowd suddenly attacked the British denying the postponement of the Durbar. Mr. Grimwood P.A. was fatally speared by Pukhrabam Kajao, Lt. Simpson got his head banged on the wall, Chief Commissioner Quinton, Colonel Skene, Lt. Simpson and Mrs. Cossin were taken as prisoners

in the fort for several hours but later behaved by the Manipuris. This tragic event of executing the Chief Commissioner of Assam destroyed the friendly relations between Manipur and the British and hence in the following days the British government responded by declaring war against the Manipuri Kingdom. This marks the breaking out of Anglo-Manipuri War 1891.

Observation narrated above led to the immediate cause for Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891, the political situation was such that sooner or later a war like conflict between the independent sovereign kingdom of Manipur and the colonial British Empire was more or less inevitable.

Timeline review of the post 1981 War till 1949 Annexation of Manipur by India gives a very clear picture in various aspects where the geo-political situation of Manipur was in such a position that Manipur was never beyond the proximity between two giant political ideologies i.e. between Democracy of the West and Communism of the East. For example, during the Second World War in 1939-45, without much involvement of Manipur in the international polity, Manipur became a hot bed of the two confronting groups (Allied forces and Japanese & INA forces). The Imphal battle of 1944 was declared as one of the greatest battles in the history of Allied forces during Second World War with maximum casualties and also the beginning of the end of Japanese Imperialism too (New York Times report 21 June, 2014 by Gardiner Harris). Another aspect is also during the decolonization period of 1947 by the British empire, Manipur due to its geo-political location between two conflicting systems, vis., emerging Democracy in India and gradually growing and ideologically threatening Communist moorings of Asiatic region and today's Northeast region and neighbouring China and Burma (Myanmar) made the new independent India to annex Manipur with a forced merger agreement on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1949 to resist any further penetration of Communism from Burma inside the mainstream India territory. Such is the geographical position of Manipur in the transcontinental map of southeast Asia and therefore no matter what the British did nor not, Manipur by nature is and will be facing serious political conflicts in course of time.

2. Family disputes among the sons of Meidingu Chadrakriti Maharaj and dissent group seeking asylum to the British:

Family dispute among the heirs of the King in Manipur is not a unique phenomenon of disunity among the royal families. Every royal family in the history of almost all the kingdoms across the globe has had such phenomenon of disunity among the heirs for power and privileges. However, all those kingdom did not face what Manipur faced during 1890-91. So, we cannot say that the family disputes among the sons of Meidingu Chandrakriti Maharaj and seeking asylum to the British could be one of the main cause for the outbreak of Anglo-Manipuri War 1891. It was the British, who falls prey to this tiny independent kingdom which was self sufficient and had enough courage to face death to defend its pride and honor for their motherland which was underestimated by the then British who were posted and involved in the affairs directly or indirectly. (To be contd....)