

Editorial  
Friday, November 1, 2019

# Bridge the trust to restore peace

**A**n assurance by a Prime Minister or the Union Home Minister conveyed through the Chief Minister of Manipur should have been enough to calm the people of the state from any kind of fear psychosis lingering to the mind of the people of the state. However, the trust deficit that they failed to bridge fails to calm the people of this state. A statement released by Press Information Bureau of the central government which said that no final agreement between the NSCN-IM, NNGPs and the GoI was signed yesterday, even fails to find a place to either believe it or not. It was not the credibility of the PIB but it was the bitter instances of those in the highest post of the country had committed. If one remember, it was on June 13 of 2001 that the then Union Defence Minister George Fernandez, while speaking to a gathering at GM Hall here in Imphal announced that, no agreement that the people of the state opposed including extension of cease fire between the government of India and NSCN-IM beyond the state of Nagaland will be signed. It was on the next day, i.e. on June 14, 2001, after the then Defence Minister had left Imphal, the then interlocutor of that time Mr. Padmabhaya, signed the agreement with the leadership of the NSCN-IM by adding three words to the extension of the cease fire - "without territorial limit", which was against the assurance of the then Defence Minister of India a day before. The result of adding the three words that the defence minister assured to exclude it from the agreement, had burnt the entire state of Manipur. The world witnessed burning of the state legislative Assembly, along with many government quarters and offices of political parties. The tears still wet mothers, widows and son and daughters of 18 people who died during the bloodiest uprising for protection of the territorial and political boundary of the state. Left with no choice the then government had removed the 3 words "without territorial limits" from the agreement on July 27 of that year.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi had assured many times that Manipur's interest will never be hurt while solving or settling the issues with the NSCN-IM. The words were also echoed by many BJP leaders who are in power including the strong man Amit Shah, the Union Home Minister of the country. Unlike other Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah combo led government is a bit different. Since they started running the country most of the words promised by them have been seen fulfilled, no matter they get votes or not during election, they always stand with what they had promised to the people. The first term of Narendra Modi led NDA government witnessed many outdated law being scrapped after he announced that outdated laws will be scrapped while delivering speech at Madison Square garden. However, for reason best known, AFSPA is still not scrapped.

So the point wanted to draw the attention of the government is that if they really want the people to have trust in the government to believe in whatever announce or declare by the Prime Minister or Home Minister, let it be converted into action, leaving aside the political gain.

Manipur have been a more peaceful state today if the so called promises are being fulfilled. Now one way to calm the people and to restore the peaceful coexistence in the state is to let everything known to the public. Settling the issue of NSCN-IM is what people of the entire North east region have desired. What ever agreed and whatever the NSCN-IM demanded should be made public and it is perfect time now as the final settlement has been reached yesterday. It's time now that the government of India placed the demand of the NSCN-IM in public domain and also the agreed points of the government that the NSCN-IM had demanded. Otherwise, the trust deficit between the common people and the Political leaders running the country can never be bridged.

## Condolence

I, on behalf of the Bharat Swabhiman Trust Yoga, Imphal West, Manipur, is deeply saddened by the sudden demise of **Pukhrambam Priyokumar Singh (@ Iboiphak) of Pishumthong Ningom Leirak Imphal West on Sunday, October 10, 2019.**

Late Pukhrambam Priyokumar Singh, supported the Bharat Swabhiman Trust Yoga during his lifetime at all his capacity by even encouraging his children to practice Yoga. Pukhrambam Bijaya, his daughter is now a Yoga Parachak.

I on behalf of the trust also share the pains of his wife Pukhrambam Ongbi Memchoubi Devi, daughters - Ningthemcha Ongbi Romabati Shija, Pukhrambam Babita Devi, Pukhrambam Bijaya Devi and his sons Pukhrambam Prakash Singh, Pukhrambam Lekhajit Singh, Pukhrambam Gogocha Singh and other members of his family.

Sd/- M. Charan Singh  
District Prabhari  
Bharat Swabhiman Trust Yoga,  
Imphal West, Manipur

## Documents Lost

I, the undersigned, have lost my Admit Card, original Mark Sheet, and original certificate, registration certificate of my - class X examination bearing Roll No. 29678 of 1990, issued by the Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BOSEM), class XII examination bearing Roll No. 14047 of 1993, TDC 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 3<sup>rd</sup> year examination bearing Roll No. 401769 of 1997 and my M.Sc Examination conducted by MU bearing Roll No. 026016 of 2002 on the way between Uchekon to Singjai Bazar on 29/08/2018.

Finders are requested to handover the same to the undersigned.  
Sd/- Thangiam Gobardhan Singh  
Uchekon, Imphal East  
Phone No. 841487828

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# UN biodiversity chief quits; Documents show she had been accused of misconduct

By Karl Mathiesen  
Agency News

**The UN's biodiversity chief has resigned in the midst of preparations for the most important summit on the Earth's living systems in a decade.**

Earlier this month, Cristiana Paşca Palmer, a former Romanian environment minister, told staff at the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), where she has been executive secretary since March 2017, she was "at a crossroads where I must accept that due to a mixture of factors increasingly affecting my health, I am unable to continue this journey and lead the CBD Secretariat on the road to the UN Biodiversity Conference in China". Documents seen by Climate Home News describe a chaotic work environment at the secretariat, widespread staff illness and resignations and allegations that Paşca Palmer discriminated against African staff members on the basis of their race.

They also show she had fallen into conflict with the bureau that represents national governments that have signed the convention. This culminated in a top Egyptian official and former executive secretary accusing her of improperly intervening in deliberations over the renewal of her contract.

Paşca Palmer declined to be interviewed for this article or respond to the allegations, repeating that she was taking time off to be with family and recover from health problems.

The upheaval at the secretariat comes at a critical moment. **Scientists warn more than one million species face extinction, many within decades.** At the CBD's 15th major conference (COP15) in October 2020, countries will try to agree new targets and processes for the protection of biodiversity over the next ten years.

These will replace the 2011-2020 goals, brokered in Aichi, Japan, which have almost universally failed to draw a response from governments. Observers are calling it the "last chance" to avert total breakdown of the natural world. It is also hoped the 2020 meeting will bolster the use of nature's own solutions to slow the rate of global warming.

The role of the secretariat and the executive secretary is vital in assisting national governments to find agreements during complex negotiations.

UN executive secretaries often become global spokespeople for their remit. This was an element of Paşca Palmer's job in which observers say she was highly effective, raising the profile of the convention through media interviews and meetings with political leaders around the world. In her resignation announcement to staff, she said "biodiversity and nature are increasingly regaining

their central role as a critical emergency", noting "growing and unprecedented support from many heads of state and governments". But as her advocacy and punishing travel schedule gained traction, Paşca Palmer's relationship with the Cop bureau - a body of 14 officials elected to represent the convention's member states - became strained.

A major source of tension was Paşca Palmer's reaction to an **article** published in the Namibian, that country's largest daily newspaper, on 29 August. The Namibian reported that African members of the bureau were concerned with Paşca Palmer's management and reports of discrimination from within the secretariat. A document, allegedly prepared by the officials, said "Africa supports no extension of the term of the executive secretary" when her contract expires in March 2020.

In an email to the bureau and the Egyptian Cop presidency in the week following the story's publication, Paşca Palmer called the document "derogatory" and asked for help investigating whether African members had "any association with the article" and whether the document represented a "unanimous view from the African region". She said she had spoken to African representatives who were not aware of the document and asked the bureau to issue a disclaimer.

It was an overstep. In an indignant email a week later, Hamdallah Zedan, a representative of the Egyptian Cop presidency and himself a former executive secretary of the CBD, said her request and questioning of Zedan and African officials "shockingly interferes in and undermines the intergovernmental process and integrity" and was done with "unbelievable audacity".

His email was sent to members of the bureau and Paşca Palmer's direct boss UN Environment executive secretary Inger Andersen. "Ms. Paşca-Palmer [sic] is asking, in the name of transparency, the bureau to take a favourable position or at least to quickly make its position clear about her request for an extension of her contract. This is inappropriate and unacceptable," Zedan concluded and asked Andersen to take "appropriate measures".

A month later, Andersen wrote to member states to announce "with regret" Paşca Palmer was leaving the CBD. Neither the UN nor Paşca Palmer would comment on whether these events were linked. While her behaviour breached norms around the traditional subservience of the executive secretary to member states, Paşca Palmer's complaint that the note did not represent a whole-of-Africa position were backed up by CHN's own investigation. Several African national

representatives - not part of the bureau - were not aware of the document's existence when contacted by CHN. This leaves open the possibility the note was fake, or prepared by African members of the bureau without consultation with other African officials.

Melesse Maryo, Ethiopia's top CBD representative and a member of the bureau, would not confirm or deny the document's authenticity. He told CHN it was not "the Africans' views" that caused Paşca Palmer to resign. "The issue is not important for [Africa]. Things have been met already because of some other reasons. Because she got sick physically and she resigned," he said.

Alongside the souring of relations with member states, staff at the CBD secretariat in Montreal, Canada had become increasingly demoralised, according to preliminary findings by auditors from the UN's Office of International Oversight Services (OIOS), leaked to CHN.

The national governments who are members of the convention requested the audit, which is a routine practice for UN bodies. The final report, which the UN said was being "finalised", would have allowed Paşca Palmer to respond to the findings. It is not yet public. In interviews, staff told auditors there had been a breakdown in trust with management and Paşca Palmer's busy travel schedule made her unavailable. This made the secretariat a "conflictual and stressful" place to work.

Between the start of 2017 and the middle of this year, 22 "senior and experienced staff" left the secretariat - one fifth of the total personnel - seven of them in the first half of 2019.

In 2016, 18 staff took days off; a total of 172 days. This increased after Paşca Palmer arrived in 2017. In the first five months of 2019, 58 staff took a total of 458 days off. Coupled with a lag in recruitment, the high absence rate and staff turnover raised concerns with the OIOS auditors that the secretariat may not be functioning at its best. Alongside a general breakdown in staff morale, certain staff members felt they were being singled out by Paşca Palmer, some because of the colour of their skin.

The issue of prejudice was raised in two complaints, which CHN has seen, lodged by senior staff members with the OIOS in May and June this year.

Both accused Paşca Palmer of trying to push them out of the secretariat. One complainant alleged Paşca-Palmer had discriminated against her because she is black. The long-standing UN employee said she observed this happening to other colleagues and listed several staff from Africa or the Caribbean who had left their jobs or been frozen out by Paşca Palmer. The complaint concluded: "I

sincerely believe that Ms Paşca-Palmer [sic] is a racist. She has a negative attitude to Africans and people of African origin."

CHN has seen no direct evidence of discrimination or racial prejudice by Paşca Palmer. But it is clear some black staff members felt they were working in an environment in which race determined how they were treated.

In an email to ten "African and Diasporan colleagues", which CHN has seen, a staff member announced her resignation from the secretariat. "I know the situation at the CBD is not the best for us as Africans/people of colour, but I just wanted to encourage you to remain strong and steadfast. God will go before you. What you are going through is nothing that Africans/people of colour have not had to endure before," the email said.

A colleague responded that it was "sad that we are being treated so unfairly and with zero respect for diversity".

The second complainant to the OIOS - who is white - noted "acts of discrimination against colleagues in the [secretariat] from African nations of African heritage".

That complainant alleged Paşca Palmer had attempted to force her out of the secretariat after discovering she had cooperated with a UN Office of Human Resources Management investigation into Paşca Palmer's decision to scrap a division of the CBD devoted to helping governments include biodiversity protection in their policies and planning.

"As a long time international civil servant, I have never experienced anything that remotely resembles to [sic] this traumatic, demeaning and degrading experience," she wrote. It is unclear if these complaints were a factor in Paşca Palmer's resignation. Race-based discrimination was an issue recognised in the African bureau letter. CHN asked the UN whether it had followed up or investigated the claims. It declined to answer.

With Cop15 less than a year away, a spokesperson for secretary general Antonio Guterres told CHN the UN was "determined to ensure that the CBD secretariat continues discharging its mandate without disruption".

In her resignation announcement to staff, Paşca Palmer said: "I have poured myself with all my heart and might into the works of the convention, working tirelessly day and night together with my team at the secretariat to advance our agenda and navigate numerous institutional complexities and roadblocks."

She said she intended to leave the body on 30 November. On Monday, Andersen wrote to staff that Tanzanian environmental jurist Elizabeth Mrema would be taking over the position on an acting basis from 1 November. Paşca Palmer will go on leave from Friday.

# Awareness programme on Rising incidence of cancer

With the growing and aging population, increasing sedentary lifestyle and deteriorating eating habits there is an unprecedented increase in the number of cancer patients on an annual basis. Recent advances in understanding cancer have helped us develop better strategies to prevent and treat cancers. We are better equipped to address risk factors such as smoking, obesity, physical inactivity etc. Almost two thirds of cancers are because of such lifestyle issues, some of them are also caused by pathogens and few because of genetic factors. There are more than 22 lakh

people living in India with a diagnosis of cancer, with more than 11 lakh new cases of cancers being diagnosed each year. Almost 8 lakh patients lose the battle with cancer in India every year and it is the second leading cause of death in the country (after cardiovascular disease).

To raise awareness, Dr Alok Narang, Surgical Oncologist, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Patparganj, said, "It is imperative for people to understand that bad lifestyle choices along with consumption of tobacco, alcohol and smoking, doubles the chances of cancer. Hence, it is very important that we make

changes in our lifestyle and it is equally important to have annual full body check-ups as a part of our habit for individuals above forty years age. This helps to diagnose the diseases in early stages, get simpler treatment at lesser cost with much better outcomes. Now-a-days with the advancement of technology and medical intervention it has also become possible to treat cancer at its fourth stage with good survival rates though complete cure is still a challenge, due to the complexity of the disease."

Awareness of various management strategies available to fight with the disease including diagnosis, staging,

surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormonal, targeted and immunotherapy goes a long way in making the right choices for prevention as well as treatment. The symptoms of cancer are quite like other diseases, therefore one mantra which works for timely diagnosis is that if there is any symptom persisting for four weeks, one should check with their doctor and rule out cancer. It's a well-established fact that delay in diagnosis, leads to stage progression. As the stage of cancer progresses from stage I to IV, the treatment is more complex, and the results are poor.