

Editorial

Monday, November 18, 2019

Is there any way forward that the Meitei, Naga and Kuki jointly resist CAB from a common platform

The "fall of the Berlin Wall" paved the way for German reunification, which formally took place on 3 October 1990. Seven years down the line, here in the erstwhile kingdom of Manipur, then became a state of India, started construction of a virtual wall to divide the state into pieces. Twenty two years later, the virtual wall is nearing completion, and today frustration haunts the people. Ideological symbiosis between the different communities of the state is nearing to perish. The strength of unity that once fought the aggressive storm blown from the Northern block is now history. The strength to resist external invasion that will be leading the ideology of this community towards different direction has been weakened. Hadn't this virtual wall be opened and stitch the divide between various communities today, in another ten years, children of the time may not feel the pride of being born as Manipuri or say Naga (as desire by some).

Each and every communities knows that its time that we the people of this region particularly the people belonging to various ethnic communities of Manipur unites to jointly resist the move for introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in the next one or two day. Justification to the CAB by some vested interested sons of this soil will not help in fooling the people as we all know that there is an agenda. Insertion of a clause to the CAB 2016, tabled during the last government, for skipping of some North Eastern states including Manipur is an excuse that will serve no purpose to the resistance of the people. Manipur's Meitei community, who are mostly Hindu and the Naga and Kuki Community who are mostly Christian, could have accepted if Myanmar is included among the countries which was stated in the Bill. Picking up of only Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan is a revelation of the Agenda of RSS and BJP. This is being said because there are 1000s and 1000s of Manipuri Hindu, whose right has been deprived by the Myanmar authority by not allowing them to give a Hindu name and treated like a second class citizen. There are also many Christian Naga and Kuki who face similar fate in that country. This is known to every think tank of India and one wander why should the CAB be from only three countries, when the real religion persecution is being faced by either Hindu or Christian living in Myanmar whose origin is the state of Manipur.

When state like Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland which have special legislation to tackle the influx of migrants stood against the CAB, on what ground would the state of Manipur accept the CAB. As of today there are no legislation to safeguard the state of Manipur and the Bill passed by the state Assembly for protection of the state from the invasion by the migrants still is not given assent by the President of India.

On the other hand, we do know that those expected to applied citizenship under the CAB (if suppose it becomes a law of the nation) is likely to be mostly persons who are struggling for survival. We also know that concerns for religion come next after they settled, as Bangladesh is a country which cannot give equal economic supports to all its citizen. Most influx might be the Muslim community by birth and no Indian authority will know which religion these migrants belong to. If one watch the Bollywood movie "Jolly LLB-2", where Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar play the role of an advocate, how a Muslim terrorist took shelter posing himself as a Brahmin. A saffron dress, or a lagoon or pair of Chandan on the forehead is enough to proof that he is a Hindu. Under the CAB it is also possible that many such imposters can take advantage to become a citizen of India. And let us assumed a Bangladeshi granted citizenship under CAB at other part of the country entered the north eastern states like Manipur, will the government have legal tools to resist them from entering the state.

The agenda is crystal clear, and at this crucial time the people of the entire North East particularly in the state of Manipur and Nagaland, people of all community need to have a break for some time over the issue of Naga and its final settlement. It is time to reconcile and stand united to chart an effective strategy and fight the CAB. As we also know that they (the BJP) will certainly pass the Bill in the next some few days as they now have numbers in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, there should be a clause that Meitei (Hindu) and Christian (Naga and Kuki) from Myanmar will also be granted citizenship in addition to the three country stated in the CAB.

National Skill Development Centre inaugurated at Kumbi

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Kangvai Battalion of Loktak brigade in association with Humanism Foundation inaugurated a Skill Development Centre at Kumbi College yesterday morning. The Skill development centre will provide free training on sewing machine and computer to the unemployed youth of the area. The event was enthusiastically attended by approx 400 locals of Kumbi, Saiton, Kwakta, Moirang, Thanga, Kangvai and adjoining

areas.

The local youth while attending the programme were elated and thanked the Kangvai Battalion and Humanism Foundation for their selfless service.

The inauguration function was attended by CO of Kangvai Battalion, Loktak Brigade; Wahengbam Shanti Devi, Chairman of Humanism Foundation; Kh Gyaneubushon Singh, Vice-principal of Kumbi College and Wahengbam Bobbyjames, Advisor of Humanism Foundation as presidium members.

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Enigma of Unique Histories

This article is an excerpt from the article "Reflections on the Conflicts of our Times : Attempt at Common Sense reading of the Manipur Experience" written by Lokendra Arambam

As for the issue of the Gol's decision to recognize the unique history, culture and situation of the Nagas, the people in the valley have other fears. Because the demographic situation of the Manipur state is composed of a plural spread of some thirty four ethnic communities all over the hills and plains and certain smaller ethnoses had been converted into the denomination of Nagas, like earlier anthropological understanding of some old-Kuki communities like the Moyon, Monsang, Anal, Maring etc. have identified themselves as Nagas, and there are resistances to this programme. The Aimol community had refused to be recognized as Nagas. They wanted to remain Aimol, and some other smaller communities like Chotho etc also refused to be incorporated into larger tribes. When the NSCN (IM) submitted their demands for the settlement of the Indo-Naga Peace Talks, they surely must be presenting to the Centre a history of the Nagas as they claimed to be unique, and one is not sure what is the representation of the Manipur Nagas, apart from their solid history of the Nagas in Nagaland and Burma, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. When the civil representatives asked for a White Paper from the Gol to produce the documents of the Indo-Naga Peace Talks since 1997, Mr. Ravi was reportedly to have brushed aside the idea curtly, saying that he didn't bring any 'baggage' of the past, meaning Gol had rejected the earlier 17 years old non-settled ambivalences of the UPA Government of the Congress, that the Modi Government was starting afresh on the issue. This means that the Modi Government had also rejected certain decisions reported to have been communicated to the Naga representatives by Mr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister that the idea of sovereignty of the Nagas shall not be recognized and that Naga integration of territories and people in neighbouring states are also ruled out. This sudden turn-about in the policies of the Centre, and recognition of the History of the Nagas as told by the Nagas only, not the history of ethnic components of neighbouring states, which are as yet not invited by the Centre from them. Here lies a complex bind on the case!

It is feared that the case of the Manipur Nagas, and their history in Manipur could have been wrongly reported by the NSCN (IM) to the Centre. It had been widely circulated that the Nagas of Manipur had never been conquered by any other power other than the British in Manipur history. It was circulated that the Meitei kingdom before they came under British rule in 1891 was only in the valley of Manipur. The Nagas of Manipur were therefore represented as being 'independent' in the hill regions of Manipur till the advent of the British.

It looks like the history of the Nagas in Manipur were being

presented to the Centre in a one-sided version. The history of pre-colonial Manipur was not much studied as public knowledge, and not much of studies had been done on ethno-history, the issues of authority relations in the pre-colonial polity, the ritual relationship amongst communities with the state, and the facts in history about progressive awareness of self-hoods amongst pre-colonial ethnoses as against others, the development of the in-group consciousness of solidarity and out-group hostility being only a late phenomenon in our lives. The Indo-Naga Peace Talks, which was freshly started by the Modi Government, with Mr. R.N. Ravi's perceptions of having carried no baggages from the past, was based on mistaken paradigms of conflict resolution exercises. Mr. R.N. Ravi himself was carrying a baggage of severe mistaken notion of Naga history, a discourse of unique history and situation of the Nagas, told by the NSCN (IM) and accepted by the NDA Government under Atal Bihari Bajpayee since the Amsterdam Conference of 2002. No other neighbouring states in Northeast India, which have Naga citizens in their territories, had ever been invited to relate their ethnic histories and cultures.

The civil societies in the Manipur valley have a relevant point to demand a White Paper of the Gol-NSCN (IM) negotiations since 1997, for the very issues of the Manipur Nagas could have been wrongly represented in the context of the negotiations. A correct perspective of history must be established about Naga uniqueness, if ever that too was reflected in Manipur history. There would be another uniqueness of Manipur history, if the pages of pre-colonial Manipur are opened. For it will be discovered that the hill tribes were participating as voluntary components of the pre-colonial Manipur polity since the tenth century of the Common Era. A ritual of mutual relationship with collective solidarity in tow known as Mera Haochongba (Dance by the Hillmen in October) was established during the reign of King Irengba (984-1074 C.E.). Both the lowland and highland dwellers fought together in Manipur's wars against foreign powers like the Burmese and the English. The hills and the plains had a symbiotic relationship, forged by the geographic, ecological and economic inter-dependencies of the natural environment. The Manipur Nagas were not being understood as Nagas, which was a British invention. The Manipur polity recognized them in their ethnonyms, their original ethnic names like the Tangkhuls, the Mao, the Maram, the Thangals etc. The spread of the idea of Naga consciousness was a fairly recent phenomenon, a post-Phizo development. Even the legendary sacrifices of Jadonang and Gaidinliu from the Manipur hills against the British imperial power, as interpreted as forbears of Naga

nationalism was found to be an incorrect interpretation. For the two leaders fought for kingdom of the Makam people, which now is represented by the Zeliangroung people. Such critical nuances in the interpretation of historical events did create a lot of misunderstanding in the study and analysis of conflict. The story of the actual participation of the Nagas of Manipur in the overall Naga ethno-national movement should be dispassionately debated in the Naga inhabited areas, understood by the neighbouring communities so as to encourage proper treatment of the subject of their dignity, status and autonomy appropriate in context.

The suggestion would however remain as wishful thinking since the issue of Naga integration under one administrative roof is a very strong demand of the NSCN (IM) and their supporters. Naga civil society groups in Manipur believe it as an act of faith that the Naga National movement is inexorably connected with the unison of territory with identity. Sanjib Baruah, an Assamese intellectual once remarked on 'The emerging inclusivity of Naga identity with geography coming into clash with the territorially embodied identities of states like Assam and Manipur! For the Nagas, to bring together all the Nagas and the areas inhabited by them under one political roof is a driving force of the Nagas (Now there are opponents of this idea in Nagaland itself). The fundamental rights and aspirations of the Naga people as expounded by their leaders incorporate this fond belief. The constitution of the Naga National Council, the initiator of the Naga political struggle endorses this principle. Many prior agreements between the representatives of the Naga movement, and the officials of the Dominion of India in the wake of the Independence of India reflect this possibility.

"Naga integration implies explicitly that it is an issue of removing all the arbitrary boundaries created without the free and informed consent of the Naga people by the Government of British India, Burma and India. Therefore, for the integration of all Naga areas, under one political roof, the partition made in the past must be removed. The total geographical area of the land which is desired to be integrated is approximately 1,00,000 sq. Km. The division of their territory is one of the greatest wounds that has been inflicted on the Naga people by the power that is including the Naga opportunist elements who have more faith in the dominant system than the Naga people. It is clear that the Naga people did not decide to be part of Assam or Arunachal Pradesh or Manipur". (White paper on Naga Integration by Naga Hoho 2002).

Civil society groups of Nagas in Manipur and Nagaland expressed deep sense of hurt when mass

movements in the plains of Manipur were organized to oppose threats to the disintegration of the state, which they feared was being negotiated in the ongoing talks between the Gol and the NSCN (IM). In 1997, Nagas derided the Meetei rally, 'as it was purportedly organized on apprehension of the Manipur Territorial disintegrity in the light of the ongoing talks between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM). The Nagas of Manipur along with the rest of other Nagas have been combating the mighty India for the last 50 years for Naga sovereignty and this long struggle by shedding blood of thousands of men, women and children cannot be easily sacrificed for the sake of Mammoth territorial integrity. The Naga political struggle is not without historical facts. The voice of the Meiteis should not be allowed to prevail upon the settlement of 50 years long political struggle of the Nagas in any manner'. (M. Dili et al - Naga Territorial Integrity Vs Manipur Territorial Integrity 14-9-97).

The tense dynamics of the ethnic relationships in Manipur and its contours are often defined by their very relationships with the Indian Government, for the Indian state is the ultimate arbiter and dispenser of ethnic justice. The future of the ethnoses in Northeast India seem to heavily lie with the decisions being made in the corridors of power in New Delhi. The equations of the proximity with and distance from the Centres of power therefore were critical factors in assessing the environment of distrust and mutual suspicion over moves and manoeuvres being made by the representatives of Indian authority, their nearness with respective political groups, and the very secretacies and hush-hush methods of the intent and actions of their higher officials. There seems to be no room for transparencies where the Central authority could be seen as being impartial and just in the eyes of the contending groups or ethnicities. Ethnic suspicions or distrust amongst themselves were thus heightened by the seeming behaviour and actions of the Central Government. This moral universe which is being tensely watched by the ethnoses in NE-India does not seem to impact on the national political parties vying for power in the five yearly exercise of electoral politics. The rivalries between the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party, and their opposing views and attitudes over the peripheral others of the Northeast does not portend any kind of democratic justice over conflictual issues in the Northeast. For the North-easterners view themselves as equals in their relationship with the Centre, and a slight tilt in favour of one ethnoses against other ethnoses is regarded as sheer favouritism. The NDA government is mistrusted as being nearer to the Nagas than to the others in the Northeast.

Asian Youth Championship: Manipur's Naorem Chanu & Sanamacha Chanu, Rohtak's Vinka & Sushma, and Hisar's Poonam win gold

IT News
New Delhi, Nov 18

Indian boxers clinched five gold medals to finish their campaign on a high with a rich haul of 12 medals at the ASBC Asian Youth Men and Women Boxing Championships in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on Sunday. The final day turned out to be flawless for the women pugilists, who won all five gold on offer while the men had to be content with a couple of silver medals.

Babyrojisa Naorem Chanu (51kg) and Sanamacha Chanu Thokchom (75kg), both hailing from Manipur, finished on the top podium along with Rohtak's Vinka (64kg) and Sushma (81kg), apart from Hisar's Poonam (54kg). Among the men, Selay Soy (49kg) and Ankit Narwal (60kg) settled for silver. The Manipur girls, both of whom train at MC Mary Kom's academy, did not put a foot wrong and swatted away their opponents with a good combination of pace and

power-packed punches. While Naorem Chanu blanked Anel Sakysh of Kazakhstan 5-0, Sanamacha Chanu beat Uzbekistan's Navbakhor Khamidova by the same scoreline. Sushma put up an equally impressive show to secure a 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Arilym Bakytzhankyzy. Vinka outpunched China's Haini Mulaatiali 4-1 to take home the gold while Poonam endured some early resistance from China's Weiqi Cai but rebounded

to win 4-1. Among the men, Selay Soy went down to Kazakhstan's Bazarbay Ullu Mukhammedsabay 1-4 and Ankit Narwal was dealt a 5-0 blow by Japan's Reito Tsutsumi. Earlier, Indian boxers had added five bronze medals to their tally. From the women boxers, Arundhati Choudhary (69kg), Komalpreet Kaur (+81kg), Jaisime (57kg) bagged bronze while Satender Singh (91kg) and Aman (+91kg) won the bronze from the men.