

Editorial

Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Traffic Challans and other challenges

The recent increase in the drive to impose traffic rules across the country has garnered reactions ranging from the positive to ones which are downright derogatory and mostly funny. Various social media sites have come out with pictures and video clips portraying the irony of such stringent rules, for the simple fact that what the authorities are imposing on the public are being violated by the law enforcers themselves in most cases. A lot of airtime has been generated in discussions regarding the same, and if the government have paid heed to the general opinion across the country, then it should agree and initiate a plan of action in accordance with the need of the public to get access to better roads and more systematic traffic arrangements.

There also remains the ironic fact that while the government insists its citizens to wear ISI marked helmets only, sub-standard helmets still outsell ISI marked ones by a big margin. The only obvious solution should be to put a blanket ban on the production of any sub-standard riding helmets in the country, but by the looks of it, the thought have not even crossed the collective minds of the authorities yet. And what is the government doing to decrease the logjam of applicants for driving licenses across the country?

While the enforcements of wearing ISI marked helmets and prevention of triple-riding or even multiple-riding in various cases are positive measures to promote road safety and prevent unwanted accidents, the authorities should also take up other equally important steps to ensure that the public are provided with the best safety practices and facilities on the road. One such step could be to put up a system where the defaulters are provided with services to procure helmets or licenses as the case may be after obtaining the required fines from them according to the nature of violations. Another aspect the government need to look into is the parking issue that is becoming increasingly worse with each passing day, and as experts have expressed earlier, the few narrow roads in and around Imphal city that are causing a bottleneck to the smooth flow of traffic needs to be addressed at the earliest. Controlling and regulating public transport is of vital importance if any semblance of order is to be restored on the roads and traffic rules are maintained. The best solution to this particular challenge would be to revive the almost non-existent government public transport so that at least there is a fillip in the unorganised public transport sector which is making road safety a real concern this very moment. A visible lack of traffic personnel at busy junctions and intersections during peak traffic hours is also a point to be noted and work on for the state authorities.

If the government both at the national and state level is serious about improving traffic awareness and public safety, there is a need for coordinated system to be put into place and implemented properly. The onus of ensuring traffic safety and observance of rules should not be left only to the public, and issuing of Challans and fines for violations, while being great deterrent to law-breakers, should not be viewed as the solution to every traffic problem in the country and the state. There still are a great deal of obligations that the government should fulfil towards the public if any positive and visible result is to be achieved from all the efforts being undertaken at present to ensure better traffic control and compliance of rules and regulations by the public. Traffic related challenges are real and ever present concern. The faster the central and state government draws up a systematic, integrated and sustainable plan of action and implement the same in right earnest putting the welfare and safety of the public first, the better off everyone will be.

Name changed

I, the undersigned, Irengbam Monisha Devi, wife of Sorokhaibam Brezhnev Singh, a resident of Pangei Khundrakpam do hereby declare that I have abandoned, relinquished and renounced the use of my old name Irengbam Monisha as I have assumed by new name Irengbam Monisha Devi.

Sd/-

Irengbam Monisha Devi
W/o Sorokhaibam Brezhnev Singh,
Pangei Khundrakpam

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VIP Culture in India

By:Sanjenbam Jugeshwor Singh

India's VIP culture forget Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy-"Government of the People, by the People, for the People". What is telling about the directive is the VIP mentality that has become part of the DNA of India's ruling elite. Contrary to the famous definition of Lincoln's democracy, India has a government of VIPs, by VIPs and for VIPs. They do what they can, the people suffer what they must. In the heyday of European empires, colonial masters ruled imperiously over conquered subjects. During the British raj, class system fused seamlessly with India's caste system to entrench social divisions even more rigidly. A simple google search of 15th August 1947 would show clippings of newspapers with headlines such as "British of India's Freedom" "Nation Wakes to New Life" etc. There is no doubt that it was a historic day for this country but, was it true freedom? After independence, India proudly declared itself a "Sovereign, Democratic, Republic" and added the word "Socialist" in the Constitution. The central tenet of the four words taken together - "Sovereign Democratic, Socialist, Republic" is the sovereignty of the people; Politicians and officials are their servants. But as in other self-described socialist and communist paradises India's ruling elite captured all the privileges while the disempowered populace was saddled with poverty, scarcity and general misery.

The more that the quality of public services (health, education, and infrastructures) decayed and institutions were degraded and corrupted, the greater was the distance between the lifestyle of the closed circle of the elite and ordinary citizens. Inevitably this morphed into the VIP culture that

Indians by and large detest with depth of contempt, anger and resentment that is difficult for foreigners to fathom. We are told that invaders ransacked the country, exploited the natives, and discriminated against the people on the basis of color and inflicted many atrocities on innocent people. But aren't the majority of people being exploited even today? It was easy to identify Britishers as they were outsiders and remained outsiders. But how do we identify our own people who are working against us? Are they even our "own" people? Do they see us as fellow citizens or just a number to be exploited? When some of them sit in the Parliament/state Assemblies, do they understand the responsibility of their position or are they just interested in abusing power? Aren't they violating the fundamental Right to Equality by getting excessive preferential treatment as VIPs? Aren't Executive & Bureaucrat officers paid by the taxes collected from us?

I get so amazed when I see people fighting and abusing each other or even strangers, just because they have a different opinion. But I wonder how is it that they fail to see that it hardly matters which part is in power because it is the public which bears the brunt of policies geared to suit certain vested interests. When people are fed up of one Government because of corruption, they vote for another party. But what they fail to realize is that if policies are geared to exploit the general public and poor people that could also be termed corruption. But just because it is passed as law, it is tacitly deemed acceptable. For instance, there are practices in the Indian parliament even today which

are discriminatory and despite the issue being raised by multiple channels, nothing is being done to stop it. In all the Airports of India there are separate VIP entrance gate for so called VIPs but for everyone else there is a small narrow gate where they are frisked roughly and everything they bring is put under scanner. There is nothing wrong in putting security measures in place but why is it selective and why aren't these so called VIPs frisked? Is it possible that those who discriminate and take advantage of the VIP culture think of their country before themselves? How is it possible? I am shocked that instead of asking the right questions, people follow such leaders blindly and fail to see that it is the rotten system that has held back the country. How would the society find solutions to its problems unless it refuses to identify them in the first place? I understand that it is not only politicians and government officials who are answerable but also the general public as there is a huge chunk of population which does not think about the country at all. When one witnesses someone spitting on the road, taking bribes, abusing others or showing lack of respect, it is so evident that this is the excuse that people in power use to continue the status quo by saying that these people can force and not by a civilized administration. Ultimately, we need to ask one question. Is this kind of society we want or do we actually want to develop? Till when will we go on ignoring things? This is India, that's how it happens here, nothing can happen, nothing will change! Till when will we keep on saying this? Aren't Indians humans? Isn't it our responsibility to contribute to the growth of the

country? Is it too much to ask to behave respectfully and follow traffic rules, not litter, urinate or spit on the roads? Is it too much to think for yourself and not follow people blindly? When will we focus on things that matter? When will we learn to speak up and speak the truth? When will we realize that democracy means responsibility and not abusing the freedom we get? The day we become aware and responsible, may be then we will realize that VIP culture needs to go and it should start from the top.

There is something demeaning about the idea of VIPs, something inherently undemocratic. It militates against the idea of equality for the simple reason that it makes some citizens inferior to others. When red beacons and police protection become status differentiators and they come at the cost of the dignity of the ordinary citizen, there's reason enough to challenge the idea and trip it apart. There can be no argument that some people deserve special treatment. However, it's conveniently forgotten that the treatment is reserved only for the special offices they hold, not for the individuals per se. In India, just about everybody, who's anybody is protected. The list is impressive indeed: Politicians, Ministers, bureaucrats, judges, spiritual leaders, criminals and even the kin of the leaders. Let me point out that the problem has become an endemic and a part of our political culture. Let's stop CHORON THERAPY to those who knelt down and touched our feet at the time of election as PM Modi said in his Mann Ki Baat about new India that we should nurture EPI (Every Person is Important) not VIPs.

(The writer can be reached to: sjugheshwor7@gmail.com)

Landslide disaster: Are Mitigation measures effective in context with North Eastern India!!!

By- Herojit Nongmaithem
Sr. Geologist, GSI, Imphal Office

Landslide has been a major disaster commonly faced by the north eastern states including our state Manipur since time immemorial. The earliest recorded disastrous landslide in the NER region was on 19th August, 1950 (killing > 500 lives) which was the aftershock effect of the Great Assam earthquake (-8.6 M_w) that was recorded on 15th August, 1950. Since then innumerable landslides have been occurring claiming lives, domesticated animals, building/structure collapses, blockage of highways, roads, damage to the natural slopes which ultimately hampers the socio-economic development in the region. In spite of the government's attempt to mitigate or so to say reduce the effect of this natural disaster, the landslide still happens to be periodic havoc till date. News of frequent disturbances, blockage of national highways, even human and livestock deaths are prime time in most of the news channels, print media, etc. during monsoon season. It is estimated that economic loss due to landslides may reach between 1-2% of the gross national product in many developing countries. Evaluating and mitigating the landslide hazard and risk is a major challenge for the technocrats and decision makers in the developing world as 80% of the reported fatalities due to landslide is within the developing countries. In India, about 0.42 million sq. km or 12.6% of land area, excluding the snow covered area, is prone to landslide hazard. Out of this, 0.18 million sq. km falls in North East Himalaya, including Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya; 0.14 million sq. km falls in North West Himalaya (Uttarakhand,

Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir); 0.09 million sq. km in Western Ghats and Konkan hills (TamilNadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra) and 0.01 million sq. km in Eastern Ghats of Aruku area in Andhra Pradesh. The landslide-prone Himalayan terrain falls in the maximum earthquake-prone zones (Zone-IV and V) where earthquakes of Modified Mercalli intensity VIII to IX can occur, and thus, are also prone to earthquake-triggered landslides. The most recent example is the aftermath of 18 September 2011 Sikkim Earthquake in the Sikkim-Darjeeling Himalayas.

When viewed scientifically a number of technical causes for landslides come up. The end number of scientific causes may be classed into geological factors, morpho-physiological factors, and factors related with anthropogenic activity. The geological factors may be elaborated into materials affected by geological structures-discontinuities, joints, fissures; weathering effects, rainfall-snowfall impacts; earthquakes; mechanical (engineering) properties of materials-permeability contrast, material contrast. The morpho-physiological causes include slope angle, different erosional processes, slope loading, vegetation changes, hydrological condition, etc. The anthropogenic activity will contagiously include all possible changes in the environment that directly or indirectly affect the slope. Construction projects roads-buildings-tunnels, Quarrying-

mining-blasting; deforestation are few to be listed that directly affect the slope.

Remedial methods may be like, strengthening the material, geometrical modification to slope, support system- breast wall, retaining wall, drainage control. Though the causes are manifold, for each and every cause, perfect or accurate scientific solutions are available nowadays. But these solutions are a vague to consider the economic input that is required. This can be elaborated by an example to remedial a landslide that subsided a bamboo hut located on the edge of Imphal-Moreh road at Tengoupal by geo technical solution say- excavating the overburden slope, drainage to divert excess water, it may sometime be economically cheap to allocate a new plot to construct a new hut with full compensation.

Critical reason for landslide management comes up as landslide is often caused by a combination of a number of causes. Hence prioritization of each causes need to be assessed. This part is to be dealt by specific agencies that have enough human and technological strength. But it cannot cover all the parts of the hilly parts of the state or even the length of the important national and state highways at a go. That is why we still are not able to cope up the wrath of the landslides. State disaster department when dealing with the landslides at Noneh-Kotlen to protect the National Highway, people are dying in Tamenglong district due to landslide. The point is that the government can't provide all out

technical measures to solve the landslide issue in every nook and corner of the state.

As rainfall is unmanageable or to rectify the faulty geological parameters by geo engineering projects are costly, it may seem that there is no possible cure for this problem. But as the saying goes, something is better than nothing, we should now react ourselves to that something good instead of the present nothing mode. When unity can defeat any sort of obstacle, there is nothing impossible. Only we need to act as an organised mechanism against this natural disaster. An effective mode of awareness to the persons utilizing the slopes by the state government is inevitable going parallel with the scientific hunt to prevent landslides. The ground level persons, viz. the people who are constructing houses on the hill slopes are should be educated about the simple use of safety measures while utilizing the slopes. Brief brochures, publicity on the first hand information of landslide needs to be propagated. Or simply the local or the district administration can devise to develop early warning system during peak rainy seasons (Darjeeling and East Sikkim districts have already devised an early warning system for landslides). Such measures are very cost effective comparing with those huge scientific researches where funding is involved. No doubt, faithful scientific researches for landslide susceptibility for huge and specific developmental projects like National Sports University, National Highway Projects, Railway tracts and tunnels should compulsorily be done by the authority.