

Editorial

Thursday, September 26, 2019

Drought and the drainage issues

It was hardly a month ago that Manipur was declared a drought-hit state when the heavens opened up in fits and starts. While farmers heaved a sigh of relief for what it is all worth, the roads and lanes across the valley welled up with the briefest of spell with some stretches of roads going under knee-deep water. Clearly, the inability of so called town planners and 'certified' authorities to learn and adapt from the system of 'khongbal/n' or traditional drainage system which has served the valley for so long and with clinical efficiency perfected over the years has been laid bare, yet once again. Perhaps the lure of personal benefits in the process of doling out contracts has blinded these authorities to the importance and necessity of maintaining a systematic and effective drainage system. But no one can escape the consequences of such oversight, especially with a few minutes of rain bringing out the murky wastewater into the roads and breaking up the roads in the aftermath, not to mention the dangers of breeding mosquitoes and other water-borne diseases which pose a threat to everybody.

While the present government might, in all fairness and possibility, put the blame on the inefficiency of the previous party in power, the focus now should be on rectifying such mistakes or blunders and not indulge in blame-games any longer. Another trait that the present government can do without is the constant comparisons being made to highlight its 'achievements' vis-a-vis the previous government. The public need not be reminded repeatedly as to why the previous party in power was almost voted out - almost - because despite losing the scramble for power, it still remains the party with a majority win and the present government should do well to remind itself of this uncomfortable fact. And while the issue of drainage or rather the lack of one in the valley might be labeled a non-issue considering the myriad other problems and challenges starting the present government in the face despite its labored attempt to present otherwise, the dream of a smart city cannot be fulfilled without a proper and well-planned drainage system supported by a systematic and efficient waste disposal mechanism which is sorely absent at present.

An effective means towards achieving a well-planned drainage or sewage system could be to evaluate and carry out a comprehensive survey to understand and form a base for drawing up a sustainable plan of action taking into account the topography of the land. The present way of constructing drainage without following the natural contour or slopes should be stopped immediately and concern authorities should ensure proper guidelines and norms are followed by the contractors and workers while taking up such works. While it must be said that the present government is actively carrying out development activities and trying to improve the public infrastructure, there is still a few areas of concern especially with regards to the method of implementation, and if a stricter means of control can be placed in this regard then the positive outcome will definitely be visibly different.

Everyting new should not be considered good or better, and tradition should be respected especially with regards to social mores and conventions, as adapting to these age old customs can solve a lot many modern day challenges. It is these small details that will ultimately determine the success or otherwise of grand dreams. A smart city inundated with dank and stinky sewage isn't a pleasant prospect after all.

KTT Media Fellowship

The last date for submission of application for **Khelen Thokchom Media Fellowship (KTMF) 2019-20** has been extended till September 28, 2019 (Saturday) due to unavoidable circumstances, a statement by the Trust said.

It said that the Khelen Thokchom Trust (KTT) is inviting eligible journalist(s) from both in hill and valley of Manipur to apply for a 6 (six) month KTM program 2019-20 for journalists to study, highlight and report on "Manipur's Dying Water Resources".

To apply for Khelen Thokchom Media Fellowship (KTMF), applicant should submit Bio-data, a letter of support from the editor that the output under the fellowship will be published (mandatory for all candidates), a minimum of one sample of 'published report' on environment and water issues if any should be submitted to Coordinator, KTMF C/o Pureiromba Enterprises, Konung Mamang (Palace Gate) near Pureiromba Khongnang, Imphal East District - 795 005 (Daily office timing 10am - 5pm except Sunday) before September 28, 2019.

For details call 841594568

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ST status demand for Meiteis widening rift in Manipur

The issue is sparking fire in the already fractured relationship between the valley (dominated by the community) and the hills (Naga, Kuki and other tribes)

By : Richard Kamei

Manipur is currently experiencing demands for inclusion of Meitei in Scheduled Tribes (ST) list, led by the **Scheduled Tribe Demand Committee Manipur (SDTM)**. A mass rally was organised at state capital Imphal on March 3 this year with an objective to pressure the state government to reach out to the Centre over the matter. Keeping in mind the general elections around that time, the protest was put on hold.

The month of September witnessed some forms of protest and demands again, and support from civil societies including **Democratic Students Alliance of Manipur (DESAM)** to strengthen the momentum of the protest. On the other hand, organisations like **People's Action for National Democratic Movement (PANDM)** and **Indigenous People's Association of Kangleipak (IPAK)** expressed that the impending Naga Framework Agreement inching towards its solution, and the possibility for granting ST status to Meitei cannot be seen in isolation.

They observed this to be more of a strategy in pacifying the people. In response to the ST status demand, the **All Tribal Rights' Protection Forum, Manipur (ATRPFM)** issued a statement on September 11 that the Meitei community is known to be the most advanced community in the Northeast region in terms of their socio-, economic and ethnic status. In presenting the situation of tribals in relation to the Meiteis, they wrote that "when we see the percentage of representations in public employment of all departments, representation of Meiteis is already high". It added that there is already a reservation of 10% for economically backward upper caste if job opportunity is one of the concerns for ST status demand.

The recent ST status demand for the Meiteis came about with the STDM memorandum addressed to the then Governor Gurbacharan Jagat on November 30, 2012. The ST status demand sparked fire into the already fractured relationship between the valley (dominated majorly by Meitei community) and hills (Naga, Kuki and other tribes). The valley witnesses an opposition from Meitei community itself but over the period the chorus is growing stronger for ST status demand.

The primacy around this demand points towards the depletion of resources, vulnerability of culture and traditional practices, and the rise of unemployment and individualisation. Then, with the presence of outsiders, the sense of insecurity in reference to Tripura sits largely on the minds of people, and the ethnic politics prevailing in the state. These factors framed the Meitei ST status demand, and through this they feel that lands can be protected and also elevate their socio-economic status through reservation available to scheduled tribes. In similar measure, the Inner Line Permit (ILP) movement, which took place in Manipur's valley few years ago, captured the mood of people from the fear, anxiety and insecurity surrounding the present and future socio-economic and cultural landscapes.

Meitei, in relation to neighbouring communities and its history from this past, remains a dominant community. This can also be inferred from the way how the Manipur and the hills (of present Manipur) came to be administered (separately) from 1891 till 1947. The tribes and their lands which were never a part of Manipur from before found themselves directly under the Manipur state after its annexation to India in 1949. In fact, in the year 1948, the Naga people waged a protest at Mao Gate

in their opposition to include their lands into Manipur state but the demand was denied and included into Manipur.

Three people were killed and 14 people were injured in the protest. Mention can also be made of the distinction of the hills from the valley of Manipur in terms of culture, tradition, customs and religious practices, keeping this in mind their lands and customary laws, and interests were protected under the provisions of Article 371 C and Autonomous District Councils (ADC). The tribal people, however, feel that these provisions are far from fulfilling its objectives. After Manipur became a part of India from 1949, the unequal relationship between the valley and hills became more pronounced under the arrangement of the nation-state. Meitei community is accrued with various means to continue their stronghold in political representation; yielding fruits of development; access to education, health, employment opportunities etc. These features accorded them a stronger unequal relationship with the tribes in the hills.

On the other side, the lands which have been protected in the hills suffer from the gaze of the MLR and LR Act from its attempts to dilute communitarian value attached to tribal lands. The tribes have been demanding since 1978 to put ADC under the Sixth Schedule Provisions. The tribes feel that the existing provisions do not protect and empower their interests and aspirations. The demand for Sixth Schedule stands till today.

The conditions in the valley in regards to its interface with the hills indicate that the design of the state is skewed in a sense that it privileges and empowers one community over neighbouring communities from the hills. This

complicates the existing unequal relationship between the valley and hills from the past. It is largely on this ground that the communities in the valley find themselves in a better situation in terms of socio-economic well-being and in having a larger share in political representation in the state assembly; 40 seats for the valley, and 20 for the hills.

It is on this ground that the Meitei community must give a thought and reflect upon how the demand for ST overlaps or infringes into the interests and rights of tribal people. One can ponder as to how a historically dominant community without bridging the gap between the hills and valley, can take recourse to ST status demands. This at the moment looks more like it shall take away the minimal protective measures and provisions available to tribal people in the hills. It will rather empower the Meitei more at the cost of the tribal people in the hills.

The demand for inclusion of Meitei into ST list goes against the notion of affirmative actions provided under the Indian constitution for the scheduled tribes. These measures to uplift socio-economic status of scheduled tribes is a means to rectify and correct the historical injustices meted out to them, and protect their vulnerabilities from appropriation, exploitation and discrimination. Reservation is never the end in itself. This is where it becomes all the more important to engage and dialogue on issues which overlaps the interests, concerns, and rights of the tribes in Manipur. A move as such can pave way for trust and peaceful living.

(Richard Kamei is a PhD candidate at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He can be reached at tennunga@gmail.com. Views expressed are his own. The article was also published in Eastmojo)

Union MoS Ramdas Bandu Athawale chairs review meeting



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Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, Ramdas Bandu Athawale chaired review meeting in the presence of State Social Welfare Minister, Nemcha Kipgen at Old Secretariat Conference Hall on Wednesday.

During the review meeting, various agendas namely release of funds for the last five years under the welfare scheme of Special Component plan to Scheduled Caste Community in Manipur, release of scholarships for SC, Atrocities Act for SC/ST, inter caste marriage, residential school for SC, scheme for old age home and old age pension, schemes for empowerment of persons with

disabilities, manual scavengers and any other schemes for the welfare of SC/ST communities in Manipur were thoroughly presented and discussed.

Briefing the media persons, Ramdas Athawale assured that he will take forward all the agendas discussed to the Ministry and will transform into action at the earliest. Minister Nemcha lauded the Union MoS for his interest towards the people of Manipur specially the weaker sections and persons with disabilities and hoped that the agendas discussed and the issues raised will surely be channeled into action by the Ministry. The review meeting was also attended by the concern officers and officials of the respective departments.

Assam Rifles conducts State Level Archery Championship

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The 6th edition of the State Level Archery Championship organised by Keithelmanbi Battalion of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) concluded yesterday at Keithelmanbi garrison. The event was organised to promote and encourage archery in Manipur. A total of 115 archers (82 male and 33 female) from 16 archery clubs from across Manipur participated in the competition which was held in three different categories namely Indian, Recurve and Compound rounds. Col Siddharth Chandra Officiating Commander, 9 Sector Assam Rifles was the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony held yesterday. The special guests for the event were Mangisana Sharma and GA Eboishak Sharma, Vice President and Secretary of Manipur Archery Association, respectively. The Manipur Archery Association appreciated the initiatives of the Assam Rifles especially in the sporting arena and advised the archers of the State to work harder so that they can bring laurel to the State and the Nation as well.

Medals were awarded to the winners of the competition by the Chief Guest and the special guests of the event. In the Individual Recurve (Men) AK Amarjit clinched Gold medal, while M Malemnganba got Silver medal and N Parithoi got Bronze medal. In the women Recurve event L Seema clinched Gold medal while Jenifer P got Silver

medal and Lumilla PH got Bronze medal. In the Individual Compound (Men) S Ramakhalan lifted Gold medal, while M Bikram got Silver medal and N Malemnganba got Bronze medal. In the women Compound Sh Manorama clinched Gold medal, LDulina got Silver medal and T Suchitra got Bronze medal. In Indian Round (Boys) L Milon clinched Gold medal, M Bikash got Silver medal and S Robert got Bronze medal. In the women category M Baby clinched Gold medal, Abesana Iron got Silver medal and L Sophia got Bronze medal. In addition to the medals the winners were also awarded certificates and cash award. Consolation prizes were also distributed to all the participants during the event.

LFS has no PTA as it was abolished in 2015

IT News Imphal, Sept. 26

Parents Teachers' Association of the Little Flower School has been abolished in the year 2015 and as of now the Little Flower School does not have any recognise Parents Teachers Association, school authority of Little Flower School said. As for the Catholic run school there is still a Parents Teachers' Association for the major Catholic Schools in valley area of Imphal, the authority added.