

Editorial

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Victims of greed

It would be wrong to blame the merger of this erstwhile Asiatic nation to the Indian Union in October 1949, for all the wrong that is experiencing in the state even as history stands true that the erstwhile Asiatic nation called Manipur has been merged illegally. There are arguments to support the reason for calling the merger of the Manipur to the Indian Union as 'unconstitutional' and 'unacceptable', but in this column it is about the multiple problems that have been haunting this erstwhile nation from time to time hampering all sort of developmental works.

This erstwhile nation had struggled at the cost of their life protecting their identity, land and culture before the region merged to the Indian Union and after merger with the Indian there is no dearth for problems and obstacles to hamper the progress of this erstwhile nation. From the series of problems witnessed in the region from time to time, it is no wrong to say that there are always external forces which always wanted to swipe away the Manipuri people from the globe either by spewing venom among the people to create enmity or to colonize the region. However, the courage of the Manipuri people and their love for their motherland always defeated any external intrusion to sabotage us.

Leaving aside others, two such problems that are endangering the people and its existence is the unseen drug war against the people and the political instability.

Well, every Manipuri know how drugs invaded the Manipuri society during the last two decade. In early 80s and 90s youths of those days were all affected endangering the future of the state.

It is the political will of those running the state that had fought the invasion of drug during 80s and 90s. The spread of HIV among the youth s of Manipur was somehow rescue.

But the drug war continues to haunt the state.

Thanks to the N. Biren Singh led government who had launched the war against drug. It was following the initiative and the kind of support to the law enforcers that multi crore worth drugs including heroine factory were destroyed and seized at many places of the state. Poppy plantations have been destroyed at many places and thus people are hopeful that the future of the state is at least at safe hand.

However, a deeper look to the state of drug use among the youth will surely revealed that drug use and that too injecting drug users are on the rise. People don't see them as this community (drug users) has now become very very hard to reach people. Due to fear of the society and the mob justice the users' community has goon underground. But the fact is that the users' community today is on the rise. A visit to some site like Public toilet or empty building will make one know that users in the state are on the rise.

The clandestine trade in these addictive drugs is booming in spite of "strict warnings" that such drugs should be sold only against the prescription of registered medical 'practitioners'. In fact, pharmaceutical shops never had it so good. These pills which normally cost not more than forty paise each are now sold at more than 150 percent mark-up. Still the demand is outstripping supply. When business is so hot, principles and terms of sales naturally become casualties. This has been proved recently with the seizure of huge quantity of drugs.

Apart from the urgency of checking this iniquitous practice, the whole sordid affair becomes all the more regrettable as the owner of the erring firm is a doctor himself.

Well, the question in front of us is why the problem of drugs among others, which is haunting the state is going out of hand. Well the political chaos and the shaky chair of the Chief Minister due to rebellion by dissident MLAs from the ruling party seem to tight the hand of the government from taking up any measures to prevent the drug use among the younger communities.

We call on the representative of the people to stop fighting for power and concentrate to the issues of the society.



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Women's empowerment is the process in which women elaborate and recreate what it is that they can be, do and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and allowing people(Women) who are on the outside of the decision-making process into it. This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and in the economic sphere on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society and in their communities. People (women) are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions such as in education, profession and lifestyle. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy and training. Women's empowerment is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society. Alternatively it is the process for women to redefine gender roles that allows for them to acquire the ability to choose between known alternatives whom have otherwise been restricted from such an ability. There are several principles defining women's empowerment such as for one to be empowered, they must come from a position of disempowerment. Furthermore, one must acquire empowerment themselves rather than have it given to them by an external party. Empowerment and disempowerment is relative to other at a previous time; therefore empowerment is a process not product. Women empowerment has become significant in development and economics. It can also point to

the approaches regarding other trivialized genders in particular political or social context. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and wellbeing.

Entire nations, business, communities and groups can benefit from implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment. Empowerment of women is a necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and quantity of human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. Women empowerment and achieving gender equity is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many World leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development and without women's empowerment, women wouldn't feel equally important to the process of development as men. It is widely believed that the full participation of both men and women is critical for development. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development. In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development. Without the equal inclusion of women in development, women would not be able to benefit or contribute to the development of the country.

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity lie ingrained in cultural norms. Many women feel these pressure, while others have become accustomed to being treated inferior to men. Even legislatures, NGOs etc. are aware of the benefits of women's empowerment and participation

however many are scared of disrupting the status of the women and continue to let societal norms get in the way of development. Research shows that the increasing access to the internet can also result in an increased exploitation of women. Releasing personal information on websites has put some women's personal safety at risk. In 2010, Working to Halt Online Abuse stated that 73% of women were victimized through such sites. Types of victimization include cyber stalking, harassment, online pornography and flaming. Sexual harassment in particular is a large barrier for women in the workplace. It appears in almost all Industries but is most notable in business, trade, banking and finance, sales and marketing, hospitality, civil services and education, lecturing and teaching. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), sexual harassment is a clear form of gender discrimination based on sex, a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women. Furthermore, in UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is urging for increased measure of protection for women against sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. 54% had experienced some form of workplace sexual harassment. 79% of the victims are women; 21% were men. Recent studies also show that women face more barriers in the workplace than men do. Gender-related barriers involve sexual harassment, unfair hiring practices, career progression and unequal pay when women are paid less than men are for the performing the same job. When taking median earnings of men and women who worked full-time, year-round, government data from 2014 showed that women made 0.79 US dollar for every dollar a man earned. The average earnings for working mothers came out to even less than 0.71 dollar a father made, according to a 2014 study conducted by National Partnership for Women and Children. While much of the public discussion of the wage gap has focused around women getting equal pay for the same work as their male peers, many women struggle with what is called the "pregnancy Penalty". The main problem is that it is difficult to measure but some experts say that the possibility of having a baby can be enough for employers to push women back from their line. Therefore women put

in a position where they need to make the decision of whether to maintain in the workforce or have children. This problem has sparked the debate over maternity leave in the United States and many other countries in the world. Such barrier make it difficult for women to advance in their workplace for the work they provide.

As a part of women empowerment initiatives, The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament of India in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels. However, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies plans, programs and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India on the other. Gender disparity manifest itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structures which is based on informal and formal norms and practices. Consequently the access of women particularly those belonging to weaker sections including Scheduled Cast/Scheduled Tribes/other backward classes and minorities, majority of whom are in the rural areas and in the informal-unorganized sectors-to education, health and productive resources, among other is inadequate, therefore, they remain largely marginalized poor and socially excluded. Girls/women who are vulnerable and marginalized and in difficult circumstances are those impacted by violence, impacted by internal displacement, disasters and migration, domestic/bonded labor, destitute women who are homeless affected by HIV/AIDS, slum dwellers and women belonging to Ethnic & socially vulnerable communities. Taking all these facts in to account, the slogan of Women's Empowerment is still continues to be the lip service of our Netas and how long it will continue is the question that many asked.

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Women's Empowerment & Hurdles to it

For foreign journalists, government cites visa rule to restrict access to Assam and J&K

Source Scrolin

On September 4, local newspapers in Assam reported that government officials had asked foreign journalists to leave Assam. The state had been declared a protected area, the *Assam Tribune* said, which mean foreign journalists reporting from there would have to get permission from the ministry of external affairs, subject to clearance from the ministry of home affairs.

The Associated Press said that an "AP journalist on assignment in Assam left voluntarily after learning the visit required prior government permission". But the *Assam Tribune* reported that the Associated Press journalist had been escorted to the airport by the Assam Police put on the next flight to Delhi.

Assam, which recently updated its National Register of Citizens, leaving 19 lakh people out of the list and facing statelessness, has been in the international news. On September 1, a day after the new NRC was published, ministry of external affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar responded to critical pieces in the international press saying: "There have been some commentaries in the sections of the foreign media about aspects of final NRC which are incorrect."

On September 4, the spokesperson for the ministry of home affairs issued a statement on social media calling the *Assam Tribune*'s story "misleading and incorrect". Neither the home ministry, nor the external affairs ministry "has given any information as mentioned", the statement said.

"Any foreign journalist, whether already based in India or not, can visit Assam after taking permission of MEA," the spokesperson went on to say. "MHA is consulted internally by MFA before issuing this permission. There is no PAP [protected area permit] or RAP [restricted area permit] area in the state of Assam. Thus no PAP or RAP is needed by a foreign journalist."

But foreign journalists based in India said that, until now, they had been allowed to report from Assam without any sort of permission from the ministry of external affairs and were not aware that it was needed.

A new missive

All foreign nationals, tourists as well as journalists, require government permits to enter "protected areas" or "restricted areas". The list of regions which fall under this permit regime is available online. They include all of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim as well as parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Assam does not feature on the list.

One foreign journalist told *Scroll.in* that when the ministry of external affairs was contacted on September 4 about the reported restrictions in Assam, it forwarded a different set of rules.

These were part of the ministry of home affairs' journalist visa rules and placed more sweeping restrictions on access. They delineated a "Procedure for grant of permission to Restricted and Protected Areas, Jammu & Kashmir and the North Eastern States on Journalist Visa". Under these rules, foreign journalists based in India have to apply for a special permit from the external publicity division of the ministry of external affairs, not just for the restricted and protected areas in the Northeast, but for the entire region, including Assam.

If such requests were made to the state government or any other authority that can issue special permits, the application would be referred to the external publicity

division of the ministry of external affairs. The ministry of home affairs would also receive a copy. Foreign journalists on short-term visits who wanted to visit these areas would have to apply for permits from Indian missions abroad.

It is not clear when this procedure was introduced – few journalists were aware of it earlier. One journalist had reported from Assam recently as July without having to go through the process of permits.

How permits have worked so far

Last year, foreign journalists got a letter from the external publicity and public diplomacy department of the ministry of external affairs. "It has come to the notice of the Ministry of External Affairs that some foreign journalists based in India, while discharging their journalistic activities or for tourism purposes, have travelled to places which come under restricted/protected areas that require prior permission/ special permit," said the letter, dated May 22, 2018.

Travel to these areas without permission could cause "unnecessary access related issues resulting in inconvenience to the journalist," the letter continued.

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