

Editorial

Monday, February 24, 2020

The dilemma in parliamentary reporting

Budget Session of the 11th Manipur Legislative Assembly began from February 14, 2020, with the Governor of Manipur Dr. Najma Heptulla addressing the house. First time in the history of Manipur Legislative Assembly, except one opposition MLA no other opposition MLAs including the opposition leader skipped a photo session officially taken on the first day of the Assembly session. The reason for not attending the official photo session with the governor of the State has not been announced, however, the way that all opposition MLAs abstained from the photo session rise eyebrow to too many political analysts.

The greatest challenges of amateur journalists while reporting the assembly proceeding particularly during sessions. Senior colleagues often advised being cautious while reporting Assembly session proceeding as there is possibility of unwanted consequences that may occur during the course of filing stories about the proceedings.

Usage of terminology has been a major concern for journalists doing parliamentary reporting. A minor mistake on the terminology often amounts to a mockery of the legislators besides degrading the credibility of the media organization. It is not just the usage of terminology but it is also about maintaining the integrity of being a journalist which was often hampered due to the privilege of the house.

A senior Journalist of the state was once summoned to apology before the house for alleged mockery of the house reflected at one of his write up.

Sometimes if a member of the house was found sleeping when another member was moving motion or answering to questions. Sometimes a member walks out of the house when the house was discussing serious issues. Sometimes a mere breach of protocol by a member becomes a joke or sometimes a mobile phone ringing might disturb the proceeding of the house. These are stories that will draw the attention of the audiences. Sometimes, slang and unparliamentary words from a member of the house during the session but went unrecorded as per the ruling of the Speaker can be reported or not. Any write up criticizing an event that comes under the jurisdiction of Assembly Secretariat during the session or any damage done during the period could be called upon for contempt.

The question arises out here is - Are we journalists being denied the right to freedom of reporting? Are our rights limited only to a certain area?

Certainly, there are certain limitations to parliamentary reporting. But what are the limitations? The area of limitation at which a reporter need to strictly abide need to be published by the authority of the learned staffs of the state Legislative Assembly.

Is any critical and analytical reporting on the speech of the Governor of Manipur be produced in the newspaper. If in case there are proved of the inefficiency of the then assembly staff in proving information to the honorable members. But would not this amount to the breach of privilege of the house?

Now another question is the certain alleged misappropriation happening inside the Assembly secretariat. Journalists certainly want to put up the issue through their story but on assuming whether it amounts to a breach of privilege or not, one often roll back.

By: Tusem A. Shishak, Patkai Christian College

When the Chinese attacked NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh) in 1962, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Army fled, leaving the helpless citizens of NEFA to fend for themselves. But who cared as long as mainland India was intact? China could even have swept easily through Assam and chopped off the "chicken-neck" corridor connecting the whole North-Eastern Region from the Indian sub-continent. Nehru's government officials and the Army quickly came back only after the Chinese Army had unilaterally withdrawn. It was divine intervention, not New Delhi, that saved Arunachal and the North-East. Have we in the North-East Region forgotten that so soon?

Even after the British left India in 1947, the Indian Government has never treated the North-East as an integral part of the mainland; only in words. Any help coming from Delhi has been mere tokenism and politically motivated. Today, New Delhi sees limitless trade potential with South-East Asia via the North-East. The Central Government's infrastructure efforts to link the North-East to Myanmar and other ASEAN countries is primarily for the mainland's commercial interests, not because it loves North-Easterners and is concerned about their wellbeing. So take with a grain of salt when Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, and their colleagues claim that BJP government's top priority is development of the North-East. BJP government's main hidden agenda is to bring the whole of the eight North-Eastern States under its complete control through political manipulation and through Hindu population growth, even if not by force. The current BJP government in Delhi is the political wing of the Rashtriya Swamysavak Sangh (RSS), the most radical religious-social-cultural-nationalist Hindu group in India. The RSS was founded in 1925 but was outlawed by the British and was even occasionally banned by the Indian government after independence.

Naturam Godse, who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, was a member of the RSS. Senior RSS members had direct links to both Benito Mussolini in Italy and Adolf Hitler in Germany. M. S. Golwalkar advocated for an India dominated by Hindus. From its genesis, the RSS openly espoused militant Hindu activism and the suppression of minorities. The RSS's ultimate objective is to

make India a homogenous Hindu nation, one bound together exclusively by the Hindu religion and culture and the Hindi language. Current RSS chief Mohan Bhagwati is a major voice in the BJP's policy-making and policy implementation. Bhagwati often says: "Everyone born in India is a Hindu." Hence it is almost impossible to believe that the RSS-controlled BJP can truly love (in deeds) Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, Christians, and other minorities in India.

Since the current government assumed power at the center in 2016, intolerance and violence have increased greatly, particularly in BJP-ruled states. They are more tolerant and merciful to cows than to human beings, especially Muslims and Dalits. Since 2016 the BJP government's interference in private and public institutions has also increased greatly. They have tried to control educational institutions, law enforcement departments such as the Central Bureau of Investigation, and the judiciary. Dozens and dozens of academicians, scientists, professionals, artists, and others have written to Prime Minister Modi concerning the government's suppression of and interference with the press and freedom of speech.

Mind you, Modi is unlike his precursor as BJP Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. Vajpayee didn't permit the RSS to interfere in the affairs of the Government; he had the ability and determination to contain the RSS element within BJP. On the contrary, Mr. Modi's BJP government is essentially in thrall to the RSS led by Mohan Bhagwati. Modi's inability or unwillingness to control the Home Minister (and former BJP President) Amit Shah and other RSS Hindus is dragging the country down into fascism.

If the BJP government wants to promote and nourish democratic values, it must part with the RSS and its ilk for good. Or else India faces a bleak future, even to the point of disintegration. That is why even so many reasonable and learned Hindus led by former cabinet ministers under Atal Vajpayee's BJP government are up in arms against RSS's false projection of genuine Hinduism and its culture.

Here in the North-East we already see that in Tripura State, immigrants have become the absolute majority and control the government. The indigenous tribals (Tripuris and others) make up only about 31% of the total population; they are now aliens in their own native habitat. It is too late there. Meanwhile, the indigenous people of Assam known

as Axamiya, a cultural identity, who accept Assam as their homeland, are now terrified that they would also be reduced to a minority if the immigration of 'non-Indians' is not checked today.

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) launched in 1979 a six-year agitation culminating with the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985, clause 5 of which states: "Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall continue to be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners." To this day the Central Government has failed to implement most of the Accord, clause 5 being at its heart.

In the meantime there comes the latest monster, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), proposed by the BJP and enacted by Parliament in 2019. This law deceitfully promises to provide eligibility of Indian citizenship to religious minorities, namely Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from India's two immediate neighbors of Bangladesh and Pakistan as well as Afghanistan. Under the CAA, migrants of these minority communities from the three countries who had already entered India by December 31, 2014, are eligible to apply for Indian citizenship. In addition, the residence requirement for acquiring citizenship has been reduced from 11 years previously to only 5. Since the CAA was enacted in 2019, anyone who is against it is called unpatriotic, anti-national, terrorist, and even threatened with fatal violence or, in the case of women, rape.

Today's protesters in Assam correctly point out that the CAA is destroying the Assam Accord, clearly violating both Clause 5 and Clause 6 of the Accord: "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people." Assam will surely follow Tripura as the second North-Eastern State where indigenous citizens will be reduced to a minority unless they fight hard to resist now. All her North-Eastern neighbors should also fight alongside Assam.

Since becoming law, the CAA has triggered countrywide protests. The whole nation of India is in uproar saying CAA is anti-democracy and anti-Constitution. Citizens in all the North-Eastern states as well as Mainland India have publicly demonstrated their opposition to CAA. Already Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Puducherry Assemblies have passed resolutions against CAA; more are likely to follow suit. Why aren't the Christian majority States like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya leading other NE States in passing similar resolutions against CAA, when the Act's main target is the North-East. Even the European Parliament and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights have stated that CAA is 'discriminatory in nature and dangerously divisive'. 'While the CAA's stated goal of protecting persecuted groups is welcome, an effective national asylum and refugee policy should be just and holistic in nature and apply to all those in need.' Of course, there can be no blanket welcome to illegal immigrants, irrespective of religious background. Hindus or non-Hindus, immigrants and refugees should be accepted through an impartial legal process and based on the merits of their individual cases.

It isn't just the non-Hindus; even the overwhelming Hindu population is against CAA because the Act destroys the secular nature of the Indian Constitution — the mutually agreed-upon 'contract' that binds the modern Indian nation together, and the undoing of which would threaten to nullify that contract. CAA openly declares the Modi government's hatred toward Muslims in India and in neighboring countries by

intentionally excluding Muslims from the CAA. But can the Hindu majority in India really treat the more than 200 million Muslims who are citizens of India as aliens?

As a Christian, I am not even excited that Christians were included in CAA because it's just a cover-up. As in Nazi Germany, first they come for your neighbor, then they come for you. Who would really believe that the RSS-controlled BJP government is genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of Christians anywhere in India, let alone Christians in the North-East. Since when did the RSS and their associates begin loving and treating Dalits, Adivasis, and other minorities (scheduled tribes—STs, scheduled castes—SCs and other backward classes—OBCs) equally, let alone Indian Muslims?

It's time all the eight North-Eastern States treat CAA as an existential crisis and face it together head on without any compromise; it's a battle for our survival. For Christians in the North-East I dare say that CAA is an extra-existential crisis. Why? The RSS and its affiliates are fully aware that there is one institution they must weaken, if not destroy, is the Church if the Hindus ever hope to control the North-East. As Secretary of the BJP NE States Coordination Council, PB Acharya (former Governor of Nagaland and an active RSS member) wrote to former BJP Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee: "We have achieved our vowed objective of piercing *Trishul* (weapon of Lord Shiva but it is also used as a Hindu symbol) in the chest of so-called 'Lord Christ' (Mid-Day). What if the more than 17 million Hindus in Bangladesh decide to leave Muslim Bangladesh? Where would they try to settle, if not the NE States? Don't tell me the RSS-controlled BJP government in Delhi might not welcome these 17 million Bangladeshi Hindus to settle in the North-East Region? How do the Naga politicians exist existing laws can prevent an influx of illegal immigrants through Assam's jungles? The Modi government is convinced that through the means of overpopulating the whole of North-Eastern Region with Hindus from Bangladesh, they can make the North-East a Hindu heartland.

Once these Bangladeshi Hindus are covered by the provisions under CAA, it will not take long before Hindus become the majority and nothing will stop them from taking control, for instance, of the Nagaland State Assembly and placing a *Trishul* in front of every church pulpit. Is this what we are waiting to see actually happen? The leadership of the church should be fully aware of this. Shockingly, of all people, five tribal Christian Members of Parliament from the North-East voted in favor of CAA — on the assurance by Modi's BJP government, perhaps, that there are already enough protective measures in place, such as the Inner Line Permit (ILP) and the provision in 371A of the Indian Constitution. Knowing the RSS-controlled BJP Government in Delhi, it is naive and shortsighted especially on the part of the Nagas to think we are fully protected and that the passing of CAA cannot impact the Nagas in any way. Believe me, if Assam falls the rest will fall too.

It's time for our young people, especially college and university students, to see how miserably my generation has failed to protect the North-East, and to wake us up from our deadly slumber. Today's politicians and bureaucrats are selling the North-East to Delhi for money, for jobs, for power. A new breed of visionary young men and women must rise up to provide leadership to save these fast shrinking North-Eastern States. The Church of Jesus Christ especially must not shirk her responsibility in rooting out evils anywhere. Christians in Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, in the tribal districts of Manipur and elsewhere, must see to it that truly God-fearing educated young men and women get actively involved and provide Christian leadership in the Church and for society at large.

Underworld don Ravi Pujari arrested in Senegal, brought to India

By Raju Vernekar
Mumbai Feb. 24

Underworld don and an extortionist Ravi Pujari (52) with nearly 200 offences registered against him in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka was arrested by Senegal (West African nation) Police from South Africa and was handed over to the officers of RAW and Karnataka police, who brought him to Delhi on late Sunday evening.

On a tip-off from Indian external intelligence agency, the Senegal police air dashed South Africa last week and arrested Pujari. Sources in Mumbai Police confirmed that Pujari, wanted in over 200 cases of heinous crimes, including murder and extortion, was detained with the help of South African agencies, in a village in South Africa. He was brought to Senegal and was handed over to the Karnataka Police after

completion of an extradition process. He will be brought to Maharashtra later.

The offences registered against Pujari include 49 offences registered by Mumbai police and 75 cases registered by Gujarat police, including a case of extortion threat to Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mewani and a sizable number of cases of extortion threats to Bollywood film makers and 46 cases registered by Karnataka police.

The cases registered by the Karnataka police include: five major ones, including murder and attempt to murder, registered in Bengaluru. They include a murder of developer Subbaraju in 2001 in Bengaluru and a brutal attack in 2007, on a developer running "Shabnam Developers".

Pujari was staying in Senegal since 2010. In 2011, Karnataka Joint CP (Crime) Alok Kumar, Bengaluru, and

his team had almost traced the his whereabouts, including the phone numbers he was using. But due to some technical reasons the police did not get proper support from Interpol.

A host of cases of criminal intimidation under IPC section 506, criminal intimidation by anonymous communication under IPC section 507 and threatening to life to commit extortion of (IPC 387) have been registered against him in Girinagar, Sadashivnagar Mahalakshmi Layout, High Grounds and Magadi Road police stations in Karnataka. Most of the cases registered against him have been charge sheeted.

Pujari, a movie junkie influenced by Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan's portrayal as Anthony Gonsalves in 'Amar Akbar Anthony' was using the name 'Anthony Fernandes' and was carrying a fake passport in the name of Anthony Fernandes issued in Burkina Faso, on 10 July 2013, which was valid till 8 July 2023.

The passport showed his profession as "Agent Commercial" meaning that he was designated as a businessman running a chain of

restaurants "Namaste India" in Senegal, Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries. Earlier his lawyers in Senegal had argued in the court that he was Antony Fernandes, a businessman from Burkina Faso as mentioned in his passport and not a fugitive as claimed by the Indian Government. The mafioso first came into news in early 2000 when he started extorting huge amounts from famous Bollywood personalities and builders. He was involved in an attempt to murder case, aimed at killing a prominent lawyer of Mumbai. Subsequently he, along with his wife Padma and three children fled India. His son who was recently married in Australia reportedly holds an Australian passport.

Pujari was arrested from a saloon in Dakar, Senegal on 21 January 2019 by local police. However, he jumped bail from Senegal and escaped to South Africa in June 2019. He was stated to be involved in big-time drug trafficking and extortion racket. He was once a right hand man of underworld don Chhota Rajan (now in custody of Mumbai Police) and had parted ways with him.

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail: imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.