

# Present electoral scenario in Manipur-II

## Significance of observing fuel conservation month

**W**ITH limited sources of natural energy it will be wishful thinking that people of Manipur will not be affected by the global trend of rapid exhaustion of stock of conventional energy reserves. Though absence of big industrial units in the state could be assumed as a blessing in disguise for use of petroleum products are mainly confined to operation of motor vehicles and cooking purposes, Manipur too cannot fiddle with its responsibility of conserving natural sources of energy and should indeed take the initiative of creating awareness and involving the citizens on the importance of economical usage of petroleum products. Imminent exhaustion of the petroleum products and its adverse impact upon the people could be comprehended from the clarion call given by Governor Dr Najma Heptulla during the kick-off function of Saksham 2017, which is a month long event to drive home the point that conservation of fuel is the responsibility of one and all. The Governor administering pledge to the student participants to conserve petroleum products and emphasising on educating the youths to abstain from wasteful use of petroleum products as well as to opt for cleaner fuel to maintain the ecological balance should have enlightened all concerned that the role of future pillars of the society at present will be equally important in deciding their own fate. Another significant remark made by Dr Heptulla was the reminder that the progress of human civilisation has been extensively linked with the wealth underneath the earth's surface, natural resources like petroleum products to be specific.

While there is nothing much policy makers in Manipur could do in contributing to the national stock of natural resources, increasing demand for energy compared to the fast depleting conventional sources of energy calls for chalking out viable policies to at-least tap the potential of non-conventional sources of energy such as solar, wind, biomass and even energy from waste material. Even though the state may be deprived of two other important sources of non-conventional energy namely tidal and geo-thermal sources, due to its geographical location, it is an undeniable fact that there is no shortage of solar, wind, biomass and waste material. Energy generated by the said sources are renewable or inexhaustible and neither do they cause environmental pollution nor entail require heavy investment, and as such absence of natural resources to convert them into petroleum products could be compensated by focusing on purposeful generation of energy from the sources available. As MANIREDA had already experimented potential of harnessing wind energy with success, there should be concerted efforts in expanding the area for tapping the non-conventional sources of energy as it would not only ensure convenient living of the people in the windy hill areas but will also be helpful to the farmers in the plains. In the same way, framing policy for providing solar panels at affordable price will encourage the farmers to adopt multiple-cropping system as they would not need to worry on footing power bills. In view of improvement in the power distribution scenario in Manipur since the introduction of pre-paid meter system, the need for providing cheap power to the farmers should not be ignored in order to achieve the goal of self-reliance in food grain production and help the state's economy.



**Kshetri Bimola**

**T**he Manipur People's Party (MPP), once a strong political force in the early 1970s and 1990s, is suffering from defections and inter-fighting within the party. The party could exercise a strong influence in the mind of the voters in the Assembly elections, 1972 and 1974. The party had secured 20 seats in the mid-term Assembly elections of 1974, emerging as the single largest party in the Legislative Assembly. There were MPP led coalition ministries in 1972, 1974 and 1990. The party could elect its candidates as representatives of Manipur in all Assembly elections except in 2012. There is no MLA representing the Party in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur, 2012-2017. The long-time and veteran leader of the MPP O.Joy had joined BJP after quitting MPP. It had affected the image, political ideology and principle of the party based on regionalism and the identity, interest of the party. It is hoped that the party will put up its candidates in the Assembly elections 2017 with political slogan of regional autonomy and protection of the interest of the indigenous people of Manipur. The Trinamool Congress is another political party joining the Assembly electoral battle, 2017. The party under the Chairmanship of Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, is playing an important role not only in the State politics of West Bengal but also in the national politics of all India level. The party was a political force on the eve of the 10th Assembly elections, 2012. The party put up its candidates in the elections and was able to elect 7 MLAs in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur. These 7 MLAs had played important role in the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly in the earlier part of the term of the Assembly. The party had suffered



internal crisis and disqualification of some of its MLAs in the Legislative Assembly as they had joined the ruling Congress party. Now the State party President is Kim Gangte, the former MP from Manipur. She had announced recently that the party will put up candidates in all 60 Assembly Constituencies and will fight elections independently without making any alliance with any other party. The CPI (M) is a strong political force in the State politics of West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. In Manipur also, the party put up candidates in the Assembly elections since 1967. After attainment of Statehood, the party had attempted to send its representatives to the Assembly by putting up candidates except Assembly elections of 2000. It was in the Assembly elections of 1980 that the party was able to elect one MLA to the Legislative Assembly of Manipur. The party it seems is not able to penetrate into the mind of voters, except its committed voters. The National People's Party is another regional political party fighting the electoral battle in the Assembly elections, 2017. The party could elect its candidates 1, in the Assembly elections 1990, 2 in 1995 and 3 in 2007. The party became a regional political force with the joining of Sangma, former Speaker of Lok Sabha. The party is putting up its candidates in 30 constituencies of Manipur. The party leaders are hoping that its candidates will be elected. Another

political party joining the Assembly electoral battle is JD (U). The JD (U) is one dominating party in the State politics of Bihar. It is the ruling party in Bihar with Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister. The party had contested Assembly elections in Manipur, 2000 and could send one MLA to the Legislative Assembly of Manipur. The party was not able to elect its candidates in the Assembly elections of 2002, 2007 and 2012. Now in this coming Assembly election, the party is joining as co-partner of Left and Democratic Alliance. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) was a political party which played important role in Manipur since 2000. In the Assembly elections 2000, the party was represented by 5 MLAs in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur. And the party put up candidates in the Assembly elections of 2002, 2007 and 2012. There were 3 MLAs in 2002, 5 MLAs in 2007 and 1 MLA in 2012. The lone MLA, 2012 had recently resigned from NCP and joined the ruling Congress party. The party, it is hoped, will put up candidates in the coming Assembly elections, 2017 and try to participate in the decision making process of the Legislative Assembly. Another political party, Lok Jana Shakti which is a coalition partner of NDA government led by BJP is having one MLA in the present Legislative Assembly of Manipur. The party had started to join electoral politics of Manipur since 2007

Assembly elections. The AAP, the ruling party in Delhi with Arvind Kejriwal as Chief Minister, is also fighting the Assembly elections, 2017, may be in some constituencies of Manipur. The State leaders of the party are trying to make it as a political force in Manipur by putting up candidates in the coming Assembly elections of Manipur, 2017. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) as a partner of Left and Democratic Front is another party taking part in the electoral politics of Manipur, 2017. So far there is no representation of the party in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur. The newly formed State political Party called People's Resurgence and Justice Party (PRJP) under the initiative of Irom Sharmila Chanu is fighting the Assembly elections, 2017. The main objective of the party is the removal (repeal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1952). Sharmila had undergone 'fast unto death' for 16 years demanding the repeal of the Act since November 4, 2000. After fasting for a long period of 16 years, Sharmila had announced the joining into the electoral politics of Manipur Assembly elections, 2017 by forming a political party with the sole objective to repeal AFSPA, 1958 from Manipur. She is contesting from Thoubal Assembly constituency from where the present Chief Minister, O.Ibobi had been elected. Why she desires from Thoubal Assembly Constituency of

Manipur is a question in the mind of the people. The answer might be, as Chief Minister had removed the AFSPA, 1958 from seven constituencies of Greater Imphal in 2005, the Act can be removed/repealed from Manipur as a whole if the Chief Minister desires it. So Sharmila wants to put the responsibility of not repealing the Act on the shoulder of the Chief Minister. Another question is whether her new party will be supported by the people of Manipur or not. The people of Manipur, particularly the womenfolk have been fighting for the removal/repeal of the AFSPA since 1980s. The logical conclusion is that when the sole objective of Sharmila's newly formed party is to remove/repeal the said Act, the people of Manipur both Valley and Hills should support Sharmila and her party by casting their votes. But the people are guided by other factors and issues rather than removal/repeal of the Act, mainly issues connected with political position and power. The results of the Assembly elections, 2017 will certainly know the support of the voters in a positive or negative way regarding the repeal/repeal of the Act.

Another State political party emerged on the eve of the Assembly elections, 2017 is the Manipur National Democratic Front. Bijoy Kojiam, former Congress Minister had announced in August, 2016 that not less than 15 sitting MLAs will join the party. The new party will field candidates in about 40 Constituencies. An electoral alliance has been formed by six political parties namely CPI (ML), AIFB, AAP, RSP, JD(S) and Manipur Democratic People's Front (MDPF). The Naga People's Front (NPF) which is the ruling party in Nagaland is joining the electoral battle of Assembly elections, 2017 with the slogan for the promotion and protection of the identity and culture of the Nagas.

Thus, almost all the National political parties and a host of regional/State political parties are fighting the electoral battle of Assembly elections, 2017. Of course, the main rivals in the electoral battle are the ruling Congress in Manipur and the ruling BJP at the Centre.

## Enough is enough, stop this blame game

S. KUNJABIHARI SINGH

**T**he People's Chronicle of the last Monday, January 16, carried a news item wherein two apparently satirical comments were reported to have been made by Prakash Javadekar, the Union Minister of Human Resource Development. **He is quoted to have observed while interacting with the media in the BJP office, Imphal, "Ibobi prolonging highway stir", "Confining additional forces in the barracks cannot end impasse".**

One need not go into the veracity or otherwise of the claims and counterclaims regarding dispatch or arrival of central forces or even their deployment. It will suffice if we as a common man ponder if such a level of mudslinging can ever happen however much they belong to opposite political faiths more so at a time when the severity of the blockade to the common man has reached untold proportions. I have remained apolitical throughout and am not a protégé of the Congress party or of the BJP. Common logic calls for some element of commensurate recognition of efforts made by the other party despite faith in differing ideologies. Utterances of the kind and content appear to be misplaced.

The fact, however, remains that the people of Manipur has suffered untold miseries exclusively from the total shutdown of the two National Highways by the UNC for the last 80 odd days. The charge of the Union Minister that the CM of Manipur is prolonging the blockade, inferring that Ibobi-led government is only keen to elongate the agitation, would sound too much of a patriotism for the BJP stalwart. One understands for sure that minting political mileage at the expense of the opponent is a commonplace in politics. Prakash should also attempt tarnishing the image of the other politician of the opposite party; nevertheless charging with such blatant impossibilities as 'confining central forces in the barracks', or intending to stretch out the Bandh would smell too much of a charge, however political it could be.

Even earlier, on January 11, the Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju too sang the same song by blaming the Congress-led government for the deteriorating law and order situation in the state. While addressing a function in Guwahati, he reiterated the need for the Ibobi-government to act regretting that all that is required to be done is yet to come. He tried to justify by stressing that maintenance of 'law and order', (LO), is a constitutional obligation of state government and the GOM should be squarely responsible for the impasse on the two NHs. What is the content and complexity of this breach of LO or could this be just a normal one is conveniently sidelined by the Union Minister.

Kiren Rijiju could be right when he asserts that 'law and order' is a state subject and therefore the GOM should be blamed for the blockade. He even reached the stage of advising the state government 'not to

aggravate' the situation, and 'not to think of taking political benefit' out of a humanitarian crises. So far so good; his advice not to worsen the situation and to extract political advantage is something worth going deeper for a more precise examination. His very consent of 'humanitarian crises' is indicative of the unique composition and veracity of the blockade in question. This is not just an item of 'law and order'; it is something more serious, calling for input, a joint effort, a unified approach from the Centre too to contain the situation.

Manipur, hill or valley, has been suffering for the last 80 odd days due to the economic blockade initially, though now, it is a kind of total blockade on and a total shut down of the two life-line highways. On Oct, 30 and 31, the UNC, a protégé of the NSCN-IM, called a 48-hour Bandh nicknamed, 'total shutdown', in all Naga inhabited areas. This was followed by the indefinite economic blockade starting Nov, 1, on both NHs No 02 (Dimapur Imphal) and No 37 (Jiribam- Imphal). The major sufferer is the valley settlers though the hill districts like Chandel, CCP or Tamenglong too are in the bracket. Ukhrul and Senapati districts by virtue of their geography would not suffer as much, though they too are victims of counter-blockade.

When essential commodities imported from outside are not available, when petrol is rationed at select depots on weekly basis, when therefore vehicle owners have to queue up before the depot from the previous evening for Rs 500 worth of fuel to be distributed at 7 AM next morning, when schools and colleges had to close down on account of inability to run school buses, would it still remain a state responsibility to stop the blockade on the premise of constitutional responsibility of the state government? Would it suffice if the GOI make available few companies of Paramilitary forces for aid of the state forces in clearing the highways?

On the 13th morning around 6 AM, as I was on my morning sojourn, I counted 158 four-wheelers lined up on the right side of Emo Filling station, the vehicles reaching Singjamei super market complex. The left side of the depot had lines of two-wheelers in rows of two, reaching as far as Yumnam Leikai Lairembi Lampak; number I ignored to count, as it could be too many to be tracked. Easily it could be near double the number of cars lined up. By 1 PM or so, when the stock allotted to the depot get exhausted, the remaining vehicle owners would be issued a 'Token' mentioning the car/scooter number and would be issued fuel next turn which may be 3 or 4 days away.

Is not this something torturous, one is not able to get fuel after spending the night in the car on the road in this wintry cold? What happens if the car owner had already depleted his fuel and had come to get some under desperate circumstances and yet not able to get but a token. How would he reach home for his turn after 3-4 days? Has any of such a situation arisen or heard of in parts

of the country other than Manipur? And this very scenario is not exclusive of the fuel depot at Yumnam Leikai. The scenario of waiting in the line, the anxiety if one would end up with a 'token' and thus has to suffer unable to get fuel happens in the some, 10 or so depots in and around Imphal.

Apart from the physical woes, the owners suffer for staying overnight in the cars, at least, the time, the precious time to be deployed elsewhere is lost in the system. The agony, the mental torture is something not encountered by any citizen on this universe, not in India nor any part of the several states, not anywhere in the NER except in Manipur. And this is not an affair of few weeks or days; it has been the system for 80 days now. And the GOI blames the GOM for inability to control the situation. Why the Centre remains a silent spectator when the entire people of the state suffer for whatever factor it could be, be they inefficiency of the State Government or the high handedness of UNC under the solid patronage of the NSCN-IM? Can't the GOI put pressure on the NSCN-IM, wield some pressure to ease the situation?

A few of the recent and more serious turn of events consequent upon the imposition of the economic blockade are:

- i) On January 9, 500 Imphal-bound trucks were escorted by security forces from Jiribam on NH 37 (Jiri-Imphal). Around 4 in the evening, unknown miscreants in army fatigue fired around 20 rounds on vehicles somewhere in the middle of the long convoy at a place called Lukhambi, near Noney, around 50 km short of Imphal. One died on the spot, three others seriously injured and are in critical condition in a private hospital. Troops of 8 AR evacuated the injured to their hospital.
- ii) The NH 02 (Dimapur-Imphal) was used for transportation of goods from outside only two times, because of the serious obstruction to the security convoy on duty to escort transporters from Mao, by bandh supporters at Senapati. See security forces are even intruded by the natives to the extent of feeling unsafe to ply on this highway; In the event of any casualty in controlling the obstructionists, another hue and cry is sure to emerge. The GOM chose the alternative to shun this road.
- iii) Only NH 02 is the sole life-line for transportation of goods to Manipur, the other NH 37 being in poor shape so far though under desperate conditions, this highway has to be depended upon.
- iv) The position of non availability of fuel has not as yet eased. Today the 17th January is no different from the position on the 13th in terms of availability of the same; the line is even longer today, reaching the old Singjamei market entrance.

Enough is enough; it's time to wake up from the deep-rooted lassitude. The people have suffered enough. The stake holders need to act fast.

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Litmus test of Naga patriotism vis-a-vis peace in Manipur

Dear Sir,

Present UNC blockade is a litmus test for the Nagas' patriotism on nationhood and now it confirms their love, courage, willpower, spiritual determination to win freedom on the basis of UN Charter w.r.t. existence on self-realization and therefore, ceasing blockade in the near future is not sighted till their front grab maximum support in the interest of peaceful Manipur state. It is also observed that the Nagas seem to have not targeted any particular civilian during this blockade except the Government of Manipur and their security personnel showing their love of peace on humanity. On the other hand, majority Manipuris particularly all the common people of both hill and valley are getting the resultant acute pain out of this economic blockade as is the outcome of any blockade by any organization. In the past, it is the state Government to have settled such issues but this time problem itself is a complex socio-political eventual creation of time to gain political mileage by both state and centre ruled parties that has prologue this time. At this juncture any effort to end blockade from any stake holder (except UNC and its associates) will go fruitless. Therefore, under such situation the UNC and its associates, ECI for State Assembly and suffering people of Manipur have to carry on their duties on "as is where" basis since all involved groups are compelled under compulsion to complete the formation of a new Government in the best interest of a United Manipur for peace and harmony in the state. The ultimate solution lies in the hand of the new government that will come up by March 2017 and therefore it is time to concentrate more on FREE, FAIR, FEARLESS poll to elect the BEST CANDIDATE IN THE VOTERS MIND TO FORM A COMPLETE NEW GOVT WHO CAN DELIVER JUSTICE AND HAPPINESS WITH PEACE AND TRANQUILITY IN MANIPUR. Election is secret voting and no one knows to whom it is voted so vote freely to one's own choice FOR A BETTER TOMMORROW.

Yours sincerely,  
**Dr G Tonsana Sharma**  
Senior citizen  
(former Chief Engineer, PWD)

## Quote of the day

I just want to go through Central Park and watch folks passing by. Spend the whole day watching people. I miss that.

- Barack Obama

7-year-old Ryan Hickman has his own recycling business. After visiting a recycling centre at the age of 3, he became obsessed with collecting and sorting not only trash, but also the money he received in return-so he handed out bags to his neighbors, started recycling for them, and saved all his money. He's made over \$10,000 for college so far (but he'd rather buy a garbage truck).



Germany's Werner Freund was once the alpha male of a real wolf pack. He spent decades walking freely among his sanctuary of 29 wild wolves, which all viewed him as their leader. His goal was to rid people of their negative views of the animal, because he felt 'you are more likely to die from meeting a were wolf than a real one'.



DID YOU KNOW