



Today's Thought

Cooperation and respect for each other will advance the cause of human rights worldwide. Confrontation, vilification, and double standards will not.
Robert Mugabe.

Extremely disturbing twist and turn
Trashing a pact with Govt

The twist and turn is disturbing and if not for its serious nature, it would have looked like a fast paced thriller from a cheap Bollywood flick. Hours after the State Government managed to persuade Kuki Inpi, Manipur (KIM) and the Anglo-Kuki War Centenary Commemoration Committee (AKWCCC) to erase the 'objectionable' phrase, 'In defence of our ancestral land and freedom' and replace it with 'In defence of dignity and freedom', came the thunderbolt from the Kuki Inpi, Kumpi, with the tag 'Apex Body of Kukis', that all 'KIM and AKWCCC executives are suspended forthwith until further orders.' Not surprisingly this was followed by the memorial stone erection at some places, Aisan in Saikul sub-division, T Waichong village and at S Moljol village, to name a few, complete with the 'objectionable' words, 'In defence of our ancestral land and freedom.' So from a stand off between the Kukis and the Nagas on the one hand and some CSOs of Manipur, notably AMUCO, UCM, PANDM, Federation of Haomee etc, the issue seems to have pitched social leaders of the Kuki community against each other. Not surprisingly the State Government has taken serious note of the new development and in a hurriedly convened Cabinet meeting it was decided to recommend that the Suspension of Operation pact with some armed Kuki outfits be suspended. This may just be the beginning and as stated in an earlier commentary, it is the common people who will stand to be adversely affected and not those who took the decision to go ahead and erect the memorial stones with the said phrase. Any confrontation will also not affect the key board warriors who have been punching in venom spewing words and thoughts from the comfort of their rooms on the social media.

The Government has every reason to be peeved with the new development. It is a case of saying that the agreement with the Government can be trashed anytime at the fancy and whims of some elements and this is what is unacceptable. More than obvious that the KIM and AKWCCC leaders who came to the agreement with the Chief Minister on October 16 would have been placed under severe strain and made to undergo some very uncomfortable situations. Now that some memorial pillars have been erected with the words, 'In defence of our ancestral land and freedom', it is unlikely that CSOs from the Naga community will remain quiet. CSOs like AMUCO, UCM, PANDM, Federation of Haomee cannot be expected to remain quiet either and certainly Manipur can expect some stormy days ahead. Trash an agreement with the Government, go ahead with an inscription that has rubbed members of other communities the wrong way and go ahead and erect the said memorial pillars with the 'offensive' words and this is akin to scripting a chapter to throw Manipur into a whirlpool of confrontations and hatred. This is the situation and this is where the Government will need to walk cautiously and if certain elements continue to whip up unnecessary passion via the social media, then this would be a sure invitation to the Government to suspend internet service.

Science News

Chernobyl's control room is now open to tourists

Oct 17: Tourists can now visit the control room of Chernobyl's Reactor 4, the scene of the world's worst nuclear disaster. But the control room is still highly radioactive, and people are required to wear protective gear when inside, according to recent news reports.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared Chernobyl an official tourist attraction in June at the inauguration of a gigantic dome built to contain radioactive material. But Chernobyl has been a tourist destination for far longer — parts of it having been open to the public for nearly a decade. In May, bookings to Chernobyl increased by about 30% following the release of the popular HBO series of the same name, according to a previous Live Science report.

But Reactor 4 had remained closed off to most of the public, save for a few researchers and cleanup workers. Now, Chernobyl tour companies have confirmed that the control room is open to the brave souls who wish to be closer to the scene of the disaster, according to CNN.

The control room, which was highly damaged from the explosion, was where the reactor was operated from and where many of the decisions the day the reactor exploded, were made. It sits under the new containment arch but outside of the original sarcophagus that contained the radiation of the reactor itself, according to the Telegraph.

The radiation in the room is 40,000 times higher than normal levels, according to Ruptly, a German news agency. Anyone who wishes to visit the site must wear a protective suit, a helmet and a mask, and limit their visit to 5 minutes. Afterward, visitors are required to undergo two radiology tests to measure the amount of radiation they were exposed to, according to CNN.

That's typical of most tours in Chernobyl; people must go through radiation checkpoints at the beginning, middle and end of one-day tours, according to a previous Live Science report. Tourists are not permitted to wander on their own; they must stay with the tours because of ongoing radiation concerns.

LiveScience

Corporations that abuse human rights are a threat to SDGs and our planet

Bobby Ramakant, CNS

One of the major processes at the United Nations (UN) that gives hope for a better tomorrow where "no one is left behind" is the UN binding treaty on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights.

History is marred with examples how transnational trade and businesses kept profit over people. Domestic laws and legal frameworks failed to hold abusive transnational corporations to account for not just human rights abuses but also for environmental damages (often irreparable loss like that of biodiversity). That is why we urgently need strong legally binding mechanisms globally to end all forms of corporate capture.

Governments need to walk the talk on the promise of sustainable development where "no one is left behind". When corporate power undermines democracy and democratic processes, a large number of people are left to deal with a range of injustices, inequalities and abuses, as well as, climate crisis deepens which further exacerbates the impact on the poor people.

People's Representatives Globally Call For UN Binding Treaty
This week UN Inter-gov-

ernmental Working Group (IGWG) is discussing a global binding treaty on "transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights".

Interest in this process continues to grow as evidenced in the significant presence of government delegations, civil society and elected officials worldwide. 321 members of regional and national parliaments, as well as municipal authorities have endorsed the Call of People's Representatives Worldwide for the UN Binding Treaty.

Charles Santiago, Member of the Parliament of Malaysia stated, "Prices of medicines are very high and people are dying because of that. This is a consequence of the monopolies controlled by transnational corporations. The emerging movement for UN binding regulations to tackle power of transnational corporations, is encouraging for all of us."

Delegates from over 40 countries representing communities affected by transnational corporations' human rights violations, social movements, trade unions and civil society organisations are speaking up too. These are the voices of affected people that should be in the centre of these negotia-

tions. Tchenna Maso from La Via Campesina (Movement of affected by Dams) in Brazil, said, "We are concerned about the content of the revised draft text presented for discussion this week because it does not reflect many of our key concerns and proposals. In particular, the treaty needs a primary focus on transnational corporations, as indicated in the original resolution 26/9, to address the corporate impunity we see in the world."

Kea Seipato, Coordinator of the Southern African section of the Global Campaign to Reclaim Peoples Sovereignty, Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity, stressed that, "The people of Southern Africa are calling for a self-determined development and are demanding a Treaty that will ensure that. They are calling for the 'Right to Say No' to the plunder of their resources by transnational corporations." Pablo Fajardo, representative of the Union of People Affected by Chevron in Ecuador, said, "International financial systems and multinationals have captured the Ecuadorian State over the last two years. That is why a binding treaty is needed, which returns sovereignty to peoples and states. But it is also clear to us that a UN binding treaty that is not accompanied by sustained social action will not be effective - as exemplified by recent events in Ecuador over the past ten days."

Karin Nansen, chair of Friends of the Earth International said: "Environmental and human rights defenders are on the frontline of resisting the violations committed by transnational corporations, enduring systematic attacks of intimidation, silencing and killings. The historical importance of this binding treaty process to end, once and for all, the impunity of transnational corporations and guarantee access to justice for those affected cannot be over-emphasized."

Recently activists performed in front of the Palais de Nations representing how transnational corporations use Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms (ISDS) to sue governments that implement regulations to protect labour standards or the environment. The action is part of a tour travelling from Geneva to Vienna, where today the UN Trade Commission

UNCITRAL begin negotiations on a reform of the ISDS system.

Dr Thomas Köller from Attac Germany remarked, "We call on the European governments and the European Union (EU) to participate constructively in the negotiations on the UN Binding Treaty. In Vienna the EU must withdraw its push for a Multilateral Investment Court."

This is not the first time where countries globally have joined hands against corporate abuse. More than a decade back in global tobacco treaty negotiations, despite tobacco industry tactics to water down this treaty process, governments agreed to stop tobacco industry interference in public health policy. This treaty, formally called the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), has two backbone Articles that potentially empowers governments to better implement life saving public health laws: Article 5.3 of this treaty, guidelines of which were adopted in November 2008 by governments, recognizes in its preamble that there is a direct and irreconcilable conflict of interest between tobacco industry and public health policy. Article 19 of this

treaty which is being worked upon by governments is to hold tobacco industry legally and financially liable for the damages it has caused. I have been part of every global tobacco treaty negotiations so far (Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC) as an observer (part of Corporate Accountability led Network for Accountability of Tobacco Transnationals team). Tobacco industry interference in global tobacco treaty is a stark reminder why we need laws and policies in place to not let abusive corporations interfere with health and development policy making.

No Time to Lose in Dealing with Corporate Abuses

Only 135 months are left for 193 governments to deliver on promise of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Conflict of interest of several transnational corporations with health and development policies is stark enough to raise alarm for stronger action to make strict legally binding rules and laws against it. It is vital to protect sustainable development policy making from corporate capture. As thousands and millions echoed last month during climate strike, there is no planet-B.

'Police Day' Story

S Balakrishnan

Lebong, Village 10 Mil, and Vill.-Mombasti, PO-Kalimpong, respectively. Eleven were taken as prisoners. The Chinese returned the bodies of the martyrs only on 13th November at the Sino-Indian border. The bodies were cremated with full police honours at Hot Springs itself at 8 AM the next morning.

The incident made "Hot Springs" a holy place to CRPF and the day a Martyrs' Day and Police Commemoration Day for entire Police Force of the country since 1960. India Post had issued a special postal cover and cancellation to honour this martyrdom. So, here is a poem dedicated to the police personnel world over, written by Edgar A. Guest -

"For Policemen All"
Defenders of what's best and right
Policemen swear to be,
And in the service, day and night,
They're never peril free.
I know the dangers they must face
And their temptations, too,
Still, from the chief to the humblest place,
The failures are but few.
Time was long hours with them I shared
Their valorous deeds to pen,
I learned back then how much they cared
To serve as honest men.
When with arrest wrong-doing ends,
Though evil was the deed,
I know the prisoner's powerful friends
For him will come to plead.
When one reckless driver stops
As he to do has sworn
The man may speak of all as "cops"
In bitterness and scorn.
But if good citizen were he,
He would at once recall
"Twas done that streets might safer be
For him and for us all.
The cares of him who grows to chief
Are many through the day.
Night may not bring to him relief.
He's often called away,
There are no stated hours for crime.
This simple truth I tell,
He has to battle all the time
To guard his city well.
So to the chief and humblest man

This tribute small is paid
For us they stand on guard and plan
For us unflinching aid.
For us their courage they display
When desperate men draw high
And sometimes, it is sad to say,
For us their bravest die.

I am preserving this poem since 1983 when it was circulated by Dy. Inspector General of Police, Sikkim, with the note - 'The following poem is written by Mr. Edgar A. Guest, an American poet. The poem is dedicated to policemen who died on duty. This copy was received from BPR&D and therefore is being circulated to all.' As a routine, our office (PIB Gangtok) had received it from I&PR Department and this paper was lying with my other papers to be discovered recently. My wife would call these papers trash, to be disposed of to the ruddiwalla. So I have locked them up, with the key tied around my waist. Curious to know about Indian Police Day, I searched Google which provided valuable background material through CRPF website.

Well, going back in time to 1930, let us see how the British utilised the services of village VIPs to strengthen their vigilance. The District Supdt. of Police of Tanjore (Thanjavur) District had issued certificates appointing my maternal grandfather as a Member of the Pamani Village Vigilance Committee under Tiruturaipundi Police Station/Circle. It is not clear for what period. Neither is my grandfather alive to find out. As I was closely scanning this appointment letter, the way he was addressed as "M.R.Ry." made me inquisitive. Well, Google had the answer ready even for this - Maha Raja Rajya! This 90-year-old document is also from my so-called trash.

I gratefully remember the faceless policeman who helped me in 1968. Just 12 years old then, I had come on school excursion to Madras (the present Chennai) to see the World Trade Fair. I got separated from the lot but did not panic. I remembered the school where we were put up. It was near the then famous landmark of Gemini Studios which now stands converted into business & residential complex. So I approached a policeman at the entrance and told him my pathetic story. He made me sit in the right bus near the driver and also told the driver to off load me at Gemini Studios. To the great relief of the conducting teachers, I was Lost & Found, thanks to the policeman! So, here I am writing this story to thank all the police personnel - both women & men and even transgender personnel!

Healthy diets for sustainability

Ranjan K Baruah

One of the paradoxes is that while over 820 million suffer from hunger, even more people suffer from overweight and obesity. In one side we are talking about making right to food for all so that no one remains unhealthy or undernourished especially amongst children. Achieving Zero Hunger is not only about addressing hunger, but also nourishing people, while nurturing the planet.

This year, World Food Day which is observed on 16th October calls for action across sectors to make healthy and sustainable diets affordable and accessible to everyone. At the same time, it calls on everyone to start thinking about what we eat. People around the world have changed eating habits or

foods due to fast changes and globalisation. We have moved to junk or fast food as we are struggling to save time because we are focusing more on earning money. Income growth also adds on the changing habits even when it comes to food.

We have moved from seasonal, mainly plant-based and fibre-rich dishes to diets that are high in refined starches, sugar, fats, salt, processed foods, meat and other animal-source products. Less time is spent preparing meals at home, and consumers, especially in urban areas, increasingly rely on super-

markets, fast food outlets, street food vendors and takeaway restaurants. But we must focus more on healthy diets and also a balanced diet. A healthy diet is one that meets the nutritional needs of individuals by providing sufficient, safe, nutritious and diverse foods to lead an active life and reduce the risk of disease.

A combination of unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles has sent obesity rates soaring, not only in developed countries, but also low-income countries, where

toll on national health budgets costing up to USD 2 trillion per year. Obesity and other forms of malnutrition affect nearly one in three people. Projections indicate that the number will be one in two by 2025. The good news is that affordable solutions exist to reduce all forms of malnutrition, but they require greater global commitment and action.

Climate change threatens to reduce not only the quantity of crops, lowering yields, but also the quality or nutritional value. We have two key challenges when it comes to food. Making the world a place of zero hunger

and also generate awareness to make people aware of obesity and life style diseases. One side we see how people struggle for food due to poverty and on other side people wasting foods. We have all solutions to make the world free from hunger, what we need is our commitment towards the cause. Not only government but even individuals may contribute towards making the world a place of zero hunger. Let us all work together to make healthy foods available for all.

(With direct inputs from FAO publication and the writer is associated with North East Youth Foundation and feedback may be sent to bkranjan@gmail.com)

Why young boys should not be told to 'man up'

Vedika Sharma

According to the BBC, men are three times more likely than women to commit suicide in Australia, 3.5 times more likely in the United States, and four times more likely in Russia. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, men are less likely to seek help for mental health issues. There is also more substance use and alcohol use among males.

Why? Material and social factors like socioeconomic status, racial discrimination, and lack of access to affordable therapy hold people of all genders back, as does our society's stigma around mental illness. But men face unique barriers to getting support.

It often starts in early childhood. We tell boys, "boys don't cry". We condition boys from a very young age to not express emotions, because to express emotion is to be weak. Crying is a challenge to masculinity. They are often called out for behaviour that doesn't match society's definition of manhood. It might take the form of name calling ("sissy" or "weak"), being told "don't be gay" or "you fight like a girl," or aggression against them such as hitting, bullying, or even sexual assault. Asking for help, demonstrating compassionate and caring

behaviour toward themselves and others or being expressive are undermined by social attitudes that put little value on empathy and encourages the concept of the alpha male.

According to a 2017 study, men with typically masculine traits are likely to have decreased mental health — and are even less likely to reach out for help. Researchers found that this was related to certain specific, stereotypically masculine traits. For example, men who valued self-reliance

were more prone to suffer poor mental health, probably because they had difficulty seeking support. Men who valued having power over women also suffered worse mental health.

We tell boys to "man up". We tell boys, "don't be a sissy". But what we're really communicating is "don't be female, because being a female is less". Erroneously gendering the universal capacity for human connection as feminine and then shaming boys to see feminine as being somehow less is how

we block men from the trial and error process of nurturing their capacity to forge relationships. The failure to do so can lead to a lifetime of loneliness.

Simply put, toxic masculinity means harmful stereotypes about what it means to be a man. There's a prominent line separating masculinity from toxicity and that line is that of patriarchy. So, there we have it. Studies and facts may seem daunting, but they, in fact, offer us an opportunity to redefine masculinity and to encourage a culture where it's all right for men to ask for help. We need to normalise men hav-

ing emotions, or choosing dolls for their sons, or buying groceries, wearing pink, being overly expressive about their feelings, crying openly, breaking down, letting their wives drive, changing diapers, cleaning the house, earning less than their wives, among other things. If we can teach compassion, respect and empathy to boys at an early, foundational age, and demonstrate that being gentle, sensitive or emotionally engaged isn't a weakness, but part of being a fully-rounded grown up man, then we're getting the message through to them before toxic attitudes have a chance to solidify. HindustanTimes