

# The Sangai Express

Let us realize that: the privilege to work is a gift, the power to work is a blessing, the love of work is success!  
David O. McKay

## Raising ST demand ahead of Shah's visit The bargaining chip

So many questions at the moment. Will another round of debates between those who are behind the demand that the Meiteis be included in the Scheduled Tribe list of the Constitution of India and those who are against this demand play itself out on the pages of the dailies published from Imphal? Is this the right time to raise such a demand given that Manipur is reeling under the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic and will Union Home Minister Amit Shah take due note of the demand raised, when the memorandum submitted by the Kangleipak Kanba Lup is presented before him when he arrives here? All questions at the moment and apart from the debate over the ST tag for Meiteis, what is of profound interest in the memorandum addressed to Amit Shah, is the manner in which the ST status demand has been raised in the backdrop of the impending final agreement between the NSCN (IM) and the Government of India. Explicit in the stand of the KKL is the stand that since something is bound to be given to the NSCN (IM), which will impact on the neighbouring States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, something concrete for Manipur too should be taken from the Centre. How far such a line of argument will cut ice with New Delhi remains to be seen, but a very interesting point has been raised and this is something which should be taken note of. So far, all that one hears is the stand of the people of Manipur and not anything on what may be acceptable to the people, if and when a final agreement is inked with the NSCN (IM). What is it that something which will be acceptable to Manipur? The KKL has been candid enough to admit that ST status will ensure that the 'scarce land to which the Meiteis are now confined to,' is protected. That should in the backdrop of the reality that non-tribals-but indigenous folks of the land-the Meiteis cannot buy landed properties in the hills as the hills come under tribal territories is significant.

Take something for 'the something' which is most likely to be given to the NSCN (IM), is the stand of KKL and it is the ST status that it has backed. Too early to say how things will unfold, but if anything is to be given to the NSCN (IM), other than Nagalim, then surely Manipur should also try to get something in return, is what the KKL is saying. The final pact is yet to be signed but this is the time for Manipur to ponder over all the possibilities of how the final deal may emerge. The Centre has already assured that all stakeholders, including Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh will be taken into confidence before the final agreement is inked and perhaps this is the right time for the Government at Imphal to reach out to its counterparts at Dispur and Itanagar. Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh are all under the BJP and this is an advantage which the Government at Imphal should try to capitalise on. Reach out to them too and see if a shared common interest can be worked out. It is for Imphal to acknowledge that in Th Muivah the NSCN (IM) has a far sighted leader and it will not hurt to discuss all the possible outcomes and sitting down with the other two States may just help the cause of all three together. This is a line which has been advocated in this column for years and now is the time to act on it. Civil society organisations too can chip in and see what they may do at the grass root level.

## Etc etc

### Anchor to ending AIDS or COVID-19 is human right to health Shobha Shukla – CNS

While we have made significant progress since the late 1990s in our fight to end AIDS, it still remains a major global public health issue. Even today, globally more than 1.2 million people living with HIV are not on treatment and 1.7 million people became infected with the virus in 2019 because they could not access essential prevention services.

The good news is that India has shown a remarkable decline of 66% in new HIV infections over the last decade, which is the highest in the whole of Asia Pacific region, said Dr Ishwar Gilada, President of AIDS Society of India, who also represents the Asia Pacific region in the Governing Council of International AIDS Society.

"But we still have a long way to go. Despite the promise of Governments, including that of India, to meet the 90-90-90 targets by 2020 and end AIDS by 2030, we had 1,700,000 newly infected people with HIV, and 690,000 AIDS deaths worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased our challenges by overshadowing HIV control measures", he added.

India is home to 2.35 million (23.5 lakhs) people living with HIV. 79% of these are aware of their status and 55% of all PLHIV are on antiretroviral treatment (ART). In other words, that is 1.35 million are receiving ART, which means that one million (10 lakh) people living with HIV are yet to access treatment. We have to ensure that everyone who tests positive for HIV should be put on life-saving ART and become virally suppressed.

Also equal emphasis is to be given to prevention as well. We cannot prioritise treatment over preventing new infections—such an approach will neither work for ending AIDS nor for ending COVID-19, emphasized Dr Gilada.

(To be contd)

# Education and the 'cultural hegemony'

RK Rajeebsana

Our decision making is implicitly shaped by the type of social and cultural conditioning that we have in a particular society in the form of ideas, beliefs and "shared value consensus" that run through the depth of our society which consequently form our psycho-social behavior impacting our socialization process and the path where we are heading.

There must be a sufficient degree of 'collective value consensus' that enhances social solidarity and social cooperation without which we cannot imagine the idea of collective life. And this collective conscience is reinforced and perpetuated by the medium of education. As Durkheim put it, education reinforces the 'homogeneity' by fixing in the child from the beginning the 'essential similarity' which collective life demands. Apart from informal ways of learning, it is the formal education, which drives and transmits the values and norms to succeeding generations to come. As we know, Manipur is a heterogeneous society and this fact should be the reason which we must take pride in because it is the evidence that we live in a very accommodative and flexible society both historically and hitherto. Liberal and democratic ideas emerged only when we live in a very diverse society with a cosmopolitan structure and finding unity in the vast ocean of difference is the true essence of knowledge.

One of the biggest mechanisms to bring a 'shared value consensus' for collective life in our society is 'the teaching of history'. The streams of tributaries that flow in different directions ultimately converge in the ocean and that 'point of convergence' is our 'common history'.

We may have various religious or ethnic identities and we should be proud enough to admit with the acceptance of each other's identity and faith but the problem arises when we have a vague larger identity, that is to say, the idea of 'we-ness' in the larger context. We can be a profound Vaisnavite, a follower of Meetei Marup, Christian, Buddhist or Mohammedan but simultaneously we should instill the idea of Manipuri consciousness or Manipuriness in the first place. And this can be achieved only through the 'teaching of history', the only 'common stock of knowledge' which we share in common. We cannot have common political aspiration if

we are ignorant about our history and a sense of patriotism cannot come out of a vacuum.

Functionalists argue that the knowledge of our history provides the link between individual and society. And if the history of our society is brought alive to children, they will come to see that they are part of something larger than themselves which will develop a sense of attachment and commitment to the society. And we should go by 'academic' interpretation of history rather than 'activist' interpretation of history. If our historical narrative is influenced by subjective bias we are inviting an unending chain of conflict that will create more division in society. Forget about the unity of hill and valley, subjective historical interpretation will create division even within the Meiteis considering the varying cultural and religious background. And in a State like Manipur where there is a divisive tendency in every aspect of life and particularly the realm of religion, we should be able to separate between philosophy of religion and sociology/politics of religion.

If the Meiteis get stuck in between Indian Nationalism and Manipur Nationalism, in between 'Saree' and 'Phanek', in between 'Eteima' and 'Bhabhi', in between 'Yaoshang' and 'Holi', then we are a bubble heading nowhere. If the Tangkhul or Kabui, Mao or Maram is in a state of 'loyalty dilemma' between their 'own motherland' and 'substituted motherland', between Kachha Naga and Pakka Naga, they too are heading a highway without destination. All these symptomatic manifestations of a deep ailment can be seen as part of a consequence of our ignorance of common history. We did/do not celebrate the 'Khongnangpambi' near me in which we breathe, play, live and die rather we celebrate the 'Khongnangpambi' in Delhi which are completely alien to us. Every child and adult will know the history behind Tajmahal, Rani Laxmibai and so on which have nothing to do with them but the large majority of us will not know the history behind 'Samu Makhong' which we commute every day. And this is a very sad tragedy. This particular historical epoch had led to the development of a 'new discourse' which is patronized both by the 'metropolis' and the 'ruling regime'/satellite till

date if we have to go by the idea of Foucault. And through this education and the 'hidden curriculum' which now have become a normal part of our thought process, shape and influence our psychological make up through the ideas and information without letting us know that we are being controlled. Traditional authority uses coercive force to exercise control over population but the modern authority exercise power through persuasion and hegemonic tactics which is again substantiated and legitimized by the creation of 'new discourses'.

And in course of such social and educational conditioning we start thinking that 'Delhi da houba khongnangpambi' is superior to our own, 'Saree' is superior to 'Phanek', calling 'Bhabhi' sounds superior to calling Eteima assuming that the former sounds stylish and fashionable, which actually is not the case if we think critically. We should put our thoughts for a moment and reflect on, why do we think, the way we think? Why do people act/ behave, the way they do? Sociologists would argue that we think or behave in a certain way not because we think it is true or normal but it is true because it is the dominant pattern of society. And any individual or agency that resists or rebels to this dominant culture of society would be considered deviant. But the point to ponder is, 'Is the dominant pattern in society reasonable enough to rationalize?' 'In whose interest does the dominant ideology serve?' Is it pro-people; pro-corporate culture or 'Is it' just the interest to serve the ruling elite as traditional Marxist or post modern thinkers like Foucault would claim? We cannot legitimize that being a 'gay' or a 'lesbian' is a punishable offence just because the dominant group in society disapprove such behavior. We cannot rationalize a 'journalist' being slapped under NSA just because it has become a usual phenomenon and normal part of our thought process. The point which we need to reflect is "Are we able to freely admit our true selfhood" or "Are we just a puppet of the docile body" normalized by the system?

(The writer is a student of Sociology. He can be reached at empathywheel@gmail.com)

## My feelings of 2020

Bretina Rajkumari

It was one of the days in mid-November, chilly winds had started patrolling and the days were getting shorter. I was just enjoying the silence of the beautiful night sky thinking of how fast time flies. With no invitation, I was suddenly lost in the ocean of anxiousness. The lights were out in my house as I was sitting outside on the stairs. At times like that, I love watching the sparkly starry night sky and thinking about every meaningful tiny possibility.

And I also like to watch the Moon shining brightest alone in the starry night: Oh! What a relaxing sight! And again, sadness comes to me thinking of our current situation even though there are no more lockdowns now. I still feel sad thinking about the troubles that we have been through. Moreover, we weren't able to celebrate our festivals as we usually do, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Isn't it painfully sad?

This had taken away many things from us including our happiness.

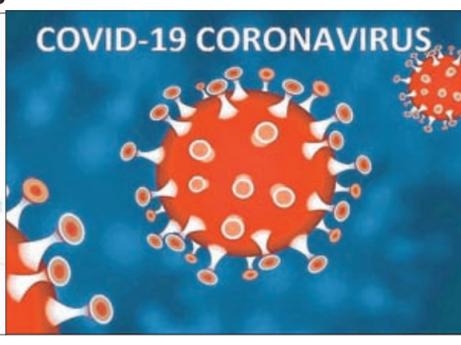
The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest nightmares ever faced by human beings of this generation. I feel sad and anxious at the same time.

Every Nation during this pandemic is suffering; whether rich or poor, whoever or wherever they are. People are facing many problems and difficulties in every field of work. So, I'm just going to express some of my feelings about this pandemic and how I get through all my tiny difficulties and boredom.

It has been almost a year since my physical school life is badly affected by this situation. With all these frustrations over my shoulders, I fail to control myself from yelling this at times, "When will this pandemic ever end!" and my Mother never fails to support me with her weirdest sarcasm,



Illustration: Freepik



"Not too soon."

As a student it was hard for me to spend good times during this period. But anyhow I managed to make up some enjoyable things to do with my family besides studies. I have never really been close with my family but now because of this jailing time at home, I am learning how to pay close attention to the smallest of the smallest details in the house. It's really wonderful to see how de-

tailed the Mothers have to be to keep home making at its finest.

In the old days, about two years ago, the year before the pandemic broke out, happy stories seemed to be all over the years. Less male brains seem to care about how hard it is to keep up with the home making process, most of them seem to be stuck in their workplace. Then, the pandemic struck – people thereafter were showered

with more family time, displayed more family time to get closer to more details in the family like it did to me. It's really a blessing in disguise. Well! Corona seems to turn out as a family fixer.

No one enjoys being alone for a long time, sometimes it's suffocating like getting chained alone in an empty room. It's hard to not be lonely when we are alone and again it's worse to feel lonely when we are with others.

Lately, I realized how this feeling can be eradicated – just a hug from mother, just a smile from brother and just a joke from father can kill all the loneliness. Well! You know until it troubles you, so – yes, it was another big lesson for me from the pandemic. Families and friends are one single anti- loneliness killing medicine.

Lastly, regardless of all the abstract and concrete problems, we must stay happy, entertainment is always everywhere – find ways to entertain yourself. Jokes are subjective – find ways to create comedy in your interest. Not to forget – health is wealth, follow all the precautions and safety measures. Another article, another call for you all, "How is this pandemic going on for you all?"

The writer is a class 8, section B student of UNACCO Meitram and can be reached at romariork96@gmail.com

## Valley volley

Dr Robert Shimray

expression. Foremost, it is to bring about amicable understanding among all.

**Ironical Terminologies:**

1. Life line.  
Being the capital, Imphal valley is the focal point for all walks of life existing within the State. It is indeed the life line in every domain. For which, people from every nook and corner would flock day in and day out for their very survival within which, their exist the hierarchy, in which, all walks of life, in their business pursuit comes the so called, the daily wage earners, as one can see, on the pedestrian flocked along with the

colorful-like paraphernalia displayed, as one could avail to be sold out.

The other section of people is one who owns their own shop, seated in a little more of comfort. More of these are the ones who own bigger enterprises, who deal in bulks. They are one who decides the main factors in business.

As one depends on the valley-based business, the hill districts have to pay its ransom, sometimes in an exorbitant price in order to fulfil the demands. Moreover, reaching the destination, the price is hiked for the loss incurred in the form of transportation and labor. Ironically, in such pandemic stage, when all are struggling, especially in the hills, for example, chicken broods are being brought from the valley at the thought of making some money in times of such crises.

But at the time of disposing it, chicken broiler is being brought up from the valley-based supplier at an unexpected low price which becomes a great challenge to the ones rearing in the hills. Having incurred so much on their handfull business run is but left in a pathetic way succumbing to the challenge as brought from the valley. Hence, as thought of 'life line' becomes a 'hard line'.

2. Shaping the future  
In a world of such a great competitive phase of time, when the trend has become,

'survival of the fittest', everyone is struggling, trying to leave no stone un-turned. In doing so, shaping the future has become one of the greatest responsibilities of the parents, and that is, educating their children.

Mushrooming of educational institutions, regardless of whether one is of standard quality, has seemed to have become the fashion of the day. Management of these many institutions varies from one to another.

A very vivid glance of differences between the valley and the hills could be well understood. In the sense, there comes a great disparity in regard to fee structure and payment of remuneration to the working staff of an institution between the said ends.

(To be contd)

## Diego Maradona : The God of football who fought for social justice

Shobhan Saxena and Florencia Costa

(Contd from previous issue)

Their friendship began in 1987, when Maradona visited the island for the first time, one year after he lifted the World Cup trophy for his country. Tormented by his addiction, Maradona was rather desperate in later years but clinics in Argentina had closed the doors to him. "And Fidel opened the doors with a heart," he recalled in an interview.

Under Castro's guidance, Maradona turned more political and vocal as he left the football world way behind. Starting with Venezuela in 1998, as more and more South American countries took a leftist turn, Maradona became a busy man, hopping from one country to another, campaigning in elections and speaking about social justice. At the Summit of the Americas in Mar Del Plata, Argentina, in November 2005, Maradona participated in a counter-summit along with Evo Morales of Bolivia and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela to challenge then US President George W Bush's push for Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA), which proposed that Latin American companies and States prioritise the sale of raw materials and products to American buyers. The opposition to the FTAA was successful. The American proposal fell through. "I am completely left-wing," Maradona had said at the time as he became one of the icons of Latin America's pushback against the US's bullying of the region.

No other continent has arguably produced as many magical football players as South America. Most of them have the same life story and trajectory: born in poverty, learn the tricks of the game in shantytowns, don the National colours, sign multi-million dollar deals with European clubs, and look for a spot in the football establishment once their legs get tired. Not with Maradona. Even before he quit the game, he called FIFA a "mafia", much before the deep-rooted and systemic



Diego Maradona, then in Cuba undergoing rehabilitation for cocaine abuse, shows Cuban President Fidel Castro a tattoo of him on his leg, inside Revolution Palace in Havana on October 29, 2001. Photo: REUTERS/Stringer/File

corruption in football was exposed in 2015. Unlike other football greats like Pele and Zico, who never challenged the football or political establishment, Maradona continued to speak for the rights of players over the profits of clubs and for the welfare of common people over the greed of corporations. In the words of Eduardo Galeano, the legendary Uruguayan writer who was himself a chronicler of injustices in Latin America, it was Maradona's "voice that gave worldwide resonance to uncomfortable questions to power".

In recent years, as South America's leftist Governments came under siege with the rise of right-wing politics in some countries, including Brazil, Maradona missed no opportunity

to defend the left and attack the right. In his native Argentina, as the Government of Mauricio Macri imposed neoliberal policies on the country, which severely affected the poor in recent years, Maradona often clashed with the right-wing leader on social media, thus setting the tone for political debate. "His decisions have taken the lives of two whole generations of Argentinians," Maradona said of Macri, who was defeated in the Presidential elections last year by Alberto Fernandez.

Maradona did not keep himself limited to Argentina. A frequent visitor to Brazil, he repeatedly expressed his support for former Brazilian president Lula da Silva against his "political and legal persecution promoted" by Operation Car Wash. On Wednesday, Lula was one of the first to mourn his death. "Outside of sports rivalry, he was a great friend of Brazil. His intensity in life and his commitment to Latin American sovereignty is commendable," said the former President. "I have rarely seen a football player stop playing and yet not stop. Maradona continued to play. He continued to play in thoughts, in his political opinions, in his criticisms. He continued to play for poor people all over the world."

At the 2014 World Cup opening game, the abuse that Dilma Rousseff received deeply upset Maradona. He never hid his politics. He saw Latin America's leftist leaders as his allies. "There is no other Chavez, just as there is no other Fidel Castro or another Lula," Maradona had said once.

Just a coincidence, but Diego Maradona left the world the same day as Fidel Castro (November 25).

The world will miss Maradona for his game and flamboyance. Latin America will miss their Diego for hope and inspiration – on and off the field.

Courtesy The Wire