

CONSTRAINTS IN DEVELOPMENT OF MANIPUR

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Editors

C. Joshua Thomas

R. Gopalakrishnan

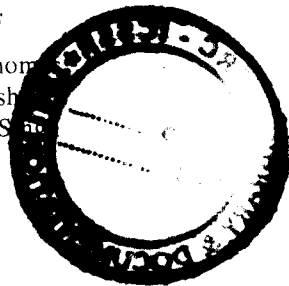
R.K. Ranjan Singh

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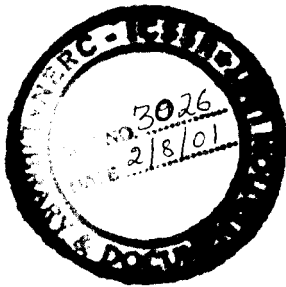
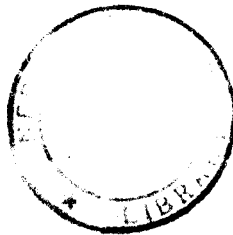
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Introduction

Manipur reflects a combination of high degree of social fragmentation, stagnating economy and insurgency-dominated activities. Even after five decades of independence, political administrative reforms and planned economic transition, political uncertainty has shown no sign of abatement. In fact, the Manipur is dominated by high population growth, worsening economic relations, rapidly increasing capital, technology and resource requirements, dwindling economic opportunities, fragile law and order situation and so on. Administrators, protagonists and populace have changed and multiplied. Growth of political flora indicated the intensity of fragmentation and fractionalisation of the polity. Access to political power became increasingly sophisticated.

Political uncertainty in such a scale has emerged abruptly. Documentary evidence clearly indicated why the state adopted policies that froze socio-political responses and consolidated hold on these territories. These documents also accounted for the existing ideological constructs and their functions including the pre-1947 insurgency situation. The pre-1947 state brought these areas under its control to further the imperial commercial interests. These areas remained for more backward than any other comparable regions the state. These became colonial possessions protecting mercantile capital. The inhabitants and local power structure frequently asserted themselves only to be crushed, as elsewhere. They succeeded in freezing most of the insurgent activities through military containment.

It was at this point that the note of dissent was voiced in the Manipur. These were in terms of a separate independent political status as voiced by the Naga confederation of people of the questioning of the merger of Manipur with the Indian union. These were not acceded by the state and developed into full scale insurgency. However, with the re-assertion of the state's control,

these insurgency situations became protracted and began undermining the socio-economic fabric of the state. Subsequent developments saw gradual spread. So that by late 1990's the state became a region in revolt. Today, when economic liberalisation is gradually transforming the national economy and society, the state is unable to attract the instruments that can telescoped development through massive inflow of capital and technology and in the process substantially transform the material life conditions of the common man. In addition to this, the increasing scale and intensity of natural calamities and immigration have further complicated the scenario.

Escalation of insurgency in the state, then can be attributed to the dynamics of internal geopolitical situation and to negligence and economic stagnation. Regional government remained concerned with strengthening of their electoral base and maintaining status quo, while being unable to effectively implement socio-economic programmes. These fell much short of aspirations of the people and their expectations of socio-economic progress, which led to social fragmentation and polarisation over issues. This encouraged the populace to look upon the protagonists as PANACEA for the socio-economic problems they faced. Subsequent mobilisation achieved cessation of these state run programmes. However, the limited socio-economic transformations and better accessibility conditions increased the level of materialistic hunger of the regional population. This was in direct proportion to the population's inability to satisfy their minimum requirements. In this regard, one can state that the initial decades after 1947 were wasted away in economic development terms. The consequences of which are probably responsible for the libertine decades of the 1970's and 1980's. These compelled the regional administrations to over extend its fragile infrastructural base. This also compelled the rapidly growing working population to become helpless, bewildered, aggressive, and hyperactive; who firmly believed that both the state and the society at large owes them a wages and a place. Yet these beliefs were mediate territorial horizons.

These also titled the equilibrium in the existing structures and opened up the Pandora box. This was essentially in the form of regional administrations effort of pleasing/satisfying the elite pressure groups on the one hand. And on the other hand, meeting the development requirements of the population of the concerned units. However, the protagonists of insurgency movements, by disrupting

the regional administration, were able to compel the former to re-identify the priorities and re-allocate the resources. It is obvious then, under these circumstances, economics development went awry.

It is not surprising therefore that both the state and the protagonists of insurgency elicited contradictory responses from the population. Instability parameters normally galvanised the state to address itself to the issues that had brought about it. Instead, half-hearted attempts and protagonists interventions complicated the entire process of development. In a manner of speaking, they followed the principles of Keynesian programmes for re-allocating and re-channelling the priorities and resources to suit the exigencies of the situation. Besides, intervention carries material and moral costs which the population in particular is normally reluctant to bear. This is evident from the situations of status quo, where the population have been manipulated to pay the costs without the possible peace and development in the horizon. Today, all the regional governments and the insurgency groups have countered and check-mated each other. The latter enjoyed definite psychological advantage and were able to compel the population to participate in their programmes aimed at disrupting the state administrative machinery. They were successful in bringing the normal activities of the different political units in the region, to a grinding halt. The moral of the regional administration's personnel reached an all time low. Such instances introduced Domino Effect not only within but also between the administrative units.

Ethnic and political power became the focus of all mobilisation in the state. Economy—its health and the growing need to accelerate its pace, became secondary, although the state of economy was used as a factor in explaining the increasing frequency of conflicts in the state. Various socio-political for a expressed different level of discriminations and deprivation affected due to their subordinate position in the respective administrative units of the region. This, along with the reluctance of the administration encouraged insurgency to spatially expand the levels of operations. Movements against the state intensified, through alliances between the insurgent outfits in the state. This common front in the 1980's, challenged the existing system and its practitioners. These groups also functioned as parallel governments, generating revenue by means that brought instantaneous compliance. This enabled them to increase their level of military preparedness.

At the same time, the regional administration found itself unable to cope up with situations. It was pre-occupied with maintaining the status quo and re-allocated its priorities and resources. They were also notable to effectively counter the psychological pressure exerted by the insurgency movements. They seemed to lose their political will and purpose. Besides, section of the populace and socio-political for a identified themselves with the conflict parameters. This was reinforced when many of these elements infiltrated into administrations. Resources and development came to be unaccounted while available channels were used to strengthen the continued survival of the elite-pressure groups in the region. The population became a mute spectator. It was such a situation that the Federal State intervened to contain the insurgency movement and revive the staggering economy.

It became obvious that with the disruption of the law and order and the stagnation of the economy, the situation in the state had come down to dangerous levels.

However, with the intervention of the federal state, an entirely new ethos emerged. Efforts were directed to restore the political will and purpose as well as increase the morale among the personnel of the regional administration, which was followed by efforts to revive and accelerate the pace of economic development. The attempt to restore normalcy seemed to be ridden with innumerable obstacles and difficulties, the reason being re-alignment of political forces. Thus, at individual or collective levels, it became difficult to categories the political and socio-economic demands and equate the same with the stability. For the various insurgency movements in the state, the return to status quo meant adoption of different tactics. They continued to take advantage to the aberrations in the regional administration and the respective societies while continuing their confrontation at a low key. For the general population, all these developments had profound impact. The state intervention brought with it a uneasy status quo, with perhaps more contenders competing for its limited resources. But, it meant revival of socio-economic programmes and realisation of short term economic initiatives. As an intermediary to restore peace, it was apparent that in order to introduce normalcy inducing conditions, the populace will have to play a more active role.

It is known fact that insurgency has come to stay in the state. Whatever measures that are adopted, it can only restrict level and

scale of insurgency and can always resurrect. What can be done is to direct efforts to thwart the rise of any conditions that may encourage such instances. Thus, it becomes obvious that what is needed, is to direct an unimpeded access to developing the economy and induce such conditions to emerge which will direct the necessary resources towards development. The policies need to be based on a force capability framework that induces the development effort. These suggests the necessity of broad policy consensus on the north-east, where continuity in policy is maintained. It should also call for a sound socio-economic policy where changes in administration does not disrupt or alter the economic process. It should involve a mass participation framework. There should be a broad consensus on the individual geopolitical framework for the regional administrative units with appropriate and flexible mechanism. It is at this centre that the workshop entitled constraints in development of Manipur was initiated.

There were nearly 20 participants of which 15 had contributed papers. These fifteen papers have been grouped under five heading of an Introduction (Part 1), Ethnicity, Insurgency, Law and Order (Part 2), Youth, Unemployment, Eradication of Drugs, AIDS (Part 3), Environment, Population and Industrial Development (Part 4), Women and Language as Part 5.

In Part 1 R. Gopalakrishnan provides a working scenario on developments in Manipur. In part 2, R.K. Ranjit Singh, Pradip Phanjanbam and L.I. Singh provides aspects of

In Part 3 M.C. Arun, M. Amarjeet Singh, Ng. Brajachand Singh and Lal Dena, discuss in Student Politics, Problem of Unemployment, Drug Abuse and Role of Church in Conflicts in Manipur.

In Part 4 B. Manithar Sharma, N. Mohendro Singh, Ch. Priyoranjan Singh and R.K. Narendra et al., discuss Impact of Environment, Problem of Industrial Development, Impact of Population Growth in Manipur

In Part 5 Ksh. Bimola Devi, L. Umarani Chanu et al., Gina Shangkhram and Ch. Yashawanta Singh deal aspect such as Role of Women in Politics, Manipur Women in Contemporary Situation, Women's Movements in Manipur, Language Development in Manipur.

Conclusion is represented by Recommendation of the Workshop.