

The Power of Truth
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By Moa Jamir

NPF fire poll salvos

The outcome of the recent Naga Peoples' Front (NPF)'s Central Executive Council on November 29 is clearly interesting in many aspects. Still convalescing after a series of internal strife in recent times, the major Party in the Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) came out blasting salvos in all direction against all its detractors.

The target, intensity and timing of attack, however, are conspicuous. The Party is playing an urgent electoral gambit given the impending polls in urban local bodies due early next year. Consequently, the Governor and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), incidentally a partner in ruling DAN Government, were prime targets.

Given the electoral consideration, predictably it employed the cheapest tricks in politicking to up the ante - the debate on the role of governor and religious polarization.

According to media report, Nagaland Home Minister Y Patton slammed the Governor PB Acharya for his statements in the media that the incumbent government was corrupt, maintaining how he would be able to address the Assembly saying "my government is corrupt"?

"The Governor should not be allowed to go to villages without invitation and check implementation of centrally sponsored schemes, specially MGNREGA and Mid Day Meal," Minister for National Highway Nukulotshi censured, according to a PTI report.

Over the years, Acharya's stand on corruption, despite his occasional foot in mouth statement, have been consistent. Most recently, he expressed concern that corruption has "diluted the rich fabric of the Naga society." The Governor has also been touring all the districts of Nagaland to gather first hand information on various issues particularly the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), inviting consternation from the state government.

Belatedly, NPF also resolved to appeal to the central government not to impose "Good Governance Day" coinciding with Christmas (December 25) "as the day is most revered by the Christian community." The Home Minister also alleged that "Raj Bhavan was becoming a place for RSS and BJP"

Seldom had the Party responded to issues with such acerbity. "Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows," wrote William Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. Nowhere, it was deemed more appropriate than the alliance between NPF and BJP. However, cracks in the DAN coalition came to the fore recently when the latter submitted a memorandum to the Governor in November highlighting "injustice and mis-governance of the DAN Government" maintaining that it cannot remain silent while the people in the State undergo "utter misery."

Whether action was necessitated by axing of one of its parliamentary secretary from the government for alleged "anti-Government activities" is beside the point. The NPF's combative salvo against the Governor must be interpreted in this context.

Politics apart, the NPF's commitment towards fighting corruption was most found most wanting when one of its minister at the same meeting lamented that some 'unrecognized' NGOs, fighting against corruption and government's incompetency, are acting more powerful than the recognized NGOs and ardently called for their derecognition.

Corruption in Nagaland is a vice which everybody loves to hate, but too feeble to resist its overarching tentacles. The ruling NPF's stand on the issue, besides politicking, are both dismissive and retaliatory and does not engender any assurance.

For any comment, drop a line to moajamir@live.com

LEFT WING |

IANS

Gained more weight after dieting? Blame gut bacteria

In a study that could lead to development of new treatment for "recurrent" or "yo-yo" obesity, researchers have found that intestinal microbes -- collectively termed the gut microbiome -- play an important role in post-dieting weight gain.

Following a successful diet, many people are dismayed to find their weight rebounding. Worse still, the vast majority of recurrently obese individuals not only rebound to their pre-dieting weight but also gain more weight with each dieting cycle.

In experiments with mice, the researchers at Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel found that after a cycle of gaining and losing weight, all the mice's body systems fully reverted to normal -- except the microbiome. "We've shown in obese mice that following successful dieting and weight loss, the microbiome retains a 'memory' of previous obesity," said researcher Eran Elinav.

For about six months after losing weight, post-obese mice retained an abnormal "obese" microbiome, reported the study published in the journal *Nature*. "This persistent microbiome accelerated the regaining of weight when the mice were put back on a high-calorie diet or ate regular food in excessive amounts," one of the researchers Eran Segal said.

"By conducting a detailed functional analysis of the microbiome, we've developed potential therapeutic approaches to alleviating its impact on weight regain," Segal noted. By combining genomic and metabolic approaches, the researchers identified two molecules driving the impact of the microbiome on regaining weight.

These molecules -- belonging to the class of organic chemicals called flavonoids that are obtained through eating certain vegetables -- are rapidly degraded by the "post-dieting" microbiome, so that the levels of these molecules in post-dieting mice are significantly lower than those in mice with no history of obesity. The researchers found that under normal circumstances, these two flavonoids promote energy expenditure during fat metabolism.

Low levels of these flavonoids in weight cycling prevented this fat-derived energy release, causing the post-dieting mice to accumulate extra fat when they were returned to a high-calorie diet. Finally, the researchers used these insights to develop new proof-of-concept treatments for recurrent obesity.

They supplemented post-dieting mice with flavonoids added to their drinking water. This brought their flavonoid levels, and thus their energy expenditure, back to normal levels. As a result, even on return to a high-calorie diet, the mice did not experience accelerated weight gain.

"If the results of our mouse studies are found to be applicable to humans, they may help diagnose and treat recurrent obesity, and this, in turn, may help alleviate the obesity epidemic," Elinav said.

COMMENTARY

Francisc Badia I Dalmases

Latin American fidelities*Fidel Castro quickly became the moral mentor of the Latin American Left, but he ended up perpetuating himself in power and not listening*

They say that heroes die young, and perhaps their heroic deeds die too when they go. In the case of the Cuban revolution, perhaps its true hero will not be Fidel, but Che Guevara, who died fighting in the Bolivian jungle before he was 40. Fidel Castro clung to the power they conquered together when in January 1959 they victoriously entered Havana from Sierra Maestra, and he failed to transform his original heroism into a representative, free and prosperous democracy.

As he faced up to the all-powerful United States in a region it had been treating for decades as an exclusive backyard, Fidel Castro became an icon for the vast majority of young Latin American revolutionaries, at a time when hope for a Communist path to freedom was still alive. The Cuban experiment offered the Latin American Left the necessary inspiration and strength to keep going and resisting, particularly during the bloody military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s which sought to repress all opposition and even planned to exterminate it with the Americans' invaluable assistance.

In Europe, a majority on the Left realized that the Communist utopia was in fact a bureaucratic dystopia, inherited from Stalinist terror, and evolved in many cases towards different conceptions of democratic socialism, transmuted into social-democracy. But it retained a fascination for the Cuban commander as an icon of its gut anti-Americanism.

In Latin America, however, this evolution of the Left was slow to arrive, but when it came, it brought a number of interesting innovations, partly due to the fact that the local oligarchies' power remained enormous, and US interventionism was much more aggressive. After all, Fidel managed to resist a thousand plots to kill him, armed invasion attempts, and

tough US sanctions which, paradoxically, ended up strengthening him. His fierce resistance and social achievements awarded him the status of a lay saint, a popular leader: an olive-green capped David who was capable of confronting capitalism's black top-hat Goliath.

Thanks to his great survival instinct and his cunning to take advantage of the interstices of geopolitics and secure three decades of Soviet aid, Fidel resisted by placing himself under the cover of the Cold War while supporting African decolonization and the multiple Latin American guerrillas. Even when the Berlin Wall finally fell and he USSR imploded, Fidel, in an exercise of pragmatism and military determination, managed to survive the loss of its geostrategic umbrella and a 35% GDP fall between 1989 and 1993.

He survived a cruel embargo and the post-Cold War period thanks to the consolidation of a peculiar quasi-autarchic regime which introduced timid capitalist reforms while effectively exporting doctors and teachers in exchange for oil. At home, in order to ensure its legitimacy and prevent its collapse, the regime kept on providing universal education and social services like nobody in the region, demanding in return blind obedience and invading as always the public space with revolutionary rhetoric and omnipresent propaganda, while monitoring and denouncing the impatient and, thanks to the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution effectiveness, unceremoniously jailing opponents, real or suspected. But the economic system, though it went from centralized planning to emergency plan improvisation, has never worked properly enough, and has undergone as little reforms as possible, so as to ensure that the first priority of the (one and only) Commu-

nist Party is met: staying in power for more than half a century.

Having turned into a moral guide for the guerrilla and the populist movements of the Left, Fidel was an endless source of inspiration for the political battles fought throughout Latin America. The Cuban Revolution originally inspired the FARC in Colombia and many other guerrilla movements, and when it seemed about to become exhausted, it became the model for the Bolivarian movement, which found inspiration and guidance in Fidel from the very beginning (Hugo Chávez's and commander Fidel Castro's reciprocal fascination, which began in 1994, is well-known, and it was in Cuba that the charismatic colonel decided to have his cancer be taken care of until his death in 2013).

The Fidel Castro icon has remained alive in Latin America, more than anywhere else, as an irrefutable proof that it is possible to resist with dignity Yankee imperialism and its associates. But the dignity of resistance ended up justifying, in the name of an idolized -- and thus untouchable -- revolution, the lack of civil and political liberties and the abuses of what turned out to be a repressive and autocratic regime. The epic of the anti-imperialist struggle and the social achievements at home keep on justifying today the rhetoric of an anachronistic leftism which puts the blame on foreign imperialism for the shortages its peoples face and for its own mistakes, and which lacks any capacity for self-criticism whatsoever, even when the polls take the power away from them.

Fidel embodies almost all the 20th century contradictions, but perhaps his sentence has been living too much and witnessing how his revolutionary legacy has definitely ceased to work, even in its last incarnation, Venezuela's Chavista regime. And Cuba, under his brother Raúl, the dynastic heir and the guardian of the Revolution, seems to be home to the last of the inherited contradictions of the last century: a combination of a highly deregulated capitalist economic system and an authoritarian regime with a Communist rhetoric which, while welcoming foreign capital, denies freedoms, represses dissenters and survives through corruption.

The temptation is to follow the Chinese or Vietnamese model (it is perhaps premonitory that the last public image of Fidel Castro, ten days before his death, shows him greeting Vietnamese president Tran Dai Quang). This is a model that does not seem to bother the new White House tenant, for whom promoting a democratic transition in Cuba will not be a priority, as long as they let him build hotels and casinos like those of yesteryear.

Fidel will probably live on more in the eyes than in the heart of many Latin Americans, and perhaps the black and white heroic pictures of 1959 will end up outstripping the gray tone of his senile years. But the promise of liberation that his revolution brought to the peoples of the hemisphere, being unfulfilled, may not survive.

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Understanding Indigenous Migration in Northeast India

Dolly Kikon (University of Melbourne)
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In the last decade, large numbers of indigenous youths from the uplands of Northeast India have migrated to metropolitan cities across in India. Many end up in the new service sector, getting jobs in high-end restaurants, shopping malls and spas. The demand for their labour is due to their "un-Indian" looks, "the exotic Asians," and in association with this, their reputation for being hard-working and loyal. Such labour market value is a remarkable reversal considering the earlier colonial stereotypes of savagery and disobedience, reproduced through the de-politicization of their armed insurrections during the postcolonial period. The daily experiences of vulnerability and marginality as well as the freedom and aspirations that a migratory life seems to engender is an important issue.

As anthropologists studying migration in Northeast India, we are concerned with the lives and lifeworlds of indigenous migrants who have travelled from the far-away Northeastern frontier to the expanding cities of South India. This movement does not involve the crossing of any international border, yet both geographically and culturally it is a movement into a very different place. It is a movement away from predominantly rural livelihoods with subsistence agriculture and politics revolving around ethnic homelands, with armed struggles and massive human rights violations and a corrupt local state structure, to a life in major Indian cities, where migrants are seen as outsiders, yet where their "un-

Roundtable series on Migration on December 3
Photo Exhibition on December 3-4
Time - 10:00AM
Venue - Hotel Acacia, Dimapur



Naga Employees at the Five Star Hotel, The Palladium, Mumbai. Pictures by Dolly Kikon

Indian" looks and English language skills helps provide relatively well paid jobs in the growing, global service sector. The category of indigenous migrants is not a clear-cut one, as we have observed in our research work, but refers here broadly to people that are categorized by the state as Scheduled Tribes (STs) and who besides their

respective ethnic communities also self-identify and assert themselves as being tribal or indigenous. Although, the term indigenous people have been a source of debate in India, we argue that the two latter terms -- tribal and indigenous people -- across Northeast India are often used interchangeably, and in India more generally.

An important question we ask in our research is why there is an increasing trend of migration among indigenous youth in Northeast India. We feel that asking basic questions like this draws our attention towards why people move and why at this particular point of time? This mobility and the questions we raise emerges as a complex puzzle since these developments has to be understood in the context of an affirmative action regime and a political culture that privilege sedentarism, that is, that people stay put in place and claim rights to ancestral territories. Our work on indigenous labour migration to the metropolis across India needs to be understood in the backdrop of changing land relations, providing and caring for family members and community in the hills, and also new dreams and aspirations of indigenous youths. By doing so, we assess the cultural fissures at work in people's attachment to the places of their journeys. The young indigenous migrants seem to be out on a journey without fixed destinations, as they struggle to make out what and where "home" is. We refer to this as wayfinding; a journey without a map or beaten paths or pathways to follow and with no clear destination or end station, but rather as a form of movement where the traveller constantly adjust the direction, seeking out new places and economic opportunities as they move on.

The research was conducted between 2013-2015 under the research project, "The Indian Underbelly: Marginalisation, Migration and State Intervention in the Periphery" at Stockholm University.

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