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MANIPUR TODAY



**AN EXPLORATION OF MYANMAR THROUGH
THE EYES OF MANIPUR MEDIA PERSONS**

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History has been created when the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Manipur organised a 9 Day long External Conducted Press Tour of Manipur media persons to Yangon, Myanmar from September 9-17, 2018. The external tour heralds the first foreign exposure of Manipur media persons to reciprocate the visit of Myanmar Press Council in Imphal during last year's Manipur Sangai Festival. Manipur Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh during the flag off ceremony said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Act East Policy has been implemented to build cordial relations between India and its neighbouring countries. He hoped that such foreign tour would strengthen the relationship between India and Myanmar.

A 28 member delegation has explored Mandalay, Yangon and Inle Lake of Myanmar. Meeting and interaction with the members of Myanmar Press Council was the focal point. At sidelines, the team engaged in various activities like visiting historical places associated with Manipur, interaction with Manipuri Diaspora living in Myanmar, discussing issues concerning their socio-economic life, call on the Indian Consulate officials at Yangon, discourse on the prospects of Indo-Myanmar bilateral relations and of course, learning the best practices Inle Lake in Shan State exhibits in attracting global tourists and maintaining the lake's eco-system by their government and people.

The memories and experiences of Myanmar trip are very profound. It taught us many lessons. Understanding the country and its hard working people itself enriches and enlightens our intellect. A trip to pagodas, palaces, rivers, heritage parks and crowded city streets throws lots of insight into the glorious Burmese civilization, might of majestic royalty, culture, manners, food habits and the present system of governance. Above all, the essence of Buddhism rules the roost in every aspect of Burmese society. People are very humble, noble, honest, although there exists a yearning for complete restoration of democracy. Familiarities and similarities are often noticed everywhere which enthral our hearts. Indeed, the tour signifies a goodwill gesture of Manipur media persons to the Myanmar counterparts to foster and strengthen the neighbourly relations in several aspects which will embolden the governments of the two countries to venture into various fields in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heisnam Balkrisna Singh'.

(Heisnam Balkrisna Singh)



AN EXPLORATION OF MYANMAR THROUGH THE EYES OF MANIPUR MEDIA PERSONS

H. Balkrisna Singh
Editor-in-Chief

Directorate of Information & Public Relations (DIPR), Manipur has been conducting external press tours outside Manipur over the years. The objective of conducting such tours to Indian cities is to provide an exposure and interaction of media persons of Manipur with the media fraternity of other Indian cities and study their mode of functioning.

*“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page”
- St. Augustine*

But this year’s external press tour is quite unique. Myanmar, popularly known as the “Land of Golden Pagodas” has been selected as the destination for the external conducted press tour. Selection of twin cities, Yangon and Mandalay and Inle Lake in Shan State, largest State in Myanmar was a bold decision in view of the democratic changes in the country. In fact,



Yangon was particularly selected as a reciprocal response of the visit of delegates of Myanmar Press Council during the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2017. New developments in the Indo-Myanmar bilateral relations which allowed crossing of land borders between the two countries from 8th August 2018 paved the way for a road trip for media persons of Manipur inside Myanmar which have not been explored so far. Accordingly, a nine-day road trip to Myanmar was planned from 9th-17th September 2018. This trip is the first-ever foreign tour of Manipur media persons organised by DIPR, Manipur.

FLAG OFF

On 9th September 2018, Shri N. Biren Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur flagged off the delegation of 28 persons including officials of DIPR, Manipur led by the Director, Shri H. Balkrisna Singh, representatives of local and national print and electronic media based in Manipur, representatives of Act East Policy Committee led by its Convenor, Shri R.K. Shivachandra and Shri Indramani Naoroibam, scholar of Manipuri history and archivist. The participants enjoyed a traditional Manipuri lunch at the Trade Centre, Moreh en-route to Tamu. After getting immigration and customs clearance, the team set out on its maiden journey to Mandalay in three hired Omnibus from Tamu.

ROAD TO MANDALAY

The distance between Imphal to Mandalay is about 595 km. The trip takes about 15 hours. We started the journey from Tamu towards Mandalay by afternoon on the same day by negotiating the two-lane Indo-Myanmar Friendship Road along Moreh-Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa (160 km stretch with 69 bridges), hilly terrains and rivers crossing. The rural landscape in interior Myanmar is quite similar to the rural settings of Manipur. The only difference is that theirs' is less inhabited, but greenery decorates the vast meadows. An eagerness to observe the wide canvas of Kabow Valley by evening was marred by dark clouds hovering over the sky. The smooth road and enjoyable ride ensured a sound sleep for all passengers travelling overnight on board. At night, we had a Burmese dinner in the middle of the journey. Everyone had a fair share of adventure, the Burmese way. By next early dawn when we wake up, the three vehicles

carrying us reached Sagaing, the capital of Sagaing Region. Sleep eluded us from witnessing the majestic Ningthi (Chindwin) River in Sagaing Region. The onward journey brought us to our first destination at Mandalay by nine in the morning, the delegates immediately checked in at Hotel Iceland, a 3 - Star Hotel.

VISIT TO MINGUN AND KAUNGHMUDAW PAGODA

Mandalay is the second largest city of Myanmar and the last royal capital of erstwhile Burma. It is located 630 km north of Yangon. The city is the economic centre of Upper Burma and considered the hub of Burmese culture. A continuing influx of Chinese immigrants, mostly from Yunnan, in the past two decades, has reshaped the city's ethnic makeup and increased commerce with China. Despite capital Naypyidaw's recent upsurge, Mandalay remains Upper Burma's main commercial, educational and health centre.

Any visitor from Manipur travelling to Sagaing, Amarapura, and Mandalay would not like to miss the historical places and majestic monuments associated with Manipur's history. A visit to Manipur origin people concentrated settlements in Mandalay city itself throws lots of insight into the lost communication with Manipuris of Myanmar and the land of their ancestors.

On the second day of the trip, the 28 member delegation visited Mingun, a small town in Sagaing Township, north-west of Myanmar, located 11 km up the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River on the west bank of Mandalay. The Mingun Temple (Buddhist temple) is a monumental uncompleted stupa built by King Bodawpaya in



1790. King Bodawpaya also had a gigantic bell cast to go with his huge stupa, the Mingun Bell weighing 90 tons, and is today the largest uncrack ringing bell in the world.

After lunch, the team visited Kaunghmudaw Pagoda, a large pagoda on the northwestern outskirts of Sagaing in Central Myanmar. It is an important pilgrimage and tourist destination in the Sagaing area. The Manipuri connection of this gigantic pagoda is that in 1738, Maharaja Garibaniwaj of Manipur entered the pagoda and put a sword mark on the eastern door of the pagoda. Shri Indramani Naoroibam, historian and archivist narrated the significance of Kaunghmudaw Pagoda to Manipuri media persons and other delegates.

JOURNEY TO YANGON

After a brief halt at Mandalay, we again set out the onward journey to Yangon by night on the same day. We boarded a Volvo bus from

Mandalay along the Asian Highway No.1. The onward overnight ride to Yangon which takes 8 hours from Mandalay was an awesome journey and a memorable exploration of interior Burma. However, due to travelling at night, we have not been able to observe the topography of the landscape. Around midnight, the bus driver stopped at a big roadside restaurant for dinner. The ethnic Asian cuisine available in the majestic restaurant relished us a mouth-watering experience.

LOCAL SIGHT SEEING

On the third day of the trip, we reached Yangon, formerly Rangoon, the capital of Yangon Region of Myanmar in the early morning. Yangon served as the capital of Myanmar until 2006, when the Military Government shifted the capital to Naypyidaw in Central Myanmar. Yangon is Myanmar's largest city and the most important commercial centre.

After few hours of rest in

Hotel 63, we visited National Races Village, a heritage park located at Thaketa Township. It is a living museum exhibiting lifestyle, culture, and costumes of different ethnic communities of Myanmar viz. Bamar, Rakhine, Shan, Karen, Chin, Mon, Kachin, etc. During the visit, we received information that Myanmar Government has earmarked land for setting up of a heritage park for Meiteis (Kate) of Myanmar. We have decided and determined to apprise and pursue the State Government of Manipur for engaging with the Myanmar Government for construction of a Manipuri Heritage Centre at the National Races Village.

In the afternoon, the team from Manipur visited a few Meitei families in the heart of Yangon and exchanged fraternal ideas about culture, language, and tradition. We were shocked to learn that the population of the Meiteis in Yangon is declining day by day. The Meitei settlers of Yangon were invited to visit

Manipur during the Sangai Festival, 2018 and present cultural programmes. They have exuded confidence on receiving the invitation and expressed a strong desire for participation in the upcoming Sangai Festival.

A MORNING WALK INSIDE TAUKKYAN WAR CEMETERY

On 12th September 2018, the fourth day of the tour, a small group led by Shri L. Ashok Kumar Singh, District Information Officer, Ukhrul visited the Taukkyan War Cemetery, Rangoon. The cemetery is one of the most visited and high rated war sites in Asia. The cemetery contains the graves of 6,374 soldiers who died in the Second World War, the graves of 52 soldiers who died in Burma during the World War I, and memorial pillars (The Rangoon Memorial) with the names of over 27,000 Commonwealth soldiers who died in Burma during the World War II but who have no known grave. We were so awestruck to find the names in the pillars which include soldiers from the North East India - Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, etc. who sacrificed their lives during the World War II.

Later, our delegation visited the temple of Reclining Budha Idol and Inya Lake at Yangon. On seeing the majestic Reclining Buddha idol, a gigantic structure, we were infused with spiritualism. Then we visited Inya Lake which is a landmark spot in Myanmar as Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese political prisoner (now State Counsellor) was kept under house arrest at a shoreline residence during the pro-democracy demonstrations and several violent students' agitations and killings also took place around this lake. While travelling we had a glimpse of Shwedagon Pagoda, popularly known as Golden Pagoda, a 326 feet tall structure which

dominates the Yangon skyline. We also visited the banks of Yangon River where ships and ferries transport passengers and goods. Myanmar is a land of abundance, rich in natural resources, river systems facilitating inland transportation and affluent agriculture, virgin forest cover providing sufficient oxygen supply, proximity to the Indian Ocean ensuring economic development and restoration of democracy as a healthy sign of advancement in all fronts. This country is now sleeping, once wakes up would be an Asian Tiger.

proposed to be held sometime in last week of October or first week of November 2018 at Yangon ahead of the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2018. Shri R.K. Shivachandra Singh, Convenor, Act East Policy, Manipur conveyed the news of Manipur Chief Minister's recent announcement for developing a Guest House exclusively for the Buddhist pilgrims of Myanmar visiting Bodh Gaya in India. During the interaction, media persons from Manipur also expressed their concern for expediting their motor vehicle crossing in both the countries and introduction



VISIT TO THE INDIAN EMBASSY, YANGON

In the evening, the delegation visited Indian Embassy at Yangon and called on Shweta Singh, First Secretary of the Indian Embassy and discussed India's Act East Policy regarding the opening of land border crossing and proposed Motor Vehicle Crossing Agreement between India and Myanmar. The team from Manipur requested her to explore possibilities about the opening of a Guest House for Manipuri traders and tourists visiting Myanmar at Yangon and Mandalay respectively. She also informed the visiting team about a conclave of Chamber of Commerce of both countries

of e-visa on the Indian side for strengthening the bilateral ties between the two countries.

PRESS INTERACTION

On day 5 (13th September 2018), Myanmar Press Council hosted an interface of media persons of Manipur and Myanmar at a hotel in Yangon. It was a follow up programme of the Statement No. 34 of the India-Myanmar Joint Statement issued on the occasion of the State Visit of Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi to Myanmar from September 5 to 7, 2017 which says, "Recognising the importance of the role played by the media in fostering and supporting democracy, both sides



welcomed the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between Press Council of India and the Myanmar Press Council". Activities under this framework will encourage exchanges between journalists and promote a better understanding of political and economic developments in India and Myanmar. Last year, DIPR, Manipur had organised a 2-Day Inter-Regional Media Interaction Programme between India and Myanmar in Imphal from 27-28 November 2017 as a part of the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2017.

Yangon Interface between the media persons of Manipur and members of Myanmar Press Council was a fruitful experience. We exchanged ideas and explored avenues for regional co-operation in the field of media. Media in Myanmar is no longer a new invention considering the fact that it flourished to the zenith during the British Raj. However, decades of military rule in the country has suppressed the democratic freedom of expression. With the ushering of the democratic process in the country in recent years, the inalienable right to freedom of expression was reborn. Understanding their plight, Manipur Media team assured of all possible help in enhancing the democratic process of the fourth estate in

Myanmar. During the interaction, I have expressed my desire to train interested budding journalists of Myanmar in the State Institute of Journalism run by DIPR, Manipur for an exposure on the functioning of media in a democratic country. Shri R.K. Shivachandra Singh also expressed that better regional cooperation between the media fraternity of Manipur and Myanmar can boost the economy of the region. Dr. Zaw Than, a senior member of Myanmar Press Council who attended Inter-Regional Media Interaction Programme in Manipur during the Sangai Festival, 2017, remarked that such interaction and exchange programmes will broaden the economic corridor of the region. Mr. Soe Myint, Managing Director of Mizzima Media Group, Yangon who was an exiled pro-democracy leader and a pioneer in re-defining the importance of free press in Myanmar also spoke of bilateral cooperation and strengthening of the Indo-Myanmar relations. Dr. Myo Thant Tyn, Vice-President of MPC also aired similar views. Journalists of Manipur while interacting with their counterparts have shared views for hosting more media exchange programmes in future and highlighted the importance of better connectivity of roads, railways and air and

the introduction of a visa-free regime in both the countries. At the end of the interaction, we relished a Burmese traditional lunch arranged by the Myanmar Press Council. By the evening of the same day, the team left Yangon for Inle Lake at Shan State.

DISCOVERY OF INLE LAKE

The road trip to Inle Lake, 591 km (15 hours) from Yangon towards the north-east was an unforgettable journey. The night travel was nothing unusual but prolonged confinement inside the ambit of a night super bus was a terrible experience. The only relief provided was the feeling that an entire delegation boarding a bus exclusively with the freedom to chat, laugh and interaction. The experience of night travel, dinner along the roadside restaurant and other activities need no further exaggeration.

In the early morning of 14th September, the sixth day of the tour, when I woke up inside the bus, I witnessed a wonderful canvas of mountainous landscape of Shan State with much resemblances of my native land. In fact, a prolonged road trip with hectic activities has caused exhaustion which often reminded me of my sweet home and homemade foods. But the morning brought a refreshing experience as the journey was taking us closer to the Inle Lake, the second largest freshwater lake in Myanmar.

Shan State borders China to the north, Laos to the east, and Thailand to the south and five administrative divisions of Burma to the west. Shan State is the largest of 14 administrative divisions of Myanmar and covers almost a quarter of the country. The state derives its name from the Shan people, one of the several ethnic groups that

inhabit the area. Shan State is largely rural, with only three cities, Lashio, Kangtung and the capital, Taungyi.

Inle Lake is located in the Nyaungshwe Township of Taungyi District of Shan State with an estimated surface area of 44.9 square miles (116 sq. km), one of the highest at an elevation of 2,900 ft (880 m). The watershed area of the lake lies to a large extent to the north and west of the lake. The lake drains on its southern end. There is also a hot spring on its northern shore. Although the lake is not large, it contains a number of endemic species. Besides, it hosts around 20,000 brown and black head migratory seagulls in winter every year. Although our Loktak Lake, the largest freshwater lake in the entire North East India is relatively bigger than Inle Lake, the two lakes are designated as a protected Ramsar site.

We reached the lake in the morning. An entry fee of Rs.600/- (12,000 kyat) is charged for foreigners entering the lake. After check in the lakeside

resort, we hired three high-speed motorboats and explored various unique aspects, the lake holds within its own fold. Lunch in a floating restaurant, visit a floating garment store where lotus weavers make special fabrics of all kinds of apparel, a Buddhist temple on an elevated dry land within the lake, organic farming over the phumdies (floating biomass), clean environment, etc. impressed us immensely. The wonderful and unique experience of the lake cropped up stark differences between our Loktak and Inle. Unlike our lake, Inle Lake attracts millions of global tourists without harming its eco-system and providing employment to thousands of Burmese settled along the banks of the lake. The huge concentration of about one thousand lakeside resorts and floating hotels speaks volumes. At night, a special dinner was arranged in the resort with continental cuisines, musical extravaganza, and lots of fun, frolic, and laughter.

RETREAT FROM INLE

On the seventh day of the tour (15th September), we left Inle for Mandalay in the early morning. The distance between Inle to Mandalay is barely 265 km. Generally, it takes only six hours. However, the same hired Volvo bus consumed more time than expected. We reached Mandalay after dark and our plan to visit Meitei settlements of Yangon and have an interaction was shelved. On arrival at Iceland Hotel, all the delegates swiftly checked in and hastily took to deep slumbers. I didn't check and enquire whether they have taken dinner or not as usual as I was completely drained and exhausted like others.

LAST DAY IN MANDALAY

Dawn of a new day has brought the last day of our stay in Mandalay. Prominent leaders of Meitei communities representing several villages spread across the city and youth leaders as well visited us in the hotel and an interaction ensued. This meeting heralded a reunion of fraternity across the borders and shared solidarity. They have put up





proposals for learning Manipuri dance, Manipuri and Burmese languages and frequent visits from each side for solidifying the brotherhood. We welcomed their suggestions and in turn, we also put forward ambitious plans to materialise and actualisation of the points that transpired during the discussions and deliberations. We invited them to be a part of Manipur Sangai Festival, 2018 by a presentation of cultural items and visit at religious shrines and tourists attraction at the behest of State Government courtesy Tourism

Department. We gifted them traditional shawls and mementos to each of them. A copy of 'Manipur Today' published by the DIPR, Manipur was also presented to disseminate current issues of Manipur.

Immediately after the conclusion of the meeting, all the delegates have dispersed in their own ways for shopping, local sightseeing, and other activities. By evening, we bid adieu to Mandalay for homecoming in three omnibuses. The ray of evening sun reflected upon the

Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River was so serene. While crossing the bridge over the river, I saw numerous ferries and large boats cruising freely along the river. They have been utilizing inland waterways since ages, whereas, Indians have failed to capitalise on this front. Besides, we missed the river cruise experience both at Yangon and Mandalay. In Myanmar, ferries and river cruises for domestic transportation from one city to another city and for carrying tourists is very common. At night, we stopped at a roadside restaurant located on



the bank of Chindwin (Ningthi) River for dinner. The full moon overlooking the vast expanse of Chindwin floodplains was a rare sight. Seeing the beauty and bounty of nature endowed with the land of thousand pagodas, I cherished every moment. A heavy dinner at the riverbank restaurant and ordeal of a long journey immersed me at the altar of the Goddess of Sleep.

HOMECOMING

In the wee hours of 17th September, we reached Kalewa, a tiny town, about 146 km from

Tamu and had early breakfast. One thing I noticed in Myanmar is that people are very hard working, soft spoken, religious, noble and humble. During our nine days of journey, not a single incident of cheating, looting, undue interference by the local taxi and cab drivers, shopkeepers, hotel staffs are either reported or encountered. The sacred thread of Buddhism seems to bind their behaviour and permeated their way of life despite political turmoil rocking the nation. By around 9 in the morning, we reached the Tamu

Immigration Check Post near the Friendship Bridge and after clearance; we proceeded to Immigration and Land Customs Office at Moreh. We had a stopover at Moreh Trade Centre and had tea and snacks and a brief shopping at Namphalong Market followed, thereafter; we reached Imphal in the evening. Thus, nine days of external press tour of Manipur media persons to Myanmar conducted by the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Manipur was concluded with a positive note and profound memories.



THE NEED OF THE HOUR

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & ECO-TOURISM

Laishram Roshan
Public Relations Officer

Wildlife Week is celebrated annually from 2nd-8th October in India. The main goal of this campaign is to promote the conservation and protection of fauna (animal) lives. The wildlife week was developed in 1952 with the overall purpose of raising awareness regarding safeguarding the lives through significant action. With this thought in mind, the Indian government has developed an Indian Board of wildlife that works for spreading awareness towards the conservation of wildlife. Throughout this week, experts conduct hands-on seminars to bring the more difficult aspects of wildlife conservation within the range and understanding of all age groups. It involves the planning to prevent the extinction of any animal species available in the country.

OBJECTIVE

1. To make people aware of the protection and conservation of wildlife.
2. To focus the people's attention towards the importance of conservation of wildlife.
3. To implement more services to preserve wildlife.
4. To discuss all the issues related to the preservation and conservation of wildlife.

Emphasis is given to school children to generate awareness on the protection and conservation of wildlife and also to inculcate love for wildlife amongst youths and students.

WILDLIFE WEEK IN MANIPUR

Manipur also observed the 63rd Wildlife week at the state level and district level by the State Forest and Environment

Department. Competitive events including a quiz, painting, essay writing, poster, and debate competitions were held at schools and colleges at district as well as state level. Besides these, a state level photography competition was also held.

The closing function was organised at the auditorium of Manipur State Film Development Society, Palace compound in Imphal East District on 8th October 2018.

On this occasion, Governor of Manipur, Najma Heptulla highlighted that it is the responsibility of the people of Manipur and the State government to protect Manipur's biodiversity which included 4000 angiosperms, 1200 medicinal plants, 34 species of edible fungi, about 500 orchids, 55 species of bamboo, 695 birds, 160 fish species, 21 migratory

aquatic birds and multitude of butterflies and insects.

The Governor also opined that commercial hunting should be completely banned to protect wildlife and maintain the ecological balance of Manipur which is one out of the 34 biodiversity hotspots across the globe.

INITIATIVES TAKEN UP TO CONSERVE WILDLIFE AND PROMOTE ECOTOURISM

COMMUNITY RESERVES

Community reserves are the decentralised means of management of protected area network, where ownership rests with the Village Management Committee but with the commitment for the protection of forests and conservation of wildlife. During 2017-18, eight new community reserves involving an area of about 92.71 sq.km have been notified under Wildlife (protection) Act, 1972 in Senapati and Tamenglong Districts.

It has helped the Forest Department in increasing the Protected Area Network from 3.8% to 4.2% of the total geographical area of the state.

KEIBU LAMJAO NATIONAL PARK

As per 2016 population estimation, the population of Sangai is 260 which include 75 stags, 127 hinds, and 58 fawns.

The forest department has also taken up various measures to protect the habitat of Sangai and to promote eco-tourism in Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLNP).

A project for development of eco-tourism in Mantha and Mukap Ching (hillocks) at the fringe of KLNP has been developed at a cost of Rs. 22 crores. The poaching of wildlife

has been controlled by the construction and establishment of Anti-Poaching camps at Khordangkong, Chingthi, and Chingmei.

Alternate livelihood support has been provided to the people living around the park through training and economic support. A total of 22 beneficiaries have been benefited by the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat and Sangai recovery programme through Direct Benefit Transfer.

MANIPUR ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN

Manipur Zoological Garden, Iroisemba is an important place for ex-situ conservation of wildlife, education, research and recreation in Manipur. The number of visitors to the zoo has increased to 1,17,848 in 2017-18 as compared to 99,218 visitors in 2016-17.

Some of the activities taken up in the Manipur Zoological garden to protect wildlife are the construction of enclosure of Slow Loris, rest shed for Spotted deer and Sambhar deer, stand-off barrier of Hog deer enclosure, clouded leopard enclosure, repair of leopard enclosure, vulture enclosure etc.

Besides, regular health supervision by the Directorate of Veterinary & Animal Husbandry

has also been arranged on monthly basis by the zoo administration.

NONGIN CONSERVATION & BREEDING CENTRE

The Forest Department has also taken up the initiative to set up a Conservation-cum-Captive Breeding Centre of the State Bird "Nongin" in its native habitat in Shirui of Ukhrul District.

SANGAI INTERNATIONAL TOURISM FESTIVAL 2017

For the first time, the "Curtain Raiser" of the Sangai Festival 2017 was organised at Keibul Lamjao by the Forest Department with the support of the Tourism Department. This has significantly increased the number of tourists both domestic and International which was around 10000 in 2017-18 as compared to 6000 in the previous year.

PEOPLE CENTRIC APPROACH TO PROMOTE ECO-TOURISM

In February 2018, a team of officers of the Forest Department had visited the Kailam, Bunning and Zeilad Wildlife Sanctuaries in Pherzawl and Tamenglong Districts to meet villagers, understand their issues and development of eco-tourism in these areas.



FAUNA OF MANIPUR



State Animal : Sangai
(Brow Antlered Deer or
Dancing Deer)



Amur Falcon at
Tamenglong



Hoolock Gibbon



Leopard



Clouded Leopard



State Bird: Nongin Mrs. Hume's Pheasant



Hornbill in Tamenglong



Slow Loris



MAKE IN MANIPUR

A STRIDE TOWARDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Irungbam Prabin Kumar Singh
Information Assistant

In line with Central Government's 'Make in India' initiative, the State Government too has started taking up steps to promote 'Make in Manipur' products. The launching of Manipur StartUp and Mission for Economic Empowerment of Traditional

Artisans and Craftsmen (MEETAC) by the State Government aim to give an impetus to this venture. From this fiscal year onwards, the Government has started earmarking Rs. 30 crores for Manipur StartUp. In the first phase, monetary assistance having 30% subsidy has been

granted to 334 entrepreneurs selected through a transparent selection procedure. Notification for the second phase of the noble scheme has also already been issued.

Apart from assistance through StartUp scheme, the



State Government has also been encouraging different banks operating in the State to provide soft loans to educated and skilled youths. Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh has even announced that the State Government will prepare a ranking of banks functioning in the State on the basis of the services provided by them to needy people. The amount of money to be deposited from the State's exchequer to these banks will be decided by this ranking. Hon'ble Chief Minister's call is very loud and clear. There is no point of depositing money to

those banks which are not willing to serve the needy people.

Manipur State Cooperative Bank Ltd. (MSCBL) is one of the leading banks which provide loans to deserving people. It is said that the bank alone has provided around Rs. 9 crores to different individuals and organisations, who approached the Hon'ble Chief Minister for financial support, on Meeyamgi Numit (People's Day) and Hill Leaders' Day. Hopefully, those companies and individuals, who have received monetary assistance from the Government, will be able to expand their business thereby giving a great boost to 'Make in Manipur' initiative of the State Government.

Moreover, the State Government has also launched Mission for Economic Empowerment of Traditional Artisans and Craftsmen (MEETAC) to promote inclusive growth by developing the traditional crafts/arts sector of Manipur as per global standards and making it an important spoke in the wheel of economic activities. MEETAC is an autonomous Society set up on 29th December 2017 under the Department of Textiles, Commerce, and Industries. However, it was officially launched on 1st September 2018.

Apart from all the initiatives mentioned above, the most important step which the State Government has taken up to immediately begin export of 'Make in Manipur' products is leasing out of production units of Apparel and Garment Making Centre, Lamboikhongnangkhang, Imphal West District to private parties for high-quality apparel production.

The building and machinery of Unit-1 of the Government-owned Centre are currently utilised by Big

Concepts Foundation Pvt. Ltd. and Unit-3 by Ningthibee Collections for stitching high fashion items in the garment sector. The State Government's idea is to explore means to encourage self-employment and entrepreneurship through a large-scale production of different apparels using high-quality fabrics imported from Guangzhou (China).

A number of Mumbai-based companies, which supply varieties of modern clothing to different parts of the country including Manipur, are also using the same fabrics manufactured at Guangzhou. These raw materials take around 40 days to reach Mumbai port from the Chinese city via the sea route. However, it takes only 12 days to reach Imphal via Kunming and Moreh.

Big Concepts Foundation Pvt. Ltd. has tapped this advantage of geographical proximity. It has begun to produce ladies' apparels and dressings with the 'Make in Manipur' tag at an affordable price using these raw materials. Now, the private company is currently providing employment to around 40 people in the production unit.

This figure may increase up to around 300 workers once the Unit-2 of the Centre also starts functioning, said Big Concepts, Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Shri L. Niranjana Singh. Two trainers from National Capital Delhi are imparting training to workers as well. The private company is planning to bring 20 to 25 more trainers to achieve the target of reaching the number of workers up to 300, he added. The CEO also informed that apart from orders from Kolkata and Delhi, they recently received a bulk order of supplying one lakh pieces every month from a Mauritian company. To cope up



THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT IS VERY SUPPORTIVE. WE'RE GETTING LOTS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE VENTURE. AND WE'RE VERY THANKFUL FOR IT.

High fashion street wear items would also be produced under the brand. It will be sold in Manipur and North Eastern States in the beginning though it has expansion plans in other States of the country as well. Handloom and power loom fabrics in addition to some materials from other parts of the country and world would be utilised in the production of Kai apparels. The whole idea of Kai is to produce high fashion apparels having a bit of Manipuri flavour. Raw material will be produced at its units located at Kangjabi, Kongba, and Moidangpok. The private company has also plans to open Kai stores at Kangjabi, Thangmeiband, Kakching and Thoubal etc. in the first phase.

Sailex Ngairangbam said that such prompt action was not expected earlier but the current Government is proactively encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment now, and this is really a welcome development.

with the increasing demand, the venture may switch to a PPP model in consultation with the State Government soon.

“The current Government is very supportive. We’re getting lots of encouragement and suggestions from the Government regarding the venture. And we’re very thankful for it” said Niranjan.

On the other hand, Ningthibee Collections is using the Unit-3 of the Apparel and Garment Making Centre. It is now producing two different brands namely, Sailex and Ningthibee. Owner of the private firm, Ngairangbam Bimolata said her son Sailex Ngairangbam, an alumnus of Domus Academy, Milan and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), is the main driving force for production of ‘Make in Manipur’ apparels.

Sailex brand is around 10 years old, and it caters to high-end products like evening wear, Christian wedding, Indian wedding, evening dresses, gowns etc. It also supplies to Multi Designer Outlets all over the country, and also to Riyadh and Dubai.

Ningthibee brand caters to mostly Manipuri traditional

apparels and Manipuri wedding materials. Raw materials from Delhi, Jaipur, China, and local fabrics are being used in the production of Ningthibee items. Ningthibee products are available in Delhi and Dimapur in Nagaland as well. The private company has received Rs. 90 lakh as assistance from the Government under Manipur StartUp recently.

Designer Sailex Ngairangbam said that as the company’s expansion plan, a new brand known as Kai would be rolled out soon. Kai would focus on mass production, and the price range would be between Rs. 500 and Rs. 5000, he conveyed.





MANIPUR CELEBRATES IRAWAT DAY OFFICIALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME

Along with the laying of foundation stone of Irawat Square at Thangmeiband near Manipur State Legislative Assembly complex, the State Government organised Jana Neta Irawat Day (Irawat Day) celebration as a State function for the first time on 30th September 2018.

Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Shri Y. Joykumar Singh and Art and Culture Minister Shri L. Jayantakumar Singh graced the historic function held at BT Park.

The Chief Minister said Irawat Day is celebrated as a State function from this year only with the coming of the new Government although his birthday i.e. 30th September was declared as a State holiday way back in 1976.

“Many Prime Ministers had come and gone in the country but no Prime Minister, except

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had ever recognised the contributions and achievements of Hijam Irawat”, the Chief Minister said. He added that during Vajpayee’s tenure as the Prime Minister in 1998, the then NDA Government released a commemorative stamp in Irawat’s name.

“Irawat stood for the unity and love between hill people and valley people”, he said. Stating that taking a resolution on the release of Rongmei religious and political leader Rani Gaidinliu in Chinga Session of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha held in 1938 was an example of his understanding on hill-valley relationship, the Chief Minister recalled that the inseparable hill-valley unity was his vision for a prosperous Manipur.

Maintaining that the current Government has been working in line with this vision from the beginning, the Chief

Minister said ‘Go to Hills’ mission is a clear testimony towards this end.

The Chief Minister said that giving thrust to irrigation, agriculture and fishery and initiation of ‘Go to Village’ mission are the clear examples of adopting Irawat’s vision of developing rural areas and uplifting farmers and poor people.

He said that paying homage and celebrating Irawat’s birth anniversary would be meaningful only when the current generation follows his ideals and translate his philosophies into action. He also assured that construction of Irawat Square would be completed before next year’s Irawat Day celebration.

Earlier, the Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone of Irawat Square at Thangmeiband near Manipur State Legislative Assembly complex.



GANDHI JAYANTI

MANIPUR BECOMES OPEN DEFECATION FREE STATE

Governor of Manipur Dr. Najma Heptulla said that the present generation should try to imbibe the virtues of tolerance and humanism from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi for a better world order. This was stated by her at the observance of National Cleanliness Day and Declaration of ODF Manipur held at Gandhi Memorial Hall, Imphal on 2nd October 2018.

The Governor said that Mahatma Gandhi proved that non-violence is the most powerful sword. “His philosophy of non-violent agitation and civil disobedience not only led his own country to independence but also influenced political activists throughout the world”, she added.

Acknowledging the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi on non-

violence, the United Nations declared 2nd October as International Day of Non-Violence on 15th June 2007.

Mentioning that Mahatma Gandhi always emphasised cleanliness for a healthy living, the Governor stressed that healthy people make a healthy nation. “The “Swachh Bharat” initiative taken up by the Central Government is towards this end of keeping the environment clean. All should endeavour to make it a persevering campaign for a good health and mind”, she appealed.

Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh appreciated the efforts of the officials of government offices and schools authorities for making cleanliness drive regularly in their premises. “The year-long celebration to

commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi has begun under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi”, he added.

Manipur is the 23rd State to be declared as Open Defecation Free State in the country. Recently, Google Toilet Locator was launched, which enable people to locate the nearest public toilet for use when needed from their mobile in the State.

During the function, Governor Dr. Najma Heptulla handed over the certificate of ODF Manipur to Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh. She also handed over the best Swachhgrahi to seven individuals for their selfless and outstanding in organising IEC campaign on sanitation and safe drinking water.



HOW MANIPUR BECAME ODF

On 2nd October 2018, Manipur has become the 23rd state to become Open Defecation Free (ODF) in India under the Swachh Bharat Mission. Manipur has 16 districts, 44 blocks, and 2556 Gram Panchayat which were all declared as ODF. As per Base Line Survey (BLS), out of the total 4.45 lakh rural households in Manipur, 2.5 lakh households were without toilets in 2012. However, at present, 100% coverage of the toilets has been achieved in rural areas with the construction of more than 2.5 lakh toilets. A total number of 142 publically accessible Toilets are uploaded in Google Map with assistance by the Quality Council of India (QCI).

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), aims at making urban areas from “Open Defecation Free” and at achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste. The

solid waste treatment plant at Lamdeng will become “waste to energy” plant. Along with the ODF sustainability activities, Bishnupur District which was the first valley district to achieve ODF has also started treating their plastic waste as a resource.

In the recently conducted SwachhSurvekshan 2018 which is part of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), Kakching was declared the cleanest town in North East India, followed by Kumbi and MayangImphal, which was declared best ‘City in Citizen Feedback’.

Around 70,000 toilets in the hill districts were constructed with much difficulty in many far-flung areas. Ukhrul has started ‘Ukhrul Town sanitation movement’ which is a one of its kind movement in the State, under the leadership of various community leaders as part of sustainable ODF. Ukhrul along

with Kamjong have conducted an intensive campaign on sanitation and safe drinking water and training emphasizing on the construction of twin pit toilets.

On the fortnightly observance of a Nationwide campaign “Swachhtahi Seva” (SHS) since 15th September 2018, the State has carried out the campaign in both hills and valley region with support from the communities, frontline workers, Swachhagrahis, volunteers, Ministers, MLAs, government departments, organisations, and private bodies.

In Manipur traditionally, there is no practice of open defecation but the conversion from insanitary toilets to sanitary toilets is the herculean task for the authority. Various programmes were organised for awareness and behavioural changes in the usage of sanitary toilets.



MANIPUR BAGS 3 NATIONAL AWARDS FOR POSHAN ABHIYAN

MINISTER NEMCHA KIPGEN LAUDS SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT FOR POSHAN ABHIYAN AWARD

Social Welfare Minister Smt. Nemcha Kipgen lauded the Department of Social Welfare, Manipur for receiving National Award for Poshan Abhiyan in two categories namely Field Functionary Awards - Individual Excellence and AAA (A++) Award 11th October 2018.

Minister Nemcha expressed that the credit for the achievement goes to the department officials, staffs, and

AWW for their commitment, dedication and team work and also the Deputy Commissioner of Chandel district for the Leadership Award. "Such awards and recognition will boost all the stakeholders to continue in their efforts in delivering their best for the welfare of all" she said.

Altogether, six awardees from the State received this award in three different categories including Leadership Awards,

Field Functionary Awards - Individual Excellence and AAA (A++) Award. They are W. Warthangam, Anganwadi Worker (AWW), Bongkhamtsel, ASHA, Regika, ANM, Krishna Kumar, Department of Commerce, Chandel, Dimkhanman Hangsing, ANM and ST NaotingVaiphei, ASHA.

The nodal ministry for the National Nutrition Mission/ PoshanAbhiyaan - Ministry of



Women and Child Development, recognised outstanding works at all levels and across Ministries /Departments during the PoshanMaah as part of the PoshanMaah Award Ceremony held in New Delhi on 10th of this month.

Minister further stated that this is the 2nd National Award bagged by the Department of Social Welfare, Manipur Department in this year.

NATIONAL AWARD FOR 100% DBT IMPLEMENTATION

The Department was also awarded by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India for its efforts and contribution in implementing 100 percent Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) through PFMS. The department was given 3rd Rank in implementation of DBT in NSAP.

The award was handed over by Union Minister, Rural Development, Government of

India, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar in the presence of Minister of State, Rural Development, Shri Ram KripalYadav at Plenary Hall, Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

As per the nationwide ranking among the states, Manipur stood at 8th and in North East, the 2nd state for 100% DBT for release of old age pension. DBT ensures that the funds are released transparently without any corruption and it can be monitored online.

The National Old age pension scheme at present in Manipur has 55247 beneficiaries. The Payment of pension benefits by NSAP-PPS through PFMS has ensured the following benefits to the general public namely de-duplication and removal of ghost beneficiaries from list, accurate targeting for new beneficiaries, monthly disbursement can be implemented, pension calculation with arrears, huge saving of time, effort and resources.

Apart from the 100% DBT, the state government has also

ensured Ru-Pay card to be issued to all the old age pensioners for Door Step Delivery of Pension. All bank branches have been instructed to issue Rupay card to those beneficiaries who don't have either Ru-Pay card or ATM card so that pensioners can receive the fund easily.

Altogether, Manipur bagged three awards today from the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. For Northeastern State and Himalayas States Category, Chandel District Administration was given the Best Performance in Effective Implementation of Extended Gram SwarajAbhiyan and for Hilly areas category, RD & PR Department received the Best SIRD for Both Training and Number of Participants.

It may be mentioned that at the National Awards function of the Ministry of Rural Development, a total of 228 awards was presented under different categories to the States, Districts, Blocks, Organizations, and individuals.



REPORTER'S DIARY BEHIANG VISIT

Irungbam Prabinkumar Singh
Information Assistant

Behiang is a beautiful border village, mostly inhabited by the people of Zou community. It is located around 125 km from Imphal along Indo-Myanmar border under Singngat Sub-Division of Churachandpur District. Manipur Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh made his maiden visit to the village on 19th December 2017 to attend the Zou Gal Centenary Commemoration function, and also to inaugurate Zou Gal Memorial Cemetery and Primary Health Centre, Behiang. He also laid the foundation stones of Behiang Police Station and Maharaja Chandrakirti Memorial Complex during his visit.

I got to hear about the visit all of a sudden. On 18th December 2017, at around 11:30 am, I received a call from T. Ramesh, Public Relations Officer, Department of Information and

Public Relations (DIPR) asking me to report at our Moirangkhom office before 2 pm that day itself to leave with a media team. Behiang was a place which I had been longing to visit for a long time.

It was only 1:45 in the afternoon when I reached our Moirangkhom office. Photographer Rishikanta and I were going from Imphal, and we had to pick up Videographer LC Haokip from Churachandpur.

In our 'Sanaleibak' Manipur, a slight delay or sometimes a long wait, which we fondly referred to as "Meitei Pung" is accepted as natural and unavoidable. But waiting for two hours was really tiring. We were supposed to leave Imphal at 2 pm but we finally set off for Behiang at around 4 pm in five SUVs - three vehicles carrying DIPR and media personnel and two vehicles

carrying other officials.

I was sitting in the third vehicle along with our photographer Rishikanta and TamoNoren of News 18. You never get bored when you travel with peppy people like Rishikanta and Tamo Noren. We had lots of amusing talks throughout the journey. No road is long with good companies. Good conversations with them made the way seem shorter. It was already 6 pm when we reached Churachandpur, and we soon realised that we would reach Behiang only late at night. So, we picked up LC Haokip from near Churachandpur Police Station and drove fast towards south on Tiddim Road.

THE FAMOUS GUTE ROAD

The whole stretch from Imphal to Behiang via Churachandpur and Singngat is known as Tiddim Road. But the

section from Churachandpur to Singngat is overlapped with the famous Guite Road, which is now part of NH-102B. It is said that a contingent of Japanese Army took this road to advance to Imphal during World War-II.

Soon after driving a few meters away from Churachandpur town, we started experiencing why Guite Road was so famous. The Mahindra Scorpio, which we were travelling in, started facing a hard time to adjust with the big potholes and boulders scattered around. Moreover, the dust emanated by the front vehicles was so thick that the visibility became almost nil.

Inside the vehicle, we were thrown up and down and left and right. In such a condition it was hard to continue our jovial tête-à-tête. Though it was a chilly December night, our driver Babulan took off his jacket as navigating with the huge potholes amid a thick column of dust was more like a good workout.

Just a few weeks back, we had travelled on Tamenglong-Khongshang road, which we found in a very bad shape. However, Churachandpur-Singngat road was more pathetic than it. Just after a drive of around 20 km from Churachandpur town, almost all the mobile signals vanished, and we virtually felt disconnected from the rest of the world.

As our conversation continued after some minutes, I was told that this road would be revamped soon. Churachandpur-Singngat-Sinzawl-Tuivai (Mizoram) had been declared as NH-102B by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in 2016. Since then, National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) had started taking up steps to construct the highway. I was also told that Saitya Builders had been entrusted to revamp

Churachandpur-Singngat section covering around 35 km.

After driving around 25 km from Churachandpur town, our discussion was disturbed by the sudden stoppage of the two front vehicles. As we got down from our Mahindra Scorpio, we came to know that we were standing at a secluded place quite far away from the nearest village. It was a dark moonless night. No light could be seen except the twinkling stars in the sky. Nothing was visible but the dark mountains sleeping like quiet monsters. No sign of human presence could be felt except chirping of insects and night birds.

Surprisingly, the two rear vehicles did not catch up to us immediately. Though we started feeling slightly uncomfortable standing there for long, we were compelled to stay there until they came because there was no mobile network and we could not leave them behind. As all of us were travelling on that road for the first time, our worry and apprehension grew stronger since the two vehicles did not turn up even after waiting for quite some time. After an anxious wait which lasted 30 mins, they finally came and informed us that one of the vehicles got punctured on the way.

It was already 7:30 pm when we started driving again. But we hadn't even reached Singngat, forget about Behiang. By then, we had to accept the hard fact that we wouldn't reach Behiang before 10 pm. But we didn't worry much with the big hope that we would get to enjoy a warm bath and a decent dinner along with a fine lodging arrangement at Behiang. We were told by an official that he had contacted a local organiser for all these arrangements in advance.

Just after a drive of around 30 minutes, we breathed a sigh



The Writer near Border Pillar

of relief as we finally reached Singngat. But we didn't stop for a break there but took a sharp left turn from NH-102B to hit upon another pleasing surprise - the Singngat-Behiang road, a smooth narrow black-topped road deep inside the interior part of the hill district. We all were amused by our sudden discovery. It was like finding an Oasis in the middle of a parched desert because the bone-shaking experience given by the famous Guite Road was hard to withstand.

Thanks to the State Government for constructing such a good road in the remote corner along Indo-Myanmar border, our Mahindra Scorpio didn't take much time in covering the 35-km stretch from Singngat to Behiang. We reached the sleepy village at around 8:50 pm. It was another surprise because we earlier calculated that we wouldn't reach the village before 10 pm.

BEHIANG

But our happiness did not last long. Upon reaching Behiang, all the narrow lanes and roads of the small village were found jammed with hundreds of vehicles and people coming from different parts of the State for

next day's function. Behiang's population was only around 1000, but more than 2000 people including delegates, Government officials and security personnel had rushed to this tiny sleepy village for next day's function. Everybody seemed in a hurry, there were lots of yelling and blowing of horns. Moreover, a night concert which exhaled huge screams and the high-decibel music was also going on in the village playground making all of us difficult to hear and talk to each other.

Adding more to our woes, there was no mobile phone network. We couldn't contact the man who was supposed to liaise with us. We even didn't know in which direction we should move. At last, I along with two others volunteered to find the unknown gentleman amid the huge crowd. After an intense and arduous search of around an hour, we managed to locate him. But his response made all our hopes of enjoying a warm bath and decent dinner and lodging facilities vanished into thin air. He had simply presumed that we wouldn't come as it was already very late. Rooms reserved earlier for us had already been allotted to others. The number of visitors was so huge that it was impossible for him to manage.

We saw many people were trying to spend the cold December night at any available space including roadside, courtyard, and open space. We also witnessed security personnel lining up to depart for different pockets of the border village for ROP duty and security coverage of the Hon'ble CM and his entourage.

Even if we had money, we could not find food, water or any eatable to purchase because meeting the demands and requirements of more than 2000 people by three or four hotels and shops of the village was



impossible. In such a condition, we had no option but to plead to our dear 'contact-man' to at least find a small lodging for us. After a lengthy persuasion, he arranged a small room for media persons in a guest house occupied by some Government officials and security personnel. When I got inside the guest house to check whether there was any other space, I found LC Haokip occupying a single bed in another very congested small room attached to the room occupied by media persons. Luckily, he asked me to share the bed. But the remaining people who came together with us from Imphal including our Photographer Rishikanta had to spend the cold night inside the vehicle, that also on an empty stomach.

The next morning, we had some biscuits for breakfast. Then we drove up to the last part of Tiddim Road on the Indian side, around 3 km from the guest house where we put up. Border Pillar No. 41 (2A) was seen standing tall on the bank of Tuivai River which separated the two countries, India and Myanmar. The road was found smoothly blacktopped until the brink of the river. On the other side of the boundary, there was a small village known as Khenman. But we did not dare to enter the village.

CM'S MAIDEN VISIT TO BEHIANG

We didn't stay there long but went directly to the serenely beautiful Chibu Lake where the Chief Minister would lay the foundation stone for the construction of Maharaja Chandrakirti Memorial Park. Near the lake, there was a hill spring which spilled saline water.

The site has lots of historical importance. There are three age-old stone slabs inside the lake complex. These inscribed stone slabs were erected during the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti in 1872 to commemorate his victory over rebel chiefs of the Lushai Chiefs. This site is protected under the Manipur Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1976. The total protected area of the complex is 607.50 sq.m.

The Chief Minister was supposed to arrive by helicopter at Tonjang helipad at 10:30 am. But his arrival was delayed for around two hours. He came only at around 12:30 pm. Health Minister Shri L. Jayantakumar, Agriculture Minister Shri V. Hangkhanlian, MLAs and top civil and police officials were accompanying him.

From Chibu Lake complex, he went straight to Zou Gal Memorial Cemetery, where



Chibu lake

of India's Act East Policy. I believe that the pace of development and growth of Behiang and Singngat villages and Churachandpur town would also accelerate on its own when it happens.

Churachandpur-Behiang road has two sections, the first one is Churachandpur-Singngat section and another is Singngat-Behiang section. Churachandpur-Behiang section is a part of Guite Road (NH-102B). The Hon'ble Chief Minister informed the villagers in his speech that he had requested the Union Minister of

Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari that Singngat-Behiang section be upgraded to a National Highway. Now we're optimistic that this section would also become a National Highway soon. Let's hope to see the tiny village of Behiang transforming into a border town. Let's also pray that the villagers residing along Churachandpur-Behiang road witness the new light of development and progress with the early translation of all the assurances into reality.

he was received by hundreds of villagers clad in traditional attires with great joy and enthusiasm. After inaugurating the cemetery, the CM proceeded to Behiang PHC and inaugurated staff quarters there. When the Chief Minister and his entourage proceeded for lunch, we suddenly realised that we should arrange our lunch on our own. By then, it was already 1:30 pm but we had no such arrangement because we were busy in locating the function venues and also in waiting and following the Chief Minister since morning. Forget about food, we could not even find water.

Even as we were searching for food and water, the Chief Minister and his entourage arrived at the main function venue where the Zou Gal Centenary Commemoration was held. Before he attended the main function, he also laid the foundation stone for Behiang Police Station. The function lasted only around 45 minutes because the Chief Minister had to leave Behiang by 3 pm. However, the 20-minute long speech of the Chief Minister earned lots of applause from Behiang villagers.

As I was standing up after the function, I was feeling a bit dizzy. I knew that my body started responding to running here and thereby skipping a dinner, a breakfast and a lunch on the trot. But nothing to worry, we were returning home. As we saw the helicopter carrying CM flew away and vanished in the blue sky, we also started driving towards Singngat bidding adieu to the beautiful border village of Behiang at around 3:20 pm.

RETURN JOURNEY

It seemed that the return journey was much shorter. We reached Imphal at around 7:30 pm. It was almost 9:30 pm when I reached home after sending out the press release.

When I went to bed, I tried to recall CM's assurances made to Behiang villagers in his speech. His promise of transforming Churachandpur-Behiang road via Singngat as the second corridor of the State to South East Asian Nations by setting up a Trade Centre at Behiang would be a boon not only to the village but also to the Churachandpur district as a whole in the light of the implementation of Government



Stone slab believed to have been erected by Maharaja Chandrakirti near Chibu Lake



MERA HOU CHONGBA

THE ONLY FESTIVAL JOINTLY CELEBRATED BY THE PEOPLE OF HILLS AND VALLEYS

L. Ashok Kumar
District Information Officer

Manipur is a land of festivities. Festivals have been an integral part of the life of the people of the State over the ages. Most of these festivals come down to us from our ancestor and also are an intermingling of the cultures and civilization of the Manipuris over a period of time. Among these, some are religious; some are socio-cultural and some are based on seasons while some are of historical importance. Each of these festivals has significance of its own and everyone celebrates the festivals with great enthusiasm. Among the festivals of Manipur, Mera Hou Chongba is a unique festival in Manipur which is jointly celebrated by

different tribes from the hills and the people in the valley of Manipur.

Mera Hou Chongba festival is celebrated annually on the 15th day of Manipuri month 'Mera', which falls in October. The festival is celebrated to promote brotherhood and unity among the various indigenous communities settled in both the hills and the valleys of Manipur. It is indeed a rare festival of Manipur.

WHY MERA HOU CHONGBA IN THE MONTH OF MERA

Mera which falls in the month of October marks the advent of the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. It is

the best of time because people long for the harvesting season that is not far off. Mera is also a month of good harvest not only in respect of paddy but also in respect of many other vegetable items - cabbage, cauliflower, pumpkin, pea, arum roots (pal), beans, etc. When the crops are harvested in abundance, people all over the State are prone to make festivities. They want to celebrate life. Knowing the sentiments of his people all over the hills and the valleys, the Maharaja of Manipur chose Mera as the particular month for the celebration of 'Mera Hou Chongba'.

HOW WAS THE FESTIVAL CELEBRATED IN THE PAST



In this festival, all the Village Chiefs or 'Khullakpa' of the hills are invited and welcomed by the kings and the nobles who exchange gifts after which they dance and dine together to celebrate the festival. The participating hill tribes come down with colourful traditional dresses with decoration of exotic headgears on their heads. In his book, "Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur and the Hill territory under its Rule" published in 1873, R. Brown depicted the Mera Hou Chongba as follow:

"The festival called Hawchongba, in October, lasts for only one day; it is a gathering of the hill tribes under Manipuri Government, and is a curious sight on account of the great number of different tribes assembled, with their curious dress and weapons, differing from each other in feature and language, but all unanimous in one particular, to get drunk as speedily and remain so as long as possible. The hill men indulge in feats of strength before the raja, such as carrying heavy weights, &c. They also indulge in war dances and sham fights. The sports of the day conclude with a feast, at which they are regaled with the flesh of cows, buffaloes,

dogs, cats, &c., which may have died in the valley. The flesh is dried and preserved on purpose for this feast. "

The eyewitness accounts of R. Brown describe how the festival was celebrated during the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti. He described the celebration of the festival by a great number of participants from the peoples of the hills and the valleys in a cordial way with the spirit of joy of sharing and the joy of festivity together. From his accounts, we can know how Mera Hou Chongba was celebrated when Manipur was ruled by different kings.

MERA HOU CHONGBA AS STATE FESTIVAL

For over the years, Mera Hou Chongba had been the affairs



of Royal Palace (Sana Konung) with a handful of civil society groups only. In the recent past, this festival was organised in low key affairs. However, it was not the same story last year. Keeping in view of the significance of the festival, the Government of Manipur declared the festival as a State Festival from the year 2017. For the first time, the festival was organised as State Festival from 4-6th October 2017 at Sana Konung and the Kangla by State Level Mera Hou Chongba Committee. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, Titular King Leishemba Sanajaoba, Cabinet Ministers and MLA took part in the celebration. This year, Mera Hou Chongba was celebrated with great pomp and gaiety on 24th October, 2018 at Kangla, Imphal.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FESTIVAL

Mera Hou Chongba is a rare opportunity for all of us settled in both the hills and the valleys of Manipur to meet and interact in a cordial way. The meeting of all communities at the same place is not an easy thing as various communities are coming from across the length and breadth of the State. Mera Hou Chongba is bridging this particular gap. In Mera Hou Chongba festival, the various communities of the State converge in the capital and jointly celebrate the festival with joy and gaiety. Celebration in such a way fosters the age-old relationship between the brothers and sisters of the hills and the valleys. The festival will go a long way in strengthening our common origin, ethnic relationship, common cultural heritage, brotherhood and unity among the hills and the valleys of Manipur.

Let Mera Hou Chongba bring us peace, unity, and progress.



GO TO VILLAGE: AYUSHMAN BHARAT-NATIONAL HEALTH PROTECTION MISSION (AB-NHPM) LAUNCHED

Seema Sanjenbam
Public Relations Officer

The ambitious healthcare scheme 'PradhanMantri Jan ArogyaYojana (PMJAY)' also known as Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM) was conducted at various GTV Camps on 16 October 2018. The PMJAY or AB-NHPM, which was launched on 23 September, 2018 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, and considered as the World's largest health scheme is the first health care program in the country to have its own data privacy policy.

The district administration of Bishnupur continues 'Khungang Chatse - Go to Village' mission

by opening two more camps at Ibudhou Loyalakpa Community Hall, Maibam and INA Memorial High School, Kwakta Bazar. The camps covered Nambol Chingmang Sabal Leikai, Maibam Chingning of Nambol Municipal Council and all wards of Kwakta Municipal Councils.

"Go to Village" (Khungang Chatse), camps were also held at S Zezaw Village for Singhat and 23-Muallum covering about eight villages (MT Geltam, S Zezaw, L Phaimol, S Belbing, N Khonom, S Geltui, S Munhoi and B Tuallian) under Churachandpur district administration.

Dignitaries attending the

function included Shri Letkhogin Haokip, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary (Agri/CADA), Shri Shyam Lal Poonia, IAS DC Churachandpur, Shri Jameson Hangshing, MCS, SDO/Singnat and other DLOs.

Various entitlements like registration of Job-Cards, PMAY forms, Domicile-Residential/Tribe/Income Certificates, School materials (Shoes), Sports Materials, Vermicompost materials, agriculture materials, etc. were distributed to beneficiaries at the camps by different departments such as, District Handlooms & Textiles, Social Welfare, Education,

Medical, Forest Department, ZEO, ADCC, Vety & AH and SDO/ BDOs of concerned Blocks etc. The district Medical Department also conducted separate screening for Immunization and Diabetes. Besides opening camps, the Vety& AH Department also conducted animal vaccination drive on the spot.

The District Administration, Thoubal organised camps at Langathel Maning Laikon Community Hall under Wangjing Tentha A/C, Pitra Community Hall under Heirok A/C and Waithou Community Hall under Wangkhem A/C. Around 28 stalls of different departments were opened to attend the queries of the general public.

Spot painting competition of school students was held under the initiative of ZEO Thoubal at the camp venues. Health checkup and Health Cards under Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT) were given to the beneficiaries under the initiative of CMO, Thoubal. LPG gas connection was also distributed to the beneficiaries under the Ujwala scheme. Weaver's cards were also distributed to the beneficiaries by District Handloom & Textiles department.

Wanjing- Tentha MLA Shri P. Brojen attended GTV mission held at the Wanjing Laikon Community Hall. Additional Deputy Commissioner Thoubal, Shri L. Radhakanta made an overall inspection of the camp venues to take stock of the functioning of the "Go to Village" mission.

The District Administration of Chandel conducted at Khengjoi village under Khengjoi Sub-Division. Eight villages namely Khengjoi, Chaijang, S. Lamphei, P. Chehjang, New Sonjang, Sonjang, Kotal Khuntak and T. Bollon were covered.

SPORTS



TOURNAMENT WITH PURPOSES CHURACHANDPUR BATHS IN FOOTGAL 2018 FEVER

Th. Mangminthang Gangte
Assistant Publicity Officer

Churachandpur town sprang to nightlife as the District Administration staged one of greatest crowd-pulling events of the district, FootGal 2018 – 5 Girls A-side night Futsal tournament - with the twin objectives of raising awareness on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Abhiyan and electoral awareness from 8th October 2018 at Rayburn High School premises.

The tournament got off to a colourful start in an electric atmosphere in front of a capacity crowd with Dr. J. Suresh Babu, Chief Secretary, Manipur as the Chief Guest.

The opening ceremony witnessed a slew of activities related to the theme of BBBP, which included an Anthem, skit and also the distribution of

prizes etc. Presentation of BBBP Anthem by Christina Shakum featuring children of Happy Hearts School, Bethel, and performance by all-time great artist MuanHangzo was another attraction of the programme.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur, Shri Shyam Lal Poonia, the event is being staged with the objective to empower and educate the girl child and spread voters' awareness and education to the masses. The DC also announced Miss Chingkhawlkim of Lungthul village as the 'Ambassador of BBBP' in the district.

Dr. J Suresh Babu said that girls of Manipur are doing wonders in all aspects. "In fact, there is so much women empowerment in Manipur. But at the same time, there are so



many to be done”, he said.

The Chief Secretary also lauded the efforts of the Election Department in their campaign to spread voter awareness. “The efforts of the Election Department such as ‘I Am Ready’ campaign would go a long way in electing one’s leaders who are able to lead the society forward and take the women’s causes forward”, he added.

The tournament was kick-started by Ms. Vunglawmching, U-16 Indian National Football player.

A total of 24 teams competed for the title of the tournament which stretched till 19th October 2018. A record number of over 20,000 people came to witness the tournament throughout the 10-day affairs. The organizers too collected around Rs. 3 lakh from the sale of tickets for the tournament.

Crowds and viewers had been drawn by the exciting action on the ground with over

150 goals having been scored. The defense also saw plenty of action, with penalty saves and goal-saving tackles providing many thrilling moments for the fans.

Lenlai Club, Doves FC, The Living Gym and Homes FA were the four finalists of the tournament. Lenlai Club defeated Doves FC 10-1 in the semifinal while The Living Gym cruised to the final after beating Homes FA by the same margin.

The final day, in the words of Shri Shyam Lal Poonia, had a different grandeur with so much fanfare. Leaving aside the players, even the whole of Churachandpur was bathing in excitement.

The final match between two favourites of the town, Lenlai Club and The Living Gym saw enthusiastic crowds swarming up the premises with Shri V. Hangkhanlian, Agriculture Minister as the Chief Guest. The atmosphere was electric even as The Living Gym coasted to a comprehensive 11-1 win over

Lenlai Club. YumnamLaxmi was declared Girl of the Final Match.

Shri Shyam Lal Poonia while addressing the grand closing ceremony of FootGal 2018, said- “The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential are the keys to unlock the door to personal excellence.”

The Roll of Honour:

1. *FootGal of the Tournament: Lalvarmawi (The Living Gym)*
2. *Top Scorer of the Tournament: Ningthoujam Borkeina (The Living Gym)*
3. *Safe Hands of the Tournament: Rosie Niangboi (Siloam Wielding)*
4. *Emerging Young Player of the Tournament: Sarah (Homes FA)*
5. *Best Defender: Chinghoihkim Samte (Lenlai Club)*

CHIEF MINISTER FLAGS OFF SECOND PHASE OF MANIPUR STATE TRANSPORT BUS SERVICE



Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh flagged off the second phase of Manipur State Transport (MST) passenger bus service after 16 months of re-introduction of the public transport to connect the important hill towns in the state from Inter-State Bus Terminus (ISBT), Khuman Lampak in Imphal East District on 24th October, 2018.

The new bus route service will connect the state capital with the remote hill towns such as Jessami, Khoupum, Kamjong, Tamenglong, Tamei and Airport Express (ISBT to Imphal International Airport) from Monday to Saturday.

Speaking at the flag-off function organised by the State Transport Department, Shri N. Biren Singh, who also holds Transport portfolio, said that the first phase of inter-district MST bus service was launched for six routes on June 24 last year. However, passenger service to Pherzawl was discontinued due to unsuitability of the bus with the road condition of the interior district, he added. However, the bus service on this route would be resumed soon with the purchase of a high-floor bus, the Chief Minister informed.

Shri N. Biren also made his earnest appeal to the media to do authenticated and balanced reporting regarding the services introduced by the State Transport Department.

It may be mentioned that after the new State Government included revival of MST Bus Service in its 100-days programme, Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh launched the first phase of inter-district and city bus services on June 24 last year.

MINISTER BISWAJIT AT SIAL, PARIS TO BOOST FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY SECTOR IN MANIPUR



Textiles, Commerce & Industry Minister, Manipur Shri Thongam Biswajit Singh accompanied by Shri P. Vaiphei, IAS, Principal Secretary (Textiles, Commerce & Industry), Manipur participated in the SIAL-2018 world food exhibition event at Paris, France as part of the Indian Delegation led by Smt. Harsimrat Kaur, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries, Government of India.

SIAL-2018 is known to be the world's largest exhibition of food processing sector and an event that offers wide experience on the latest developments in the sector which is a key area in the context of the efforts of the Department of Trade, Commerce & Industries which is making concerted efforts in convergence with Horticulture & Soil Conservation Department to tap the huge potentials of the State in its organic food products under the Central Government's Kisan-SAMPADA initiatives which is to cover as many areas of the State as is feasible.

Shri Biswajit wants to take up the Food Processing Industry sector in Manipur with more government interventions, especially with the State's good natural resources of agri-horticulture products.

He acknowledged the fund constraints of the department and has therefore considered funding sources from concerned Ministries at the Centre and also linkages with markets outside. In line with Prime Minister Modi's vision of Sabke Saath, Sabka Vikas and his focus on the farmers' welfare through enhanced agriculture & horticulture produces alongwith their improved processing and marketing, our State could also take up this key sector in a way that would make it more economically viable and effective.

KARANG

THE FIRST CASHLESS ISLAND IN INDIA

Suanlyan Tungnung
Translator



Loktak, the largest natural freshwater lake of North East India is in Manipur. This lake is located between 93°46" - 93°55"E longitude and 24°25" - 24°42" N latitudes. It is oval in shape with maximum length and width of 32km and 13km respectively and the depth of the lake varies from 0.5m to 4.6m with the average depth recorded as 2.7m. There are ten Isles of the Loktak Lake made up of rock which belong to upper Dsang of Disang groups. The ten Isles are Ithing, Thanga, Sendra, Karang, Yaosulakpa, Khoudemching, Hanubiching, Shingdonpok, Pabotching, Mukpa, and Manda.

Karang is a small island situated in the Bishnupur District, Moirang Sub-division, around 50 km from Imphal. The village is surrounded by

Loktak Lake in all sides. Karang is surrounded by Khordak, Nongmaikhong and Kumbi village in the east; Mayangimphal, Sekmajin, Hayen, Phabakchao, Komlakhong and Laphupat Tera in the north; Moirangkhunou, Moirang and Thamnapokpi in the south and Naranseina, Sunusiphai, Phubala, Thinungei, Ningthoukhong, Tabokpi, Upokpi, Nachou, Kwasiphai, Toubul and Oinamkhunou village in the west. The village has a population of around 3000 peoples. It is connected by water from Thanga village by motor-boat and 'Hinao' (canoe) which is around 1 km distance and then by road to different parts of the state.

OCCUPATION

According to the census

report 2011, 297 families are residing in Karang Island. Karang, with the total population of 1859, has a literacy rate of 53.4% as against 76.94% of the entire state of Manipur. The main source of income of these people is fishing and fishery-related activities and it comprises 70% of total income sources. The private sector employs some 20%, while 5% works in the Government sector and the remaining 5% are engaged in others like trade, construction works, small business, etc. Their monthly income varied from Rs. 1000-10,000 and above per month. 70% of the family belonged to the medium income group in the range of Rs. 5000-10,000 per month then followed by a low-income group ranging from Rs. 1,000-5,000 per month



and high income with Rs. 10,000 and above per month.

DIGITAL INDIA

During the past decades Loktak dominated surrounding areas especially Thanga, Karang and Kumbi were regarded as a paradise for armed militants. These places provide a perfect escape gateway to the militants whenever their location is compromised. It is said that the underground personals use to petrol these villages daily with full warlike paraphernalia. Outsiders were barred from visiting these places.

In spite of its past infamous history, the Bishnupur District Administration is making several efforts to reduce the use of cash in the economy by promoting digital payments since December 2016. The main aim for the

promotion of the digital payment is to bring cash less society, digital economy, and corruption free India.

To promote digital payment in Karang, the awareness was



Karang Island was declared as The First Cashless Island of India on 13th January 2017

not spread only through mass awareness programs but also by handholding through a door-to-door campaign where one-to-one training was given by teams of technical experts led by Prasanta Oinam, District Manager, Bishnupur District E-Governance Society. The district administration designed its own logo and pledge for the promotion of digital payments to motivate the people as well as spread the awareness among the citizens in a fast manner. The district also spread awareness through innovative methods like Digital Bishnupur - online YouTube channel where every person is covered through tutorials of digital payment in local languages.

Many CSOs were also involved to create awareness and conduct training programs for the



promotion of digital payment. After the awareness program by the District Administration, many private initiatives also come up with their own investment some digital payment at their small grocery shops.

The Digital India Program is a flagship program of Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. "Faceless, Paperless, Cashless" is one of the professed roles of Digital India. Promotion of Digital Payments has been accorded highest priority by Government of India to bring each and every segment of our country under the fold of Digital payment services.

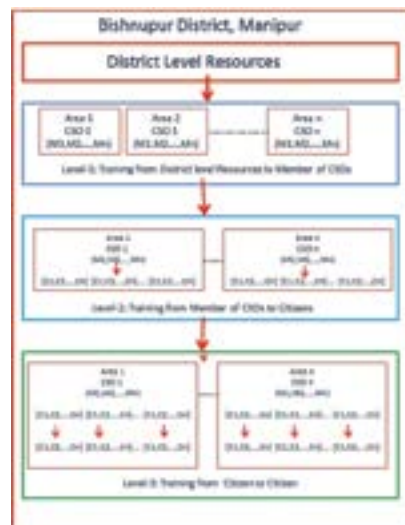
IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAM

With the introduction of Digital Payments, the Karang Island Motor boat service providers' problem was solved. Since the introduction of digital payment counter for payment of boat fare, there is now transparency and accountability among the service providers. Online electric bill payment system was started which led to an increase in revenue collected for electricity bills through digital payment mode. All the financial transactions including withdrawing wages for MGNREGA, PMAY Rural, etc. are done through digital payments rather than receiving by cash through local electives. Due to the cashless initiative by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, economy and influx of tourist both domestic and foreign has

grown in the region leading to the increase in earning as well as foreign inflow.

After the awareness programme by Bishnupur district administration, Cash outflow is reduced by 33%: Cash outflow per capita from SBI Bishnupur branch in September-October 2017 is Rs. 8,92,44,000/- and in September-October 2016 was Rs. 12,39,11,573/-.

As a part of supporting digitization National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) for Sub-Registrar Bishnupur, Manipur was launched by Hon'ble Minister, Shri Karam Shyam Singh on 13th July 2018. This is the stepping stone for using digital payments in the revenue department. In the future, using these system citizens will be able to pay their land revenue from home and transparency will increase. Bishnupur District is also known as zero unbanked block district as it has 16 bank branches, 17 ATMs, and 28 Banking Business Correspondence (BCS) in 24 Gram Panchayats.



After all financial transactions are done using digital payments, Wangoo and Moirangkhunou Gram Panchayat were also declared as cashless

Gram Panchayat and Karang Island was also declared as The First Cashless Island of India on 13th January 2017. Karang Island Cashless Promotion Society was formed by the inhabitants of the island to maintain its title as the First Cashless Island of India. The district also bagged the award in the group 'North East and Hill States' for excellence in implementing "Promoting Digital Payments" under the 'Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration'. The award was presented on Civil Services Day, 2018 function organized by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions.

Despite the difficulties of inaccessibility and backwardness caused by insurgency and lower literacy level, the initiative taken by the Honorable Prime Minister for the promotion of digital payments was a huge success in Karang. This can be attributed to the innovative measures taken by district e-governance society to reach people through their two architecture models, door-to-door campaign and design of its own pledge for district administration. Karang Island has become the first cashless island of India despite the fact that it's accessible only by boats and in the windy season it is totally cut off from the rest of the district. The involvement of common service centers and civil society organization for the promotion of digital payments further helped in the campaign. The initiative helped in the increase in the number of tourists as well as the growth of the tourism industry not only in Bishnupur but also in the whole state.



THE LANGBAL THOUGAL OF PHAYENG

A reflection of traditional ritual life of the Phayeng people of Manipur

Surekha Longjam
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The traditional life of the Meitei of Manipur passes through a number of observance of rituals and festivals. 'Tarpon' is one of the rituals that are performed by every Meitei household in Manipur in the lunar month of Langbal, which falls in mid-August-to mid-September of the Gregorian calendar. 'Tarpon' is observed for half a month starting from the full moon day of 'Langbal' till the new moon.

'Tarpon' is the Meitei version of 'tarpan' or the 'pindand' of the Hindus. Every year the ritual is observed to offer food to the souls of deceased ancestors. 'Tarpon' is a ritual observance that

strengthens the ties of kinship. It is a kind of ancestor worship in which foods are offered to appease the souls of the deceased. On the other side, it is also a ritual of remembrance of the ancestors by their offspring. All the family members take part in the ritual performance by offering family feast in the name of the deceased. Married women and the male head of the family play a special role in the ritual observance. The offerings in the morning are done by the male head of the family by reciting the names of the forefathers from whom they have descended. And the fruits that are to be offered are brought by the married daughters

of the family. Here, we can see the kinship bonding of the sons and daughters of the family. The basic underlying sense is that through 'Tarpon', the kindred of a family spend time together feasting in remembrance of their fore parents.

THE LANGBAL THOUGAL OF PHAYENG

Unlike the Meitei-Hindus of Manipur, the inhabitants of the Phayeng village remember their fore parents by performing the Langbal Thougal. Popularly known as the Phayeng 'Tarpon', 'Langbal Thougal' is the food offering ritual observed by the people of Phayeng. According to the Phayeng people, their



for cooking. The goose eggs are boiled and cut into pieces for the offering. Thus, the foods are cooked in a simple way at the hearth by the womenfolk of the household. The offerings are to be done by the male head of the household.

The rituals start with the offering made to the malevolent spirits. The offering to the fore-parents is the main ritual that is performed in detail by the menfolk of the household. First, the place or the seat where the ancestors will be seated is set up at the extreme left of the verandah of the house. A wooden seat is placed over which a layer of banana leave covered with white cloth and a canopy is made. The imaginary abode is sanctified by laying a banana leaf. On it, an herb called 'langthrei' is placed. Three buds of 'langthrei' are arranged in order on the seat. These three numbers signify the presence of the three ancestors namely the deceased father, grandfather and the mother of the man offering the food. Three banana leaves are laid down in front of the seat. The middle

'Langbal Thougat' differs from the 'Tarpon' observed by the Meitei-Hindus. In Phayeng, the offering of food is done in the night time or in the dawn. And the food offered is cooked food. They start cooking from the evening so that the food is ready on time for the offering. The food to be offered includes 'Yu' (rice beer), a cock broth, a goose egg and a mashed mixer of red chilly, salt and 'Ngamu' (Channagachua) called 'morokmetpa' along with rice.

A local cock is to be used for preparing the main dish, the broth. The peculiarity of the broth is that the meat is to be cut into definite parts without deforming the parts into pieces. For example, the head part consisting of the head along with the comb, eyes and neck, the whole breast portion, the back part, the whole of the organs-heart, liver, and gizzard as one, the leg pieces and the intestine. The meat is to be boiled along with the herbs. No oil is used





seat and plate is reserved for the father, to the right for the mother and to the left for the grandfather. Three more plates are laid for the guardian spirit of the house beside the three main platters. Rice mounts are made for the offering and are placed in the center of the plate. Next simple boiled vegetable, 'Champhut', are served. It is a believed among the Meitei that 'Champhut' is the head of all the dishes and has to be served first. The remaining dishes are also arranged in the sequence of their order. The meat served for the father is organised in such a manner that all the parts of the cock are placed in order. The remaining meats are distributed as the servings of the mother and the grandfather along with the three guardian spirits. Rice beer, 'Yu', is also an important offering served to the fore parents. 'Yu' is locally brewed in Phayeng and is a part of their culture. Thus, 'Yu' has to be served in every ritual of the Phayeng.

After the plating, the

head of the household recites the prayer to appease the souls with the food offerings. Other family members also participate in praying. He asked the souls to ward them off from all the bad omens and bless them with health and wealth. After the offering is done, the head of the household gets the share of the father. So he will eat the food which he can later distribute among other family members. The wife of the head of the household will receive the share of the mother. Likewise, the other four plates are shared by the other family members. The leftovers of the offered food are carefully collected and thrown outside the gate by the head of the household. In doing so, he draws three lines on the ground as he recites the prayer with a knife.

PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL RITUAL

The significance of the 'Langbal Thougal' is that the married off daughters stays overnight at

their natal home to participate in the ritual providing an opportunity to spend time with their parents and siblings. For those who are married in the same village, they do not stay back but they participate till the end. On the next day of the 'Thougal', the family invites their kindred for lunch at their residence. The food for the feast is prepared collectively by the kindred that again strengthen the kinship ties among them. The foodways of Phayeng comprising of meat and liquor contradict with that of the Meitei-Hindu, but the symbolic meaning of the food offering ritual holds the same. No matter what is being offered, the purpose of the offering is to remember the ancestors. The 'Langbal Thougal' of Phayeng is unique in its own way and the functional aspect of such traditional ritual is worth preserving. The symbolic meanings of the ritual lives of every society need to be understood in the context of the society and its culture.



GOVERNOR DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA FELICITATES SHRI N. BIREN SINGH MANIPUR CM ADJUDGED 3RD BEST CHIEF MINISTER IN INDIA ACCORDING TO AN INDIA TODAY SURVEY

Manipur Governor Dr. Najma Heptulla felicitated Shri Nongthombam Biren Singh on being conferred the 3rd Best Chief Minister of the country at a small gathering held at Raj Bhavan, Imphal on 15th October 2018.

Governor Dr. Najma Heptulla congratulated the Chief Minister on bagging the 3rd Best Chief Minister of the Country in a survey conducted by the media group- India Today. “Shri N. Biren Singh is the best Chief Minister the State has ever produced” she said.

“During his one and half year tenure as the Chief Minister of the State, Shri N. Biren Singh with his Cabinet Ministers have initiated and achieved a lot of progressive programme for the welfare of the people of the State. The State has moved

forward and Manipur is now recognised by the rest of the Country which earlier used to stop somewhere in Assam. Now people have realised that there is something beautiful beyond the borders of Assam”, she added.

Shri N. Biren Singh interacting with the media persons said that soon after swearing-in as the Chief Minister, his first priority was to work for the people and work with the people.

He said he is motivated to work harder for the welfare of each and every citizen of the State after being conferred as the 3rd Best CM of the country. He also dedicated the achievement to the people of the State.

Hon’ble Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh, elected as the

leader of the BJP Legislatures Party of Manipur in March 2017, was sworn in as Chief Minister of Manipur on 15th March 2017. Under his leadership, the Government has taken up many developmental projects for the benefit of the people of Manipur. It may be mentioned that after taking charge as Chief Minister of the State, he initiated the schemes ‘Go to the Hills’ and ‘Go to Village’ to bridge the gap between the Valley and the Hill people and to cater benefits to the people residing in remote areas of the State. Many schemes were introduced focusing on the welfare of the people such as Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT), Chief Minister-gi Sotharabasing-gi Tenbang (CMST) among others.



GOVERNOR LAUNCHED THE MISSION FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF TRADITIONAL ARTISANS AND CRAFTSMEN

Manipur governor Najma Heptulla launched the Mission for Economic Empowerment of Traditional Artisans and Craftsmen (MEETAC) at Hotel Imphal on 1st September 2018.

MEETAC is an autonomous society set up on 29th December 2017 by the Government of Manipur under the Department of Textiles, Commerce and Industries to promote inclusive growth by developing the traditional crafts and arts sector of Manipur as per global standards and making it an important spoke in the wheel of economic activities.

“There is a need to put in effort by the Government to revive and promote the dying crafts of the State’, the Governor said.

“Though the State’s population is hardly 28 lakh, artisans and craftsmen concentration is so high in the State. As such, the Government should not only provide support

to the craftsmen but also create a market for them so that they may have sustainable livelihood through arts and crafts”, she added.

Observing that people should inculcate the sense of the dignity of labour, Smt. Heptulla emphasised on the need to include crafts training in the school curriculum so that knowledge of craftsmanship is imparted right from the beginning.

Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh said that MEETAC is a brainchild of Governor Najma Heptulla. Stating that there are many other projects which the State Government could launch successfully because of her, the Chief Minister said that Manipur is so lucky to have Smt. Heptulla as its Governor. The State has started moving forward under her guidance, Shri N. Biren added.

Maintaining that there is no dearth of talent and work culture in the State, the Chief Minister

opined that these talents and hard works can be translated into economic development if proper opportunities/avenues are provided to the people. The Chief Minister opined that Manipur can become a model State in the country within 10 years if it avoids bandhs, blockades, and violent agitations.

Textiles, Commerce and Industries Minister and MEETAC chairman Shri Th. Biswajit said that MEETAC is a new beginning and it would certainly open a huge avenue of opportunities to traditional artisans and craftsmen. Stating that the State needs to promote all its talents and potentials not only in the country but also in the world, the Minister said that it is high time to explore State’s potentials.

Deputy Chief Minister Shri. Y. Joykumar, CAF & PD Minister Shri Karam Shyam and Water Resources Minister Shri Letpao Haokip also attended the function.

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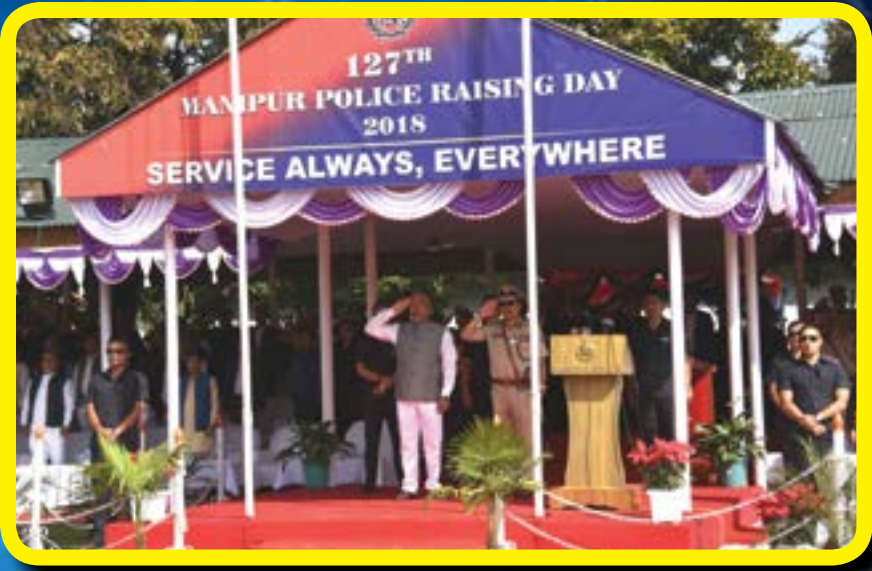


PHOTO SPEAKS



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A TRIP TO CHINA

THE 5TH SILK ROAD INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 2018

Aribam Shivadas Sharma, MCS
 Director (Art & Culture)
 Government of Manipur

The Silk Road International Art Festival is an annual Cultural Event hosted by Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Shaanxi Province, and organised by Shaanxi Provincial Department of Culture. The purpose of this festival is to promote cultural exchange and to develop cultural understanding and co-operation among different countries and the region world-wide.

The 5th Silk Road International Art Festival 2018 was held in the Xian City, the capital of the Shaanxi Province from 7th to 21st September

2018. Shaanxi is one of the Provinces located in the North Western China that used to be the capital, and the starting point of the Silk Road and Silk Trade. Xian is the home to the Mausoleum of First Qin Emperor, and an archaeological site containing thousands of clay soldiers' called the Terracotta Army. The Committee of the 5th Silk Road International Arts Festival made an invitation to the Hon'ble Minister Art & Culture, Manipur on 29th May 2018 to participate the festival along with a cultural troupe.

To showcase 7 (seven) cultural items i.e. Kanglei

Haraoba, Thougai Jagoi, Shim Laam (Kabui), Asa Ralii Odo (Mao), Thang Ta, Holi (Dhol-Dholok) and Folk Song, a cultural team of 15 members led by the Director (Art & Culture) was flagged off by Shri M. Lakshmikumar Singh, IAS, Commissioner (Art & Culture) at Directorate office at Palace Compound, Imphal on 5th September 2018.

On arrival at Xi'an city, the team was put up at the Lemon Hotel, Yongyang Park which is at a distance of about 47 km from the Xi'an airport. Accommodation for all the participants including all foreign participants and local Chinese groups were arranged

at the same hotel. This made the coordination of the entire participants and officials very convenient and easily accessible. The participating countries were America, Russia, France, Italy, Hungary, Pakistan, Thailand and local Chinese groups from different provinces, besides Manipur (India). The Chinese dining schedule was -- breakfast from 7 to 9 am, lunch 12 to 2 pm and dinner 5 to 7 pm.

On 7th September, all the participating teams were taken to Xi'an Grand Theatre for stage rehearsal especially for the opening and closing choreographic presentation under able & dynamic Director / Choreographer, Mr Tong. In the evening 7.45, all the country leaders were invited to the Xi'an Qinqiang Opera Theatre for Opening Ceremony of the festival with a Chinese Opera showing the origin of the Silk, and the Silk Road.

On the 8th September evening, the Grand Opening of the Festival was held at the Xi'an Grand Theatre. At the foyer of the Theatre, exhibition



of Intangible Cultural Heritage was mounted where all the participating countries displayed their respective ICH items. Pena, Pung, Kartal (Cymbal), Kokyet (Turban), and traditional attires were exhibited for Manipuri team. The speciality for Manipuri team in the exhibition was that a short demonstration of these instruments was also done through performance, which was not found in the exhibition by other countries, and thus was a reason for assembling more visitors.

The formal inaugural function was preceded by signing a pact between the officials of China and Pakistan, in the presence of all leaders of participating countries, to conduct Silk Road Festival in partnership in future. The formal inaugural function was followed by Opening Choreographic show. It was an experience with great exuberance - the way choreography was done through amalgamation of all performers of various teams together on stage for few minutes which made the presentation so





lively. Then, performances of all the countries followed that again attracted applause of the gathering audience followed by the Closing Choreography of the groups together.

On 9th September, performance was held at Weinan Theatre in Xi'an. On 10th September morning, all the participating teams were invited to the Opening of Modern Art Exhibition at Yongyang Park. One representative from each country has been called on stage to paint colour to the already penned arts. In the afternoon, the performances were given at Xi'an Senior High School. On 11th September, the performance was held at Yan'an Grand Theatre which is about 350 km from Xi'an, and all the team stayed the night at Silver Sea International Hotel, Yan'an. On 12th September morning, the teams were taken to the Yangjialing Revolutionary Site - a historical site of former CCCPC General Office where residence of Mao Zedung and ZhaiEnlai was there. After lunch at the hotel, the team went back to Xi'an. On 13th September morning, the team visited Terra-Cotta Warrior's - an archaeological site, which is an

attractive site for thousands of tourist. In the evening, Dance Workshop for Manipur team was scheduled at Yongyang Park, but due to rain, it got cancelled. On 14th September after lunch, the team was taken to Baoji for performance (about 285 km from Xi'an). That was the concluding show of the festival. On 15th September evening at Yongyang Park, certificates to the leader of the participating countries were given away followed a musical party. The evening was rainy but it couldn't stop the artistes and the crowd from enjoying the event.

On 16th September afternoon, Shri A. Shivadas Sharma, Director (Art & Culture), Shri G. Dharmadas Sharma, Programme Officer (Art & Culture), Shri R.K. Sherjit, Coordinator along with Ms Tracy, Director of the Silk Road International Arts Festival 2018 visited Jin PE- Museum (Xi'an City) and presented a Pena - traditional fiddle instrument of Manipur to the Museum as a souvenir and also as a step towards building a cordial relations. The museum official also made a ceremonial reception and all the museum pieces available

were beautifully explained to the team, some museum publications were also presented to the Manipur team which the Director (Art & Culture) shall present to the Manipur State Museum for posterity.

PERFORMANCE BY CHINESE CULTURAL TEAM

On 17th September, the team left Xi'an for Kolkata via Kunming. They arrived at Kolkata Airport at 11.50 in the night. The next morning on 18th September, the team arrived at Imphal.

The cultural troupe of Manipur comprising students and teaches of Government Dance College and Director (Art & Culture) express warm gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Hon'ble Minister (Art & Culture), and the Chief Secretary, Government of Manipur for providing the opportunity of exposure of Manipuri culture in China and for the opportunity of learning and sharing experience with artistes of other countries during the tour that shall always be remembered.

Experiencing not only the high quality performances on Stage, but also the way of life of every artistes as a whole during those days, I reach to a level of understanding ever than before that culture will nowhere lead but only towards love, peace and harmony in the universe, and for the sake of it with greater responsibilities, we must preserve and promote our culture to the most possible extent.



**THE MANIPUR STATE COOPERATIVE BANK (MSCB) LTD.
A GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR SPONSORED & APEX BANK OF THE STATE**

A. Subhash Singh, MCS
Managing Director, MSCB

The Manipur State Co-operative Bank (MSCB) Ltd., is an insured Bank under Deposit Insurance & Credit Guarantee Corporation under which a depositor is entitled to insurance protection to the extent of Rs.1,00,000/-”.

ESTABLISHMENT

MSCB Ltd. was established on 24th June 1956 and registered on 2nd July 1956 with 77 members under Regd. No. 1 of 1956 under the Manipur Cooperative Societies Act, 1947 which was subsequently replaced by the Assam Co-operative Societies Act, 1949 as extended to the State of Manipur and Manipur Co-operative Societies Act, 1976 with jurisdiction over the entire State. The bank commenced banking business on 24th March

1958. The bank is licensed under Section 22 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (AACS) under No. RPCD.Guwa/2011-12/SCB-2 dated 29th March 2012.

BRANCHES OF THE MSCB LTD.

The MSCB Ltd. is serving through its network of 11 CBS enabled branches in the State with its Head Office/ Administrative Office at Old Assembly Road, Imphal. The 11 Branches of the MSCB Ltd. are at (i) Old Assembly Road Imphal, (ii) Imphal East Branch at Porompat (iii) Nambol Branch, at PhojjingChingmang (iv) Bishenpur Branch at Bishenpur Bazar, (v) Thoubal Branch, at Thoubal Bazar (vi) Kakching Branch at Kakching Bazar (vii) Churachandpur Branch at Churachandpur Bazar (viii)

Kangpokpi Branch at Kangpokpi Bazar, (ix) Ukhrul Branch (x) Tamenglong Branch and (xi) Yairipok Branch at Yairipok Bazar .

UPCOMING BRANCHES

The MSCB Ltd. is also committed to open five more branches at five different locations of the State, viz. (i) Saikot Branch (Un-banked Block), Churachandpur District; (ii) Jiribam Branch, Jiribam District; (iii) Paomata Branch (Un-banked Block), Senapati District; (iv) Moreh Branch, Tengnoupal District; and (v) Ima Market, Imphal West District.

FACILITIES AVAILABLE

The MSCB plays a key role in channelising the credit flow in the State for economic upliftment



of the people of the State by extending Loans through a cross-section of cooperative societies as well as individuals involved in a wide spectrum of economic activities. The MSCB Ltd. has been providing Short Term Crop Loan [Seasonal Agricultural Operations (SAO), Kisan Credit Cards (KCC)], Medium Term and Long Term credit to the Agriculturists (Dairy, Poultry, Piggery, Pisciculture, Pump Sets, Tractors, Power Tillers, Duckery) and other Schematic lending. The Bank also implemented NABARD's Area Based Scheme. Besides this, the bank also provides Personal Loan, Business Loan, Jewel Loan, Housing Loan etc.

The MSCB also provides ICC (Ima Credit Card). It is a hassle-free credit in the form of cash credit up to a limit of Rs.1,00,000/- provided to the women vendor cardholders of the ImaKeithel, Khwairamband Bazar, Imphal and other constituents of the bank in rural

and semi-urban areas without insisting on purpose or end-use of the credit by pledging the Vendor Card as the security.

On the Information Technology (IT) front, all the 11 Branches of the Bank are now on CBS platform under ASP Model with C-Edge Technologies, Thane as the CBS Vendor.

The Bank is providing all kinds of modern banking technologies,

viz. RTGS/NEFT(H2H), SMS Alert, Aadhaar seeding, Mobile seeding, IMPS, BDTL (H2H), NACH DR/CR, E-KYC, PoS, MPoS, ABPS, CIC, PFMS etc. besides Head Office automation. The Bank has also Joint the National Financial Switch through YES Bank as the Sponsor Bank and C-edge Technologies, Thane as the Card Vendor and as on date, it has installed five ATMs, one each, at Imphal Main Branch, Imphal East Branch, Thoubal Branch, Kakching Branch, and Nambol Branch. The Bank has started issuing Rupay Debit Card and Rupay KCC Card to its customers.

The Bank has also put into service one "Demo/Mobile Van" with ATM facilities with a view to provide anywhere banking service to the people of the State, which is the first and one of its kinds in the State and was procured with the financial support from NABARD under Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF).

This Demo/Mobile Van

**Money deposited
in MSCB will
remain in
Manipur only**





was put into service by the Bank during last year's Sangai Festival, held on 21st-30th November, 2017, the biggest Tourism festival of the State under the aegis of State Tourism Department, Government of Manipur and proved to be very successful as people across the State appreciated the new initiative of the MSCB Ltd.

Efforts are also on for providing Mobile Banking, Internet Banking, e-KYC, c-KYC, Micro ATMs and AEPS etc.

The Bank has also procured five ATMs for installation at its Kangpokpi Branch, Ukhrul Branch as well as at its upcoming Jiribam, Saikot and Paomata Branches and 16 Micro ATMs for installation at various locations of the State under Financial Inclusion Solution with a view to provide banking services to the people residing in areas where there is no Bank branch.

ROLE IN MEEYAMGINUMIT

MSCB Ltd. has been involving actively as an integral part of the Hills Leader Day/'MeeyamgiNumit' (People's Day) since its launch by the State Government. MSCB till now has committed Rs. 8.14 crores as the credit to 303 applicants who have come through Hills Leader Day/'MeeyamgiNumit'. Out of

this, Rs.3.51 crores has already been disbursed to the applicants and others are in the process of disbursement.

STAFF TRAINING

The Bank has been imparting training to its Officers/Staff from time-to-time by deputing them to participate in different training programmes conducted by various Training institutions at Lucknow, Kolkata, Guwahati, Shillong, Bengaluru and Institute of Cooperative Management at Imphal. Majority of the Officers and Staff have undergone some kind of training programmes. The Bank is also arranging Exposure visit of its Officers/Staff to other State Cooperative Banks with a view to learn the developmental activities or best practices being implemented by them as also to exchange experiences between the officials of the MSCB Ltd. and other SCBs.

FORMATION OF SHG/JLG

MSCB took an active role in improving the financial health of women living in rural areas of Manipur by organising them through SHG (Self - Help Group)/JLG (Joint Liability Group). SHGs /JLGs have been formed and provided credit linkage in Kwatha Village in Tengnoupal District, Paomata in Senapati District, Khurkhul and Phayeng in Imphal

West District, Kamjong District in Ukhrul etc. Achievements of the bank in this regard is as below:

(i) SHG: During the last two years, the Bank has formed 100 SHGs and all these SHGs have been linked with the deposit as well as with credit by extending a sum of Rs.55.50 lakhs till 30th September 2018.

(ii) JLG: Till 30th September 2018, 126 JLGs have been formed and credit facilities amounting to Rs.190.18 lakhs has been extended to these JLGs.

Conversion of State Government's Loan to MSCB Ltd for implementation of SEGP into Grant

With a view to strengthening the financial health of MSCB Ltd., the State Government has converted the State Government's loan of Rs.116.45 crores provided to the Bank for implementation of the SEGP into Grant.

VISION

Our vision is to be one of the vibrant and financially strong and viable Banks of North East India by 2020 and to be a "Scheduled Bank" by 2025.

It is a matter of pride that the Manipur State Co-operative Bank is now a vibrant and flourishing Apex Bank of the State that has taken leadership in supporting the farmers and rural economy in the State. These are exciting times for MSCB Ltd. I appeal to all the customers / patrons to keep reposing their faith in the MSCB and strengthen the Cooperative movement in the State. Needless to say that the money which is deposited/ parked in MSCB will remain in Manipur only. It won't go outside the state. It will be circulated amongst the people of Manipur only, mainly in cooperative and agri and allied activities. So, come bank and grow with MSCB.



SHIRUI LILY

Often compared to a beautiful and modest girl, Siroi Lily is known worldwide for its rare and modest beauty. Siroi lily or Shirui lily (*Lilium mackliniae*) is a rare species of terrestrial lily grown naturally only on the top of the Shirui Kashong peak in the upper reaches of the Shirui hill ranges in the Ukhrlul district of Manipur.

This lily was discovered by British botanist and plant-hunter Frank Kingdon-Ward in 1946 and later renamed *Lilium mackliniae* by British botanist J.R. Sealy in honour of Jean Macklin, wife of Frank Kingdon-Ward. The Lily won the Merit prize of Royal Horticultural Society at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1950. This shade-loving lily blooms at its best in May and June. Siroi Lily (locally called Kashong Timrawon) has been the State Flower of Manipur since 21st March, 1989.



Glossy Ibis



MERA HOU CHONGBA 2018

মংগৈ নং স'ম'চ

“মেৱা হৌচোংবগী হৰাউ তয়ান্নবা নুমিৎ অসিনা লাকপদা লমদম অসিগী চীং অমদি তমদা খুন্দাৰিবা
তোঙান-তোঙানবা কাংলুপশিংগী মৱক্তা লৈরিবা মৰীবু হেন্না চেংশিলহন্দুনা তংদু-লৈতাৰা, হেন্না নুংশি-চান্নাৰা,
হেন্না নুংগাই-য়াইফবা অমদি মপাদল কল্লবা লমদম অমা ওইহল্লসি।”

