Seminar on "The Peace Dividend"

Sponsored by:
Home Department, Govt. of Manipur
Organised by:
State Academy of Training
Our Manipur, often referred to as "The Jewel of India" is a state of contrasts and magnificent natural beauty. Here each ethnic group has its own culture and tradition. We are proud of our rich cultural heritage. The women of the state from time immemorable have played a pivotal role in our society.

It saddens us that the continuing spate of violence, frequent bandhs, blockades, extortions, abductions etc. has resulted in a disturbed state for too long. This is perhaps an opportune time to put our heads together and apply our collective mind to identify and analyse the malaise and arrive at possible remedies. We need to channelize our human capacity to engage in constructive dialogue to bring forth a mutually beneficial relationship between all stakeholders. This seminar seeks to take one small, but definite, step in this direction.

**Headlines we see in the dailies.**

- Schools closed
- Bomb found inside bus
- JACs protesting extortions/kidnapping

We have rich natural resources, traditional knowledge, proficiency in English and closeness to the dynamic economies of South East Asia. We are the natural Gateway to South East Asia.

**Drama in Real Life:**

Let us hear these tales:

------ Usharani from Urambam did not get to hear about the 1st day of bandh.

"I reached the market around 5.00 am to sell a bundle of vegetables. As soon as I heard about the bandh, I prepared to leave with my goods but could not get a bus to go back home", She says. She had to walk 25 kms to get back home. "I had to leave most of my vegetables behind since I could not carry them back all the way. By the time the bandh was over, the vegetables were spoilt. I lost more than Rs. 1500."

------ Jolina, a VII standard student says "During bandh, I get a free holiday, so I stay back at home either playing or watching T.V. and sometimes, if there is a strike for several days, I don't feel like going to school when it is over".

The school going students and daily wages earners are the most vulnerable sections of society during the bandhs and blockades.

**Why the "PEACE DIVIDEND" ?**

**EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND SELF HELP GROUPS - WAY FORWARD?**

Women constitute half the world's population, perform two-thirds of the world's work, receive one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property. Rights and protection of women from social inequalities in statute books are not good enough. Some practical solutions need to be devised, and more importantly, enforced. Promotion of women led enterprises to generate income, can transform them from "being alive" to "living with dignity"
IMPACT OF BANDHS AND BLOCKADES

A decade ago, general strikes; state wide bandhs, economic blockades etc. were few and far between. Now, we have far too many of them. Reliable statistics reveal that in the year 2004-05, the total number of days of bandhs & blockades in Manipur was 80, which went up to 145 in 2005-06. Violent means of protests often undermine the very purpose of agitations. During bandhs whatever is destroyed, damaged or ransacked belongs to the people and those at the bottom of the social ladder like vegetable vendors and daily wage earners. About 1/9th of the annual per capita income of Manipur is lost in bandhs & blockades.

At times, the kindergarten children question "How many days a week?" has to be rephrased, as "How many bandhs in a week?" Can't we express dissent without hurting ourselves?

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ROLE OF SECURITY FORCES

All human are entitled to basic rights and freedom. All individuals deserve fair and just treatment. In conflict zones, human rights have a special significance. Let us debate how we can bring dignity to our fellow countrymen.

ROLE OF MEDIA IN PEACE DIVIDEND

The media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Media, both print and electronic is an all powerful force to influence the public mind and policy makers. Hence, it is imperative to support unbiased reporting of events. Given the situation in Manipur State, the media has a challenging task. They have been doing a commendable job under extremely difficult circumstances.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Governance transcends the state to include civil society organizations. Governance is just one actor of governance but for good governance it should ensure that concerns/sections are taken into account particularly the most vulnerable sections of our society. It has been recognised that stability and peace do not stem from authority but from a broad sense of justice.

The first step to resolve any conflict situation is to sit together and deliberate upon issues of conflict and work-out acceptable solutions.

This is quintessentially the goal of this seminar.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE:

The goal is to ensure that the "PEACE DIVIDEND" should be harvested without any hindrance. The opportunities of growth are not to be missed. There are no easy solutions. Searching solutions is a long drawn process. No model can be applied mechanically.

Let us make a small beginning by engaging some of the stakeholders in a dialogue.

Microfinance and formation of Self Help Groups is one of the most innovative approaches to women empowerment and rural entrepreneurship. We only need to look at what the Bangladesh Grameen Bank has achieved in our neighbouring country.

This Seminar seeks to link up all the pertinent points and strives to further promote innovative solutions.
Contact us at
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