

Kudos to Nagaland Food Safety Commission

July 26, 2018

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I heartily congratulate the State Food Safety Commissioner Mr. Himato Zhimomi and his team for the sincere initiatives being taken to check the habitual anomalies committed by traders and food producers in Nagaland. The detection of formalin injected fish on sale in market, the exposure of unhygienic hoteliers and bakeries and the seizure of fruits ripened with use of chemical are but semblance of governance. I am thankful to Bengaluru based Public Affairs Centre(PAC) for highlighting the comparative data on how each State is governed effectively in India, and for sure Nagaland is recorded at the penultimate as least governed. It is obvious and such exposure of truth does not surprise anyone here in Nagaland nor such will prick the 60 members and bureaucrats who have elephant skin barring few.

The opinion of PAC's Public Affairs Index(PAI) has alarmed Meghalaya. Yet no amount of warnings and embarrassments can make Nagas sensible as we, including myself, all have been suffering from numbness for too long. In that state we allowed individualism and selfishness to dictate the governance of the affairs of the State. In that state, we allowed our valuable and powerful laws to get rusted and rot. I do not believe that for want of laws the Food Safety measures could not be enforced earlier. The nodal authorities were equipped with powers to take actions against the defaulters at anytime and at any place with the same existing laws and yet none bothered till Mr. Himato Zhimomi was given the assignment as I watch in the gallery.

Introspectively speaking, due to negligence of the concerned authorities to prevent sale of contaminated food in the market, how many lives were lost and how many people are being placed in health peril due to adulterated food items. Is Nagaland Govt. not responsible for those who had premature death due to food poisoning? Why Nagaland has maximum number cancer patients in NE?

Is Nagaland Govt. serious about the ongoing operation against food adulteration and unhygienic hotels and confectionaries under the command of Mr. Himato? The Govt. must not have subjective operation but the enforcement of the law must be holistic and impartial. The actions of the defaulters are not accident but incident, and therefore corrective measures should be laced with punitive actions to make the defaulters respect the law henceforth. The Kohima team has started as disclosed, but how determined and sincere the team will be is the question. Just as the CMO Dimapur, the Kohima counterpart too should have comprehensive action plan without any subjectivity. The initiatives have begun and it should not be allowed to become a mere show like Nagaland's Swachh Bharat or Kohima Town cleaning once in a blue moon but it should reach its logical conclusion.

Hence, there are possibilities in the process that Mr. Himato may become the odd number similar to that of a discipline petty police officer in Nagaland. As assigned, the poor police officer booked the culprit and reported the matter to his boss. Whereas, instead of getting unconditional support from his boss for the honest job done, he had to face reprimand for the reason that his boss connived with the culprit. The police personnel on ground are demoralized lot today as the fish always rots from head and never from tail. To be blunt, authorities of today, be it politician or bureaucrat, are malleable and remained un-resistible to wads of currency notes from traders or anyone who can offer. I am sure Mr. Himato and team is now uniting all those whose business establishments are checked. When so, the nucleus will become formidable to gain political, legal and bureaucratic backings. Following which whisper campaign will start branding Mr. Himato to be over smart, excessive, partial, too personal and vindictive followed by lobby for his immediate transfer to insignificant Department.

If the State Govt. becomes so fragile and lacks integrity even to lend support to such an important undertaking (its all for health) headed by a daring bureaucrat who is found able to resist the temptation of abuse of the delegated power for personal interest, then the common man will have what they do not deserve. Our markets will go back to square one. Formalin laced fish will fill the fish market and we will be compelled to consume contaminated food items all the time to come.

Secondly, as much as the contaminated food is poisonous to health, the manipulated and uncontrolled rates of items be it eatables or garments or construction materials are injurious to consumers' economy. The other day, the Dimapur Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI) clarified that costly rate of brick is due to indulgence by middlemen and not that the kiln owners raised the rate. The ball is in the court of the Govt. now. I believe Nagaland has the costliest rate of sand in the country as Kanaikat sand costs Rs.26000/-, Longli sand costs Rs.23500/- and Deopani sand costs Rs.22000/- per truck load respectively though the rates do fluctuate.

Although we do not have elected Municipal body, we have District administration manning the Council. Yet, for instance as Kohima town, I seldom see the presence of the administration in respect of public welfare measures. The consumers are always at the mercy of traders whose hobby is to squeeze maximum juice from the gullible consumers. I do not trust the vegetable qualities imported from outside Nagaland to Kohima market. I am told chemicals are used for the speedy growth of even non-cultivated jungle leaves which are on sale at Kohima. What about meat qualities in Kohima markets? How perfect are the scales of meat sellers? How often the responsible local officers are responsible enough in monitoring the markets for the sake of consumers. Are our food items safe for human consumption or not. The authority concerned must be committed to verify food item comprehensively in the interest of the citizens. Whereas, when the local administration has much indifference and lethargy, who will protect the interest of the consumers. Show your existence. All those who are doing well, you are not alone. You have the support of right thinking people.