

Report on Documenting History - Written and Oral Histories of Manipur

Date: 13 October 2012

Time: 10 am to 1 pm

Venue: The Classic Hotel Imphal, Manipur

Supported by

 **HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
INDIA**

For more than 63 years of Indian republic, it has come to light that the history/histories of 45 million of its citizens living in 8 states of the Northeast region of the country are absent in schools, colleges and university text books. This is one of the causes of the wrong perception and discrimination of people of Northeast region when they travel for study and work in different parts of India. Concerned citizens, scholars in the region and beyond felt that this needs to be urgently rectified.

Understanding and noticing this major lacunae, team of Manipur Women Gun Survivor Network and Northeast India Women Initiative for Peace, two women-led civil society movements in Northeast region in coordination with Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) organised a conference “Documenting History - Written and Oral Histories of Manipur”, at Imphal, Manipur on October 13, 2012. The event was attended by eminent personalities that included historians, scholars, activists, media and women’s organizations.

Speaking at the convening, chief guest RK Anand, MLA, stated that the conference was a “Historic Initiative” and stated the support of the Government of Manipur to ensure that due process of an inclusive syllabus happens and the need to prepare a much needed “Roadmap”. Delivering the inaugural address, Professor Basudev Chatterji, Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research stated that “History is not a battle-field where people say his history is right and others are wrong”. The aim of ICHR is not to solve current problems but to seek an understanding that needs basic requirements such as “Evidence”. He lamented the sad state of affairs of Manipur’s State Archives.

Dr Ishrat Alam, Member Secretary, ICHR shared that ICHR was an autonomous body created in 1972 and that the organization is yet to work on India’s Northeast Region and have ICHR’s commitment.

Professor Gangmumei Kamei, eminent historian lauded the fact that it is for the first time that ICHR has realized the study of oral history. He called upon ICHR to start a big project with technically qualified people to start work on documenting both oral and written history/ies of Manipur and the region. He mentioned that NCERT laid guidelines for syllabus from Class VII to Class XII and mentioned that there can be local variations and usually this amounts to less than 30 percent teaching of history in so called “Social Sciences”.

Professor N Lokendra, Registrar of Manipur University stated the fact that in an earlier part of his research period in 1980s many files he wanted to take a look were not available for researchers as the rule at that time was sensitive areas of Northeast region, files after 1920s needed permission of the Home Ministry. He also stated that history of Southeast Asia actually starts from Northeast region and he gave his commitment to work with ICHR to take the process forward and will make a plea to Vice Chancellor, Manipur University for the same.

Dr Arambam Ongbi Memchoubi stated, “We need to trace our own history in our own indigenous ways”. She also lamented that women in Manipur were not allowed to touch or read script in earlier times and that women historians of Manipur are hardly recognized. She also narrated how the first queen of Manipur was called Laisana or “Laisara”, meaning she was the Chieftain of the lai people as part of a tradition of warrior queens.

Dr Jibon Kumar Sharma, Director, Manipur Institute of Management Studies (MIMS) stated that history and decision making are closely related. The past always has an impact so we should create knowledge of how to go about in documenting and preserving our histories.

Nepram Bihari, author of Cheitharol Kumbaba, said that in the early period some evidence was lacking with respect to archaeological, anthropological and cultural findings but in the 11th and 12th century AD these short comings were found incorporated in the royal diary which we term it as Cheitharol Kumbaba ”.

Manipur has its identity because of its archaic script as evidences from stone inscriptions / coins.

The meeting concluded with a historic resolution in which the following resolutions were unanimously taken

- Call upon Indian Council of Historical Research to start work on documenting history- both written and oral of Manipur; Urged Government of Manipur (Through the commitment given by Chief Guest present RK Anand) and Manipur University (Through commitment given by Prof N Lokendra Registrar present at meeting) to take lead in initiating the process of documenting, archiving history/ies of Manipur; Constitution of an eminent panel task force in Manipur to start the process.
- Members present at the October 13 convening as well as others (who will be identified and later spoken to) will be included in process.
- Indian Council of Historical Research will work with all above mentioned stakeholders to ensure that history/ies of Manipur and Northeast India are included in Indian history school, colleges and university text books.
- It was also agreed that resolution to Chief Ministers, PM, Education Minister, HRD Minister and other relevant authorities to ensure that follow-up is done.

For more information, kindly contact:

Ms Binalakshmi Nepram, Founder, Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network & Secretary General, Control Arms Foundation of India. Email: Binalakshmi@gmail.com

Address for correspondence: B 5/146, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029, India
Website / Blog: www.womensurvivorsnetwork.org, <http://neiwip.blogspot.com/>
Phone: +9-11-46018541, Fax: +91-11-26166234