

# **Dynamics of Bandhs and Blockades in Northeast India A Study of Manipur and the Way Ahead**

Sushil Kumar Sharma



Centre for Land Warfare Studies  
New Delhi



KNOWLEDGE WORLD  
KW Publishers Pvt Ltd  
New Delhi

### **Editorial Team**

Editor-in-Chief : Maj Gen Dhruv C Katoch SM, VSM (Retd)  
Managing Editor : Ms Geetika Kasturi



### **Centre for Land Warfare Studies**

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Phone: +91.11.25691308 Fax: +91.11.25692347

email: [landwarfare@gmail.com](mailto:landwarfare@gmail.com) website: [www.claws.in](http://www.claws.in)

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

© 2014, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi

Disclaimer: The contents of this paper are based on the analysis of materials accessed from open sources and are the personal views of the author. The contents, therefore, may not be quoted or cited as representing the views or policy of the Government of India, or Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army), or the Centre for Land Warfare Studies.



[www.kwpub.com](http://www.kwpub.com)

Published in India by

Kalpana Shukla

KW Publishers Pvt Ltd

4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002

Phone: +91 11 23263498 / 43528107 email: [knowledgeworld@vsnl.net](mailto:knowledgeworld@vsnl.net) • [www.kwpub.com](http://www.kwpub.com)

# Contents

Abstract	1
1. Introduction	2
The Study	2
The Objectives	2
Data Sources, Methodology and Scope	3
2. Understanding Bandhs and Economic Blockades	4
Bandh	4
Blockade/Economic Blockade	4
Legal Position	5
Bandhs and Blockades in the Northeast	5
3. Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur	7
Nature of Bandhs and Blockades	7
Topography	8
4. Findings of Survey	9
Popular Perception against Bandhs/Blockades	9
Tribe-wise Response to Bandhs/Blockades	9
5. Causes of Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur	11
Ethnicity	11
Bandhs a Political Tool	11
Pressure Tactics by Civil Society	12
Socio-Economic Factors	12
Quick-Fix Solutions	13
Blockade is the Only Option: Manipuri Mindset	13
6. Common Effects of Bandhs and Blockades	15
Economic Loss	15
Price Hike	15

Hostile Investment Atmosphere and Black Marketing	15
Effect on Social Front (Social Sector)	16
Institutional Loss	16
Impact of Bandhs and Blockades on Trade and Commerce	17
Humanitarian Tragedy	17
Losing People's Support	17
Localised Effect	18
7. Case Study: 120 Days Economic Blockade in 2011	19
Genesis	19
Developments Leading to Blockade	20
Blockade by SHDDC	21
Stand of the Naga Bodies	21
Lifting of Economic Blockade	22
Effect of the Blockade	23
Role of Civil Administration and Police	23
8. The Way Ahead	24
Government Initiatives	24
Flexibility and Imagination in Approach to Conflict Resolution	24
Need of Paradigm Shift in Ideologies	25
Shift the Centre of Gravity to Progress and Development	25
Alternative Means of Supply	26
Role of the Media	26
Role of Civil Society Organisations	27
Role of the Church	27
Awareness Campaigns	27
Legislation	28
Central Government's Need to be More Sensitive	28
Interdependence of the Various Organisations, Including Security Forces	29
Role of the Armed Forces and its Impact	29
9. Conclusion	31
Notes	32

# **Dynamics of Bandhs and Blockades in Northeast India**

## **A Study of Manipur and the Way Ahead**

### **Abstract**

Holding immense importance strategically, the northeastern region of India is known for its ethnic and linguistic diversity, rich mineral wealth and vast human resources. The myriad ethnic groups are in constant conflict with each other, which has severely affected the overall development of the region. With more than 200 different tribes fighting for their identity through various political and insurgent movements, the region has witnessed bloodshed, violence, bandhs, blockades and ethnic killings in the past. Dissent is often expressed through frequent bandhs and blockades, even over mundane issues, as these are considered effective means of drawing attention of the state machinery. Manipur is one of the worst affected states with a pronounced 'bandh culture' and can boast of the longest bandhs and blockades adversely affecting the economic life-lines of the state. Bandhs and blockades often involve mindless violence, casualties and damage to public and private property. They cause tremendous hardship for the average resident, create economic losses and hinder development. This paper is an attempt to understand the causes and effects of bandhs and blockades in Manipur, and propose a way ahead to overcome this menace.

# Introduction

## The Study

Manipur remains the most volatile state in India's troubled northeast, with all its nine districts (four in the valley and five in the hills) afflicted by varying degrees of extremist activities. In the past decade, the state has witnessed frequent economic blockades (including bandhs,<sup>1</sup> general strikes) ranging from a few hours to some exceeding 100 days. Almost every major blockade has ended with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government. Such MOUs have largely been futile efforts as they could not resolve any issue. There have also been "counter-bandhs and counter-blockades,"<sup>2</sup> the impact of which is felt by the locals as they have to bear the burden of exorbitant prices of scarcely available basic amenities.

There is a strong undercurrent of resentment against bandhs. But as the groups calling for the bandh are usually supported by Underground Groups<sup>3</sup> (UG), people are scared to voice their opinion against these bandh calls. This paper carries out an in-depth analysis of the causes and effects of these bandhs and blockades through the striking illustration of a case study. It proposes possible measures that need to be taken to bring succour to the people of Manipur and to look for a way ahead leading to a bandh-free environment.

## The Objectives

This study aims to bring out the genesis of bandhs and blockades in Manipur and their contemporary relevance. It also aims to underscore the perception of the people and evolve a strategy to combat the menace of bandhs and blockades. The objectives of this study are as mentioned below:-

- Understand the dynamics of bandhs and blockades.
- Understand the causes of bandhs and blockades in Manipur.
- Analyse the fallouts of bandhs and blockades in Manipur.
- Study a case of protracted blockade in the state of Manipur.
- Recommendations and the way ahead.

### **Data Sources, Methodology and Scope**

The study is primarily based on the writer's own experience as a serving combatant in the state of Manipur. Review of the contemporary literature on the subject was carried out to obtain current views on the subject. Interactions were carried out with the stakeholders in order to obtain the viewpoints of the people right from the grassroots level to the intellectuals who contribute on a regular basis to the media, nationally as well as internationally. Surveys have also been conducted to obtain the views of the stakeholders. Another exercise undertaken was to solicit and analyse the opinion of experts from various domains and to corroborate the opinions obtained from the common people with the opinions formed on the basis of the research carried out. Their perception and outlook were studied, analysed and well-absorbed while authoring the study. This detailed analysis has formed the basis of proposing a strategy for preventing bandhs and blockades in Manipur by addressing the ill effects associated with this menace.

# Understanding Bandhs and Economic Blockades

## **Bandh**

Bandh, originally a Hindi word meaning “closed”, is a form of protest where the community or political party declaring a bandh expects the general public to stay at home and not report to work, and is prepared to enforce it with appeals or coercion. A bandh is a powerful means of civil disobedience because of the huge impact it has on the local community;<sup>4</sup> it is a much-feared tool of protest. It puts the government machinery on the defensive in anticipation of an escalation of the situation. By calling for a bandh and then holding it, citizens are prevented from attending to their livelihoods, traders are prevented from carrying on their business activities, workers are prevented from going to the factories and other manufacturing establishments, leading to loss in production which, in turn, leads to a national loss. Also with a view to perpetrate terror, the organisers of the bandh indulge in wanton acts of vandalism like destruction of government and private property and vehicles, and can be responsible for fatalities.

## **Blockade/Economic Blockade**

A blockade is an effort to cut off movement of food, supplies, war material or communications from a particular area by force, either in part or in totality. A blockade should not be confused with an embargo or sanction, which is a legal barrier to trade, and is distinct from a siege in the sense that a blockade is usually directed at an entire country or region rather than a fortress or city. An economic blockade is carried out by the termination (prohibition) of trade, financial, credit, and other economic ties with the blockaded state. The termination of credit ties with a blockaded country, for example, can be an instance of a partial economic blockade. An economic blockade is generally connected with a political blockade and is often combined with a military blockade, even without military operations. Today, an economic blockade is being used as a tool by underground groups and socio-political organisations for their personal gains.



## Legal Position

It was almost a decade ago, in July 1997, that the Kerala High Court delivered a path-breaking verdict declaring forced bandhs illegal. People cannot be made to participate in bandhs under duress, the court had said. Organisers of bandhs “trample upon the rights of the citizens protected by the Constitution,” observed the court. “In simple terms, the judiciary laid down the rule that political parties and trade unions have a right to protest, but the citizens have an equal right to not support their action”.<sup>5</sup> Calling for a bandh has ceased to be a fundamental right or a legitimate democratic means of registering a protest. Yet, the import of the judicial pronouncements, it appears, has not sunk deep in the mind of the general public and the level of awareness is low. The law, therefore, is that whenever an organisation gives a call for a bandh, it acts in contravention of the Constitution of India. It may be mentioned that in none of the judgements has the court directed the state to pass a new Act or to make calling for a bandh a punishable offence. But that does not preclude fresh legislation by the state in order to protect and uphold the fundamental rights of the people.<sup>6</sup> There is sufficient justification for recommending that calling for a bandh ought to be made into a specific offence. First, calling for a bandh is illegal and unconstitutional and interferes with the exercise of the fundamental rights of the people. Secondly, a bandh deprives people of their income for the day and causes them wrongful loss. Bandhs cause a massive loss to individuals, to the society and to the state in the areas of education, trade and commerce and industrial production. There is no prescribed way to estimate the loss in terms of money. However, the organisation and its followers, by enforcing the bandh, cause the country to suffer heavy losses and are, therefore, liable. They can be punished with imprisonment and fines.<sup>7</sup>

## Bandhs and Blockades in the Northeast

An economic blockade, a method used by pressure groups/interest groups or civil societies to push through specific demands, is often experienced in India, particularly in the northeastern region. An economic blockade is a recognisable means of assertive, reassertive and reactive issues of present-day politics. Most of the states of northeast India are geographically located in hilly regions and composed of land-locked states. Only the Brahmaputra

and Barak rivers provide the opportunity of water transport but these rivers are not so important for transportation in the region (Manipur and Assam). All the states of northeast India depend on railway lines and roadways for transportation of goods and passengers. Economic blockades are an effort to cut off essential commodities of life like



food, clothes, supplies, medicine and communications from a particular area by force, either in part or in totality. The number of bandhs depends on many contemporary economic, socio-cultural and political issues and also on the real or perceived sense of injustice in the various ethnic, religious or linguistic communities. As Assam provides road and rail connectivity to all the other states of this region, bandhs and blockades in Assam cripple the entire northeastern region.

# Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur

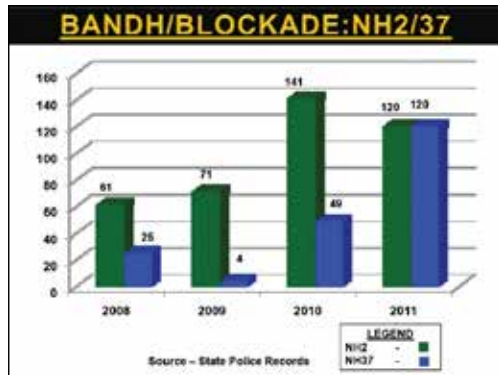
## Nature of Bandhs and Blockades

Bandhs, general strikes and blockades need no description for any Manipuri because every person has been either directly or indirectly victimised by them. In Manipur, bandhs are generally called by socio-political organisations. Besides, various frontal organisations having linkages with insurgent groups are also known to give bandh calls. Bandh calls are generally made to protest against the inaction/indifference of government authorities towards a particular public (or a section of public) grievance. The bandh is supported by volunteers who, more often than not, are educated yet unemployed youth. This often leads to mindless violence, casualties and damage to public and private property. Ironically, these protests, which are meant to be peaceful, often turn violent and have far-reaching consequences in the people's day-to-day lives and in the government's discharge of its duty.

During a bandh, buses are set ablaze causing irreparable loss to the economically backward state government; vehicular traffic is sparse, commercial activities come to a standstill and government and private offices are shut down. Every activity related to education such as attendance in schools, private tuition, coaching is automatically affected. Not only this, food item dealers, water, electricity, medical stores, and hospitals all become inaccessible. Even after this systemic paralysis, at times, the demands put up by the bandh callers are not met by the government. Through their skilful political manoeuvres, the politicians either succeed in cornering the issues or treating the symptom while the cause gets neglected.<sup>8</sup>

If the Government of India was to rank any of its states for having the maximum number of illegal activities of strikes, bandhs and economic blockades in a year, the stricken state of Manipur would definitely be "topping the list".<sup>9</sup> It is evident from the details of blockades that took place between the years 2008 to 2011 as depicted in the graphic below. In Manipur, the people are regularly having to suffer from "economic blockades" which strangle the life-line of the state. Bandhs are held one after another as a routine matter against the government for any kind of demand in the name

of claiming democratic rights despite the very strict “ban” imposed even by the highest judicial forum of India, the Supreme Court.<sup>10</sup>



## Topography



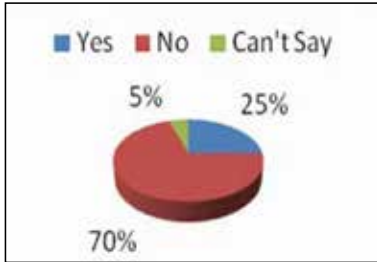
The total geographical area of the state of Manipur i.e. 20,089 sq. km is covered by hills; the remaining area is a small valley covering only 2,238 sq. km and accounting for only one-tenth of the total area of the state. The state could be divided into two regions viz. hills and valley. The valley lies in the

central part of the state; it is connected by road to the rest of the country and to Myanmar by three National Highways [NH-39 and NH-150 (both renamed as NH-2) and NH-57 (renamed as NH-37)], totalling about 1,000 km of road length through the state. Amongst the highways, NH-2 is the state’s main life-line and its major link route to the outside world. Hundreds of vehicles ply along this route daily to bring petrol, diesel, cooking gas and other essential items, including food grains, from other parts of the country. With limited accessibility in the state due to its hilly terrain and limited road connectivity, movement of most of the essential commodities and public transients is restricted to these routes. This is effectively exploited by organisations calling for bandhs and blockades in their respective areas.

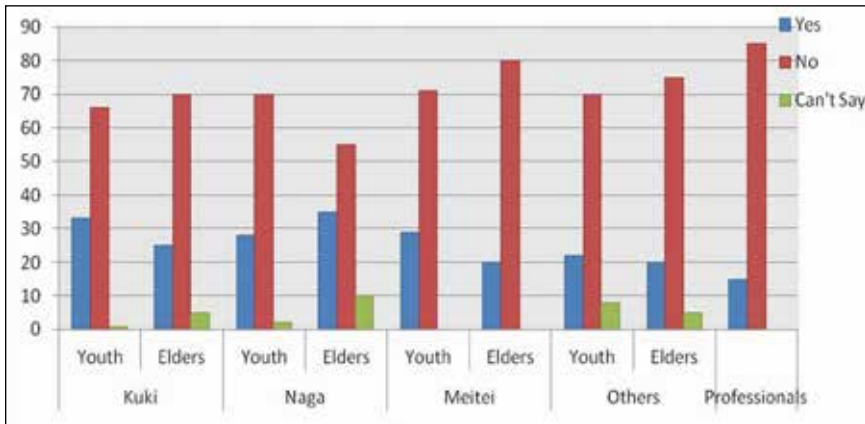
# Findings of Survey

## Popular Perception Against Bandhs/Blockades

The survey was carried out in Manipur. One of the questions asked in the survey was: Do you think that economic blockades and bandhs are the right methods being employed by the civil society organisations to put across their demands in Manipur? Over 70 percent



(175 out of 250 respondents) of Manipur's people think that bandhs/blockades are not the right method adopted by the social organisations to put across their demands. Only 25 percent (63 respondents) justify the bandhs. They feel that this is the only way to make the government listen to them, while 5 percent remain undecided regarding bandhs. It can be concluded that the populace is against bandhs and blockades.



## Tribe-wise Response to Bandhs/Blockades

Close to 70 percent of Kukis feel that bandhs cause discomfort to them. However, 28 percent of Kukis feel that bandhs are organised to attract the government's attention towards their problems. The youth favours the means of bandhs: about 33 percent of Kuki youth feel that organising bandhs

is the only option left to them. However, among the older population, a miniscule proportion (about 25 percent) justifies bandhs.

About 60 percent of hills-based Nagas do not support bandhs. However, 30 percent of Nagas believe that bandhs and blockades are the best weapons to influence government decisions. It is felt that anger against the government and support to the cause is relatively higher among the Nagas as compared to other tribes of Manipur.

The others category includes Muslims (Meitei-Pangals), Nepalis and North Indian settlers in Manipur. About 73 percent of these categories do not support bandhs, however, 6 percent remain undecided.

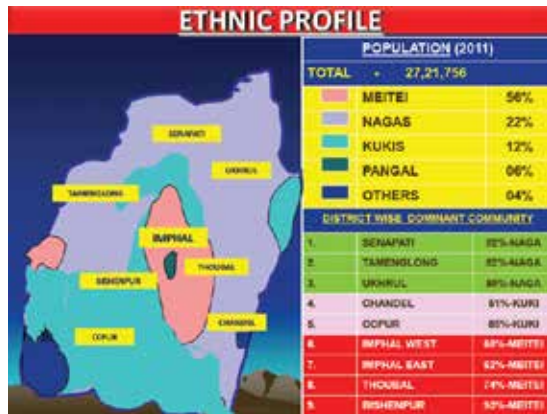
Meiteis, who inhabit the valley region of Manipur, are the worst affected people because of bandhs. About 75 percent do not support bandhs. The percentage of people averse to bandhs is higher as the valley is the most adversely affected region due to bandhs and here Meiteis are in a majority. Conversely, 29 percent of Meitei youth still support bandhs as they are frustrated with the lack of development and the poor governance. They feel that organising bandhs is the best means to get the government's attention. But 85 percent of the professionals and intellectuals are vehemently opposed to bandhs and only a small section of 15 percent voices an opinion in favour of bandhs.

It can be concluded from the survey that the people of Manipur are tired of bandhs and blockades. Though a small percentage still regards them as a tool to get the immediate attention of the administration, the majority does not support bandhs or blockades called by social organisations. It is apparent that most people are forced to participate in bandhs.

# Causes of Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur

## Ethnicity

There are three major tribes in Manipur i.e. Nagas, Kukis and Meiteis. The Nagas and Kukis inhabit the hill and the Meiteis the Imphal valley. The societal space in Manipur is deeply fractured along ethnic lines, whereby the Meiteis, who are inhabitants of Imphal



valley, are generally seen as being the more dominant class by the tribals residing in the surrounding hills. Ethnic and cultural insecurity is one of the major causes for the respective social bodies being prejudiced about the others. Thus, in order to highlight issues related to deprivation and lack of development in the hill areas, the Nagas and Kukis resort to blocking of highways leading to the valley areas as an effective means to lobby with the government's decision-making process. Economic blockades have often been called a form of protest by different ethnic groups to draw attention to their cause and grievances. The Meiteis, who also happen to inhabit the gateway to west Manipur in the area of Jiribam, frequently resort to blocking NH-37 to preclude the hill populace from getting essential commodities.

## Bandhs a Political Tool

Bandhs and blockades have always been used as a political tool. Even for matters which have little merit, bandhs and blockades are imposed. Such a disturbing trend is a consequence of the government's inaction and faulty policies. It takes a bandh for the government to usually turn its attention to

the matter and it ultimately doles out something or strikes an agreement on certain points with the aggrieved party. Because of such ad-hoc response of the government, bandhs and blockades are called for at the drop of a hat. On the other hand, the government does not think it necessary to allow people to debate on its policies before implementing them. The ethnic indifference also comes from political apathy that has seeped through people—both young and old.

### **Pressure Tactics by Civil Society**

Economic blockades have been used as a means of agitation since the 1990s for all kind of contests between different ethnic communities and also for their assertive and reassertive demands. The Naga civil organisations often launch economic blockades just to put pressure on the Union and state governments and urge that it is not against any community.<sup>11</sup> Valley people have also started counter-blockades to stop movement from the valley to the hill areas, thus, creating a vicious cycle which helps none. It has also been seen, at times, that civil societies call for bandhs to remain relevant and ignite ethnic divides. A bandh called by the valley groups, just before Christmas in 2012, to harass the tribal people is one such example.

### **Socio-Economic Factors**

The state has lagged behind in economic, technological and industrial development and has been mainly supported and supplied essential commodities from the rest of India. There is no development of big industries in the state due to the difficult landscape, varying climatic conditions and inadequate infrastructural facilities. Internal trade is restricted to food items and is carried out by the people of the hills and valley, mostly women. The hill people bring products such as tea leaves, firewood, bamboo shoots (usoi or soibum), vegetables, charcoal and fruits down to the plains and sell them in the open markets while they buy essential things like ngari (fermented fish), fish, dal, salt, onions, oil, potatoes and clothes from the valley in return. Thus, the people of the hills and valley supplement each other and are connected through these economic ties. Any disturbance, whether in the hills or valley, area affects the lives and business of both



communities. This causes the populace of both the hills and valley to suffer immensely.

External trade is carried out through the two main highways which are the life-lines of the state as there is no railway connectivity in Manipur. Thus, the two highways are inextricably linked with the socio-economic conditions of Manipur. Both the national highways of Manipur run through the hilly areas mainly populated by the two major ethnic groups of the state: the Naga and Kuki tribes. Though violent clashes between these tribes had concluded a few years ago, the bitterness remains which translates into bandhs and blockades. They have not been able to establish friendly relations till now. Their opinions remain widely different and contradictory in many respects.

### **Quick-Fix Solutions**

The social and economic paralysis induced by bandhs / blockades in Manipur has often been overlooked. Whenever the civil society organisations get a chance to protest, they mostly fix a bandh, in some cases, an indefinite bandh. It has become such a widespread/popular method of protest that a boy killing his girlfriend sparks a state-wide bandh; an inter-community murder for financial tangles results in a bandh; civilians abducted or killed by the military or by militants is also a cause for bandh.<sup>12</sup> Because of this menace, which is perceived as a quick-fix method of demanding justice, the government is left with no option but to treat the symptom, not the actual cause.

### **Blockade is the Only Option: Manipuri Mindset**

Some socio-political leaders of this remote state often feel that their peaceful protests and appeals to the state as well as the Centre are generally ignored. The national media has also not been able to effectively report the state dynamics and its burning issues. The acts of violence, on the other hand, lead to killings and further vitiate the atmosphere. Thus, the social bodies, on behalf of the common people, resort to such bandhs and blockades as these happen to be the only viable option through which they are able to raise their pitch to be rightfully heard by the government, which otherwise is perceived to be totally insensitive to their demands.

Thus, the mindset of some sections of Manipuri society is deeply rooted in taking extreme steps for achieving any set objectives. Perhaps the

frequency of bandhs, strikes and blockades confirms this fact in Manipur. Any subsequent change in the government has not been able to solve this menace. Those mainly affected are the daily wages labourers, shopkeepers, those who are self-employed, the public transport operators of buses and auto-rickshaws who are supposed to stay off the roads and not carry any passengers, and the common people. In short, the whole socio-economic order comes to a standstill. Though a bandh is supposed to be in support of a cause, the question is: does it actually serve that cause? One just cannot be too sure.<sup>13</sup>

# Common Effects of Bandhs and Blockades

## **Economic Loss**

Bandhs and blockades cause tremendous economic loss. The total loss suffered by the Manipur economy on account of economic blockades and bandhs was Rs. 246 crore in 2004-05, Rs. 553.23 crore in 2005-06 and Rs. 520.73 crore in 2006-07. The per capita loss due to bandhs and blockades was Rs. 996 in 2004-05 and in 2005-06, it rose to Rs. 2,196, followed by Rs. 2,027 in 2006-07.<sup>14</sup> Manipur's Department of Economics and Statistics estimated the loss at Rs. 245.64 crore due to 120 days of economic blockade on the national highways at the rate of Rs. 2.67 crore per day.<sup>15</sup> The loss does not include properties destroyed by volunteers and supporters who torch vehicles, including freight trucks, light vehicles and government offices. This loss directly/indirectly affects the common man.

## **Price Hike**

Price hike is not a new phenomenon in Manipur. Normally the price behaviour in the retail market is higher by 20 per cent than the national average. However, during the prolonged economic blockades, the prices of essential commodities increase three-fold. The price of petrol per litre is Rs. 100 to Rs. 140. The price of kerosene increased to Rs. 100 per litre and of diesel to Rs. 80 per litre. The all-time high price of LPG of Rs. 1,200 to 1,500 per cylinder is agonising. The expenditure on essential items multiplies with a heavy onslaught on the meagre savings of the people in the state.

## **Hostile Investment Atmosphere and Black Marketing**

Frequent and unexpected imposition of economic blockades and bandhs by the underground and other civil organisations creates a hostile investment atmosphere punctuated by insecurity of life, insecurity of investment and insecurity of business, insecurity of employment and disruption in market connectivity. The unjustified costs, risks and barriers to competition fall heavily

on the tottering and fragile state economy. The economy suffers two losses that are long-term in nature, namely: (a) brain drain; and (b) discouragement to entrepreneurship, which should act as the driver of development.

### **Effect on Social Front (Social Sector)**

The social sector is important because it is the springboard for human capital formation and it has to pay a heavy price during bandhs. These bandhs have a deep and profound impact on the educational atmosphere of the state. Disruption in studies causes a loss of concentration among students as they have to miss classes. In the absence of a regular teaching programme, students cannot maintain their calendar and can hardly compete for national opportunities. This violates the inter-generational equity and deprives young learners of the right to education. The non-availability of life saving drugs is another cause of concern. Major operations have to be postponed or avoided. Admission of outdoor patients, under such a dismal situation, forces aged people to get treatment outside the state at exorbitant cost.

### **Institutional Loss**

The economic loss is only one side of the story. While most of the economic losses can be repaired and rebuilt, the loss of faith, trust and understanding has very high costs and consequences. The breakdown of institutions, the loss of credibility and the trauma heaped on the vulnerable population, stimulate in the long run a new basis of antagonism which may take a violent turn with the slightest provocation. This is a long-term loss of social capital. Although exact quantification of the diminishing value of the 'peace dividend' in the northeastern region has not been done, the region is bound to be affected by the vast array of disturbing activities engineered by the social organisations. This 'new culture of aggressive social action' in the form of bandhs and blockades on local issues and small pretexts has cascading effects on the rising growth impulses/index. Frequent imposition of bandhs or blockades in Manipur today does not mean just a disruption of normal day-to-day activities of the people, but a rippling effect in all sectors. More importantly, the prevailing bandh culture in Manipur has underlined the widening gap between the people and those who govern them. In such a situation, the mindset of any aggrieved party is to think of taking recourse to

such extreme steps as the only possible means to achieve its demands or to make the concerned authorities of the state government take notice of its grievances.<sup>16</sup>

### **Impact of Bandhs and Blockades on Trade and Commerce**

Under the 'Look-East' policy, trade and commerce and related activities are likely to acquire new dimensions. The northeast region/Manipur is likely to strengthen trade and commerce with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including the five adjacent countries, i.e., Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Appropriate strengthening of trade routes and connectivity is shaping up. Major National Highways, Nos. 2 and 37, have been ordered to be made four-lane ones. Rail links are to be extended from Jiribam (bordering Silchar/Assam) to Imphal. Further, it is likely to be connected with Myanmar through Moreh (Manipur's border town to Myanmar), as a part of the Trans-Asian Rail to connect 28 nations. Unfortunately, these developmental activities are getting delayed, and some are not even materialising because of the negative impact generated by the bandhs and violence. These problems are more or less the same in the other sister states of northeast India.<sup>17</sup>

### **Humanitarian Tragedy**

Bandhs and economic blockades affect the common people. They cause a lot of hardship to the people, leading to humanitarian tragedy. One kilogram of rice was priced at Rs. 30; a litre of petrol was priced between Rs. 150 and Rs. 200 and an LPG cylinder was priced between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 1,500. The Public Distribution System (PDS) was closed. Worse still, the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences and Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences, two of the main hospitals in Manipur, stopped functioning due to non-availability of medicines.<sup>18</sup>

### **Losing People's Support**

It is evident from the findings of the survey that a majority of the people are against the culture of bandhs and blockades and are being forced/ threatened to participate against their will. There are even times when children are asked to skip school, to support such demonstrations to enhance the effect.

Yet, this has not deterred organisations or groups from organising bandhs in the name of justice. Why is this so? In a democratic country, every citizen may claim the right to protest against the injustice meted out to him/her. Are bandhs or blockades the only means to seek justice? For the success of any social cause, the support of the people is essential. But when the same people who should come out to support the cause voluntarily become fed up with the crippling impact of the frequent bandhs or blockades, the means definitely become unjustified. With such deplorable means, the cause of the struggle becomes redundant.

### **Localised Effect**

This is exactly what has been witnessed in the past spate of bandhs and general strikes called in the state. Even if normal life in the state may have been affected with inter-state or intra-state vehicular movement staying off the roads and market places shutting down in fear of vandalism by supporters of such mindless bandhs or strikes, the real impact of these agitations has remained, by and large, localised to areas in close geographical confines. This should be a warning sign to the people or organisations which have come to think of bandhs and blockades as the only means to seek justice, to look for alternative ways. On the other hand, it would be much wiser on the part of the state administration to give up its habit of waiting until all possible damage has been done and to 'arrive at an agreement' with the agitators. As long as this view point of the administration reigns, no amount of legislation enacted would be able to prevent the protestors from hitting the roads and the culture of bandh and blockade would become a way of life in Manipur.<sup>19</sup>

# Case Study: 120 Days Economic Blockade in 2011

## Genesis

Prior to its integration into the Indian Union, Manipur was an independent sovereign state. Both the hills and the valley had participated in the first democratic election held in 1948, and a partially democratically elected government was installed. There was fair representation of elected representatives from the hills in the government and the election did not result in any kind of ethnic or communal tensions. The issue flared up when the Maharaja of Manipur signed the Merger Agreement on September 21, 1949, as a consequence of which Manipur was formally integrated into the Indian Union on October 15, 1949. Over a period of time, the hill people (both Nagas and Kukis) forged an alliance to countervail any hegemonic incursion attempts into the political space by the Meiteis. The Nagas of Manipur became part of the Naga political movement under the nationalist movement headed by the combined Naga leadership.<sup>20</sup> Different ethnic groups of Manipur are resorting to political mobilisation to gain more political power, cultural autonomy, and control over territory, economic security, and development. But, their political aspirations are fed by a belief that adequate political power is a necessary condition for retaining their ethnic identity. The difficulty arises when the ethnic identity is connected to the demand for separate homelands.<sup>21</sup>

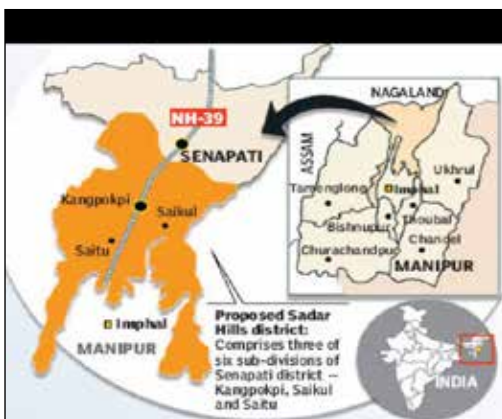
The introduction of electoral politics further produced cataclysmic ruptures in the ethnic landscape of the hills and witnessed ethnicisation of politics and politicisation of ethnicity. Over a period of time, the Nagas could maintain cultural and political unity; while, on the other hand, the Kukis could maintain cultural unity but lost out on political unity. However, the Sadar Hills District Demand Committee (SHDDC)<sup>22</sup> provided a singular platform mainly to the Kukis of Sadar Hills for the cause of creating the Sadar Hills district.

## Developments Leading to Blockade

The demand for the creation of the Sadar Hills district first came from the Kuki Chiefs' Zonal Council in its meeting held on September 03, 1970. This was followed up by holding numerous rounds of talks with the government, but all these talks failed to produce any result. Under the auspices of the Kuki National Assembly, the SHDDC was formed in 1974 to demand a full-fledged revenue district status for the Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council.

SHDDC had then opposed the implementation of the report of the Committee on Reorganisation of Administrative and Police District Boundary as the political interests espoused by the different groups in the state would erupt into an unhealthy political confrontation. In a representation submitted to the then Chief Minister, SHDDC asserted the constitution of six Autonomous District Councils in the hill areas of Manipur as per the Government of Manipur's notification dated February 14, 1971. The representation highlighted the provisions under which justice was asked for the Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council, as had been done for other hill districts.

Post Manipur attaining full-fledged statehood, several ministries made abortive attempts to propose full district status for Sadar Hills. It was in 1982 that Rishang Keishing's Congress government attempted to declare Sadar Hills as a full-fledged revenue district by putting up an ordinance to the Governor to declare Sadar Hills as a district and the same was duly signed by the Governor. But the ordinance was withdrawn due to opposition from the then Manipur Naga Council



In 1990-91, RK Ranbir Singh's United Front Ministry endeavoured to upgrade Sadar Hills to a district status, but the political instability prematurely ended the tenure of the state government and its efforts. The succeeding Congress Ministry of RK Dorendro Singh also put in efforts during



its regime, without success. After heading the Manipur State Congress Party government in December 1997, W Nipamacha Singh's ministry fixed a date in October 1997 to inaugurate Sadar Hills as a revenue district at Saparmeina. Adequate buildings were constructed and all functional departments were upgraded but the final decision was not made. In 1998, a new Assembly constituency, Saitu, was created since all the hill districts were having a minimum of three Assembly constituencies each. To prepare Sadar Hills for full revenue district status, a mini-Secretariat, Sports Complex, etc. were constructed.

### Blockade by SHDDC

The election of the new SHDDC leaders in June 2011 marked the revival for the demand of Sadar Hills district. The Sadar Hills District Demand Committee was thereafter renamed as Sadar Hills District-hood Demand Committee. The committee



BLOCKADE BY SHDDC

requested the state government to declare Sadar Hills as a full-fledged district before July 31, 2011, failing which seven days economic blockade on the two national highways, NH-2 and NH-37 (formerly known as NH-39 and 53 respectively) was to be called and an indefinite economic blockade thereafter, if there was no response from the government.

The non-response from the government forced the SHDDC leaders to impose the blockade on the two life-lines of Manipur, NH-2 and NH-37, with effect from 0001 hour on August 01, 2011, which was later converted to an economic blockade on September 07, 2011.<sup>23</sup> On the eve of the visit of the Home Minister on November 01, 2011, the Government of Manipur signed the agreement with SHDDC for the grant of a separate Sadar Hill District, thereby calling off the 91-day blockade.

## Stand of the Naga Bodies

In the face of the ever intensifying agitation sponsored by SHDDC on both the national highways leading to the state capital, the United Naga Council (UNC) threatened the state government of Manipur with serious consequences if the Sadar Hills district was created without consulting the Nagas. This stand of the UNC was echoed in the statements of the All Naga Students Association of Manipur (ANSAM), Naga People's Organisation (NPO), Senapati District Students' Association (SDSA), and All Naga Women's Union of Manipur (ANWUM) which steadfastly opposed the creation of Sadar Hills district by carving out part of Senapati district. The UNC was not willing to accept the bifurcation of the Naga areas against the wishes and consent of the Nagas. The Nagas have been resisting arbitrary encroachment and creation of artificial boundaries on their land since the colonial period and, hence, any attempt on the part of the Government of Manipur to create the Sadar Hills district without consulting the Nagas was destined to be strongly opposed. The Nagas had signed four Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with the Government of Manipur, wherein the MoU of 1998 stated that the resolution of the conflict over the issue of Sadar Hills would be brought about through a consensus of the people, to bring about lasting peace and harmony between the Nagas and the Kukis. Therefore, the government's hasty decision in this matter is being viewed by the Nagas as a "biased attitude" towards the Kukis while maintaining a "hostile attitude" towards them.

The UNC imposed an economic blockade on all national highways in Manipur on August 21, 2011, to stall the state government's alleged attempt to bifurcate the Naga-dominated areas to create new districts. In retaliation to the Government of Manipur's agreement with the SHDDC, on November 01, 2011, the UNC and Naga organisations in Manipur called for a three-day total bandh, wef November 03-06, 2011, in all Naga inhabited areas, the UNC deplored the manner in which the Manipur government had executed the agreement "without consensus and consent" of Nagaland and started enforcing the bandh more vigorously. However, after leaders of the UNC met the Home Minister on November 22, 2011, and in response to the call given by the Home Minister to call off the bandh, the same was lifted wef 0600 hrs on November 29, 2011.

## **Lifting of Economic Blockade**

After 120 days of economic blockade on the arterial National Highways 2 and 37, the agitating United Naga Council lifted the blockade on November 29, 2011. According to the UNC, it decided to lift the economic blockade on three conditions—assurance from Union Home Minister P Chidambaram to the Naga body on the Sadar Hills issue, various appeals from the church and civil organisations to lift the blockade and also taking into account the people's suffering because of the impact of the economic blockade.<sup>24</sup>

## **Effect of the Blockade**

The four-month-long economic blockade and resultant deadlock affected the normal life of every person in this part of the country. During the course of the 92-day blockade imposed by the SHDDC, properties worth Rs 2.45 billion were estimated to have been lost, inclusive of government buildings and private vehicles which were vandalised or destroyed. According to a government report, the state exchequer suffered a loss of Rs 25.7 million every day during the course of the economic blockade. At least 20 government offices and around 45 private vehicles were set on fire by the blockade supporters. Prices of essential commodities in the Imphal Valley soared as a result of shortages, with LPG cylinders being sold in the black market for up to Rs 1,600 per cylinder, and petrol at Rs 120 a litre.<sup>25</sup>

## **Role of Civil Administration and Police**

The civil administration and police were unable to control the agitation and remained ineffective during the period of the blockade. The ineffectiveness could be attributed to shortage of police forces, limited presence of the civil administration and police in the remote areas, and lack of training in dealing with such agitations. The terrain and ethnic spread in Manipur put constraints on the police forces to secure the NHs, whereas this facilitated the miscreants in carrying out bandhs and blockades. At times, the interference by the police could have led to collateral damage as the locals created human barriers along the National Highways. However, the Army and Assam Rifles vehicles were allowed to move during the blockade.

# The Way Ahead

## **Government Initiatives**

The political will is evidently missing from the government's attempt to curb the bandh culture. If the requisite political will can be gathered, then a suitable legislation may be introduced to ban bandhs after a detailed study on the bandh culture in Manipur. Steps need to be initiated by the government towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcing agencies so that the possibilities of bandh do not arise henceforth. A centralised democratic and apolitical public Grievance Redressing Cell (GRC) may be set up. This should be a quasi-judicial office, constituted under a retired High Court judge, assisted by one human rights activist, one social worker, one student representative, one woman leader or Meira Paibi representative (irrespective of whether the other appointees are women or not), one litterateur, one journalist, one doctor and one engineer. In fact, Manipur has seen a number of Joint Action Committees (JACs) till date. Every bandh is actually backed by a JAC. In future, any such JAC should first approach the GRC. The GRC should try to convene a meeting in the next 24 hours. They should communicate the decision to the government for needful action.<sup>26</sup> It is necessary to introduce/implement a citizen's charter in the law enforcing agencies. Police reform has been long overdue in this country, but a state like Manipur needs it with no time to spare. The citizen's charter will surely help the police department become public-friendly and more active.

## **Flexibility and Imagination in Approach to Conflict Resolution**

The government in Delhi needs to show more flexibility and imagination in its approach to conflict resolution in the northeast. Hitherto, it has focussed on territorial solutions, which include carving out states and districts to meet the demands of the region's multiple ethnic and tribal groups. However, territorial arrangements do not provide lasting solutions as they create unhappy minorities within the new territorial arrangements, triggering new conflicts and endless wars. The government would need to be more imaginative in its conflict resolution and consider non-territorial

solutions so that clashing claims such as those between the Kukis and Nagas in Manipur do not provoke blockades that hold an entire state hostage.<sup>27</sup> We need to resolve the ethnic problem more pragmatically and find a more comprehensive solution.

### **Need of Paradigm Shift in Ideologies**

The cultural differences between the various parties of Manipur, namely, the Nagas, Kukis and Meiteis are well known. Each of them looks at the others with suspicion and are rivals when it comes to demanding their share of revenue from the state. The need of the hour is to sit together and work out a solution which is agreeable to all the parties. However, each party needs to move that extra mile for ushering in peace and tranquillity in the region. The various parties and agencies such as the central government, state government, and the Army, Assam Rifles, other security forces and various socio-political groups of the Nagas, Meiteis and Kukis need to invest in time and effort so as to arrive at a consensual resolution to the contentious issues. There can be an answer to this problem too, provided the communities shed parochial mindsets for the greater benefit of peace and prosperity.

### **Shift the Centre of Gravity to Progress and Development**

Basic human nature, the world over, urges us to work towards development. To achieve this, the government needs to provide various employment opportunities for the local populace to earn a livelihood. Keeping a progressive economy as the basic tenet, the government needs to promote the whole of Manipur as a major tourist destination, which, in turn, will earn valuable revenue for the state. Moreover, the land in the valley as well in the hills is rich in soil content and has a large variety of flora and fauna. The vast tracts of unused land can be used for agricultural purposes by the locals, utilising better technology in terms of seeds and equipment.

The key to progress and economic development is infrastructure development. Infrastructure in the state needs to be revamped in order to support tourism, agriculture and industry. NH-2, connecting Dimapur to Imphal, is the main artery of the state, with NH-37, connecting Jiribam to Imphal being the second most important artery. All inter/intra state movement takes place on these two axes. It is a well known fact that the state of the

arteries, especially NH-2, is a matter of great concern due to their poor condition. The state needs to invest sincerely in all infrastructure related projects and take them to their logical end. Both the arteries connecting the region to the rest of India should be of international standards.

### **Alternative Means of Supply**

As movement along NH-2 was hampered, some limited quantities of essential commodities, including petroleum products and food grains were transported through other routes. The Indian Air Force (IAF) airlifted 493 quintals of rice from Guwahati in 11 sorties in May 2010. The Logistic Post Cargo and IAF aircraft airlifted 42.8 metric tonnes (MT) of life saving drugs; 80 kilo litres (KL) of fuel products were also airlifted between May 21 to 22, 2010. Since the Naga bodies had also declared a blockade of NH-37, the state government had initially arranged transportation of essential commodities, with assistance from the Government of Mizoram, through the very long and circuitous NH-150—Silchar-Aizawl-Churachandpur-Imphal.<sup>28</sup> Hence, it is important to identify alternative means of supply and have adequate stocks of essentials to offset the effect of prolonged bandhs and economic blockades.

### **Role of the Media**

The media, being the fourth pillar of democracy, can play a major role in stabilising the situation in this region by projecting the complex matrix in the correct light and, thus, aiding to arrive at a logical solution to the current political problems. Both the print and electronic media should make a sincere effort to transform and shape the minds of the society by conducting numerous interactive sessions with the aggrieved communities, thereby infusing knowledge and awareness, and arriving at a consensus on resolution to the problems. The media must also play a responsive and impartial role and not engage with self-motivated individuals/organisations. The last crisis in Manipur was covered basically by Imphal-based media, thereby leading some people to question its impartiality. It was only once the story got dated that it found some bytes in the national electronic media. There may be a need to be proactive and invite the national media to cover such a crisis in a non-partisan manner.

## **Role of Civil Society Organisations**

Civil society has a significant role in uniting people and addressing their genuine concerns. Civil society organisations need to play a proactive role to resolve the differences in an amicable manner. Civil society should aim for a means to achieve social harmony and a framework for engaging various sections of the society towards consensus about ends and means. When these three approaches turn towards each other and integrate their different perspectives into a mutually supportive framework, the idea of civil society can explain a great deal about the course of politics and social change, and serve as a practical framework for organising both resistance and alternative solutions to social, economic and political problems.<sup>29</sup>

## **Role of the Church**

Churches in northeast India play an important role in conveying messages. It is imperative that the people are made aware of the indirect adverse effects on their lives due to prolonged bandhs and blockades. It can best be done during the church services through sermons and teachings by important personalities. The church, as a powerful institution, can respond and initiate possible solutions and influence the opinion of the masses.

## **Awareness Campaigns**

The locals are most affected by the direct and indirect impact of bandhs and blockades. It is important that they are made aware of these facts. Seminars/symposiums may be conducted for discussions on the effects of blockades and counter-blockades. These could be in the form of brain-storming sessions where leaders of prominent socio-political organisations would be invited to give their stand and point of view on the aspect of their organisations resorting to frequent bandhs/blockades. The brain-storming sessions would also include people from various sections of society who would be provided adequate opportunity to voice their opinions on the issue. The security forces, due to their non-partisan approach, are best placed to bring about a rapprochement among the estranged Meiteis, Naga and Kuki communities. It would be worthwhile to consider bringing all the key players of the conflict on a common platform. This could be done by way of organising a seminar on how the conflict could have been best handled. Brain-storming and open

house forums with the local community leaders are also recommended to be organised.

### **Legislation**

There is need to have a legislation to check the menace of bandhs and blockades. A House Committee of the State Assembly in Manipur had tabled a report proposing passing of a legislation to prevent the culture of calling for bandhs, road and economic blockades in Manipur. Noting that calling for bandhs, road blockades and economic blockades affects not only normal life, public and individual property but also the state economy in various ways, the report proposed “The Manipur Bandh, Blockade and Economic Blockade (Prevention) Bill, 2011”, which empowers the state government to sentence blockade supporters to a jail term of one to three years with a fine ranging from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 1 lakh. According to the proposed Bill, a group of persons or any organisation, registered or unregistered, calling and making, by written or oral publicity or through the media, directing or causing the public, barring or prohibiting them to come out of their respective houses to carry on their normal work, commits the offence of bandh, while a person or a group of persons or any organisation creating or attempting to breach the public peace or causing large scale disturbance of the general current of public life, commits the offence of blockade. Endorsing the ruling of the Supreme Court which had denounced bandh/blockade as “illegal and unconstitutional”, the Bill also proposed to make one of the sessions courts as the special trial court for speedy disposal of cases and pronouncing judgement against offenders. Although the proposed Bill is yet to see the light of day, it is hoped that its enactment may provide some relief to the bandh/blockade weary public of Manipur.<sup>30</sup>

### **Central Government’s Need to be More Sensitive**

The inaction of governments in Delhi and Manipur to break the blockades has evoked an angry response among the people of Manipur. They want the government to use force to end the standoffs. An editorial titled “Government’s Profound Absence” in the Imphal Free Press called on the government to “crack the whip and break the blockade”. Let the agitation carry on democratically and let an amicable settlement be reached in the



course of time, but the government needs to say in definitive terms that certain styles of public protest, which indiscriminately hurt the people, men, women and children, cannot be allowed under any circumstance. A symbolic strike of this nature for a day or two is pardonable, but one that extends over two months is something which should not be allowed under any circumstance by any government with spine, it says. Hence, it is important that the government in Delhi becomes sensitive to the misery of the people of Manipur and other states of the northeastern region during bandhs and blockades as it has been in other parts of the country.

### **Interdependence of the Various Organisations, Including Security Forces**

A large number of organisations is working towards a common cause, however, their methods are not synchronised. The call of the day is to be interdependent. The government, security forces, police, bureaucracy and socio-political organisations should work in close cooperation, thereby arriving at a common goal. A detailed policy has to be worked out, where all the agencies have their role charted and the same is knitted into one matrix, so that the results are factorial.

There is a need to identify future flash points in all insurgency affected states and for resources to be earmarked to deal with expected and unexpected contingencies. Last minute mobilisation of troops during a crisis leads to avoidable delays; besides, the freshly inducted troops are neither aware of the local dynamics nor the terrain. The earmarking of additional resources must include engineering resources in terms of dozers and JCBs for removal of road blocks.

### **Role of the Armed Forces and Its Impact**

The Army being a neutral, apolitical force and the instrument of last resort, can play a constructive role in ushering in peace during bandhs and blockades. The security forces should ensure that the supply of essential good and services continues uninterrupted. They should also ensure that insurgents/unlawful elements do not take advantage of the situation for their own gains. Awareness needs to be created among the people about the adverse effects of bandhs, and continued interaction with the locals is necessary to maintain

peace. During the economic blockade, the security forces took over the role of a buffer between the state police forces/civil administration and protesting socio-political organisations. The Army and Assam Rifles units continued to enjoy the confidence of the local people throughout the crisis. This bond should be further strengthened by regular interactions with the locals and leaders of socio-political organisations.

# Conclusion

Today, the northeast is passing through a new phase of unrest, with financial loss and ethnic mistrust, which are the outcome of bandhs, economic blockades and other violent activities, sponsored and spearheaded by a number of insurgent and social outfits. The culture of 'bandhs' (state closure) paramount in the northeastern states like Assam, Manipur and Nagaland goes against the notion of individual rights, is a stigma on the effectiveness of local governance structures and is unconstitutional to say the least. These bandhs adversely affect every aspect of normal life of the people. The most badly affected are the traders, small businessmen, the daily wage labourers and poor locals. These bandhs have a negative impact on their earnings, the education of their children, and other social activities. The low attendance in government offices during bandhs results in a backlog of files, many of which are related to important developmental projects. Closure of financial institutions also affects the people. The time has now come to give serious heed and thought to this menace which is affecting everyone and everything. There is also an urgent need to have a legislation to deal with bandhs and blockades.

## Notes

1. Bandh, originally a Hindi word meaning “closed” is a form of protest used by political activists in South Asian countries such as India and Nepal. During a bandh, a political party or a community declares a general strike. A bandh is a powerful means of civil disobedience. Because of the huge impact of a bandh on the local community, it is a much-feared tool of protest.
2. Counter-bandh or counter-blockade is the bandh called against a bandh.
3. Militant group organised to overthrow a government by force. In northeast India, these groups are known as underground groups. Various groups are involved in the insurgency in northeast India, Some groups call for a separate state, others for regional autonomy while some extreme groups demand complete independence.
4. “Will Bharat Bandh Shut Mumbai Down on Thursday?”, *NDTV*, May 28, 2012. Retrieved September 30, 2013.
5. D Murali, “People Can’t Be Compelled to Participate in Bandhs”, *The Hindu Business Line*, October 06, 2006, [www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays...bandhs/article1748078.ece](http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays...bandhs/article1748078.ece) accessed September 15, 2013.
6. Adding more power to the state government tackling the Gorkha Jan MuktiMorcha’s (GJMM) agitation in Darjeeling, the Calcutta High Court, on August, 15, 2013, hauled up the GJMM and asked its counsel to file an affidavit stating as to why those people in the hills whose fundamental rights have been violated should not be compensated. Directing the state government to assess the damage to public property, the court further directed the GJMM counsel to state in the affidavit as to why his client should not be asked to compensate for the damage to public property.
7. Murali, n. 5.
8. Mohammad Imtiyaj Khan, “An Open Letter to Manipuris: Stop the Bandh Culture,” *E Pao*, September 22, 2013, accessed October 05, 2013, [http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news\\_section.opinions](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions).
9. Manipur witnessed 628 bandhs and blockades during the last 15 years, from 1995 till June 2010, causing huge losses to the tune of Rs 2,828 crore in the state exchequer, said Chief Minister O lobi Singh in the House of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, July 09, 2010, accessed October 05, 2013, [www.sinlung.com/2010/.../manipur-had-628-bandhs-blockade-in-15.html](http://www.sinlung.com/2010/.../manipur-had-628-bandhs-blockade-in-15.html)
10. Waikhom Damodar Singh, “Manipur, The Land of Strikes, Bandhs and Blockades,” *The Sangai Express*, April 30, 2013, accessed September 10, 2013, <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/tseitm-25812-manipur-the-land-of-strikes-bandhs-and-blockades/>
11. Hawaibam Herojit Singh, “Politics of Economic Blockade: A Case of Manipur Experience,” *The Echo* 1.4(2013):132-142, accessed November 12, 2013, doi: <http://www.thecho.in/files/Politics-of-Economic-Blockade.pdf>
12. Khan, n.8.
13. “Bandh, Strikes and Economic Blockade in Manipur: A Way of Life in Manipur and Everybody Loves It,” *People4Changes Issues Forum*, May 01, 2010, accessed October 13, 2013, <http://people4changes-issues.blogspot.in/2010/05/bandh-strikes-and-economic-blockade-in.html>
14. N. Mohendro Singh, “Economic Impact of Conflicts in the North-East – With Special Reference to Manipur,” *The Manipur Times*, August 27, 2013, accessed September 25, 2013, <http://www.manipurimes.com/news-article/the-peoples-chronicle-article/item/2468-economic-impact-of-conflicts-in-the-north-east-with-special-reference-to-manipur>
15. “MoU Ends SHDDC Bandh”, *Nagaland Post*, November 02, 2011:2 AMIST
16. “The Fragile Economy,” *Hueiyen Lanpao*, July 15, 2011, accessed November 28, 2013, <http://www.hueiyenlanpao.com/editorial/item/11621-the-fragile-economy>
17. Komol Singha, “Conflict, State and Education in India: A Study of Manipur,” *American Journal of Educational Research* 1.6 (2013): 181-193.

18. Namrata Goswami, "Manipur Blockade: A Tale of Vested Political Interests and Exclusivist Narratives," *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, June 10, 2010, accessed December 05, 2013, [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ManipurBlockadeATaleofVestedPoliticalInterestsandExclusivistNarratives\\_ngoswami\\_100610](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ManipurBlockadeATaleofVestedPoliticalInterestsandExclusivistNarratives_ngoswami_100610).
19. Hueiyen News Service, "Time to Rethink on Bandh," *Hueiyen Lanpao*, April 20, 2013, accessed November 24, 2013, <http://www.hueiyenlanpao.com/editorial/item/9105-time-to-rethink-on-bandh>
20. Sanatomba Kangujam, "The Myth of Ethnic Conflict in Manipur," *The Sangai Express*, September 19, 2011, [www.yousaytoo.com/the-myth-of-ethnic-conflict-in-manipur/1211308](http://www.yousaytoo.com/the-myth-of-ethnic-conflict-in-manipur/1211308), accessed August 10, 2013.
21. Dr Amarjeet Singh, "Ethnic Groups in Conflict in India's Manipur," *South Asia Journal*, Issue 10, February 19, 2014, accessed June, 08, 2014.
22. The Sadar Hills District Demand Committee (SHDDC).
23. n.15.
24. K Anurag, "United Naga Council Lifts Economic Blockade in Manipur," November 29, 2011, accessed December 05, 2013, <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/united-naga-council-lifts-economic-blockade-in-manipur/20111129.html>
25. Veronica Khangchian, "Ethnic Turf War," *Outlook India*, October 31, 2011, accessed November 11, 2013, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?278957>
26. Khan, n.8.
27. Sudha Ramachandran, "Delhi Immobilized by Manipur Blockade," *Asia Times*, October 7, 2011, accessed December 12, 2013, [http://atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/MJ07Df02.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MJ07Df02.html)
28. Hueiyen News Service "HM's Statement in LS on Manipur Blockade," *E-Pao*, Hueiyen News Service, August 19, 2010, accessed December 11, 2013, <http://e-pao.net/epRelatedNews.asp?heading=17&src=200810>
29. Rajkumar Bobichand "Rethinking Civil Society in Manipur Context," *Imphal Free Press*, March 16, 2014, accessed March 16, 2014, [www.ifp.co.in/nws-9643-rethinking-civil-society-in-manipur-context/](http://www.ifp.co.in/nws-9643-rethinking-civil-society-in-manipur-context/)
30. "Of Bandhs and Blockades – Is Legislation the Way Out?" *Hueiyen Lanpao Editorial*, June 13, 2012, accessed December 13, 2013, <http://www.hueiyenlanpao.com/editorial/item/2278-of-bandhs-and-blockades-%E2%80%93is-legislation-the-way-out>

