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Plight of Truck Drivers at NH 37 during Economic Blockade in Manipur: A Grave Concern of Human Security

I. Yaipharemba

Manipur is a land lock state which depends on existing National Highways for importing essential commodities and transportation of materials entirely rest with the incumbent trucks. Highways remain only passes through which, in addition to essential commodities, traveller undertake bus journey to train station like Dimapur or Guwahati. The Tupul-Imphal train line is at construction phase and will take some more years to complete. Jiribam has also limited train service. On air connectivity, Imphal has an airport that is well connected with metro cities but bringing essential commodities by aircraft is very limited, as a result highways are very important for the state for flow of commodities. In a nutshell, average Manipuri depends on road for journey to other states of Northeast and commodities required. By its significance nature existing Highways are the life line for people of Manipur irrespective of Hill or Valleys. Due to fragile ethnic-political conditions that prevail, the state is prone to bandhs and economic blockades initiate by parties for one or another reason. During economic blockade, vehicular traffic at the Highways is totally shut down by supporters and violent attacks at good laden trucks and drivers frequently take place. The truck drivers suffer the most when assaults were inflicted during the journey. The assaults generally damage or destroy vehicles and cause financial issue for the drivers. During normal days, essential items are brought at NH 2 Dimapur-Imphal which is short and well constructed as compare to NH 37. The NH 37 for Manipur is 220 km in length and is single lane with severe road conditions. However, due to frequent and prolong blockade, essential materials including petroleum products, medical items, eatable etc are brought through NH 37 Jiribam-Imphal with police protection regardless of violent assault from blockade supporters and bad road. The truck drivers thus, play a live saviour role in the critical situation by bringing goods to capital city Imphal, facing numerous odds. Time and again, during blockade while escorting, there is wide presumption that police protection are inadequate and insensitive. Drivers feel the security cover is not enough and more materials can be transport in, if frequency of security con-

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voy is increase. The study attempts to establish the complexities suffer by truck drivers integrating the fundamental of Human Security that concerns with individual safeguarding. This paper is a noble effort of recounting the relentless efforts of unrewarded truck drivers at the mad road ahead.

Keywords: NH 37, Blockade, Jiribam, Imphal, Human Security

Introduction

Manipur is a state prone to bandhs and economic blockades, for one or another reason organisations call for the shutdown of road, markets and highways. When protests take place the Highways are obstructed by blockade supporters not allowing the good laden trucks to reach their destination. At this situation, Government in order to bring essentials supplies utilize the more secure Highway NH 37, as compare to NH 2 in the context NH 37 could be viably protected and defended though the Highway is much longer and less constructed. To transport materials from nearest supply depot at Guwahati, good carrying trucks are put into action to transport. Mainly in any blockade, scarcity arises of petrol, medicine, rice and other essential material etc. and while transporting materials, blockade supporters usually attack the good laden trucks to show the protest. The blockade is against the Government in literal sense but truck drivers face the heat and common people irrespective of hill or valley men suffer equally without any acceptance. The irony is very beautiful here, hammering own toes.

Economic Blockade is one of the non-military means to attain certain economic advantages over the adversary during peace as well as in war. It is the manipulation of an adversary's foreign trade by means of boycott, embargo and financial controls. More direct means such as "blockade" or "quarantine" are acts of economic war. War is thus not fought only in the battlefield but in rail and roads also (Singh, 1995). It is confusing to pin point who is adversary and for whom economic blockade is meant for, as no war is going on and no one is winning. It is a lose-lose situation for any individual or groups. The one calling the blockade and for whom blockade is tended, suffer equally. This is a lesson every person must learn collectively.

The Supreme Court of India, the highest judicial body of India as well as Manipur High Court recently declared that blockade at National Highway's is unconstitutional. Supreme Court's judgment in T.K. Rangarajan vs. State of Tamil Nadu (2003), declared the right to strike is illegal, and 'bandh' is unlawful. It violates citizen's fundamental rights. But still more bandhs and economic blockades, a big mockery of law in Manipur and Government seemed to be sitting kaput. In every blockade, common people always suffer the most; this is the striking point of any Economic Blockade. Everyone in Manipur is very good in demanding the fundamental rights but is worst in performing their fundamental duties; which is one of the root cause of problem in the state.

On 9th January 2017, at a convoy of 500 trucks including petroleum carrier were fired upon near Noney market at Lukhambi Part-2 (Khumzi) by some armed assailant killing one and injuring three. Among the injured, one is an oil tanker driver from Assam, Nipin Kalita who was part of the transport and other ill-fated civilians were

not part of the convoy; they were travelling at the road on their private vehicle.¹ The drivers in general lament that in spite of collecting annual heavy road taxes by hill based insurgent groups at National Highways, repeated assault and cases of firing at good laden truck injuring the drivers and damaging truck is a very hooligan act.²

Human Security at a Glance

The concept of Human security is one of the most important and serious challenges to the way in which security has been both theorised and practised for much of the twentieth century. In place of the state-centric security framework, which has both endangered people and ignored the real threats to individuals, the Human security framework is argued to have the potential to be an emancipator and empowering security framework for individuals. Human security considers the broad range of conditions below which the survival, livelihood and dignity of people, particularly those most vulnerable, are seriously threatened. Essential to Human security is the advancement of political, social, economic, environmental and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks for achieving peace, development and human progress.

While the term “human security” may be of recent origin, the ideas that underpin the concept are far from new. For more than a century -at least since the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the 1860s -a doctrine based on the security of people has been gathering momentum. Core elements of this doctrine were formalised in the 1940s in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Conventions. The specific phrase “human security” is most commonly associated with the Human Development Report of 1994. Published by the UNDP, the Report was an attempt to capture the post-Cold War peace dividend and redirect the freed resources towards development agenda.

Human security in particular sense focuses on widespread and cross-cutting threats to the survival, livelihood and dignity of individuals and communities. With people’s insecurities interconnected, human security provides a dynamic framework that capitalizes on the comparative advantages of a diverse network of actors. Recognizing that threats to human security vary considerably across and within countries, and at different points in time, the application of human security calls for an assessment of human insecurities that is people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and preventive. Such an approach helps focus attention on current and emerging threats to the security and well-being of individuals. The application of human security derives much of its strength from a dual policy framework based on the mutually reinforcing pillars of protection and empowerment. Human security is best safeguarded through proactive and preventive actions to current and emerging threats.³ The threshold-based definition of human security is the following:

Human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, health, food, personal and political threats (Martin, & Owen, 2013).

Or

Human security means safety for people from violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterised by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives.

The first half of the definition has origins in the articulation of the 2003 Commission on Human Security (CHS). In particular, the Commission's refer to threats being critical, pervasive and targeting the vital core of individuals. Commission on Human Security advocates definition of human security that encompasses '*freedom from want*' and '*freedom from fear*', that individuals should be both protected from human and empowered to live the life that they wish to lead.

The core purpose of establishing human security thresholds is to keep the concept as open as possible to allow for a diverse range of threats to potentially be included, while remaining focussed on those that warrant the security label. Also, Human rights and Human security are very different concepts. While the basic legal entitlements of individuals, security involves personal safety. Human security thresholds seek to identify the line where a Human rights concern also becomes a human security threat and justify as such (Chandler & Hynek, 2010). Human rights is "enjoyment of civil and political freedoms and of economic, social and cultural rights which are inter-connected and inter-dependent".

Human security is argued to have the potential to give voice and power to the most vulnerable, powerless and other voiceless communities.

Objective of the Study

The study is carried out by keeping in focus the lone objective: To highlight the problems faced by the Truck Drivers of Manipur at NH 37 during Economic Blockade.

Hypothesis

The assumption is as follow: Truck driver's personal safety is considerably at risk owing to aggressive assault by blockade supporters, insufficient police protection and bad road condition.

Methodology of the Study

The study is Explanatory research in nature that aims at establishing a relationship between variables. The method of research is Case Study (Inductive Process) which studied the phenomena through intensive analysis of the case.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized for the study. For clarity in collecting Primary data, two groups of respondent were approach; one is the Office bearer's of The All Manipur Road Transport Driver's and Motors Worker's Union plus All Manipur Petroleum Products Driver Association. I had interviewed the General Secretary of the Union and Vice Secretary of the Association who themselves is driver of many years experience. Another is Case Study of injured IOCL driver, Nipin Kalita at whom fired upon at NH 37 on the afternoon of 9th January 2017 while driving during the blockade under police cover. I had interviewed Nipin at Raj Medicity, Imphal where he was treated for bullet wound on 17th January 2017.

For collecting data, one questionnaire was framed for both parties. The questionnaire consisted of only three open ended questions and is designed to collect information on their account at NH 37 during economic blockade. The Questions are as follows (Code Q1-Q3):

Q1. What is the nature of assaults carried out by blockade supporters at NH 37 during blockade?

Q2. What is the intensity of police protection at NH 37 while ferrying materials during blockade?

Q3. What are the problems faced at NH 37 due to severe road condition?

Secondary data/sources comprises of descriptive literatures such as local newspaper articles, pamphlets, related notice and online sources.

Structured Interview was carried out. In-depth Personal Interview based on the Questionnaire is used as tool for collecting necessary data.

Suffering in a mist

The profession of the Truck drivers is such of a continuous and relenting work is demanded from them irrespective of any political conditions. Here the political situations might be of transporting essential materials in middle of blockade through the very epicentre of the volatile area. The drivers in spite of their valuable obligation are being look down as a pitiful profession in our intellectual society. In every part of their profession, they face numerous odds and difficulties. They are extorted of money by hill based insurgent groups and rapid attacks at them while they were transporting materials during blockade under government supervision, such are some of the inconvenience faced at the moment. Their problems reach its zenith when they have to transport material during economic blockade, on one hand they have to earn their livelihood by transporting and on other, have to face extreme danger while driving at the mad road. It is the ultimate question of feeding hungry families and facing danger and as usual always the hunger wins. Another great concern for the drivers is sudden economic blockade at the Highways which left the drivers stranded at middle of the journey without adequate food and supplies for a long time. This sudden eruption cause problem in facing food, medical illness, lack of money and meeting essential requirements at the hill area.

The NH 37 Jiribam to Imphal is 220 km in length and the road is extremely bad in condition. Beside the road is flooded with hill based insurgent groups, who continuously extorted money and damage vehicles under the very nose of security forces that guard the Highway. The attacks at them are so brutal that many drivers have lost their lives and whereabouts of many are still untraceable till today for e.g. murder of driver Gyaneshowr at Leinganpokpi, Jiribam while waiting for police escort during a blockade and still untraceable incident of father son duo drivers from Yairipok for not implying to demands of insurgent groups. The cases are many, but underlying point is the silent suffering endures while performing their job at the uncertain road. On December 12, 2016, at NH 37 during blockade while transporting at Lankhang area two drivers were fired upon by unknowns critically injuring both. In addition to extreme bad road conditions, attacks on the truck drivers further add more suffering

to the already inflicted souls. Now and then, The All Manipur Road Transport Driver's and Motors Worker's Union appeals to concern parties to show mercy and kindly not view them as an adversary while drivers carried out their responsibility.

It is widely known that in acts of assault by blockade supporter in forms of throwing stone or unprovoked firing, many drivers loss their live and some get critically injured. From 1978 to 2016, as many as 219 drivers died of assault by unknowns and accident due to bad road in addition to kidnapping & murder for not implying to demands made by insurgent groups. Due to violent assault many of the drivers get amputated and the numbers are many more as compare to the death ones. It is known that for the death and amputated ones, Government of Manipur have provided monetary compensation from time to time. While the truck owners have their own vehicle insurance, the truck drivers are left without any life insurance for themselves. By help of the Union, in event of death or severe injury to the drivers while transporting during blockade, Government is urged to provide some kind of job to family member of the deceased or the injured.

Presently, nearly 8000 drivers including truck drivers are plying in Manipur, while 3000 of them renew their license with the Union annually. Regarding pay, the trucks drivers must receive an average salary of Rs 6000 monthly by rule's according to the Union but the actual salary varies depending on the owner and if the truck drivers work for Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) or Food Corporation of India (FCI) their average monthly salary amount to Rs 8000-9,000. The trucks driver's ply their 500 kg load for 3-4 times a month under the salary during normal days. But during blockade, at NH 37 for one way journey it takes 5-6 days including loading and unloading of the materials and reaching the destination, Imphal city.⁴

In the protective cover of State Police, CRPF and Assam Rifle, the good laden tucks often carried the long journey at NH 37 day and night to transport the materials. But the security cover is somewhat insufficient for the 1500 goods trucks that only 500 of them have to travel in one protective cover, thus the remaining trucks have to stay back and wait for the police escort to come back. The insufficient security further cause more problems to the drivers in additions to expenditure they incurred in a single journey. Police protection means each vehicle has to drive following a common pattern and schedule with precise timing and speed. There is a wide appeals from the driver's side that security frequency must be increased in order to cater and allow usual numbers of trucks to transverse in a single slot. Single slot mean more trucks may come in one journey and more materials could reach in a single time. It will further increase the frequency a truck could carry during blockade.

The truck drivers face many difficulties either natural or manmade. The journey itself is at hill region and the area is infested with many vector borne diseases. The drivers acknowledge that many of them suffer from Malaria due to inadequate protective measure while driving at hill. Owing to prolong sitting and driving, health complaint such as Piles is a common occurrence. Two cases of medical complaints are effects of prolong driving at the Highways. Some of the drivers become alcoholic in order to beat stress.

Nipin Kalita's Case

Nipin Kalita is 25 years old oil tanker driver from Karbianglong, Assam. He is a driver by profession attached to the Indian Oil Corporation Limited and on the ill faith day he was driving an oil tanker of the Corporation transporting diesel from Guwhati to Imphal. The assault happens near Noney Bazar Lukhambi Part-2 (Khumzi) around 3:30 pm afternoon on 9th January 2017. The transport party was fired upon from all the directions mainly from top of the hill where the road passes through. He was hit by 4 bullets, one at the chest, 3 at left arm just below the shoulder. One bullet that hit the arm pierce and other 3 bullets including one at the chest were removed surgically at Raj Medicity, Imphal. The oil tanker is also hit leaving with 4-5 holes and oil leaked. Nipin was brought to hospital by one of the member of the Union and Depot Manager in a very unstable state. He also added that along with firing many also throw stones at vehicle from above and side of the hill. Many times in such acts drivers usually get hurt. It was a nightmare for him and he thank god that he is alive after such vicious attack. After the ordeal, he was contacted with his family, at the time of interview his elder brother was taking care of him at the hospital.

He accounted that the assault was not the first experience for him, he also encounter previous assault at one of the trip at NH 37 when blockade supporters attack the vehicle by climbing up and damaging the front glass screen of the vehicle, fortunately he escaped unhurt. But second time was unlucky for him. Since beginning of economic blockade on 1st November 2016 midnight, Nipin has undergone two transport trips facing much resistance from the supporters. Unfortunately, on the second trip he got hurt.

Nipin was carrying 12 KL litres of diesel for the Indian Oil Corporation Limited at his second unfortunate trip and normally draw a salary of Rs 8000 monthly from the contractor. For him it takes almost 3-4 days to reach Imphal from Guwahati after filling up the tanker and waiting for the police protection at Jiribam and continuing journey to Imphal. During blockade for convenience loading of petroleum product, IOCL has shifted oil depot from Tinsukia to Guwahati. He commented that if more security cover is provided it will be quite comfortable to drive without any danger and also appeal that such act of life assault on hard working truck drivers is unjustified. The road condition is also worst which is full of dust that leads to breathing

problem and potholes but leaves no option other than driving to feed his family back home. The sorry condition of the road is one of the factors for driver facing many problems.

He was very glad that Government of Manipur agreed to take care of hospital bill concerning his treatment till he finally recover. The IOCL official has not yet provided any monetary support till the time of interview but he was sure that Corporation will help him. Though he will recover in no time he have to stay 2 more days at the hospital before discharge, Nipin said doctor advised him to take rest for some more days at home, he feel insecure as he will be unable to resume his job for quite some time leaving a hollow period of no earning for his family.⁵

The condition Nipin encounter is similar occurrence when other drivers faced if they got injured while doing their job. Many of them are foot to mouth people and usually their family depend on them for livelihood. No driving or work means any money and not only him, whole had his family suffered. What is Economic Blockade good for? a big question to be answered.

Here, question of the fundamental of security repeatedly arises, the concern of Human Security now a day's in every sphere of life and at every section is becoming a reality and necessity. The key point of Human security is the protection of valuable human lives which is becoming dimmer & dimmer in case of emerging volatile political crisis. The truck drivers are part of the society and contributing every bit of their efforts thus they must be safeguarded at every cost.

All Manipur Petroleum Products Driver Association's comment

The Association have approx 340 card holder oil tanker drivers that transport petrol, diesel, aviation fuel and kerosene. Presently, approx 400 oil tankers are running under the Association. It takes 3-4 days for one to and fro journey of transporting petroleum products from Guwahati to Imphal at NH 37, since starting of blockade till January 2017 end, approx 500 oil tankers have been put to service. According to the Association, a 6 wheels and 10 wheels oil tanker bring 12 KL and 20 KL litres of petroleum products beside a new 10 wheels model vehicle bring 18 KL specifically for petrol pump owned by the owner of the vehicle.

Other than Nipin's incident, firing near Awang Khul near Noney and Makru had taken place at the transporting party. The Association feared that the lives of drivers are always at risk because of indiscriminate firing and stone throwing by blockade supporters. For the Association, life of Driver is main priority, in case of any life threatening incident, the Association provide a monetary support of Rs 30,000-40,000 to the driver. In addition, the body wants some monetary help concerning medical expenditure to the unfortunate driver from IOCL beside already provided medical help from Government. Many of the drivers are illiterate and few had studied up to 10th standard, even though owner insure their vehicle but drivers due to lack of knowledge & means haven't insure any life insurance policy. Therefore, in any incidents drivers as well as handyman always suffer. What is unfortunate is handyman/helper, the helper have no fixed pay unlike driver and almost no monetary support in case of any accident.

The Association on its own has a Recovery vehicle for any crack down vehicle

at NH 37. It is commented that condition of NH 37 is very bad and if properly constructed making it two lanes will definitely minimize many of the odd face by drivers so far. The unavailability of ambulance is a great concern for them and wants the government to start ambulance service at the Highway.

Regarding security, Association decries for insensitive coordination and support. At the firing incident at Awang Khul, drivers requested the Road Opening Party (ROP) and security convoy to give some time to repair their damaged vehicle. Though, security may have some strategy to guard the transport party, but driving a damaged vehicle is considerably risky for the drivers. It is added that, security ROP acted as protection of themselves neither for drivers nor for the transporting party.⁶

The Association grieves that in the middle of bullets and stones, drivers are working day and night to earn their livelihood and sustain their families. This is the very fact as well as a sad story of truck drivers.

Fate of NH 37

Many factors lead to the damage of NH 37, not only the lack of regular maintenance mainly after the rainy season is to be blamed, travelling of excessive heavy loaded goods trucks is also a factor. According to a Supreme Court ruling, the maximum load capacity of 9, 10 and 12 wheel trucks is 9 tonne, 15 tonne and 20 tonne respectively. The ruling is also approved under the Motor Vehicle Act. However, in Manipur, owing to the negligence of the concerned authorities, goods transporting trucks are loading much more weight than the prescribed limit, which in turn affects the highways and could be a reason for affecting the bridges and road at NH 37.⁷

At both sides of Makru Bridge, NH 37, due to extensive road damage, part of the highway was difficult to travel with many potholes with rain water. Considering the condition of the section of NH 37, Transport and Driver Council (TDC) agreed to unload 300 truckloads of stone and gravel at the damage site for filling many potholes on their own expense. The unloading and construction begins on October 2nd week of 2016 with help of trucks registered under the Council. Generally, Highway is in hands of the Border Road Organisation (BRO) which has the authority to construct and maintain it. However, BRO officials commented that their objective is only for construction and black topping, funds provided for NH 37 to the Organisation is unconcerned with filling up of potholes caused by rain and landslide.⁸ When Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Mr Nitin Gadkari came to Manipur and declared a package of Rs 22,000 crore exclusively for road and bridges. Among 19 projects that are covered by the package, the one km in length bridges at Barak and Makru rivers costing a total of Rs 141 was announced.⁹ The construction of bridges will be a step forward in upgrading the NH 37. Presently, by an official notice dated 23rd December 2016 of the Ministry, National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) took charge of NH 37 under Project Pushpak. On January 2017, a full bench of the High Court of Manipur has directed the Secretary, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Road Transport and Highway to carry out the High Court order regarding repairing of patches of road along NH 37 (Imphal-Jiribam sector). The order was passed by the full bench after discussing Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case 46 of 2016.¹⁰

What is visible from scenarios that prevail in NH 37 is a gross negligence of BRO as well as Government of Manipur. The blame game between Government of Manipur and BRO regarding maintenance of NH 37 is a clear sign of bureaucratic mumble jumble. On part of Manipur Government, NH 37 is remember only when any economic blockade occurs in Manipur, if NH 37 is so important for transporting goods and can be defended as compare to NH 2, and then what is the problem behind not constructing it properly as par with other Highway. That is a very big question being asked now and then by common public of Manipur.

Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from different individuals are qualitative in nature as the questions being asked were open ended structured one. Therefore, the data is complicated to be process statistically instead the nature of data permits to pick similar patterns in their response. The similar pattern in the response is single out and content analysed to justify the lone hypothesis of the study. Comparing with quantitative data that can be process arithmetically, processing qualitative data is much more complex and tricky.

The respondents reply comfortably to the questions put forward. The positive reply on assault at drivers is a common point and happens in one form or another.

Code 1-8

1. Life attempt by unproved firing by insurgent group.
2. Frequent case of stone throwing damaging vehicle, breaking vehicle canopy glass injuring drivers by supporters at good laden trucks.
3. Torching of trucks take place.
4. Feel if number and frequency of police patrolling increase, drivers can possibly put more efforts and feel easy at their job.
5. Drivers depend upon security personnel for their safe being and successful journey.
6. Lamented that severely damage road put up a challenge in course of journey. Potholes, frequent landslides, lack of ambulance and recovery vehicle are difficulties encounter.
7. Road itself is a danger beside medical illness suffered. Cases of Back pain, allergy due to dust are common occurrence.
8. Driver added if road condition is better and well constructed journey will take less time and cost less money.

Table 1: Frequency

Respondent	Question	Code
N. Anil (General Secretary) AMRTDMWU	Q1	2, 3
	Q2	4, 5
	Q3	6,7,8
Nipin Kalita (Driver) IOCL	Q1	1,2
	Q2	4,5
	Q3	6,7
N. Rokesh (Vice Secretary) AMPPDA	Q1	2
	Q2	4,5
	Q3	6,7,8

After scrutinizing response patterns (**see Code Q1-Q3 and Code 1-8**) from interviewed respondents, it would not be wrong to rationalize the assumption of the study validated. The replies truly justify the assumption that the truck drivers indeed face numerous difficulties while carrying out their job at the NH 37 during economic blockade. Undeniably, the Truck driver's personal safety is considerably at risk owing to aggressive assault by blockade supporters, insufficient police protection and bad road condition.

Findings of the Study

1. It is widely seen that the truck drivers due to their responsibility of transporting materials during blockade at the Highways, blockade supporters generally perceive them as an adversary who defy the blockade. Thus, drivers were indiscriminately targeted injuring critically.
2. In many cases of assault by supporters or insurgent groups, vehicle as well as drivers is either damage, injured or both. Both were easy targets irrespective of police protection at the Highways. The drivers are merely working to earn their livelihood and their profession demands to act the part.
3. Other than attacks by throwing stone, breaking vehicle canopy glass by supporters, direct firing assault towards the convoy of goods laden trucks injuring drivers is common phenomenon during a blockade.
4. The road condition of NH 37 is indisputably bad though the road is a National Highway. The Agency trusted with construction of Highway is far lacking behind in maintenance as per with other highways in other part of India. Beside

there is no facility of ambulance in case of accident and adequate recovery van etc.

5. On part of Manipur Government, NH 37 is kept neglected. Every time when a blockade is call upon and NH 2 is consider volatile, Government realised that NH 37 is there to transport materials without acknowledging condition of the road.
6. In an event of injury or death of a driver while transporting during blockade at Highways, Government of Manipur, Driver Union and Tanker Association are doing whatever is necessary to provide monetary help, medical assistance free of cost to the driver.
7. The drivers feel that they were precisely targeted and consider as a scapegoat due to their line of work and in addition, major section of the society lookdown as a pity profession in-spite of what they do during blockade to bring in the supplies.
8. For every section of the society, economic blockade will solve any problem but give rise to more unwanted issues. The blockade is not good for anyone and hit equally hard irrespective of hill or valleymen.

Suggestions

1. Sufficient Road Protection Force/Highway Protection Force must be provided to the good laden trucks other than the skimpy security cover during blockade at the Highways presently. This is a major demand for a long time from every section including drivers, unions etc but yet not permanently operationalised.
2. Government of Manipur must provided necessary Security, Ambulance and Recovery Vehicle for the drivers and truck in case of accidents during blockade at the Highways. If driver loss his live in any ill faith incident while transporting during blockade, he must be properly compensated under the Workmen Compensation Act.
3. Presently, the Union on their own is providing a meagre sum of Rs 200 per month as pension to retired drivers of the Union. The Government of Manipur must also contribute some amount in addition to the Union provided pension for welfare of the retired drivers.
4. Illegal taxes on the vehicle, alleged torture of the drivers by state and non-state actors must be stopped at the highways. Government must also take up necessary actions to deter illegal taxing by insurgent groups at the Highways from the Truck Drivers/Owners.

5. The NH 37 is utilised at any event of economic blockade for transportation, thus, the road should be properly constructed like any other national highway for better connectivity. Bridges at the Highways must be kept intact and maintain regularly so that heavy loaded trucks could passes through with ease.
6. The truck drivers driving at NH 37 during blockade must not be harmed as they are plainly carrying out their duty by transporting the goods. The materials they are transporting are being utilised irrespectively of hill or valley men. The drivers are doing a vital act in light of inadequate police cover and extreme bad road so that common public must not suffer the shortage of essential commodities in an event of blockade.
7. It would be utterly wrong on part of any organisations to consider the hard earning truck drivers as an adversary and inflict damage to them. They play the role of 'Life Giver/Saviour' and established arteries of goods movement at NH 37 during economic blockade.
8. Finally, any act of alleged assault to the drivers during blockade can relate to gross violation of Human Rights and a serious concern of Human Security.

Conclusion

Every time a blockade sprung up, Government manage to bring supplies through the badly damage NH 37 under police cover. According to a survey, an economic blockade costs Rs 3.09 crore per day of public money in Manipur, but what is most distressing is absence of immediate Government response. Blockade supporters variably harm the transporting parties in one way or another. In fact, drivers of such transporting parties are always at receiving end, they get hurt or their vehicle badly damage due to aggressive assault from the supporters. It is important to admit that drivers are surrounded by problems which many fail to notice while their profession demands them to drive through the violent road without knowing what may happen. Some of problems associated are loss of property as supporter's scorched good laden trucks or damage by throwing stone; physical injury due to sporadic unprovoked firing by unknown leading to death & amputations and medical infirmity because of prolong driving at bad road. For the drivers irrespectively of weather, their profession incite them to undertake the task of transportation at any cost.

The drivers know the danger while operating at NH 37 during blockade, but in order to fend livelihood, they are ready to face the odds. Protecting the drivers while at duty seems to be fading away though police presence is there. The fundamental principle of Human security also became irrelevant as police and security personnel fail to safe guard an individual in any crisis. It is not the question of only the drivers but any individual during blockade. The descriptive literature highlights many difficulties face by drivers mainly during blockade at NH 37 incorporating the concept of Human security. From laymen's eyes the combination may be irrelevant but consid-

ering political crisis and life threatening incidents upon drivers, welding of human security with drivers proved volatile events happen at NH 37 occasionally.

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Notes

- ¹ PNS. (2017, January, 12). Including Petrol 500 good laden trucks arrived. *Poknapham*, p. 1.
- ² PNS. (2017, January, 17). Today 500 vehicles will arrive. *Poknapham*, p. 9.
- ³ Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/humansecurity/human-security-unit/human-security-approach>
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- ⁵ (Nipin.Kalita, personal communication, January 17, 2017.)
- ⁶ (N. Rokesh , personal communication, January 27, 2017.)
- ⁷ PNS. (2017, January, 12). Don't allow over weight trucks to travel at Jiri Road . *Poknapham*, p. 9.
- ⁸ PNS. (2016, October, 11). TDC will help with 300 truckload of stone. *Poknapham*, p. 1.
- ⁹ PNS. (2016, December,12). Nitin Gadgare announced 19 projects costing Rs 22,000 crore in total. *Poknapham*, p. 1.
- ¹⁰ Staff Reporter. (2017, February 1). Repair stretches of NH 37:HC. *The Sangai Express*. p. 1.