

## Premonitions and Regressions—Indian Coast Guard

By Dr Prabhakaran Paleri

Author is a strategist, researcher, academic and author with professional experience in Indian naval, customs and coast guard services and also as a non-executive corporate director in public sector undertakings. He retired as the director-general of the Indian Coast Guard in August 2006, and thereafter continued as a research scholar and academician in India and abroad.

**[Note: Written for Indian Coast Guard on the occasion of Coast Guard day 2021]**

Regressing into the past enlivens memories randomly. It's not easy to localise fermented thoughts that hurriedly rush to the front for a person not habituated in scavenging the past. The coast guard is firmly associated with my career phase that includes navy and marine customs along an explicit continuum. It is not a faded past but active present. Though officially retired from coast guard, the momentum is still on. The ship is not stopped; it's still moving... into the future.

"Who will be in charge of safety and security of offshore oil platforms when they come up, the navy or the air force?" was a question that the senior most in the class, a wing commander, asked me, their instructor, rather ardently. It was a leading question. All my students were much senior to me at the prestigious Air Force Administrative College (AFAC) where I was assigned to deliver lectures on naval operations for junior commander's course (JCC). The year was 1974. I was a lieutenant. For the coordinator of training at Southern Naval Command, I was the right person to deliver the lectures. He said, "You have seen it all Paleri; you are the right person." Actually he meant I was disposable.

I realised the tone in the question from the smiling and agile wing commander. I was the junior most in that class, though an instructor. All my students adorably ragged me asking difficult and irrelevant questions. Of course, it was a pleasure to be with them later in the air force mess.

I paused a second before answering the question, "Who will protect the offshore rigs?" It cannot be the army or BSF. So it has to be either navy or air force. Then it suddenly dawned in me that the navy was in the process of taking over maritime recce from the air force at that time. The latter was getting ready to ditch or convert the remaining fleet of Lockheed super constellations (superconnies). My dilemma was that of a prisoner. If I say navy, they will shoot me; if I say air force, I will be wrong because of the transition. Thinking for a moment I said, "Sir, it will be a new maritime force that will take care of offshore oil rigs." There was momentary silence in the class, a sign of disbelief, when a squadron leader from the front row bellowed in a rather off-tone voice, "Which, one?" I felt I was in a quiz competition and thought of saying "pass." That was when I realised I would have said the one answer for every question from seniors: "I shall find out, sir." The good sense didn't prevail in me. It also happened to Karna on Kurukshethra.

"It will be called the coast guard," I said loud and unpretentiously. I remembered reading about the US coast guard (USCG) in a book on war while at college.

I had a sigh of relief when I left. But it lasted only for a moment. The news of the new armed force which I blabbered spread around and finally reached the C-in-C who had only one question to my commanding officer,

“How did Paleri know the government is thinking about a coast Guard?” Nobody believed me when I told I was just guessing to get out of a situation. They wanted to know, “How was I privy to the knowledge?” But the admiral believed me and told me “Son, you are right.” He was the intrepid Ronald “Ronnie” Lynsdale Pereira.

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) became a reality in 1978 as an armed force of the union under Seventh Schedule, Article 246, List-1, Para 2, of the Constitution of India under its own Act. The service went through many trials and tribulations, natural to any organisation. All the time it stood firm on the strength of its Act, and the forbearing of its people.

There are 143 coast guards in the world including those of quite a few landlocked states<sup>1</sup>. All of them are unique and country-specific. Their roles are universally similar: law enforcement and service besides other roles in the national interest as specified under their respective laws. The charter of Indian Coast Guard is very specific and crisp, which it will perform as “deems fit” and “without duplication of efforts” individually or along with other armed forces. The Act makes Indian Coast Guard totally dynamic operationally, if the government so desires, and a firm model for others to adapt for country-specific requirements. India has reasons to be proud of its coast guard.

Sweden created the first coast guard (*Küstbewakning*) in the world (1638). Interestingly it was a decade before the Peace of Westphalia was established affirming the concept of sovereign states, as the countries are today. The peace treaties were established after the Thirty Years’ War in Europe. The Sri Lankan Coast Guard (SLCG) is the latest (2010).

It is not that Indian Coast Guard does not have its fears and uncertainties even today. A drawback is absence of a formal training system. The training is outsourced or done in situ without formal academy or institute. This also means the coast guard does not have any arrangement for strategic research or training in practical enforcement topics like moot court, etc. on subjects that define its roles. This is a major drawback even after 42 years of its existence. It is encouraging to see that the government is serious about a coast guard academy which the service may ensure on fast track.

The service had to face criticalities *ab initio* with frequent efforts from similar organisations to take over command and control especially eyeing for senior vacancies. This will paralyse the operational service and jeopardise performance effectiveness and efficiency. It is important to understand a coast guard is a much specialised service where experience in chartered duties under terrain specificity matters. The government understands it and has handled prudently so far. But any sort of continuation to dilute the service and its duties can be counterproductive. This is my exclusive and considered opinion. It will be good if the government puts a moratorium on takeover bids or shifting. The government also needs to exploit the coast guard to maximum advantage.

Indian Coast Guard has no limitations in the area of operations under the Act, except in territorial seas of other countries. This is especially so since the ocean beyond the territorial sea is a global commons. In the territorial sea too the service can operate with the permission of host countries under agreements and memorandum of understanding for mutual benefit if there is consensus *ad idem* between governments. India believes in working together for everybody’s benefit. Limiting Indian Coast Guard operations to specific areas is not a matured decision and goes against its charter under the Act unless it is a matter of operational optimisation. Ultimately it is for a government to decide on policy and use its armed forces and agencies in the best interest of the nation and, thereby, its people, based on the Constitution.

## Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Lessons learnt and Borders redrawn

By Dr. Arnab Chakrabarty

Guest Lecturer, Department of International Relations, Sikkim University.

The former Soviet Union was a behemoth with a multitude of nationalities and minor ethnic communities, bound together in terms of territorial integrity. Ideology, commitment to Moscow and absolute obedience to the diktats from Kremlin were some of the threads used to bind the various communities into the largest state ever. In fact, while these ethnic communities and nationalities had their own conflicts, the overarching structure of the former Soviet Union ensured effectively that unity was

maintained throughout. After the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the authority based in Moscow decided to create the **Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh** within the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan despite the fact that the region was largely **inhabited by ethnic Armenians**. Apart from ethnicity, it is noteworthy to mention that while Azeris are mainly Muslims, Armenians are Christians thus adding a religious dimension to their long-standing conflict.

As the former Soviet Union began to falter and the end of the world's first communist state was well within sights, these minor ethnic conflicts escalated often beyond the limits of Moscow. In 1988 for instance, the legislature of Nagorno-Karabakh **voted to join Armenia**, thus spurring clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union these clashes turned into a full scale war and by the year 1993 **Armenia effectively controlled the autonomous region**. While Nagorno-Karabakh remained as a part of Azerbaijan, it is **dominated by ethnic Armenians** who are in turn supported by Armenia. A Russian backed ceasefire was in effect since 1994, which however did not aid in reducing tensions between the two neighbours. The **OSCE backed Minsk Process** did lay down significant guidelines to sort out the tensions between both the sides but to no avail.

The conflict is noteworthy due to the strategic importance of the region in addition to the religious dimension of the conflict. In fact, **Turkey showed exceptional interest** in the conflict by aiding Azerbaijan and historically too, Turkey and Armenia have been at loggerheads due to the former's refusal to recognize and accept the **Armenian Genocide**. While it was obvious that Turkey would support Azerbaijan due to its disdain from Armenia and its **shared cultural and religious values with Azerbaijan**, Russia did not choose sides thus leaving the Armenians short of effective allies. Despite many attempts in reigning in both the neighbours and de-escalate the situation of perpetual conflict, the current series of clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan turned out to be different. The **conflict** that started in July 2020 and continued till the recent ceasefire saw intense action from both the sides. Turkish support for Azerbaijan was not hidden in a conflict that witnessed the use of armoured vehicles, long range artillery and other sophisticated weaponry. Perhaps the massive use of **armed drones** by the Azeris made a critical impact, the response for which was lacking from the Armenian side.

While the previous conflicts between the two witnessed decisive **Armenian victory** which allowed them to **retain vast swathes of land**. However, the present series of clashes witnessed a demoralised Armenia attempting to counter the Azeris from a position of weakness. Indeed, military superiority and proactive assistance by Turkey played its part well. The use of Turkish made **Bayraktar TB2 drones** added an edge to the Azeri arsenal, allowing them to effectively target Armenian air defences and other sites of military bearing with impunity and without the threat of rebuttals. While the Armenians did have enough military hardware and expertise to prolong the conflict resulting in a favourable result, Azeri military tactics of stealth attacks and **luring the enemy prior to a massive strike** dealt devastating results. While the Armenians concentrated their armour and firepower in close groups, they turned out to be sitting ducks for Azeri drones after their positions were revealed.

Furthermore in terms of garnering international support, Armenia was outclassed by its opponent. While no international power or agency considers **Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Armenia** that did not dissuade them from seeking international support for itself. Azerbaijan on the other hand as explained received support from Turkey extensively including military hardware as well as diplomatic representation. There were also **unconfirmed reports** of Syrian fighters in collusion with troops from Pakistan fighting on the Azeri side. Even Israel **sold drones to Azerbaijan** which tilted the balance in their favour.

While this defeat was hard to digest as Yerevan erupted in protests against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan demanding his resignation, it has scratched a raw wound which reminds the Armenians of the genocide at the hands of Turkey a century earlier, **military and territorial reverse** which are indeed hard to digest. While Armenia expected more international support in its cause, the role of Russia is seen in a dubious fashion. Some argue that the Russians should have backed Armenia, others insist that the **Russian backed ceasefire** aided Armenia in losing more territory including Stepanakert. The **glaring absence of the United States** also allowed powers like Turkey to play a stronger role. Surprisingly the United States which is a part of the Minsk Group along with Russia and France and have been trying to end the raging conflict between the two since 1993 did not partake in the **cessation of the conflict**. While critics are quick to point out the disengagement from international events under the Trump administration, others believe that it's a tacit diplomatic manoeuvre on the part of the United States to avoid irking Russia in its **sphere of influence**.

Previously, the United States had deputed its representative to the Minsk Group without the status of an Ambassador, thus delimiting the **position** in the year 2017 which heralded the Trump administration's **lack of interest** in the region.

The Russian backed peace agreement highlighted the fact that Russia is still a **regional behemoth** and has the potential to call the shots, what is surprising though is its disengagement from backing Armenia despite its obvious intimacy. While the outcome is favourable for the Azeris, Armenia must learn quickly from its defeat and **organise its defence forces** for any such future military engagements. Nikol Pashinyan, the Armenian Prime Minister must also deal with the **wrath of fellow citizens** who are still not ready to accept a defeat. Turkey, on the other hand has emerged as a **power to reckon** with given its military and political will which it unabashedly exercised to aid its ally, Azerbaijan. Also the absence of the United States and any other major Western European powers from making inputs exhibit their paucity in reaching out to the region, or rather their **incapability in enforcing decisive results**. The outcome will also affect the ethnic Armenians in the territories now handed over to the Azeris with many vowing to keep the conflict in motion with an obvious mutinous demeanour. While retreating Armenians engaged in an all-out **Scorched Earth Policy** leaving nothing behind for the incoming Azeris the mood was ostensibly dark. It's a repeat of previous conflicts which resulted in **decisive victory** for the Armenians and when Azeris were compelled to withdraw from their territories leaving them in the lurch for their arch opponents. Only time will tell if the peace deal will be long lasting given the history of animosity and conflicts between both the sides or if any such conflict flares up in the future with repeated devastating results.

## Creating a robust and effective digital media regulatory mechanism

By Uday Kumar Varma

Author is former secretary, I&B ministry

***A huge regulatory structure just to monitor content and process the violations seem neither optimal nor prudent.***

On November 9, the Centre amended the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, and brought streaming video services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar, and news websites under the ambit of the ministry of information and broadcasting (I&B).

There is one point of ambiguity, though, in the notification: The online content can be curated content (as provided by news portals or entities such as Netflix, Hotstar or Amazon), and also user-generated content. The words "providers" and "platforms" must be explained clearly to clarify whether both curated and user-generated content are covered under this notification. This will materially change the scope of the notification.

The reactions to this notification from content providers have been adverse and display their apprehensions of an impending regulatory mechanism for online content. These fears do not appear to be well-founded, at least, for now. If, with the present arrangement of co-regulation, better and more innovative TV programmes are being curated, then why this fear?

The notification only formalises the government's decision that matters related to news, current affairs, films and audio-visual content online will be dealt with by I&B ministry. The fear that it will lead to censorship or a regulatory regime is perhaps fuelled by the fact that this notification has been issued after the Supreme Court (SC) sought the government's response on how it plans to deal with objectionable online content. The industry is most probably under the impression that after creating this enabling provision, regulation will follow.

Is this perception misconceived? Or does it contain some truth that the government intends to control online media content? An important indicator of the government's thinking on this matter could be how it has dealt with content control on television channels, both news and non-news.

The only content that is censored in India today is that of films. Television programmes are not censored. What prevails today as far as TV content is concerned is something akin to co-regulation. While the

I&B ministry retains the power to control content through the provisions of a programme code incorporated in the Cable Network Regulation Act, 1995, industry bodies — the Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF) and the News Broadcasters Association — have also set up their self-regulatory mechanisms. Both have programme codes and regulatory authorities. IBF set up Broadcast Content Complaints Council (BCCC) in 2011, while NBA set up News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) in 2008.

While there is no formal acceptance of their codes, the I&B ministry has been forwarding complaints it has received to these bodies. It has increasingly ceded regulatory space to these bodies. The trust quotient between these bodies and the ministry has improved over these years.

The world of online content is far more complex. Not only is it without boundaries, but the volume generated is enormous. Its nature is driven by the choices and decisions of viewers. Several layers of technology-aided safeguards can be provided to make sure that the content reaches only the intended viewers.

Given the huge size and diversity of India's entertainment sector, and the quantum of content created every day, setting up an apparatus that will monitor content online 24x7, analyse it, detect violations and initiate action against the violators will be a complex, time-consuming, controversial and expensive task. Its administrative cost may outweigh the gains. A better way would be to implement a rule-bound and transparent self-regulatory mechanism with government oversight. The government and industry must work out the modalities of a credible self-regulatory mechanism with a robust and practical code for content, a representative, inclusive and fair governance structure, and an effective enforcement mechanism. A huge regulatory structure just to monitor content and process the violations seem neither optimal nor prudent.

**Courtesy-Hindustan Times**

## **Vikas Dubey case: The long-awaited SIT report**

**By Dr Vikram Singh**

Author is former DGP of UP Police. Presently he is Chancellor Noida International University, Noida UP

It is not just the case of one Vikas Dubey; there could be dozens of Vikas Dubey's in the shadows, who may have used this 'effective' modus operandi to run and promote their empires of crime.

The SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government finally submitted its report on the Vikas Dubey episode of Kanpur.

If newspaper reports are to be believed, no fewer than 80 government servants of various seniority and ranking were willing accomplices of the slain criminal Vikas Dubey in his various depredations -- whether it was the surreptitious acquisition of licences of firearms, through political manipulations or bribery, or both; whether it was forcible possession of expensive plots and buildings or getting easy acquittals in the 70 odd offences, for which he was charged. It is an extremely disturbing situation where senior officers are also allegedly involved in giving him protection for caste, economic and political reasons.

Of course, the larger question is that this systemic failure did not happen in a day; it is a cumulative failure of the entire administrative machinery. How could firearm licences be recommended and granted to Vikas Dubey when he had a criminal history running into dozens of heinous cases? All the complicit officers, starting from the police outpost in-charge, Station House Officer, the DSP, the Additional SP, the Senior Superintendent of Police and the District Magistrate who finally sanctioned the arms licences need to explain their conduct and compulsions as to the reasons why these firearms licences were recommended and sanctioned.

Not a single criminal case against Vikas Dubey was vigorously pursued to ensure his conviction. For this serious lapse, investigators and those who supervised the investigations, which in the present case would go up to the level of Superintendent of Police and even higher, need to answer the en masse acquittals. Those responsible for effective prosecution also failed miserably as their cases fell flat in courts. All these officers should be held accountable for the mass acquittals and the liberal bails granted.

All assets, movable and immovable, usurped by Vikas Dubey must be immediately identified, especially those that are benami. These must be confiscated and either auctioned or utilised for public purposes. Those government servants who benefited from these transactions must be treated as gang members of Vikas Dubey and exemplary action be taken against them expeditiously. This orgy of crime, violence, extortion and loot had a free run for no fewer than two decades plus -- this is a terrible reflection on the existing criminal justice system and loose administrative machinery facilitating crime syndicates. It is not just the case of one Vikas Dubey; there could be dozens of Vikas Dubey's in the shadows, who may have used this 'effective' modus operandi to run and promote their empires of crime.

Obviously, the internal vigilance mechanism of all departments found complicit, namely the police and the magistracy, also failed the people when they turned a Nelson's eye to the first abnormal fault lines of illegality. This is impossible without the connivance at crucial levels of administration. There are disconcerting reports also of the involvement of the very highest officials. In the light of these sensational disclosures, it is expected that the least that the Government and Vigilance department could do is to nail all those found complicit in this shameful saga.

Under the present circumstances, the Government must take exemplary punitive action and corrective measures against all those who are charged with providing illegitimate assistance to Vikas Dubey, because nothing less than dismissal would meet the ends of justice. The provisions of Article 311(3), of the Constitution of India, are meant to deal with deviant government servants and summary dismissal is possible under these provisions. Sadly, this has not happened in the past, which has greatly emboldened the corrupt and the inefficient, at great public cost.

There was a time when a senior IPS officer, returning from Japan after training, was dismissed from service because he did not pay the customs duty of the camera that he had purchased in Japan! An ICS officer was made to resign because of an inadvertent extra claim of 25 paise in his travelling allowance bill. But these are unbelievable things of the past and nothing shocks and surprises us any longer. The NN Vohra Committee in its report in October 1993 explained in great detail the deep and criminal nexus among the politicians, criminals, bureaucrats and the police. Expectedly, this report is eating dust since then and not surprisingly little action has been taken against any of these four constituents of institutionalized corruption. To the contrary, the number of corruption cases registered has also decreased over the years. So, are we really to believe that the corruption level has gone down? Nothing would be more absurd than to give credence to this conjecture; it must be analysed as to why there is a decline in the registration of corruption cases.

It is not just the matter of just one Vikas Dubey, it is the matter of innumerable Vikas Dubey's mushrooming in every block, tahsil and subdivision, to grow into huge banyan trees of corruption and organised crime over a period of time, with the blessings of corrupt politicians, corrupt bureaucrats and an eroded and compromised police system too.

It will not serve the interest of justice to merely penalise the lower functionaries and the middle-level officers. The senior-most in the IAS and IPS and politicians must be held accountable for the open loot of public and private assets.

Not to do this would give conflicting signals that there are a separate set of rules for the higher officers and different set of rules for the lower functionaries

There are extremely important lessons that should be drawn from this horrible administrative failure. The internal vigilance needs to be tightened to a level that any officer displaying abnormal characteristics of living beyond his means must be immediately identified and charged with corrupt practices; those found aiding and abetting crime syndicates should be dealt with administratively and legally, depending upon the seriousness of the charges. Prompt punishment must be awarded within 180 days without inexplicable delays.

The documentation of criminals of every category must be standardised, with due care, attention and application of mind. Inspections must be conducted regularly by senior officers; all adverse observations of inspecting officers must be carefully numbered and documented, so that faithful compliance is possible on quantifiable parameters duly monitored by the Police Headquarters and the DGP Office, a practice that has lapsed into disuse. Vikas Dubey would not have become a Frankenstein's monster, but for the internal lapses of the police, prosecution, administration and a symbiotic lifeline provided by corrupt politicians.

The senior officers of all services are expected to provide mature leadership to their junior colleagues to uphold the highest traditions of public service, unimpeachable integrity and zero tolerance to brazen mafia depredations so that the likes of Vikas Dubey are not just nipped in the bud but crushed in their germinating stage itself.

**Article is courtesy TIMESNOWNEWS.COM**

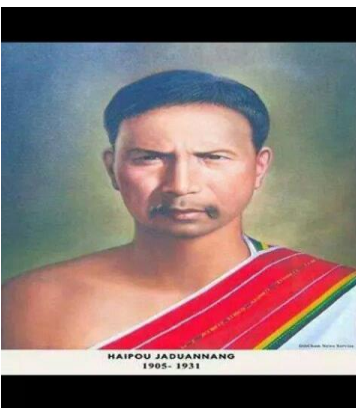
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## Nation is Indebted to:

**Haipou Jadonang**

**First Naga Martyr - Freedom Fighter against British rule**

**Born 1905 Martyred 1931 (Hanged by British)**



**A man who built an army of 500 to take on the British, Haipou Jadonang has been largely overlooked by writers and historians.**

Freedom fighters fundamentally stand on two pillars—their spiritual and political convictions. Without one, the other does not stand. Subtract faith from Mahatma Gandhi, and there is very little one would understand about his anti-colonial struggle.

Haipou Jadonang, the Rongmei Naga leader from present-day Manipur, was a spiritual leader, social reformist, and political leader who sought to emancipate the Naga people from the clutches of British colonial rule during the early decades of the 20th century.

He was born around 1905 in Kambiron village of present-day Tamenglong district in Manipur to a poor peasant family from the Malangmei clan of the Rongmei Naga tribe. Jadonang was the youngest of three sons.

By the age of 10, he would pray for long hours, visit places like the Bhuvan Cave (near Silchar, Assam) and Zeilad Lake (Manipur) – sites of significant religious importance for the Nagas – and make predictions, besides using local herbs and medicines as healing agents for those who came to him with various illnesses.

Towards his late teens and early adulthood, Jadonang's ideas about the revival of indigenous Naga culture, the political struggle against the British and social change began to take shape.

At this juncture, it is imperative to contextualise Jadonang's struggle with a growing pan-Naga consciousness among the major Naga tribes against colonial rule. World War I, was a major turning point in the Naga struggle against the British, which subsequently translated into the formation of the Naga National Council and the modern-day National Socialist Council of Nagaland.

However, what's beyond dispute is the socio-religious movement he started – called Heraka (translation: Pure), which he drew from his ancestral Naga practices.

There was an emphasis by Haipou Jadonang on truth, love and respect for sentient beings. Even songs, hymns and prayers in praise of the supreme deity were encouraged. The ultimate aim, however, was to challenge British colonial rule.

According to some accounts, Jadonang had heard about Mahatma Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement on the mainland and sought to express solidarity with it. In January 1927, according to scholar John Thomas, Jadonang had arranged for a trip to Silchar with a dance troupe of 200 Naga boys and girls, to welcome Gandhi.

However, the British cancelled Gandhi's visit, and the trip never materialised.

Nonetheless, according to John Thomas, Jadonang travelled across lands inhabited by his fellow Zeliangrong people, and the Angami tribe, seeking support for his political leadership. He would travel on horseback, wearing British attire to move around undetected.

However, the British officials got wind of it in 1928, and SJ Duncan, who was then the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) appointed by the British, one day confronted Jadonang, asking him to dismount and remove a hat he was wearing.

The Naga freedom fighter refused, and so he was taken to Tamenglong, where the British interrogated him and ordered him to spend a week in jail.

Interestingly, Jadonang was arrested a week before the Naga Club, predominantly made up of members from the Angami community, submitted a memorandum before the visiting Simon Commission seeking independence for the Nagas.

Meanwhile, news of his arrest raised his popularity, and following his release, he started building an army.

Comprising of 500 men and women at its zenith, the army was well-versed in military tactics, handling weaponry and conducting reconnaissance missions. It was also organised in civilian matters, assisting with farming, livestock grazing, and firewood collection, among other activities. Jadonang even composed songs singing praises of the struggle against the British, which his disciple Rani Gaidinlui imparted to his followers.

With weapons, personnel and an innate understanding of the local terrain, Jadonang and his men were prepared to take on British.

Unfortunately, the British caught whispers of Jadonang's strategy around January 1931. In February, the British arrested Jadonang at Lakhipur, while he was returning from his last pilgrimage to Bhuvan Hills with 600 other followers. He was charged with sedition.

Imprisoned in Imphal Jail, alongside hundreds of other followers, the British long interrogated him about the arms, ammunition and plans to overthrow the British, which he steadfastly refused.

Later that year, a British court found him guilty, sentencing him to death.

He was only 26 when he died at the hand of the British. However, his legacy was carried further by Rani Gaidinliu, his disciple, who was herself later incarcerated after many failed attempts, and released only after Independence.

Write to us at:

**[bulletin@finsindia.org](mailto:bulletin@finsindia.org)**

OFFICE :

**4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu Road,  
Dadar (East), MUMBAI 400014**

**Phone 022 24127274**

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