

# Nambul River: Saviour of Imphal

In olden days Nambul river was a source of water as well as the saviour of Imphal city from floods by serving as the main natural waterway for draining out flood water. However, the pressures of urbanization in general and machinations of individuals in particular, have crippled both systems. With city's garbage being dumped into Naga nullah and flow of night soil from houses directly into the main channel, Nambul is today a stinking open sewer. Creeping encroachments on the banks and grant pattas within the right of way of the waterway have caused constrictions which obstruct the free flow of floods waters.

The area drain by Nambul River is around 250 sq km including a hill catchments of 60 sq km. The average rainfall in the hill catchments is said to be around 1473 mm whereas in the valley it is around 1319 mm. As 62 kilometre Nambul is a rain fed river, it gets swelling during monsoon that lasts from June to October.

It serves as the main, if not the sole, flood water channel for the heart of Imphal town as well as the adjoining places such as Chingmeirong, Khurai Lairikyengbam Leikai, Nagaram or Tangkhul avenue, Lamphelpat, Sagolband, Uripok, Khwairamband Keithel, Secretariatcampus, Yaiskul, Keishampat, Keishamthong, Singjamei, Pishum, Khagempalli, Langthabal, Heirangoithong, Canchipur, Samurou and Wangoi etc.

Rapid urbanizations have also created problems. Being a swampy area on the outskirts of Imphal, Lamphelpat used to serve as temporary detention reservoir for the river has no completely reclaimed for construction of residential and non-residential buildings and is now no more functioning as flood detention reservoir of the river.

"Though we regulates the culvert as usual, it's been almost five/six years, there's been less number complaints comparing to the past "shares Th Ratan, the operator of the Samushang culvert or popularly known as Samushang Uku that blocks the river water entering Lamphelpat area. Many ministers as well as top government officials forced to open the culvert once their residential complexes is flooded to start draining into river.

Drainage problem of Imphal city is very acute as there is no sewage system and no proper storm water drainage and after a brief spell of rainfall during monsoon almost all the area of Imphal city particularly the busy Khwairamband Keithel site is water logged and remains thus for days till the water level in Nambul river recedes.

Earlier Samushang Uku plays an important role in balancing the water level of both Nambul as well as Lamphelpat especially during monsoon. Since the last six years, the flood water from Lamphelpat area cannot recede as in the past until and unless the water level of Nambul river lowers. "This of because of the rise of Nambul's river bed" confirms M Radheshyam, Superintending Engineer of state's flood management circle of the Irrigation and Flood control department.

The IFC department is going to submit a detailed project report for managing the river by constructing retaining walls along the riverside from Naoremthong to Heirangoithong in Imphal west district under Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty alleviation's Jawaharlal Nehru Urban renewal mission.

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## Sobhapati Samom

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The carrying capacity of Nambul in the portion Iroishemba to Khwai Bazaar has been seriously decreased by encroachments on both banks. The normal flow of the river near the Hump Bridge, which is a monument in the heart of Imphal city, is also a bottle neck.

Obstructions caused by Phums (weeds) at tail end of Nambul near Loktak lake wherein Nambul River was known as Yangoiachouba maril has further reduced effective drainage capacity. The result over the years has been increasing flooding of parts of Imphal town like Nupi-Keithel (women market), Thangal bazaar, Paona bazaar, Kangchup road, Iroishemba to Khwai bazaar. This has caused heavy damage to heavily build up areas, loss of property and disturbing communication.

"One of the recent devastating flood in this river is that of July-August 1989 which has inundated almost all the valley of Imphal city including 16,000 hectares of built up area and agriculture land were submerged" informs Ph Rajendro, state agriculture officer.

The need and urgency for increasing the capacity of Nambul by widening constrictions and removing or bypassing bottle-necks and of cleaning the entire system cannot be overemphasized. Nambul must again be enabled to give clean water to Imphal and also effectively drain off flood water.

As a long term measure, a flood control scheme from Iroishemba to Mongsangei (10 km) had been sanctioned for around Rupees 2 crore during the President's rule in 1994. Similarly works have to be carried out further

downstream also. However looking to the urgency, a short term scheme was devised and given high priority. Its implementation already reached the half way mark.

The aim is to save Imphal city from Inundation during the monsoons of 1994. Social care has been taken to see that these measures from a part of the long arm scheme for restoration of the Nambul River system and that money spent now is not rendered in fruitous at all.

People who are residing near the river, particularly in the town areas may please appreciate that encroachment and extension of homestead land into the river course has constricted the waterway and crippled the ability flood discharge. The result is inundation of large parts of Imphal. Some of them are illegal encroachers, but some have secured 'pattas' on right of way of the river.

This is a classic example of individual interests prevailing over public interest and causing misery to large sections of law abiding citizens of Imphal. "Our appeal to the encroachers is to voluntarily vacate their encroachments. Patta lands would have to be acquired as per need," P P Srivastav, the then advisor to the Manipur Governor once said in one of his article, "We are, however, trying our best to save as much as patta lands as possible consistent with the minimum possible technical needs in the back ground of the Manipur Flood plan zoning Act 1978 to prevent inundation of Imphal". The appeal of the Advisor turned into action after 13 long years as Manipur's Chief Minister O Ibobi led ministry vacated the encroachers in November last year.

Ibobi's business trip to New York and Bangkok in September 2007 prompted him to keep Nambul River neat and clean. As a result an attempt to re-establish an environment-friendly Imphal city, state's Secular Progressive Front ministry has started to clean up one of the most polluted Nambul River in the state since October 2007.

Plans are on to clean up the Naga Nullah and measures to prevent dumping of garbage are also being devised. The degree of success would however depend on the willing cooperation of the people without which it would be difficult to maintain cleanliness.

The senior government official is also confident, that with the rich cultural heritage and the highly developed aesthetic sense of the people of Manipur, every section of society would come forward to keep Imphal clean and beautiful to help in widening the waterway of Nambul, the saviour from floods.