

HIGH COURT OF MEGHALAYA
AT SHILLONG

PIL No.17/2021

Date of order: 20.09.2023

Philip Khrawbok Shati Vs. State of Meghalaya & ors

Coram:

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjib Banerjee, Chief Justice

Hon'ble Mr. Justice W. Diengdoh, Judge

Appearance:

For the Petitioner : Mr. H.L. Shangreiso, Sr.Adv with
Mr. T. Dkhar, Adv

For the Respondents : Mr. K. Khan, AAG with
Mr. J.N. Rynjah, GA
Mr. Philemon Nongbri, Adv
Ms. K. Gurung, Adv

In several areas this Court has expressed concern, not only because the situation is alarming but also at the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the State to deal with the problem. Traffic congestion in Shillong is, possibly, number one on the list.

2. For more than a year, meetings have been held, reports have been filed and some measures have been suggested but there has been no change on the ground; indeed, the malaise has worsened on a daily basis.

3. It is now par for the course that if one has to exit Shillong to take a flight from either Umroi or Guwahati more than an hour has to be kept in hand to negotiate just the Shillong part of the traffic. In the afternoon, when most schools get over, traffic in the central part of the capital city

comes to a standstill. The situation improves late in the afternoon but by 5 pm it is the same story.

4. Though the State has bandied a report obtained from an international agency and, at the behest of this Court, IIM, Shillong was also requested to look into the matter and a workshop convened, nothing seems to have come of it. Even worse, vendors have spilled on the streets that makes pedestrian travel impossible on the footpaths and leave the pedestrians to jostle with vehicles on the roads. For the elderly and the less-abled, the Shillong road is a threat to life.

5. Yet the government carries on as if everything is hunky-dory. In matters of the present kind there is only so much that the Court can do. Once the Court draws the government's attention to a problem that has to be dealt with, it is ordinarily expected that appropriate steps would be taken. Unfortunately, the State government has chosen to do nothing in the matter of easing traffic congestion, whether by regulating the same, or creating one-way streets or removing vendors and others who have no business to be on the streets or pavements. There is clearly a lack of political will and leadership.

6. The latest report of August 22, 2023 that had been filed speaks of 70 students in the city availing of the transport provided by the

government. Though the State give itself a certificate by saying that there has been a substantial progress in such regard as the figure has increased from 2 to 70, the irrelevance of the measure can be gauged once it is recognised that the number of school-going students may be more than 50,000 in the city.

7. There are certain other plans indicated, particularly for creating parking spaces. The earliest of such projects is expected to be completed by March, 2024. A comprehensive mobility plan is said to be in place, but there is no effect yet on the ground.

8. The State would do well to ensure that those who encroach on the road space and have altogether taken over the footpaths are kept at bay or relocated so that the available roads and the footpaths may be used by only vehicles and pedestrians, respectively.

9. It is hoped that some progress would have been made by the time the State reports four weeks hence.

10. List on October 18, 2023.

(W. Diengdoh)
Judge

(Sanjib Banerjee)
Chief Justice

Meghalaya
20.09.2023
"Lam DR-PS"