



'The United Nations and the Lions Clubs International'

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"The United Nations (U N)" is a very popular and well known body at the global level and it needs no detail explanation. In the meantime, "The Lions Clubs International (LCI)", also known as "The International Association of Lions Clubs" is comparatively less known amongst the general population, while there exists a unique and close relationship between these two global organizations.

Before highlighting the above relationship which is the main purpose of this article, a brief explanation about 'Lionism' or 'International Association of Lions Clubs' is considered important.

Founded in 1917 by an Insurance Agent, Melvin Jones in Chicago, the USA, the International Association of Lions Clubs is mainly a service club organization doing humanitarian services at the global level for the betterment of the communities and the humanitarian needs. It is an Association of about 48,000 Lions Clubs spread all over the globe, covering more than 210 countries and geographical areas, being the largest, fastest growing and most effective one of its kind in the world.

Lionism reached India in 1956 (Bombay and Delhi), North East India in 1958 (Digboi) and ultimately Manipur in 1968 (Imphal), being the 9th oldest Lions Club in the N. E. India. By now, there are about 200 Lions Clubs in the 7 NE states including 37 in Manipur, rendering various humanitarian services from time to time.

Relationship between the United Nations and the International Association of Lions Clubs started after the Second World War. In San Francisco, California, the USA, on October 24, 1945 (ever since known as the UN Day), the then US President, Harry Truman joined Winston Churchill, the then Britain's Prime Minister and other world leaders in signing the UN Charter. In the same year, Lions Founder Melvin Jones and Past International Presidents, Fred W Smith and D A Skeen were asked to help develop the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Charter for the new global organization. At that time, the International Association of Lions Clubs was more than 28 years old and already an established worldwide service club organization, as mentioned earlier. And this was the first step of establishing a relationship between the UN and the LCI.

During the ensuing years, the two International Organizations have co-operated on many humanitarian ventures. Lions have provided aid and manpower for the projects of several UN Agencies like, UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund), WHO (World Health Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) etc. In fact, the LCI has already established a consultative status with the UNESCO. Under the UNICEF also, there is a programme for imparting education to children during emergency situations called 'School in a box/kit' which contains all essential items for students and teachers. The LCI is the main contributor of these Boxes/Kits with teaching materials. Because of the closeness in relationship, the WHO Doctors also use to assist the LCI in their ' Campaign Sight First' programmes Another area where the two global organizations work together closely is in the selection of some of the Grand Prize winning Posters from the global Peace Poster Contest among the students of the age group of 11 to 13 years, organized by the LCI, to be used by the UN for their Postage Stamps.

From the beginning, the relationship between the UN and the LCI has been limited to the Humanitarian endeavours and that is the uniqueness of the relationship. The Lions Clubs International, in keeping with its stated Objects/Purposes, has no involvement at all in the political or security affairs of the United Nations

Keeping in view the activities of good relations between these two organizations, the UN has started observing a day, sometime during the month of February/March as ' Lions Day at the United Nations (LDUN)'. On this day, apart from recognizing the services of the Lion leaders, the Grand Prize winner of the global Peace Poster Contest is also felicitated and honoured in person, if time permits, or otherwise, during the Lions International Convention held during the June end/July beginning.

It is worth mentioning here that India has so far won the Grand Prize of Peace Poster Contest which carries a monetary award of US \$ 5,000 along with the return tickets and hospitalities of the parents of the student and the sponsoring Club President, twice in 2010 and 2014. In both the occasions, the winners were from Manipur (Sponsored by Moirang Lions Clubs) and the Indian Lions were very proud of it.

To reciprocate the nice gesture shown by the United Nations by organizing the LDUN etc. the Lions Clubs all over the world use to observe the UN Day on 24th October every year. The Lions Club of Imphal has been organizing an 'All Manipur Debating Competition' for students (IX to XII standards) on an UN related topic every year on this day since mid 1980s as a part of 'Observance of the UN Day'.

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