

KHANGLAI-2014 “For such a time as this”

All India Kuki Worship Service (AIKWS) held its fourth edition of KHANGLAI from 3rd to 5th October at Peace Resort Center, in Bangalore, Karnataka. Over 1000 delegates of which 530 delegates from outside Bangalore, representing 15 Kuki Worship Service (KWS) units across India as well as abroad turned up for the conference, where eminent Kuki speakers and distinguished persons mentored to the youth of AIKWS.

KHANGLAI Conference was initiated for the first time in the year 2000, in New Delhi; with the 2014 Bangalore edition being its fourth one. The concept of a Khanglai conference was born after the All India Kuki Worship Service Co-ordination Committee (AIKWSCC) decided it best to organize a unifying event for AIKWS members, in order to cater to the growing Diaspora of Kukis in urban cities and towns of India; with the youth being the primary focus of the conference; as a platform for social and spiritual awakening.

Khanglai 2014 commenced on the evening of 3rd October with Rev. Jangkhoham Doungel, Executive Director of Evangelical Churches Association, Manipur, inaugurating the event. KWS Bangalore, the host unit, led the Praise and Worship that evening, which was later followed by an inaugural message from the Main Speaker Rev. Dr. J.M. Paupu. From his first sermon he emphasized on the theme of the conference, **“For such a time as this”** which was taken from the book of Esther, chapter 4 verse 14. The book of Esther, tells a story of an orphan girl brought up in a foreign land, who made the most of her circumstances, rising to a position of influence and saving the Jews of the Persian Empire from eminent death. Thus through this story he tried to instill a narrative in the people for the need of God fearing leaders beyond the confines of the Church; and in to the marketplace of politics, businesses, government institutions and the civil society.

The 2nd day of the event saw a much heavier turn out, as the day began with a devotional program beginning at 7 am, led by Bishop Paothang Haokip, the newly elected Chairman of AIKWS, who shared about the history, development and significance of KWS in the Kuki society. The next session was led by Pu Lunminthang Haokip, IAS, and newly designated DC of Churachandpur, who delivered a seminar on, **“Integrity, Accountability and Social Ethics”**. He captivated the audience with his interesting anecdotes, often resulting in splits of laughter. On being asked about his opinion regarding the Miss Kut beauty contest, he suggested that instead of a “Miss Kut” it would be more desirable to have a “Miss Good” contest.

The end of the interesting Seminar gave way to the singing competition, pitting the choirs of various KWS units against each other; who were scrutinized and graded by judges, not just on their singing ability but also on various other aspects of their performance from their entry on to the stage as well as for discipline and dress code. A couple of Solos and duets from renowned Kuki artists followed and a choreographed dance wrapped up the afternoon programme.

The afternoon session started with a revisiting of KWS “Vision 2020” brought on my Mr. D.P. Haokip, IRS, Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai, who listed out a four point vision statement, elaborating on some goals for the KWS churches to strive for by the year 2020. He started with his vision to see the role

of KWS expand from not just an inter-denominational fellowship of believers, but also as a church that aspires to sponsor and even send out missionaries into the world. He also stressed on the need for KWS to build churches where ever they can, so as to instill loyalty in its members and provide an identity which they would be proud of and carry with them wherever they are. The third point of his vision focused on the need to equip the youth as torch bearers for the church so that they may shine as a beacon of hope and lead an exemplary life for their peers where ever they may be, be it at their work place or institutions of learning or at home. The final point of his vision was an open invitation for all to visit the holy land if they had the means to do it.

The evening was marked by sportive revelries, with a volleyball tournament organized for both men and women, who fought hard in a bid to secure a trophy for their respective KWS units. People also found other ways to entertain themselves, thanks to a red carpet area blanketed by a large AIKWS banner in the background; an ingenious idea envisioned by the core committee, which allowed delegates to indulge in a red carpet like experience leading to memorable photographic evidence of their time at the conference.

In the later part of the evening KWS Hyderabad took the stage in leading the worship, thoroughly enthralling the delegates and leading everyone in participative action songs. The speaker for the evening was Rev. Dino Touthang, Asia Regional Program Director for Compassion International, and currently residing in Thailand. His talk was on the future role of KWS in the 21st century, where he called on the youth to be open-minded and hoped for the church to continually grow with its people so as to stay relevant for generations to come. And he dreams of a day when KWS would not be a church just for the Kuki community but for anyone seeking to worship God. This was in reference to Solomon's prayer in the book of 2 Chronicle 6:32-33, where Solomon beseeches God to answer the prayers of even the non-Jews who come to pray in the temple he built; so that all may know that the God of Israel lives and listens to prayers.

The 5th of October, followed a similar routine to the previous except for changes in the speakers, agendas, and objectives. The morning devotion was led by Rev. Seikam Touthang, Pastor of Kuki Community Church, Tulsa, USA who was one of the more animated and enthusiastic personalities from among the VIP delegates. The highlight of the day was the "Panel Session" conducted in the afternoon, featuring distinguished personalities from various backgrounds such as: Theology, Management, Human Resource, Indian Revenue Service, Information Technology and Entrepreneurship. After a brief introduction by each of them they were asked to share their insights, experiences and tips on how to be successful in their respective fields.

The evening saw the final stages of the volleyball tournament which sent the delegates into a sportive frenzy; with fans enthused in cheering for their respective teams; vying to secure the top place in the finals. If the morning saw the self-reflective delegates, the evenings saw delegates coming out of their reflective shells as active and sportive personalities.

For the final session of Khanglai 2014, the turnout was immense. After a time of worship Speaker J.M. Paupu took stage for the last time where he encouraged the youth to be more forgiving and shine for Christ; beginning at the individual level, which would then be reciprocated by others so as to lead to a more inclusive and a unified society. The speaker ended his sermon with an alter call to which a large majority of the attendees answered. And just as his prayer for the people had come to an end the weather took a turn for the worst and broke out into a heavy down pour cutting short the evening session.

Due to the sudden downpour, the last session of the conference resumed after dinner inside a smaller hall, beginning with a time of typical “Lenkhom” style singing, followed by a prize distribution ceremony, where KWS Shillong, KWS Delhi and KWS Gurgaon bagged the first, second and third places respectively in the “Singing Competition.” The first place for the Men’s volleyball went to KWS Pondicherry with KWS Bangalore as the runner-up, and in the women’s category the first place went to KWS Shillong and KWS Kolkata as the runner-up.

Overall, Khanglai 2014 was a successful and well-organized event. The dedication of the core committee along with the collaborative efforts of the hosting units of South India, comprising of Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune; was evident in the success of the event which exceeded everyone’s expectation. The efforts of all the volunteers who served as ushers and as unseen heroes comprising of the kitchen staff; all played an important role in catering to the efficient management of the event from start to finish. And as a response to the overwhelming participation in the conference, the AIKWS Facebook page has been swarming with photos and testimonies from delegates who attended the conference, with many already looking forward to the next AIKWS Khanglai which would be held in the year 2017, in Delhi.