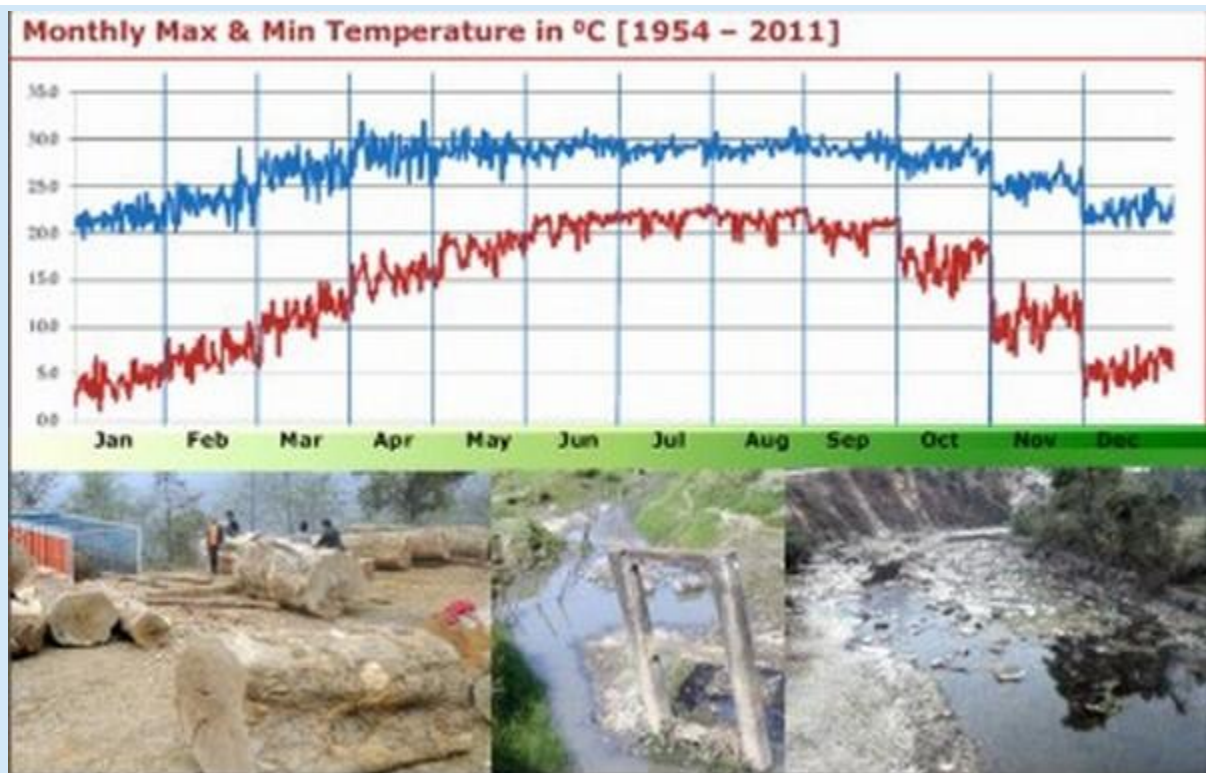


Rainfall quantum dropping sharply

Source: **The Sangai Express**

Imphal, April 05 2012: Thanks to unrestrained logging and profligate devastation caused to the forest cover, Manipur at present is passing through a critical phase of climatic change with the gravity of the situation best illustrated by the fact that only 6 millilitres of rainfall could be recorded last month. In the backdrop of the prevailing dry spell drastically reducing the water level of some important rivers such as Imphal, Nambul, Iril and thoubal which flow through the valley pockets of Manipur, The Sangai Express carried out a survey at the Siroy (Shirui) Hills, which is the origin of Thoubal river. Upon spot inspection it came to light that the river source has dried up substantially to such an extent that people in Ukhrol district headquarters are also feeling the heat of acute water scarcity for the past many weeks. apart from the district headquarters, severity of the water shortage is so grave that Shirui villagers are compelled to enforce water procurement regulation with strict monitoring of water provision for only purposeful usage. At Litan the riverbed has almost dried up.



The rainfall graph and drying rivers

On factors responsible for the dry spell in Manipur, once considered to be one of the wettest parts in the world, Dr T Brajakanta, who is Research Officer in the Directorate of Environment, attributed the phenomenon to ecological imbalance with impact of the global change in climatic condition being felt in Manipur too. Highlighting that Manipur recorded 2268 millilitre rainfall in 1999 which declined the next year to 1854, the Officer said that the downward trend continued in 2009 with only 1027 millilitre of rainfall, 1500 ml in 2011 and only 6 ml recorded till February this year. Contrary to the decline in rainfall, average temperature in the State rose to 23 degree Celsius in 2010, which nominally increased by a degree in 2011 and is predicted to be hotter by 3.7 degree Celsius in 2015, according to Dr Brajakanta. Further informing that forest cover in the catchment areas of Manipur had been on the wane with the most significant change clearly visible in the Shirui Hill range, he cautioned that continuous destruction of forest would automatically lead to fewer quantity of water at the river sources. Commenting on the issue, Environmentalist Dr RK Ranjan said until and unless an effective afforestation measure is initiated there would be no respite from the problem of acute shortage of water. Pointing out that recent trend of torrential rainfall for a short period in a year and prolong dry spell is an

indication that ecological imbalance prevails in Manipur, he also cited urbanisation diminishing natural water storage bodies as one of the factors for the problem. Further referring to improper utilisation of the water source along with the lack of awareness among the general public on the importance of water conservation, RK Ranjan also noted various complaints of inefficient planning by the Public Health Engineering Department. Meanwhile, report by the Forest Survey of India suggest that forest area in Manipur in 1987 was 79.21 percent whereas the said size shrunk to 76.54 in 2011 .