

“If you would convince a man that he does wrong, do right. Men will believe what they see.”
--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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India-US sign LEMOA

WHILE India-US economic collaboration with no strings attached can only be welcome, not so matters of strategic import. That explains why the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) took 12 years to be signed. The Indian Defence ministry has explained that LEMOA “establishes basic terms, conditions and procedure for reciprocal provision of Logistic Support Supplies and Services between the armed forces of India and the US”. Mutual support does not cover all fields. Its application is confined to authorised port visits, joint exercises, joint training, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. Logistics support, if any, in other areas will be selective and subject to scrutiny. In this respect, it differs from Logistics Support Agreements (LSA) between the US and other countries. Washington would have wanted New Delhi to sign it on the dotted line. Not merely the UPA but the NDA government also decided to go through the stipulations with a fine tooth -comb. In view of recent global developments and the shadow of the White House, coming under is xenophobic President like Donald Trump, the Modi government was not overanxious to cozy up with the US, especially in matters military.

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has made it clear that the Agreement does not put any obligations on either party. No joint activity is obligatory and bases are not to be considered. There is no fear of a Diego Garcia coming up. There can be no criticism of Delhi’s guarded approach. Defence is a sensitive area and cannot be opened to the slightest interference by a superpower. There are two other pacts in the offing -a Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on geo-spatial services (BECA). Parrikar was reticent on these two pending facts. The Indian government has done well not to rush into a US defence umbrella.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

Opp. Flays govt in both houses

The opposition in both houses of parliament today mounted a blistering attack on the government policies saying these had failed to solve major problems of poverty and unemployment. They asserted that centre had “miserably failed” to restore normalcy in Punjab.

The opposition members, who ended their three days’ boycott of the proceedings in the Lok Sabha and two days boycott in the Rajya Sabha were participating in the resumed debate on the motion of thanks to the President for his address to the joint session. They described the address as “colourless and insipid” and “full of clinches and platitudes.”

A strong defence of government policies came from two interventions in the Rajya Sabha by Agriculture Minister Mr Bhajan Lal and Minister of state for Sports, Youth Affairs and Women Mr Margaret Alva. Mr Bhajan Lal said the opposition which had failed to suggest any constructive line of action to solve various national problems had no justification to accuse the government which was sparing no efforts to take the country forward.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) today accused the government of using the Governors in non Congress(I) states for partisan purposes. Participating in the resumed debate in Lok Sabha on the motion of thanks on the President’s address he said that in some opposition-ruled states the Governors were being used to help the ruling party at the centre.

He charged that they were creating difficulties in the functioning of some of these. By seeking to strengthen panchayati raj system in the name of decentralization, the centre was trying to create further trouble for states, he added.

Mr Chatterjee regretted that there was no reference in the President’s address to centre-state relations. He claimed that states were not consulted on the appointment or transfer of Governors.

Condemning those advocating “Khalistan,” Mr Chaterjee, however, added that the government’s incation” in implementing the Rajiv-Longowal accord taking strong steps against those involved in the 1984 Delhi riots and releasing all the Jodhpur detenus had alienated the Sikh community.

UMPF MLA removed from Handloom Federation

The Meghalaya Govt in a notification issued here on Tuesday has removed the controversial HPU MLA Mr P D Sangma from the post of Chairman, Board of Directors of Meghalaya Apex Handloom Weavers & Handicraft Cooperative Federation Ltd.

He has been replaced by Mr Huboy Shullai, who was an aspirant for Congress(I) ticket from Mawprem-Laban constituency. Mr Sangma's removal, it appears, is a sequel to his anti-UMPF activities during the recent District Council election in Garo Hills.

District Council’s autonomy and the dual posts issue

With regards to the dual posts issue in the Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly, the High Court can give no other ruling except as decided by the Governor as provided in clause (1) of article 192 of the Constitution of India; and the Governor can give no other decision except according to the opinion of the Election Commission as provided in clause (2) of article 192 of the Constitution. Hence, the final *de facto* decision is that of the Governor. So, the crux of the issue lies with the Election Commission. The Governor has to stamp constitutionality on the opinion of the Election Commission, and the High Court has to interpret it accordingly. It is as simple as that, and there is nothing so mysterious or profound about it. This article is not a challenge to the ruling of the High Court on matters of law, but to give some pointers for public discussion on matters of truth.

According to article 191(1) of the Constitution of India, a person shall be disqualified ‘for being chosen’ (to be barred from being elected), and ‘for being’ (to be disqualified if having been elected) as MLA if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State specified in the First Schedule. An office of profit is defined as an office which is capable of yielding a profit or pecuniary gain. The MDCs, Chairman, CEM and EMs of the District Council receive monthly salaries including perks and allowances that are credited into their personal bank accounts. Certainly these payments are made out of public fund because there is no private person or company donating or sponsoring the salaries of the MDCs.

Some may argue that the MDCs do not hold office of profit under the State Government or the Central Government because the District Council pays them salaries out of its own fund. The so called District Council’s own fund comes only from land revenue and taxes from the public which it is empowered to assess and collect by the Constitution of India under Para 8 of the Sixth Schedule. Is not the District Council functioning and paying salaries under the Government of India? To consider the office of the

CEM of the District Council who draws a fixed monthly remuneration of Rs. 66, 900/- plus other perks and benefits, not as an office of profit, may be justified in the context of article 191 (1) of the Constitution, but it is not justifiable in truth.

We commonly think of the Government of India only in terms of the Cabinet of Ministers with the Prime Minister, belonging to a majority political party in the Lok Sabha. But constitutionally, the Government of India comprises the legislature, the executive and the judiciary in inseparable interrelationships. The executive power of the Union is vested in the President and exercised by him either directly or indirectly or through officers, subordinate to him (Cabinet of Ministers) in accordance with the Constitution. All executive actions of the Government of India are expressed to be taken in the name of the President. At the same time the President is part and parcel of the Parliament. An Act of Parliament can be a law only with the assent of the President.

The Supreme Court of India was established to act as a vigilant guardian of the Constitution, particularly the fundamental rights guaranteed to the citizens, and as the conscience-keeper of the Government. It is the right of the judiciary to question the constitutional validity of the laws enacted by the legislature. But the age permissible for a Judge and the number of the Judges in the Supreme Court, and the extent of its powers shall be prescribed by the Acts of Parliament. However, the determination of the qualification of a Judge as a distinguished jurist and the appointments of Judges are to be made by the President. But despite all the powers conferred on the President, he/she may be removed from office through impeachment in Parliament (article 61). Moreover, article 53 provides that, nothing in this article shall prevent the Parliament from conferring by law functions on authorities other than the President.

An analysis of the provisions of the Constitution reveal the principle of checks and balances in the entire structure of the Government, and the nature of the Parliament as the *de facto* representative of “We the People”, and the President as the *de jure* representative of “We the

People”, who solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic. The Council of Ministers and the Judiciary take up the actual responsibility of governance. But the expression, ‘Government of India’, has to be viewed in the context of its whole structure. Hence, any person drawing monthly remuneration out of public funds, whether in the State Government or in the District Council, has to be construed as holding an office of profit under the Government of India.

The argument that the Sixth Schedule provides the District Council with autonomy via-a-vis the State Government, and the Central Government is untenable. The District Council may to some extent be autonomous with respect to the State Government. However, even in this respect its autonomy is limited by the provision of Para 12A of the Sixth Schedule. But the District Council can in no way be autonomous with respect to the Government of India. The District Council has no plenary power to make law; it has no absolute autonomy even with regard to the laws it is permitted to make because all laws made by it should be submitted to the Governor and, until assented by him have no effect. Central funding constitutes a major portion of finance for maintaining the institution and the activities of the District Council. Article 21(1) of the Constitution empowers the Parliament to amend any of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. Where is the District Council’s autonomy with respect to the Government of India?

According to Para 2 (6) of the Sixth Schedule, the Governor shall make rules for the first constitution of the District Councils in consultation with the existing tribal councils or other representative tribal organisations. This indicates that there is some extent of cultural autonomy of the Scheduled Tribes with respect to the Government of India. This cultural autonomy, however, belongs not to the District Council, but to the tribe and its traditional institutions. The District Council is only a special constitutional agency standing in between the cultural autonomy of a tribe and its traditional institutions on one side, and the political sovereignty of Government of India on the other side. But cultural autonomy of whatever kind

does not belong to the District Council itself. Moreover, cultural autonomy should not be misconstrued as political sovereignty.

The Prevention of Disqualification (Members of Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya) (Amendment) Bill, 2015, intends to bar a person who is an MLA to also hold the post of MDC. Article 101 of the Constitution also bars a person to be at the same time a member of both Houses of Parliament. Also no MP shall at the same time be an MLA of a State Legislature. In principle, the State Bill requires the dual posts holders to resign from the post of MLA, but it neither advises nor compels anyone to resign from the post of MDC. But the dual-post holders chose to resign from the post of MDC of their own accord. If the State Bill does not permit MLAs to also be MDCs, it is not the business of the District Council to interfere, and it is not correct to say that the State Bill intrudes into the domain of the District Council.

Seeing this issue from the perspective of the District Council, the resignations of the MDCs have no connection with the State Bill but they resigned, on their own accord. Hence, they have no justification now to demand to be re-instated just because the State Bill is defeated in the High Court. As a jaidbynriew (tribe) we have always been easily moved by emotions, so I deem it proper to send words of caution to one and all that the court case victory of Mr PN Syiem is his personal victory in defending his own position. He deserves commendation for his courage but his personal victory should not be misconstrued as a victory of the Tribe.

Even if the present State Bill cannot be effective now, a proper law should definitely be passed and enforced from the next term onward to save the District Council from being abused as a dustbin for dumping the spill-overs from State politics, and to save the jaidbynriew from dishonour by the perpetuation of this 63-year-old ‘stop-gap arrangement’ which was meant for an illiterate society. The defects of the present State Bill is only because it is not timely and was passed with ulterior motives. Even the best of laws would become infructuous if made with ulterior motives.

Distance, Open Education And Inclusiveness

By Ananya S Guha.

There is much hype about inclusive education. Education in its lexicon automatically appropriates inclusion. In other words at least as per Indian laws everyone has a Right to Education. The polemics of the word ‘inclusive’ coupled with its interpretive nature is precisely because of non-inclusion due to non-affordability and capitation fees which have earned several times the stricture of the Apex Court. Inclusive education also means opportunities, access to education, for those who live in seclusion and live in disadvantaged social and economic conditions. However the telling paradox is that education is also becoming more exclusive. Otherwise how do we explain the ubiquitous cut off marks ranging from 97- 99 to get admission in colleges in the country, especially in the capital city where everyone tends to make a bee line for? Or with privatisation of education the money factor impounds on the quality, and this intersection makes it difficult to draw the distinction as to what the emphasis is on: money or the elusive ‘quality.’ The point of this article is to focus on how Distance and Open Education by a systemic methodology can make education wider in terms of access to it, flexible in terms of spacing out studies and also can invest education with continuity, that is taking to studies after a hiatus or continuing with education and work at the same time. This is a significant attribute of what we call inclusiveness, as this gives to education a broad continuum of meaning and space.

Apropos of the fact that education must be inherently flexible in terms of access is a point of ambiguity. It cannot because schools and colleges have limited openings or seats. And why is this so? Because they say the student teacher ration must be contained. True. But the ratio is still on the very high side especially in government schools. The flawed part of it is that education in our country is systemically flawed. The learning by rote androgogy or pedagogy still continues unabashedly. Of course today we have the internet, but the ‘cut’ and ‘paste’ formula still works with elan both among students and teachers! Added to it is the ghost of teacher absenteeism.

If we are to look at the flexibility perspective of education, we are thinking of a complexity factors: the continuity of it, alternating between work and study, lifelong education, education for women, working people, education for those challenged due to reasons beyond their control or their parents and continuing education- a steady flow of the precepts of learning from childhood to adulthood unimpeded by trauma of failing, getting degrees and an interested or even a ‘disinterested’ pursuit of learning for its own sake and for pleasure.

It is precisely here that Distance and Open learning can play a pivotal role in shaping education, giving it the much needed dynamism, flexibility and continuity in a steady and unabated flow. Moreover it gives a chance to the learner to come back to studies after a break for whatever reasons. It addresses the problem of ‘drop outs’ and one time failure by giving maximum time to complete courses and programmes. It introduces flexible concepts like associate degree and credit transfer thereby opening up dialogue with other universities for inter student mobility. It is no wonder then that Distance and Open education in India free of myopic restrictions has become very popular with its intake of students accounting for almost twenty five per cent of the takers in Higher Education. Moreover it subverts a degree bias and places certification and diplomas on a common platform, not meant to be comparable with higher degrees, but standing on their own right as professional or vocational short term academic programmes. The three selection criteria of Distance Education are: easy access, flexibility in terms of duration of courses, and admission throughout the year. This is its connotation of being ‘Open’ meaning inherent flexibility.

However in recent years the glitches and the stumbling blocks are many. The University Grants Commission which is now the apex body for assessing Distance Education insists on a review every two to three years; imposes restrictions on introducing new courses and monitors dual body institutions saying that these universities cannot introduce courses in Distance Education other than what they offer in their respective institutions. This is not only duplication but a gross embargo on innovation. Moreover again under its aegis the NCTE, AICTE, Nursing Council of India, the Dental Council are imposing all kinds of restrictions to Open Universities to initiate professional programmes by means of partnerships and alliances. The collaborative nuances of education are undermined and stifled. Access and flexibility are becoming myths and Indian Education is slowly going back to its heydays of backwardness, learning by rote and procuring degrees by the do or die maxim. If hurdles are put in the way of Distance Education then free access to deprived learners will be denied. Moreover the mission statement of education is reaching remote places, and this can be achieved by taking it to remote areas through study centres and mobile learning centres. True Apex Bodies can issue guidelines for academic programmes having a heavy practical component, but I do not think it is wise to restrict academic programmes only to traditional Graduation or Post Graduation Degrees. Education must be innovative and Distance Education because of its inherent flexibility can look towards larger target groups: the young, the young adult, working professionals, housewives, missionary and charity workers, school and college teachers etc. Such cutting across sections of the society calls for greater and wider selection of courses and much more applicable oriented human resources.

So in this context what is inclusiveness? It is the rounded appeal of distance education which is cardinal. Inclusion would mean accommodation of education for all, which is a catchword and still remains mythical. Inclusion will mean related entry norms, extension of the classroom in terms of pedagogy introducing innovative standards like reflexive technology, internet and free and open source software by means of which students can glean information for knowledge transference. Teachers must use both in the synchronous and asynchronous modes; the mobile phone and the internet to keep in touch with students. E- Learning must be appropriately used in terms of teaching, use of the skype, google/ yahoo groups and social networking sites will not only bring traditional effects to education, while reducing ‘distances’ and breaking barriers of isolation.

Here Distance and Open Education is not only reinventing the wheel but changing rapidly with the times, by adapting the newest in technology and associating education with training as well. The inclusiveness of Distance Learning is that it is: lifelong learning, adult education, continuing education, professional training and also education for the young immediately after school. If this isn’t a wide spectrum of inclusion then what is? It is not a one to one management of education but a one to many as study texts substitute the teacher persona and in- build a teaching mechanism in the content material, written in a lucid manner so as to ‘teach’.

TO THE EDITOR

JACATAM & expedient stance of Education Dept

Editor,

Education Department is to be congratulated for its clear stand with JACATAM on provincialisation of teachers services though dilly dallying over the issue since 2013. Government will look into the Social Security for all teachers under New Pension Scheme within the period of six months based on the New Education Policy. It is further clarified that Teachers under Deficit Grants in Aid system, as per existing rules are recruited by Managing Committees of the respective Schools and not by the Government. Approval of the Government is required

only to ensure that teachers are appointed by the committees are according to the rules. District School Education Officer may take note on this matter accordingly.

There are problems afflicting the system itself. The term Deficit is non connotative. The schools under Deficit Grants-in-aid receive total recurring grants against sanctioned posts without sharing from fees collected by the schools. These schools can in fact be treated as Govt. of Meghalaya undertaking.

When funding is most powerful weapon for improving these schools, teachers accountability needs to be given priority. Some schools are privileged to have more teaching staff while others have less than the required strength. Teachers’ strength need to be rationalized. There has been no inspection for long time now which is essential

under the system. Most of the schools under this system cater to the needs of BPL children. Even a teacher of a school will not admit his/ her own child in the school where they teach. They prefer a private school for their own children. Most of the private schools are now mainly for APL children. Even the Office Assistant of a Deficit School somehow tries to find accommodation in a private school for his/ her own child where teachers are much less paid than teachers of a deficit school.

Therefore the initiative taken by the present Commissioner & Secretary, Education is commendable but priority needs to be given to the accountability of the teachers and teachers’ Unions. Principals and Managing Committees should not only be accountable for academic performance. JACATAM totally ignored principals

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“*Most men cry better than they speak. You get more nurture out of them by pinching than addressing them.*”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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Sexual harassment in university campuses

A college or university campus should be a safe space where young women can walk with their heads held high and not cower in fear. Alas! Such is not the case in most institutions of learning. In universities, particularly, there is a certain power game that is played by those who are supposed to be mentors and guides for research scholars. Academia in this country is largely male dominated. It is a patriarchal domain where all the oppressive characteristics of the alpha male are let loose. Despite the stringent clauses of the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace, Act, 2013, it has not served as a deterrent because the perpetrator feels that his prey is vulnerable and at his mercy. Most women scholars have put up with such evils so that they complete their thesis and earn their doctoral degrees. The kind of subservience, that women research scholars are made to go through and the sexual favours demanded of them by their research guides makes academia a very sick place indeed.

Not long ago a lady research scholar of a particular department of NEHU had a harrowing time because the Head of that Department refused to allow her to change her guide midway. The guide allotted by the HOD had expressed his discomfort about guiding her on the research topic she had opted for. It took a campaign by the media and her own spirited fight for justice to push the HOD to change his mind. Such instances abound but are largely buried under the carpet because parents often don’t support a young woman fighting against her teacher, guide and mentor. The question of family honour and prestige seem more important than the trauma that young researchers face.

The NEHU Women’s Cell constituted about 11 years ago has gone about its fact-finding task in the present sexual harassment case. However, it appears that the NEHU authorities have not familiarized themselves with the latest Act of 2013 which specifically mentions that under Section 4 of the Act an Internal Complaints Committee should be set up. A Women’s Cell has a benign sound. It does not have a legal connotation to it as the Internal Complaints Committee has. Awareness sessions for young students and research scholars on the salient features of the Sexual Harassment Act 2013 are imperative. Copies of the Act should be freely distributed in the campuses. Being well informed is being well armed. Every girl student should know her rights under the Act.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

ACKSA threatens agitation for separate state

The All Cachar-Karimaganj Students Association (ACKSA today threatened to launch an agitation demanding a separate state for the Barak Valley areas if the Assam government and the All Assam Students Union opposed the establishment of a central university in Silchar. Taking serious exception to the Assam government’s opposition to the recent centre’s decision of establishing a central university in the area, an Association spokesman told newsmen that they would “resist such parochial stand of the government at any cost.” We will not hesitate to launch an agitation demanding a separate state for the Bodos.

He said the Association would also oppose tomorrow’s ten-hour bandh, called by the AASU, the students wing of the ruling Asom Gana Parishad, in the state. He dubbed the bandh as “undemocratic” as a 175-hour bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union began this morning demanding a separate state for the Bodos.

The ACKSA spokesman they were agitating for the last seven years for a central

university in the Barak valley. “We will not accept any opposition from any quarters in this connection.” He alleged that the ruling party was now adopting a “parochial approach” and warned that its “consequence would be worse” unless they try to “see reasons.” He said they would not tolerate any “further attacks on the people.”

Regional parties’ nominee elected chairman

Mr Mihsalan Suchiang of the HPU-HSPDP combine was elected Chairman of the Jaintia Hills District Council in Jowai on Thursday confirming the regional parties, claim of majority in the House of 24 elected members. Mr Suchiang polled 15 votes against nine votes of Congress(I) led UMPF nominee Mr T K Darnei. The regional parties which call themselves Council Regional Democratic Front (CRDF), bagged the support of Mr Primus Susngi, an Independent Member who upset a sitting MLA. The HPU has ten Members and the HSPDP four.

After the cabinet reshuffle, what?

By Patricia Mukhim

(IBDLP) is the Chief Minister’s brainchild and this Programme calls for a convergence of departments like Agric-ulture, Horticulture, Water Resources, Environment and Forests, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Community and Rural Department etc., would it not have been more prudent and yielded better results if these Departments were under the CM and that he plans and directs the convergence model? Convergence in a state where departments are treated as fiefdoms, not just by politicians but much more by the bureaucracy, is a no-go domain. Without convergence the IBDLP continues to struggle to deliver.

The IBDLP has in fact been able to train a number of entrepreneurs in remote corners of the state. These entrepreneurs have registered themselves with the IBDLP. But they now need start up funds. One is yet to hear of any financing model that could meet the capital investment of these entrepreneurs, who it is assumed have been sufficiently trained in practical book-keeping and accountancy and also to conduct market surveys to decide the products that the market needs. It is usually the case with tribals that if a neighbour’s business is doing well then a similar establishment will be set up a few yards away. As a result both units will turn sick because they would be stealing each other’s clients. In a village the number of clients who would patronise an establishment are nearly always the same.

The IBDLP has also succeeded in developing a set of stakeholders in environment and wild life conservation. This needs to be given greater thrust and special attention in order to become sustainable. Many programmes collapse following a change of leadership because those leading the programmes have failed to build second and third rung leaders. We hope that the IBDLP into which a lot of resources both human and financial have been pumped into will emerge into a vista of empowerment for village communities. We also hope that the IBDLP provides training to people to articulate the kind of development and

livelihoods that are most sustainable to them and not one that is pushed by government. If the Programme fails to empower communities to speak up against landlessness and poverty; if the Programme does not empower them to use the RTI and to have regular Jan Sunwais (village hearings) then it would not have succeeded in its mission.

In Meghalaya, Education is the Sword of Damocles that no minister actually wants to see hanging over his/her head. I am sure Dr RC Laloo is relieved to have this department off his chest and his head as well. Now he does not have to deal with agitating school or college teachers. And nor does he have to expend extra energy to knock the doors of the central government to tap into the various schemes available. That’s precisely the challenge. A minister in the state must have enough clout in Delhi to be able to demonstrate effectively what his department needs in order to function effectively. Driving teachers to the streets to agitate is never an option. It only suggests a failure to engage with them meaningfully.

We are hard pressed to see any Minister who treats his/her department as they would their own businesses. Most ministers spend quality time constructing dream homes or residential apartments in Shillong or Guwahati or Delhi or build resorts with long term business plans. No wonder their departments are floundering. If at all they have any interest in their department it is only to milk money; that’s all.

We now have exactly 19 months to go before the next elections. It is obvious that every sitting MLA will want to return and to do that they will move heaven and earth. Those in the government are at an advantage as they have access to public funds. Those in the opposition will use their MLA funds at the eleventh hour to buy votes directly or indirectly. Hence our hope of getting better and more committed representatives is only a pipe dream.

What we actually need to do is to start a peoples’ movement beginning now. As was written in this paper’s editorial a few days ago we need to develop a performance report card of each minister and a separate

one for each MLA from the opposition. The Department of Political Science NEHU can be roped in for this exercise. They owe it to the state of Meghalaya. This should be an interesting exercise even as we engage young people to go around collecting data. A mass awareness programme on the inadequacies of the present set of representatives needs to take off. Civil society should be prepared to undertake this task which will of course cost a lot of time and resources. This civil society should also keep itself busy during the entire election campaign period and hold simultaneous meetings at different constituencies.

Democracy is a lot of hard work and sweat and tears. If we complain of MLAs whose incompetence, corruption, lack of diligence, self-serving attitude stand out, then as citizens we need to be doing something rather than just sitting and moaning or gossiping about which minister has made how much.

We should spend more time in the constituencies that will be putting up retired bureaucrats who have barely hung up their boots but want to rush in to the electoral melee. These would be the most dangerous ones for they know how the system works to their advantage. The Election Commission has done a disservice to this nation by not stipulating a cooling off period for such bureaucrats. The question to ask is where do bureaucrats have the resources to fight elections if they have not made their little nests while in service? That as a society we tolerate such impunities is a sad commentary on our collective internal dissonance which hinders positive collective action.

The caption of this article is ‘After the cabinet reshuffle, what? It is a million dollar question because there must be a reason why the reshuffle happened. The Chief Minister has said that this is a regular exercise in any government; that it is not meant to discredit or demote anyone but to provide opportunities for new leadership to emerge. We hope he means what he says because we will be judging the performance of each minister henceforth.

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

RAHUL GANDHI TO LEAD JATRAS OF CONGRESSMEN IN UTTAR PRADESH

Despite the high demand and publicity, Priyanka Gandhi has put her campaigning in Uttar Pradesh on hold. But this does not mean that she will not campaign. Priyanka would start her campaign a month before the elections giving her brother Rahul a chance to be projected. This is the litmus test for Rahul Gandhi. His future will depend on the success of the Congress in UP elections. Rahul will start his kisan yatra from Deoria on September 6. Deona is the political turf of Fazle Masood who has been made in charge of Rahul’s kisan yatra. Masood who had won his first assembly elections from Deoria will accompany Rahul throughout. Rahul will cover the rural areas of the state and even hold khat sabhas in which he would interact with the rural youth of the district. This yatra will culminate at Lucknow where Rahul is expected to address a huge rally. In Lucknow, the other two yatras are also likely to culminate at the same time. It will be a sangam of the three yatras. During his yatra Rahul will also have bhojan with the rural people mostly the Brahmins. Pressure is however mounting upon the Congress leadership that Priyanka should also join Rahul at the Lucknow rally. But so far, there is no indication from Priyanka. The thinking in the Congress is that Priyanka may over shadow Rahul so it is better that Priyanka should not join Rahul at this juncture.. Meanwhile the Brahmin sammelan which had to take place in Allahabad will now take place in Lucknow. The decision to change the venue was the rain and flood situation.

RAHUL GANDHI ACTING AS DE FACTO CONGRESS PRESIDENT

The formal coronation of Rahul Gandhi may have been deferred till after the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections are over but informally he has started functioning as the de facto president of the party. Now the Congress vice president will be taking a meeting of all the AICC general secretaries every day at 9.30 AM sharp in the morning. All the AICC general secretaries have reportedly received a circular from Rahul Gandhi in which they have been asked to report to him every day so that they can deal with the complaints the vice president has been receiving concerning their department or state. Again the way he is leading the UP campaign despite the publicity of his sister Priyanka Vadra Gandhi to lead the campaign, just shows that he has taken over as president of the Congress party in the absence of his mother Sonia Gandhi.

MODI GOVT USING BLACK MAILING TACTICS TO SCARE CONGRESS LEADERS

Once a journalist close to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has written several books on Modi and the BJP issues during the 2014 election campaign had remarked that if Modi is scared of anyone, it is Priyanka Gandhi. The Dingra report indicting Priyanka’s husband Robert Vadra has come when the Congress campaign in UP is successfully picking up. The timing of this report is being seen as a move to scare Priyanka. But if sources in the Congress are to believed then Priyanka can convert this into a sympathy move in her favour if she sheds a few tears and says that the BJP is being vindictive, says a senior Congress leader. Priyanka is not the only one whom the BJP is scared of. The BJP is using every trick in its bag to scare the Congress leadership. For this they are using all the

investigative agencies to their convenience. The recent visit of the ACB to probe into the Rs.400 crore Delhi Jal Board scam allegedly done by Sheila Dixit is also an attempt to scare the Brahmin leader. If sources in the BJP are to be believed, then the BJP is jittery with the gradual success of the Congress campaign because the Congress is banking on the Brahmin votes which till now had been the base vote of the BJP. In the absence of any Brahmin leader In UP, the BJP is compelled to use these black mailing tactics.

JAI SHANKAR GIVEN MORE POWERS TO MARGINALISE DOVAL

The national security adviser Ajit Doval is reportedly on his way out. Pressure has mounted on the prime minister from the ministry of external affairs to have a diplomat as his NSA. The foreign secretary Jai Shankar is retiring in January next year. Jai Shankar is supposed to have worked out successful visits of the prime minister to US. After the home minister’s disastrous visit to Pakistan organised by Doval which actually triggered the need for a change, the charge of Pakistan too has now been given to Jai Shankar. This is seen as an indication of Jai Shankar replacing Doval. The only hurdle can be that two officers are senior to him and they may create problems for him. He can even be made the deputy NSA but with more powers than the NSA.

AMAR SINGH HAS NO ROLE IN RAJYA SABHA AS SAMAJWADI PARTY MEMBER

Amar Singh who is famous as a family breaker is upset with his mentor Mulayam Singh Yadav over the patch up within the Yadav parivar. His problem is that by patching up with Akhilesh and Ram Gopal Yadav, Mulayam and his brother Shivalp are now devoid of power and the anti Amar Singh duo Akhilesh and Ramgopal will control the party. Now Amar Singh is not getting the same VIP treatment of which he was used to in his previous stint. Despite his utmost efforts the party has not given either a Rajya Sabha seat or assembly ticket to his friend Jaya Prada. And even of equal importance is the fact that he may have managed a RS seat but in Rajya Sabha ,the leader of the Samajwadi Party is his bete noire Ram Gopal Yadav who does not allow him to speak in the house. His grudge is that he is not allowed to speak in the house .

CONGRESS WORKERS ANGRY IN WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH OVER YATRA

Resentment is high among the Congress workers of Bundelkhand as well as of western Uttar Pradesh over the high command’s decision to add up the three muslim leaders all from Lucknow and the adjoining areas of Sitapur, Kanpur, Lucknow and Allahabad. In their bid to woo the muslim community the party has recently added up three new muslim faces in their yatras besides Fazle Masood ,Zafar Ali Naqvi and Abdul Mannan. They have also been given the opportunity to prove themselves. While Masood belongs to Allahabad and is living in Lucknow, Naqvi is from Sitapur and Mannan is from Kanpur. Except Imran Masood who is from Saharanpur, not even a single hindu or a muslim leader has found a place in the UP committees. Salman Khurshid who is from Harrukhabad in central UP was a name known internationally but was dropped at the last moment and replaced by Abdul Mannan in the wake of his Balochistan statement. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

A sell-out!

Editor,

I am shocked to learn that the state government is in the process of transferring a piece of land measuring about 6000 sq. ft. at Lachumierre, Shillong for the purpose of construction of the Community Hall for the Lachumierre dorbar and the irony is that the local MLA instead of protecting the properties and interests of the state government is pressing hard to sell off the said land. May I inform the readers that there are about 45 government offices that have applied for land in Shillong for construction of their office buildings. As of now the State Government has been spending crores of money in paying house rent for hiring buildings for those same offices. Suitable multi- storied buildings should have been constructed on the said plot of land to accommodate those offices which do not have their own buildings. I would request

Revenue Department not to approve the above proposal otherwise it would be foolish on the part of the Government of Meghalaya to part with a precious piece of land at a prime location. It would also be foolish to provide land to a group that will construct a durbar hall where people will converge and make all possible means or conspire to undermine the authority of the state government. I know for sure that the majority of the residents of Lachumierre, especially the headman are crore-patis, There is no problem for them to buy land and have their beautiful community hall there.

Yours etc.,
B R Wanshong
Shillong-3

Terrorism of a different kind!

Editor,

During the past 2-3 months I have travelled often to and from Shillong and Sohra. It was a pleasant surprise to see the water in Umiew river, flowing through Umtyngngar and downstream feeding the Mawphlang water supply

reservoir (GSWSS) to be clear, clean and green and in sharp contrast to the usual muddy, murky and dirty water that we used to see many months before. On enquiry I was told that sand mining along the course of the river has been stopped and I could see with my own eyes that all such activities have ceased. Wanting to relax, I went on a fishing trip to Wah Umiew on Aug 8, 2016, at a location upstream of Umtyngngar near Laitlyngkot where there is a Steel Purlin bridge over the river Umiew linking Laitlyngkot to Smit/ Nongkrem.

I was truly shocked to see that someone has already made an ordinary enclosure with planks near the P.W.D. bridge on a slope just about 15 to 20 feet above the river bank to be used as a garbage dumping ground. Garbage of all sorts was found to have already been dumped in the place with plenty of stray dogs around. It is obvious that the dirt and seepage would flow directly into the river which feeds the Greater Shillong Water Supply Scheme(come rain or no rain).

It is high time that the District Administration the

PHE dept and the Police department urgently enquire and investigate into this matter as the vested interests involved in starting this garbage dumping ground are aimed at harming the lives of lakhs of human beings in Greater Shillong, wholly dependent on the water supply from this river, by contaminating and poisoning the water of the river. The perpetrators of this act have to be mercilessly dealt with and adequately punished as their action is nothing short of Terrorism. The role of the Sand mining Mafia in this regard has to be thoroughly examined and vigil along the river starting from Smit, Nongkrem has to be continuously maintained to check the activities of the unscrupulous elements.

Yours etc.,
KS Diengdoh
Shillong - 6

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“*Live each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influences of each.*”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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The Singur Verdict

THE Supreme Court’s verdict on many issues-it seems to be proactive in coming out with search verdicts-may cause criticism, at least raise reservations. The Shingur verdict is one of them. It is generally admitted that West Bengal needed an industrial revolution and so the then Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee got Tata Motors to start the Nano facility on about 900 acres of land at Shingur. As the Land Acquisition Law of 1894 laid down that land belonged to the state, there was no legal impediment to it. The government also decided on a compensation package to be paid to land owners for rehabilitation. Landless labourers were promised employment in the ancillary industries to be set up by the Nano factory. There was however relentless opposition to the Left Front government’s industrialisation drive spearheaded by Mamata Banerjee and her Trinamul followers. The political outcome proved disastrous for the Left which has been virtually wiped out in two successive assembly elections.

However, the apex court has to judge legality and not public opinion. The UPA government sought to replace the 1894 Act with the Right to Fair Compensation and transparency in Land Acquisition Resettlement Legislation in 2013. But under the Modi government the new land acquisition bill still hangs fire because of amendments asked for. The bill has not been passed yet and Mamata Banerjee herself voiced disagreement with the central proposal. Now the Supreme Court has said that the Left Front had not followed 1894 procedures. The legal cavil at forceful acquisition of land seems inconsistent with the implications of the 1894 law which provides that land belongs to the State. In such circumstances, until Parliament passes the bill one may wonder if the Supreme Court can invalidate the Left Front’s action. Besides, returning the land to owners who had accepted compensation for the land they had parted with over about 400 acres may not be justified. That will be doubling the generosity of the Mamata Banerjee government.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

Unprecedented situation in NEHU

Deans decide to run administration

In a day of dramatic development, the controversy in the NEHU over the appointment of an Acting Vice-Chancellor took a new turn with a five member committee of Deans announcing that it had assumed administration of the University in the absence of a regular VC. In another development, the non-teaching Staff of NEHU announced their "non-cooperation" with the acting Vice-Chancellor Prof P R Mehrotra, plunging the University to an unprecedented crisis.

Prof Mehrotra, who sat through the day in the Vice-Chancellor's office without receiving a single file, is however in no mood to relent. He told this reporter that he had received a telegram from the Union Minister of Human Resource Development upholding the Executive Council decision to appoint him as the Acting VC. During the day, Prof Mehrotra's efforts to win over the teaching staff failed to make an impression. He summoned a meeting of the Deans at his office but the Deans declined the invitation. Later they met exclusively to take the unprecedented step of assuming administrative control of the University.

The five Deans present were Prof R S Lyngdoh (Languages), Prof J B Bhattacharjee (Social Science), Prof R K Rai (Environmental Science), Prof A L Verma (Physical

Science). Prof (Mrs) K S Lyngdoh (Education). The Registrar was requested to record the proceedings of the meeting and to treat it as official. Referring to an interpretation of the 50th meeting of the Executive council where the EC had observed that the Pro-Vice Chancellor's tenure is coterminous with that of the

Vice Cllancellor", and having learnt from the Registrar that Prof R K Misra laid down his office as Vice Chancellor on February 28, the Deans noted that the two Vice Chancellors are deemed to have relinquished their office. The Deans therefore decided to act in accordance with the order of precedence contained in section 10 of the University Act 1973, and to collectively exercise all powers vested in the Vice Chancellor.

The Deans decided that the Registrar and all officers of the University should take orders from the collective authority of the Deans until the Chancellor assumes charge of the duties of the Vice Chancellor or until a regular VC is appointed and he assumes office.

The Deans also examined the proviso made in Clause (5) of statute 2 (a) which lays down that the senior most professor shall perform the duties of the Vice Chancellor if a Pro Vice Chancellor is not available.

Consternation overwhelmed me while reading the *UNI* news report straddling across four columns – 5 to 8 – on page 4 of The Shillong Times (June 16, 2016) because I read in it the signs of early disintegration of India beginning with the North-Eastern States, unless the policies of India are orientated to accommodate fully the aspirations of the indigenous people of the region. Failing that, we may kiss goodbye to the much-desired Look/Act East Policy (LEP/AEP). The governments and bureaucrats in New Delhi should not lose sight of the historical facts that the indigenous people of the region are Mongolian in the map of racial/ethnic and cultural identities; and are quite distinct and vastly different and even peculiar from what one finds in mainland India in most respects. However, these differences and peculiarities are not traits that should be magnified, but should be addressed with great caution and circumspection so that the relationship between them and the mainland people becomes stronger for a desired cohesive integration.

That said, it is pointed out that to achieve that desired cohesive integration the powers that be in New Delhi should honestly analyse with great circumspection the past efforts to address the aspirations of the people of the region and their total effects as obtained now. For that purpose, it is necessary to choose a classic example of events in any state in the region. There can be no better example of events to choose from than those to be found in the State of Tripura.

Firstly, it is necessary to remind ourselves that after the overthrow of imperialism in Europe during the European Revolutions of 1848, there emerged democratic governments all over Europe. In India, after the reformations provided for in the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935, had paved the way for the Pethick-Lawrence Cabinet Mission of 1946 to introduce the idea of the Constituent Assembly 1946 to create the Constitution of India 1950, there emerged, among people of every racial/ethnic group, an enunciated common/universal aspiration to govern themselves according to their own genius to preserve their perceived unique identities under the umbrella of political justice secured to every citizen under the preamble to the

Constitution of India. Thus, pursuant to this provision for political justice there was the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 (States Re-Organization Act, 1956), to iron out the kinks in the then extant provisions.

After that exercise, many other changes, good and bad, have been introduced to improve governance. New autonomous states have been carved out of Assam. Unconstitutional and undemocratic governments have been lording it over the indigenous tribals in Tripura.

The Tripura State Assembly itself is unconstitutional and undemocratic because, it is a government formed by the majoritarian alien refugees-turned-illegal immigrants who ought not to have been allowed to participate in the political affairs of the state. That was the root cause of the ‘irredentist movement’ of the TNV. Thereby hangs a tale.

Tripura was a compact unitary princely state inhabited by a proud race of people ruled by Manikya rajas in the *days of yore*. Like all small states it had its share of the experiences of the vicissitudes of life, and, had weathered the storms it had encountered with success, by the courage of its valiant Twiprasas whose history is a work better undertaken by historians. This article is a humble attempt only to draw attention to the insidious policies which our successive governments at the centre have been following by relying solely on the advice of the alien Bengali immigrant-dominated bureaucracy whose bias against the indigenous Twiprasas is evident in every political move without giving a thought to what might result from such policies.

The initial policy was to bracket Tripura as a full-fledged state among Part C states in Schedule 1 to the Constitution: that was right and fair. After that, it was placed among the Union Territories since 1st November, 1956 by the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 passed on 19th October, 1956: that also was just and fair because, at that time the indigenous people of Tripura were not yet politically mature to manage their own political affairs. Even now they are, lamentably, politically immature. Ironically, the few indigenous people who seem to be politically aware choose to stay aloof from politics. However, the state of affairs, especially, the demographic imbalance in the state which manifested in the increasingly dwindling percentage of tribal population which, by

S O S/Mayday call from Tripura

By Morning Star Sumer

the census of 1971 had plummeted to 28.95 percent and still continuing to dwindle, was not lost on the young neo-literates who decided to do something to regain lost political power. In this they were like the other neo-literates in other NER States like those in Nagaland, Mizoram etc. These young neo-literates took to violent militancy to wrest back political power little realizing that violence would subject them and their kith and kin to great hardship and would not bring the desired result. By resorting to violence they had only helped their adversaries, the illegal non-tribal immigrants, to brand them as ‘insurgents who revolted against authorities’ and, thereby, invited the forces of law to suppress and treat them like criminals.

The truth is that, as stated above, the so-called ‘insurgents’ are patriots who want to get back their political power: therefore, they are not insurgents but, ‘irredentists’ whose aim is only to get back their legitimate right to govern themselves like all other people in the world. It was in that spirit that Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl led a team of Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), not to revolt against authorities, but, to regain or get back their legitimate right to political power of which the alien illegal immigrants have robbed them by deceit. To add insult to injury, the TTAADC Act, 1979 was enacted to unconstitutionally carve out an area for the tribals within their own state; thus reducing the legitimate inheritors of the state to the status of refugees. It also has the effect of reducing Tripura to the status of a district (within another state?), which it was not!

How had the indigenous people of Tripura lost their political power? In democracy, power is in the hands of the numerous, because, governance is in the hands of the majority. Since the census of 1951 when the Twiprasa population was only 37.23 p.c., their percentage share of the population kept dwindling and fell to 25% in the 1991 census: now it may be even less than 25 per cent. So the Twiprasas population which was dominant in Tripura became a minority since 1951 at 37.23 per cent. Who are the others who swell the population and gain majority population status? The answer is, the illegal immigrants. As every concerned Indian should know by now, the great majority of illegal immigrants belong to the Bengali ethnic/racial group. A great majority of them were refugees from East Bengal/Bangladesh who, by rights, had to return back to where they came from, but, did not: instead,

they chose to settle down and swelled the population of illegal immigrants. We should understand that, accepting people as refugees does not mean that they are accepted as *bona fide* citizens of the State to participate in the political affairs of their hosts. Unfortunately for the Twiprasas, the refugees overstayed their welcome to become illegal immigrants. Since Bengalis form almost 100 p.c. of the illegal immigrant population, I call them Bengali illegal immigrants: not to denigrate the entire community but, to state the simple truth, as I see it, about the situation in the state.

Like in all groups of people whether ethnic, religious, political or anything else, there are bound to be, among them, who are rabidly fanatical. I regret to have to mention here the fact that among the Bengali Diaspora in Tripura, a great majority of them appear to be fanatical about their ethnic identity or community and political association. In the state almost the entire Bengali Diaspora is communist; a deadly mix, of obsessive patriotism with communal or ethnic identity and political fanaticism, is formed to obfuscate rational, ethical vision.

The fanaticism of the Tripura Bengali illegal immigrants is evident in the way that Bengali language and literature and culture are being showcased. Visitors to Tripura would be guided only to Agartala, the State capital, which is proudly presented to them as a ‘Little Bengal’ where the language and culture of the Bengali Diaspora dominate and almost everything indigenous has been obliterated. ‘Ujjayanta Palace’, the pride of the tribals is not now recognized as a palace with its own nomenclature: it is now the ‘Tripura State Museum’ recently inaugurated with much fanfare by no less a dignitary than the Vice President of India, Hamid Ansari, to trumpet the achievements of the Diaspora’s CPI unconstitutional, undemocratic government of Tripura! At the gate of the erstwhile Ujjayanta Palace (now Tripura State Museum) stand statues of Khudiram Bose and Masterda Suriya Sen. Elsewhere, inside and within the palace grounds, are found statues/busts of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, and paintings adulating Bangali heroes/achievers. All this and much else that is happening inside Tripura are ominous signs of the early extinction of a whole proud Twiprasa race right under our noses!

hope that he would do better than his predecessor.

Yours etc.,
Monkhmer Lyngdoh,
Via email

Who’s managing PMS?

Editor,
The brochure distributed to the parents and students of the School on the August 22nd, 2016 by an Organisation, calling themselves PTA (Parent Teacher Association) of the school which includes great personalities of the city like Antonio War, E.M. Khasi Hills District Council, Allan F. Dkhar Vice - President of the United Democratic Party (UDP), Wanshan Kharkrang, an Engineer of the Pollution Control Board, etc who are all big shots of society. This has confused the parents who are not part of the PTA and also the public which is left wondering under whose authority or management this prestigious school is?

The brochure informs us that the PTA members not only contribute to the

different amenities needed by the school, but even paid salaries to teachers, which also means that they control the teachers as well.

May we request those who have authority over the school (or have recently forfeited it) to enlighten and inform us as to when the transfer of powers to the PTA happened so that we could understand where to go and approach for anything concerning school matters?

No wonder we have been seeing for a while now the parents who are members of the PTA roaming freely in the school premises any time of the day, while we, who are not, are not allowed to enter beyond the gate. Is this power vested on them because the Principal is immobile? Or is this authority given to them by the Principal herself to help her run the school?

Can someone enlighten us poor parents and the public.

Yours etc,
L Nongkynrih,
Shillong

Bernie Sanders set to transform American politics

By Nitya Chakraborty

The US Presidential elections are scheduled on November 9 this year but the socialist Democratic Party leader Bernie Sanders has not waited till the elections are over and the new President is elected between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump. He has announced as promised his immediate agenda through his organization "Our Revolution" which is the continuation of the electoral battle run by the Vermont Congressman against the establishment candidate Hillary Clinton for the nomination of the Democratic Party. Bernie has endorsed Clinton for Presidential nomination on the basis of the results in the primaries but he agreed only after Hillary and the Democratic Party establishment agreed to incorporate the majority of his demands in the programme of the future Democratic Party President.

That was one part of the victory of Bernie to radicalize the agenda of the Democratic Party but he believes that the grassroots movement in America in favour of his agenda focusing on the removal of equality, has to be expanded and this needs a forum which will continue to fight for the implementation of the agenda which he has been articulating to improve the quality of lives of the underprivileged in America. This movement will continue irrespective of who wins, since even under the Democratic Party presidency, the agenda already agreed to by the Party leadership and the Presidential candidate, will not be implemented in practice unless there is a big pressure from the people concerned.

Sanders this time, is not just confining his movement to propaganda in favour of his economic agenda, he wants to progressivise the character of the Democratic Party and that's why his movement will field candidates who are true fighters for the underprivileged and who will work for the 99 per cent Americans. He says that his strategy is turning the power balance in the Democratic Party in favour of the Left and fielding his pro-people candidates to local school boards, city councils, state legislatures and in key positions in Washington. As Sanders sees it, these members of Our Revolution, will be involved in major ballot initiatives dealing with campaign finance issues, environmental programmes, labour issues, gender issues and the efforts will be to create a new America based on the principles of economic, social, racial and environmental justice.

Many hardcore left intellectuals of USA campaigned for the setting up of a new political party on the left lines taking advantage of the massive support gained by Sanders in his campaign for nomination and the participation of millions of young people in the campaign for Sanders. They said that the Democratic Party can never be radicalized and Sanders agenda will reach nowhere. But Sanders stuck to his gut instinct and he decided to fight by being within the Democratic Party using 'Our Revolution' as a platform for putting pressure on the Democratic Party establishment. He got full support from the US Communist Party and its journal Peoples World which have been backing Sanders the whole hog and is of the view that the fight against the Republican Party candidate Donald Trump and defeating him, is the primary task of the democratic movement now and Sanders has to carry the battle by mobilizing forces within the Democratic Party.

Sanders has now given a new dimension to the grassroots movement. He says that the change never takes place from top to down. It always takes place from bottom on up when millions of people come together and demand fundamental change

in the country. Sanders supporters see their movement as a magnificent opportunity to expand the progressive coalition beyond labour and to reach out to important sectors of the younger generation. As a part of his bid to expand the power base in the Democratic Party, Sanders has a programme of supporting 64 candidates spread across the US and Puerto Rico. Forty are running for seats in state legislatures, 11 for city or country offices,12 for seats for US House of Representatives and one for a seat in the US senate. This number will be increased to one hundred and the objective is to help develop the next generation of progressive political leaders, empower millions to fight for progressive change and elevate the American nations overall political consciousness.

Notably the US labour movement which has been basically dominated by the conservatives, has undergone a radical change in the course of the latest Presidential election campaign. The Labour for Bernie movement has imparted a left orientation to the thinking in the US trade union movement and many veteran centrist and left leaning trade union leaders have got themselves mobilized in favour of Bernie feeling that a progressive change is still possible. Bernie's campaign has been able to unite the Labour left and many of them have become part of the Our Revolution platform.

What is significant about the American polity today is that the talk of inequality and socialism as also crony capitalism has become the talking points in the middle America drawing rooms which was not the situation before Bernie started the campaign. From Jessie Jackson to Dennis Kuci-nich to Howard Dean, many peoples' leaders made a splash in the Democratic Presidential elections but none could make anti-capitalist agenda so popular as Sanders has. His no nonsense class based politics is a measure of how there is big disillusionment in America with the ideology of free market. Bernie has been successful in channelizing the anger of the younger Americans who are fed up with neo liberal policies at home.

In US, the Left as a political force has always been miniscule though in the area of ideas, the Left leaning intellectuals commanded wide respect. Until now, the critical moments of left advance in America, the Seattle WTO protests, the anti-war movement, Occupy Wall Street as also the campaigns for gay rights and Black Lives Matter- have taken place outside electoral politics. Whatever might be the level of participation, its impact on electoral politics has been insignificant. For the first time, that is going to change and this is not a one shot affair because there is a big urge among the younger followers of Sanders to take it forward to its logical conclusion

But the path may not be easy. As one close confidante of Sanders says as the movement advances and the Democratic Party establishment gets worried, there might be odds as Wall Street will be equally active and look for ways to stop this surge. One leading academic close to Sanders says," the more successful we are, the more perilous the political situation is likely to become". He explained, "the difference between Marxists today and those before us is that except for the glassy eyed sectarian religionists, we no longer have the solace of teleological confidence. There is no millenarian moment, no objective moment of the crash. We don't know which way history will go, we can only try to influence history". That is what Bernie is trying to do now.(IPA)

A mission beyond religion in search of truth

The Mother's firm letter to Morarji Desai on Freedom of Religion Bill Made A Difference, says B.M Lanong

It was March 25, 1979. Mother Teresa wrote an open letter to all the members of Parliament, but addressed directly to the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, from her Lower Circular Road residence in Kolkata (then Calcutta). The letter was in regard to the Freedom of Religion Bill, 1978, tabled by Janata Party leader O.P Tyagi seeking prohibition on conversion. The Mother wrote, “Mr Desai, you are so close to meeting God face to face. I wonder what answer you will give for allowing the destruction of the life of the innocent-unborn child and destroying the freedom to serve God, according to one’s choice and belief.” She went on to assert, “... no man, no law, no government has the right to prevent me nor force me, nor anyone, if I chose to embrace the religion that gives me peace, joy, love.” In her mother’s magnanimity, she exhorted Desai and the members of Parliament not to “belittle our Hindu religion”, saying “our Hindu poor people give up their religion for a plate of rice”. The Mother did not dither to point out the truth that is survival amid poverty and desperation, which had hitherto remained elusive to the Indian leaders, in simple yet firm words. The said Bill, however, faded away to smithereens and never heard of thereafter. On family planning programme, Mother Teresa wrote, “In Calcutta alone, we have 102 centres, where fami-



(Top) Mother Teresa with local politicians in Shillong in 1975 and (above) the Mother speaks to members of the Rotary Club, Shillong

lies are taught self-control out of love. Here we promote the moral, legal and scientific methods of Natural Family Planning. From 1971 to 1978, we have helped 11,701 Hindu families, 5,568 Muslim and 4,341 Christian families. Through this natural and beautiful method, there have been 61,397 less babies born.” She believed that “children are special gifts of God to the world. People can only help in upbringing them as useful citizens”. It is flabbergasting to note, for an Albanian missionary, later a naturalized Indian, to dare write an open letter to the country’s Prime Minister, who was no less than the hard-boiled leader of the opposition who had struggled all his way

through to reach the coveted office, after the Emergency was lifted by Indira Gandhi and the Janata Government was installed to power (1977-1979). The former Chief Ministers of West Bengal, B.C Roy and Joyti Basu, were the Mother’s favourites for their fair assistance to her mission in West Bengal, the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity. Roy, at one of Mother Teresa’s functions, said, “People swindle away my money, you may take whatever you need for your mission and I will not insist for the accounts, I trust you.” **Shillong visit** Shillong too remembers the year (1974-75) of the Mother’s visit. She

wanted to start her centre in Shillong and at Nongpoh (Ri Bhoi district), which has now a colony for lepers at Umshangling, fully run by the Sisters of the Mission. The home provides shelter, food and healthcare to about 135 men and women. Some of them have been cured and in some, the disease is restricted. Many in Shillong reminisce the Mother’s memorable address on October 18, 1975, at the State Central Library. The next day, a ‘walkathon’ was organised by the Shillong Rotary Club from Shillong to Umiam Dam Site to raise fund for the Leprosy Colony. The then government of Meghalaya was fully involved. Her Missionaries of Charity centres of more than 600-strong members have

spread out all over the globe to serve the poor, drug addicts and alcoholics, irrespective of caste or faith. All those who have been discarded and rejected by the community are, on the contrary, the fittest in the Mother’s institutions. This humane philosophy had won her accolades and support of the global community and governments, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. ‘Time’ magazine, in its issue dated December 29, 1975, called her ‘a living saint’. Her long accomplished journey finally ended on September 5, 1997, Kolkata. Her remains were buried amidst tearful adieu by a mammoth gathering of mourners and admirers, including many heads of States in a State Funeral accorded by the Government. What puzzles the sensible community is the rash reaction by some individuals and groups, raising irrelevant issues against beatification and canonisation by the highest authority of the Church, after verifying, among other things, the two miracles in respect of an Indian lady, Monica Besra, and a Brazilian man, Macelio Haddat Andrinro, whose cancerous diseases were cured after the family members invoked the intercession of Mother Teresa, only to expose their being paradoxical and parochial on a plain, simple and deserving issue such as this. Such reactions aptly invite the admonition of the most venerated Khasi poet, U Soso Tham, who in his last poem ‘Ka Kyntang lawai (Farewell) lamented- *Ka Lynti ka kylluid Ka mon ka laituluid La me kwah ban long brier/Ne me kwah ban long ksuid* (The way is wide/The will’s your right/ You’ll seek civility/ Or choose Savagery) (The writer is former Deputy Chief Minister of Meghalaya)

Long Road To Sainthood

The documentation of life and virtues of a holy man/woman begins five years after death. However, the period of time can be waived by the Supreme Pontiff, like in the case of the Mother where Pope John Paul II waived three years. After the completion of the waiting period, the Bishop of the diocese in which the holy person died can petition the Holy See to allow initialisation of a Cause for beatification and canonisation.

SERVANT OF GOD Once a Cause has begun, the individual is called a Servant of God. The Postulation established by the diocese to promote the Cause must gather testimony about the life and virtues of the Servant of God and the documentation can take many years and concludes with the judgment of a diocesan tribunal, and the ultimate decision of the bishop. The results, along with the bound volumes of documentation, or Acta (Acts), are communicated to the Congregation consisting of cardinals, archbishops and bishops for the Causes of the Saints. The Acts are committed by the Congregation to a Relator appointed from among the Congregation’s College of Relators, whose task is to superintend the Cause through the rest of the process. When the Positio (summary of the life and virtues) is ready, the theological commission votes affirmatively or negatively on the Cause. This recommendation is then passed to the cardinal, archbishop and bishop members of the Congregation whose votes determine whether the Cause lives or dies.

VENERABLE Once the person’s Heroic Virtues have been recognized by the Pope, they are called Venerable. The remaining step before beatification is the approval of a miracle. The diocese of the candidate then conducts its own tribunals, scientific and theological. With the Holy Father’s approval of a Decree of a Miracle, the Servant of God can be beatified. **BLESSED** With the beatification rite, conducted on the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, the Venerable Servant of God is declared Blessed. A Blessed may receive public

veneration at the local or regional level, usually restricted to those dioceses or religious institutes closely associated with the person’s life. After beatification, the Church looks for a second miracle before proceeding to canonization. After the diocesan process is concluded the proposed miracle is studied by a scientific and then a theological commission of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

SAINT By the Rite of Canonisation the Supreme Pontiff, by an act which is protected from error by the Holy Spirit, elevates a person to the universal veneration of the Church. By canonisation, the Pope does not make the person a saint. Rather, he declares that the person is with God and is an example of following Christ worthy of imitation by the faithful. A Mass, Divine Office and other acts of veneration, may now be offered throughout the universal Church. If the saint has some universal appeal he may be added to the general calendar of the Church as a Memorial or Optional Memorial. If the appeal is localized to a region of the world, a particular nation, or a particular religious institute, the saint may be added to the particular calendars of those nations or institutes, or celebrated by the clergy and faithful with a devotion to the saint with a votive Mass or Office.



The Mother during the 1975 walkathon in Shillong

Still waters run deep

The still camera and the photographer have become almost invisible today due to the digital wave. In this ambience of relative ‘invisibility’, a journey into the past through cinema reveals an interesting mix of films that have featured a photographer as an important character, discovers Shoma A Chatterji

This is an age when the moving picture catches your eyes constantly to keep you captivated – be it on your tablet, cellphone, computer, television screen or the wide screen. Often the ‘creator’ or photographer is invisible. Till recently it was not so. World cinema has no dearth of unforgettable celluloid photographers. A few examples show how still photography is not just about recording visual history but also a revelation of the versatility of the camera within the larger screen space created, manipulated and controlled by a character within the film. One of the recent important films where photography plays a pivotal role is Anand Gandhi’s *Ship of Theseus*. The first story in the film starts with Aaliya Kamal (Aida El-Kashef), a celebrated Egyptian photographer who is blind and is in the process of undergoing a cornea transplant in India that will restore her vision. She undergoes a successful surgery but later battles to cope with her photography post regaining her eyesight. Take Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954) for instance. A nail-biting thriller that reveals how the still camera in the hands of an intelligent photographer, though trapped temporarily on a wheelchair, can unravel a cold-blooded murder by freezing moments in time



A scene from Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro and (top right) Hitchcock’s Rear Window

and space through an open window. The photographer is no detective but becomes one when he discovers the magic of his camera while under forced confinement. Italian filmmaker Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* (1966) a cult film and his first English language film, is also a murder mystery but distanced from Hitchcock’s style and approach. Antonioni focuses his narrative almost exclusively on Thomas (David Hemmings), a fashion photographer who is rude and nasty with his models. His chance ‘adventure’ with his camera in a neighbourhood park

makes him suspect that he has uncovered a murder. From then on, the creativity of Antonioni comes to the fore as he moves the script into the dark room of the photographer and the negatives of the photographs he has clicked as he blows them up to find out exactly what he has seen. The murder remains vague and becomes vaguer as the prints are enlarged and the photographer becomes uncertain about what he has really seen. The still camera and the photographer who uses it as a character in Indian cinema surfaced in Aparna

Sen’s *Parama* and *Mr. & Mrs. Iyer*, Mrinal Sen’s *Khandhar* and Kundan Shah’s *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*. In these films, the still photographer as a character within a film takes him beyond his professional expertise and is presented as a person who can fall in and out of love, who can play-act to save the woman he falls in love with, who can get unwittingly trapped in criminal activities and who can diabolically manipulate a given situation to further his experience and his excellence as a photographer. *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983) is a dark satire on the rampant corruption

in Indian politics, bureaucracy, news media and business, and has an ensemble cast. Professional photographers Vinod Chopra (Naseeruddin Shah) and Sudhir Mishra (Ravi Baswani) open a photo studio in the prestigious Haji Ali area of Mumbai and hope to make enough money to keep it running. But the two are bumbling idiots doomed to fail in their ventures because they are too naïve to understand the complexities of the world. After a disastrous start, they are given some work by an editor of a publication that exposes the scandalous lives of the rich and the famous. These two characters portrayed brilliantly by Shah and Baswani define a milestone in the history of satiric characters in Hindi cinema. In *Mandi* (1983), Shyam Benegal uses burlesque as a mode to examine the dynamics of a whorehouse. He tempers the film with black comedy, allowing a certain amount of crude voyeurism in keeping with the socio-economic backdrop of the film’s narrative. A novelty of the film is its introduction of three male characters that crowd the brothel. One of them (Om Puri), is a photographer. His scenes are set up in a way as to render the thrill of Peeping Toms by creating a character who functions as a Peeping Tom. The smalltime photographer walks in and out of the brothel to click dirty pictures for his daily



Rear Window reveals how the still camera in the hands of an intelligent photographer can unravel a cold-blooded murder by freezing moments in time and space through an open window

bread. The photographer who uses voyeurism as his way of earning a livelihood is a unique character in Indian cinema. Aparna Sen in *Parama* (1984) introduces an internationally renowned still photographer Rahul who comes to India to do a series for a reputed magazine from abroad. Rahul’s camera, along with its accessories and parts, play a significant role in the film. The camera is as much an integral part of Rahul as it evolves into a *leitmotif* in the film. It recurs throughout the film while Rahul is present, constantly cutting into the dominance of the movie camera. At times, the lines between the SLR markings of Rahul’s camera within the frame of the screen and the movie camera (shooting the film) tend to blur till the sound of the shutter falling or the subject’s freeze marks the dif-

ference. Rahul, in fact, appears on screen after his camera does. Rahul’s camera and its trappings offer several readings to the audience. Rahul’s obsession with his work of which the camera is primary; then, Parama within the frame of the camera and outside the purview of the camera; the camera turning from a recording instrument and an instrument of aesthetic self-expression into a political instrument that can play havoc with the surface peace and happiness of a family; alternately, the camera as an instrument of change that brings about a dramatic change in a woman’s life, her philosophy, her attitude, her looks, and her relationships within marriage. Rahul, however, despite his torrid affair with Parama is only a catalytic agent in her life who makes her realise her position within the family – as daughter-in-law,

wife, mother and most importantly, as a woman and the photographs he has taken of her later published in an international magazine are catastrophic in forcing her to decide her future course of life. In the 2009 romantic sci-fi thriller *Aa Dekhen Zara*, Neil Nitin Mukesh plays a struggling photographer who suddenly inherits a very ‘special’ camera from his grandfather who was a scientist. The camera can see the future and deaths and the life changes for the hero and her love interest in the film played by Bipasha Basu. Far from the commercial appeals of Bollywood, Mrinal Sen’s *Khandhar* (1984) features a professional photographer, Subhash (Naseeruddin Shah), who comes with two of his friends at a dilapidated mansion inhabited by a bedridden mother and her daughter Jamini (Shabana Azmi) who is engaged to be married to someone who will never come. Subhash pretends to be this ‘absent’ fiancée in front of her mother knowing well that he would never come again. In the photographs he has taken of Jamini, he discovers a ‘model’ completely different from the ones he photographs in his professional domain. In the climax, the movie camera slowly pans across photographs in his studio in Calcutta coming to rest on Jamini’s photographs placed beside those of the professional models. The photographer as manipulator, as a strategist and as a proficient artist comes across lucidly in one of the most understated films by Sen. Cinema, photography and the ways they have been understood have changed constantly and this comes across in these films. (TWF)

Lend a helping hand in time of crisis

Ranjan K Baruah

A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope with using its own resources. A natural hazard is a natural process or phenomenon that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impact, damage to property, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage.

Various phenomena like earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, tsunamis and cyclones are all natural hazards that kill thousands of people and destroy billions of dollars of habitat and property each year.

However, rapid growth of world population and its increased concentration often in hazardous environments have escalated both the frequency and severity of disasters. With the tropical climate and unstable land forms, coupled with deforestation, unplanned growth proliferation, non-engineered constructions, which make disaster-prone areas more vulnerable, tardy communication, and poor or no budgetary allocation for disaster prevention, developing countries suffer more or less chronically from natural disasters. Asia tops the list of casualties caused by natural hazards.

Besides natural disasters, there are manmade disasters. Human-insti-



gated disasters are the consequence of technological hazards. Examples include stampedes, fire, transport accidents, industrial accidents, oil spills and nuclear explosions/radiation. War and deliberate attacks may also be put in this category. As with natural hazards, man-made hazards are events that have not happened — for instance, terrorism. Man-made disasters are examples of specific cases where man-made haz-

ards have become a reality in an event. Now the question is what we do with disasters? Wild animals may adapt in disasters but as human being are we also ready to mitigate disasters or safe ourselves during disasters. In this regard, we may think of a career — disaster management. Well, disaster management can be defined as the organisation and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, re-

Career: Disaster Management

distribution of food and medical care for the injured people. NGOs and international organizations, like World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations, Red Cross and other organizations offer various opportunities for trained disaster management professionals. They are recruited for conducting training and workshops on disaster management to the general public and for other related activities. There are also opportunities

sponse and recovery in order to lessen the impact of disasters.

Disaster management courses are offered at the short-term certificate, undergraduate, postgraduate degree and diploma levels. Disaster management courses aim at enhancing knowledge, capacities and skills, and perspective on disasters. The course covers different areas of disaster management, which include management of the situation of emergency, response to the needs of the people and the area, evacuation process,

distribution of food and medical care for the injured people.

NGOs and international organizations, like World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations, Red Cross and other organizations offer various opportunities for trained disaster management professionals.

They are recruited for conducting training and workshops on disaster management to the general public and for other related activities. There are also opportunities

in governments as there are special agencies related to disaster management.

UPDATES:

Post Graduate Scholarships for Professional Courses for SC/ST Candidates: The scheme has been initiated keeping in view the social background of the candidates from the deprived section of the society and to provide them opportunity to undertake postgraduate level studies in Professional subjects like Engineering, Technology, Management, Pharmacy etc. in Indian Universities/ Institutions/ Colleges. The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to 1000 SC/ST candidates to pursue postgraduate level studies. Last date for sending application is September 15.

‘Ishan Uday’ For North Eastern Region: Students with domicile of the northeastern region who have passed Class XII or equivalent exam from a school situated within NER through any recognized Board of Education may apply for Ishan Uday scholarships. Last date for sending application is September 15.

ONGC Scholarships: Student may apply for scholarships from Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited.

This scholarship is for meritorious and economically backward general and OBC students. Last date for submitting online application is October 10.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career-related queries)

Digital Heir-a

With an array of virtual platforms, choosing a digital heir becomes imperative to protect your valuable photos and posts

By Nishant Arora

With most of us spending a considerable amount of time on various digital platforms — Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, WhatsApp and the like — a pertinent question that arises is what happens to our digital possessions once we die.

All those unforgettable personal photos, family videos and friendly posts acquired over a period of time will either be deleted or kept “frozen” unless we have a digital heir who can preserve those precious moments and gift those to future generations in an external hard disk or pen drive.

While several social media platforms, including search engine Google, allow us to safeguard digital memories in some form or the other, there is no such thing as transferring such assets to someone when it comes to cyber law, including in India.

According to legal experts, when someone dies leaving behind his email and social media accounts, these become movable property and any heir of the deceased can seek the right to access them.

“They said heirs can ask the digital/social media companies to get access after giving the necessary proof. Invariably, the service provider may not be inclined to give such access without any requisite order from the court of competent jurisdiction. This could mean getting a succession certificate from a court of competent jurisdiction, which could be a time-consuming process,” explains Pavan Duggal, one of the nation’s top cyber law experts.

According to Duggal, also a Supreme Court advocate, Indian cyber law has not even touched upon — let alone dwelt on the nuances of — the issue of one’s post-death digital life. “Complicating the entire matter is that the Indian cyber law is not applicable to wills or testaments. This has created huge confusion. The ground reality is that people have stopped waiting for the law to change. Instead, they have come up with their own digital wills which provide various

VIRTUAL REALITY

■ When someone dies leaving behind his email and social media accounts, these become movable property and any heir of the deceased can seek the right to access them

■ Social media giants have formulated their own solutions to the problem. Like FB will memorialize your account and allow you to choose a legacy contact

■ Google, which owns Gmail, YouTube and Picasa web albums, has an ‘Inactive Account Manager’ feature that allows a user to nominate who has access to his or her information

■ In the event of the death of a Twitter user, it can work with a person authorised to act on behalf of the estate or with a verified immediate family member of the deceased to have an account deactivated

“ Facebook, which currently has 1.71 billion users worldwide, will turn into the world’s biggest virtual graveyard by 2098

Hachem Sadikki, Statistician

methodologies for devolving their digital assets and information to their heirs after their death,” Duggal says.

Digital data comes within the ambit of movable property and hence the appropriate succession certificate needs to be applied for in the Indian context. “It is pertinent to note that India does not have a dedicated law on digital inheritance which is, indeed, unfortunate, given the rapid adoption of and reliance on digital data by young Indians,” Duggal laments.

The social media giants, however, have formulated their own solutions to the problem. Facebook will “memorialize” your account and allow you to choose a “legacy contact”. No one can log into a “memorialized” account.

The “legacy contact” can “manage” your account by adding a pinned post (like a funeral announcement), respond to new friend requests and change the profile picture and cover photo — but nothing beyond that.

Google, which owns Gmail, YouTube and Picasa web albums, has an “Inactive Account Manager” feature that allows a user to nominate who has access to his or her information. If people don’t log on after a

while, their accounts can be deleted or shared with a designated person.

According to Twitter, “In the event of the death of a Twitter user, we can work with a person authorised to act on behalf of the estate or with a verified immediate family member of the deceased to have an account deactivated.”

The micro-blogging site, however, added, “We are unable to provide account access to anyone regardless of his or her relationship to the deceased.”

From the security point of view, one has to safeguard digital impressions in case of death so that they are not used for anti-social purposes.+

“Digital signatures/impressions generally have a validity/expiry date that requires a yearly renewal and they are also equipped with a unique combination of passkey so even if someone has the digital signatures they must know the access key to use that,” says Lucknow-based social media analyst Anoop Mishra.

According to statistician Hachem Sadikki from the University of Massachusetts, Facebook will become the world’s biggest virtual graveyard by the end of this century as there will be more profiles of dead people than of living users.

“Facebook, which currently has 1.71 billion users worldwide, will turn into the world’s biggest virtual graveyard by 2098,” Sadikki claims.

In such a scenario, preparing a digital will where you appoint a legal heir to take over your digital life is the need of the hour. The law, however, is silent on this not just in India but abroad too. Several US states have been debating the question of whether families can access someone else’s digital assets after they die.

“The law has to intrinsically recognise that digital data and information, as also aspects pertaining to digital life, are integral components of our life and the law must provide for seamless inheritance of digital data,” says Duggal.

This becomes all the more significant as we have become huge data generators, data publishers and data broadcasters in our lifetimes.

“All eyes are on the governments, including in India; they must come up with requisite legal frameworks to provide for seamless and efficient digital inheritance for the people,” Duggal asserts. (IANS)

(Nishant Arora can be contacted at nishant.a@ians.in)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi Sunday, September 4, 2016

On your solar return chart Moon square Pluto and this indicates a mixed year. A lot of efforts would be required to get desired results. You feel opposition in your plans and ideas. You need to consolidate your resources and follow your own path. Confrontations are best avoided as they could be detrimental. Personal growth through skill development, travel and cultural influences is highlighted. You learn from early setbacks and move closer to your goals. Travels pay off by it professional or personal. Romantically this would be a fulfilling year.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This week brings understanding and harmony in personal and professional relations. You gain money and influence through business ventures and partnership. You connect with old friends and business associates. Being open and receptive, you attract interesting opportunities and people. You are happy as there is balance and harmony at home and synergy in the work area. You start a new business project while adding zest to an old one. Don't allow personal feelings to influence professional decisions.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

This week brings cordial relations with family and loved ones. Changes in personal relationships and attitudes happen by themselves, with natural ease, rather than pursuing them. Social, romantic, intellectual, and financial opportunities arise now. For you, an empowering conversation about the past or about support can occur now. An opportunity or investment to make quick gains is on the cards. Creative occupations bring pleasure. Energy is high and things happen swiftly. Be ready to make quick decisions at work and act spontaneously in personal situations.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This is the time to explore and develop a sense of inner security. This is a time for re-organization and heightened awareness of your roots, issues of intimacy and vulnerability, and it's an excellent time to be in touch with your feelings and needs. Focusing on your support system and the manner in which you support others is also probable. This is a good time to make long-range plans for the future or to do any type of re-organizing or even re-modeling of the home and other family-related activities.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You are dynamic and assertive while making new beginnings at work. However, you are soft and loving in personal relationships to maintain a balance. You make important changes in personal and professional situations by integrating contrasting elements or aspects. You are courageous and diplomatic when you need to be. You are ready to face professional competition or rivalry. Victory is on the cards after a short period of strife. Walking can be a therapeutic pastime and can add to your fitness routine.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are original and ambitious instilling a personal style in whatever you do. You socialize with important people in power or government. This phase challenges you to take responsibilities for who you are and live your truth. It's time to put your best foot forward, but be sure to do so with grace and consideration for others, or you may just make a display that you regret later. Give yourself the knack of responding to whatever comes, as it comes in life. Health needs to be replenished with a planned diet and fitness schedules.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You may be tempted to spend extra money on things that will make your life more comfortable and pleasant. You retain a professional position of power and influence despite all the changes that happen at work. Success in material aspects

is on cards. You are noble when approached for involvement in a worthy cause. Your personal relationships go through a dreamy and transitory stage since you wait for promise and commitment. It's fine to make a compromise in an ongoing conflict and understand another person's point of view.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Finances and budgets need to be kept in mind as you complete projects and start new ventures. You would improve personal and professional relations with patience, love and care it would be better to avoid discussions, criticism and arguments. You would achieve professional success with your own power, wisdom and resources. You may require solitude in order to get mental work done during this time. Your memory is sharper than usual, and your thoughts often turn to personal matters, family, and loved ones.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

Your communicative abilities will largely be applied to professional world ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters. Your personal affairs may take time to resolve, be patient and persistent. Love, romance, party fun, celebration and family reunions can keep you busy and happy this week. Health needs to be nurtured and cannot be ignored.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You would bring a combination of wisdom and knowledge in personal and professional life. A personal involvement has the qualities of love, balance and freedom that you desire. It is time to heal old friendships with tender, love, care and move into new relationships with sensitivity. New ideas and concepts floated by you at your work place will be appreciated. Arguments can be detrimental to production in business and harmony in family. Go out in the open and commune with nature it will help you reflect and be a stress buster too.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

The planetary configuration indicates learning important lessons from life could be the beginning of spiritual growth and understanding. You are blessed with divine wisdom and inspired to take up a professional challenge. Spiritual pursuits and meditation can be rewarding. You grow and transform as you pass through a touching emotional experience. This is a period during which you can enjoy increased powers of concentration. Stars indicate an especially busy and hectic time on the domestic front.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

Success in business and love in personal relationship transforms your life and attitudes. There are chances of new associations as new opportunities and changes may come. You have to find better creative and progressive options. It would be better to participate in social and family celebrations to lighten up and relax. This can also produce an event that requires you to take charge and show your responsible side and organizational skills. You feel fresh and re-energized after a long walk or light exercises.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This period brings more efficiency and creativity in your work. Your family would be more supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships. Travel, promotion, or publishing could also figure in your career and benefit you. A professional collaboration comes together when you have given up all the hopes of it. Creative and professional plans are set to actualize and it is best to work towards them persistently. Your business plans have a magical quality of perfection and completion.

Why drinkers are their own worst enemies

Never drink alcohol before a job interview or you might do what my friend did and confuse the words "lecturing" and "lactating" in answer to the question: "How do you earn your living?"

In fact, better to not drink at all, I reckon, after finding three news reports about alcohol in my reader contributions inbox.

Staff working in a court recently realised that the heavy drinker in the dock spent more time on the premises than they did. "He's probably before this court more than I am," the court's duty lawyer said. The offender, who had clocked up 448 offences, apologised to court staff and admitted he no longer leased an apartment, preferring the cells. They should really start charging him rent. This UK report was sent in by reader J.S. Hawe, who said: "I can't decide whether the guy is very stupid or very smart."

The same cannot be said about a drinker in Canada. He was making

trouble at a Toronto gas station but police didn't need to grab him. He marched over to the police patrol car, mistaking it for a taxi, climbed into the back seat and demanded to be taken home. "Very helpful. Saved them a job," said my contributor, who did not want her name printed.

The problem with substance abuse is that it makes you (a) commit illegal acts, and (b) deliver

that her few functioning brain-cells were trying to prevent.

I could fill the rest of this column with examples of dumb-as-rocks people calling police to report that their stashes of illegal drugs had been stolen — but that would be too easy. Instead, let's go back to where we started and talk about verbal mistakes non-criminals make after a few drinks.

Like the time a colleague

The Funny Side

By Nury Vittachi

yourself into the hands of people paid to arrest com-mitters of illegal acts.

Reader Arnold Chen told me that in New Zealand last month, a woman realised she was drunk and would be committing a crime if she used her car. So she drove to the police station to tell them about her predicament, committing the exact crime

introduced a climatologist at an after-dinner speech as a "kleptomaniac", an easy mistake to make.

In London, there was a fashion to buy large colourful houseplants called crotons. When fruit was served at a dinner party, one woman said, "I love fruit but never know what to do with the banana skin." The tipsy

hostess replied: "My husband rolls it up and hides it behind his scrotum."

But what I like best is to take notes when my drinking buddies start to sing. A colleague managed to turn the line "I can see clearly now the rain has gone" into "I can see clearly now Lorraine has gone". And Abba's biggest hit became: "See that girl, watch her scream, kicking the dancing queen." Nor should we forget the chorus of Toto's Africa: "There's nothin' that a hundred men on Mars could ever do."

But of course, you don't need to be drunk to make verbal slips. You can be sober and stupid. Giving a school talk, I once confused necromancer (which means "wizard") with necrophiliac (which doesn't mean "wizard"). Luckily, no one was listening to a word I said. Thank God for small mercies.

(Nury Vittachi is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send comments and ideas via his Facebook page)

“It is as hard to see one's self as to look backwards without turning around.”
--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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From Mother to Saint Teresa

THE canonisation of the Albanian nun, a woman who had dedicated her life to serving the poorest of the poor must inspire those of her congregation and denomination – the Catholic Church - to meditate on Teresa’s mission in life. It is not easy to live amidst stark poverty and to pick up those discarded humans from the streets of Kolkata and give them the experience of what it is to have a home over their heads and to die a death of dignity and also a funeral reserved for the high and mighty in a proper grave.In this mission Teresa spared no pains and used donations coming from every strata of society. She was known to have said that she would not judge the colour of money as long as it is of help and assistance to those who need it the most. For this Teresa was bitterly criticised but she was not perturbed. She went about her work with zeal and continued to serve until her death.

Sainthood is conferred on a person when he/she is able to perform miracles and answer the prayers of those who pray to them. In the case of Saint Teresa miraculous cures of the sick after her death in 1997 have been attributed to her intercession. Critics of Mother Teresa also accuse her of helping people with the hidden agenda of furthering the Catholic Church’s proselytisation mission. While that cannot be denied, considering that Teresa believes it is her goal to lead those without faith to a faith she herself had come to believe in and which she trusted would give life and healing to the lost, as much as Jesus Christ did while he was on this earth, although he never preached religion. Christ preached love, forgiveness, humanity, compassion – the values that are fast disappearing from this earth even within and among the Christian fraternity. Conversion has become a bad word today especially amongst the intellectual classes who feel very strongly that people should not be pushed to adopt a particular religion under duress but that it should be an informed choice. And that goes for all religions including Hinduism which today has taken the form of an institutionalised religion. Teresa’s sainthood should not be an occasion to rejoice but to reflect on the future mission of the Church as Christ intended it to be.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

The end of a controversy

The centre has decided to set up a Central University in Cachar district of Assam, Mr L P Shahi, Minister of State for Education and Culture told the Rajya Sabha last week in reply to a question by Mrs. Bijoya Chakraverty. That a Central University for Assam, which had none so far, was well on the card was known for several years now and if it did not see the light of day yet it was because of the fierce controversy raging from the very start over its location, the rival valleys claiming it with equal gusto. The Rajya Sabha announcement settles the issue at last by allotting the University to Cachar in the Barak valley, a clear victory for Mr Santosh Mohan Deb, the Union Minister from this valley, who has been promising this institution for Cachar through successive Lok Sabha elections he has successfully fought on this issue among others the last serious statement he made was that he would not stand for election once again if he failed to redeem his promise during his present term in the Lok Sabha and impliedly his current tenure in the Union Council of Ministers.

Mr Shahi's reply added that the Centre's decision had already been conveyed to the State government. This appears to be more a reply to the recent assertion by the State Education Minister Mr Brindaban Goswami that they were yet to receive any such instruction. The State

government had all these years been banking on what it considered to be a clear case in favour of its preference for Darrang, which location could serve, apart from Assam's north banks the adjoining Arunachal Pradesh also to a great extent. At one time the Darrang lobby looked well on the road to victory, but if the tide ultimately turned it could well have been for the threat of a massive agitation which Barak valley threatened and which the Centre could not possibly countenance with the other valley already plunged in utter confusion due to Bodo agitation and other problems showing no prospect of immediate solution. Apart from political consideration, the Centre's veto for Barak valley is a recognition by the former of the latter's distinct cultural identity which the local people genuinely felt was not too safe under a step-motherly government dominated by the other valley which was not too kindly and responsive to even the rudimentary needs of the Barak valley. Now that the controversy over location of the University has been settled, Dispur is expected to follow this up with expedition so that there may not be other irrelevant side-issues raised in the meantime to scuttle what has become right at the present moment a fait accompli.

In the name of Customs and Traditions

Recently some pressure groups in Jaintia hills collectively objected to the toll collected by the organization of the Dalois in Jaintia hills. The tax which is being collected at every entry point to both the East and West Jaintia hills district was imposed in the name of customs and traditions. The toll collected by the Dalois of Jaintia hills has raised many questions and an ignorant layman like me wants answers to these questions. The collection of the customary tax by the organization of Dalois is a question not only for the organization itself and the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council but the man in the street also wants to know the stand of the Government both state and the central on the very important issue.

By tradition the Dalois collect a tax (called dan) from the markets within their respective elakas (area of jurisdiction). For instance in the case of eleka Jowai the Dalois can collect taxes only from the ‘berlaka’ or people from other elaka who come to do business in the market. It has been the practice since time immemorial that those farmers who are from elaka Jowai do not have to pay the dan, while people from elaka Thangbuli, Nongtalang, Nangbah Rymbai, Sutnga etc have to pay dan for selling their products in the lawmusiang market. But this tradition is also being done away with and the Dalois now collects dan from whoever is doing business in the weekly market. In spite of the fact that local farmers from the elakas are exempted from paying dan by tradition, yet out of respect for the Dalois they pay the dan without any complain.

Apart from the dan many Dalois also enjoy the right to ‘ka rek dalois’ which is mostly in the form of paddy fields that the Dalois can use to support his family. The rek dalois is a known source of income for the dalois and it demonstrates the wisdom of our forefathers of having a system in place so that the Dalois can earn some revenue to support his family. Though the arrangement was not in the

form of a salary, yet the Dalois enjoys the right to the produce from the paddy fields. This enables him to serve the community without any hindrance. The rek dalois passes on to the next Dalois on the demise of the current incumbent. This has continued for the past many generations. The rek dalois is a unique arrangement which attests to the ancient wisdom that when our ancestors created an office which serves both public and religious duties, they have a system in place that the person who holds office can perform his duty without having to worry about how he will feed his family. In other words unlike the office of the dorbar shnong which by tradition is voluntary in nature, the office of the Dalois has some semblance of remuneration to compensate the person who holds office for the service he renders.

After independence and the adoption of the Sixth Schedule of the constitution, the office of the Dalois and the other traditional chieftains like the Sordar of the elaka Saipung were recognized as subordinate officers of the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. The Council also engaged the office of the Dalois in matters relating to registration of land and now the Dalois also charges money for any recommendations they make (which is mandatory) whenever a person applied for a land holding certificate.

By virtue of office, the Dalois is also a second class magistrate and conducts the proceedings of the village court which is under his jurisdiction. But the Daloiship is not known for and nor was it meant for doing any developmental work. Never in the history of the District Council has it ever been reported that the office of the Dalois is involved in construction of footpath, drinking water wells etc. Hence the most important question is, what will the money collected from the tax be used for? If the Dalois plan to use the money collected from the customary tax for developmental work, is it not true that we already have hundreds of schemes in both the Central (MNREGS),

the state government and even in the district council for the same? Do we have a system in place to check duplication of work? How can we say that the latrine constructed in the village is from the Swacch Bharat mission (PHE) and not from MNREGS, MLA scheme or the District Council, is one such example?

Though there is no gender equality in the election to the office of the Dalois, yet by tradition the office has some semblance of democracy by which the Dalois is expected to act as per the supervision and advice of the dorbar eleka, but the question is how many Dalois had ever convened a regular Dorbar Elaka or had even constituted the Council of their respective elakas. By tradition the Dalois is expected to convene a meeting of the all- male Dorbar on a regular basis but now it rarely occurs in any elaka. Now the other question that begs the answer is whether any of the Dalois consult their respective Dorbar elekas before they decided to collect the customary tax?

One can understand if the Dalois collect taxes from horse-pulled carts or bullock carts, but since when has it become a tradition to collect taxes from trucks? This is another very important question. Approximately one thousand trucks ply only on the National Highway 44 every day, but the Dalois of Jaintia hills collect taxes from every entry point to the two districts. In a day, loosely calculated, the collection will be from more than two thousand trucks. The other question is how can the Association guarantee accountability? Does the public have the right to know how much has the office of the Dalois collected from the trucks in a day? If the public want to seek information on how the money collected is being used, what and where is the concerned authority to seek information from? Or does this new institution fall under the Right to Information Act? If so, have the Dalois appointed any person as their public information officer?

The other pertinent question is how can anybody other than the

National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) collect taxes from the roads built by using central government funds? Has the Dalois at any point of time contributed to the construction of any road? If the Dalois can collect taxes from the trucks plying on the national highway or any state road, then how can the government stop the Siyems, the Nokmas or even the Dorbar Shnong from collecting customary taxes from vehicles plying on public roads in the area of their jurisdiction? After all these are traditional institutions too.

With regards to the Daloiship, as per tradition, the office is has both secular and religious roles. The Dalois is not only the head of the elaka (which is his secular role) but he is also the head of the traditional religion (Niamtre) of the elaka. The dual role of the Dalois makes him the chieftain as well as the high priest of the Niamtre in his elaka hence this raises another important question as to how can a religious head collect taxes from the road constructed by the government.

The Dalois can and has all along collected the dan as mandated by tradition and has never collect taxes from vehicles. Collecting taxes from trucks has never been part of the tradition so is this not the case of abusing the office, powers and functions of the traditional institution? People have the right to know especially when the tax is collected from the trucks plying on the national highway constructed with public money.

The question is also to the central and the state government. Will they allow the Dalois to continue collecting taxes from the trucks plying on public roads? The trucks have already paid for the permits and road tax and toll gates installed by NHAI, why would they have to pay another tax? But the most important question is for the JHADC. If the Dalois are subordinate officers of the Council, does it also mean that the councils are responsible for whatever the Dalois are doing?

Narendra Modi failing on many fronts
BJP to face tough challenge in days ahead

By Harihar Swarup

Narendra Modi has completed nearby half of his five-year term as Prime Minister. Various news channels and newspapers have commissioned surveys to find out his popularity rating, achievements and failures. Off to a dazzling start when he took over in May, 2014, Modi’s popular support graph has now dipped sharply but he still continues to be more acceptable leader compared to Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee, Jayalalitha and Nitish Kumar.

If Lok Sabha elections are conducted now, the BJP may not get a majority; it is too early to talk of 2019 when general elections are due. Modi has to demonstrate tremendous all-round skills to master what is most difficult task; governing a country like India. He must speedily win public approval for the rash of programmes he has announced, leaping over many hurdles.

He must show endurance, which he did while winning political support for the much

re-election in 2019. There is recognition that the NDA government’s performance has somewhat improved in the past six months. Worryingly for Modi, on key issues such as jobs, inflation and corruption, people are far from satisfied. With the BJP tally remaining well below the majority mark in Rajya Sabha, it remains dependent on its NDA allies and others outside to see it through Parliament. So Modi and the BJP still have to retrieve ground that they have conceded in the past two years in power. The most obvious explanation for Modi’s rebound is what poll Pundits call the TINA (There is no alternative) factor. If one looks across political spectrum, there is no serious challenge, within his party and outside it, to Modi’s primacy. The major reason why Modi was voted with a massive mandate—the first government in 30 years to have a majority of its own—

The most obvious explanation for Modi’s rebound is what poll Pundits call the TINA (There is no alternative) factor. If one looks across political spectrum, there is no serious challenge, within his party and outside it, to Modi’s primacy.

delayed Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill. He has also to display power and agility needed for field events to deal with many challenges he faces, be it cross-border terrorism, economic instability, social distress or religious disharmony.

The strain of delivering on the great expectation that his victory evoked, began to set in. As people’s impatience with Modi’s inability to usher in ache din grew, his government’s popularity in three subsequent surveys held at six months intervals, began to fall precipitously.

In a February 2016 survey the NDA coalition numbers plunged alarmingly. The BJP’s share dropped far below the historic majority it had achieved during 2014 general elections. Worse for Modi, the Congress-led UPA, which had reached as low as 59 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, began to show signs of a major revival. Rahul Gandhi’s political fortune showed a remarkable resurgence and he appears to be emerging as a challenger to Modi.

Despite strong Third Front leaders winning state assembly elections—like Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu and Arvind Kwjriwal in Delhi--- they are showing no sign of challenging the primacy of Modi and NDA government. Nitish Kumar and Kejriwal, though, are narrowing the gap with Rahul as the opposition leaders best capable of taking on Modi in his bid for

was that the people wanted a decisive leader heading a government that would arrest the drift the country experienced under UPA-II. But a series of missteps on the farm front, aggravated by two successive droughts, electoral defeats in Delhi and Bihar, saw the Modi government’s rating plummet, though the prime minister’s personal popularity remained high. While Modi and the NDA have staged a strong recovery, the perception still remains that his government is yet to deliver on several key issues. Given the opposition’s inability to knit a cohesive alternative to the BJP, Modi despite the blemishes, is still perceived as the best leader to steer the nation through these troubled and testing times.

While Modi always led from the front, in the past six months, he showed he had learnt from his missteps and revved up governance. He shook off his anti-farmer and anti-poor image by making the single-largest allocation of funds towards shoring up the farm sector and alleviating poverty since independence.

He also pumped huge amounts of government funds into infrastructure projects for roads, railways, ports and housing to stimulate the economy and provide employment. The Prime Minister then boldly went ahead and further opened key sectors to Foreign Direct Investment.(IPA Service)

Beltola Chariali
Guwahati &
Suresh Rai, TS Singh,
Jowai

Auction of oxen

Editor,
In today's edition of your esteemed daily, there are three advertisements on page 4 announcing the auction of 1 no, 5 nos, and 6 nos respectively of oxen. These three large advertisements are same in all respects except for the timing of the auction at 9.30, 10.30 and 11.00 hours,

respectively. Is there any logic behind having three separate advertisements. And is this not a clear case of sheer wastage of public money? A regular reader of The Shillong Times will vouch that today's incidence is not unique but that it is a regular phenomenon.

Yours etc.,
Dr. T. Kakoty
Shillong -14

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

TO THE EDITOR

H. Gordon Robert’s Hospital

Editor,
It is very painful to learn from media reports that the state of health of the pioneering H. Gordon Robert’s Hospital, Jaiaw, Shillong, has further deteriorated due to a variety of causes including mismanagement by the authorities concerned. This is not the first time that this reputed hospital is beset with one problem after another. But the inherent problem seems to be centered round poor streamlining of human resources, administration and inefficient financial management. Efficient Hospital Management depends on the expertise, commitment and dedication of the management and the hospital staff.

It is good news that the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Assembly has thoroughly discussed how to overhaul the Hospital by entrusting overall management of the Hospital in the hands of an “expert” Managing Committee. Moreover, it is a wise decision to set up an “Expert Committee” of doctors to probe into the various causes of ill health of the hospital, including

huge internal debts, low bed occupancy and man power deployment. People of the state hope that the Managing Committee knows its assigned job and that the Expert Committee knows how to diagnose the root cause of the infirmities of the hospital, and would recommend the right remedy for revival of the hospital.

We hope that this time, this reputed hospital, famous for services rendered to local poor and marginalised sections of the society, will no longer be paralysed by poor administration. Handing it over to some private players in the health sector would mean commercialization of healthcare of this pioneering missionary institution and the poor of Meghalaya, especially the local rural poor, will not be spared by the private healthcare sharks.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Shillong-2.

Speed breakers must be painted!

Editor,
This morning while travelling to work I witnessed something painful which I feel could have been prevented. I was driving on the Lawmali road

near what is called the Meter Factory. I saw a scooter being driven by a man with a boy around 12-13 years sitting behind, skid and they both crashed on the road. We stopped to help them; the boy had scratches on his hands, his feet and the man too. We came to know that accidents on this road are frequent as there are speed breakers without the white line over them. The scooter too saw the speed breaker at the last moment and just jumped and maybe the man applied the brakes and this is when both of them came crashing down.

I think it is mandatory for speed breakers to be painted with alternate black and white bands to give visual warning. Most of the speed breakers in Meghalaya are not painted. Who is responsible for the accidents that happen due to the missing white lines over the speed breakers? Shouldn’t PWD make it mandatory for all the speed breakers to be painted?

Yours etc.,
Teddy Kharpuri,
Via email

Dolois have no place in modern Meghalaya

Editor,
The association of non-tribal transporters Jaintia Hills express its appreciation

at the bold and courageous leader of Jaintia Hills District Council, Chief Executive Member, Mr. Thombor Shiwat. We thank our leaders Messrs Rai and Bansal for taking us to the Chairman JHADC Mr Blah to solve our problem. After meeting them we the transporters feel that Jaintia Hills is the only safe place for us to do business as we have courageous leaders like Mr Shiwat. who thinks for the whole India and not for the Dolois only. In a globalized world the Dolois are not relevant anymore. If they are allowed to interfere in Jaintia Hills, the district will not develop. Jaintia Hills is very rich in minerals and forest. A lot of development is coming from these resources. The Jaintia Hills District Council as a responsible body rules all with same law and does not discriminate between tribal and non-tribal. We need a leader like the Jaintia Hills CEM in the State of Meghalaya. We also thank the MDCs we have met to discuss our problems. They have promised to punish the Doloi for disturbing the non-tribal transporters. We thank all the MDCs supported us in the Meeting of the District Council MDCs on Aug 23, 2016.

Yours etc.,
Pinaki Chaudhary

“Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate.”

--- Henry David Thoreau

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VIP Security and public money

THE Supreme Court recently admitted a petition by a private citizen questioning how a Meghalaya High Court, Chief Justice, could on the eve of his retirement seek to extend the Z-plus category security cover post his own and another judges’ retirement. It is not known to the public as to whether the State Police had, prior to that order, been tasked with assessing the threat perception to the two judges and whether they had actually given an official report of that assessment. In the absence of such information, we are left to assume that such an exercise was not carried out and the Police succumbed to pressure from the High Court because they were themselves not adequately briefed by the State Government’s standing counsel. The Supreme Court has stated that a private citizen cannot question whether judges require Z-security cover while in service or after their retirement, because that depends on the assessment of the State Police. Meanwhile the apex court has sought an explanation from the State Government on the threat perception to the two retired judges.

VIP security in this country has become a gigantic problem and anyone of any stature wants to avail that facility, if only to demonstrate their own sense of importance. Citizens have been petitioning the law courts to challenge the overused VIP security cover, given at times to undeserving kith and kin of politicians well beyond their tenure in office. That a High Court judge would extend the Z category security to himself and his colleague beyond retirement appears ultra-vires. In India those provided security include those considered high-risk individuals by the police and local government. Depending on the threat perception to the person, the category is divided into four tiers: Z+ (highest level), Z, Y and X. Individuals under the security blanket include the President, Vice-President, Prime-Minister, Supreme Court & High Court Judges, Service Chiefs of Indian Armed Forces, Governors of State, Chief Ministers and Cabinet Ministers. Z+ category has a security cover of 36 personnel [including 10+ NSG Commando] + [Police personnel]. Z category has a security cover of 22 personnel [including 4 or 5 NSG commando] + [Police personnel]. Y category has a security cover of 11 personnel [including 1 or 2 commando] + [Police personnel]. X category has a security cover of 5 or 2 personnel [No commando only armed police personnel]. Except in very rare cases the same security cover is extended post retirement. It is high time that tax payers question this needless security paraphernalia.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

Meghalaya Assembly

MTC bus services & local taxi come under fire

Meghalaya Transport Corporation services and the practice of taxi driver charging unreasonable fares came under heavy fire from Mr Chesterfield Marak (HPU) in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly today. Mr Marak pointed out that due to the lack of public transport in Tura, buses are often loaded up a triple capacity. Even though there is an acute shortage of transport, permits for private bus services are lying pending with the Transport Department. He also spoke of the bad maintenance of MTC buses and the rude behavior of the drivers. He called for the suspension of the licenses of drivers who misbehave and said that MTC officers should not be afraid of the drivers. Dwelling at length on the deplorable state of affairs in Tura where there are few government registered taxis, he stated that Taxis in Shillong and Tura often overcharging their customers. He called upon

Mother Teresa, a Teacher in the global classroom

Edmund Burke has aptly said, “Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other.” Or as Gilbert West highlights, “Example is a lesson that all men can read.” Each year India celebrates Teachers’ Day on 5 September, the birth day of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, India’s second President and an erudite philosopher and educationist. Teachers’ Day 2016 will see another great teacher on India’s, nay, on the world’s educational horizon, St. Teresa of Kolkata, who taught in the ‘global classroom’ through her exemplary life. She continues to do so, through her Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, who, spread across 133 countries, are imparting practical lessons in loving service to the countless victims of neglect and indifference.

Mother Teresa was a member of the Loreto Sisters from 25 May 1931. On 10 September 1946, on her train journey from Kolkata to Darjeeling she received from God the “Inspiration” or special message involving a “call within a call”. Till then she had been principal of St. Mary’s School at Entally, Kolkata, and had taught History and Geography in that school run by the Loreto Sisters.

Her “call within call”, demanded her to leave the Loreto Congregation and to dedicate herself to serve the “poorest of the poor”. After patient waiting and requests she received official permission from Archbishop Ferdinand Perrier of Kolkata in January 1948 to leave her first religious “call”. Dressed in white, blue-bordered sari she left the portals of her beloved Loreto Convent on 17 August 1948 to enter world of the poor.

After a short medical course in the Holy Family Convent Hospital in Patna, Mother Teresa returned to Calcutta and found temporary lodging with the Little Sisters of the Poor. On 21 December the 38 year old ex-Loreto nun ventured into the slums for the first time. Children started crowding around her. Without a classroom, desks, chalkboard, paper

and other requirements, she began her first class for the slum children by scribbling alphabets on the wet ground.

What were her academic qualifications? Besides her schooling and nine years of teaching experience as well as brief medical course in Patna, she had no qualifications in health care or social work. But she could speak fluently five languages and was a great communicator. What urged her on to venture into the uncharted arena was the clear invitation of God, “Come be my light” which she received in the aforementioned “Inspiration”. Since then she spared no efforts in bringing light and joy in the life of suffering millions all over the globe while herself suffering her

doubts or the so-called “dark night of the soul” for over 50 long years.

Mother Teresa was not a scholar in the common parlance of the day but her few books such as, Life in the Spirit (1983), A Simple Path (1995), In My Own Words (1996), and No Greater Love (1997) do serve to reveal her deep spirituality as well as her practical wisdom.

Through her practical words and actions she teaches the greatness of little things, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love”. Much before the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai could say, “One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world”, Mother Teresa had confirmed the importance of doing things humbly and gradually, “If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one”.

The great scientist Albert Einstein did not claim all the credit in bringing transformation in others, “I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.” Mother Teresa in her

TO THE EDITOR

PIL on retired judges’ security

Editor,

I fully endorse the PIL filed by Mr. Sajay Laloo regarding the order issued by the Meghalaya High Court to provide Z-plus security to the court’s serving and retired chief justices and judges and that they are also to be treated like “state guests”. As Mr. Laloo states, on what grounds and reasons should the two, Chief Justice Uma Nath Singh and Judge TNK Singh themselves asses any threat that may come their way and that too at the cost of the state exchequer? What on earth could the two possibly be so afraid of that they wish to shield themselves snugly at any cost? While it may be accepted that serving chief justice may be provided Z-plus security after being duly assessed, after retirement they are plain ordinary individuals like anyone else. They must understand that. I’m sure any sane individual in the

humility attributes all good actions to God, “I am only an instrument in the hands of God”. In relation to the magnitude of the problem facing the poor of the world, she considers her work insignificant though useful, “...what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.” She recommended the practice of the virtue of humility which she considers the “mother of all virtues.”

Alfred Mercier underscores the importance of doing things joyfully, “What we learn with pleasure we never forget.” Mother Teresa too highlights the value of serving others joyfully, “...The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it”. How similar it is to what the

Bible says, “Each one should give, then as he has decided...for God loves a cheerful giver” (2Cor.9:7).

Mother Teresa had a profound respect for human life, even of unborn babes. In the 1971 war between East and West Pakistans an estimated 200,000 women were raped. Some women committed suicide. Many wanted to abort their babies. Mother Teresa begged them to have their babies and give them to her, “The Sisters will take care of you, and we will find a good home for the babies” (Maryanne Raphael, What Mother Teresa Taught Me, 2007, p.87).

Rightly does Ken Blanchard tell teachers, “Your role as a leader is even more important than you might imagine. You have the power to help people become winners.” Mother Teresa and her Sisters have helped over 22,000 people to die dignified deaths (Maryanne, p. 136). She has even made discarded children into winners. For instance, Gautam, a polio-stricken orphan was abandoned at the age of two. Mother Teresa picked him up and cared for him in Shishu Bhavan, Kolkata. He was

social, educational, economic, political or other issues of the society.

It is a fact that the condition of the 83 km U m s n i n g - M a w h a t i - Mawiong-Jagi Road is one of the worst condition roads in Meghalaya. Having travelled through this long back breaking road, I fully know that this road is without any maintenance for last many years. Villagers from Mawhati, Umsning, Nongpoh and Umroi constituencies are facing indescribable problems every day due to the condition of this road. The PWD at Umsning Division does not care about this communication problem raised by the people from time to time. The former MLAs, P.W. Muktieh, Donbok Khymndeit and the present MLA of Mawhati constituency, Mr. Julius Dorphang, are not effective at all to deal with this problem.

In fact, a joint Memorandum was already submitted by the people residing all along this road to Mr. H.D.R Lyngdoh in 2012 when he was PWD Minister. The Memorandum has requested the PWD Minister to convert this strategic road

Mother Teresa: An embodiment of love for humanity

By Albert Thyrniang

Whether holding a child in her arms or embracing an infirm, or administering a sick person or assisting the destitute, giving a speech or simply beholding her countenance, Mother Theresa conveyed one simple but powerful message - love and compassion. Here words, her works and her life replicated the Creator's love and compassion to the poor and those in pain. The "living saint" in her life time, was officially declared a saint at the Vatican's St. Peter's Square on 4th September 2016 (eve her 19th death anniversary) by Pope Francis, 18 years after her death. Her canonization was celebrated by faithful all over the world, including in our own state.

Born as Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje, now Republic of Macedonia, then part of the Kosovo, on 26 August 1910, she moved to Ireland and later she came to India to work as a teacher in Calcutta. She was a Loreto nun until that "Inspiration day" in 1946. Distressed at the poverty in the 'City of Joy', while on a train from Calcutta to Darjeeling she received the "call within a call". Responding to this call was certainly a conscious action of love to serve the poorest of the poor. With a humble beginning of an open-air school for homeless children, she later moved to slums, visited poor families, washed the sores of children, cared for the ailing old and infirm and nursed the destitute dying of terminal illnesses in her shelter homes.

On October 7, 1950, Mother Teresa received permission from the Vatican to establish her own order. Initially known as the Diocesan Congregation of the Calcutta Diocese it later came to be popularly known as the "Missionaries of Charity". The primary task of the international society is to take care of persons who nobody was prepared to look after. Living a demanding life from dawn to dust she and her followers cared for "the unwanted, the unloved, the uncared for." Inspired by her dedicated and committed life and work, members of her order increased rapidly. By early and mid 1960s, Mother Teresa began to send her Sisters to other parts of India and abroad, the first being Venezuela in 1965. Rome and Tanzania followed and by 1990 her order was present in almost all the seven continents. Even communist countries like the former Soviet Union and Cuba too welcomed her sisters without any reservation.

The needs of the poor prompted Mother Teresa to found the Missionaries of Charity Brothers in 1963, the contemplative branch of the Sisters in 1976, the Contemplative Brothers in 1979, and the Missionaries of Charity Fathers in 1984. Similarly she formed the Co-Workers of Mother Teresa and the Sick and Suffering Co-Workers which included people of different faiths and nationalities with whom she shared her mission of work of love.

The 50 plus years at her adopted home, Calcutta demonstrated God's mercy and tender love. She manifested God's immeasurable and tangible compassion to 'the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the leprous, the unwanted, the unloved, the uncared the sick, homeless, hungry, destitute, abandoned'. Through refugees, former prostitutes, the mentally ill, sick children, lepers, AIDS patients, the aged, she did "something beautiful for God".

She spread the message of love all over the world. The acceptance speech at the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 was a powerful message of love to the world audience uttered in feeble voice. She said, "I am sure this award is going to bring an understanding love between the rich and the poor. And through this award and through all of us gathered here together, we are want to

proclaim the good news to the poor that God loves them, that we love them, that they are somebody to us, that they too have been created by the same loving hand of God, to love and to be loved."

Her selfless service earned her a Padma Shri in 1962 (India), a Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1962 (Philippines), Pope John XXIII Peace Prize in 1971 (Vatican), Honorary Companion of the Order in 1982 (Australia), Order of Merit in 1983 and 1996 (England and USA respectively), Golden Honour of the Nation in 1994 (Albania), Haitian Legion of Honour, the Balzan Prize for promoting humanity, peace and brotherhood among peoples (1978), the Albert Schweitzer International Prize (1975), the La Storta Medal for Human Service in1976 (University of Scranton in n o r t h e a s t e r n Pennsylvania), Honorary doctor for social science in 1987 (University of Scranton) and other awards. Thus she was a global figure.

After battling heart problems for many years, Mother Teresa passed away on 5 September 1997 aged 87 and was given a state funeral by the then JK Gujral care-taker government. Buried in the Mother House of the Missionaries of Charity, her tomb quickly became a place of pilgrimage. She became a symbol of compassion, an icon of love and a legend of unwavering service.

Mother Teresa had and still has her critics. Chief among them are the Indian-born physician and writer, Aroup Chatterjee who lives in Britain. Chatterjee had briefly worked in one of Mother Teresa's homes in Calcutta but turned critic when he decided to investigate into the finances and other practices of Teresa's order which he details in his book Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict. (2003) Another well-known detractor, Christopher Hitchens produced a documentary, Hell's Angel who followed it up with the book, The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice.

Criticism of Mother Teresa centers around neglect of medical care given to sick and dying people in the Mother Teresa's home, claiming virtue in pain and suffering, cozing up to dictators, promoting her efforts to a global media, uncompromised stance on abortion and contraception among others. Individuals and groups like the RSS and other nationalist organization also accused the 'saint of the gutters' of conversion. Her elevation to sainthood triggered controversies in India and abroad, some even questioning the authenticity of the two miracles attribute to the Mother. Her canonization was marred in controversies.

The scathing attacks were no deterrence as nearly half a million people attended the canonization of the diminutive nun and the two-hour ceremony transmitted live to audiences worldwide. It is to be remembered that no human is perfect to be free from criticism. Even Jesus himself was a subject of criticism, accusations and condemnation. Mother Teresa's life and works are certainly open to criticism. There is nothing unusual about it. Secondly, Mother Teresa was a devout member of a particular Church with uncompromising teaching on abortion, contraception, family planning, etc. Being a convinced member she could not take a contrary view. Therefore, criticism of Mother Teresa on these issues is actually criticism of that particular Church. But no one can deny the fact that Mother Teresa worked for alleviating the pain and suffering of mission of the poor.

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 29 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2016

Sedition and defamation

THE Supreme Court has told the authorities that criticism of government is not essentially an offence under the sedition law. Nor is it under the defamation law. The 1962 Kedar Nath Singh v/s State of Bihar case made it clear that sedition law operated only when there was violence or proven incitement to violence. The recent reminder is useful as sedition charges are being leveled in large numbers and carelessly. The cases which readily come to mind include student protest at the Jawaharlal Nehru University or a Kashmir debate organized by Amnesty or former Congress MP Ramia showering praise on the people of Pakistan. Governments run by different parties in this country are prone to misuse the law to suppress dissent and stifle slogans which are of no consequence. Minister of State for home Kiran Rijju said in Parliament that the definition of sedition in the IPC is so wide that anybody who speaks against the government can be accused of it and imprisoned for life.

Criminal defamation charges are made in arbitrary ways to gag and muzzle offending views. Sedition and criminal defamation go back to the days of the British Raj. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru found the sedition law highly objectionable and obnoxious. He wanted it removed in 1951. However, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi tried to introduce an anti-defamation bill. But to him and his supporters defamation meant character-assassination without substantiation. But under tremendous pressure from the opposition and the Press, he had to withdraw the bill. There have been undoubtedly cases of irresponsible defamatory articles published in certain magazines which led to their closure. There should be a fine distinction between such irresponsible writings and healthy criticism of government.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

PM’s package deal for Punjab

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today announced in the Lok Sabha a bold package, including the decision to release the remaining Jodhpur detenues, to set in motion the process of a political solution to the Punjab problems. Mr Gandhi, who was replying to the marathon debate on the motion of thanks to President for his address, said the cabinet committee on Punjab would soon start a dialogue with the opposition parties.

The other steps in the package include withdrawal of the draconian amendment to the National Security Act restrictive application of Disturbed Areas Act and removal of restrictions on foreigners to visit Punjab. Mr Gandhi's announcements drew enthusiastic applause from the house, which later adopted the motion by a voice vote after rejecting all opposition amendments. Dwelling on Punjab at length in his 75 minute reply, Mr Gandhi paid handsome encomiums to the people of Punjab and the two Communist parties for supporting the government in the fight against terrorism and successfully delinking them from religious places.

“Terrorists are no longer a political force in Punjab, they are only a terrorists force and the government will not relent in the fight to end terrorism Mr Gandhi said amid cheers.

As regards the Jodhpur detenues, he said the authorities would process the charges and prosecute those against whom there

were specific criminal charges. The Prime Minister clarified to the opposition members that he did not mean to make any charges against them when he said that the government did not get the cooperation in the expected measure from some of the opposition parties in the fight against terrorism in Punjab. “When I say opposition leaders, they include those who are not members of Parliament he said. The Prime Minister wanted to know from Prof. Dandavate what action his party would take against Mr Ram Jethmalani for commenting the Bharat Mukti Morcha. Referring to the repeated opposition charge that “nothing” had been done to bring to book those involved in the Delhi riots of 1984, Mr Gandhi admitted that the process of law and justice was “slow” in India. But he assured them that the “mill is grinding in the right direction.

He said over two thousand persons had been chargesheeted and a few cases already disposed of resulted in the conviction of about 80 persons. "There is no question of soft-peddalling of those involved in the Delhi riots." Mr Gandhi assured the house amid cheers. Mr Gandhi said the bill on Panchayati Raj (Devolution of Power) would be "hopefully" introduced in the current session or definitely in the next session. He made it clear to the opposition members that proposed bill would not in any way affect the centre-state relations.

Mining in Meghalaya: Wealth at what cost

Meghalaya cannot forget April 17th 2014 a day that came as a blow to the State's economy. Meghalaya Government was not expecting the NGT ban on mining. One should look at the NGT ban against the backdrop of degradation of environment which includes, soil, plants, water bodies and air pollution. Mining in Meghalaya follows the primitive rat-hole system of extraction right from the British era, but this type of coal mining is very unscientific..

It is a fact that the ban has snatched away the livelihoods of many in the rural areas. Rural economy has drastically gone down especially in the mining belt. The transport sector has collapsed dramatically. When the NGT pronounced rat hole mining as illegal it had repercussions on all sorts of mining including coal and limestone (even sand mining along river banks) wherever the mode of extraction is unscientific. Total deposit of coal in North East India is 900 million tons of which 450 million tons is in Meghalaya. Limestone deposits run to 4000 million tons but as on date only 500 million tons os proven reserves in Meghalaya. Most mining areas in Meghalaya are critically polluted areas as environment management practices by mine owners are still in their infancy, and Regulatory Institutions have failed to push the industry towards adopting better practices.

There are several Impact Assessment studies conducted by scholars and researchers on the impact of Coal Mining in Meghalaya, especially on *Vegetation, Water bodies, Soil & Environment*. One such study was conducted on “**Status of Water Quality in Coal Mining Areas of Meghalaya**” by Sumarlin Swer and O P Singh and was published in the Journal of the Institution of Public Health Engineers, India (Special Issue). According to their study the water bodies of the area are the greatest victims of coal mining. Pollution of water is evident from the colouration of water which in most of the rivers and streams in the mining area varies from brownish to reddish orange. Low pH(between 2-3), high electrical conductivity, high concentration of ions of sulphate and iron and toxic heavy metals, low dissolved oxygen(DO) and high BOD are some of the physic-chemical and biological parameters which characterize the degradation of water quality. Contamination by Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) originating from mines and spoils, leaching of heavy metals, organic

By DK Areng

enrichment and silting by coal and sand particles are major causes of degradation of water quality in the area. The problems of water quality and its adverse impacts on availability of potable water, soil quality and agricultural productivity, and biodiversity in the area have been attracting increasing attention of people.

Another study was conducted by Kiranmay Sarma, S P S Kushwaha, Khuraijam Jibankumar Singh-on **Impact of Coal Mining on Plant Diversity and Tree Population Structure in Jaintia Hills**. The present study was undertaken to analyze the impact of coal mining on plant diversity and tree population structure as affected by its proximity. The study revealed that the number of tree species was low in all the mining sites due to various activities during the mining as compared to adjacent un-mined area. However, mining sites were represented by higher number of herbaceous species (31-41 species) than the un-mined area (23 species). *Pinus kesiya* in the mining area, and *Camellia caudata, Castanopsis purpurella* and *Quercus griffithii* in un-mined area were among the dominant trees. Majority of species showed contagious distribution pattern in the un-mined and mined areas. The dominance-distribution pattern showed log-normal distribution in un-mined area while it resembled broken-stick series model in the mined area. Shannon diversity index for tree and shrub species were low in mined areas as compared to that of the un-mined area, however, diversity index of ground vegetation did not differ among the mined and un-mined areas. Simpson's dominance index shows a reverse trend to that of diversity index. The tree density was more (1040 stems ha-1) in the un-mined area than the mined areas (515 and 646 stems ha-1) while density of herbaceous species was higher in mined areas than the un-mined area.

A similar study was conducted by Kiranmay Sarma on **Impact of Coal Mining on Vegetation (Feb, 2005)**. The study indicated how mining causes massive damage to landscape and biological communities. As a result, many parts of the district have been converted from the original lush green landscape to mine spoils.

Study on “**Degradation of land due to coal mining and its natural recovery pattern**” was conducted by Uma Shankar, L Bora, H N Pandey and R S Tripathi, Department of Botany, School of Life Science, NEHU, Shillong. The study says the major problems

which would have a serious impact on the establishment of plant cover and nutrient regeneration in colliery spoils is extreme acidity. Associated with it are the levels of Mn, N, Fe and S which approach toxic limits. These problems arise simply because of up-side-down change in substratum structure of the spoils consequent to mining. The problem could be tackled in two ways: (a) by chemical treatment of such potentially toxic ion-producing material, and (b) by backfilling of the pits from where the overburden has been removed. The former technique requires large amounts of limestone to add to the spoils so that they could be neutralised. Researchers have indicated that even this does not offer a permanent solution as the spoils start becoming acidic again by cumulative accumulation of hydrogen, sulphur and iron ions that are being continuously produced by oxidation of pyrite.

Therefore, further additions of limestone at certain intervals would be required rendering the restoration efforts very expensive. The backfilling technique would involve segregation of the soil horizons and their replacement in the same order as removed during the mining. The advantages of this technique are many, e.g. problems like acidification and re-acidification of the site are minimised as the pyrite component is buried deep down, the soil structure is maintained, and the technique is cost effective. Initiatives by the government in the shape of law are required in this direction so that the approximate original contour of the site could be maintained and the affected land could be reclaimed at a relatively much faster rate.

To generate public awareness, *Centre for Science & Environment* (CSE) also conducted two workshops one at Shillong and another one in Tura, on illegal mining and rat hole mining in Meghalaya. in collaboration with Samrakshan Trust, a local NGO working in Meghalaya, *The hands-off approach of the Meghalaya government towards the state's rat-hole coal mines is fuelling destruction of forests, farmlands and water sources* in the state: say the writers of **Rich Lands, Poor People — Is Sustainable Mining Possible?** The book was released by Meghalaya governor R S Mooshahary on October 20, 2008.

While formulating the “Meghalaya Mining & Mineral Policy, 2012, the government did not take into consideration the impact assessments carried out by the different agencies and institutional studies. This has given enough material to the NGT for banning of

mining in Meghalaya. The Policy does not reflect;

► That sustainable mining is possible in Meghalaya

► That the local communities will be made partners in the mineral development of the state

► That the Policy has the potential to steer the mining sector to adopt environment-friendly practices

The Hoda Committee in its report (Ministry of Mines, 30th Nov.2011) r e c o m m e n d e d development of an SDF specially tailored to the Indian context taking into account the work done and being done in ICMM & IUCN. The SDF says;

“*Mining that is financially viable; socially responsible; environmentally, technically and scientifically sound; with a long term view of development; uses mineral resources optimally; and, ensures sustainable post-closure land uses. Also one based on creating long-term, genuine, mutually beneficial*”.

The CSE report points out that mining cannot be sustainable or truly environment-friendly: one, because all ore bodies are finite and non-renewable and two, because even the best managed mines leave “e n v i r o n m e n t a l footprints”. It is about ensuring that mining is conducted in an environmentally and socially acceptable manner.”

To convince the National Green Tribunal the state should take some urgent steps and redo the Policy and at the same time convince NGT to allow disposal of extracted coal at the earliest otherwise it will add to pollution. The Department should immediately take action on the followings:

► Have awareness campaign and motivate miners about the ills of such mining

► Take expert advise for scientific mining from CSE, MoM, MoEF, IBM

► Mend the loop holes in the Mining Policy

► **Introduce Corporate Social Responsibility.**

In fact, after the amendment of Companies Act in 2013 and promulgation of CSR Rules in 2014, addressing and reporting CSR performance has become mandatory. No doubt the Government is in a tight position. Due to NGT ban there is negative impact on employment, and loss to state revenue. It also affects thousands of families that solely depends on mining.. However, till such time the Mining & Geology Department should engage to take visibly corrective steps. One cannot expect NGT to withdraw the ban on mining from the state so easily.

TO THE EDITOR

have good roads in the locality. Why is this section of Madanrting area being neglected like this? Why are we still deprived of the basic fundamental rights of adequate water supply and better roads? We appeal to the concerned authorities to take a serious view of the matter seriously and take prompt and necessary action to overcome these problems.

Yours etc.,
Namita Thapa,
Via email

Delayed BED results!

Editor,
With a heavy heart, I put forward my plea to the higher authorities of NEHU who are responsible for withholding our 1st

Provincialisation of teachers’ service: Another view

By Philip Marweñ

Provincialisation of the services of teachers serving under the Deficit System of Grant in aid, Ad-hoc grant and Aided schools is illogical and incorrect because these teachers are recruited by the private Schools' Managing Committees. If the government feels that it is able to do so, it should provincialise both the schools and the services of teachers. But the majority of Managing Committees of these schools will never agree to hand over the schools to the Government because they consider the school as their inviolable asset. After all, the schools have been established, built, managed and run by them for years together. They may also hesitate to handover services of the teachers to the Government because the school Managing Committees will have no more control over the teachers whom they have appointed. The Government will also hesitate to take them because it will have no control over the teachers since they were not appointed by it. Hence nobody will have control over the teachers and they will not be accountable to anyone. This will be at the peril of education itself. What the Government can do is to substantially enhance financial grants to the SMCs meant for better salary package and social security of teachers, and for betterment of the schools infrastructure but leave the schools and teachers to be administered by the SMCs. Why should the Government take over more responsibilities than it can shoulder? Moreover, experiences have proved times without number that whatever the Government touches is destroyed.

Instead Government should immediately concentrate on bringing out a sound education policy along with holistic rules and regulations covering among other things, appointments and services of teachers in both government and private schools. Regular auditing of schools' accounts by competent auditors and overall inspection ought to be made compulsory at least once a year in all schools. It is very sad to mention here that the Inspectors and Deputy Inspectors of Schools, including higher ups, do not find time and do not care to inspect the schools of Meghalaya. Hence majority of the schools in the state are in shambles and education scenario pathetic. We have been receiving regular reports that many of the school Managing Committees are not functioning properly and many of them are hijacked by few individuals, including senior teachers. It was also reported that many SMCs are helpless; teachers do whatever they want. It was alleged that in quite a number of schools,

especially in many remote villages, the appointed teachers are absent for months together and in their place some Tom, Dick and Harry are sent to take classes and are paid a quarter of the salary drawn by the appointed teacher. The sheep are left only with wayside hired shepherds. It is also alleged that some teachers indulge in other extraneous activities, including running after government schemes at the blocks, districts and state headquarters including MDC, MLA and MP schemes and become distributors of these schemes in the villages. During election time it is alleged that many of these teachers become the main agents of candidates of some political parties and when the elections are over they become the distributors of contractors of Government, MLA, MP and MDC schemes. This is a gross conflict of interest. What is the Education Department doing to discipline the teachers and where are the SMCs? Are they not hijacked and controlled by these few daring school teachers?

Government as an overall regulatory authority should meticulously concentrate on overseeing the functioning of schools and teachers as well. As parents, the government should and ought to know where the children are and what they are doing. Responsibility and Accountability of School Managing Committees and Teachers ought to be the top priority of the government to be reflected in the new sound and clear cut Education Policy out of which should flow a robust set of rule to cure the various ailments in educational sector and to remove the lapses and defects embedded in the present education system in the state. Certainly Provincialisation of Teachers' services of the said schools is not the remedy and in fact, it will aggravate the already sickening condition of the education system in the state. Provincialisation is certainly not according to what one I Syiem of KDSTA views it to be, but it will only enhance the coffers of the teachers of the above schools without any responsibility and accountability to the SMCs and the Government. Instead enhancement of financial aid to the above-mentioned schools and other private schools for better salary package and social security scheme for teachers are the preferred options. In fact, the deficit schools have the CPF which was implemented long back by education department. It is definitely a social security scheme for teachers. If the teachers do not want it anymore, and instead they prefer some other social security scheme, it is up to them to decide.

Semester, B.Ed Exams 2015 results. It is almost a year now since we have completed our 1st Semester Exams which were held on December 2015, but the results are not out till date. In addition to this, we have also completed our 2nd Semester B.ed Examination held on July 2016 and currently we are pursuing our 3rd Semester session. I wonder what the reasons are for the delay in publishing our results? Is it because our answer scripts are lost? Or is it too difficult to tally our marks?

Whatever the reason maybe we the student-teachers of the B.Ed Course 2015-2016, are anxiously awaiting our results. Will the Vice Chancellor take personal interest in this urgent matter?

A Concerned Student
(Name withheld on request)

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“Thank God men cannot as yet fly and lay waste the sky as well as the earth!”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 30

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2016

Judiciary under scrutiny

SIXTEEN years after the Third Judges case, Justice Chelameswar has shocked the nation by stating that (a) the Collegium does not record nor communicate the views of its members to the government (b) it does not maintain minutes of its own meetings (c) the dissenting views of its members are not recorded nor communicated to the government (d) the views of the Chief Justices of the High Courts are not made known to the government. Chelameswar’s recent letter to the Chief Justice is a stinging indictment of the Collegium. In fact, this is the first admittance of irregularity coming from within the judiciary itself. Justice Chelameswar has decided not to attend the Collegium meetings and has asked the Chief Justice to send him the recommendations which he will examine from his chamber to proffer his views. He has also taken a high moral ground by stating that he would be retiring in less than two years and would not look up to anyone for a post retirement job. Chelameshwar claims he has no personal agenda in the stand taken but is doing so in public interest. He has called for a public debate on the matter. This action by a member of its own fraternity has made the Collegium directly answerable to the public.

For a long time the judiciary has remained beyond the pale of public criticism because of the fear of contempt of court or a misreading of what that means. This has left the judiciary or those who run it feel a sense of infallibility. Justice Chelameshwar has taken away this protective cloak that kept the judiciary from public glare. Indeed the moral stock of the judiciary had declined during Indira Gandhi’s tenure when it began to dance to the tune of the political executive and gave judgments supporting Emergency and without Constitutional precedents. Justice Chelameswar’s stance is for transparency in the appointment of judges of the supreme court and high courts and his dissenting order is an appeal to the larger constituency of citizens to correct the erroneous approach to judicial appointments.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

ABSU Bandh enters 2nd day
9 killed in a trail of violence

Nine people including two women were killed in violence in the bandh-bound Assam Kokrajhar District and Udalguri Subdivision of Darrang District during the past three days. The 175-hour statewide bandh, called by All-Bodo Students Union to press its demand for a separate bodo land, continued for the second day today and evoked partial response.

The Bodo extremist shot dead two women and injured three members of a family at Repnagar in Udalguri laast night. Seven Bodo extremists were killed in clashes among themselves and encounters with the police. Of them, one was killed when police opened fire to ward off an attack by about three armed extremists at Khairabari in Udalguri subdivision today. According to director general of police Mr S V subramanian, a group of Bodo extremists raided the house of one Mr Hareswardas at Rupnagar in Darrang district and shot dead his wife and mother besides injuring three other including a baby. The extremists fled after the incident.

Meanwhile, the All Assam Student’s Union sponsored 10 hour statewide bandh ended peacefully at 1600 hours today. Work in all government offices in Brahmaputra Valley of the state was paralysed and vehicles went off the road. About 200 AASU picketers were arrested in Nagaon district, official report said. The Bandh had, however, no impact in Barak Valley and two hill districts of Karbianglong and North Cachar, Mr Subramanian said. The AASU called the bandh

in protest against the Election Commission’s decision to undertake the revision of electoral roll in the state without any guideline and the centre’s announcement to set up a central university in Cachar district. The death toll is extremists violence in the state since Wednesday last was risen to eight. Three extremists were killed in an encounter with police at Bamora under Khairabari police station in Udalguri sub-division. Mr Subramanian quoting a delayed report said two Bodos were killed in a group clash on Tuesday at Sidli in Kokrajhar district. While one group wanted to set on fire a lower primary school building at Khunsing village, another section resisted it. In the following clash two persons were killed.

TRUGP alleges conspiracy to dissolve district council

Tripura Rajya Upajati Ganakukti Parishad, a frontal organisation of CPI(M), has expressed concern over the alleged “conspiracy” of the ruling Congress(I) TUIJS alliance to “dissolve” the elected Autonomous District Council for the tribal areas. After a three-day meeting of the Parishad’s central council a spokesman told newsmen that yesterday that the threatened agitation of the ruling partners including the Tripura Upajati Yuva Samity was nothing but a “stabbing in the back” of the tribals interest. He appealed to all tribals not to join in such “suicidal movement.

In Search of a new identity for the Adivasis of Assam

As I started writing this piece, I was reminded of a very popular jhumur song in our childhood days: “*Chal re Mini Assam jabo / Deshe aro dukh re / Assam deshere Mini / Cha bagan harial*”. Here we will find a complex psyche of the migrated labourers to the tea estates of Assam from different parts of East and South India. At the same time, we find Adivasi people mourning their lot as they walk up to Assam but at the same time, people are evidently willing to go to Assam because their own land is plunged into distress.

As a young representative of the Adivasis of Assam, I always felt that we need to understand the basic meaning and essence of the current struggle and crisis of identities among the Adivasis in Assam. I will try to signify the importance and at the same time, to differentiate the current political movements from the past movements among the Adivasis in Assam. I will also try to relate this current struggle for the making of a new identity among the Adivasis in Assam along with the much-talked about formation of greater Assamese Identity, as that will help us to understand the complexity and compositeness of the new identity of Adivasis of Assam.

At the very outset I would like to make my stand clear in the current situation. I disagree with the naming of my community as “Tea-garden labour community / Ex-tea garden labour community / Tea-tribe”. Is there any community in this world named after a commodity? It is the best example of the colonial domination of British, and later the internal colonialism taken over by the State. What I believe is that we have a duality regarding the nature of Identity. I understand that we are an integral part of greater Adivasi nationality of India and at the same time, we are also actively taking part in the formation of the greater Assamese identity. People who are progressive, liberal in thought, democratic in attitude and put a firm stand against communalism have recognized the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis as one of the most important communities contributing to the formation of the greater Assamese society. It is equally true that the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis of Assam are a branch of the greater Adivasi society

By Kamal Kumar Tanti

of the country. So, I prefer to be called an Adivasi. I also prefer to put a duality into the identity of “Tea-tribes and Adivasis of Assam” – first, we should be called as (only) “Adivasi” and second, an “Assamese” like “Adivasi Assamese”. Now onwards in this article, I will identify all the ethnic groups who were brought to Assam primarily as indentured labourers to work in the tea plantations from various parts of India during the colonial period-as “Adivasi Assamese”.

By writing history of the Adivasis, a good number of prominent and less known Adivasi and mainstream historians have clearly shown that the place of the Adivasis in the history and society of the country has always been at the bottom of the heap. From the beginning of the modern era in Indian history, the Adivasis have been moving through a distinct independent route different from the one taken up by the other communities of the country.

In fact, out of the orbit of the caste dominated society of the caste Hindus, the Adivasis had been guided by their independent cultural sense, where they never felt themselves inferior to others. Rather, there had always been a sort of self-admiration inextricably associated with their high cultural sense.

In my opinion, the history of the Adivasis is a history of ceaseless struggle - a struggle to carry on their own independent cultural identity and their backgrounds against the perpetual contempt of the high caste people. Due to this inherent contempt towards the Adivasis, it is not possible for of the high caste people to realize the total historical backdrop of the Adivasis whether he is a historian, social scientist, writer, poet, artist, sculptor or art-critic.

I believe the history of the Adivasis is a history of resistance against colonial exploitation, communalism and casteism. History says, the Adivasis were pioneer in igniting Indians’ minds against British colonialism. They were in forefront in revolting against British rule. Many historians claim the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 as the first Independent Struggle. But it is not right. If we look at the revolts of the Chauras, the Mundas (led by Birsu Munda), Kols (led by Buddho Bhagat in Chota Nagpur region), Santhals (led by Sidhu and Kanhu in Rajmahal Hills in Bihar) etc, it can be said

beyond doubt that the Adivasis were the first to revolt and organize mass-movement against British colonialism in India. Historical documents show the Adivasis fighting against two forces - against colonialism of the West and cultural domination of the caste Hindus.

Although the Adivasis are an important element in the process of formation of the greater Assamese society, they have an independent history and cultural sense along with a history of refraining from a complete assimilating with the culture of the high cast people. In the formation of the greater Assamese society, the Tea-Tribes or the Adivasis will coexist with the mainstream Assamese people rather than assimilating themselves completely, as the latter is not possible for any community bearing a distinct identity. I think, describing the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis as Assamese does not mean that they have become Assamese. Rather, the Assamese will have to recognise and respect their distinct identity.

Besides their own identity, the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis have also been identifying themselves as Assamese after a process of adoption of the Assamese language and culture since the beginning of the 20th century. It is my request for the Assamese people to recognize the two identities of the Adivasis. We, the Tea Tribes or the Adivasis are willing to introduce ourselves with our own identity (as Tea Tribes or Adivasis) before introducing ourselves as Assamese. We hope the main-stream Assamese people will shun their disdainful attitude and try to respect the Adivasis and feel that the latter is really an inextricable part of the greater Assamese society.

The Tea Tribes or the Adivasis have come forward willingly for a peaceful coexistence with the mainstream Assamese people. The mainstream Assamese should also come forward to maintain the peaceful coexistence. Willingness for formation of a greater Assamese society both by the mainstream Assamese and the Tea Tribes or Adivasis is the call of the time.

Our forefathers came to Assam from different parts of the country. While coming to Assam they brought with them their own cultural elements like dance forms, songs, festivals, folk tales etc., kept these elements

among themselves and passed them down from generation to generation. Their languages were different. In course of time a praiseworthy communication and unity came into being among themselves. And, a uniform blend of those diverse elements gradually developed a rich mass culture in the state which can well be termed as Adivasi mass-culture.

From the sixties-seventies of the last century the rich and variegated culture of the mainstream Assamese people started mingling with the Adivasi culture. The Adivasis started to take education in Assamese medium schools, participate in various cultural programmes, which led brought the two cultures close to each other. There have been instances of setting up matrimonial alliances between the two communities. Literary activities started among the Adivasis in Assamese language. The educated Adivasis started reflecting the suffering of the community and the injustices done on them through short stories, poems, novel etc. Similarly, the mainstream Assamese writers also started reflecting the community through their writings which is indeed a very good sign despite of the fact that such writing is less in number.

Yet, there have not been adequate studies in the state on the rich diverse culture of the Adivasis. Similarly, there have not been enough studies how the two cultures came closer in course of time and contributed to each other. I think we should find out the elements of mutual contribution of the two cultures. Besides, I believe that the culture of the state can be further enriched by a contribution of the cultural elements of the Adivasis.

(Kamal Kumar Tanti is a well-known voice in the contemporary Indian English Poetry. Kamal is a bilingual poet and writer, writes both in English and Assamese languages. He belongs to Adivasi Tea-garden Labourer Community of Assam. His first collection of Assamese poetry Marangburu Amar Pita (Our Father Marangburu), published in 2007, won him the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2012, for Assamese language and Munin Barkotoki Literary Award in 2008) .

TO THE EDITOR

Traffic jams - Shillong’s woe

Editor,
Life on the street is very stressful not because the roads are muddy, or bumpy with potholes but because too many vehicles clutter the roads and cause excessive congestion. The journey from Jingkieng Nongthymmai to lewduh (Bara Bazar) may take one full hour which could be commuted in 40 minutes if one just sweats out on foot. Besides the presence of countless local taxis and private vehicles on the roads, the deployment of a fleet of JNNURM buses send out the signal that the journey would be joyless, stifling and tardy. The long traffic jams which are common sights on the roads of Shillong have literally turned our lives unproductive and sluggish.

For years now

successive Governments have not dealt with this issue by restricting and rationing the issuance of new private vehicle registrations. Everyday new vehicles are hitting the same roads, same by-lanes and same footpaths. What is more disquieting is that the local taxi — the permit for which has fully been stopped by the Government some years back are still being issued by the concerned authority from the backdoor? One local taxi driver reveals on condition of anonymity that he obtained the permit recently by paying 2.65 Lakh. His vehicle is prefixed with ML 05 P. Why don’t the authorities blow the whistle to chase out the dishonest transport officers who are involved in the corrupt practices?

I believe, no one want to stand against the plans and policies of the government for generating revenue and thereby improve the economy of the state. But one doubts that mere issuance of permits for

new vehicles and thus over-cluttering the roads is a good revenue earner. It only except fattens the wallets of the transport department staff. Even logically speaking — the swifter the communication, the larger the scope for growth of trade, commerce and thus much more development and profit.

It would therefore be wise on the part of the Government first to think out the long-term plans to expand the infrastructure. The wider roads, flyover are a must for the Shillong town. The free and smooth running of the vehicles can only ensure faster development and that only makes the state smarter and richer. Merely owning new brand of vehicles will be an embarrassment for the wealthy as those vehicles which are meant to drive at great speed are actually moving at less than 20 kilometers per hour. .

Yours etc.,
Salil Gewali,
Via email

Digital technology falls flat

Editor,
The introduction of Digital Initiatives through the launch of National Portal Scholarships Website might appear a blessing to the common citizens and especially our students but for me it proved disastrous. When I personally logged in on behalf of my children, I experienced that the online application for Pre-matric and Post-matric Minority Scholarships was a futile exercise due to technical failure, non-updation, unsystematic or negligence from authorities concerned (viz. State Education Dept.).

Some of the peculiar observations is that the website is applicable only up to Class V in spite of the fact that the recent last date is fixed for 31st August ’16 (luckily extended upto 30th Sept’16) and that Minority

G-20 Summit has a tame ending India to get limited benefits in steel

By Subrata Majumder

G-20, which was set up with the global aspiration for economic security after two major financial crisis, Asian currency turmoil in 1997 and Lehman shock in 2008, seems to have lost its genie. The 11th G-20 Summit at Hangzhou city in China ended in a paradoxical situation. While a broad agreement was reached for coordinated approach towards macroeconomic policies, little headway was made in the concrete proposals.

Protectionism was univocally accepted the ill for the growth of world economic health. Innovation was the remedy to the Rejuvenation of the economy, and not just the financial and monetary policies, G-20 endorsed

Even though the main agenda of the summit was the health of global economy, attempting to curb the financial mess in the world, the summit was huddled with bilateral meetings , bemoaning the political and financial terrorism and lamenting the China's intransigence to UNICLOS ruling for South China sea dispute.

India played a key role at the summit to let the global leaders aware of India specific problems, stemming from terrorism. It used the platform to step up attack on terrorism and the sponsor and vent ire on fueling black money, holding the banking institutions responsible for indulging in banking secrecy .

Prime Minister Narendra Modi alluded Pakistan (without naming) as the single nation for triggering terrorism in South Asia. He urged the G-20 members to eliminate the 'safe heaven' for economic offenders and reduce black money proliferation, which was causing a great damage to the financial health of the emerging economies.

As anticipated, China, as the chairperson, failed to push up G-20 summit toward a bold action for global health of the economy. China observers felt that China was itself bogged down by its own economic pitfalls. The allegation against China's industrial over-capacity in the summit, which caused misbalance in the global growth, put China into corner. After the slide in Chinese economic growth, China is engulfed with industrial over-capacity.

Before the summit meet, a big agenda was made for G-20 under the Presidency of China. In May, Chinese foreign Minister Wang Yi outlined an ambitious agenda for the summit. The main aim was to push the global economy with others. He suggested a blue print for innovative growth, involving innovations and digital growth. He urged for a cooperative initiatives for industrialization of Africa and least developed countries. To gear up international investment and security for the investors, he suggested multilateral investment rules, as 3500 bilateral agreements have divided the international trade. He wanted G-20 to act as a coordinated force to reduce the trade costs and increase trade financing , as it covers 80 percent of the global trade.

In the summit, industrial over-capacity became a hot debate. European Commission President Jean Claude Junker ranted the Chinese industrial over capacity, blaming it the cause for damage to its steel industry and resulting looses of several jobs in recent years. He vehemently opposed the China's industrial over-capacity 'unacceptable'. He said that China must set up a mechanism to address its problem of over-capacity. It is not only European Union, but India too fell in the trap of Chinese industrial over capacity. Like European Union, Indian steel industry is in moribund stage. In 2015-16 and 2014-15, India's steel import surged by 25.6 percent and 71.0 per cent respectively. This caused a damage to the domestic production of steel. India turned a dumping ground for China's steel. Domestic finished steel production declined by 1.9 percent in 2015-16. Much of the damage was caused by gushing flow of Chinese steel. China is the biggest exporter of steel to India. It accounted for 24 percent of the total steel import in 2015-16. This led Indian government to put embargo over Chinese dumping of steel in India by various non-tariff barriers since September 2015.

Most Chinese observers were waiting for a new direction for economic policy reforms. They were expecting them to be announced by the end of current year or at the beginning of the next year. This was forecasted by Prof. Jeffrey Wilson of international political economy with Murdoch University in Australia. But, he feared that since China was unsure of its model of reform, there were little chances that China would use G-20 chairmanship to project the model abroad. What were then the silver lining of 11th G-20 summit ? The G-20 called for a global forum to address steel excess capacity adjustment. Even though it did not discuss concrete steps to address the mismatch between excess capacity and demand in the world, this may prove boon to India. Hitherto, India was under sever attack for its protectionism measures to the domestic steel industry. It was irony that EU, along with Japan, alleged India for its non-tariff barriers, which were not WTO reliant. India imposed safeguard duty on almost all finished steel for four years from September 2015 and MIP for eight months beginning from February 2016. With the G-20 agreeing to a global forum for steel excess capacity adjustment, some solace may come to India with the hope that China may voluntarily restrain from aggressive selling of steel in India. It may leverage Indian steel companies to spin off a life for the dormant steel industry. However, at the same time , the bell of a strong global warning against protectionism will ring , which may hinder India to take restrictive measures in the trade.(IPA Service)

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Having filed for the same. Hence I appeal to the authorities concerned not to play games with ourinnocent students thereby depriving them of the assistance due to them. Yours etc.,
G Sun,
Viaemail

Scholarship is also meant for Post-matric as well. Hence I cannot imagine how the State and Central Govt. boast of providing better accessibility to the masses when they have failed in this basic utility service. Other issues concerning the Online Scholarship application is that one cannot upload pending documents in spite of the fact that final submission is not completed. Secondly, the option for filling complaints is fake as the complainstatus is void and unregistered even after

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.”
--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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Surge pricing in railways

The Indian railways have made a move to hike railway fare on premium services such as Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto. It will go up by 10% for every 10% tickets sold. It is called surge pricing which will be fixed through every railway budget. As a result, railways will cease to be a departmental enterprise. It would become a more commercially-oriented organization. The objective is to face competition from airlines on premium routes and road transport. A dynamic fare system was introduced for railways in 2014. It generated higher revenues. But this was a flawed system and railways reverted to the simple and transparent fare system. Surge pricing will be dynamic even in lean periods. Refunds will be made on time and services will be improved. Passengers therefore will not be tempted to switch to road or air travel. Cross subsidization of railway fares or keeping rail fare low by hiking goods freight should not be an ideal measure. Railway finances need to be restructured. If government funding is reduced, railways cannot discharge social obligations estimated at about Rs 25,000 crore annually.

There is now a move to curtail the monopoly operation of the railways. Commercially run organizations are gradually coming up. Competition can only trigger change and tone up efficiency as a result of which consumers will be the beneficiaries. It is time railways dealt with competition from commercial road operators and private airlines.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

Windies tour
India 283 for 6 against President's men

India, electing to bat on an ideal pitch at the Kensington Oval, scored 283 for six against the West Indies Board President's XI on the opening day of their Caribbean tour. It was a satisfactory position, but not one to delight over considering the lovely conditions for batting and the fact that all the batsmen who went to the wicket, got settled. However, only Ravi Shastri and Mohammed Azharuddin passed 50- and that only just. The Impetus to the Indian scoring was provided yesterday by Srikanth who, at the start of the innings, made a hurricane 40 out of an opening partnership of 51, off only 38 balls, and Kapil Dev who, in the final session, plundered 46 off as many deliveries.

Shastri and Skipper Dilip Vengsarkar batted 230 and 119 minutes, respectively, for scores of 57 and 42 and Azharuddin 118 minutes for 52, before falling to the second new ball. Arun Lal stayed through all but 16 minutes of the morning session to make 27. Considering that they will get another chance to acclimatize before the start of the One-Day Series next week and have only one more First Class match before the first Test, the Indians main concern, rightly, for occupation.

The Indian position would have been less healthy had the President's XI not dropped three chances of which the most expensive was Winston Benjamin letting of Shastri, at midon, off leg-spinner Haynes, when he was only 25. The principal partnership during the innings were 79 for the third wicket between Shastri and Vengsarkar and 75 in only 15 overs for the fifth wicket between Azharuddin and Kapil Dev.

Marshall, Kirmani indisposed

The west Indies will have to do without leading fast bowler Malcolm Marshall for the first three one day cricket internationals against India in the coming series. The West Indies Cricket Board of

"Did the children go to the Army camp to buy toffees? Did the 15-year-old boy go to fetch milk when he attacked a police station? What is the Government's fault in that?" Quivered an angry Mehbooba Mufti as continuous stone-pelting entered its 55th day in Kashmir valley with 67 people deaths since the killing of Hizbul Mujahedeen poster boy Burhan Wani late July.

In one fell stroke, the Chief Minister adroitly put the onus on "five per cent protestors", slamming Pakistan for constantly fomenting trouble even as she called for resolution of the problem through dialogue and reconciliation. However, even as the Centre and State Government extended themselves to restore peace in the Valley, how to deal with Pakistan weighed heavy. More so after Islamabad anointed 22 MPs to raise the Kashmir dispute in the UN General Assembly session in September.

Citing enough is enough over Islamabad meddling, Prime Minister Modi made a dramatic change in India's Pakistan policy. In his Independence Day address to the nation he evoked Baluchistan and asking Islamabad to "vacate its illegal occupation of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK)". His aggressive message was blunt: You incite terror in Kashmir I will expose your atrocities in Baluchistan. Thereby, signaling his move to internationalise the issue.

Undoubtedly, Modi's salvo at Pakistan was driven by two main motivations: One, to deflect pressure on his Government vis-à-vis strife-torn Kashmir. Pakistan has long accused India of fueling terrorism in Baluchistan, its largest province, and of supporting its independence movement. Islamabad painted India as the aggressor in 2009, when the Sharm el-Sheikh joint statement by the two countries referred to State-sponsored terrorism in Baluchistan, effectively causing India to admit to control announced yesterday that Marshall injured his wrist in a Red Stripe Cup match for Barbados on Sunday and would be unable to play in the first three of five scheduled matches. The first is at Kensington Oval here on Tuesday and Tuesday and the second and third are at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad on March 9 and 11. Allrounder Eldine Baptiste, out of the West Indies team for its last two tours of England and Australia, returns following consistent performances in the Red Stripe Cup competition. Opening batsman Philip Simmons, is also back in the squad of 13 announced by the West Indies Cricket Board of Control. The West squad for the first three one-day internationals, Vivian Richard (Captain) Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Philip Simmons, Richie Richardson, Gus Logie, Ketith Arthurton, Jeef Dujon, Eldine Baptiste, Winston Benjamin, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh and Ian Bishop. Meanwhile a stiff neck has kept 20 year old leg-spinner Narendra Hirwani out of the Indian team for today's opening match of its cricket tour of the West Indies team manger Srinivasan Venkataraghava announced.

Nurul Hasan heckled in Orissa

Disorderly scenes, slogan shouting and a boycott preceded the oath taking ceremony of the new Orissa Governor Prof Nurul Hasan, here this evening. This closely followed incidents on his last day as Governor in the West Bengal Assembly on Monday, and his first day as the officiating Governor in the Orissa Assembly a few days earlier. While in the former incident he was heckled and nearly assaulted by Congress(1) MLAs, in the later his address on the first day of the budget session was noisily boycotted by the opposition.

Two, project India as a regional hegemony capable of denying China access to economic trade routes through PoK in the ambitious \$45 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that will give Beijing access to the Arabian Sea through the port of Gwadar. Plainly, without India's support, CPEC will remain a pipe-dream.

Specially against the backdrop of Pakistan and China successfully presenting a united front against India in the UN. And Islamabad not only failing to reciprocate the Prime Minister's overtures in the last two years, but worse, Nawaz Sharif asserting, "We are waiting for the day when Kashmir becomes a part of Pakistan."

Even as Pakistan angrily retorted at India for "crossing the red line", New Delhi continues to play hard ball by underscoring any dialogue would only be on cross border terrorism and return of PoK and certainly not on Islamabad's pet stale wail: Core issue of Kashmir.

Questionably, not a few wonder about what strategic reward, if any, India hopes to gain by raising the geo-political stakes. Not a few feel by raising Baluchistan, India has given Pakistan further ammunition. Many however see it as of tactical utility.

Baluchistan holds vast quantities of Pakistan's natural resources and provides access to the Arabian Sea through Gwadar Port. Any further unrest in the area could completely destabilize Pakistan and its geo-political position.

As matter stands today, a deep chill has set in Indo-Pak ties. Deep mistrust and lack of confidence is apparent. Yet the two have not rejected further dialogue. Even when it is no more than a repetition of known positions. Islamabad has to match its words with deeds.

However, what is worrisome for Islamabad is that militancy and terrorist strikes are not providing any tangible results, other than providing cover to push jihadists into India before

TO THE EDITOR

Is the SMB blind and deaf?

Editor,

The Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) and MUDA in the recent past has penalized over a dozen residents and traders in town for polluting and releasing effluents in public spaces. But it is puzzling that the same civic authorities are turning a blind towards those who have reduced the Quinton Road in Police Bazar into a sewage stream. The irony is that the MUDA parking lot is also contributing to the display of filth right in the heart of the city. One can see clearly that the rear side of this parking lot followed by a row of buildings (all G+4 and above) till the lane that connects Thana Road are openly dumping sewage and other wastes into this road. And when it rains the damage is collateral since the filth tends to enter the low lying basements of commercial buildings and private houses. It is a chaotic sight here which the local MLA, Roshan Warjri is neglecting with impunity. It does indeed need a display of political thick skin to ignore one's own constituents - with whose vote she is today enjoying her share in the state cabinet - in this manner. The draining of sanitary and drain water in this road 24x7 has reduced

the pedestrians to ballet dancers as they skirt the slush and filth flowing on the filthy road. The huge-sized potholes with vehicles running over them will make anyone nauseas as the dirty water splashes on to peoples clothes. I have learnt that residents here are using two pairs of shoes one for walking on this horribly dirty road, which they never take inside their homes, and another pair for the interiors. Not just this, when people return half bathed in this filthy water while walking on this road they have to take a bath compulsorily after reaching home. I want to ask SMB and MUDA here whether the violating traders / buildings have greased their palms so much so they are unable to lift a pen to issue them a penal notice. Is MUDA, which is located less than a stone's throw away from Quinton Road, unable to keep its own backyard clean?

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

Kudos to the CM!

Editor,

As the whole world rejoices at the canonization of our beloved Mother Teresa, apostle of love and charity, the people Meghalaya join in the celebrations. The International Film Festival on Mother Teresa organized by SIGNIS in collaboration with the Shillong Archdiocese, Jowai Diocese

Changing the rules of the game

It takes two to tango

By Poonam I Kaushish

winter which makes intrusion difficult. Moreover, insecure Pakistan faces twin dilemmas of international marginalization due its political and economic instability and India's political stability and growing economy.

For Pakistani fed on the belief, that 'accepting the status quo with India is defeat', has resulted in a perceived ideological perspective that it has to be at war to stand up and be counted. This is forcing the Pakistani army to take calculated military risks against the back drop of its nuclear capability as a manifestation of its continued struggle which it must continue to provoke India.

Additionally, due to it being a failed State a fundamentally dissatisfied Establishment seeks to increase its prestige through spread of its ideology and religion in pursuit of its revisionist policies. Furthermore, India's "suspension" of the dialogue process has reduced Pakistan's incentive to keep the peace.

Moreover, there is nothing concrete to suggest that Islamabad is ready to address New Delhi's 'core' concerns on terrorism as it refuses to give up its confrontational mindset of waging a "thousand wars". Nor is there any indication that Pakistan has changed its antagonistic approach to India and neither does it share India's desire for friendly relations.

On its part, New Delhi's decision not to hold talks underlines its conviction that the military cost will soon become too high for Pakistan. As the recent incidents show, the Government and its security agencies need to remain ever vigilant, be one step ahead of Pakistan, its jihadis and act promptly vis-à-vis terror attacks and cross-border terrorism. India should refuse to be bullied and stop all trade and cultural exchanges with Pakistan till it mends its ways.

At the same time, notwithstanding the threat of a nuclear conflagration the neighbours know damn well

and the Missionaries of Charity, is a fitting tribute to this great and valiant saint of our motherland. India today, has not only Bapuji to showcase to the world the rich human values, but we now have St. Teresa of Kolkata to reinforce the positive image of our country. She was like a comet looming into the Indian sky to enlighten our countrymen. Her message of peace through her life of love and service still rings loud in our hearts and in the consciousness of the world. It is heartening to know that Chief Minister, Dr. Mukul Sangma, during his speech at the opening function in Soso Tham Auditorium, declared that the Day of Mother Teresa would be observed annually in the State. This is truly good news for all Meghalayans and for those who cherish great love and admiration for the saint. In my humble opinion, perhaps 5th of September which is the feast day of St. Teresa of Kolkata could be chosen as the day for State celebration. That day could also be declared as Peace Day for the State of Meghalaya which would be quite fitting, for St. Teresa of Kolkata was an ardent champion of peace in the world for which she received the Magsaysay Award for Peace in 1962, the Pope John XXIII Peace Prize in 1971 and then the highest honour, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

In the context of North-east India where there is so much of ethnic unrest and militancy, peace is an imperative in our society. We

India-russia defence talks make sense

Modi has to rely on strategic friend

By Arun Srivastava

It did not make much difference. But to keep the Indian rulers in good humour, the Obama administration made a departure from its past practice and modified the military logistics agreement, Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) to Logistics Exchange Mem-orandum of Agreement (LEMOA). The USA has a standard draft text of military logistics agreement to be signed by the countries. Since the Obama adm-inistration badly needed on their side and was also aware of the criticism Narendra Modi and his government will have to face for allying with the US, the standard draft was replaced by a new summary text.

Obviously India preferring to ignore its new friend and rearing to sign a defence deal worth millions of dollars with Russia during the summit level meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin scheduled to take place in October in Goa is significant. The deals that are to be signed include purchase of S-400 air defense missile system, IL-78 multi-role tanker transport by India and the joint upgrading of the SU30MKI and Kamov 28. Naturally question arises what made India to look towards Russia?

Nevertheless an insight into the recent developments will make it explicit that four factors prevailed upon the Modi government to look for alternate. First, while US was unwilling to offer help to India in nuclear propulsion for the proposed construction of its largest-ever warship, the 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier INS Vishal, last week, a Russian delegation visiting New Delhi offered the Indian Navy Russia's latest supercarrier design, dubbed Project 23000E Shtorm (Storm). A Russian diplomat based in India confirmed that an offer has been made. This 65,000-ton supercarrier, the INS Vishal, the second ship of the Vikrant-class, will feature "significant design changes from the lead vessel, the INS Vikrant, including possible nuclear propulsion and Catapult Assisted Take-Off But Arrested Recovery (CATOBAR) and Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch Systems (EMALS).

India already operates a nuclear-powered Akula-II submarine christened INS Chakra, which was acquired on a 10-year lease from Russia in April 2012 under a \$900 million deal inked earlier. Major defence deals with Russia, ranging from the Rs 39,000 crore acquisition of five S-400 Triumf advanced air defence missile systems to the \$1.5 billion lease of a second nuclear-powered submarine, are also in the offing.

Secondly, the Modi government is not sure of the approach and attitude of the new US President towards India. Though Obama maintained a friendly relation with Modi, he did not persuade the American Senate to recognise India as a "global strategic and defence partner" of the US. It is not yet clear whether Obama really intended to confer this privilege on India.

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to a joint session of Congress, top Republican senator John McCain had moved an amendment to the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA-17) which if passed would have recognised India as a global strategic and defence partner. But it could not get through. McCain had expressed disappointment. What USA did was to acknowledge India as a "major defence partner" through a joint statement issued after Modi held talks with Obama which supported defence-related trade and technology. In fact Modi had expressed surprise as to why the US Senate failed to recognise India as a "global strategic and defence partner".

Yet another factor that appears to have prevailed upon the Modi government to make a tactical shift in its policy towards USA has been the increasing say of Russia in the global affair. Republican

presidential candidate Donald Trump only a week back vowed to seek better relations with China and Russia if elected. He also announced that he would make U.S. allies bear more of the financial burden for their defense. Trump a bitter critic of Barack Obama's foreign policy accuses him of letting China take advantage of the USA. He pledged to "shake the rust off America's foreign policy." For Trump "an easing of tensions with Russia from a position of strength" is possible.

Meanwhile Russia has been trying to recover its friendship with China. Its joint military exercises in the East China Sea are a clear show of strength against USA and Japan. The US sanctions have in fact upgraded China's importance to Russia. Closer ties between Moscow and Beijing have been expected long before the Ukraine crisis. A new foreign policy concept published by the Russian government in 2013 noted the importance of friendly relations with China and India, and Russia and China have often joined together to oppose the western members of the United Nations Security Council.

With a loosening grip over the Western market, Russia is slowly picking up its own pivot towards the East, drawing closer than ever to China and finding new friends like Pakistan. Recently Moscow closed a landmark military deal with Islamabad - the first in many decades - while its relationship with Beijing continues to develop.

Back home, the peoples' perception towards USA might have played a major role in making the Modi government look towards Russia. A vast section of the Indians feel that USA has been treating properly. The Modi government has been simply acting on the advice and suggestions of the Obama administration, which mostly are against Indian interest.

Though US military company has agreed to produce aircraft F 16 under make in India programme, the fact remains Russia is the first country to have agreed to take the initiative under the "Make in India" umbrella in two key strategic sectors - nuclear and defence. This move underlines that Russia has confidence in India's economy.

On September 13, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin will be visiting India to hold the international committee on technical and economic cooperation. This will also pave the way for the bilateral meeting between both leaders. Modi and Putin will be holding their bilateral meeting on October 15 in Goa on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit. India and Russia are also expected to discuss the expansion of the civil nuclear cooperation between them. Russia kept its promise and on August 10, Modi and Putin inaugurated, through video conference, the Kudankulam Unit 1, which is a 1,000 MWt power plant.

Both sides are also expected to sign an agreement on the fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) project or the Perspective Multirole Fighter (PMF). The talks for the project were revived earlier this year. It took a back seat when India opted for the French Rafale fighter jets. The final R&D contract for the FGFA was on hold till now despite the two countries having first inked an inter-governmental agreement in 2007.

Russian-Indian cooperation in the defence sector is not just of 'seller-buyer' but works on complex joint development projects with participation of Indian public and private companies, and licensed production in India. It is also encouraging that India and Russia agreed to strengthen the defense partnership in line with the "Make in India" program.(IPA Service)



Dances from the mountains

It is not surprising that Jammu and Kashmir is presently almost synonymous with terrorism, curfew and unrest. Sadly, an entire generation of young people has been brought up on such ethos. But is that all there is to this beautiful state which was once known for the Dal Lake, shikaras, gardens, emerald valleys and snow-capped mountains? Where do we begin our search for that beauty?

“Over the last few decades, had the government given due importance to the culture of Jammu and Kashmir, things here could have been different,” says Padmashree Balwant Thakur. He is one of those few who are not willing to give up on the essence of the state and are committed to reviving its lost glory. The founder of the Natrang theatre group, Thakur has worked towards bringing dance forms from all over Jammu & Kashmir to one platform and presenting them to the world.

Witnessing such a cultural extravaganza can be an eye opener. There are many different dance forms in the regions of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh. Every festival, weddings and every joyful occasion is expressed through a dance form.

Each dance form is different but reflects the spirit of the mountains.

For example, the Rouf of Kashmir has been performed since ancient times. You will find two groups of women facing each other and performing a slow dance using simple footwork. You could catch this performance in the evenings of Ramzaan and Eid.

During weddings in the Dogri tradition, a dance called Jagarna is performed which is quite theatrical. When the men are out accompanying the bridegroom to the bride’s home, the women of the house get together indulging in gossips

Behind the blood-stained facade of J&K lies a pristine & beautiful land that is rich in culture, music & dance. Sonali Jha Chatterjee reports from Jammu



In the Rouf dance form, two groups of women face each other and perform a slow dance using simple footwork. This dance is performed in the evenings of Ramzaan and Eid

through music, dance and revelry relating to their marital life, interrupted only when the men return.

The nomadic community in the hills has its own culture and tradition and this transforms into songs and dances. One of these communities is known as the Gujjars and their colourful dance form is called Gojari. Their songs are more like narratives of their daily lives involving the people and their livestock.

Kashmir offers a platform to the adolescents as well for displaying their musical talent. An entire dance form is dedicated to them. Bachha gyavaun or Bachha Nagma, meaning the adolescent melodious

voice, is performed traditionally by boys or men dressed as boys during wedding ceremonies and cultural celebrations.

In the provinces of Poonch, Rajouri, Uri, Keran and Karnah lives a community of people called the Pahari or people from the hills. Their distinctive folk songs and dances showcasing their costumes and lifestyle come through in the Pahari dance form.

Resounding in the hills of Reasi, Udhampur, Kathua and Doda regions is a very popular dance form known as Kud. Traditionally, this dance form is performed to appease the local deities. Because of the belief that

“Over the last few decades, had the government given due importance to the culture of Jammu and Kashmir, things here could have been different

Padmashree Balwant Thakur



The Gojari dance form of the Gujjars

missing out on this ritualistic dance would displease the deities, this form has continued over centuries and today it is performed during weddings, births and harvests. Though Kud

used to be performed only by men earlier, today women participate with equal abandon.

Ladakh is known for the Jabro dance, very popular in the Changthang region. This is a community dance

performed by the nomadic tribe of the Tibetan origin. Performed mainly during Losar (New Year), the Jabro songs are sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument, the daman, and the flute.



(Top) Jagarna is performed during weddings in the Dogri tradition; and (above) Kud is performed to appease local deities

The Bhadarwahi dance comes from the region of Bhadarwah near the foothills of the Himalayas. This area, known for its breathtaking beauty is also known as mini Kashmir. The dance is performed by another nomadic tribe known as Gaddis. They are shepherds who move along with their sheep in the region searching for grazing pastures.

Several Bollywood directors have used the dance forms of Kashmir in their films. One can remember Preity Zinta and Hrithik Roshan dancing to *Bumro*, *Bumro* in the movie *Mission Kashmir*.

“As a theatre person, I can say that I have done some work to get theatre to a certain level in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, but the same cannot be said about the dances. Dances were left behind.

“As regional theatre carries with it elements of dance and music, I have now amalgamated these art forms in my work. But I have

always felt that at the local level, artistes are not given enough importance,” says Thakur.

The dance forms from Jammu & Kashmir were brought to the centre stage in the form of programmes such as Jashn-e-Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir Utsav and Celebrating Diversity.

As a cultural activist, Thakur says his endeavour has been to create a platform for the preservation and promotion of these art forms. He began by founding a music and dance repertory in 2004.

Fortunately the hard work has paid off and today there has been a growing demand for these performances not only in India but abroad as well.

The group is slated to perform in several countries in Europe soon, celebrating the artistic side of this ‘heaven on earth’, showcasing its beauty and diversity and also the potential to go beyond the perceived notions about this beautiful land. (TWF)

Understanding a brat, but too late for me

Someone showed me a somewhat random video in which people put cucumbers near cats and the horrified cats leapt away in sheer terror, sometimes leaping out of windows. Watching it, I relived my teenage attempts at dating. Cucumbers: I feel your pain.

Your columnist was further thrown back to childhood days by an Indian newspaper report that police officers are using catapults to fire balls of chili powder as a crowd control technique.

Well I did the exact same thing as a kid and my teacher denounced me as a troublesome brat who would achieve nothing in life. Okay, so her prediction was accurate, but I should still get royalties, right?

I was feeling stung about that when a reader sent in a news item about a guy in France who is suing his boss for boring him. He claims that the four years he spent in one company were so stupefyingly dull that they caused him physical harm, damaging his joints and brain.

My high school history teacher, Mr Mohan, was so boring that you could actually feel your brain fossilising during the class. Once he scheduled a history double-period and not even the brainy kids turned up, knowing he would induce comas and then brain-death.

Yet it is only now, finally, that society is seeing childhood episodes as things to take seriously. Following the success of The Anger Room in Texas, several countries offer “tantrum spaces” where adults can scream and shout and smash up stuff. They quote psychologists as saying that destroying property is “a vital outlet for emotional release blah blah blah”.

Well thank you very much, world,

for realising this decades after I spent my childhood being punished. At last, modern kids have the terminology to argue their case. Teacher: You just burned down the school. Kid: Destruction is a vital outlet for emotional release blah blah blah. Teacher: Good point — here, take this gold merit star.

Readers may have seen the US news item about an incident in Colorado when police used pepper-spray to subdue an out-of-control kid aged eight.

Some people said they should have just reasoned with him, but that only makes sense to people who’ve never had to deal with eight-year-olds. Pepper-spray is the minimum force necessary. A

preferable option would be to approach the kid with a bomb disposal robot fitted with a speaker. “Put down the axe and we will

send an adult in a hazmat suit to read a Winnie-the-Pooh book to you.”

I reckon Asian boys grow up with the trickiest challenges these days. In China, the folk tradition called Fu-Ji requires children to use a Chinese ouija-board to summon a female evil spirit. But Chinese law says males have to wait until they are at least 22 to get married.

So it’s fine for a boy to call up a demonic she-devil, but marrying an actual physical woman — whoah, guys, this might be dangerous, let’s wait at least 10 more years. (Not sure if that is bizarre or actually very smart.)

Whatever. Now excuse me while I go dig up my catapult. My kids are running amok and I need to do some crowd control.

(Nury Vittachi is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

The Funny Side

By Nury Vittachi

By Natalia Ningthoujam

Itanagar, the capital of the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh that borders China and which Beijing still lays a claim on, has its own mystique and a lot to offer a traveller from outside the North East.

I was told that it would take only six hours to reach Arunachal Pradesh from Guwahati by road. Little did they know about my material form of love — food and photographs. Forget about six hours, at least for me, it was a 12-hour drive and absolutely worth it!

The journey was all about food, selfies and songs by Assam’s singing sensation Zubeen Garg.

After several halts to dive into snacks or to get a perfect shot of the full moon, the sparkling stars and the lush green surroundings, we reached the ‘Land of the Rising Sun’, as Arunachal Pradesh is popularly known in these parts of the country because of its easternmost location, around 4 am.

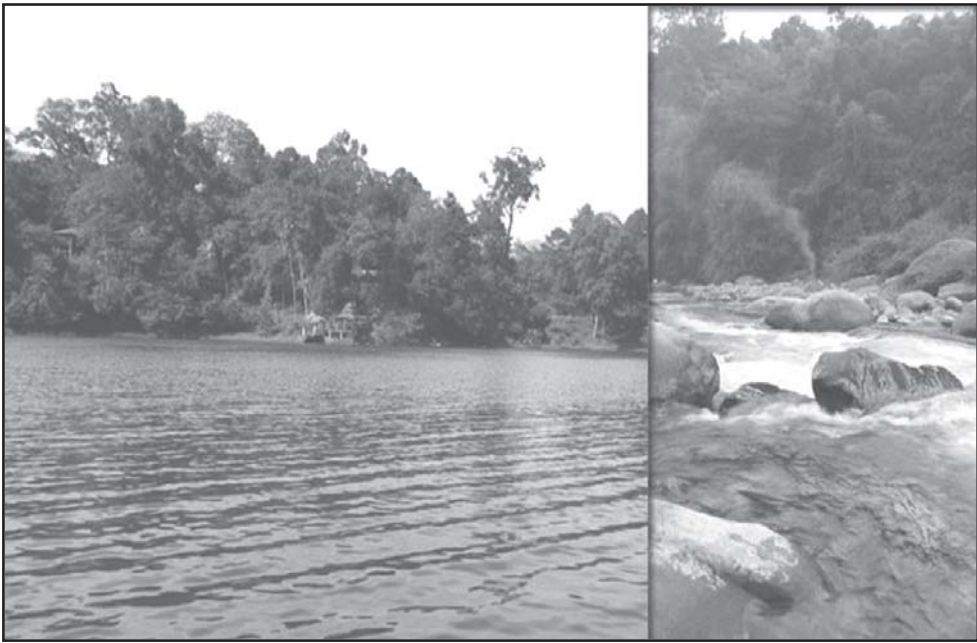
Unlike Delhi, where I am currently based, the hotels are protected by metal shutters. Double safety for sure, but with no guard around we had to honk for a few minutes to get the gate opened. It was certainly not a luxury hotel, but I was too tired to even deliberate over the hygiene of the room. I crashed into bed. The chirping birds further induced sleep.

A few hours later, I ordered a chicken sandwich with my all-time favourite, masala tea. Restaurants usually serve sandwiches with potato wedges. I got my sandwich with an unexpected food item — a disc-shaped papad. All stuffed, I geared up to explore the city.

I asked the receptionist about the must-visit places in Itanagar, which is nestled in the foothills of the

In the Land of the Rising Sun

From Nature’s abundance to a slice of city life, Itanagar has a lot to offer



The fluttering colourful prayer flags at the Gompa provided a soothing sound as we sat near a statue of the Buddha placed under a banyan tree at the monastery. Then we beat the heat by dipping in River Senki View

Himalayas. Had there been a Worst Ambassador of Itanagar Award, the receptionist would have won it hands down. All he said was, “You are wasting your time here. There is nothing interesting to do. Go to Tawang (monastery).”

I am so glad that he was proved wrong. My driver took me to Ganga Lake. Surrounded by trees, the lake was absolutely calm. It tempted me to go boating. Obviously paddling wasn’t on my mind as I didn’t want to exert my legs. As the sun

was in no mood to cool down, I sat under the shade of an umbrella and enjoyed the moment.

Then I was on a lookout for a restaurant. There were lots of eating joints, including a Manipuri restaurant. The driver suggested I dine at ABC Restaurant, where I could see schoolgirls, families and groups of youngsters enjoying Chinese dishes.

The chicken fried rice and chicken sweet and sour tasted similar to the ones available in Delhi. They had

that local touch, but the dim sums were different. Served with chicken clear soup, the steamed appetiser had a good amount of chicken filling, though the oil percentage was slightly high.

I then headed to the newly built multipurpose cultural centre — venue of the second edition of the North East India Fashion Week (NEIFW) — situated atop a hill. A low budget event, but a great initiative by designer Yana Ngoba Chakpu who brought the designers and weavers of the region on the same stage.

Once the event wrapped up, my friends and I checked out the nightlife. I could see military forces patrolling the streets where hardly any people could be spotted. Yes, I was a little jittery, but I mustered the courage and checked into a restaurant-cum-club. After crossing a few youngsters enjoying their drinks, we went to the reserved area, which had shiny disco balls and loud music.

It turned out to be a fun night as I gave my maiden karaoke performance and also made my Bihu debut by dancing to “Aaya mausam dosti ka” from Salman Khan-starrer “Maine Pyar Kiya”. Not an ideal Bihu song, but yes the steps matched the Bollywood beats.

The next day, we went to Gompa where the fluttering of colourful prayer flags provided a soothing sound as we sat near a statue of the Buddha placed under a banyan tree at the monastery. Then we beat the heat by dipping in River Senki View.

Soon, it was time for me to hit the road. But due to some problem, the mode of transport had to be changed. It was suggested I take a chopper. The thought of a possible chopper crash made me pick a sleeper class coach instead.

Situated at a distance of about 10 km from Itanagar, the Naharlagun railway station, inaugurated in 2014, was relatively clean. The train journey took me back to my childhood days.

Within 10 hours, I was back in Guwahati and two hours later in Delhi.

My maiden trip to Itanagar was one of those rare opportunities where you get a chance to befriend people from all northeast Indian states — Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. A trip to remember, certainly. (IANS)

Delve into wealth of nations

Ranjan K Baruah

One of the subjects that we learn from secondary level is economics. It is one of the important subjects as it is related to wealth and resources. Economics is a social science concerned with the factors that determine the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Economics focuses on the behaviour and interactions of economic agents and how economies work. Consistent with this focus, primary textbooks often distinguish between microeconomics and macroeconomics.

Microeconomics examines the behaviour of basic elements in the economy, including individual agents and markets, their interactions and the outcomes of interactions. Individual agents may include, for example, households, firms, buyers and sellers. Macroeconomics analyses the entire economy (meaning aggregated production, consumption, savings and investment) and issues affecting it, including unemployment of resources (labour, capital and land), inflation, economic growth and the public policies that address these issues (monetary, fiscal and other policies).

Besides the traditional concern in production, distribution and consumption in an economy, economic analysis may be applied throughout society, as in business, finance, healthcare and government.

Economic analyses may also be applied to



technical and professional courses, including medical and para-medical courses (Integrated courses included) in Universities/ Colleges/Institutions recognized by UGC / Institutions of National Importance/Institutions recognised by other statutory councils within as well as outside the states of NER. Last date is September 15.

such diverse subjects as crime, education, the family, law, politics, religion, social institutions, war, science and the environment. Globalisation has brought more opportunities for the subject.

One may study the subjects from Class IX but as an independent subject it is taught from Class XI onwards. One may do bachelor or masters course in Economics. There are a range of courses like MA or M Sc related to economics. There is another option like Master of Business Economics (MBE). Business Economics deals with the analysis of the behaviour of firms in markets and industries and with determination of costs and prices.

Most of the Indian universities offer courses related to economics. It can be pursued internationally too as most of the universities outside the country also offers the course with specialization. Some of the leading institutes in the country are Delhi School of Economics and Madras School of Economics. Many colleges and universities in Assam and e North East also offer the course. London School of Economics and Political

Career: Economics

view the social background of the candidates from the deprived section of the society and to provide them opportunity to undertake postgraduate-level studies in Professional subjects like Engineering & Technology, Management and Pharmacy, among others, in Indian Universities/ Institutions/ Colleges. Last date for sending application is September 15.

‘Ishan Uday’ For Northeastern Region: Students with domicile of NER who have passed Class XII or equivalent exam from a school situated within NER through any recognised board of education, including Central Board of Secondary Education, Indian Certificate of Secondary Education, National institute of Open Schooling within NER only, and have secured admission in general degree course,

UPDATES:

Post Graduate Scholarships for Professional Courses for SC/ST Candidates: The scheme has been initiated keeping in view the social background of the candidates from the deprived section of the society and to provide them opportunity to undertake postgraduate-level studies in Professional subjects like Engineering & Technology, Management and Pharmacy, among others, in Indian Universities/ Institutions/ Colleges. Last date for sending application is September 15.

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Circle of life & death

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

There is only one purpose to all life — to reproduce itself. This cosmic order has been given to every cell in every being. It shapes the way we look, think and behave. In order to follow this order, the Universe has designed a variety of ways: reproduction, using a male and female sperm and egg, seems to be the norm. But there are organisms that multiply themselves by splitting; one species that has seven sexes (Tetrahymena) and can multiply with any; species where females or egg layers don't need males to give birth; species like bacteria where DNA is simply sent across a tube to another identical being. Creative coupling is the order of the day.

In some deep-sea anglerfish species, like the needlebeard seadevil, the tiny male bites into the female, who is often 10 times his size, and soon begins to disintegrate, melting and fusing into her until he's nothing but testes and a tail sticking out of her side — a sperm supply she'll use to fertilise her eggs. How does the sperm get to the eggs? Males release sperm and females release eggs, which are then fertilised in the water.

Male squid use a tentacle to stick sperm packets, called spermatophores, on to the heads of females. The sperm burrows into the skin. After that, its route is a mystery.

Dragonfly sperm scrapers are a unique tool in the reproduction game, according to entomologists at the University of Arizona. Before mating, male dragonflies use one penis to scrape the female's organ and remove the sperm of

WONDER WORLD

■ A male orb-web spider detaches its genitalia (palp) after penetrating the female and scuttle away to avoid being eaten by the female. The palp continues to deliver sperm



■ A female aquatic Pipa frog keeps the eggs in the spongy tissue on her back. The eggs develop into froglets on the female's back and emerge



■ The New Mexico whiptail is a female lizard of a species that has no males. They don't require fertilisation for their eggs to develop and hatch into new female lizards



any prior mating before delivering their own. They then use their other set of genitals and move sperm from the testes into the penis and then mate her.

The male Adactylidium mite technically becomes a father while still inside his mother's body. The mother mite hatches up to nine eggs inside her body, and usually only one is male. This lot lives inside the mother and eats her body. Once matured, the females mate with their brother, then cut a hole in mom's dead body and leave, while the male dies of exhaustion.

Osedax worms live in the deep sea, where they feed on whale bones. The males are much smaller than the females. They live inside the females and "ejaculate" through the top of their heads, releasing sperm right near the opening where the female's eggs come out.

Flatworms are hermaphroditic sea slugs. When it is time to reproduce, one has to be the bottom and the other the top. To decide, they spar with their penises, and the one who is stabbed receives the

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, September 11, 2016

Jupiter is forming an angle of 160 degrees with Neptune on your solar return chart indicates some ups and downs this year. This is a year that will provide opportunities for financial gains. Be careful of the company you keep as someone may tarnish your image and this could affect your career too. Work on your interpersonal relations as support would go a long way in helping you. Family relations will be congenial and there would be a marriage in the family. Keep a reign on your temper and think twice before you enter into an argument. Health will improve and you will benefit with the renewed energy.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)
You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they too draw upon you a great deal. You need space and contact with others in order to feel content. You are blessed with intuition and foresight which leads you in the right direction. You seem to need a good friend with whom you can share your ideas. You focus on balancing your personal interests and objectives with what would be best for a significant other. It's important to give others credit and recognition, and to attempt to harmonize and include others rather than to go solo for the time being.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
This is an especially introspective phase during which you have the chance to truly uncover your personal strengths and talents. On a more practical level, you may be dealing with joint finances and shared resources now more than usual. This is an excellent time under which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions in your relationships with loved ones. All which is deeply personal comes into focus now. Intimate matters are especially important to you during this period. Just how well you are handling your life comes up for inspection. You are more willing than usual to explore life's secrets. Research uncovers new material that allows you to develop a better overall picture of the events.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)
You feel fun loving, energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. Financial benefits may come your way. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation. You would focus on intimacy with a partner, or simply retreat a little from the hectic pace of life. This is an excellent time to create a budget or financial plan, or to rid yourself of bad habits that undermine your sense of personal power and self-mastery.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
You display great skills in sports, competitive exams, physical activities and this wins appreciation and brings about new opportunities. Close relationships continue to be in focus. Emotions run close to the surface. You may also see the culmination or fruits of a personal project at this time. This week is good for foreign affairs and education. Personal relations are satisfying and you have plenty of goodwill and friendships around you. You are likely to get back to fitness routines and diet programs to enhance health and energy.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
You are ambitious, authoritative and courageous. This period is excellent for career and business income. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to negotiations and one-on-one communications. Be as non-judgmental as you can with a partner. There may be the need to revisit old issues in a partnership, or there could be some communication problems with a partner. Misunderstandings with your partner now can do some damage if you focus on words said instead of the meanings behind the words. Stick to regular exercise routine and regular pattern of nutritious diet.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)
If you need to talk through problems, do your best to be as non-judgmental as possible, and don't over-react to what your partner has to say either. Re-thinking a partnership arrangement is possible now, but you should avoid jumping to any premature decisions. It would be wise to be especially clear when it comes to communicating with people, take time to re-examine issues rather than communicating about them

prematurely. Communicative abilities will largely be applied to professional world ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)
This week brings entertainment, communication and popularity among people and harmonious relations in personal and professional life. Intimate connections can be especially meaningful. Intensity appeals in your relationships. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You may get the backing you need now—financial or emotional. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive pleasure from these activities. More freedom is likely to be experienced in your career. Integrity and honesty will be the keystone.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)
People in fine arts, and communication related fields would give a non-traditional blend to their creations and get popularity by the work done. Routine affairs simply don't seem to satisfy. You receive pleasure from anything that expands your horizons, both physically and mentally. People from overseas and foreign climes may particularly appeal now. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love. A love interest who attracts you during this cycle may be somebody who you previously wouldn't consider attractive, or someone whose cultural background is very different from yours.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)
You would have a strong desire to cooperate and communicate with others. You feel most comfortable spending time with people on a one-to-one level, or with those with whom you share personal matters. Your own thoughts become clearer through dialogue with others. You may be involved in public relations work, counseling, negotiating, or arbitration during this cycle. There is a lot of emphasis on communications with partners and best friends at this time. You can use the power of words to advise others or to make peace with people in your life.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)
The planetary configuration indicates authority figures, elders, parents, or influential people in your life who will support you and whose respect you will earn. They are more willing to help you on your road to success. The more willing you are to be in the limelight and take center stage, the more positive the rewards. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities and family relations. You have a taste for the exotic now that can show up in many areas of your life—who you are attracted to, what you buy, the kind of art or entertainment you enjoy, and so forth. You would be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)
You are more diplomatic than usual during this transit. Delays and miscommunications are possible. It's a good time for rethinking and revising partnership matters. You are likely to take your hobbies and talents more seriously. This is an excellent week for concentrating on a personal hobby and turning it into a source of income. You accept the individuality of loved ones and that would be helpful to resolve your conflicts and move ahead in harmony. You feel fresh and re-energized. Finding a balance between autonomy and dependence is key for you at this time.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)
Negative expression of this energy is the tendency towards ego conflicts concerning jointly held property or money. Conflicts with partners over values or possessions are possible. Occasionally, this transit could bring a crisis or ending of some kind. Something you hear about now might disturb or touch you deeply. You would be more sensitive and dedicated to your personal and professional life. You work hard to meet the goals. This is a good time to build your skills, to get organized, and to attend to your health and wellbeing.

THE SAINTLY MOTHER

Rajdeep Pathak

The sound of the hymns reverberated in the Vatican City as Pope Francis canonised Mother Teresa as a Saint at a special ceremony at the Vatican City on September 4. The mother to all destitute will hence be known as the Saint to the world.

However, Pope Francis was right when he said a mother always remains a mother. As I, like over 100,000 people across the world, watched the canonisation of Mother Teresa live from the Vatican City, I could feel the tears of joy, ecstasy and more than anything, love which was the eternal message of the Mother and which was again floated and reiterated across mankind gathered to witness the moment of her transformation to a Saint.

Sisters from the Missionaries of Charity in their blue-bordered white saris and nuns from different countries stood in silence, in prayer as the canonisation ceremony unfolded. Leaders of different faiths too had gathered to be part of this historic moment.

Speaking from the steps of St. Peter's Basilica, the Pope said Mother Teresa spent her life “bowing down before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity”.

“She made her voice heard before the powers of the world, so that they might recognise their guilt for the crimes of poverty they themselves created,” he said, adding, “Let us carry her smile in our hearts



People queue up in front of U Soso Tham Auditorium in Shillong on the last day of the Mother Teresa International Film Festival organised by the World Catholic Association for Communication's India chapter. (ST)

and give it to those whom we meet along our journey, especially those who suffer,” the Pope wished on the eve of the 19th death anniversary of Mother Teresa in a Eucharistic celebration that went a little over two hours.

Saints are not mere representatives of religion, but they are representatives of humanity. Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu represented this trait. She was the epitome of grace, compassion and love and this was probably the reason that whoever came in close contact with Mother Teresa, was awed by the simplicity, firm determination and commitment she showed towards the causes of the deprived.

It is evident that people all over the world has recognised this true spirit of sacrifice and commitment towards the needy. The Missionaries of Charity has expanded. Since 2003 when she was beatified and after

her death, the cause that was left by Mother, has indeed prospered.

From 605 homes in about 120-125 countries (at the time of her death), the Missionaries of Charity today has 745 homes in over 135-140 countries with volunteers, nuns and sisters serving the deprived. They all follow the same adherence to the legalities, and commitment, set by the Mother and follow in her footsteps.

Barring the controversies that still surround her life or even the Missionaries of Charity, it is beyond any doubt that the work the group at *Nirmal Hriday* — the home which Mother Teresa founded in 1952 — is undertaking, is exemplary and in the true spirit of volunteerism and a true leader.

I wondered seeing the number of people who gathered in the Vatican City on how in some way or the other, the proclaimed saint

touched their lives and felt the controversies are so pity given the remarkable work she and her nuns did in times when the lepers were ostracised. It is because of this, the number of volunteers is increasing every year.

The saintly mother's life still touches millions, for she left a testament of unshakable faith, invincible hope and extraordinary charity, which shimmers in the glory of service.

She stood out as a true volunteer in the service of humankind, upholding the sacredness and dignity of every human being. What she taught was passion, commitment, determination and above all, selfless service with love, which still remains as the basic quality of a volunteer. The Mother, like always, has put people in God's hands. Sainthood brings another chapter to it.

(The author is a programme executive at Gandhi Smriti & Darshan Samiti)

“How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live.”
--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 33 SHILLONG, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

BCCI and ICC wrangling

INDIAN cricketers are busy at the game of fouling up a gentleman’s game. The Indian cricket team is doing quite well under Virat Kohli. The number of fans of the game in India has not dwindled. The country earns an enormous amount of money out of the game, the largest in international cricket. An Indian, Shashank Manohar, is chairman of the ICC. And yet Indian cricket is a victim of singular lack of statesmanship which casts a shadow over world cricket. India has threatened to pull out of the Champion Trophy as it demands that it should grab the lion’s share of the revenue from the ICC. Indian cricket is in the hands of crony capitalists and self-seeking politicians. They talk of market economics. They rake in the most money and so they expect to get the most. The Supreme Court has taken a dim view of their attitude. One cannot take these self-styled economists seriously. The BCCI looks like a babe in the woods.

ICC is also very much at fault. If the Indian representative is absent, how can the world body carry on important financial committee meetings? The ICC’s objectives cannot be above suspicion. They hold no talks about preserving the decency of world cricket which is very much on the decline. The two-tier test structure does not solve the problem. The chief administrators should sit together and thrash out the problems facing international cricket. The bigger picture always matters. Whatever deadlock there may be has to be resolved. But can cricket administrators be expected to show the necessary statesmanship?

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

Army P.R. Cell

The Army is reported to be preparing to launch a major public relations offensive in the north-eastern States, especially Manipur. The need for it arose when it is recalled, the national Press was agog with reports of the Oinam incidents of mid 1987. The reports were highly critical of the role of the force, particularly of the Assam Rifles, about 75% of whose officers and men are generally drawn from the Army. Why it has taken so much time to decide on a counter offensive and opening a public relations cell is a mystery, knowing as we do that the Army is known for its expedition as it should be. The local Human Rights groups meanwhile filed a writ petition in Guwahati High Court, which makes the Army version rather difficult of presentation independent of the Court proceedings for fear of inviting contempt of court. Outside of this limited area also, there are lots of scope for the proposed cell to do its little bit, when para-military forces are particularly engaged in such wide areas discharging a wide variety of jobs involving dealings with the public at large. As such, the cell may more conveniently be located in Shillong, the headquarters of the Assam Rifles and the centre of a wide range of Defence establishments in the North-east.

Church initiative in Mizoram

Reports say that the Congress(I) in Mizoram had planned to organize a victory rally at Aizwal and the Opposition parties threatened to hold a parallel programme opposing the move. Ultimately, the Church leaders intervened to ward of a veritable confrontation and both the parties agreed to respond to their appeal and abandoned their respective plans. Again on February 23, the Opposition parties called off their proposed Bandh and this too at the behest of Church leaders. In doing so

the MNF and People's conference have appealed to the Chief Minister, through the Church leaders, not to initiate criminal proceedings against the five MNF activists held in the police custody for allegedly stealing a few used ballot boxes. The official reaction, which is yet to be known, will reveal the extent of Church influence on the new government and whether such peace-making efforts and over tunes on the part of the church will become a feature of Mizo politics for the future or not and, if at all, to what extent.

Twentythree burnt alive, 150 injured in fire

Twenty three people were burnt alive and 150 injured when the VIP enclosure caught fire during a march past at Jamshehpur Tata's 150 th birth anniversary function here today. Most of the victims were women and relatives of TISCO officials sitting in the enclosure, packed to a more than 1,000 capacity. TISCO chairman and managing director Mr Russi Modi told newsmen that all the injured were admitted to the Tata main hospital where the condition of many was stated to be serious. Unconfirmed reports, however, pout the death tol at 30, Mr Modi said the fire was first noticed by sub-divisional officer, Mr J R K Rao at the "Gold gallery" where the officials along with members of their families were witnessing the colourful function. The panic-stricken spectators tried to run for safety but the flames, fanned by gusty southern wind, engulfed the entire enclosure within minutes. Mr Modi said the tragedy was unparalleled in the history of TISCO since its inception in 1913. A TISCO official said the bodies of the victims were yet to be identified.

History of the origin of the Unitarian Church

In a week from now the Unitarians in the Khasi and Jaintia hills and Karbi Anglong will celebrate the Church’s 129th birth anniversary on the 18 of September. However, despite its long eventful existence, being a non-proselytizing church, Unitarian remains a lesser known religious organization. Despite its unique local history specific to area, the Unitarian Church remained secluded only amongst the members of the church. This also reminds me of the incident during a seminar at the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) when a wise professor in the department of history asked me about the origin of the church and wondered if the church traces its origin to the Deist. Obviously only a handful of people know about the church. Hence the credit for this article goes to her and I must thank the professor for that.

There are many definitions on the meaning of the word Unitarian but suffice it to say that it differs in many ways from the three predominantly monotheistic religions in the world. In all its traditions and forms, it is a church which owes its origin to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but the church which upheld the unitary nature of God and also maintained the liberal outlook which makes it different from the other denominations.

History tells us that people with Unitarian outlook appeared in different parts of the world at different points of time. One such event was the history of Akhenaton (? – 1336/34 BCE) an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh who earned the ire of his priest demoted all gods even popular ones to the status of mere manifestations of the one God he recognized and worshipped. It can therefore be concluded that it was Akhenaton who discovered and invented monotheism by elevating the Sun God, Aton to the status of sole divine ruler. But on his demise the priests regain their influence and were able to convince his half brother who inherited the throne to revert to the ancient faith also giving him the name Tutankhamen which also means reinstating the glory to the gods, Amen. But about five hundred years after Akhenaton’s

death the worship of one God was rediscovered and reinvented by the Hebrews. It is also interesting to note how the human concept of God changed with time and it began with cave dwellers who worshipped according to them, the greatest imaginable power which is nature. Then to the hunters and masters of fire, God was fire and later when agriculture replaced hunting and gathering, God became Goddess of fecundity, procreation, birth and life. This was followed by the history of the city state when God became Lord and King Protector and enforcer, leader and judge.

The Hebrews believe that their God and King were the only principalities and Isaiah was the first prophet who called God, ‘Father,’ when he said, ‘You are the Father.’ But it was Jesus who spoke of one God who is Abba or daddy to be precise. But according to Jesus, God is not only beyond us but also within us, participating in our love for others and in our quest for Justice and this is the concept of God that the Unitarians believe in.

The Unitarians believe that their history goes back to the Apostolic Age,- the life of Jesus and the decades immediately after his death, and they also claim that this doctrine was widespread during the pre-Nicene period, that is, before the First Council of Nicaea met in 325 CE. There are some Jewish-Christian congregations in the late first and early second centuries which hold the view that Jesus was a great man and prophet, even the Son of God, but not God himself. The earliest controversies over the nature of Christ broke out at Rome during the episcopate of Victor I (189–199) (Wikipedia). The controversy called ‘Mon-archian’ propagate by Paul Samosata bishop of Antioch which emphasized on God being one, originated in a revolt against the influential Logos theology of Justin Martyr. Then there was another group called the ‘adoptionists,’ led by Theodotus of Byzantium and Artemon because they suggested that Jesus was adopted by the Father to be his Son. So, even in the early Christian period we find evidence of proto-Arianism though they were not fully formed, but the truth is that both of these theologies have similarities to latter day

Unitarianism. Then later in the history of the church there was the Arian movement which occurred more than three hundred years after the death of Jesus under the leadership of Arius (CE 250–336) hence the name Arian. Arius a Christian presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt believed that God the Son came after God the Father in time and substance and in his own word said "If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his substance from nothing."

The controversy compelled the church to convene its first ever council at Nicaea in 325 CE and at the end of the debate the group led by the young archdeacon Athanasius which upheld the notion that Christ was co-eternal and con-substantial with the Father won with the support of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great who converted to Christianity only in 313 CE. The issue was considered settled and the adoption of Bishop Alexander of Alexandria’s view became the orthodox doctrine known as Nicene Creed and all other views were considered heresy and officially suppressed.

However, during the reign of the emperor Constantius II, the anti-Nicene party rose to prominence and exercised considerable influence over the church for about a generation. But when Theodosius the first’s reign he was able to revert the situation to the post Nicene period. At the Council of Constantinople in 381, the position that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost were all the same being was agreed upon, and the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity was complete and all Non-trinitarian forms of Christianity were outlawed by Theodosius.

Later during protestant reformation; Michael Servetus (1511?–1553) who is a polymath developed a non-trinatarian Christology and in July 1531, Servetus published *De Trinitatis Erroribus* (*On the Errors of the Trinity*). The next year he published another work; *Dialogorum de Trinitate* (*Dialogues on the Trinity*) and the supplementary work *De Iustitia Regni Christi* (*On the Justice of Christ's Reign*) in the same volume.

In 1553 Michael Servetus published yet another religious work with further anti-trinitarian views. It was entitled Christianismi *Restitutio* (*The Restoration of Christianity*), a work that sharply rejected the idea of predestination as the idea that God condemned souls to Hell regardless of worth or merit. Michael Servetus was arrested, imprisoned and burned at stake for his belief in Geneva.

Nowadays most Unitarians see Servetus as their pioneer and first martyr, and his thought had influenced the beginnings of Polish and Transylvanian Anti-trinitarian churches. The term "Unitarian" first appeared as *unitaria religio* in a document of the Diet of Lécfalva Transylvania on 25 October 1600, though it was not widely used in Transylvania until 1638, when the formal *recepta Unitaria Religio* was published. In Poland, the Polish Brethren began as a grouping of Arians and Unitarians who split from the Polish Calvinist Church in 1565, and by 1580 the Unitarian views of Fausto Sozzini (also known as Socinian) had become the majority in the country. Sozzini's grandson Andrzej Wiszowaty Sr. in 1665-1668 published *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum quos Unitarios vocant* (*Library of the Polish Brethren who are called Unitarians* 4 vols. 1665–69). The name was introduced in English by the Socinian Henry Hedworth in 1673. Thereafter the term became common currency in English, though their detractors continued to label both Arian and Unitarian views as ‘Socinian.’

Unitarianism which started in Europe spread to England and USA from where it spread around the World including India. The story of the beginning of the church in India is also unique because the churches started independently. The first church was established in Madras more than two hundred years ago by a Tamilian and the church in the hills was started by a native of the place Hajom Kissor Singh Lyngdoh Nongbri on September 18, 1887 independent of the other. Christian deist like Thomas Jefferson have some connection with the Unitarians and they honour the Jefferson’s Bible but they do not believe God is like a clock maker.

Round the States

By Insaq

J&K Separatists’snub; Centre eats humble pie
Centre seems to be at a dead end in Kashmir. It has had to lump the rebuff its all-party delegation got from the separatists in the Valley. Both Geelani and Omar Farooq slammed the door on enthusiastic senior leaders of the Left, JD(U) and others who had gone to open dialogue with them in Srinagar. This, after the BJP had to change stance of no talks with the Hurriyat, which it insists had lost hold on the people. Notwithstanding the propaganda that it unleashed against the Hurriyat leaders, the Centre has had to go along with the view of the delegation, which passed a resolution that both State and Central government must take steps for a dialogue with “all stake holders.” In effect, the dialogue with civil society, government officials and political parties doesn’t suggest any step forward and the PDP-BJP government is back to square one appealing to the people to shun violence and resolve issues through discussion. Interestingly, New Delhi has had to deny reports that it was contemplating a crackdown on the separatist leaders, as it’s a no-go with national leaders. The team has suggested that confidence-building measures be undertaken such as removing AFSPA from civilian areas, ensure

Andhra’s ‘Special’ Aid
The ruling TDP in Andhra Pradesh should be in a conundrum. The Centre on Wednesday night finally announced to give “special assistance package” and not “Special Category Status” to the State as demanded. Should Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu be relieved or feel let down by partner BJP, is the moot question. Finance Minister Jaitley’s package includes funding of Pollavaram irrigation project, tax concessions and special assistance. And has assured that “an amount equivalent to what the State might have got as a special category State will be compensated through externally aided projects for five years.” Can Naidu believe partner BJP? He has little choice and can best see the glass half full rather than half empty. However, the deal struck has both Congress and YSR Congress screaming it’s a “betrayal of the people.” Importantly, the package is subject to approval by Union Cabinet. Will there be a slip between the cup and the lip?

Karnataka Plays Safe
Better sense has prevailed over the Siddaramaiah government in Karnataka for the time being. It has chosen to play safe and not ruffle feathers of the Supreme Court. On Wednesday last it started

The order is to help the accused or any person connected to file appropriate application before Courts for redressal of grievances. Police stations which were in difficult terrain, having poor connectivity could take up to 72 hours for uploading the FIRs.

safety of citizens etc and that Prime Minister Modi should engage with Pakistan if he goes there for SAARC Summit in November. Clearly, the baton is out of the Centre’s hand and passed on to the all-party MPs. It’s anybody’s guess what’s next?.

Bihar Education Mess
Bihar is trying to clean up its education system mess. Of the 150 higher secondary schools and intermediate colleges inspected till now, affiliation of 88 has been suspended by the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) for failing to meet required norms. The action was triggered after reports revealed a sorry state of affairs, wherein schools had fudged facilities such as classrooms and laboratories they had. Shockingly, few schools were found to be only on paper with no teachers and students! In the past two years, 212 institutions were granted affiliation in a rush because of increase in school enrolment. The plus point has turned negative. Inspection of remaining institutions may spell more scams. The State education department must be overhauled and action taken against erring officials. Sooner the better, for the State’s kids.

Transparency In FIRs
States and their police departments can no longer play truant with FIRs (First Information Reports). On Wednesday last, the Supreme Court ordered that all police stations across the country must upload FIRs on their websites within 24 hours of their registration. If the police stations didn’t have websites, the State and UT governments should upload on their websites. The only exception being offences sensitive in nature, such as those pertaining to insurgency, sexual cases and terrorism. The order is to help the accused or any person connected to file appropriate application before Courts for redressal of grievances. Police stations which were in difficult terrain, having poor connectivity could take up to 72 hours for uploading the FIRs.

Time will tell whether the aim to have transparency will be achieved.

complying with the apex court’s order to release 15,000 cuses of water to Tamil Nadu for 10 days. However, it did so only after getting the nod from an-all party meeting convened. But with farmers’ protests erupting in the State, the government is contemplating asking the court for modification of its order. On the other side, while there was a sigh of relief in Tamil Nadu, the amount of water to be released is ‘not adequate’. Here too protests have begun, leading to inter-States bus service being affected from either side. The ball is now in the Cauvery Supervisory Committee’s court, which will visit the States to assess “ground realities” and hopefully find a formula to adjust current release against future release of water. Of course, both sides need to agree eventually. Will there be a miracle?

Haryana “Biryani Chase”

Haryana is now on a “biryani chase.” Its police is on a mission of collecting samples of biryani from stereet vendors in Mewat district to test the preparation for the meat used—i.e. whether it is beef or not. The action has been decided after the Gau Sewa Aayog (Cow service commission) has complaints coming to his doorstep about the vendors serving beef. Apparently, Haryana stands second to Uttar Pradesh when it comes to the number of complaints filed against people for smuggling and slaughter of cow for its meat. The mandate of the police is to check only biryani and not mutton curry, or kebabs as the vendors may be camouflaging the beef in the rice. The Muslim community is gravely upset as the action will not be restrained to Mewat only but other districts. It is an attempt to humiliate us, says a resident. The action is also very badly timed. Just before Eid. It is bound to cause harassment and give the police a handle to nit-pick. Surely, someone must see the absurdity and ensure the government lays its hands off the festivity.--- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Poor services of SMB

Editor
This letter is to highlight the poor quality of services provided by the Shillong Municipal Board (SMB). Taxes have been hiked at a tremendous rate, whereas there is no justification for them to do so, judging by the poor quality of services provided. In some localities, the services are so poor almost as to be non-functional. The Minister in Charge should improve the quality of the services provided by the SMB before, thinking of hiking taxes and increasing the exchequer of the Board by any means. There is a long list of grievances. Firstly, the water supply provided by the Board is insufficient You would be lucky to get three buckets of water a day. The services provided by municipal plumbers is pathetic and most of the time people end up losing their new pipes for no fault of theirs. When a complaint is registered the unhelpful staff come up

with lame excuses and shirk responsibilities to get them restored. The end result is that most of us, who are affected by water crisis, end up buying water. So what is the point of paying taxes to the Board? Secondly, there are no street lights in the so-called municipal areas. In fact the non-municipal areas are better lighted although they don’t need to spend so much on taxes. I know of a lady who lives in the non-municipal area, and was surprised that she had better lighting along the footpath leading to her house, for a small payment every month. If one walks along the streets of Shillong in the municipal areas, one feels a sense of insecurity due to absence of street lighting. It is only thanks to the light coming from peoples’ homes and passing vehicles that somewhat lights up our paths. Thirdly, when the septic tanks are full, the municipal trucks that come to clean it up charges up to Rs 7000 per trip and many a times one trip is not enough. So what is the purpose of a Municipal Board? They might as well privatise the whole range of services.

Last but not the least, even the garbage from peoples’ homes are picked up by the Dorbar Shnong in small pick- up trucks in many localities for a small payment made by every household. But one is appalled to see garbage dumps everywhere in the city after the SMB had done away with the dumping bins. The intention was good but the garbage collection system did not meet up with the needs of collecting garbage more frequently especially in commercial areas. It is such an ugly sight that greets tourists who flock here to get a breath of fresh air from the much touted, ‘Scotland of the East.

I therefore reiterate that the Minister, in charge of Municipal Affairs should improve the services of the Department, before thinking of a tax hike.

Yours etc.,
D Diengdoh
Shillong- 1

Misleading tourists

Editor,
On my way to Laikynsew a few days ago I

was stunned to see few signages of hotels and eateries along the route depicting the famous Nohsngithiang Falls as 'Seven Sisters Falls.' It appears that the Polo Towers Hotel at Sohra (Cherrapunjee) seems to have initiated the change. This is absolutely ridiculous and unethical. How come the local Village Dorbar and the Village Community did not know of such matters? And more surprising is their silence on this change. How can we allow any Tom, Dick and Harry to change the traditional names of waterfalls and resorts whenever they feel like? This renaming of places is misleading and an insult to the cultural sensitivities of the indigenous people of Meghalaya apart from hurting the image of our state.

Yours etc...
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.”

--- Henry David Thoreau

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Making and breaking records

AMERICAN astronaut Jeffrey Nels Williams landed on planet earth on September 6, 2016 after spending 534 days in space after he took off on March 18, 2015. Fifty eight year old Williams set the new NASA record for cumulative time spent in space. In those 534 days, Williams has captured some of planet Earth's more spectacular features such as the pale blues of coral reefs, unique agricultural plots, and winding river deltas, along with astrological features such as noctilucent clouds, aurorae, and the full moon. While in space Williams has seen the International Space Station (ISS) grow from a single, crew-less module to the continuously-manned orbiting laboratory that it is today. His first mission was aboard the Space Shuttle Atlantis back in 2000, where he worked to prepare the space station for its first crew, spending just 10 days in space. He returned in 2006 and spent six months there, setting up experiments and replacing equipment. In 2009 ,Williams commanded the station for the first time, overseeing the arrival of, among other things, the famous cupola. On his most recent mission, the station had officially been declared complete, but Williams still found work to do, adding a docking adaptor and helping to deploy a new module.

A Christian by faith, Williams confesses that he is never tired of viewing the beautiful planet earth from space; a planet which is the only home for humans and other living creatures. Earlier on his return from one of his space journeys, Expedition 21, Williams wrote the book, "The Works of His Hands: A View of God's Creation from Space." The book chronicles his sense of awe at the goodness of divine providence. Williams is a retired United States Army officer and a NASA astronaut. He is a veteran of four space flights and currently holds the American record for most days spent in space. But Williams' record is soon set to be broken by astronaut Peggy Whitson who is scheduled to undertake her space mission in November this year. The human spirit knows no bounds indeed! .

LOOKING BACK

March 5, 1989

CPI, CPI(M) oppose division of Assam

Both the Communist parties the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist party of India (Marxist) are opposed to formation of a separate state by further dividing the state of Assam. They however strongly favour the grant of local and regional autonomy to arrive at a negotiated settlement of the vexed tribal problem. The CPI in its provincial conference recently at Jorhat held that the present crisis could only be solved by granting autonomy at appropriate levels within the state of Assam. The conference in a resolution opined that it was wrong to assume that separate autonomous status to different tribal groups would only weaken the unity and integrity of Assam. Rather the process of spontaneous unity would be strengthened, the CPI felt.

Meanwhile the CPI(M) Assam state committee in a statement expressed similar views. The CPI(M) rejected the plea for separate state as unrealistic and extended its support to the unity of the state as well as the autonomy for the ethnic groups within the state of Assam. The CPI(M) state committee noted that the crux of the problem was recognition of the rights of the ethnic tribal minorities to have their identities recognized politically by granting them regional and local autonomy and held that on settlement could be

really reached unless this right was recongised. Both the CPI and CPI (M) described the violence as counter productive. CPI reminded the leaders of Bodo agitation that any movement when turned violent only paved the way for state violence. Violent methods had already contributed to the mutual distrust and suspicion among different sections of the society, the CPI pointed out. In the same tune the CPI(M) firmly opposed the current violence and observed that they would solve no problem, provoke police action and further violence and isolate the movement from the democratic forces of the state and the country.

Advocating a negotiated settlement of the trial question both the Communist parties emphasised the need for a break from the Congress(I) policy of last four decades. The CPI appealed to the AGP government to hold a meeting of all concerned including the tribal organizations and political parties to find a way out. CPI(M) also urged upon the people of Assam to mobilize public opinion for an early settlement through negotiation. The entire experience of the north east had shown that despite bloodshed and bloody suppression the solution of ethnic problem needed patient negotiations, the CPI(M) pointed out.

Skill Development in the North East

The demographic dividend of any nation is defined as the growth potential of the nation that can occur due to rapid increase in percentage of working population (15-64 years) to the total population. India stands at a crucial juncture on top of this demographic dividend. A large number of youth are entering the job market at a time when global numbers are declining. India not only seeks to fulfil its own ambition as a rising economic superpower but can also become the future human resource centre of the world. And thus in these interesting yet crucial times, the concept of skill development gains much prominence. Skill development is imparting training to any individual in a particular sector so that he/she can enter the job market with employment of a status that justifies their knowledge and skill level. With this goal in mind, the government of India has launched an ambitious Skilling Mission that seeks to skill 40.2crores by 2022. During the target year 2015-16 the results have been fairly positive with government achieving 23.64% of the target in the first quarter itself. With these premises, it would be a good time to revisit as well as analyse how skill development has performed in the north eastern states as well as chart a course for the future.

Alongwith the rest of the country, Skill Development has picked up in the NorthEast as well. The Arunachal Pradesh government has set up a State Skill Development Mission with the aim of training 50,000 people by 2022. The goals are set to be achieved through coordination with both government funded ITIs as well as private service providers. In Assam, skill development is imparted through EGM(Employment Generation Mission) as well as Assam State Livelihood Mission and National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM). These schemes have achieved phen-

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

omenal numbers. A Skill Development department in Assam has also been set up recently to spearhead the success story of skill development in Assam. Manipur has set up a number of committees that are engaging with varied stakeholders to carry the idea of skill development forward. The Meghalaya State Skill Development Society has trained 7700 youths in skill development, in its first phase and has ensured their placement too in different industries and sectors. The DDU-GKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kausalaya Yozna) aims to train rural youths and bring them into the job market. The Meghalaya government has also identified a few key sectors to work on, including Tourism, Automobile Mechanic, and House-keeping among others, through this scheme. Both Mizoram and Nagaland have aligned their skill development schemes and goals within the gambit of broader skill development goals of the country. Tripura has set up a separate State Skill Development Mission to enable youth to gain employment. Sikkim has inaugurated livelihood schools where skills are imparted to youth in different sectors including training them in arts and crafts. The livelihood schools in Sikkim have been performing consistently well .They have, in fact, given a new lease of life to the arts and crafts industry of the state.

While the above would show us that most of the states in the North East have immersed themselves in the objective of skill development, there are other steps to further sustain and maintain the momentum in achieving the goals of skill development mission. One of the first steps would be a comprehensive skill mapping of each state. Skill mapping would encompass the harnessing of traditional knowledge of a particular area and developing it into a skill which can be redesigned as a source of

employment. Such skill mapping that focuses on the needs of the catchment area would ensure meaningful employment for the local youth, instead of rapid migration to urban areas. The Assam government has already rolled out a framework and a map in this regard. For example, Barpeta district in Assam, which is traditionally known for local fireworks and bell metal handicrafts, have ITIs and other institutes in place which impart knowledge on these sectors. The syllabus of such institutes can be reworked to place the traditional domain knowledge and redesign it in such a way that the trained youth are ready for the market sector. At the same time, smaller MSME industries in cluster mode should be encouraged to be developed in such areas. This ecosystem would ensure that skill development reaches its logical end of achieving employment. Similar model can be developed in Cachar district, known for its pottery and Sital Patti work. Sonitpur district can be developed into a prominent rice milling centre, given its existing experience as well as expertise.

The other North Eastern states could carry out their own skill mapping exercise in order to identify those niche areas where they can develop a strong foothold backed by a traditional knowledge ecosystem or advantages of history or geography. Tripura can harness its immense potential of becoming a Rubber giant. The Rubber manufactured in Tripura can also be exported to neighbouring countries. With the recent plans to connect North East by railways to the East Asian neighbours, such business models gain more trajectory. Hence there is an urgent need to develop a strong skill development mechanism to train workers for the rubber industry. Nagaland can focus on tourism centred around the Hornbill Festival which has become a nationwide phenomenon today. The idea of tourism

has to move from an overview to a more niche targeted model. For example, Meghalaya can stress on few areas like Sohra, Dawki and the unexplored Jaintia hills to develop centers of excellence in tourism with a whole support system of food and beverage, hospitality, adventure sports spun around it. Apart from skill mapping, there is a need to integrate the international market by identifying new areas where traditional domain knowledge of these areas can be harnessed to create market for certain products in neighbouring countries. This model has been replicated by Pran Foods in Bangladesh. The food processing company from Bangladesh has created a niche market for itself in North East by introducing products like Litchi Juice in the market. In the last few years, the company has gained a firm foothold in a large number of areas in the North East. The North East states must take advantage of this cross border trade as well and eye industries which can deliver products which neighbours need. For example, the rich tradition of handicrafts in forms of gamoucha (towels) and shawls in the North East, can be utilised to create options for products in the market in neighbouring countries for the same. The Pran Food model of Bangladesh must be utilised as a template to identify areas where North Eastern states can thrust themselves. The North Eastern states must take advantage of close proximity to its East Asian neighbours and derive economic prosperity through the same.

While Skill Development programmes in the North East is undoubtedly on track, further innovative solutions will yield even better results. These steps have to be rooted in the heart of the region and be futuristic at the same time, in terms of harnessing the knowledge towards sustaining meaningful employment through the path of skill development. *(Views expressed by the author is personal in nature.)*

TO THE EDITOR

Impeach the Assembly

Editor, One does not have to graduate in rocket science to understand that the 60 MLAs in the state are only for themselves and nothing else. It is only a pretension that they are for the people. The selective topping of the roads through which these self-absorbed lot is visiting the temporary legislative assembly at Brookside Mansion to "celebrate the autumn session of the state assembly," and having no resonance with the plight of the common people in the state is a real mockery of democracy. This shameless show is led by the chief minister who has recently got a breather after he was almost pulled down by his own party men but somehow managed to get a breather from the mother - son duo managed AICC (All India Congress Committee) at the national capital. The AICC must be replaced with SRCC - Sonia Rahul Congress Committee since 'All India' is a real misnomer. The opposition in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly has no other business than going after the Speaker - who is accused of toeing the line of the ruling brigade. What does the opposition want? That the Speaker should revolt against the ruling side and take their side? The ruling

side is so busy with "people centric governance" that they don't have much time to spend inside the Assembly given the autumn assembly length. Just look at the city's roads and those in Mawhati, Shillong - Guwahati Highway at Umsning, Jaintia Hills Highway connecting NC Hills, Garo Hills. These shameless bunch of legislators care two hoots and will come with their begging bowls as 2018 approaches. See the power scenario in the state. It is in the doldrums since even to supply uninterrupted power supply to the ongoing autumn session of the assembly, the MeECL has to shut down power supply in certain areas of the city and elsewhere so that the "tamasha" inside the assembly can continue.

People in the heart of the city have to depend on water carriers since the "palm greased" SMB / MUDA cannot ensure supply, whereas, the politicians are happy with passing the buck. The schools in the state are biting the dust and so are our teachers, who retire empty handed after years of service for want of policies and regulations by the State Government to determine their future. This is an utter show of sham going on inside the assembly and nothing can change if these sixty 'peoples' (sic) aren't shown the door out of the main secretariat. This is a disgraceful show which needs to be stopped.

Impeach the assembly! Yours etc, PK Dwivedi Shillong - 1

Rejoinder from DTO Shillong

Editor, Apropos the letter to the editor captioned, "Traffic Jams- Shillong's woes" (ST September 9, 2016) where one Salil Gewali has alleged certain anomalies and corrupt practices of dishonest transport officers, I would like to clarify to the general public and Salil Gewali in particular that this office is not issuing local taxi permits through the back door and that too at a whopping amount of Rs.2.65 lakh per permit. Issue of local taxi permits has been stopped with effect from 31st March 2009 except in special cases, for example for people with disabilities and surrendered militants for rehabilitation. Even this is not done by this office alone but in a transparent manner through the Regional Transport Authority with the Deputy Commissioner as its Chairman and other members which includes the Superintendent of Police. Therefore, the question of issuing taxi permits by this office is an allegation which seeks to malign the image of the Department.

Secondly, for information of all, anybody who currently owns a local taxi permit can always approach this authority if he/she wishes to replace the existing

old vehicle with the new one for the existing permit. For example if one is having an old ML05 series of vehicle, he/she can replace the same in the new vehicle registered in his/her name having the ML05P series but the number and year of the permit so issued remains the same and the old vehicle can be converted into a private car. This is a regular process and there is nothing illegal about it.

Further, if one desires to transfer the permit to another person he/she can do that either with the same vehicle or with a new one. If he/she wants to place the old permit with the new vehicle, the old vehicle is to be converted into a private vehicle as per procedure.

In conclusion, while the Constitution of India has given all citizens the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression it may be worthwhile for an individual to seek clarification with the concerned authority before putting the blame on anyone. This office has put in great efforts to streamline the procedures in order to improve efficiency, transparency and ensure smooth functioning to benefit the public.

Yours etc., H.F Khongsit, District Transport Officer & Secretary,Regional Transport Authority, East Khasi Hills, Shillong

Collapse Of Judicial System

By S Saraswathi

The procedure for appointment of judges has become a contentious issue between the Government and the judiciary forcing the Prime Minister to come out with a conciliatory statement that there is no scope for any confrontation or tension with any constitutional institution. Acknowledging that there must be as much warmth with judiciary as needed for constitutional decorum, he has stated that he would try his best to maintain that decorum.

This soft statement is significant as the issue of delay in the execution of the recommendations of the judicial collegium for appointment of judges for over eight months is coming up for hearing in the Supreme Court shortly. It stands in marked contrast to the stern message of the Supreme Court a few days back which sounds that the stage of decorum is already over. It conveyed the court's concern over the degeneration of the justice delivery system described in a strong term as "collapsing" that it "won't tolerate logjam in judges' appointment which is stifling judicial work". CJI Thakur is reported to have told the Attorney General that "the Centre is attempting to bring the judiciary to a grinding halt by not appointing high court judges".

The issue now includes fixing accountability for the delay in the appointment of judges. India is having less than 11 judges per one million population which is one of the lowest in the world. Lack of adequate number of judges being the main cause for judicial delay, the on-going clash between the Executive and the Judiciary over judges' appointment cannot be watched passively by citizens who want speedy justice. Incidentally, time factor in deciding court cases is an indicator for assessment of proficiency of justice delivery system in a country.

The tussle between the Judiciary and the Executive over the collegium system for appointment of judges is going on ever since the system was introduced. It is further complicated by reported differences within the present collegiums leading to weakening of popular trust in the judicial system as a friend in need.

A senior sitting judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Chelameshwar, who is a member of the present collegium, has expressed dissatisfaction over the process for appointment of judges, particularly lack of transparency. His strong statement indicting the collegium system as "absolutely opaque and inaccessible both to public and history, barring occasional leaks" shows split within the judiciary as in political parties. It is reported that he also refrained from attending the collegium meeting.

It was an important meeting convened to decide on the draft Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) regarding appointment of judges prepared by the union government in response to the Supreme Court order in 2015. Its verdict then struck down the National Judicial Accountability Act (NJAC Act) passed by the government to replace the collegium system. The Act provided for a 6-member panel comprising CJI, two Supreme Court judges, Union Law Minister, and two eminent persons to appoint judges.

Relevant is the fact that the dissenting member of the collegium today was the lone dissenter in the 5-judge Constitution Bench which upheld the 20 year old Collegium System in 2015 in which the government was given no role in appointing judges. Above all, he expressed strong views that keeping the government away from the appointment process was "illogical and inconsistent with foundations of theory of democracy".

Lack of unity among judges on this issue is widening with more and more judges voicing their individual opinions for and against the collegium system. A retired judge of the Supreme Court, obviously on the basis of his experience, is reported to have described

that the system has degenerated into a "give and take" policy and the members had not proved themselves to be "detached". The citizens can only hope that this is exaggeration and pray that judiciary can get over this crisis without delay.

The issue involves a very important task of maintaining the independence of the judiciary and safeguarding the balance of power among the three principal organs of governance. Prolonged delay in resolving it will only add to the woes of litigants looking for justice.

People must be sick of hearing the oft quoted saying of the British PM, Gladstone (1809-98), "justice delayed is justice denied". Nobody but the litigants and the affected people are anxious for speedy settlement of disputes and for speedy trials. Statistics on pendency of cases in courts are but numbers for others - be they concerned authorities or official and non-official service providers of various categories at various levels.

It is reported that total pendency in various courts is over 2.24 crore and about 475 judicial posts are vacant out of about 1100. The National Judicial Data Grid shows that fresh cases filed in courts outnumber those disposed off in the same period. In August, 7.28 lakh cases were disposed of, but 7.70 lakh fresh cases were registered, which indicates the trend of increase in backlog. Consequently, courts may be tempted to shorten hearing and come to hasty conclusions.

In India, people generally knock at the doors of the police or the judiciary when there is no other option and when matters reach a critical point. One of the main causes for continuance and popularity of out-of-court settlements, caste panchayats, katta panchayats, and informal arbitration by village elders is the inordinate delay in deciding cases in law courts. Traditional forms of resolution of disputes may be a healthy sign of community power and harmony. But, there is no guarantee that they will adhere to the law of the land without being influenced by traditional prejudices.

One way of tackling the problem of backlog is to establish separate divisions for some important matters. The Law Commission Report of 2015 favoured establishment of commercial courts, an idea that already had the approval of the cabinet in 2009. A bill then introduced has undergone revisions and finally the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Appellate Division of High Courts Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in April 2015. This bill provides for creation of commercial divisions in high courts and at district courts to handle disputes relating to financial transactions. However, mere creation of such courts cannot solve the problem unless required number of judges and other staff to man the offices are created without delay.

Apart from delay in appointments, there are other problems also contributing to people's distrust in getting justice through the judiciary. Legal professionals are adept in prolonging cases for several years. Automatic filing of appeals in the Supreme Court, taking adjournments on false and frivolous grounds, enormous number of court holidays, and in recent years frequent strike by lawyers are forms of exploitation of litigants by legal professionals. The sufferers are clients and only clients.

Prolonged dispute over the power of appointment will create suspicion over the independence of the judges in upholding law and justice. Selection of judges may be left to a panel comprising members from both the executive and the judiciary. At the same time, all contributory factors for judicial delay must be addressed before outsiders push us to introduce legal reforms.--INFA

(The writer is Former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

“*It's time to say goodbye, but I think goodbyes are sad and I'd much rather say hello. Hello to a new adventure.*”

--- Ernie Harwell

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 36SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

Vector Borne Disease

Sri Lanka and Maldives have banished malaria. But large parts of India have remained victims of vector borne disease. Chickenguniya has added to the misery caused by malaria and dengue. The reason is that health systems in India are vulnerable. The country needs to prioritise and emphasize preventive measures. The first step should be a well-organised public health system which should curtail the damage cause by endemic disease. More attention should be paid to Swachh Bharat and supply of safe drinking water, two of the essentials to ensure welfare according to Amartya Sen. Finance should not be a serious deterrent. The Swachh Bharat scheme itself raises huge resources for sanitation. What is needed is vision and accountability.

Endemic disease does great harm to the economy. The effect can be seen in Delhi where infrastructure projects have slowed down as a result of depletion in the labour force. Add to that the pathetic state of governance which is true of the whole of urban India. It is fanciful to talk of smart cities. Swachh Bharat or relief from vector borne disease is also an unrealistic goal if governance is in bad shape. There cannot be any real accountability if there is no clear chain of command. India is a country of sloganeering which adds up to nothing. Sri Lanka and Maldives have shown the way. The annual pestilence can be anticipated and duly prevented. Of course, it can be possible if only powerful politicians show the will to get things done instead of trading accusations among one another.

LOOKING BACK

March 5, 1989

Navigational aids in NE airports

That navigational and fire-fighting aids at north eastern airports, particularly at Dimapur and Guwahati, are inadequate and far from safe is a complaint given vent to in the Press quite often. What is surprising is that there is scarcely any response from the authorities concerned to these complaints either by way of clearing up the position or redressing the deficiencies complained of. Particularly serious is the one such that even though equipment in the instrument landing system (ILS) failed on many occasions the officials of air traffic control do not always feel it necessary to inform the airlines about these failures.

For instance, as recently as on Feb. 15 last an Indian Airlines' Air-bus flight from Calcutta reached Guwahati but the pilot did not get the 'guide path' of the ILS, so that he was holding over Guwahati' for over 15 minutes. It was raining at the time and visual landing was impossible because the "already poor visibility" was fast worsening. When he communicated it to the tower the pilot came to know that the "ILS was unserviceable" and then returned to Calcutta since "holding any more could have been dangerous".

Aviation sources say that such failures have often been recorded at airports in the north- eastern region. The sources said that at Dimapur the emergency aids and even the fire-fighting arrangements are particularly deplorable.

The Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA) sources alleged, moreover, that Dimapur airport had only one IA technician but no engineer. An aircraft's "flaps" and "leading edges" are extended when its engine is started and the ground staff confirm the extension over headphones. But at Dimapur the ground staff do

Governance by confrontation Vs Governance through cooperation

By Toki Blah

In the day to day life of the ordinary citizens of Meghalaya, especially those of the Khasi Jaintia Hills, a question lingers in the air. People ask, they wonder, they speculate and they worry about the role, function and responsibilities of our grassroot system of governance, the institution fondly known as the Dorbar Shnong. Our Dorbars have been identified as traditional institutions of grassroot governance, and therein lies the trouble. As indigenous people we have been discouraged, subtly dissuaded and deterred from asking too many uncomfortable questions about the efficacy and functioning of tradition. Tradition is a holy cow, something never to be questioned; to be delicately handled only by ordained priests such as third rate politicians, academicians from their scholarly ivory towers and power hungry office bearers of traditional bodies and by no one else. For others to raise the alarm, to evaluate and to criticise that tradition has been hijacked; usurped and becoming increasingly irrelevant is akin to blasphemy. Come to think of it, it's time now for some serious blasphemous discussions on the subject.

The first question that comes to mind is what exactly, irrespective whether it is modern or traditional, is the role, duty and function of any grassroot institution? What are the basic and fundamental essentials of a Dorbar or a Panchayat for that matter? There is the claim that grassroot institutions are platforms where the purest form of democracy prevails! True, but if the institution itself is unclear about its primary role, mission and purpose of existence, then such a claim becomes tenuous and doubtful. Today this is exactly what is happening to our durbars and if the truth be said , they have lost focus. The mandate of Grassroot institutions like the Dorbar is to provide basic fundamental services to the community they serve. This system of service delivery is called governance. A question arises - are the durbars providing governance which is in tune with the needs of our times?

One of the biggest handicaps that Meghalaya faces is the multiplicity of institutions of governance and the role they perceive for themselves. We have the Govt, the ADCs, the himas and now a mushrooming of apex bodies of durbars that call themselves Synjuks. The sad fact is that each and everyone of these institutions is focused on one and one issue only - how to garb themselves with political power! All of them of course vow that they exist for the interest of the common man. Nothing is further from the truth as each exist only for themselves and their vested interests! As such confrontation with each other is the main strategy to ensure survival. Look at the pointless quarrel between the Govt and the KHADC. Each exists because of the Constitution which has clearly defined their respective subjects (not

territorial areas) that each entity is suppose to handle. Today the row is over who has jurisdiction over 6 Schedule areas and non schedule areas (essentially it is a question of territory). The battle cry has been over where the other side should or should not intrude. That there has been utter failure to perform as per mandate of the Constitution has been conveniently hidden from the public. All this stupid charade is then passed of as governance!

What ever might be the shortcomings of the current autumn session of the State Assembly, one or two issues of import that came out for discussion are (a) The silent invasion of drugs into our society, especially amongst our youth (b) the urgent need for civic Urban Governance and waste management systems in our societies. Our very existence as an urban community depends on it (c) the pressing need for Govt, ADCs, political parties and traditional institutions to come together; to identify themselves as social stakeholders and to act in unison to save Meghalaya society. How refreshing to note the realisation in the State Assembly that political posturing has not done any of us much good. None can dispute the urgency in addressing the above social needs on an emergent and participatory footing. One is therefore encouraged by this rare political vision displayed by our MLAs. This type of visionary leadership needs to be encouraged. The despair arises from the fact that none of the above social ailments flicker on the radar of our traditional bodies. Political millage through absurd demands such as exemption of Government servant Rangbah Shnongs from Govt service rules continue to dominate the traditional mindset. It is a non issue which at best is an ego problem of Rangbah Shnongs who work in Govt departments. What has it got to do with the welfare and wellbeing of the common man? What has it got to do with the future of my children? How does it help to bring about Good Governance in our shnongs? God only knows.

As raised in the Assembly discussions, most shnongs are faced with the silent invasion of drugs. It is a fact, a horrible fact that threatens the very fabric of our culture and way of life. The collective body of the durbars , the SNSBH, may prefer to turn a blind eye on the issue but fact is many individual durbars are affected by it and if the truth be told are scared witless, because it has pared no one. It is clear that the menace of drugs cannot be dealt by any single individual or by the dorbar alone. It demands a collective effort by all. There is this urgent call for coordinating our collective efforts to tackle the problem. The Dorbars need to coordinate their efforts with the police, with the district administration, with social welfare with the health department. The MLA, MDC, the Rangbah Shnong and religious leaders need to work together as a team. This is what society expects of them and they must not let society down.

It is the same on how we handle urban and civic governance. Everyone is seriously concerned over the civic deterioration of Shillong and other urban centres of Meghalaya. The Municipality has not been allowed to function but at the same time the 6th Schedule has failed to provide any alternate institution. In the meanwhile the state needs to come up with a workable waste management system. We need to come up with policies and plans on how to collect, transport and effectively dispose off our wastes. Working together offers a viable solution to our problems. It is the key. We need to reorient our institutions, be they the Dorbars, the Municipality, MUDA, the KHADC or the Urban Affairs Department. We need to reorient our focus and vision on the issue. The bureaucrats involved need to listen to the people, the people need to listen to reason and logic. Noises made from the Assembly and the Govt appear to be in favour of such a paradigm for the new century. It is the hope of this essay that the new Minister I/c Urban Affairs take charge of this singular aspect of urban governance and call, at the earliest, a joint meeting of all stakeholders to discuss the issue. Hopefully we can come up with a viable and workable proposal not only for this generation but for the next 90 years to come.

administration will follow suit. Though the lawless hawkers have tried to encroach but thanks to the JMB which has done a commendable job in evicting them. The hawkers should know that there is plenty of space at lawmusiang and above all there are enough stalls which are empty at lawthymme. They should not take the law in their hands. It may be mentioned that the Jowai Municipal Board has not enough revenue to meet the salaries of the JMB staff as a result of which the JMB staff stopped working for about a fortnight, leaving Jowai Town with a foul smell. If only the people of Jowai Town could increase the monthly fees deposited to the JMB then the grievances of the staff would be addressed. Once against I sincerely appreciate the JMB and the District Administration for making lawmusiang spacious and surely the people of Jowai puts their hand together to express approval for the work done.

Mean while the park adjacent to the Deputy Commissioner's residence looks beautiful and clean after the Forest Department took up the responsibility of cleaning it up. Children are now playing safely with no fear of rodents while it was a bushy park. We can say that it would look more beautiful if flowers are planted and with a keeper (mali) to look after.

Yours etc.,
Omarka Laloo,
Mynthong, Jowai.

Don Shahabuddin challenges Nitish’s authority Lalu playing politics with Bihar CM

By Arun Srivastava

It may sound bizarre, but the fact remains that Nitish Kumar's JD(U) has to beg to Lalu Prasad to restrain his disciple don Shahabuddin from hurling diatribe and denunciation against Kumar. No one would have imagined that the proxy boys of Nitish have to approach Lalu for buying peace.

The importance of being Shahabuddin could be implicit from this simple incident. Though the RJD's vice president, Raghubans Prasad Singh, next to Lalu in party hierarchy, has been quite critical of Nitish ever since he became chief minister, the JD(U) or Nitish never took cognizance of his utterances. But a one liner quip from Shahabuddin rocked the political establishment of the state and JD(U) has to reach to the door step of Lalu.

Just after stepping out of the Bhagalpur jail, Shahabuddin had created a tremor in political circle by calling Nitish Kumar "CM of circumstances" and lampooning him by saying that Nitish cannot get more than 20 seats on his own. The don says; "I just had said that Nitish Kumar became chief minister because of circumstances, so what is wrong in that. A regular chief minister comes from the masses, others become chief minister by virtue of being in a coalition...because of circumstances. Our neta (leader) is obviously (RJD chief) Lalu Yadav, (and) Nitish Kumar is the chief minister of the state, (there's) no debate on that".

Shahabuddin explicitly clarified that Nitish Kumar was not his leader. For him Lalu Prasad will continue to remain his leader. He says, "I've started my political career with him and will end it with him. Whatever decision he takes, wherever he goes, I'll follow him. For me, he is the only mass leader in the country today, and a natural leader". What was worse in reply to Niish's rebuttal that the people of Bihar had given him the mandate, he retorted "Madhu Koda ko bhi public ka mandate tha (Even Madhu Koda had public mandate)". Madhu Koda the lone RJD legislator in Jharkhand became the chief minister and was in office for nearly two years. He was later jailed for his involvement in coal scam.

Shahabuddin disowning Nitish has not been an impulsive observation. He was speaking the mind of his leader, Lalu Yadav. Those who are aware of the style of functioning of Lalu know that no leader of any stature can open his mouth on any issue, forget criticism of Nitish, without the tacit approval of the RJD boss. Though lone exception has been Raghubans Parasd, he too has been cautious of not crossing the Laxman Rekha.

Shahabuddin's avowal projected Lalu Yadav as the leader above the equals. In the political circle so far he was being acknowledged as the big brother of Nitish, who interfered into the running of the government. But Shahabuddin's remarks made it explicit that Nitish was following the dictates and fulfilling the wishes of Lalu. Nitish has no independent locus standi. Little doubt that it has eclipsed the aura and invincibility of Nitish personally rebutting Shahabuddin's remark vindicates its magnitude and significance. There is a galaxy of party spokesperson but none dared to counter Shahabuddin.

While generally people of the state have taken Shahabuddin's jibes seriously, there are some who look at the development from the perspective of the friendly shoot-out. They nurse the view that the release of Shahabuddin must not cause damage to image of Nitish which was why he was resorting to such tactics. True enough his release has put the government in dock. Questions are being raised if dreaded don Anant Singh can be pushed inside the jail

under crime control Act (CCA), why Shahabuddin was allowed to come out notwithstanding he was convicted in some other cases and is still under trial in some important cases?

These people apprehend that it was done at the behest of Lalu Prasad. They look at the episode as a part of Shahabuddin's strategy to be harsh towards Nitish, to emphasize the differences between them. In fact the release of Shahabuddin is causing more problems to the Nitish Kumar government. It has added to the peoples' perception that 'jungle raj' is returning. What has further reinforced the peoples' notion is the police action in not collecting toll charge at the Muzaffarpur toll booth from Shahabuddin's convoy of more than 200 cars coming from Bhagalpur jail to Sivan. Later it transpired that the toll employees had police orders to let more than 200 cars in ex-MP Shahabuddin's convoy pass without toll..The convoy included many red beacon cars. IN fact people seek reply; "How permission was granted to take out a procession of hundreds of cars with arms while Shahabuddin was going to his hometown of Siwan from Bhagalpur jail?

An astute politician, trying to steer clear of the controversy after JD(U)'s request, Lalu has simply to say: " I am not aware of the developments. However I will ask the leaders to restrain and behave in a decent manner." This is a usual refrain resorted to by the politics to silence the public criticism. Lalu's stance is not different.

To complicate the things further for Nitish, a day after Shahabuddin said Nitish became Bihar's chief minister only because he was in a coalition with the RJD, the former union minister Raghubans Singh said he had been opposed to Nitish becoming CM. " M a h a g a t h a n d h a n (coalition) leaders had decided that Bihar CM would be Nitish Kumar, I didn't agree with it...But leaders decided it (that Nitish Kumar will be Bihar CM), so I had to obey their decision".

If for Chandrashekar Prasad, alias Chanda Babu, whose three sons were allegedly murdered by the goons of Shahabuddin, the release of the don from jail after eleven year stay in prison, "is nothing less than my death sentence", for the Bihar chief minister it heralds the beginning of an uncertain future. Nitish cannot be sure of the survival of his government and the existence of the grand alliance. Maverick Lalu may play a trick any day.

Shahabuddin is out on bail in the murder of Rajiv Roushan, Chanda Babu's eldest son. Roushan was an eyewitness to the murder of his two brothers. Chanda Babu says, "My sons Girish and Satish were kidnapped in 2004 by Shahabuddin's men and killed by pouring acid at Pratappur. Rajiv, the elder son, was kidnapped but he escaped. When he returned to Siwan in 2014, he too was murdered". Rajiv was killed in front of his father just 21 days after his marriage. Significantly two most wanted "absconding "killers Mohammad Javed and Mohammad Kaif, of journalist Rajdev Ranjan were spotted in the don's convoy seen travelling with Shahabuddin when he was let out of Bhagalpur jail. It is beyond comprehension why the Siwan police failed to arrest them? In a major turn of events, now the senior police officials maintain that so far the police had no proof to establish Shahabuddin's direct involvement in Rajdev Ranjan's murder on May 13 this year. However earlier Laddan Mian, a contract killer close to the Siwan strongman, had hinted at the involvement of don. Laddan and five suspects - Sonu Gupta, Rohit Kumar, Rajesh Kumar, Vijay and Vishnu - are lodged in Siwan district jail. (IPA Service)

“A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it begins to rain.”
--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 37 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2016

Food and Research

NOT long ago there was a serious conflict between the tobacco lobby and the US government because of the statutory warning on packets of cigarettes. In India the warning states that tobacco causes cancer. Now the same controversy has arisen over sugar. Opinion seems to differ on whether a low-carb or a low-fat diet is healthier. The food industry majors are doing their best to bend research their own way, disregarding the truth about what is healthy and what is not. It seems a proven fact that the American sugar lobby paid scientists in the 1960s to play down the deleterious effect of sugar in causing heart disease. Now there is evidence that a trade group called Sugar Research Foundation which at present calls itself the Sugar Association has gone the tobacco road. Three Harvard scientists have been paid to publish a handpicked 1967 review of research on sugar, fat and heart disease. It negates the common belief to serve the interests of the sugar industry.

There is ample evidence that research on the food industry influences governmental nutritional guidelines. The objective is to augment the profit of the industry. The recent wrangling over a Nestle product is a case in point. What is most alarming is the effect motivated guidance has on children. Parents have been increasingly induced to go for junk food for their children resulting in childhood obesity and growing lifestyle diseases. Diabetes is a serious threat. It is necessary to ensure that food research is funded by the right sources. There may be cynics of course who say that if the environment is unhealthy, there is no point in being cautious eaters. Eat whatever is tasty.

LOOKING BACK
March 5, 1989

IDBI in the North-East

The General Manager of the North-Eastern regional office of the Industrial Development Bank of India gave a rather satisfying account of its performance at the silver jubilee celebrations of IDBI held at Guwahati. The IDBI commenced its operations in this region by opening a branch at Guwahati in 1971, which was upgraded as a regional office in 1976. A decade later the IDBI opened its branch offices in the remaining six states of this region in 1986-87. Assam, therefore, has so far been the largest, almost the sole, beneficiary of this regional office, receiving in 1987-88 alone a total assistance of about Rs 65 crore which compares very favourably with the bare 0.18 crore in 1970-71, the year it started functioning at Guwahati. Assam's total assistance from IDBI upto December 1988 comes to Rs, 256 crore which, of course, the Assam Chief Minister in his inaugural address considered quite insignificant, compared to the cumulative assistance of over Rs 30,000 crore for all-India.

At the regional level, Assam is fortunate to have made much better use of the IDBI, the regional office being located at Guwahati which by the way is also the commercial hub of the entire region. The industrial climate is far more congenial in Assam than it is in the other smaller States of the region which have rather been too slow in receiving the message of industrialisation, The IDBI has established two technical consultancy organisations, viz. NEITCO in 1973 and NECON in 1973 and have so far trained altogether 2158 potential entrepreneurs. Upto June last year it sponsored 98 entrepreneurship development programmes in different States of the region, about half of which is in Assam alone. At present it is in the process of setting up training-cum-development centres in six states of the region to provide training facilities to promote a new class of

entrepreneurs. The smaller states which have not yet even faintly picked up the tempo of industrialisation should be able to take full advantage of this training programme and then of the financial assistance provided by the IDBI. In Meghalaya and other similar hill states cultivable land is particularly scarce and therefore the brunt of economic development in these States has to be borne by industries of various grades suited to local temperament and climate. Being late entrants, these smaller States may come up to the level of conforming to all the all India norms of the IDBI. It should, therefore, be the role and responsibility of the regional office to adapt itself to local needs and situations to provide the quantum of assistance required for the economic development of these comparatively more backward units of this region.

Centre against division of Assam

The Centre would not allow further division of Assam Union Minister of State for Home Mr Santosh Mohan Dev said here today. The Centre wanted to solve the current Bodo problem in Assam through mutual discussions, he said while addressing the open session of the Congress(I) state level convention on the panchayats. Mr Dev said Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi was keen to solve the Punjab problem and had already announced a package programme for this purpose. The Centre was taking special initiatives in bringing to the negotiation table those elements indulging in "terrorism" he said adding the government was prepared to hold discussions with any terrorist organizations provided they abjured violence.

No-confidence motion loses teeth in Meghalaya

It is commonplace for the Nationalist Peoples' Party (NPP) a party which won with a huge margin in the parliamentary elections against its closest rival the Congress which is the ruling party in the State, to believe that the results are a public indictment against the ruling party. Following Conrad Sangma's victory the NPP had been stating times without number that Dr Mukul Sangma should step down for losing the Tura bye-election. Hence the no-confidence motion was expected as this is the first assembly session after the Tura bye-polls. But a parliamentary election is hardly the barometer for testing the strength or otherwise of the State Government. There were many factors that led to the victory of the NPP candidate, foremost among which was that he was stepping into the shoes of his late father PA Sangma. The BJP and UDP provided much moral and physical support by not setting up candidates, the latter for want of any contender. Congress candidate Dikkanchi D Shira was hardly a match for Conrad Sangma when it came to public debates and also as a parliamentary representative. These are indisputable facts.

For a while the BJP kept on harping on the possibility of the MUA-2 government of Dr Mukul Sangma toppling under its own weight. Now the BJP has decided that it is wiser remain silent and allow the Congress-led government to become a victim of its own inherent contradictions. Well, that did not seem to work. For one, dissension in the Congress party is an old wives' tale. We have seen the shenanigans being played out time and again with the incumbent chief ministers flying to Delhi as if it's a stone's throw away, to ply with the AICC that they do not deserve to be dropped; that they have provided good governance; that schemes have been regularly and effectively implemented. All these discussion take place within the AICC with not a shred of evidence that the claims are indeed authentic and with no report card to buttress those claims.

At one time I recall a CM aspirant returning to Shillong from Delhi and obviously sore that he

could not make the cut for becoming CM. In a fit of pique he lashed out saying that if only had a few crore rupees he would have got the CM's post. So within the AICC things are not as straightforward as they are made out to be. Money plays an important role. Some senior Congressmen have alleged that even meeting the AICC President, Sonia Gandhi requires that the machinery that grants access to her be well oiled. It is not easy to meet the Grand Dame of the Congress! And then the AICC puts up a drama of sending the person in charge of Meghalaya to come and assess the situation here. The man comes and talks to Congress party workers only to show that they have been consulted. No one really cares for the views of party workers. It's the Congress MLAs whose views count, particularly those with the potency to bring down the Government. We recall how Major Ved Prakash had in 2007 carried in a sealed envelope to Delhi the secret votes by 29 Congress MLAs to decide the fate of the two contenders for the CM's post -JD Rymbai and DD Lapang. At the time Dr Mukul Sangma was also in the fray but later withdrew his candidature. Such political theatrics are part of the Congress culture.

The same drama - clamouring for leadership change - was enacted yet again recently. Many moons later the matter is settled and Dr Mukul Sangma jettisoned some of the ministers who had become a liability to his government (particularly the PWD Minister). Not that he has done any better this time! PWD will still be the Department that could cause the downfall of Dr Sangma's government because it will still be the worst performing department of his government. In the meanwhile, within his own party Dr Sangma has stolen a march. Perhaps his detractors lack strategy; perhaps they could not converge on the point of an alternative leader to match the astute Sangma. Whatever be the reasons, the AICC seems to have settled on Mukul Sangma as the best bet for now.

But coming back to the No Confidence Motion (NCM) against the MUA -2, which actually is an NCM against Mukul Sangma, this strategy is a bit worn out. We are aware that Meghalaya

has about 15 months to go before the next assembly elections. Opposition political parties would give an arm and a leg to be able run the Government and pamper their constituents with schemes. NCMs are supposed to be targeted attacks by opposition parties. But for that they require a considerable amount of prior organisation and floor management. Voters are generally unconcerned about change in government. They know that as far as politicians are concerned they only want power. It is highly unlikely that the Opposition would be any different from the MUA-2 as far as governance is concerned. Besides, (and this is a fatal flaw of politicians in Meghalaya) the Opposition in Meghalaya is a disparate group of ambitious men. After having moved the NCM, let us suppose that the opposition wins the day, the question that follows would be - Who will be the next Chief Minister?

The NCM could only have been won if some Congress MLAs also voted against the Mukul Sangma Government. Would they agree to have Dr Don Kuper Roy as their CM? Doubtful! If I can read the signs of the times then Dr Roy does not even enjoy the confidence of his own party MLAs (UDP). His tenure in 2008 was lackluster and Roy himself is not an inspirational leader. Remembers how his Government fell at the first hint of trouble in 2008? Dr Roy cannot be trusted to lead a Government comprising incongruent elements. I doubt that the HSPDP would support Roy as CM. In fact, those of us who know the political situation here also know that the combined opposition forces would not be able to decide on a CM and that would lead to more political instability and short-circuiting of whatever governance was happening under the MUA-2.

Normally voters are more attentive to NCMs when there are reinforcing negative signals about the government's performance, such as weak economic performance, a major corruption scandal and also if they see that that there are potential leaders in the Opposition who can bring about substantial change. But voters here don't believe in musical chairs that are being played out without

any real benefit to them. Hence as far as voters are concerned they are apathetic to these seasonal political antics. Before bringing a 'No Confidence Motion' the combined Opposition should have shared with the public who they have in mind as the alternative leader and what is the plan of action of that new dispensation. But what we see is an Opposition going to battle without the ammunition required to take the battle to its logical end.

And then on Friday we will have another NCM against the Assembly Speaker AT Mondal. This will be the second time that he is being tested. The Opposition suspects that Mondal is too close to the ruling Government. Now when have we had a Speaker who could eschew his political affiliations simply because he sits on the Speaker's chair? We have had enough debates on the need to insulate the Speaker from party politics but have had to agree that it is well nigh impossible as long as he needs to seek re-election from one or the other party or even as an Independent candidate. So Friday too will be a waste of time.

There are many acts of omission and commission that the Government needs to be pilloried for but much time has been wasted on political monkeyshines. It takes much time to understand where the Government has failed, why it failed and how it failed. Allegations not based on solid evidence will not stand scrutiny. Barring a few, the rest of the MLAs have no idea or are too indolent or too pressed for time to study the Government's function from close quarters. This makes it difficult for them to pin-point serious lapses and they are many. At the end of the day therefore, this is yet another wasted Assembly session, high on noise and rhetoric but short on delivery.

From Monday it will be back to 'business as usual' (BAU) with Mukul Sangma having the last laugh!

(A disclaimer: Since this article is written a day before the floor test for the survival of the Speaker, if it does happen that the NCM motion is won then I will have to eat crow. But that's one of the pitfalls of writing a column one day prior to a crucial political drama)

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

PRIYANKA GANDHI MAY CONTEST NEXT LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is sure to contest the Lok Sabha elections from Rai Bareilly in 2019 in place of her mother, Congress President Sonia Gandhi. Sonia Gandhi will relinquish both her post and her Lok Sabha constituency because of her health and age, thereby setting an example for the rest of the ageing Congress leaders. It is expected that the longest serving Congress president Sonia Gandhi whose term came to an end in March this year after completing 18 years in office would hand over the post to her son Rahul Gandhi. But the only condition would be that Rahul has to prove himself and be successful in the Uttar Pradesh elections. Rahul will be anointed president most likely after the UP elections depending on the results of the party . In 2019 if he manages to become the PM, then the post will be handed over to Priyanka Gandhi.

AMIT SHAH'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON RESULTS OF UTTAR PRADESH POLL

The battle of Uttar Pradesh will decide whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP national president Amit Shah would win or perish. Both Modi and Shah are leaving no stone turned to win Uttar Pradesh. Despite the age embargo slapped on Najma Heptullah and even Anandiben Patel the erstwhile chief minister of Gujarat were told to quit because they had reached the age of 75 thus resulting in a revolt against Shah, but Kalraj Mishra has been spared. Mishra is a Brahmin and has been sulking even after he was made a minister with an insignificant portfolio of small and medium industries. He is also 74 plus but he was spared with an eye on the UP elections when the Congress party is out to woo the Brahmin community. The BJP cannot afford to alienate the Brahmin leader of the state. Now it is the turn of another sulking veteran leader of the BJP Lalji Tandon. But reports are that Tandon may be shunted out of UP politics before 2017 to the cosy environment of Raj Bhavan in Bhopal to allow Kalraj Mishra to operate in Uttar Pradesh.

AMAR SINGH WANTS MULAYAM SINGH YADAV TO BE CHIEF MINISTER

Is Amar Singh planning a new party with Shivpal Yadav in the lead? Amar Singh who has the reputation of being a family breaker is once again at it. The problems in the first family of Uttar Pradesh started with Amar Singh's entry in the Samajwadi Party against the wishes of the chief minister Akhilesh Yadav and Mulayam's cousin professor Ram Gopal Yadav. Both Ram Gopal and Akhilesh opposed it tooth and nail but Shivpal who is closer to Mulayam succeeded more than Shivpal. It is the money factor that finally won. And Amar Singh got the entry but intensified the fight within the SP family. Mulayam Singh divested Akhilesh of the post of the state party presidentship. It is said that Mulayam took the step after a two hour meeting with Amar Singh . In retaliation Akhilesh divested uncle Shivpal of the three meaty portfolios. Earlier in the day he even sacked Singhal the UP chief secretary, supposed to be close to Amar Singh and Shivpal Yadav. After this, Shivpal has threatened to resign. And Akhilesh has blamed Amar Singh for the problems being faced by his family. But though he has been asked by Mulayam to wait but pressure has mounted on Mulayam to take over as CM again.

HRD MINISTRY IS ALWAYS A TROUBLE SPOT

HRD ministry troubles refuse to go. National Book Trust which is mandated to produce good books- literary

or critical analysis at affordable cost, was a bastion of the Left liberals. Now it is headed by Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman with Dr. Rita Chowdhury as Director. But these persons are at loggerheads. So much that Chowdhury often is seen hobnobbing with Left liberals who are staunch critics of Prime Minister Modi. Problem is Chowdhury's husband Chandra Mohan Patowary is Assam's Commerce and Industry Minister and a powerful BJP state leader. How will Prakash Javadekar get out of this problem?

RAHUL GANDHI IGNORES BRAHMIN LEADERS IN POLL CAMPAIGN

When the Congress leadership is projecting a Brahmin Sheila Dikshit as its chief ministerial candidate the self claimed biggest Brahmin leader of the Congress party from Uttar Pradesh Pandit Janardhan Diwedi has been kept out of the UP campaign. Diwedi who just loves to be addressed as Panditji on the likes of Kamlapati Tripathi has been side lined in the party after he gave certain anti Rahul statements and certain pro upper caste statements, continues to sit in AICC When the entire Congress campaign is at its peak. In Uttar Pradesh, despite the party leadership's decision to project the Brahmin leadership, panditji is not being involved in any way in the Congress campaign. Rahul Gandhi who is campaigning alone with just Ghulam Nabi Azad, has not taken with him any Brahmin leader. The thinking in the Congress is that Rahul whose grandmother was a Brahmin by birth is a the biggest Brahmin in the Congress .

NO TRACE OF SHEILA DIKSHIT IN RAHUL GANDHI'S YATRA

Sheila Dikshit, the former CM of Delhi might have been projected by the Congress as the Brahmin chief minister for Uttar Pradesh but she is nowhere to be seen in the campaign. Sheila, the Congress candidate for chief ministership is missing in the entire campaign. She is neither present on the posters nor in slogans, neither is she around Rahul Gandhi who is campaigning alone on his khat yatra. Rahul's managers who organised Rahul's khat yatra have landed in trouble after the khat chaos in Deoria. Congress workers are questioning the wisdom of his managers and even of Prashant Kishore who was instrumental in Rahul taking on the yatra. There are severe criticisms for keeping the CM candidate out of Rahul's campaign. It is not the first time that Rahul is campaigning in UP. He has campaigned in UP earlier but the result has been nil. Just a month ago Rahul had introduced Dikshit as the CM candidate with great fanfare. But not only has Sheila been missing but even the PCC chief Raj Babbar and chairperson of the campaign committee Sanjay Singh, are absent in Rahul's yatra.

BJP LEADERS HAPPY AT GEELANI MISBEHAVING WITH OPPOSITION

When Hurriyat leader SAS Geelani sent back CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury and other opposition leaders from his home, refusing to meet them, the word spread quickly that the octogenarian separatist has snubbed the all party delegation's overtures. But the government was very happy that Geelani didn't meet Yechury and company. In the return flight to Delhi, a minister "congratulated" some Opposition leaders that they have "exposed" the Hurriyat leaders. "The whole world could see we came to talk to them. But it was Geelani, who refused to enter into dialogue," said a senior BJP leader. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

Stop bulk recruitment into MCS/MPs

Editor, Apropos the news item in your paper, "State to knock on center's door for civil service revamp", (ST Sep 15, 2016) we would like to draw the attention of the Government and the M.P.S.C to the following points which we feel will go a long way in improving governance in the State and bring about transparency in the working of the public service commission.

In Meghalaya, the examination to various important posts such as the Meghalaya Civil Service, the Meghalaya Police Service among others is at present being conducted once in ten years. For instance the advertisement for the last MCS exam was published in 2006 for 72 posts. Ten years hence no new advertisement has been notified for the MCS. The same is the case with the MPS 2015 batch of 34 officers who were inducted after a gap of eleven years. This method of a "Whole Sale Recruitment" once in a decade to such important posts is not a healthy trend as it not only deprives fresh and talented young minds from entering such services and

contributing to nation building and good governance but it also results in mediocracy. Instead of the best and the brightest entering these services, there is a huge intellectual gap by virtue of the large scale recruitment once in a decade only. Now imagine if the UPSC inducted at one go let's say 600 IAS officers for five years instead of the current yearly induction of 180 IAS officers. The quality of the officers entering the service would come down drastically. Therefore we suggest that the State Government should conduct MCS, MPS exams yearly or at least once in two years to whatever little vacancies are available as is being done in other states of the same size as ours and not to wait for such posts to accumulate to a large number before recruiting wholesale at one go. This is an unhealthy practice and has shown that it has adverse effects in the governance of the state especially at the grassroots level.

We also request the new MPSC chairperson to be proactive by declaring the marks of candidates of various exams in the commission's website and not wait for RTI applications before doing the same.

It is also seen that the time gap between advertisements and the conduct of examinations for various post is too long and

sometimes extends to over three years. It would be good if the Commission could reduce this gap.

Also if other public commissions such as that of Mizoram , Manipur, Assam and others can give tentative dates of exam at the time of giving out advertisements for various posts, why can't the MPSC do the same? This would streamline its function and also help the candidates to have a rough idea of the examination dates and prepare accordingly.

Lastly we also suggest that there should be minimum qualifying marks in the exams to the said posts because it is seen that by virtue of the large intake some candidates scoring as low as 25 percent in the written exams come through. This perpetuates mediocracy which we are witnessing in the lackluster administration in our State.

We request the Government and the MPSC to take note of the points mentioned above and work on them.

Yours etc.,
S Warjri, Wansam
Lyngdoh
Shillong - 1

Three powerful words!

Editor, I had the privilege of witnessing the opening day function of the boxing championships organized by the Rilbong Sports Club

at the Club premises yesterday where Olympian boxer Shiva Thapa, was the Chief Guest. A youth icon, his presence was a thrill for all especially the youth. The boxing fare presented was great as the little pugilists went at it with lot of stamina and zeal. There is good potential there, and we in Meghalaya can look forward to many Shivas in the days to come..

Shiva Thapa, handsome, boyish and with that slight amount of diffidence, which added to his charm, was invited to say a few words. He spoke from his heart saying he was half a Shillongite and spelling out for the youth present the path to success - hard work, persistence and a never say die attitude which has seen him where he is today.

But it was towards the end of his speech that he spoke those three words, almost casually. He said, " DON'T DO DRUGS" - just that - don't do drugs. To me and as I am sure to the large number of young fans present it was like a straight left, delivered only as a champion could, and must have hit them equally effectively. I am sure the message delivered so simply and so sincerely, will be picked up by the youth. Thank you Shiva, may God bless you!

Yours etc.,
Anjan Datta ,
Via email

“By trying we can easily learn to endure adversity -- another man's I mean.”
--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 38 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2016

Congress loses Arunachal Pradesh yet again

WITHIN two months of leading a Congress Government in Arunachal Pradesh after the Supreme Court restored status quo ante, on Friday Pema Khandu the Chief Minister along with 42 Congress MLAs staged a dramatic exit from the Congress Party. Khandu and his team have joined the regional People's Party of Arunachal, an ally of the BJP, leaving Mr Nabam Tuki, former chief minister of the State as the sole Congress member now. Tuki was earlier replaced as chief minister when the Congress tried to stem rebellion in its ranks and picked Mr Khandu as a compromise candidate. When it comes to changing loyalties no one does it like Arunachal Pradesh. The state is known for its massive corruption which makes other states look like babes in the wood. Pema Khandu must have been tempted by promise of more development funds if he would agree to support a friendly Government at the Centre. Needless to say the All India Congress Committee is flummoxed. All that the Congress spokesperson Randip Singh Surjewala had to say was that the prodigal sons of Congress who have jumped ship have made massive ideological and political blunder and compromise. Such statements fall like water on a duck’s back in Arunachal Pradesh where the stakes for the money game are very high.

In the Arunachal assembly of 60 members, the Congress had 44 lawmakers and 11 members are from the BJP. Two independent MLAs who supported the Congress have also joined the regional outfit. Naturally all eyes are on Union Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju who was perhaps given the difficult task of delivering Arunachal Pradesh to BJP. The move did not succeed last time as the Supreme Court had stepped in the restore the Congress Government. This time Rijiju is successful in his mission but not before attributing the reasons for the switchover of the Arunachal MLAs to the poor leadership in the AICC where the chief minister and ministers have to wait for days to meet either Sonia Gandhi or Rahul Gandhi. After a period of central rule, Congress rebels led by Kalikho Pul had in February this year taken over the Government with support from the BJP. That government lasted only five months as the Supreme Court reinstated the previous government. Mr Pul was later found hanging in his home in August. He must be turning in his grave now.

LOOKING BACK

March 5, 1989

Govt release Jodhpur Detenus

Altogether 104 Jodhpur detenus were taken to Punjab today by plane following special court judge Mr Khemchandra Sharma's order for their release. Two detenus were taken to Delhi. The remaining 82 detenus ordered to be released, including former SGPC Chief Mr Gurcharan Singh Tohra will leave tomorrow. The judge issued by order after the prosecution moved an application seeking withdrawal of all cases pending against them, including that of waging war against the state. The court was moved following Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's announ-cement in parliament on Friday of a package of measures including release of Jodhpur detenus to initiate the process of normalization in Punjab. Formalities in connection with the release are expected to be completed by this afternoon. The detenus are to be taken to Punjab in batches according to official sourcers. The judge issued the order at 1100 hours after accepting the government's plea for withdrawal of cases against the detenus. The detenus greeted the announcement with slogan of "jo bole so Nihal."

While the Punjab police will escort in a separate plane 84 of those released against whom warrants have been issued in Punjab on various counts, the rest will follow them back to the state in another plane. **Nigerian Drug Pusher held at Umroi** A Nigerian youth was nabbed at Umroi airport on March 4 last on charges of drugs trafficking. Some 30 grams of number four was recovered from his possession. The youth who claimed to be a law student in Lucknow, did not have Restricted Areas Permit. Police brought him to Shillong and after two days of continuous interrogation unearthed some incriminating documents which might lead to the busting of an interntional drugs traffickers. Some tell-tale letters and few photographs of some Mizo women were also recovered from him. The women are suspected to be his contacts in Mizoram. Later following a raid at Madantring area in the outskirts of Shillong, police arrested a Mizo man on charges of harbouring the foreigner. Sources said that another Nigerian who is part of the gang, made his way to Mizoram along with a Mizo woman who is supposed to be his wife. The man has been arrested with the help of Mizoram Police and is being brought to Shillong tomorrow.

Sharmila Chanu being “Marykomised”
Manipur’s real issues getting sidelined

The end of the epic 16 year fast by Irom Sharmila Chanu should make the Indian Union government heave a sigh of relief. Her repeated arrests through the long years should have embarrassed any government with an iota of shame. But clearly the government has no shame. The relief is elsewhere. The epic fast by Irom Sharmila used to continuously put focus on many of the dark secrets of the brutal practices of the Indian state. Now, though the practices will continue, the focus will end. If people have missed a certain irony, let me state it. Indian Union media attention was showered on this one event about Irom Sharmila like never before - not when she started, not when she continued, not when she was tube-fed forcibly, not when she was arrested innumerable times but when she ended. The end of the fast signaled to Indians that she had come back to their idea of the “mainstream”, which is another word for business as usual and hence this focus and celebration of business as usual. What will happen to her one doesn't know. And India hardly cares. How do we know India doesn't care? For Irom Sharmila's fast pointed to a deeper disease. If putting focus on that underlying disease didn't get as much Indian press as the end of the fast, that gives a good idea about the priorities and what is the narrative that is acceptable. It is not that the putrid disease has gone away but now, with the end of the fast, India thinks that the stench is manageable and uncomfortable discussion about the disease that Irom Sharmila's fast symbolized can be obliterated. Not the disease but its discussion. Now Irom Sharmila can be refurbished and reinvented in Delhi's eyes on a comeback path to normalcy, may be a “Northeastern” Kejriwal of sorts, whatever that means. This failure of imagination is deliberate. It is designed to obfuscate rather than to delve deeper. India has failed Irom Sharmila not because it never wanted her to succeed. Those Idea of India folks who think Irom Sharmila Chanu's struggle

is only against the inhuman and degrading Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and not for what causes AFSPA to be imposed on Manipur want to conveniently brand her as a "human rights" activist as opposed to a campaigner for rights of Manipur. That not-so-subtle move places Irom Sharmila and her epic fast in a pantheon that stretches from Lokpal fast to corporate Save Tiger, Plant Tree type of campaigns to One Rank One Pay fasts in Jantar Mantar . This is a necessary first step towards defanging and domestication of the wayward. Human rights implicate no one. Manipur implicates Delhi as a quasi-imperial formation. Manipur implicates the idea of India. So, for those who “stand with Irom Sharmila” but not with Manipur, their stance and their vacuous, self-congratulating idea of Indianisms, in reality don't stand with Irom Sharmila and Manipur but stand in the way of Irom Sharmila and Manipur. Thangjam Manorama Debi saw through that. Everyone except those with tri-colour blinders see through that. Manipur sees through such “solidarity”. Which is why her fast is one of resistance, not a M.K. Gandhi style blackmail of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar before the Poona Pact. There is a reason why its important to focus on the cause, irrespective of whether one agrees with the cause or not, and not the high decibel aura that a powerful media and government network can instantly create. What did Irom Sharmila Chanu demand through her fast? She demanded that AFSPA be withdrawn from Manipur. She is aware as any other person living in an AFSPA imposed area that the kind of atrocities that AFSPA gives a clean chit to or worse are committed even without AFSPA and even then few of the Khaki-clad perpetrators have ever been brought to justice. So while AFSPA is an issue, it is shorthand for the daily indignity of Manipur. What triggered this fast? The atrocities by Indian Armed forces in general in Manipur. One can imagine that the gang rape and killing of Thangjam Manorama Debi by Khaki forces in 2004 only strengthened her resolve to

continue the fast. Thangjam Manorama Debi was picked up from her home in in Bamon Kampu Mayai Leikai by Indian security forces, the 17th Assam Rifles, on 10th July 2004. Her body, covered in sperm and bullets, was found the next day in Laipharok Maring of Imphal East district of Manipur. 30 Manipuri mothers stripped themselves in protest outside an armed forces outpost with the banner ‘Indian Army, Rape Us’. No one has been prosecuted for this act to this day. As the Irom Sharmila story spread around the world, Manipur got relegated to the background and India came to the foreground. Both USA based Wall Street Journal and UK based Guardian and their Indian origin correspondents described Irom Sharmila primarily as an Indian human rights activist, an act on gate-keeing that has consequences. That is true for her citizenship. Whether that is her primary identity to her and her Manipur based support is an altogether different matter. But this game of foregrounding and backgrounding, underlining and deletion, represents the politics of power in media, representations and narratives. Such narratives are powerful, especially when they serve power. The Government of India wants such narratives. It wants Irom Sharmila to not be just Manipuri for that puts the focus on Manupur. “India” dilutes it and that is helpful. “India” undercuts it and that is even more helpful. Which is why Indian Union government, its media and various wings of its official and unofficial establishment took to Mary Kom like a godsend PR opportunity. Then comes the Bollywood packaging of Mary Kom. In Mary Kom, the heavily pregnant heroine is going towards the hospital with her husband. She is nearing labour. There is curfew on the streets. The husband tells her to wait and advances a bit. He is in the middle of a group of khaki-clad Indian security force men out to weed out trouble-makers. He tells them about his wife. A jawan finds her. The story matches. They arrive safely at the hospital. Many such images of an agitated Manipur break into

‘Mary Kom’. I use the word ‘images’ very deliberately here, for some realities are somewhat different. In July 2009, Mary Kom was selected for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award, the Indian Union's highest sporting award. It was in the same July of 2009 that khaki-clad government forces surrounded an unarmed Chongkham Sanjit in a busy bazaar at Imphal, the capital of Manipur. Sanjit does not resist. He is whisked away to a dark area beside a roadside medicine shop. A few minutes later, the Khakis come out with Sanjit's bullet-ridden dead body and throw it onto a truck. Wait. There is another corpse on the truck. It belongs to Rabina Devi, a pregnant bystander killed by police a short while ago. This whole sequence gets captured on camera, just like a film. A little Googling will do. Not all pregnant women and young men on Imphal streets get the ‘Mary Kom’ treatment. There is no market for these pictures of Manipur. While the hunger strike was on, the story of Irom Sharmila Chanu was no formula to Bollywood success. The picture of Irom Sharmila Chanu with the force-feeding tubes stuck to her nose is sure to take the pop out of popcorn. And if nothing else, the censor board will happily oblige in its mission of catering fairytales to citizens and protecting impressionable minds from such naked images. Sports are a better bet. The “army kid” Bollywood and now Hollywood heroine Priyanka Chopra has described Mary Kom in Hindi as “Junglee Baccha”, the most charitable translation of which can be wild and aggressive child. The “jungle” pejorative and “baccha” paternalism are both useful terms as they have in them the idea of what is to be aspired to. The aspiration is to tame the child. India hopes and thinks that Irom Sharmila Chanu has been “tamed”. The taming will be complete when Irom Sharmila is Mary Komized. As Sameirang Laikhuram of Manipur perceptively puts it, “And now to the next important question: Who should play Irom Sharmila in a Bollywood blockbuster?” (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Woes of the working class

Editor, Our state policy towards the marginalised, low-income and disguised employment sector is so disappointing because of the fact that no political party, regional or national has ever represented the most critical issues pertaining to this sector. They could be muster roll workers, barefoot village health workers, malaria workers, home guards and a host of other professions requiring varied skills in various capacities. The Assembly is currently in session and we expect some of the politicians to take up these issues concerning the underprivileged working class. Can we expect something from an ailing dispensation which is fraught with power mongering, chair pushing, corruption ridden and wastage of public money? We look forward that if not today then in another two years the people will make them pay for the criminal neglect they suffer. Yours etc...

Dominic S. Wankhar Shillong-3

Kudos to our Paralympians

Editor, My heartfelt gratitude goes to each and every paralympian at the Rio Paralympics, 2016 who have made our country proud. The poor show that was rendered by our Olympians at the Summer Olympics, except a handful few, was reciprocated well by these athletes, despite their wide range of disabilities, with their extremely good show and keeping the Indian Flag flying. The show of their mettle and determination to outperform the competitors despite their many physical challenges is a lesson for our democratic government at the centre and every state as to where their attention should be turned to. Our country of over a billion people may not be able to create world class athletes but these paralympians have shown us with their achievements that there is still hope. Their efforts made us believe that physical disability is just another hurdle which one can

overcome if there is will power. The union sports minister who was involved in a controversy at the Summer Olympics photo-ops should come out of his cove and declare gallantry sports awards to these individuals who are our true sportspersons. It would be a real compliment if these players are awarded with Arjuna Award, Khel Ratna and what have we. I bow my head once again to each of these paralympians in appreciation of their achievements. Yours etc. PK Dwivedi Shillong – 1

is one of the main arms of the government in its scientific experiments and achievements. Our ISRO scientists have made us proud by their hard work, dedication, and strong will power which shows that our Indian scientists have now reached such platforms where nothing is impossible. This launch marks the third consecutive success to the credit of ISRO and it has also crossed an important milestone with this successful launch of weather satellite INSAT-3DR using GSLV. ISRO is advancing in leaps and bounds in space technology. Our country has now become a world leader in cost-effective space launches and technologies. Time has now come when we should go to the grass-roots level and inspire the youngsters to think of a career in space research. Yours etc., Vinod C. Dixit Ahmedabad -15

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

When nature in Jaintia Hills weeps

By Sajay Laloo

When a child weeps, the mother immediately consoles the child and wipes the tears dry. But when the mother weeps, there is a reason for every child to be worried. Right now Mother Earth in Jaintia Hills, weeps. There is large scale exploitation and destruction of thick forests in Jaintia Hills. In the name of Industrialization, Nature and Mother Earth are being anaesthetized by various policies of the State Government and the District Council to favour their greed. It's only greed everywhere. The concept of sustainable development and a secured future for our generations is an alien idea. Where are we heading to? The definition of Forest is yet to be coined in the Dictionaries of both State Government and District Council. A thick population of standing trees which was once known as "Khlo Narpuh" (Narpuh Forest) is not a forest according to the Government of Meghalaya and the District Council. Hence, there is large scale destruction of standing trees and natural habitats with rampant limestone mining and other mining activities in the midst of Narpuh Forest. Everyday thousands of metric tonnes of limestone are mined all over Jaintia Hills and several acres of forest lands are destroyed. Several hundred trucks of timber are being smuggled every week from various parts of Jaintia Hills. All these activities are taking place openly and the District Council which claims to be the guardian of soil, forest and minerals in the Tribal areas is turning a blind eye to these and behaves like a tamed tiger. The indigenous tribals of Jaintia Hills are nature worshippers. For the welfare of future generations their forefathers have preserved several forests and water bodies as sacred ones and no one is allowed to disturb or pollute these places. But, in today's world, these thick sacred forests and preserved water bodies turn out to be gold mines for the timber smugglers and industries in Jaintia Hills. Mining is not a new profession to the Jaintia people. The Hon'ble High Court of Meghalaya in its order passed in Balios Swer Vrs Govt of Meghalaya and Ors has recognized the tribal knowledge of mining and allowed only traditional mining of limestone and not anything else as it is more nature friendly and less hazardous to environment. The tribal bodies are well versed with the concept of preservation of forest and environment too. In fact they are the main guardians of nature in Jaintia Hills. For example, Myntdu river which supports the lives of thousands in Jowai town is one of the sacred rivers maintained and preserved by the Tribal bodies in Jaintia Hills. No one is allowed to dirty or pollute the river. There are certain stretches of the rivers where even fishing is not allowed and declared prohibited areas to preserve the rich biological diversity of the river. In Jowai alone there are two Sacred groves - Khlo Blai Chyrmang and Khlo Langdoh. Unfortunately, the efforts of the tribal bodies to preserve rivers and sacred groves is paralyzed day by day as there is no cooperation from any corner. At the current rate of destruction of forest and other natural habitats and with the ignorance of the District Council to check the rampant mining in the forest areas, one can say that soon Jaintia Hills will turn into a ruined district once inhabited by the Royals. I won't be surprised to see if one day in my life the rocks in the Great Monolith Park at Nartiang are being auctioned off by some authorities. The condition of the area is highly pathetic and there is no maintenance at all. It

seems like we are all ashamed of our predecessors and previous rulers who have built such a Great Wonder of the World and left us with a rich natural history. The Tribal Chiefs who were once the powerful rulers of Jaintia Hills are now Phantoms of the past stories. They are voiceless, powerless in the hands of the District Council. From being the main foundation and pillars of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, they are now understood to be simply appointees of the District Council who can be removed at anytime at the whims and fancy of the Executive Committee. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India while passing the Judgment and Order in I.A. NOS. 1868, 2091, 2225-2227, 2380, 2568 and 2937 IN WRIT PETITION (C) No. 202 OF 1995 (Lafarge Umiang Mining Pvt. Ltd. Vrs Govt of India and Ors) has mentioned that National Forest Policy Under para 4.3.4.2 the rights and concessions from forests should primarily be for the bonafide use of the communities living within and around forest areas, specially the tribal. The Policy recognizes the fact that the life of tribals and other poor people living within and near forests revolves around forests and therefore the Policy stipulates vide para 4.3.4.3 that the rights and concessions enjoyed by such persons should be fully protected. Para 4.4 deals with diversion of forest lands for non-forest purposes. Under the said para it is stipulated that forest land or land with tree cover should not be treated merely as a resource readily available to be utilised for various projects, but as a national asset which requires to be properly safeguarded for providing sustained benefits to the community. Thus, keeping in mind the need for providing sustained benefits to the tribal communities in the area the Hon'ble Court directed the Lafarge (a Cement Manufacturing Company) to deposit a sum of Rs 55 crores and also a royalty of Rs 90 per metric tonne on limestone mined from the areas to the account of Special Purpose Vehicle (an implementation body) for the purpose of development of health, education, economy, irrigation and agriculture in the project area of 50 kms solely for the local community and welfare of tribals. It may be mentioned here that from Lafarge alone, the local families residing in and around Nongtrai Village are getting a remuneration of Rs 7000 each per month currently. With the ban on coal mining, there is a large scale unemployment and starvation all over the district. Had the same system been adopted in Jaintia Hills too, at least several hundred families would be spared from economic harshness and would not feel the brunt of mining ban at all. There are 8 Cement manufacturing companies in Jaintia Hills. The tribal people of the District are straight away loosing Rs 440 crores and also the Rs 90 royalty per metric tonne from limestone which is their right. Ultimately, where do we point our fingers at and how do we go about it? Sustainable development and afforestation are the only way out to secure our future. Principal polluter should be taken to task and the permanent settlers and communities should reap the benefit of industrial development alongside preservation of protection of Nature and environment. The world is a beautiful place. Let us preserve its beauty.

Assam artisans weave hopes

With help from an NGO and an American designer, women weavers in Bokakhat are earning their independence



By Usha Rai

Anjumoni Doley, 20, and Ritumala Singh, slightly older, from Bokakhat, close to the Kaziranga National Park in Assam, were two women living on the margins who needed to contribute to the household income so that their siblings could go to school and to ensure that there was always food on the table. Both had dropped out of school and college, respectively, to support the family.

While Anjumoni learnt weaving from her aunt and began plying the loom to make a range of fabrics, Ritumala learnt embroidery from her cousin and started selling her work through a small clothes shop of her own.

Then, earlier this year, the two women participated in a special workshop for artisans organised by the North East Social Trust (NEST), an NGO working for the economic empowerment of impoverished women through traditional Assamese crafts and weaving skills. That experience has turned out to be life changing to say the least.

That’s because here they connected with Kristine Gottilla, designer and

founder of Spencer Devine, an American hand and travel bag label. Gottilla has been visiting the state since 2012 to derive design inspiration from the exquisite weaves of the region as well as to do her bit to help local women alleviate their circumstances.

According to the Brooklyn-based designer, not only are the traditional motifs and designs of the different communities in the North East “extremely interesting”, but the skills of rural Assamese artisans are truly matchless.

Both Spencer Devine and NEST came up and experimented with different possibilities of taking this initiative to a different level and worked on it over the past couple of years. In the meantime, Gottilla made it a point to visit Bokakhat every year and spend time with the artisans to gain a better understanding of the designs, their skills and their lives.

Today, Gottilla is successfully retailing ‘Assam Capsule’, a range of bags for her US customers, integrating the fabrics, designs woven at Bokakhat.

A part of the profit she earns out of the sales is given back to NEST, which in turn uses the money to



HELPING HAND: (Above) American designer Kristine Gottilla with women artisans at Bokakhat and the Assam Tote, a simple and light-weight cotton carry-all that can be packed to the rim with market bounty

Select artisans from Bokakhat weave exquisite fabrics embellished with special designs

provide sewing machines to women of BPL families so that they can earn a decent living. With the sewing machines they have received, most women are now running sewing schools and doing some additional tailoring work on the side.

So far, 10 machines have been given out, including to Anjumoni and Ritumala, who are happy to have benefitted from this project.

Usha International, from whom the sewing machines have been purchased by NEST, too, has given seven days of basic training on cutting

and stitching apart from tutorials on maintenance and repair.

This has, in fact, helped them run their tailoring schools efficiently and enabled them to give a certificate to their student at the end of the course.

And how do the exclusive Bokakhat-Brooklyn collaboration bags come to life? While select artisans from Bokakhat weave exquisite fabrics embellished with their special designs, the beneficiaries of the Sewing Machine project create the preliminary shapes of the bags. These are then

shipped off to Gottilla’s studio in Brooklyn. Once there, her team and she get down to the task of giving the finishing touches by putting together the leather work, the Assamese embroidery, motifs and other add-ons.

The end result: there’s the Spencer Devine LG A-line, which is a fine, yet durable, leather tote that easily transforms into a backpack and is one of their best-selling items.

Other products range from a variety of leather pouches to the Assam Tote, a simple and light-weight cotton carry-all that can be packed

to the rim with market bounty. The price of these bags ranges between \$42 and \$524.

The bags can be used in multiple ways by the “chic women” — for the morning bike ride, yoga class, formal business meeting or an evening cocktail.

Thanks to this collaborative venture, the 21 talented women creators at the Assam end of the manufacturing line are able to contribute Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 to their family income.

While 11 women are weaving the material for the bags, 10 are stitching them with their new machines. Each one of them works from home, coming once in a while to the Bokakhat office to brainstorm for design development and review meetings.

Joining hands with NEST and Gottilla has certainly changed Anjumoni’s life for the better. Earlier, she had to borrow her aunt’s sewing machine to do her stitching work but that’s not the case anymore.

As the proud owner of her machine, proprietor of a small sewing school and tailoring business, these days she judiciously spends her time mentoring other girls in addition to expertly fashioning stylish women’s clothes for her clients.

Like her, Ritumala is also pleased at the way things have turned out for her, especially her enhanced earnings and her new status in Bokakhat. At present, she has only two students, but hopes to eventually have a “big sewing school of my own”.

Of course, the one constant source of pride for them all is their work on Assam Capsule. Indeed, recently, the women were very excited to have their work showcased at NY Now, a premier exhibition “for all that’s new and on trend in specialty retail”, held in the Big Apple.

Though there is a renewed focus on indigenous Indian weaves as well as the conditions of weavers, commercially, this talented group is yet to get their dues. Such opportunities definitely bring in newer possibilities and the promise of good times. (WFS)

God of Irony is following me

Cop: You were doing 20 km an hour over the speed limit. Me: Yes, but you’re standing there telling me this on a planet spinning at 1,000 km an hour moving around the sun at 107,000 kmph in a solar system that travels at 789,000 kmph through a galaxy moving at 1,000 km a second. Let’s talk about you. (Cop doubles penalty.)

So much for science. Life is so ironic these days. In a bookshop recently I saw Blink, a tome that says the key to success is making snap decisions. I couldn’t decide whether to buy it.

Later that day, I saw a news clip in which an energy minister’s speech about 24x7 electricity supply was interrupted by a power cut. He continued to talk in the dark, although I think it’s fair to say that his point was undermined. That incident in India was solid proof of the truth of my long-held belief that irony is The Guiding Principle of the Universe.

We live in a world where a kite-flying event in Hong Kong is cancelled after weather forecasters predict “a windy day”; a world where my silly friends try to organise an Animal Rights barbecue; a world where a woman wearing a Stop Domestic Violence T-shirt in the US was arrested for hitting family members.

Indeed, there could be a whole sub-category of incidents involving offenders wearing ironic or apt T-shirts, says reader Joshua Poulson, who collects police mugshots. He sent me one of a cold, unsmiling villain with “DO I LOOK LIKE I CARE?” on his

The Funny

By Nury Vittachi

shirts. Women are much more likely to blame themselves for problems, and his collection includes a mugshot of an arrested female wearing a T-shirt saying: “I’m sorry, it’s my fault”. If she pleads not guilty in court, the shirt is going to be a problem.

This can also be said about a man arrested with “I’M PROBABLY LYING” emblazoned across his chest. Smart prosecutor: “Did you commit this crime, and can you tell us what your T-shirt says?” Suspect: “I’m not guilty, and I’M PROBABLY LYING”.

Apt slogans are seen less often where I live in Asia, since our goods tend to have random, surreal sentences on them, such as: “So happy is my cucumber wind.” And, of course, there are the many unintentionally ironic people who comment “your stuped” (sic) on the web versions of my articles. Someone sent me a picture of a bumper sticker from a car in the US: “Your in America speak English.” We need to pass a law now, before the climate change apocalypse that allows us to legally eat anybody who writes “your” for “you’re”: Who’s with me on that? Everybody. I thought so.

A few days ago, my news feed reported that insurance agents told the pastor of a storm-damaged church in Pennsylvania that they would get no money as floods are classified as “acts of God”. The pastor took it in good humour, which seems wise. You can’t win so you might as well smile. Meanwhile, I need a judge who will listen when I explain that the movement of the Earth means it is scientifically impossible to move at less than 1,000 km a second. And not double the penalty.

(Nury Vittachi is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

By Fabian Lyngdoh

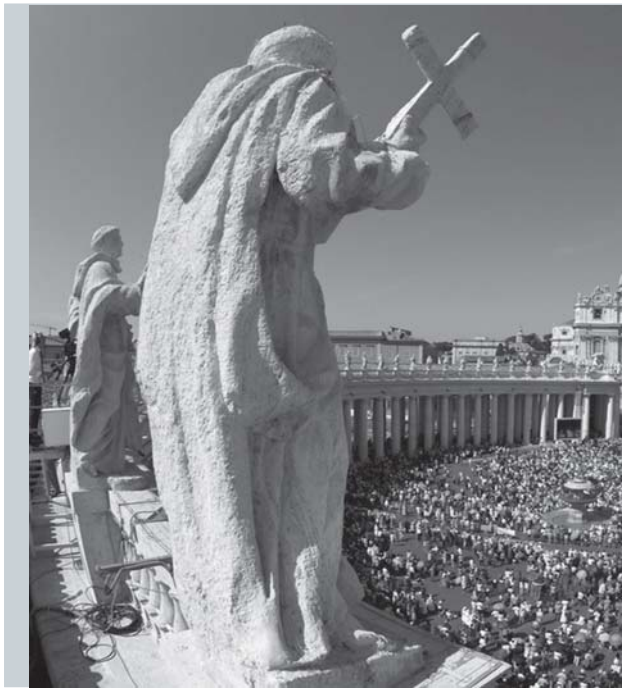
There are Saints in every religion who are believed to be living in spiritual realm, and interact with the living members of a particular faith. This article will limit its scope to the Christian Saints and address particularly to Christians.

I am neither a theologian nor an expert in Church doctrine, but I will speak here with the belief of a common man.

No one can enter the kingdom of God unless one is “perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5: 48). This also implies that everyone who enters the kingdom of God is a perfect soul, hence, a Saint. Jesus’ emphasis on perfection made his disciples to ask in bewilderment, “Who can then be saved?” Jesus look at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19: 25-26). This implies that we can never be perfect and enter the kingdom of God only through human efforts. We ultimately need the grace of God to attain perfection. Jesus said, “No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3: 5). To be born of water and spirit signifies the initiation necessary for obtaining the grace of God; and the primary conditions required is belief in the Word of God and faith in its eternal power.

The grace of God alone is sufficient to make us perfect and obtain pass marks for entering into the kingdom. One of the criminals crucified along with Jesus at Calvary said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43). This repentant criminal would have obtained zero marks by his deeds, but by the grace of God he instantly obtained pass marks for entering into Paradise.

Every human soul worthy of entering into the kingdom of God is a Saint. Who are then the Saints canonised by the Church? The Saints canonised by the Church are among the multitude of victorious souls in heaven whom God permits to have communion with the faithful still living a physical and social existence. They stand as models of spirituality to



St Mother Teresa is a little special in the eyes of the society because she is a great personality on earth as well as a Saint in heaven. She had fulfilled the greatest commandment, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thyneighbour as thyself’

assure us who are still living an earthly life about the existence of the spiritual realm unto which every human born is destined to enter.

The evidence of sainthood which the Church is looking for before canonisation is not based only on reasoning upon the human activities that a person has been doing on earth, but mainly on the revelation of God through miracles.

Miracles, especially

healing miracles, can happen anywhere and from whatever sources. “The devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give to you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me” (Matt. 4: 8-9). It is not spiritually wise to pray for intercession in the name of any human soul who is not revealed by God and canonised by the Church even if we strongly believe

that that person is in heaven, because the Evil One might impersonate the person we are communicating to.

King Saul was in great distress and sought the help of the witch of Endor to bring up the Spirit of Samuel to him for consultation. Samuel appeared and rebuked Saul for bringing him up for consultation when the Lord has turned away from him and became his enemy (1 Samuel 28: 8-16). Jesus said, “Many will say to me on that

day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and performed many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7: 21-23).

A Saint permitted to communicate with the living is revealed by God, and canonised by the Church, so that the faithful can safely take resort to prayer and communion with God for some favour

through the intercession of the Saint. It is not the canonisation that made Mother Teresa a Saint, but the Church canonised Mother Teresa as a Saint because it has been revealed by God. It is for this reason that Jesus said to Peter, “I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16: 19).

Not every great person on earth is a Saint in heaven, and not every Saint in heaven had been a great personality on earth. There are many Saints revealed by God and canonised by the Catholic Church who had lived simple lives hardly noticed by the world. The bodies of some of these Saints still lie incorrupt in various chapels and basilicas across the world to stand witness to the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God.

Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata is a little special in the eyes of the society because she is a great personality on earth as well as a Saint in heaven. She had fulfilled the greatest commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22: 37-41).

Saint Mother Teresa has

been a great personality on her own and received the Nobel Prize by the greatness of her heart. She had been also made into a great celebrity by the media, and like a little child she seemed also to have innocently enjoyed the attention, but she did not allow the greatness of her celebrity image to overwhelm the greatness of her heart. “The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19: 14). Mother Teresa was happy but indifferent to the honour of the world, and she continued to live a simple life serving the homeless and the needy knowing full well that a greater reward is waiting for her in heaven.

Mother Teresa and all the other female Saints also testify to the world that in the eyes of God, and from the spiritual stand point, neither is the woman subordinate to man, nor is man subordinate to the woman.

Man and woman are subordinate only to God. It is the circumstances of social life that makes one human being subordinate to another.

May the women folk draw inspiration from the life of Mother Teresa that God recognises the greatness of soul in a woman, and may the men folk look at every woman as a possible Saint by the grace of God.

Jewel in the crown

Ranjan K Baruah

There is no doubt that something always charms us, whether it is related to man or woman. Jewellery is one such thing that charms and fascinates both genders. It consists of small decorative items worn for personal adornment, such as brooches, rings, necklaces, earrings and bracelets. It may be attached to the body or the clothes, and the term is restricted to durable ornaments, excluding flowers for example.

For many centuries, metal, often combined with gemstones, has been the normal material for jewellery, but other materials such as shells and eco-friendly materials may be used. It is one of the oldest types of archaeological artifact — with 100,000-year-old beads made from Nassarius shells thought to be the oldest known jewellery.

The size of the global Gems and Jewellery industry was estimated at \$146 billion at retail prices in 2005, and is estimated to have recorded \$170 billion in sales in 2008. The industry has grown at an average Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 5.2% since 2000.

India is one of the eight key world markets, the others being the US, the UK, Middle East, Turkey, Japan, Italy and China. India is also the largest consumer of gold in the world and is estimated to hold nearly 16,000 tonnes of gold, accounting for nearly 12-15% of the world's cumulative 'aboveground' gold stocks. India is also the largest diamond cutting and polishing centre in the world.

While a predominant portion of gold jewellery manufactured in India is for domestic consumption, a significant portion of rough, uncut diamonds processed in the form of either polished diamonds or finished diamond jewellery is exported.

The manufacturing and processing of Gems and Jewellery is distributed across several countries in the world (i.e. the African continent dominates the mining space of diamonds whereas India is the dominant player in diamond processing). Apart from being a major market, India primarily forms a part of the polishing and jewellery manufacturing part of the industry's value chain in addition to increasing traction in the organised retail of jewellery.

Traditionally there were less people



involved in designing or making of jewellery and other ornaments. Goldsmiths were involved in the process and it was more like family tradition or practice but now things have changed and there are new people coming into the profession who had no family connection with goldsmith.

Jewellery designing is the art of designing and making jewellery, stone cutting, engraving and polishing etc. Jewellery designers are those who plan the style and pattern of jewellery, silverware and other decorative metal work products. They require a high degree of skill and precision and use a variety of specialised hand tools and equipment to design and manufacture new items. We shall publish more about courses and career opportunities related to jewellery designing in our next edition.

Career: Jewellery Designing

UPDATES

Commonwealth Scholarships: Online applications are invited from Indian nationals for the '2017 Commonwealth Scholarships tenable in the United Kingdom' for Master's & Doctoral degree programmes. The study will commence in September/October 2017. Maximum 65 candidates will be nominated for this scholarship, which includes 26 nominations for PhD.

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) will make the final selection from the nominated candidates. About 25 to 30 candidates will be finally awarded the scholarship.

Candidates are required to apply online at Ministry of Human Resource Development's web portal.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98604 55558 for any career related queries)

By Taru Bahl

Triveni lives in Hisar, Haryana. Her husband works in the city and visits her over the weekend. She dreads Friday evenings, as he comes home in an inebriated state after catching up with local buddies. Arguments, slanging matches and abuses follow. Sometimes he hits her; often he flings things at her.

The scenes are repeated over the next two days. They see the weekend through with a few bruises, damages to the home and loss of face in the neighbourhood. Finances get impacted as he gives her only a part of his earnings. And worse of all, Triveni usually gets saddled with unplanned, unwanted pregnancies, urinary tract infections and pent-up anger and frustration at a situation that she finds herself completely incapable of handling.

From small town Haryana to the swanky IT city of Gurgaon, meet Shraddha, who works in a call centre in Gurgaon. Her boyfriend also drinks and occasionally has one too many. That is when all hell breaks loose in her otherwise orderly home. Petty arguments, suspicions and bickering escalate to a point where he ends up raising his hand on her, pulling her long hair, pushing her to the wall, wringing her arms behind her back and, on occasion, even throwing things at her. She has had a number of medical emergencies, including a broken tooth, stitches on her inner thigh and a badly sprained arm. It is these violent, drunken bouts that have forced her to put off her marriage.

She even visited a local de-addiction centre where she confided to the counsellor, "He is otherwise a gentle person. It is only alcohol that makes him lose control."



Excessive alcohol consumption leading to violence is not a new or an unknown reality. What is worrying is the fact that most women live in denial and are unable to seek help at the right time. That's because alcohol addiction is not a problem that is openly acknowledged in our society. There is a tendency to make excuses, brush violent incidents unleashed on family members under the influence of alcohol as a "mere aberration".

Drunken aggression is seen as "manly behaviour" and women, in particular, are counselled by elders to not take any remedial action which would "make the family a public spectacle" or "break the home".

It just takes a momentary loss of control for violence to turn deadly. Several studies indicate that between a third and half of the perpetrators of reported violence were found to be intoxicated. Moreover, substance abuse by the perpetrator, victim or both has been flagged in as many as 92 per cent of reported episodes of domestic violence. This clearly establishes that alcohol is definitely a trigger for domestic violence. And

yet, those suffering such abuse repeatedly have nowhere to turn to because there are few social or institutional support structures that can help deal with it.

An Analytic Study on Alcohol and Violence Against Women in India, conducted by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), reveals that there is little documentation and evidence on the role of alcohol in sexual violence. Indeed, most gender violence programmes have paid scant attention on ways to incorporate alcohol addiction treatment as a workable prevention strategy. This glaring lack of dialogue across sectors, whether it is at policy, research, activism or programme level, makes women facing the dire consequences of alcohol addiction highly vulnerable.

What is needed is a seamless inter-sectoral dialogue, particularly between policy-makers and those who address issues of Violence Against Women (VAW). For the present, the government is enforcing a clutch of measures with varying degrees of success. While on the one hand the

Excise Department has been trying to regularise the sale of alcohol, several states have imposed full or partial prohibition and declared 'dry days' to reign in consumption. Some have placed restriction on advertising, promotion and sponsorship of alcoholic drinks; others have banned drinking in public places.

Legally, there is a minimum age for drinking and nowadays a hefty excise duty is being levied to push up prices. Apart from these rules, over the years, groups of women have been coming together, especially in the hinterlands, to combat widespread alcoholism that has afflicted generations of rural women.

One such powerful campaign that has been etched in social memory is the Anti-Arack Movement of 1994 in Andhra Pradesh that culminated in a ban on 'arack' in the state.

In neighbouring Tamil Nadu, women's groups have been rallying to make it difficult for their men to buy alcohol. In cooperation with the Excise authorities, they have mapped out the trouble areas and organised extensive

awareness building rallies. At a micro level, they have taken up the issue with shops selling alcohol while on a macro level, they have done advocacy to sensitise the government on how traditional notions of patriarchy and male dominance impact women, in scenarios where there is excessive alcohol use and abuse. More recently, in Bihar, despite a lot of opposition women's collectives forced the government to deliver on its electoral promise of a complete prohibition.

On the face of it, there is a lot being done to tackle alcoholism. Then how is it that women and children are still bearing the brunt of alcohol-induced beatings and other atrocities at the hands of the male members in the family? The ICRW research findings suggest that the solution to the violence that is brought on by alcohol abuse cannot solely come from policy-makers, women activists and de-addiction centres. People have to take on the responsibility for creating safe spaces for women. Within homes, alcohol use has to be seen not just as an "individual problem" but one that needs a more nuanced understanding.

Enabling factors such as education, awareness, strong legal systems, social deterrents and women's employment can help mitigate the problem to a large extent.

Ad d i t i o n a l l y , counselling and support in terms of building a more sensitive environment which creates better development opportunities, too, can bring about a noticeable transformation in the lived realities of most vulnerable families. There is a concerted effort towards addressing gender violence in India but it can't be done without empowering communities to beat alcoholism. (WFS)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, September 18, 2016

'Birthday Forecast'

Overall a good year ensues as there is an opposition between Venus and Uranus on your solar return chart. Your communication skills are peaking and you are able to make a huge impact. Ambitious plans see the light of day. You land a plum job or a prestigious assignment. Academic achievements spell success for future endeavours. Profits accrue with sale or purchase of assets. This is a wonderful romantic time, love shines and you feel elated. A pleasurable journey brings unexpected results. Harmony in family is evident and a celebration takes place.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This week brings forth a powerful and energetic approach to resolve professional projects in hand. As you travel you will find that it brings in luck in another aspect of your life. Some of you may have to make some critical decisions due to situations in your life that force you to make choices between career and family goals. The challenge is to find a healthy balance to improve home life, while at the same time tending to your career needs. Meditation is needed for gaining deeper insight into personal relations and complex situations.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine luck and good management. This tends to change your outlook in life, perhaps stimulated by travel or contact with people of different cultural backgrounds. You are more determined to achieve your personal goals, and more strategic in the manner you go about doing so. Fundamental changes in your domestic situation and career orientation are likely. New friendships are likely to emerge during this time, supportive and easygoing ones.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You feel energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. As you accept the individuality of people around; this would help to resolve conflicts and differences. You feel the need to be appreciated by family members, and the need for togetherness with others, comes into play. New contacts with others may also occur. Events are such that you move towards a more objective approach to your life and you cultivate true friendships. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Personal relations are rejuvenated and your romance moves more rapidly as you relate well on the intellectual level as well and move towards a long-term commitment. You encounter people who are very considerate and understanding. You are also likely to form business relationships with people based on a deep level of mutual appreciation and understanding for each other. You are in touch with your more sensitive and spiritual qualities. You are able to express a greater level of sensitivity and sensibility during this period. Walking and gardening can be therapeutic pastimes.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

This is a magical time for romantic relationships. You initiate a current of forceful energy to achieve success in an important venture. You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with difficult professional and family matters. It's a very favorable time for developing your relationships with parents and other relatives. At times life becomes extremely distracting and work and other financial or professional commitments take over. You would give attention on fitness and health related programs.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 23)

People are attracted to you for your intelligent and sharp mind. Your social life is enviable as you interact with interesting people. You need to remain in touch with personal relations or you stand to lose valuable emotional support. You feel on top in domestic issues and spend quality of time with people you care about and in activities that are rejuvenating. A light and playful attitude takes you to high places and to important people. Don't allow old fears to get to you but confront important issues and people that are likely to change. A happy surprise awaits you.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Trust your feelings and intuition about people and situations when taking decisions. Work and pleasure can be combined. You connect with well known personalities and artists. You could find relationships with others confusing and hard to define. Although you may enjoy an increase in your intuitive capabilities, you can also be too open to influence so that fears or delusions impact your ability to see your life clearly. This could also be a time when you are more creative, yet not always in a reliable or organized manner.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You feel fresh and re-energized this week. You may take up new assignments and a project that would call for creativity and new ideas. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. There may be gains from property and fixed assets. You are nurturing and caring in personal relationships. You are likely to experience events that highlight the necessity to share and trust. You may have to deal with willfulness and issues of power and competition in others and in yourself.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

This is a special time for romantic relationships. Your credibility is important at this time and efforts at self-promotion might be made now. It is time to come back to your inner center to regain physical strength, mental balance, emotional harmony and spiritual awareness. A comfortable level of personal popularity helps to keep conflict to a minimum. With the ability to handle your emotions successfully, there is less stress on both your mind and body. Your self-confidence and positive attitude will reward you.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

The planetary configuration indicates responsibilities and commitments may take up more time than usual this week, so set some time aside. Also, parse your schedule so that you don't take on too much and that you don't wind up handling more errands and odd jobs than you meant to. The key to success is adopting a realistic, practical and disciplined approach to your life which comes easily to you. Certain elements of your social and financial lives are stabilized, secured, and more reliable. You may solidify a romantic relationship under this influence.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

This period proves good in terms of investments and speculations. It's a good time to join religious organizations and groups. You move on the path of success and betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth. Circumstances may be such that you need to handle money more carefully or this may simply come naturally to you now.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You are compassionate and generous with family, friends and relatives, drawing respect from them. You have new attitudes towards love matters, finances, and social relationships. Your creative urges are powerful indeed. New friendships, or new spins on established connections, are indicated. A period of hard work and effort is also in store. You take on new responsibilities, but enjoy the challenges. Beware of over indulgence of any kind by maintaining balance in all areas of life. Walking can be a therapeutic pastime.

Khadi's the fabric of the future: Bibi Russell

Bangladeshi designer Bibi Russell, who works closely with Indian artisans for her fashion creations, foresees a bright future for khadi — a fabric that Mahatma Gandhi used as a symbol of protest against the British Raj — provided it is "contextualised" and is in sync with current tastes.

"Khadi is the fabric of the future. It keeps you warm in winter and cool in summer, it uses hand and human resources from step one till finish. What it needs is contextualisation in modern times," Russell told IANS in an e-mail interview from Dhaka.

The designer is excited about showcasing her latest collection at the seventh edition of India Runway Week that began on September 16 and will conclude on Sunday and said khadi would be the focus of the range.

"The collection that I will be showing is 100 percent khadi and 100 percent Rajasthani. Rajasthan is a goldmine for all sorts of culture and art. It is also the largest producer of woollen khadi or 'ooni' khadi as they call it," she added.

What about jute that is found in abundance in Bangladesh? "Jute is the pride of our nation. (Nobel laureate Rabindranath) Tagore's *Amar Shonar Bangla*, meaning Our Golden Bengal, has been adapted as our national anthem and has been inspired by jute, which

turns golden when ripened. Because of the use of nylon and polyfibres, jute and other natural fibres took a hit. We are still the leading exporters of jute. And gladly there is a general awareness spreading in the population, through the youth, which is proving the undeniable superiority of natural fabrics," the designer said.

Russell is also a former international model who worked for different magazines, including Vogue, Cosmopolitan and Harper's Bazaar. Her modelling stint also saw her take part in fashion shows when she worked with names like Yves Saint Laurent, Kenzo, Karl Lagerfeld and Giorgio Armani until 1994.

The designer said she finds a "certain beauty in poverty and it is the people". "I love my craftspeople, and craftspeople around the world. This is my dream, that was a bonus," she added.

Russell says "fashion for development is an accurate description" for her work and adds that her inspiration comes from the craftspeople. "All my outfits are beautifully handmade by skilled craftspeople. My work shows joy in a positive way, in which I see craftspeople... That is why all my inspiration comes from the craftspeople and I salute them," said the designer, who was born in Chittagong, Bangladesh. (IANS)

Circle of life & death

(Contd from last week)

Most flowers have a relationship with bees and butterflies that help in reproduction. The insects get nectar and in return carry pollen from one flower to the next. Once this happens, the receiving flower starts the process of making the seeds that will grow into new flowers.

Certain species of orchids don't find this strategy good enough. They don't want the bee to simply go to the next flower, as this causes inbreeding. In the Mediterranean, a bee orchid, *Ophrys apifera*, looks exactly like the rear of a female bee, fur and all, with its head buried in a blue-petalled flower. Not only that, Ophrys mimics the scent of the female bee.

Male bees fall to mating so vigorously with the flowers that they dislodge pollen packs pre-loaded with a special adhesive that sticks to their backs. After some frantic efforts at achieving bliss, the bee realises he has been fooled and flies quite far collecting his wits. By the time he forgets and falls for the trick again; and he has chosen an Ophrys which is far away and so the strategy of the flower, in finding new flowers to pollinate, is successful.

An Australian marsupial, Antichenus, resembles a mouse with the bristly fur of a hedgehog. During the annual mating season, males copulate with many partners one after the other, for up to 14 hours at a stretch. Days later this marathon sex causes the males to develop sores, lose their hair, go blind and finally die of exhaustion.

Hermaphrodite land snails have both male and female sex organs. Once they've selected a likely

partner, they flex a muscular sac inside their bodies and eject a dart into the other snail's head, which delivers mucus that readies the snail to receive a sperm packet.

Some species jab their mates over and over with their dart, with one stabbing its mate more than 3,000 times. These darts pierce its head completely even hitting the eyestalks. Male bedbugs use their needle-like penises to puncture the females' exoskeletons wherever they can. Sperm is deposited into the wound, where it travels through her body fluid to the ovaries.

Male bees, after inseminating the queen, die because their testicles explode inside her. This is an evolutionary necessity: with the penis inside the female, which seals off any chance of another male getting a mating with her. That is a serious commitment to the future.

Why look at animals for weird, wonderful and scary

reproduction. Our own mythology is full of strange examples. Shiva and Parvati enjoyed an intimate moment and Shiva's seed fell on the ground. So much heat began emanating from it that it threatened to engulf the world in flames.

Agni devoured the vital fluid. He felt so hot that he transferred the fluid to the wombs of six women, called Kritikas, who were turned into stars. They aborted their foetuses on the Himalayas. The holy river Ganga carried the foetuses and Kartikeya was born in the reeds.

Zeus, the head of the Greek pantheon of Gods, swallowed his lover Goddess Metis. A few months later he developed such a headache that he had his head chopped open with an axe. Out jumped his daughter, Athena, goddess of wisdom.

(Concluded)
To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in

“*Barring that natural expression of villainy which we all have, the man looked honest enough.*”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 40 SHILLONG, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

Worst terror attack in Kashmir

IN a deadly pre-dawn attack on an army base in Uri, North Kashmir on September 18, Pakistani militants killed 17 Indian jawans in their sleep. This is the worst single attack on the army in 26 years. More than 30 soldiers were injured, many of them critically, leading to fears that the death toll would rise. This attack comes in the wake of Pakistan President Nawaz Sharif’s repeated threat that the deaths of Kashmiri people in the two month-long siege in the valley would be avenged. Trouble first broke out in the valley after militant leader Burhan Wani was killed by Indian security forces in July this year. It is believed that Wani’s funeral procession, where thousands congregated to protest his death was actually orchestrated by terror outfits from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), that sent in people by the hordes. Since then Kashmir has been on the boil. This latest attack triggered by cross-border forces puts paid to the Indo-Pak dialogue moving forward. There is now a clamour within India and within the military establishment that the country should not be seen as a ‘soft state,’ and calls for a fierce retaliation against Islamabad which is alleged to be behind the strike, are gaining ground.

Four terrorist have meanwhile been killed in a fierce encounter with Indian army. Today’s strike will also jeopardise any hopes of peace being restored in Kashmir whose people have suffered immensely since trouble started in the valley two months ago leaving 86 people killed and thousands injured or blinded by pellet bullets. Meanwhile Prime Minister Modi has condemned the dastardly attack and stated that the perpetrators would not go unpunished. The dilemma for India is how to deal with a rogue state like Pakistan that uses terror outfits nursed on its soil to constantly rattle India. The question now is whether India needs to use covert operations across the border.

LOOKING BACK

March 5, 1989

**ABSU bandh enters 5th day
3 killed in fresh violence**

Two Bodo extremists and a home guard were killed nuing the past 24 hours as the All Bodo Students Union sponsored 175-hour “Assam bandh”, marked by violence continued for the fifth day today. An Army Nayak was arrested in connection with the killing of the home guard, while the death toll in violence during the past five days of bandh rose to 14. Director General of Police Mr S V Subramanian told newsmen that arson, attacks on police and trains had been reported from Kokrajhar district, Udalguri subdivision in Darrang district.

Five Bodo extremists attacked the house of Mr Arvinda Kachari, at Tatlapara village under Paneri Police Station of Udalguri sub-division yesterday. The dead were identified as Rabin Daimari and Prabin Daimari, he said. A home guard jawan was killed and another injured when the extremists fired at them at Jaldobra bridge in Dhubri district. The dead jawan was identified as Abdul Jalil Khan. Later a police party which went there found an army Nayak moving about suspiciously there Police arrested him. The Nayak came on leave.

With this, four army personnel have been arrested in the trouble torn Bodo inhabited areas, Mr Subramanian said. Mr Subramanian said during the bandh a total of four cases of arson, ten bomb explosion and 23 attacks on security forces were reported from Kokrajhar district, Udalguri subdivision and some other Bodo inhabited areas. Altogether 50 extremists were arrested, and a large quantity of arms and ammunition were

recovered, he said. An RPF jawan were arrested yesterday when a bomb exploded at Tarang railway bridge in Kokrajhar district.

The Northeast Frontier Railway has suspended the running of special trains following the detection of planting of bombs under the track at several places, he said. Mr Subramanian said the extremists burnt down the Rangphal High School and Janta College buildings at Safanguri in Kokrajhar district yesterday. A forest beat house was set on fire at Kohithama in Barpeta district. The Basbari high School in Dhurbi district was also burnt down. The extremists also burnt down four bridges on Bijni Ulubari Public Works Department road in Kokrajhar district yesterday.

Mini bus go on lightning strike

Mini buses in Shillong strike on Monday over an ugly incident involving a police Sub Inspector and a Mini bus driver. All the 50 buses went off the road for the whole day cusing to the commuters a great deal of inconvenience. According to reports, at about 10 AM near the Sweepers’ Lane traffic island a mini bus which was moving towards Motphran was asked by the police to stop so that it could go to the terminus via Sweeper's Lane which has been made two way recently. Apparently the driver was unaware of the change of route and did not stop at the blow of whistle. This enraged the SI who allegedly pulled the driver out of the bus and launched a physical assault

Small changes high Hopes

By H H Mohrmen

A young lady who holds a Master’s degree in Social Work after having made her first attempt on a written test conducted by a certain District Selection Committee (DSC) in Jaintia hills, came to me dejected and said that she is done with applying for jobs advertised by the DSC. The young lady was appalled by what she saw and promised herself that she would not apply for any job call by this Committee and would have nothing more to do with the DSC.

This could be one reaction of the many young people who make their first attempt at the written test conducted by DSCs. Often they are left with a bad taste in the mouth. Any candidate who appears for such a test is in a dilemma because the youth are left with only two options. One option is (like the young lady disgusted by what she saw) to decide to forget and rubbish any job advertisement or call by the DSCs or they can join the band wagon. Its like the famous quote, “If you can’t beat them, join them.”

We have seen with our own eyes how young people fresh from school or college, agog with hopes of living an honest life, appear for the tests only to find their cherished ideals challenged. The ideals of living a life of integrity is put to the test, and in one fell swoop their dreams are shattered just like that. It is an open secret that many written tests conducted by the DSCs are not fair. There is open mass copying of answers by the candidates while invigilators turned a Nelson’s eye to these acts of commission by remaining mute spectators to what is going on in the examination hall.

Of late with the advent of technology young people who appear for the written tests conducted by DSCs make the best use of their smart phones to help them cheat in the examination. The modus operandi is that the candidate photographs the questions and sends them to friends and

relatives through whatsapp. They in turn google the answers and send them back to the candidates in the hall via whatsapp.

Many young people after appearing for such tests succumb to the pressure and follow what others were doing and blame the system, while few others avoids applying for government jobs through DSC altogether. But the majority take the easy way out and follow what their friends were doing and start indulging in unfair means. In such situations can we offer any hope to the young people? Still the most important question is; if this is how we recruit people, then what kind of future is in store for the state? Not only are the youths left without hopes but even elders who see how the system is manipulated are disheartened and resigned to their fates and blame the system. It is indeed easy to just blame the system and avoid having to do anything with it, but the question is will that bring a desired change?

I was in such a situation when few years ago a friend who was an MLA then sent a feeler requesting me to accept his nomination to be the member of the DSC of Jaintia hills district. When the offer came to me I could not help but ask myself, “Why me?” Then I realized that the politician friend is indeed very shrewd. He knew of my capacity to influence and hoped that my membership in the DSC would help many job aspirants from his constituency to get the job. I was also aware of what was going on and admitted that with the prevailing system, I will neither be able to bring change nor can I do anything to improve the system. I politely rejected his offer and later when I shared this story with some of my friends, they were stunned. They called me fool and said that there is no other person more stupid than I was. They also regretfully suggested that I should have taken the job and at least helped some of my relatives get appointed in some government job. When I

replied that ‘that was precisely the reason why I rejected the offer, they kept mum.’

Considering that now thousands of educated youths are applying for every job advertised, it is the duty of the government to ensure fairness and provide a level playing field for all the candidates applying for the job. The Deputy Commissioner West Jaintia hills although he was only recently appointed DC, is aware of what is going on in such exams and in his effort to improve the way the test is conducted, he personally visited the centres where the test was held and caught some candidates indulging in unfair means. The candidates were duly punished and it did not stop there. Making the best use of available technology the DC put the key answers to the questions online for everyone to see. In the past DSCs received many RTI requests but with the key answers available now online, the candidates can compare their scores. Now this is the beginning of a transparent process and a beginning is made to change the system. Unlike many of us who rued that the system has failed us and do nothing but crib here is a Deputy Commissioner who is attempting to change the system.

When the outcome of the written test conducted by the DSC was posted on DC office’s facebook page, suggestions were made to go one step further and get the personal interviews recorded on video or perhaps even considering installing CCTVs in the room. Some young people complained that those who attend interviews were sometime asked silly questions by members in the interview board. Candidates especially young girls complained they were even asked question like whether they have boyfriends or if they are married? The DC was quick to respond and reminded that personal interviews carry only 30 marks while written tests carry 270 marks. He also said that CCTVs can only record images and not sound, so if the intention is to record the entire

proceedings of the interview, CCTV will not serve the purpose.

It is therefore imperative that those who conduct the tests should ensure fairness in the way the written tests are conducted and that every candidate is given an equal opportunity. The crux of the matter is how the written tests are conducted and if there was fairness therein. If the tests are conducted as desired then half the battle is won. If the DSCs and MPSC could only ensure that written tests are conducted in a fair and transparent manner, candidates selected for government jobs would improve.

One only hopes that other DSCs, the MPSC and even police recruitment make the best use of technology to improve the process of selection of candidates for their respective posts. Using the technology available, if the CBSE can conduct tests like NEET for lakhs of students in the whole country without any glitch, what prevent the DSCs, the MPSC or board for recruitment of candidates for Police force and nurses in the health department from adopting the same technology? Using this available technology one also hopes that the MPSC will not take ages to conduct interviews for one job. West Jaintia hills district can serve as a model that the process can be completed in time without delay and causing much inconvenience to the youths of the state by making use of technology.

In fact Jowai or West Jaintia hills in particular is fortunate to have a techno-savvy DC who is constantly interacting with the public online. His facebook page Deputy Commissioner’s office West Jaintia hills has huge followers and residents of the district particularly youths are making suggestions and complaints through the DC’s facebook page and Whatsapp account. Now all officers in the district are active on social media and at least have a Whatsapp account because the DC is communicating with them through that medium.

TO THE EDITOR

Unwarranted criticism

Editor,
In drawing your attention to Patricia Mukhim’s column captioned “No-confidence motion looses teeth in Meghalaya” (ST Sep 16, 2016), the writer’s analysis on the capacity and ability of the present Leader of Opposition as the then Chief Minister in 2008 with the incongruent elements on board, is not only irrational but reeks of an attempt to throw poor light on a Chief Ministerial alternative the opposition has. This is politicking if not politicking. It is irrational and highly unjust to compare the CM who had only 11 MLAs and lasted a year against a CM who is backed by 43 + 2 MLAs along with the blessings of the Congress High Command from Delhi.

One ought to consider the historical fact, that not being the largest party in 2008, Dr. Donkupar Roy still rose to the occasion and took on the challenge with all that he could sum up. The incongruous element only added up to his unquestionable experience and it will be the saving grace that will bring the alternative to the fore come 2018.

Coming to the writer’s assessments over his standing with his own Party MLAs, I find it naive to bring this up especially, in the present political scenario. To target the opposition as being without leaders fit to occupy the Chief Minister’s chair is highly questionable when opportunity has not been provided and hence your

discounting of the opposition force holds no water as such. If one were to look back at history, one would undoubtedly realize that regional parties have performed better in trying times despite obstacles galore. However, regional parties have yet to embrace the factor that will unite them and this is a valid criticism for all to dwell and delve upon.

The writer has always been bowled over by charm, charisma, wit and the modern looking youth leadership but experience, knowledge base, level mindedness and above all integrity has always withstood the test of time. To speculate on the available alternative’s capacity is immature and can be read as a biased effort, considering the fact that it was made crystal clear that the No Confidence Motion’s objective was to have an opportunity to raise burning issues afflicting the state. Hence, I would like the readers to have a clear perspective of things and not be swayed by the opinion of one person..

Yours etc.,
Allantry Franklin Dkhar,
Shillong- 1

The MCCL impasse

Editor,
The Executive Committee of Mawmluh Sirdarship expresses its loss of confidence in the Office of the Managing Director (MD) of the Mawmluh Cherra Cements Limited. The Committee views all statements from the said office regarding the commissioning of the new plant as an attempt to hoodwink the people, a

rhetoric, a tale of sound and fury bearing no practical meaning, with reasons best known to the incumbent. Time and again the MD has given media bytes with soothing words of hope to the victimized workers and the residents of Mawmluh and Sohra in particular and to the public in general that the commissioning of the new plant is imminent but till date, the catch-phrase in the site and around it is “on a trial basis”. Smooth functioning of the factory is still a far cry, with technical snags hindering the process, apart from uncoordinated inter-departmental issues. Add to this the frequents frequent power trips that brings the factory to a grinding halt.

When a delegation from the Mawmluh Durbar had sought audience with the MD in June 2015, he had categorically verbally revealed that it was the unwillingness and lack of co-operation of the workers (who were then on strike against the non-payment of their salaries) that stood as a hurdle for commissioning the plant. He assured us that the moment they resume work the plant would be ready to kick-start in two or three weeks. Within a few days the workers went back to work but it is now more than a year and the hopes fuelled by the MD’s assurance are in vain.

As per the report in this paper (ST April 7, 2015) “... a new dry process plant of the company will be commissioned post the completion of the trial run by the end of this month.” Such promises were repeated in different media. To say the least the MD’s beating of the drum has misled the public in general and the stakeholders in particular. The question is how could

he have made promises and assurances like these when the workers have fulfilled their part of the bargain and some production has taken place but the finished product cannot be despatched because of due clearances that have not been obtained from certain authorities. Is it naive to presume that the MD wasn’t in the know about these clearances to be obtained? To repeat the points made above, full-fledged commissioning of the plant is still a distant dream, the main factors contributing to this fiasco being the apparent ineptness of the officers and the seeming lack of mutual understanding amongst them, which, the MD appears to have failed to address.

The Executive Committee of Mawmluh Sirdarship (Mawmluh being a major stakeholder in the Mawmluh Cherra Cements Limited) takes strong exception to this strange drama where the MD of the company keeps giving misleading statements about the proposed take-off of the MCCL plant. We have lost confidence in him on grounds of inefficiency, his lack of interest to restore the workers and their families to normal economic health and his reluctance to alleviate the suffering and gloom of the people of Mawmluh and Sohra, leave alone to restore the lost glory of the oldest Public Sector Undertaking in the State which hitherto had been the main flagship of Meghalaya.

Yours etc.,
PS Lyngdoh
Sirdar
Mawmluh Sirdarship

**Don Shahabuddin challenges Nitish’s authority
Lalu playing politics with Bihar CM**

By Arun Srivastava

It may sound bizarre, but the fact remains that Nitish Kumar’s JD(U) has to beg to Lalu Prasad to restrain his disciple don Shahabuddin from hurling diatribe and denunciation against Kumar. No one would have imagined that the proxy boys of Nitish have to approach Lalu for buying peace. The importance of being Shahabuddin is implicit from this simple incident. Though the RJD’s vice president, Raghubans Prasad Singh, next to Lalu in party hierarchy, has been quite critical of Nitish ever since he became chief minister, the JD(U) or Nitish never took cognizance of his utterances. But a one liner quip from Shahabuddin rocked the political establishment of the state and JD(U) has to reach the door steps of Lalu.

Just after stepping out of the Bhagalpur jail, Shahabuddin had created a tremor in political circles, calling Nitish Kumar “CM of circumstances” and lampooning him by saying that Nitish cannot get more than 20 seats on his own. The don said Nitish Kumar became chief minister because of circumstances. A regular chief minister comes from the masses, others become chief minister by virtue of being in a coalition...because of circumstances. “Our neta (leader) is obviously (RJD chief) Lalu Yadav, (and) Nitish Kumar is the chief minister of the state, (there’s) no debate on that,” says Shahabuddin. Shahabuddin explicitly clarified that Nitish Kumar was not his leader. For him Lalu Prasad will continue to remain his leader. He says, “I’ve started my political career with him and will end it with him. Whatever decision he takes, wherever he goes, I’ll follow him. For me, he is the only mass leader in the country today, and a natural leader”.

What’s worse, in reply to Niish’s rebuttal that the people of Bihar had given him the mandate, he retorted “Madhu Koda ko bhi public ka mandate tha (Even Madhu Koda had public mandate)”. Madhu Koda the lone RJD legislator in Jharkhand became the chief minister and was in office for nearly two years. He was later jailed for his involvement in coal scam.

Shahabuddin disowning Nitish has not been an impulsive observation. He was speaking the mind of his leader, Lalu Yadav. Those who are aware of the style of functioning of Lalu know that no leader of any stature can open his mouth on any issue, forget criticism of Nitish, without the tacit approval of the RJD boss. Though lone exception has been Raghubans Prasad, he too has been cautious of not crossing the Laxman Rekha.

Shahabuddin’s avowal projects Lalu Yadav as the leader above the equals. In the political circle so far he was being acknowledged as the big brother of Nitish, who interfered into the running of the government. But Shahabuddin’s remarks are explicit that Nitish was following the dictates and fulfilling the wishes of Lalu. Nitish has no independent locus standi. Little doubt that it has eclipsed the aura and invincibility of Nitish. Personally rebutting Shahabuddin’s remark vindicates its magnitude and significance. There is a galaxy of party spokesperson but none dared to counter Shaha-buddin.

While generally people of Bihar have not taken Shahabuddin’s jibes seriously, there are some who see the development from the perspective of the friendly shoot-out. They nurse the view that the release of Shahabuddin must not cause damage to image of Nitish which was why he was resorting to such tactics. True enough his release has put the government in the docks. Questions are being raised if dreaded don Anant Singh can be pushed inside the jail under crime control Act

(CCA), why Shahabuddin was allowed to come out notwithstanding that he was convicted in some other cases and is still under trial in others.

These people apprehend that it was done at the behest of Lalu Prasad. They look at the episode as a part of Shahabuddin’s strategy to be harsh towards Nitish, to emphasize the differences between them. In fact the release of Shahabuddin is causing more problems to the Nitish Kumar government. It has added to the peoples’ perception that ‘jungle raj’ is returning. What has further reinforced the peoples’ notion is the police action in not collecting toll charge at the Muzaffarpur toll booth from Shahabuddin’s convoy of more than 200 cars coming from Bhagalpur jail to Sivan. Later it transpired that the toll employees had police orders to let more than 200 cars in ex-MP Shahabuddin’s convoy pass without toll..The convoy included many red beacon cars. In fact people are asking how permission was granted to take out a procession of hundreds of cars with arms while Shahabuddin was visiting his hometown of Siwan from Bhagalpur jail.

An astute politician, trying to steer clear of the controversy after JD(U)’s request, Lalu has simply to say that he is not aware of the developments but that he would ask the leaders to restrain and behave in a decent manner. This is the usual refrain resorted to by the politics to silence public criticism. Lalu’s stance is not different.

To complicate things further for Nitish, a day after Shahabuddin said Nitish became Bihar’s chief minister only because he was in a coalition with the RJD, the former union minister Raghubans Singh said he had been opposed to Nitish becoming CM but since leaders decided it so he had to respect their decision

If for Chandrashekar Prasad, alias Chanda Babu, whose three sons were allegedly murdered by the goons of Shahabuddin, the release of the don from jail after eleven year stay in prison, “is nothing less than a death sentence”, for the Bihar chief minister it heralds the beginning of an uncertain future. Nitish cannot be sure of the survival of his government and the existence of the grand alliance. Maverick Lalu may play a trick any day.

Shahabuddin is out on bail in the murder of Rajiv Roushan, Chanda Babu’s eldest son. Roushan was an eyewitness to the murder of his two brothers. Chanda Babu says, “My sons Girish and Satish were kidnapped in 2004 by Shahabuddin’s men and killed by pouring acid at Pratappur. Rajiv, the elder son, was kidnapped but he escaped. When he returned to Siwan in 2014, he too was murdered”. Rajiv was killed in front of his father just 21 days after his marriage.

Significantly two most wanted “absconding “killers Mohammad Javed and Mohammad Kaif, killers of journalist Rajdev Ranjan were spotted in the don’s convoy seen travelling with Shahabuddin when he was let out of Bhagalpur jail. It is beyond comprehension why the Siwan police failed to arrest them? In a major turn of events, now the senior police officials maintain that so far the police had no proof to establish Shahabuddin’s direct involvement in Rajdev Ranjan’s murder on May 13 this year. However earlier Laddan Mian, a contract killer close to the Siwan strongman, had hinted at the involvement of don. Laddan and five suspects - Sonu Gupta, Rohit Kumar, Rajesh Kumar, Vijay and Vishnu - are lodged in Siwan district jail. (IPA Service)

“Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you an opportunity to commit more.”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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Dual post conundrum

IN September last year the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly passed the Prevention of Disqualification (Member of Legislative Assembly Meghalaya) Amendment Bill, 2015, which barred legislators from simultaneously holding the post of members of the autonomous district councils. This Bill was allegedly passed to pre-empt a Court ruling pending a Public Interest Litigation which challenges why an MLA who is also holding the post of MDC cannot be disqualified under the Office of Profit clauses flowing from Articles 102(1) and 191 (1) of the Constitution. The PIL brings in the contentious argument that an MLA who is also an MDC receives a salary for both posts and is therefore violating the Office of Profit clauses which prescribe restrictions at the central and state level on lawmakers accepting government positions. Any violation attracts disqualification of MPs or MLAs, as the case may be. The dichotomy arises because the term office of profit has not been clearly defined in the Constitution.

Sonia Gandhi, a member of Lok Sabha, was appointed the chairperson of national advisory council by the UPA- 1 government. After the issue of office of profit was raised, she quit as an MP and sought re-election. The Prevention of Disqualification Act was amended in 2006 to add the position of NAC chairperson to the list of exempted posts. The then Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, too, faced disqualification but was saved by amending the Act. MP Jaya Bacchan of the Samajwadi Party lost her seat for holding the post of chairperson of the Uttar Pradesh Film Development Federation. The Act was again amended in 2013 to save the chairpersons of the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes from disqualification. In that sense the disqualification clauses can be played around with to protect those that the system desires to. In the case of the 21 MLAs of the AAP who also held the posts of Parliamentary Secretaries, President Pranab Mukherjee has refrained from giving assent to the amendment of the disqualification clause passed by the Delhi Assembly. In the case of Meghalaya the holding of dual posts of MLA and MDC is to be seen from the point of it being a direct conflict of interests since the laws passed by the Council can be struck down by the Legislature under Article 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule. How can MDCs who are also MLAs pass a law in the Councils and revoke the same in the Assembly? This is confounding to say the least. So more than the office of profit it is the conflict of interest issue that the voters should be engaging with.

LOOKING BACK

March 5, 1989

Nagaland opposition threat of ignoring Governor

The newly elected 17th Nagaland legislative assembly meets here tomorrow on a day's session for the swearing in of the members and electing the Speaker amid threats of 'ignoring' the Governor by the opposition. As the inauguration of the house is scheduled with an address by Governor Gen. K V Krishna Rao, the opposition Nagaland People's Councils (NPC) legislature party leader Mr K L Chishi said the former being an "agent of the Congress(I)" had forfeited his all constitutional and moral rights to continue as head of the state. Mr Chishi said they would express their feelings about the Governor through "appropriate means" in the house tomorrow.

The NPC having a strength of 24 in the 60 member house today also reiterated its demand for the Governor by the Centre. Meanwhile, the opposition and Congress(I) legislature party members held their meeting separately today to

decide their respective strategies at the inaugural session. Besides the debate on a motion of thanks on the Governor's address the house is likely to elect a new Speaker tomorrow itself following the resignation of Mr T N Ngilie as Speaker Pro Tem. Raj Bhawan sources said his resignation had been accepted. Mr Ngilie who resigned to contest for speakership as Congress(I) nominee for the post has his lone rival NPC candidate Mr S Sokten Konyak.

Bandh disrupts life in Kokrajhar Dist.

Life was disrupted today in the tribal dominated Kokrajhar district of Assam following a 12-hour bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union in protest against the arrest of one of their office bearers. The ABSU has already announced a 121 hour statewide bandh from 5 am on Thursday in protest against non-fulfilment of their demands including a separate Bodoland.

Recovering the real idea of nationalism

By D V Kumar

Nationalism is a hotly debated issue in India these days and rightly so. It is only through a critical and creative dialogue that ideas in all their glory can be recovered. Unless they are subjected to constant interrogation, there is a possibility, in fact, a danger that they are appropriated for the all the wrong reasons. One such idea is nationalism. Ever since the incidents on the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus on Feb 9 2016, there have been excellent articles from some of the outstanding social scientists especially from JNU on the question of nationalism. Also it has been quite an education to listen to some of them speak at , what came to be called as Freedom Square at JNU on nationalism.

Contrary to what dominant social science argued long back that collective identities (including the nationalist identity) would become weaker in the context of modernity and development, what one has seen in the recent past is actually a strengthening of them. Our discussion would , however, be confined to the trajectory that the idea of nationalism has taken in India. There is something dialectical about the very idea of nationalism. It can be progressive, democratic, liberating and empowering and at the same time it can also be regressive, undemocratic and oppressive. It depends upon what uses it is employed for.

The nationalism that grew in India during the freedom struggle , as a response to the colonial rule, was largely a liberating, empowering and democratic phenomenon. It sought to include everyone on an equal footing. It offered a great possibility, a great hope. It was something to be celebrated. There was childlike innocence in the way we fought for our independence but at the same time there was a confidence born out of a long civilization. There was almost a touch of romance. One could have hardly refused to fall in love with the ideas of

justice, equality and freedom which were the guiding principles of our nationalism. It was an open invitation to explore. Enough of foreign rule and it was time to negotiate our own lives in a creative manner. In this endeavour science was to be a partner. Science was viewed as culture. When Nehru spoke about scientific temper, he meant precisely this. Science was to be a way of life, not to be merely seen as an instrument of development, as was the case in the West. Yes, there were different social groups –dalits, tribals, religious minorities, women – who had their own concerns, grievances and anxieties. But there was a general consensus that these needed to be addressed. When the Constitution, which was a product of reasoned debates and contestations, came into existence, it unleashed enormous democratising possibilities. Its incorporation of funda-mental rights and freedoms was a paradigmatic shift in a society which had and still has some of the most oppressive structures such as the caste system. A democratic Constitution could have emerged only in the context of a democratic nationalism.

The nationalism that is sought to be privileged now in India these days is almost the antithesis of what nationalism stood for during the freedom struggle and just in its aftermath. Three distinctive features of the present day nationalism can be identified. First, it is based on exclusions-dalits, tribals, religious minorities and women are subjected to a systematic relegation to the background. The fact that they can become easy targets for physical attacks for doing what they have been doing for years-skinning of dead animals by dalits (the new- found love for Dalits needs to be looked at from an electoral perspective), for example, clearly shows that they have no space in the dominant imagination of the nation. Also women are constantly lectured on what kind of dress they should wear and how which actually

makes them objects of patriarchal domination. There is a symbiosis between patriarchy and nationalism. What we are seeing today is an aggressive and masculinised version of nationalism. As noted by Anderson, a nation is an 'imagined political community'. He, however, did not look at the possibility of multiple imaginations and also the possibility that at certain historical junctures certain imaginations (rightwing nationalism at present, for example) hold sway over others. In the current dominant (rightwing) imagination, there is clearly no space for marginalised and oppressed sections of the society such as dalits. Either they fall in line or be ready to be subjected to 'cognitive blackout'. Therefore the nationalism that is presently on the ascendant has lost its progressive and emancipatory potential. It refuses to be inclusive and democratic.

Secondly, nationalism has been reduced to symbols, polarising at that. Bharat mata ki jai and the cow, for example, have emerged as the symbols around which nationalism is sought to be constructed. These symbols, it needs to be recognised, have a chequered history behind them. Bharat mata ki jai was a slogan originally found in the novel Anandamath by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It was essentially used as a mobilising tool by the Hindu right wing nationalist leadership against the British and Muslims.. It was basically used to mobilise the Hindus. Therefore from the very beginning it has been a polarising tool. The other symbol cow (which is organically connected to the rural economy) has become a hugely politicised animal in the recent past. As D. N. Jha argues cows were sacrificed in the Vedic rituals in the ancient India and therefore to argue that cows were never killed in India would be historically untenable. It assumed a political character during the medieval times when the Muslim invasions began. It began to be used as a differentiating symbol

between the Hindus and Muslims. Some wanted to separate themselves from Muslims who happened to be beef-eaters and they used the cow as a 'signifier' and made it 'holy'. Symbols are important in the national imagination but care should be taken to select symbols which have the potential to unify rather than divide as it is presently happening, unless, of course, the intention is to divide rather than unify.

Thirdly, a cosy relationship developed between corporate capitalism and right-wing nationalism. Whenever capitalism is in crisis as it is in now, with high levels of unemployment and the falling rate of profit, it looks for those phenomena which can distract the attention of people. It has found in Hindutva one such phenomenon. Also capital needs a reactionary ideology to deradicalise class consciousness and prevent the possibility of marginalised sections of the society coming together in the fight for justice and equity. The ideology of the right-wing nationalism is precisely that. Further equality is an idea with which both of them- capitalism and right-wing nationalism- are uncomfortable with. It is not that this kind of relationship was not there before but what is new is the deep intensity of relationship that has developed between them now. 'Make in India' programme, for example, is indicative of the renewed relationship between them now.

The above features of the contemporary nationalism would compel one to conclude that it has assumed a distorted form. It no longer remains as emancipatory as it once promised to be. It is time we fought hard to recover the progressive and empowering idea of nationalism which once united us on the basis of principles of equality, justice, secularism and respect for the difference.

(D.V. Kumar teaches Sociology at the Department of Sociology, North-Eastern Hill University)

TO THE EDITOR

Of no-confidence motions

Editor,

In my quest to participate in the debate whether the no confidence motion moved by the opposition in Meghalaya, in the recently concluded autumn assembly, were toothless or not, in response to Patricia Mukhim's column, "No-confidence motion looses teeth in Meghalaya" (ST Sep 16), I would like to state the following. The opposition do have teeth but they were all shaky which came out of their jaws during the course of the short autumn assembly or else why was the double no confidence motions withdrawn. Records speak for themselves and it has been seen that the taste of Meghalaya electorate has always been for national parties, mostly Congress, after the formation of the state. It is also a fact that what we have witnessed in Arunachal Pradesh recently was practiced and inflicted by Congress in the past on the local parties of Meghalaya post statehood when they hijacked all into their fold.

And given the situation that stands today with the north east reorganizing itself into the saffron fold, Meghalaya may not be too far and more so when saffron eyes are set in this state from neighboring Assam. So it is time that the opposition here braces itself with real or artificial jaws since that will be required most in the days to come. A party without teeth might otherwise have to go the Sonia and Rahul Gandhi way. The duo are at the moment speaking only from the national capital. Teeth are vital whether in motion or no motion.

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong – 1

Habits are formed by rewards and punishments

Editor,

There is a famous saying, 'Spare the rod spoil the child'. This letter is not meant to encourage severe punishment in order to stop crimes. Instead it is a personal feeling that if the state (government) follows the universal principle of 'good must be rewarded and evil must be punished,' then

the mentality of the people might change. Long ago I had written a letter to the editor on the slowness of the legal system and how it encourages crime yet, our legal system continues to be tardy. The case of the murder a young girl from Upper Shillong (Umyingka) has not seen justice till date. For the bereaved family it is a case of 'justice delayed is justice denied.' Before this case could be solved another murder case has been reported of a young girl from Lumparing, then the kidnapping of two young girls from the BSF camp at Nongmynsong - a case still shrouded in mystery. Why is the legal system so slow in our country? The Chief Justice of India has urged the government to speed up the recruitment of judges in order to give justice to thousands of cases pending in different courts in our country, but the Government pays no attention to this serious issue of the judicial system. Similarly it is quite surprising to see the sudden rise of many other crimes such as thefts, rape and drug peddling particularly in our state of Meghalaya within these past few months. Many say that it is because of drugs that all other crimes arise. But the question is why do young people in our

region suddenly go for drugs? Frankly speaking we the inhabitants of Meghalaya are rich in ethics and morality but today we find all those teachings of our ancestors rapidly disappearing from our society. Perhaps the youth think that with the development of science and technology and communication, all those teachings and values of the old generation are outmoded. My personal view is that, the causes of rising crime in our society today is because parents and elders are not using the rewards and punishment model in their children's upbringing. As a result the young generation feel no qualms in committing any crime. Let us question ourselves how we forming the younger generation? Have we as parents, including the church elders as reported in the Shillong Times dated 17th Sept, 2016 lost the sense of morality?

Yours etc.,
Aiborlang Nongsiej
Mawkyrwat
South West Khasi Hills

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

Revival of Silk Industry in Assam

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

India is known for its rich heritage of arts and crafts. North East India particularly deserves special mention for having a history of art and craft that goes back to thousands of years. Among many such illustrious crafts that have sustained for millenniums, one must mention the silk industry of Assam. Assam is the only place in the world which produces three type of silk - golden Muga, white Pat and warm Eri silk. The centre of this silk industry is in Sualkuchi. Sualkuchi is a small town which is almost 40 kilometres away from Guwahati. Nestled between the Brahmaputra on one side and Guwahati on the other, Sualkuchi is one of the adjoining towns of Guwahati city. It is also home to the traditional silk industry which has survived in Assam for almost 10 centuries now. Along with the brass metal industry, traditional silk industry is one of the two bedrock industries of Assam. Not only money, the industry also brings a lot of recognition for Assam. Looking into all these aspects, the government decided to establish a Fashion Institute Technology in Sualkuchi region, a few years ago.

Yet for the past few years now, this source of pride is in the news for all the wrong reasons. The glory that this sleepy town earned for Assam and for India throughout the years, is now slipping away. It is slowly turning into a story of despair. It is important to understand the problems that these industries face and how we can solve them. Such solutions might not act for Sualkuchi alone , but can also provide a template to all those regions whose traditional industries face one challenge or the other.

First and foremost, we must be able to understand the basic problems that plague this craft. The non existence of a price control regime is the one of the foremost problems that plagues this industry today. There is no price control board which regulates the price of these commodities. For example, the price of a piece of cloth is the same as it was five years ago with very minor increase. In this era of inflated economy, we can all comprehend how this non-increase in the basic prices of the commodity will hit the producers. Major fallout of this non-increase in price is degradation in the quality of cloth. To make up for the losses caused by stagnant prices, a large number of producers are resorting to mixing other elements in the cloth. The price of the commodity depends on a few large traders who virtually have iron grip on the market. They fluctuate the prices according to their own needs so that the market prices move when they desire to do so. This hegemony deters the very growth of the industry and also acts against letting any new traders enter this trade.

A few years ago large number of protests were held against the large traders. The smaller weavers had lamented that these traders passed off cheaper Banarasi silk and other material as traditional Assamese silk. The smaller weavers were expecting a boom in sales since Rongali Bihu is round the corner (that particular time when a large amount of cloth is sold) and to their despair, they found cheaper cloth was being sold in the name of Sualkuchi silk.

This system of hegemony of trade, in the hands of a few has other major fallouts. Once the production is made, the small traders flock to the few big traders of the commercial area of Guwahati to sell their produce. Hence smaller traders from the town are at a disadvantage. These people do not have direct access to the market. Hence

they are forced to sell their products at the hands of a few who control the larger market. These bigger players do not pay the smaller traders full payment and let the balance accumulate over years. Since market access and customers is the final goal of any economic enterprise, the smaller traders from town are forced to rely on a few large merchants, a system which ensures their systematic exploitation.

The solutions to these problems are not difficult to comprehend, however. The first solution is, of course, the government setting up a price regulation mechanism so that the small traders are not exploited and they get fair price. This can be done by setting up a Silk Auction Board on the lines of the Tea Auction Board. With a proper administrative mechanism, this board can regulate the activities of the traders in Assam and all produce being sold through them. This will make Assam silk a large global brand like the tea industry and will also transform it into a modern industry ensuing competition at the global level. Government can take steps to regularise the payment of the weavers or the traditional "sipinis" so that they get paid more than what the NREGA pays. This will make weaving a lucrative option once more, and will stop the trend of decreasing weavers in the industry. Proper financial auditing must be a strict regulation for all the traders so that they have a sound economic growth. Banks and other financial institutions must come forward to give loans to the small traders. Till now, most of them are dependent on private financiers who charge very high interest rates. Banks' interest in this sector will also encourage many youths to take up this business.

Secondly, we must understand the pattern of the silk trade. A major part of the silk produce is exported to Japan where it is used to make kimonos — a kind of specialised clothing in Japan. The traders in Assam can organise a workshop by visiting Japan under the aegis of the Assam government. They can learn how to manufacture kimonos. After getting back, the weavers can sell the finished product of kimonos, instead of raw silk. This will ensure not only added revenue but will make the silk traders of Assam global competitors in the true sense.

To curb the meance of inferior quality silk entering the market in the name of Pat and Muga, the government must establish some taxation norms on the entry of such products in the state. Apart from that, the local people must be vigilant about any unscrupulous practices like hoarding of silk of inferior quality etc. The small traders also should be given an institutional mechanism where they can air their grievances and also find a platform for solutions. Declaring Sualkuchi as a cluster industry under the MSME (Micro Small and Medium Industries) and giving them benefits under it will also auger well for this industry.

In the end, everyone has a stake in the betterment of the silk industry. It is after all one of the oldest industries of not only Assam, but also the country. Hence what it needs is not armed action and curfew, but genuine attempts at understanding the grievances of the people and efforts towards solving them.

Ibu Sanjeeb Garg
(Views expressed by the author are personal in nature)

“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing you can do is keep your mind young.”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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The Samajwadi Story

THE Samajwadi Party (SP) developed ugly fissures with uncle pitted against nephew, son taking on father and governance gone to sixes. It showed the lack of inner party democracy. Most other major parties have the same fault lines. Parties like the Shiv Sena, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the DMK, the AIADMK, the Trinamool, the RJD, and the Janata Party (Secular) are run on personal lines. Elections lead to the choice of a leader by consensus. During the state and general elections candidates are chosen by the ruling party leader. Akhilesh Yadav has said that Mulayam Singh Yadav, the party patriarch, will decide who the candidate for the office of chief minister will be in 2017. It is an internal matter. But what about the quality of the candidates? The country needs a model about the choice of candidates and their constituencies. The ruling clique should not be allowed to call the shots. The election commission demands that party functionaries should be elected. Of course, in most cases a consensus is achieved about the choice of a candidate. Reforms have been suggested by various committees advocating inner party democracy.

Political parties decide on the spending of public funds and frame laws. That makes institutionalized inner party democracy all the more necessary. Leaders should decide on most matters but those who elect them should also have a role in decision making. The family struggle in the Samajwadi Party exposes a sordid saga in Indian politics.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Tripura’s Industrialisation

Thanks to its abundant potential of natural gas, Tripura bids fair to come up very fast and prominently on the industrial map of India. It may not indeed be too tall a claim on the part of the Chief Minister, Mr Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar that the State government was determined to take up the challenge for developing backward Tripura into an industrially advanced state by the turn of the century. The industrial scene had already started looking up and a few gas-based industries were working satisfactorily. Finalisation of a few more industrial projects was on the cards, An agreement has been signed earlier this month for setting up a 50-tonne capacity vanaspathi unit between a Delhi based private company and the Tripura Industrial Development Corporation. A proposal for the setting up of a nearly Rs 115 crore methanol plant was now nearing finalisation, The methanol plant has the distinction of being the first to have attracted an investment of Rs 9 crore from the Oil and Natural Gas Commission as equity. A decision to approve ONGC’s investment in the methanol plant was taken recently by its Board. This is in line with the giant public sector undertaking’s new policy of taking part in the equity of gas-based projects to be set up in and around Tripura. The Union government agreed to allow ONGC setting up joint ventures with State governments in the north-eastern region and power plants, methanol projects and sponge iron units were being mentioned in this context. The project cost is estimated at Rs 114 crore and the time schedule for its implementation is 36 months after the zero date. What additionally contribute to the Chief Minister’s optimism is perhaps that leading industrial houses in the country are evincing keen interest to set up industrial units in Tripura. Official sources said that several of these houses have

submitted proposals for launching their projects and the State government was interested in taking advantage of the “experience, technical know-how and investment capabilities of those reputed concerns”. Several industrialists from different parts of the country had recently visited the state and “substantial progress has been achieved towards setting up of a few big industries under joint sector, sources added, While the State government would offer the infrastructural facilities, what appears to have been attracting entrepreneurs is the cheap availability of natural gas and also manpower. Against this bright prospect looms large the deepening economic crisis in Bangladesh at the other end of a tenuous 800 km border inviting ceaseless infiltration from that country. The fact that many of the infiltrators are only day-time intruders offering cheap labour or attending cinemas, getting treated in hospitals and than returning to their country in the evening may not pose a political problem as such but its economic implication is bound to be grave. The more industries are opened at our end , the more would be the incentive for such migratory labour offering unhealthy competition with the locals who many eventually be driven out since the entrepreneurs would more interested in getting the cheapest labour irrespective of their nationality residence. A good percentage of them would in due course settled down permanently, which is a possibility directly affecting the tribal-nontribal demography raising thus a grave political question. The long international border must therefore be brought under effective vigil on all kinds of infiltration to make the benefits of on-going industrialisation safe and secure for the locals of all categories.

Compromise City

We have a mongrel that we named Snowy when he was a pup. Since he was pure white, Snowy, like Tintin’s dog, was the obvious choice for his moniker. From a sickly puppy he has grown into a fine healthy adult and because he always tags along with us everywhere, we have become extremely fond of him. However I do think that I made a mistake in calling him Snowy. A more appropriate name, perhaps in the manner of the Red Indian names, would have been “White Shadow”. It would have reflected, more appropriately his character. Similarly I think whoever has named our city, Shillong, made a bit of a mistake. In hindsight, a more appropriate name for it, would be, Compromise City.

For visitors to our beloved, or yet to be loved hometown, the compromise is apparent the moment they enter its outer limits. If their left nostrils take in the air of fresh pines, the right nostril is bombarded by the stench from the Martens dump. Having travelled speedily some ninety odd kilometres, on a wide undulating highway, they now have to crawl through the narrow lanes of the city. It is as if Nature which invited them here, gave them unrestricted passage here, but the city itself like a shy damsel, refuses to allow them into her living quarters. Is it because our living spaces are something to be ashamed of? There isn’t one proper well planned, orderly laid out colony, in the entire city. Fancy multi storied buildings sprout, compromisingly in shabby localities. The houses may have fancy furnishings and interiors, are even sparkling clean but the surrounding public areas all have potholed narrow roads, leaky pipes, tangled electric and phone wires and abysmal parking spaces. Whether it is the old and hallowed mound of Iewduh, or the newer areas such as Mawblei, they all point to a compromise between the demands of today and the lost beauty of yesterday. “Compromise in colours is grey” says Edi Rama, artist, writer and current Prime minister of

By Paramjit Bakshsi

Albania. This is the colour of our city. Grey. It lacks any defining character. If Chandigarh is well planned, Srinagar breathtaking, and Mumbai vibrant (Maximum City), it is difficult to characterise Shillong. Though nature has truly blessed us, and the weather is to die for, our city lacks any man made distinguishing features. But for the topography, the city is indistinguishable from other nondescript places like Muzzafarpur, Meerut, or Dibrugarh, Our museum and library are nothing but apologies. We lack wide tree lined avenues and we have no majestic flyovers to help ease traffic. The only swimming pool in spite of the recent renovation is still not Olympic sized. The stadium at Polo after having taken decades to build is still primitive. However the top honours as far as compromise goes should go to our famed Golf Course. It is a matter of surprise and a testament to the grit of the diehard golfers that they still play golf here. The fairways are thoroughfares for church goers (including priests and pastors), school children, lovers, fitness buffs and picnickers. Broken bottles, empty chip packets and papers litter the course. Children play soccer on the greens where, even golfers tread carefully, and occasionally some mean minded people even crap in the holes. The cars have been stopped from entering the course by digging big fat drains on the periphery otherwise we might have hosted a daily motocross here. This is our Scotland of the East. The Scotch tag remains stuck on a bottle which is now full of dirty water.

Though one mentioned the travails of tourists visiting us, their flirtation with the city is brief and for this reason, they can afford to be uncritical and forgiving. It is us residents, who bear the brunt of the lack of proper planning and infrastructure. For a person like me, living in the heart of the city, one cannot but wonder how we have gone so wrong. In front of my home lies the Fire Brigade field or the Madan Iew Rynghep. Early morning one sees keen young footballers being coached by African coaches. That is when the rain Gods are kind and the

field is not slushy. What is surprising is that in decades, no one has been able to fix this space, when all it requires is a bit of proper drainage. Perhaps it is not really an imperative because very often the ground is hired out for trade fairs such as the one which is on currently. Behind the house runs what used to be the Wah Thang Sniang (ouch). Today it is but a foul smelling drain. It is not that people cannot manage things well. Adjacent to the fire brigade field lies the Marbaniang Petrol pump and right next to the stream is the Bethany hospital. Both these do roaring business and are efficiently managed. It is the public assets which belong to everybody and thus belong to nobody, which are badly maintained, misused and compromised. To quote Spike Jonze, “ If you compromise what you're trying to do just a little bit, you'll end up compromising a little more the next day or the next week, and when you lift your head you're suddenly really far away from where you're trying to go.”

But compromise it is and it never stops here. Not when the Mothphran turns into an insignificant traffic roundabout, not when the fountain at Khyndailad stops working, not when pavements turn into markets, and even not when deforestation brings little rain and causes power cuts. That there is a complete lack of political will to do anything about the city is only too apparent. What goes unnoticed is our complete apathy. Shillong is an orphaned city for which no body is responsible but which like a street child is exploited by everybody. If the politicians are loathe to take hard decisions it is because we compromise and let them off the hook. We want to be likable people and allow our personal likes and dislikes, and not the efficiency of our public servants and elected representatives, to be the criterion. Yet it is not our personal likes or dislikes that should matter. Margaret Thatcher once said, “If you set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing.”

The only areas in our city

that are truly well maintained are the ones occupied by the Army, Air Force and other paramilitary forces such as the Assam Rifles and the Border Security Force. At one time, they used to maintain, our Golf course too. Should those areas ever come to us I am sure we will turn them into ugly urban slums too. There is already a colony called Solace in Laitumkhrach. I guess this name reflects our sense of defeat and frustration at the way things are. With land prices still astronomical, I guess we are all now mere Slumdog millionaires lordling over congested and crumbling slums.

Of course one need not take my suggestion, to rename our hometown, Compromise City, seriously. Other choices can include Solace or even Martens Dump. Or perhaps even Confrontation City because that is what one has seen for the last forty years. It is either District Council Versus State Government or Headmen versus Urban development and Municipality, or NGOs (No Good Organisations) versus NGOS (Non governing organisations, that is the government) .Everybody is rowing our boat with oars of self interest in different directions and as a result we are heading nowhere. The forces of entropy seem destined to win over any attempt to evolve Shillong into a well planned well regulated urban space. Smart city remains a mere pipe dream.

They say that you cannot step into the same river twice because different water flows into it every time you step in. We also cannot be living in the same Shillong every day. It is changing rapidly - right under our noses and our very eyes. “The body can endure compromise and the mind can be seduced by it. Only the heart protests. The heart. Carbon-based primitive in a silicon world.” writes Jeanette Winterson in The Powerbook.

Do our hearts still beat and are we truly alive? Or are we just dark shadows inhabiting a grey compromised city.

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Bengal sets example by returning Singur land to farmers

Mamata's action may have impact on other states

By Nantoo Banerjee

Last week, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee may have set a truly rare example by returning hundreds of acres of illegally acquired agricultural land in Singur by the previous Left Front government for Tata Motors to the farmers in a quickest possible move within days of the Supreme Court judgement, but not many states have acted in a similar fashion to right the wrong despite judicial orders. In fact, several states, including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have been rampantly allowing conversion of farmland and small holdings of poor people for residential and industrial uses showing little respect for law or concern for poor farmers for the benefit of business houses and highly politically-connected individuals. In fact, Mamata Banerjee's matured political action not only made the once forced land-losers of Singur extremely jubilant, but even the Tatas accepted the court verdict with grace, probably thanking the providence for the early legal settlement of issue, saving the country's largest industrial house from more embarrassment and losses.

Unfortunately, the country is yet to witness a similar action by governments of other states to proceed against their previous administrations for illegal agricultural land acquisition to enrich businessmen and politically hi-profile individuals or prevent themselves from indulging in such immoral and unlawful practices. On the contrary, some of the state governments have gone to the extent of easing the land acquisition laws to accommodate business land sharks to make money at the cost of poor farmers for whom political parties often shed crocodile tears before elections. Little is known about the aftermath of another landmark Supreme Court judgement earlier this year that provided huge relief to farmers by squashing illegal and deceptive licensing of 280 acres of land at Rohtak in Haryana to a less-known Uddar Gaggan Properties Limited in 2006 by the previous state government under the then powerful Congress chief minister, Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Incidentally, the original land acquisition act promulgated by the British Raj is over a century old. It was enacted in 1894. Even the Fundamental Right to Property of citizens of free India, under the Constitution (Article 31) that had gone through several amendments, does not appear to be truly fundamental if considered under various cross sections of the British-Raj act. The land acquisition purely for "public purpose" often serves private purpose as it was in the case of the Singur agricultural land. Under the 1894 act, which is still in vogue, the Haryana Urban Development Authority and the state industrial development corporation enjoyed powers to acquire land through notifications under Sections. 4 and 6 while the licence is awarded under Section 9. There have been several occasions when businessmen or realtors fail to buy land directly from owners they either use the government to acquire the land for them or scare the land owners of such a probability to grab land cheaply from the owners. To break the resistance of farmers, the state government is used to impose Sec. 6, under which the state declares its intention to acquire specific plots of land.

In its judgment on the Rohtak land case, the Supreme Court said: "Here is a case where artificial reasons were created, the records were fudged with the aid of the Deputy

Commissioner, Rohtak, to mislead the fact that the possession of acquired land was not taken while announcing the Award. The responsible officers of the State Government, in their anxiety to help out Uddar Gaggan, have completely overlooked the interest of landowners or of the general public to whom thousands of plots could have been allotted at a fairly low price through the aegis of HUDA". The Supreme Court was very caustic in its remarks about the illegal Haryana land deal by the then state government. The judgment spoke about "the unholy nexus to promote the private interests" of builders by "transfer of resources of poor for the benefit of the rich" through "gross abuse of law" and "clear fraud".

There have been several media exposures beginning October, 2012, on fraudulent land licensing in Haryana to favour greedy and politically connected businessmen, involving such powerful real estate promoters as DLF and its associates like Congress-president Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra and Uddar Gaggan that was brought to the notice of the Supreme Court, almost three years after West Bengal's Left Front government's Singur land deal with Tata Motors. Yet, nothing much seemed to have changed the fortune of those powerful Haryana promoters such as DLF, Uddar Gaggan and Robert Vadra. The case of Vadra's controversial land acquisition in Rajasthan has made little progress despite an initial initiative taken by the BJP government there under Chief Minister

Vashundhara Raje. It may not be out of place to mention the goings-on in Maharashtra and Karnataka, where the state governments have further eased the acquisition of agriculture land. In Maharashtra, the BJP-Shiv Sena government has substantially relaxed the rules for industrial expansion on agricultural land as part of its 'Make in Maharashtra' push for business. Reportedly, it increased building rights on farmland by dropping the requirement to convert agricultural land to non-agricultural use. On the other hand, the Karnataka legislative assembly passed a land reforms bill to make it easier to divert agricultural land for commercial and industrial purposes while introducing a 10-year deadline for industries to use land awarded to them following conversion of agricultural land. The Congress government modified section 109 of the Karnataka Land Reforms Act 1961 in such a manner that permission granted to acquire land for non-agricultural purposes under the law can also be deemed as a clearance given under section 95 of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act 1964. The state government notification allowed industries nine times the earlier building rights on agricultural land. To exploit this additional space, they merely need to pay a fee worth 30 per cent of the land rate to the district collector.

Sadly, most political parties forget that India's economy can't afford an unbalanced growth with agriculture, industry and real estate development operating at cross purposes, instead of them judiciously moving forward together. Under such an atmosphere, Mamata Banerjee's action to immediately return the illegally acquired agricultural land at Singur to farmers after the Supreme Court judgment while inviting industrial investment in legally-held government land in Bengal from the same platform, is truly laudable. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Oldest road in WGH in disrepair

Editor,
The first and oldest road of Garo Hills from Phulbari to Tura was constructed during the British period. Tura is now the headquarters of West Garo Hills and Dadenggre is the only Civil Sub-division after the creation of Meghalaya state. The people from the villages need to travel to Tura and Dadenggre every now and then to meet government officials since all government offices are located in the civil Sub-division.
But it is a shame that due to the deteriorating condition of the road surface there are huge craters resulting in water logging during rainy season. Hence the transport of machinery and movement of vehicles us badly affected. This road has not been repaired in years Earlier the PWD would spread sand and gravel as a temporary measure but now they have stopped that too leaving the road unusable. Now the road has deteriorated to a point where it ha sbecome dangerous for vehicles to

ply on. I request the Government to repair this road and demonstrate its commitment to equitable development.

Yours etc,
Gomonsing D. Sangma
Phulbari (Rongsaigre)
West Garo Hills

Golf links poser!

Editor,
Our attention is drawn to B Mawrie's poser,"Can we salvage Golf Links?" Yes, but not on the terms he suggests. It must be common knowledge by now, that the public's easy round the clock access unlike in other courses protected by a boundary wall is the root cause. As such, keeping out cricket, football and other harmful activities and the littering which goes on regularly is a daily headache causing the resources to be utilized in cleaning up the mess. Hence the Board of Directors has decided on a plan to re-align the road network as would provide an alternative passage for both the motorists and pedestrian to move about undisturbed.
Yours etc.,
J.B. Marbaniang
Administrator
On behalf of the Board of Directors
Shillong Club Ltd.

Irritated by poor network

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily I want to express my unhappiness and disappointment over worst network coverage from Aircel network service provider in my village at Ichamati, Mawlong Sirdarship East Khasi Hills District. In spite of the tall boast of the company to provide better network coverage we are facing the worst network than ever before. What's most irritating is when we make a call have to dial repeatedly as we see our cell phone displaying the sign "Call Ended" or a voice saying not reachable. Even when we get connected the recipient does not hear the caller's voice and vice versa or we hear voices of some other caller as if there is a third party between us. This has gone on for six to seven months and is getting worse every day. Some consumers expressed that it made them feel as if the company (service provider) is doing it intentionally to have call drops so that they can extract our money. If the company cannot rectify these problems at the

earliest, I feel that most of the consumers will choose other service providers as other providers are now available unlike those days when depended solely on Aircel network in our area.

As far as I am concerned I shall shift to other service providers if these problems persist in spite of being an Aircel customer for the past 7 years because I am afraid that with this kind of network I will be in trouble when I need to contact someone in an emergency. What would happen, for instance if I met with an accident and cannot contact anyone on time? Time is precious and priceless and cannot be bought. Even one second makes a difference between life and death. It will be a big blow for the company to lose its consumers if it does not value us and every paisa that they earn from us.

Yours etc.,
K. Beni Warjri
Ichamati Mawlong

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

“Do something every day that you don't want to do; this is the golden rule for acquiring the habit of doing your duty without pain.”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 43 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

Wanted Diplomatic War

PRIME Minister Nawaz Sharif has talked big on human rights violations in Kashmir at the UN General Assembly meet in New York. He has not spoken about the bedrock of terror in his own country. Islamabad exports not merely terror but also nuclear technology. Pakistan is providing North Korea with the trigger to explode successive nuclear devices. Nuclear capability appears to be Pakistan’s foreign policy boast which can be properly dealt with only with international sanctions. New Delhi should go all out to make sure that Pakistan’s diplomatic space is increasingly narrowed down.

The Indian government has to put up a case at all major international forums to nail Pakistan’s lies about not being a terror-sponsoring and terror-exporting country. There is no doubt that Pakistan aids and abets cross-border terrorism into India. India should get Bangladesh and Afghanistan on its side to prove its case. A joint boycott of the SAARC meeting in Islamabad should be a step in the right direction. It should also be made clear that the Pakistani ISI and military are supporting terrorism with the civilian government under their thumb. India would do well to shelter Pakistani dissidents, intellectuals and artists persecuted in their country. Exiled Balochi leader Brahmdagh Bugti is already seeking such asylum in India. He wants the International Criminal Court against the Pakistani army for its atrocities on the Baloch people. Pakistan should be condemned for human rights violations against ethnic minorities and liberal protestors. That will rev up India’s diplomatic war against Pakistan.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Union carbide to pay Rs. 705 cr to Bhopal victims

The US Multinational unions Carbide will pay compensation amount to 470 millions dollars Rs 705 crore to victims of the 1984 Bhopal Gas disaster under an agreement with the Government of India endorsed by the Supreme Court today.

Chief Justice Mr R S Pathak presiding over a five judge bench hearing cross appeals in the case, ordered that the money be paid to the Government by March 31 this year. The settlement brought to an end the protracted legal battle waged by the victims of the world’s worst industrial disaster through thousands of petitions claiming compensation totaling more than Rs. 3,000 crore.

The settlement to which both the American multinational Union Carbide Corporation and the Government of India agreed, came together suddenly. A five judge bench, resided over by Chief Justice Mr R. S. Pathak, had resumed the hearing today in the cross appeals against two judgements of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in the case. As the court assembled the Chief Justice observed that enough arguments had been heard and that it was high time that a settlement was reached.

He proposed 470 million dollars as compensation and both the sides promptly agreed to it. The amount fixed was less than one fourth of compensation totaling about Rs. 3,000 crore filled on behalf of the victims of the world’s worst industrial disaster in thousands of damage petitions.

ULFA reaffirms commitment to Armed struggle.

Extremist United Liberation Front of Assam ULFA has reiterated its commitment to build up a

sovereign socialist state of Assam through armed struggle to free the Assamese masses from all sorts of discrimination and exploitation.

In a press release issued by ULFA it was stated that while the achievement of this goal required “solid independent training involving heavy expenditure the fund had to be raised through voluntary donations of the people having revolutionary consciousness.

The ULFA however, claimed its as their right to exact money from the corrupt officials since these were earned at the cost of the people’s interest.

The ULFA disowned its responsibility for the collection of money by individuals and stray groups to serve their personal interest in the name of ULFA, the ULFA accused the police and some other reactionary gangs for promoting fake ULFA groups in association with a few so called democratic organizations in a bid to tarnish the revolutionary image of ULFA.

According to ULFA some so called democratic and nonviolent organizations extended full protection these fake ULFA gangs in spite of definite proofs about their crimes.

ULFA announced suspension of its fund collection drive for the present hoping that it would help expose the fake ULFA gangs.

Man killed in drunken brawl

A middle aged man was murdered at Nongpiur village in Upper Shillong area on the mid night of March 4-5. It is learnt that following a drunken brawl between two friends, one friend hit the other with a blunt weapon. The man died instantaneously.

The murderer has been absconding since then.

Is Meghalaya Tourism Accessible?

27th September will be observed as World Tourism Day yet again! The day and the days thereabouts are always abuzz with discourses on the tourist, tourism, hospitality and so forth. In most cases it exudes a festive feeling of gaiety and celebration, something like Christmas in December. In actuality, when this day is supposed to rejuvenate and scale further the efforts for tourism development, the sad reality is that it has become a stop-gap reason for commemoration as a ritual. Be that as it may, the theme of World Tourism Day, 2016 reminds us what this sector is all about and what impacts it can have. The theme this year goes as 'tourism for all - promoting universal accessibility'. Thus, it is about opening doors for travel, facilitating in-flow of guests, maintaining visits and motivating revisits, making our tourism resources accessible across all clientele (regardless of age, gender and differently-abled categories) and so forth. However, as promising and melodious as it sounds, are we missing something here?

Firstly, there is an analogy that resonates. It is called 'Meghalaya within Meghalaya'. The first Meghalaya represents the heart and soul of what we actually are and how we actually sustain. We are poor and in economic rags with no agency to scale-up and scale-out of hardships and poverties. The second Meghalaya is a facade of what we are actually not. They are the small proportion of the populace who have migrated from lower levels of livelihoods to become the new middle class. This face hides and misrepresents the poverties of our state. Depressingly, the real Meghalaya in actuality is the first one. As such, we can all see the sad realities. Fact is, only our towns are developed to a certain extent, the rest of the state is struggling. It is for all to experience that the moment we move a few kilometres out of Shillong, our roads, services and infrastructure disintegrates and blurs into nothing. If I may be insensitive and crass, Meghalaya at best reflects extreme similarities and hence may be considered as a 'mini central Africa'

Thirdly, accessibility goes together with hospitality. They are inseparable as accessibility is incomplete and handicapped without hospitable behaviour by the hosts. Imagine a situation where on reaching a place, instead of warm smiling faces that display etiquette and comforting services, you are greeted with distant and adversarial stances. The important question here is whether the Khasis are hospitable. As simple and harmless a question as it may seem, truth is, this is what really drives tourism. This is even more so as tourism is a

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

(central Africa being one of the most impoverished regions of the world). Despite this nadir, all is not lost and there are plausible interventions for reversing the trend. To this end, tourism-related measures are one of them. However, this is a serious challenge as reflected further in the succeeding paragraphs.

Secondly, the theme puts 'accessibility' at the centre-stage. However, the term is relative and contextual in nature. In the case of far developed tourism-oriented countries, accessibility would imply making the tourism resources more tourist friendly across specially-abled and differently-abled clientele. In case of others it may mean making tourism and travel economical and affordable to the masses across market segments. However, in our case, it is anybody's guess. In a 'mini central Africa' type of situation where even the roads and services in Shillong leave much to be desired, it is difficult to really picture what accessibility means for us. To start with, there are many pockets of our state that are not accessible for numerous reasons ranging from poor roads, no bridges, missing law and order, questionable safety and security and so forth. Fact is, before we start talking of tourism in terms of accessibility in the true sense of the term, it is critical that we address these nagging chronic limitations first. After all, the tourism sector's development excessively depends on the progress of other infrastructural sectors. Moreover, in a bamboozled state where we still tend to debate whether Wangala/Shad Nongkrem is a state holiday or not, where is the idea and perception of accessibility in our cognitions?

Fourthly, why is accessibility, be it local, domestic or international, extremely important? This is primarily because the degree of travel by the tourist directly impacts upon the livelihoods of the local populace. I have raised this issue of how and why our tourism resources and spots are missing out on the spending by tourists at local markets numerous times. Hence, this time let us move further on this point. It is high time we realize that the tourism sector is not only about mapping out geographical landscapes for attracting clientele. Importantly, it is more about enablers for tourism-related businesses so as to complete the cycle of accessibility. In the absence of proper tourism-related services, the propensity to pull visitors takes a serious hit. As such, the existing network of food, accommodation and transportation needs to scale up further and target at giving a memorable experience to the tourist. In addition, more and newer business forms are required so as to encourage spending by the clientele at our local markets. To this end, a number of colleges and Universities in Shillong are actively working at it with the objective of motivating students to take up the entrepreneurial challenge. However, a lot more needs to be done and all the

TO THE EDITOR

Wanted transparency in MPSC!

Editor,

Through your paper we would like the MPSC to clarify regarding the appointment to the post of Assistant Research Officer or ARO (Under Economics Affairs Department). Whereas the Advertisement for the said post was given on 17th June 2014 via No.MPSC/Advt-38/1/2014-2015/1 for five (5) posts only and after the written examination and interview was conducted, the list of five (5) successful candidates appeared namely (1) Bankordor Warlaithma (2) Wanshimi Nongkynrih (3) Banylla Lyngkhloi (4)Azean Farlane B Sangma (5) Pangsang Manda Sangma, were declared via No.MPSC/Ex-C/28/2014-2015/3. However, it has come to our notice that one candidate by the name of Lasoki Sumer whose name did not figure in the list of successful candidates was appointed to the said post and is now serving as

Assistant Research Officer in the Shillong, Secretariat. Moreover, as per our knowledge there was no waiting list ever published by the MPSC for the said post. Therefore, we want to know from the MPSC on what basis the above candidate was appointed to the said post. This is to quell any misconception in the minds of other candidates of a backdoor appointment in the above case. There are many like us who also made it to the interview but our names did not figure in the final list.

Yours etc.,
S.M. Sangma,
J.Lyngdoh, B. Lyngkhloi,
Via email

Why is India so weak-kneed?

Editor,

India is either a cowardly country or too patient towards Pakistan which is engineering many bloody attacks against this country since the past several years. What India must do is to teach Pakistan a lesson and speak the language it understands, either bilaterally or at the international fora. India must

act and stand tall. It ought to make itself known to that country and others that it cannot be played around with. Pakistan does not understand diplomacy. It understands only one language and that is brute force. Pakistan has been hurting India through a thousand cuts by using the ISI and its military regime. It nurtures terrorist organisations including the Al Qaeda, Mujahedeen, Jash-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e- Toiba, ISIS and others. It is a terrorist country. Terrorist countries do not understand dialogue; they only understand the power of the gun.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein
Via email

Great initiative by apex court!

Editor,

The Supreme Court of India should be congratulated for making Internet search engines agree to block sites and advertisements that offer kits to determine the gender of an unborn child. With the help of such kits, crazy, killer parents have already, done

Brics summit may decide on a credit rating agency

Move to end domination of Western Companies

By Nitya Chakraborty

India, as the host of the eighth BRICS summit at Goa on October 15 and 16 this year, is proposing a draft to set up a BRICS credit rating agency with the aim of ending the domination of the western dominated international credit rating agencies like Standard & Poor's and Moody' Investors Services. The proposal has already been discussed by the finance ministers of the five member countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and there is a possibility of a memorandum of understanding on this credit rating agency being signed at the Goa Summit.

This will be a credit rating agency mainly for the emerging economies since these countries have suffered due to the double standards being followed by the western dominated credit rating agencies. The emerging economies have been complaining these western agencies for arbitrarily downgrading the rating of the developing countries resulting in rise in the cost of borrowings. Indian officials say that the objective is to set up an impartial rating agency so that the emerging economies get correct evaluation of their economic status. All the BRICS members have been subjected to the partial evaluation of their economic status by the US dominated rating agencies so far.

Another proposal to be taken up by India at the Goa summit is establishing high standard arbitration mechanisms to settle intra-BRICS disputes so that the member countries and their companies have not to go to the forums dominated by the developed countries. The idea is that once this mechanism is set up, such arbitration practices under BRICS could be made part of the bilateral investment treaties with other countries.

For the next BRICS summit, India is also readying a list of priority projects to invite investments from BRICS countries. The prospective projects for investments, mainly in the field of infrastructure, are expected to give a thrust to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “Make in India” programme. The initiative, is expected to raise the level of trade and economic cooperation among BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

According to officials, India's list of projects is likely to be similar to the one Russia prepared last year during its chairmanship of BRICS, which included around 60 projects. In the run up to the Goa summit, India would hold a number of meetings at different levels of various sectors, to prepare for the 8th BRICS summit. “We will adopt a five-pronged approach during our chairmanship. It will comprise Institution Building, Implementation, Integration, Innovation, and Continuity with Consolidation.” Indian officials say. India is chairing the rotating summit for the second time after it hosted the 4th BRICS summit in March 2012, in New Delhi. The previous BRICS summit was held in July 2015, in Ufa, under Russian President Vladimir Putin's chairmanship. The Ufa declaration adopted the strategy for economic partnership and, as a follow

up, India is working on a programme to develop trade, investment and economic cooperation in a number of fields, including manufacturing, minerals processing, energy and agriculture.

The Indian Prime Minister had, at Ufa, proposed a 10-point programme for consensus between member-countries, to hasten the process of closer cooperation between BRICS nations, in the present global economic slowdown. The programme takes into account the immediate issues confronting the BRICS member-countries. The main objective of the theme of India's chairmanship, ‘Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions’ (BRICS), is to ensure BRICS work closely to find solutions to issues confronting the group's economies.

India wants to build on initiatives started by Russia and chart new pathways for growth. “Developing continuity is crucial for BRICS,” Indian sources said. At the Ufa summit, both Putin and Modi expressed their commitment to the progressive development of cooperation within BRICS and strengthening its role in the global economy. During 2016, India plans to launch greater cooperation among BRICS in services and in ways to deal with non-tariff measures restricting goods trade between BRICS member-countries. The BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) met in April to discuss trade and economic issues, including India's list of priority projects, and a proposal to establish a mechanism to expeditiously resolve non-tariff barriers. In services, the meeting exchanged opinions to intensify cooperation in different mutually beneficial fields including education, travel, tourism and health. The CGETI has prepared the agenda for BRICS Trade and Economy Ministers. The final action plan document will be finalized at the last meeting, to be held with the 8th summit.

As BRICS chair in 2016, India is pursuing a pro-active economic policy, aimed at enhancing mutual cooperation among member-countries. It plans to push for an agreement on business visa liberalization and issuing business travel cards during the summit. Visa liberalization is expected to allow businessmen multiple-entry business visa for a longer period of time. India is also working on a programme for cooperation in the field of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME).

Modi, who is taking a special interest in making the summit a success, with an “Indian imprint,” has instructed concerned officials to work on his 10-point programme, to boost cooperation between the BRICS nations. People-to-people interactions, business, youth, and sports are the priority areas. In the run up to the summit, India is also planning to hold a Trade Fair and an Investor Forum to promote programmes such as “Make In India,” “Smart City Mission,” “Digital India,” and “Start-up India.” (IPA Service)

on impact of any ban. It is the government concerned, whose responsibility is the progress of the state and the welfare and economic well-being of its people that should be taking up such a study in the first place. It could have assessed the adversity of impact on all sectors and come up with alternative solutions to mitigate the effects. Shirking of responsibility is least

Yours etc.,
R K Lamare,
Shillong-3

“Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 44 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2016

India’s response to the Uri massacre

AFTER Pathankot it is difficult to believe that a similar security breach could repeat itself in Uri leading to the loss of lives of 18 soldiers. The assault by Pakistani trained terrorists appeared too easy and glib and raises many uncomfortable questions. Who is to be held accountable for such a major security lapse which at once puts paid to the claims that the Indian army is one of the best trained force in the world and is always on ‘attack’ mode. That this army which is to secure the country’s borders could fail to secure the lives of its own men speaks poorly about India’s internal security architecture. Investigations carried out by the National Investigating Agency (NIA) say the major fatalities happened inside the cook house and store room which was set on fire and bolted from outside by the suicide bombing terrorists. NIA sources also claim that the terrorists spent a whole day in the mountains observing the activities and routine of the Indian soldiers to detect the chinks in their security armour so that they could catch them off guard and take advantage of those security lapses. Officers who have served in those areas wonder how security breaches of such a grave nature could arise in a high security zone.

The sabre-rattling by retired and serving army officers and diplomats in television studios after this horrendous attack hardly helps the cause. It further exposes our inability to work out coordinated strategies by the country’s collective internal intelligence agencies in the boardrooms where state secrets can be discussed without the fear of their being leaked out, thereby keeping the enemy on etemal guard. Television studios are only virtual war zones and war mongering inside those studios does no good to the image of India. And while the blame game continues and Pakistan is labeled as the terrorist hub of South Asia even as India tries to drive home this point at strategic international fora, there are a few lessons that its politicians can imbibe. When it comes to the country’s security there can be no politics. The best minds from different political parties should converge. The habit of scoring brownie points on the country’s internal and external security policy lapses puts India in poor light. When will Indian politicians learn that the country’s interests are larger than their petty political games?

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Two more killed in unabated violence

In unabated violence two people were killed in the past 24 hours as the 175 hour "Assam Bandh" called by the All-Bodo Students Union continued for the sixth day today. Altogether 16 people have been killed including eight Bodo Extremists since the "Bandh" started on Thursday last, Director General of Police Mr. S V Subramanian said.

He told newsmen that one Demi Ram Hazarika was killed when 150 miscreants armed with gun and other lethal weapons yesterday raised a house in Odala-Tamulbari village under Udalguri sub division. The raiders set a blaze the house owned by Mr Deben Saikia. Some more houses were also burnt down at Tatla para village under Paneri Police station of same sub division from where a charred body was recovered last night he added. Mr Subramanian said the house of a plains Tribal Council of Assam's member as set on fire at Gendabeal village in Kokrajhar district.

Attempts were made to set on fire a bridge on Gossaigaon Tamarhat road in Kokrajhar when a police party reached there. The extremists exchanged fire with police. No casualty was however, reported on either side. The extremists burnt down the forest quarters at Tipkai in Dhurbri district and exploded at least 37 crackers in which three of them were reported to have been

injured. The DG said police arrested 20 Bodos and recovered some arms and ammunition from them during a combing operation at Routa and Orang areas of Udalguri. Altogether 83 extremists were arrested during the bandh hours when 52 arsons, 22 explosions and 30 attacks on security forces, besides eleven on general public were reported, he said.

The bandh however no impact except in the Bodo inhabited Kokrajhar district Udalguri sub division of Darrang district. Mr Subramanian said while passenger train services remained suspended, operation of goods train was maintained about 800 trucks and other vehicles piled on national highway No 31 under police escorts from Srirampur, on the border of West Bengal.

Meanwhile, ABSU Vice Present Mr Pradeep Kumar Daimary alleged that the government was terrorizing the people to crush "the peaceful movement" and trying to make a "genocide" like situation in the state.

He however, denied Assam government's version that the Congress (I) was behind their movement for a separate "Bodo land" and that it was meant to establish the government in indulging in violence the ABSU never professed violence, he added (UNI)

#MySelfieWithaCop

By Patricia Mukhim

Let me begin this article with a quote from the Indian Police Foundation, sent to me by former DGP Meghalaya, Mr N Ramchandran, who now leads the IPF. Ironically it came just as I was writing an article which I captioned, "Police: A Force or a Service." This quote says, "One of the first steps in police reform is to build mutual trust between citizens and the police. They should develop confidence in each other as partners in building security, peace and order. Indian Police Foundation has been engaging in a nationwide campaign for police reforms. As part of this campaign for citizens' support, we call upon every Indian to take a selfie with a policewoman or a policeman in uniform and post it on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram page of the Indian Police Foundation. You may also post it on LocalCircles @ SurakshitBharat page. Selfies can be with your neighbourhood beat constable or any other policewoman or policeman, including those of State and Central Police Organizations, Fire Forces etc."

The question I pose as a citizen is, which policeman/woman do I take a selfie with? Can I find a friendly n e i g h b o u r h o o d policeman/woman? Other than the East Khasi Hills SP and City SP, who are always on their best behaviour, I don't think there are too many people who would want to pose for a picture, especially with OC of a police station. I would rather take a selfie with a well-mannered traffic policeman. From our collective experiences we can deduce that the police whose prime duty is maintain law and order in the locality are not trained in public relations. And I shall narrate later on in this article the reason for saying so.

As a founding member of the IPF, our brief is to think of the welfare of policemen and women and free them from the grip of politicians by suggesting incremental reforms since radical shifts are almost impossible. But I am sure that 99% of policemen in our state have not even heard of the

IPF.

At a seminar on, 'Breaking the silence on rape," organised at St Edmunds College in July this year, SP (City), Vivek Syiem made one earth-shaking statement. He said the police is not a force; it is a service. This one statement changes the whole format of policing. However, this statement must be backed by action. The rank and file in the police hierarchy require orientation to reformat their role. In fact, we are seventy years late in bringing about a transition from the ruler's police to the people's police. While the top rung police officials don't lack in basic courtesies, those down the line are what evoke expletives from even benign citizens.

The fact that police can be bribed to not book a law breaker or that they are almost reluctant to register an FIR when complainants come to the police station should tell us that there is something rotten in the system. And the irony is that even if you are a law abiding citizen you feel like a law breaker the moment you step into a police station. First, the Station House Officer or the Officer-in-Charge looks you up and down as if you would not be there unless you had a brush with the law and have come to lodge a false FIR. Second, if he accepts your FIR and reads through it he will find several loopholes as to why he cannot register that complaint.

Now there are as many kinds of policemen/women as there are police stations. While some have an instinctive understanding of their profession, others believe they occupy a position of power and authority and the uniform vests them with the power to flex their muscles. If that attitude of authority, strictness and effectiveness is demonstrated while solving a crime, maintaining law and order in their respective jurisdictions and, above all, in preventing crime by building a swish network for intelligence gathering, we would have seen the crime graph go down. Alas! That is far from happening going by recent statistics.

As for building a network of informants amongst

citizens, police cannot do so by throwing their (heavy) weights around. Perhaps there are grave lacunae in the police training module which turns even an ordinary person into a brute once the uniform is on. Police can hardly speak politely; they believe that raising their voices would achieve better results. Amongst all the professionals, police are least trained in soft skills. Many a time we have heard of police heads propose the need for better police-public relations to build that network for information sharing. Police-public relation committees comprising members of the locality within the jurisdiction of the police station, a few policemen and the heads of the locality are formed and then forgotten. The Committees formed just to tick the boxes. I have not heard of a single performing Police-Public Relations Committee. Hence solving crime will continue to be a problem.

Let me now come to the point. On September 19, 2016 I lost my mobile phone and went to the Rynjah Police Station to file an FIR. The OC took a look at the FIR and told me I needed to go to the BSNL office so they can authenticate that the post paid mobile number in the lost phone was actually issued to me. I told the OC that this is a new rule I have not heard of. He insisted that a new rule is in place about registering FIRs for mobile phone loss which is that the FIR be endorsed by the service provider since too many people are losing mobile phones or are misusing them. After much altercation I had to call the SP East Khasi Hills to complain about this predicament. The SP called the OC and told him to register the FIR and that was done pronto.

So why was the OC so reluctant to register my FIR? After all, the FIR falls under sub-section (1) of section 154 CrPC. It is the earliest and the first information of a cognizable offence recorded by an officer-in-charge of a police station. In case of theft or damage to property, an FIR is necessary to claim insurance or protect oneself from any liability arising from the misuse of one's property.

Chest thumping, lip services, appearing on TV debates, giving long and scripted media interviews and hyped vocal messages to Pakistan by the Indian government, top politicians and bureaucrats will not resolve the issue. India has to do way more than that; else the nation stands to lose much in terms of potential foreign investments as it will be viewed by big multi-nationals and overseas investors as an unsafe investment destination. This will deeply harm the booming Indian economy and the morale of the nation. India has to engage directly and actively counteract and block Pakistan in every international and regional platform for political, strategic and diplomatic isolation of that country. The world currently will stand by India since a huge part of the globe is impacted by terrorism and this should be taken as an opportunity to push Pakistan to the edge internationally. India needs to continue voicing concerns for Baluchistan, Sindh and Pak Occupied Kashmir (predominantly Gilgit-Baltistan) in every possible forum to humiliate and embarrass Pakistan as well as seriously think of conducting surgical strikes at strategic points along the LoC and other hot areas to eliminate terrorist outfits. Enhanced fire power along the border along with superior

You should see them...

By Diganta Halder

They have laughing faces, though it does not mean there is absence of sorrow! William Shakespeare’s words can be so well related to the lives of our soldiers who smilingly brave it out in the most inhospitable terrains and the most uncongenial conditions, smilingly and to ensure that while they suffer, we smile. They serve twenty four hours a day, seven days a week for the duration of their service commitment.

Like everyone else I am in deep morose about the seventeen martyrs and the gruesome manner in which the flames of their lives were put off by the unscrupulous militants at Uri near the Line of Control. I’ve seen closely the forces working for more than two decades. Believe me, dear readers, there is not an iota of doubt that while we enjoy our serene siestas, our brave hearts at the frontiers answer to bullets and bayonets, persecution and agony, hunger and distress and pitiless deaths.

You should see the ‘Paltans’ moving in convoys for days altogether. Most of them are travel weary, scorched, sitting for hours on tin trunks in the bumpy one-ton trucks as their Units move, while you travel in your chauffer driven air-conditioned sedan few odd miles to enjoy your favourite movie in the classy multiplex over hot cups of coffee and puffed popcorn. You should see them perspire as they queue for food at the ‘Langars’ while you pamper yourself with the well spread sumptuous cuisine, seated on a royal-like foam chair inside your air-conditioned dining room.

You should see them take bath in the community barrack washrooms while you mollycoddle yourself with the cool foam hand shower, submerged in your cozy rose-watered tub as you read to yourself the lines out of Hemingway’s ‘A Farewell to Arms’ in which the author recreates the fear of war. To you war is all in the book. For him war is when he tries to save his last drop of blood that trickles down his heart fighting to save you and me.

You should see them at their nondescript posts, fidgeting uselessly for hours for the one meek signal to pop up in their cell phones with a thin ray of hope to hear the sweet resonances of the voices of the new born and the beloved ones at home, while you feast on your latest android that gives you great bandwidth in the city, superb multimedia support, high data rate, seamless global connectivity, online TV, jet speed downloads, video conferencing and so much more than you asked for.

You should see how they cry inaudibly when they cannot go home for months altogether, while you plan your foreign trip packages with your sweet family. You should see how they sleep on cold cots in their tents in the wintry chill

while you enjoy the warmth of your bedroom fireplace. You should see them night patrolling across thick militant infested jungles while you lie comfortably under your warm quilt and enjoy virtual war games preloaded in your expensive Play Station.

You should see them risking their own lives to save others in calamities while you watch them in TV, doing so, sitting comfortably on your fat sofa leisurely sipping in your soft drink and munching away a pack of chips. How does it really matter to you who survives the ordeal and who doesn’t?

You should see them throng Mandirs, Masjids, Gurdwaras and Churches conscientiously folding their hands before God and praying for their safety and longevity while you pray for wealth, bliss and prosperity.

You should see them carrying on their tired backs hundreds of kilos of arms and ammunition as they indomitably ascend steep mountains to crush down our enemies while you hire Coolies to carry just a suitcase.

At an altitude of 5,000 metres, the levels of oxygen in the blood would be similar to that of a patient with a severe lung disorder at sea level. While such patients are admitted to ICUs, confined to bed and treated with continuous oxygen therapy, the soldier at 5,000 metres at Siachen with similar levels of oxygen in his blood performs intense physical activity and fights the enemy. I say, the tough conditions under which Indian soldiers are deployed at the world's highest battlefield are real tough. Many of them end up frostbitten or going impotent while you plan your pleasure trip to the exquisite snow clad mountains of Switzerland.

You should see them weep for their dead soul mates and still march on with the corpses on their reliable shoulders to fight till the end while you selfishly check out your legal rights and papers when your parents are dead. You should feel the way the ‘just married’ soldier leaves behind his beloved when duty calls while you plan out your long and peaceful holiday with your spouse in Venice.

You should see so many things you haven’t seen. I have. After all this, the returns they get in terms of salary and small perks is only a bare minimum the Nation gives them as reciprocation to their huge sacrifices.

You live today and so do I because he left this world protecting you and me ... smilingly, though it does not mean there was absence of sorrow!!

(Dr Diganta Halder is Principal, Assam Rifles Public School, Laitkor, Shillong).

intelligence and predator drone based precision strikes will be necessary to contain Pakistan. Naval threats delivered to Pakistan as well as pushing Pakistan both on her eastern and western fronts diplomatically, strategically, economically and politically will be important to keep the nation engaged in high conflicts.

This is the time for India to sit with the permanent security members excluding China to hit Pakistan in every front to reduce the security threats. India has to adopt Israel model partly to counter Pakistan in defense terms to enhance security for the nation. Last but not the least, the Chief of Army Staff should be held accountable as to how the security breaches are hampering precious lives and national property. Sitting in his office with all the comforts of life

and a huge salary and secure fat pension after retirement, the Army Chief must answer to the nation how these Pakistan based terrorists are regularly infiltrating Indian borders and targeting army and air force bases and civilians in spite of spending billions of dollars of Indian tax payers money to security installations and buying sophisticated arms. What is the Army Intelligence doing? Are they sucking lollipops? The Chief of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) also stands exposed for failing to provide vital security tips for national security. Unless these top officials are pushed beyond their comfort zones, India will continue to bleed.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J4B3

“Education: that which reveals to the wise, and conceals from the stupid, the vast limits of their knowledge.”

--- Mark Twain

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Birth of girls not welcome

IT is common knowledge that most Indian families do not prefer daughters. The state has not succeeded in tackling the problem. The number of girls born per 1000 boys fell from 999 to 906 during 2011-13. Delhi had the steepest fall- 887 to 876. Uttar Pradesh came next. The 2014 sample registration system shows that sex selection is not limited only to the Hindi heartland. Even Tamil Nadu has been affected with the number of girls born falling from 927-921. Job opportunities are limited for women. There is gender discrimination or patriarchy. As a result, fewer families want fewer girl children. The states have failed in implementing the Pre- Concession and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994 (PCPDTA) in its full sense. The Act bans determination of the gender of an unborn child. This is to prevent girl feticide. Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi proposed compulsory tests to determine the sex of unborn babies. But women rights groups set their face against it.

A recent Comptroller and Auditor General Report states that the PCPDTA has been made ineffective owing to lack of regular inspection, underutilization of funds earmarked for that purpose and failure to conduct sting operations. Only 52 decoy operations were undertaken in 1% of the 4622 registered centres in Uttar Pradesh during 2010-15. Court proceedings in such matters generally prove abortive. The government must declare feticide and the falling sex ratio an emergency situation. Otherwise the scene will remain as bleak as ever.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

New Bihar CM

The installation of Mr Satyendra Narayan Sinha as the new Bihar Chief Minister last week-end is among the few judicious political decisions taken in the recent months by the Congress(I) supremo Mr Rajiv Gandhi. Mr Sinha's choice is the least controversial and may help keep the dissidents in check till the next parliamentary election scheduled for December this year. In the caste-ridden politics of Bihar, Mr Sinha has emerged as the first aristocratic Rajput politician to become Chief Minister of the State. This appears to be a long-range shot taken by Mr Gandhi to apparently offset the influence of Mr V. P.Singh on the upper caste Rajputs-Thakurs. To what extent this will prove effective is not easy to predict. In the recent months, Mr Gandhi removed two Chief Ministers belonging to the Thakur caste; first it was Mr Veer Bahadur Singh in UP and subsequently, Mr Arjun Singh resigned in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore it was of paramount importance for the Congress (I) leadership to induct a Rajput- Thakur in Bihar.

Among the names seriously considered for the Bihar CM's post was that of Meghalaya Governor Mr Bhishma Narayan Singh who too is a Rajput by caste. The Prime Minister had at least four sittings with Mr Singh before the decision was made. Mr Singh who is known for his cool temperament, is among the least controversial leaders of Bihar. It appears that the choice eventually fell on Mr Sinha because of his close association with the new BPCC(I) President Dr Jagannath Mishra. In any case, Mr Singh's gubernatorial tenure is going to end in April paving way for his early return to active politics. It is probable that Mr Singh will find a berth in the union cabinet which post he relinquished to occupy the Raj Bhavan in Shillong. The new Bihar Chief

Minister has onerous responsibilities on his shoulders. Not only he will be required to keep the political adversaries at bay but also ensure that the fan of the ruling party's image with the controversial Mr Bhagat Jha Azad as the Chief Minister is neutralised without much loss of time. Bihar is among the three major Hindi-belt States of the country which constitute the last bastions of the Congress(I). Much of Mr Rsjiv Gandhi's political fortune hinges on Bihar, UP and MP which together account for 179 seats in the Lok Sabha.

ABSU firm on Bodoland

The All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) vice president Mr P K Daimary said they would not retreat from their demand for a separate State even if the Asom Gana Parishad government mounted its pressure to crush the movement. In a statement he said that although many Bodos had laid down their live for the creation of Bodoland, lakhs of people were still ready. "All may perish fighting but we need a homeland even for a pair of surviving Bodos" he said. The All-Political Party Meeting convened by the AGP government on March 11 had discussed how to prevent the Bodo movement instead of how to solve the problem. This showed the immaturity of the AGP leaden, Mr Daimary said. He said the ABSU believed that the Asom Gana Parishad government had convened the recent all - party meeting not to seek the opinion from different quarter, for a solution to the tribal problems but to find ways so avoid it. The government leaders did this knowing fully well that the political map of Assam would be changed "during the reign of AGP which they could not help stop.

Entrepreneurship: The tool for economic development

By D K Areng

India lives in villages. Rural people who account for about three-fourths of the total population have for long lagged much behind the overall progress of the economy. In rural India while majority of the people work in the farm sector and in the activities allied to agriculture such as forestry, horticulture, dairy farming, fishing, pig farming, quite a significant number are engaged in village trade, traditional crafts and household industries. People living in the rural areas are up against three problems of great magnitude. These are: backwardness of rural economy, massive poverty and widespread unemployment and under-employment. All the policies and programmes have failed to do justice and as a result these problems continue to persist. Meghalaya is no exception.

For a predominantly agricultural state like Meghalaya, development of industries and small enterprises is a must. Although steps have been taken to develop industries, but honest assessment will show that it has not given the desired results. It is now an established fact that material riches and industries go together. The Industrially advanced countries amply demonstrate this, and the countries which lack industries, people live in poverty.

To breach the gap between rural and urban development the state government has taken up schemes like, "Integrated Basin Development & Livelihood Programme". This is not exactly a new programme. All the activities were there with the respective departments but these programmes were not implemented judiciously because funds were not available and there was absence of co-ordination. However, our crafty Chief Minister, to ensure sufficient funds flow launched the "IBDLP" as a new inclusive state project. His game plan worked and the centre placed sufficient funds under this head.

An honest introspection of IBDLP will show that little or nothing has been achieved since its inception. Though the intention of the Chief Minister is good, but implementation is weak or incorrect. Prior to implementation of a specific scheme, departments were not asked to go into whether the scheme/s are economically viable and technically feasible and whether the particular scheme will benefit the masses and will revenue be generated thereafter. Second, no scheme is being evaluated as to whether it is having any impact at the state level. District Officers are doing their part because they were asked to do the job. So they only followed instructions.

T Petrin, of the FAO says "Entrepreneurial orientation to rural development, contrary to development based on bringing human capital and investment from outside, is based on stimulating local entrepreneurial talent and subsequent growth of indigenous companies. This in turn would create jobs and add economic value to a region and community and at the same time keeps scarce resources within the community. To accelerate economic development in rural areas, it is necessary to increase the supply of entrepreneurs, thus building up the critical mass of first generation entrepreneurs."

Former Prime Minister Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee once said, "The present system of pumping funds and external expertise into under-developed areas is not going to transform them into fast growing areas. If this holds good then by now India would have been among the list of developed nations. Without entrepreneurial capabilities, which are well developed or potentially available, the external funds will be wasted on projects that will not provide long term economic growth."

There is a saying, "America was discovered by entrepreneurs, nourished by entrepreneurs, and the United States becomes a world economic power through entrepreneurial activities. More important, our future rests squarely on entrepreneurial ventures founded by creative individuals. They are inspired people often adventurers, who can at once disrupt a society and instigate progress".

Therefore, Supply of entrepreneurs is a crucial factor for the economic development of Meghalaya. This will harness vast untapped human resources in a state like ours. Most of the developing countries recognize that small and medium enterprises continue to play an important role in their socio-economic development. Concept of entrepreneurship has come up new, afresh; this has already aroused much interest among academicians and policy makers and spreads almost the world over including communist country.

The word entrepreneur is derived from 17th century French word "ENTREPRENDRE", which means undertaker, meaning those who undertook the risk of new venture. An entrepreneur is basically a change agent who transforms resources into useful goods and services, often creating the circumstances that lead to economic growth. Entrepreneur is also a social activist generating employment avenue for the unemployed youth of the society. He is also a good dreamer who is ready to take calculated risk in the face of uncertainty to translate his dream into reality.

Entrepreneurs tend to be "strategic thinkers "who recognize change and see opportunities where others do not. By creating new ventures based on these strategic changes, entrepreneurs make a contribution and create wealth for their personal satisfaction.

In practice, entrepreneurs have historically altered the direction of national economics, industries or market. They have invented new products, developed the organizations and means of production to bring them to market

At this stage government's endeavor should be to generate first generation entrepreneurs, give them hand holding if necessary. This is not going to be an easy job especially in a state where we do not have any institution of repute which can impart Entrepreneurship Development Programme. The state badly needs an institute of the likes of NESBUD Noida, IED Gandhinagar, IIE Guwahati, NIRD Hyderabad etc run by people of experience and repute. Imparting Entrepreneurship Development Programme may be managed by hiring professionals in the field, but this has to be equally backed by other factors. Simple training would not give any dividend to the trainees or the state unless the followings are taken care of.

Access to Finance: Rural artisans and entrepreneurs almost invariably suffer from inability to access finance. Their poverty and indebtedness are only too well known. They don't get adequate and cheap credit facilities. The financial institutions in general do not advance any loans to the entrepreneurs or artisans; cooperative societies are limited. Low credit to the artisans does not enable him to produce sufficient goods to make it economically viable. Thus the traditional artisans/entrepreneurs are forced to look towards middlemen or moneylenders.

Marketing: Another serious problem faced by rural entrepreneurs and artisans is in the field of marketing. Rural industries do not have a proper market to sell their products at a remunerative price and neither can they compete with mechanized industries that have an advantage over quality and price.

Difficulties in securing raw materials: Then there is the problem of getting raw materials. Cottage industries

are unable to get raw materials at a competitive price. The supply of the raw materials is irregular and not up to the desired quality. This gives rise to the production cost and qualitative disadvantage.

Outdated machine tools and equipments: Rural artisans till today use primitive tools and implements. Little attention has been given to produce and supply suitable tools and equipments at a reasonable rate so as to raise their production and quality of produce.

Lack of technical advancement : Entrepreneur or rural artisans being illiterate and poor cannot afford to use advanced techniques in the specific fields of their activity. This has resulted in low production, uneven quality. As a result they do not get the remunerative prices for their produce.

In conclusion we need to create an environment for enterprises and bring change of attitude and mindset of the people towards entrepreneurship. If the government really desires results it should take note of the above-mentioned factors to achieve visible results. Nevertheless, it is not going to be an easy task for the Government since financial institutions are not within its control and nor do we have a State Financial Corporation. For a certain period, Meghalaya Industries Development Corporation was playing the role of SFC, however, due to absence of trained personnel and other factors, most of the advances turned into NPAs and so far no action has been initiated against willful defaulters.

To achieve the desired goal, government should identify EDP training institute (till state has its own institute), develop our own State Financial Corporation (MIDC) may be over hauled with the help of Banking experts and entrusted as SFC, however, there should not be any political interference while sanctioning loans), create market linkages, up- date technology especially for the rural sector, identify tools and equipments in close coordination with the empanelled machine suppliers (by the central government). Once this is done, it will not only change the economic scenario of the state but will also reduce unemployment. Mere pumping in money in the name of development is not going to work. Therefore, if government wants to see a change in the economy, social life, unemployment scenario etc., then it has to give a sincere thought and revisit its plan and policies for visible results.

Is it too late are we on the brink of extinction? Is the world coming to an end? Yes our individual world will come to an end because we are born to live and die. But what is our contribution while we are still alive? Do we think of our loved ones? Is their future secure? Most of us are so selfish that we even forget to think of the future of our own children and when it is too late they have to struggle to even make ends meet.

Very few people who are doctors, engineers, IAS officers etc., will be able to guide their children to become like them because we know that intelligence is not inherited. So it is up to us to change our complicated system and simplify it. It's time to unite and find ways to change the system for a better future for our loved ones. Let us start by doing away with greed and selfishness. To be active in politics is good but not party politics or the politics of profitability. Instead we should encourage the politics of neutrality or realistic politics.

The mushrooming of political parties is confusing and pressure groups are the main causes for the downward trend in our society. We have tolerated them for too long. They have defeated us in every which way they can. It's time we stand together and take up real issues.

Let's also be aware of people and political parties that have mastered the art of changing uniforms every now and again for their own vested interests. And why does the party in power accept such people in its

The Bloody Mess and the Valley of Death in J&K

By Philip Marwein

Kashmir Valley continues to bleed repeatedly and the bloody mess continues to smear not only the state of Jammu and Kashmir but the entire country. The Indian Governments in conjunction with the National Conference Tigers, the Abdullahs, as well as the PDP Snow Leopards could not contain the continued raining attacks of the militants both from inside J&K and from Pakistan. Massacres and deaths keep piling up day after day and weeks after weeks. There seems to be no respite to this mayhem. The majority peace loving common people of J&K are fed up, disgusted and dejected over the continued lawlessness but they are helpless. The J&K state regimes which are supposed to ensure law and order in the state have failed miserably. Successive Indian Governments which are supposed to guard the borders from enemy intrusion and terrorists' infiltration into the state have equally failed miserably. Formula after formula has been tried by the J&K and Indian Governments but none seems to work. Even the present PDP-BJP government in the state is in a quandary on how to ensure lasting peace and take J&K forward.

The main reason for this continued massacre and bloody mess in J&K and particularly, in the Kashmir Valley, is because Pakistan is nurturing, mentoring and sponsoring militants and terrorists outfits within its soil and despatching them into the Indian Occupied Kashmir to keep the momentum of terrorism going. Another reason is because there are quite a number of anti- India sentiments and separatist elements within the Indian soil of J&K who are trained and influenced by Pakistan or who are pro-Pakistan. To contain terrorists and militant outfits coming from across Pakistan is not the main problem. The main problem is how to gain the confidence of the people of J&K to live peacefully and contentedly within the Indian Union. The fact is that till date there are many people in Indian J&K who are dreaming of being independent from both India and Pakistan and there are also people there who want to be with Islamic Pakistan mainly because they belong to the same religion, Islam.

Now, what is the way out? The Instrument of Accession was signed by the Raja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, with the Indian Union in 1947 giving Special Status to J&K that allows it to have its own constitution and control over most administrative functions barring communication, foreign affairs, defence and currency. Now the main power players in J&K are the National Conference (NC) which demand that India should revert to the pre-1953 status of Kashmir barring

key areas such as defence, foreign affairs and communications, but the state should have sovereign rights over all other powers. The soft separatist PDP of Mehbooba wants self-rule similar to NC demands but that should include Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). On the other hand the united political face of the separatist movement, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, which came into existence in 1990 as a result of the imposition of AFSPA in the Kashmir Valley, is divided between ceding to Pakistan and independent rule (Azadi). Delhi has been maintaining all along that none of these are acceptable to India.

The reality is that Indian government in the past has committed mistakes in relation to J&K and now it has to pay heavily for this historical blunder. India's precious resources have been drained out heavily during last 69 years in J&K and it seems more time, money, energy and precious lives will be lost and will continue to be drained out in the foreseeable future in the state, if solutions are not found to solve the J&K problem. It is really a thorn in the flesh for India. To allow J&K to secede to Pakistan is out of the question but the issue needs to be resolved immediately by the Present PDP-BJP alliance in J&K and by the right wing BJP government in New Delhi. It was thought that with the Right Wing BJP ruling India Things would become very difficult for Pakistan and for the separatist elements in Kashmir and Jammu. But nothing much has changed and are no different from that of the previous central governments. Now is the golden opportunity for BJP to prove itself. For the people of India as a whole and for the political parties in India petty politics should be set aside. It is time to put our heads together to solve problems confronting the country. One of the things that can be explored is to entrust this job to a group of specialists who will go into the various recommendations of the past Committees or Groups on J&K and also to explore areas on better co-operative federalism between the J&K and the Indian Union. Involvement of all stakeholders at various levels, involving the people and especially the youths in development activities and other initiatives may be helpful. But, all exercises will come to naught if the NC, PDP, Hurriyat and other stakeholders are not united and do not see eye to eye on what is the best for their future and the future of the people of J& K. Pakistan cannot in any way help them, instead their problems will be compounded and confounded if they depend on that country.

Yours etc.,
Manphynai
Marbaniang
Shillong.

TO THE EDITOR

Extortion at Umling toll gate!

Editor,

I would like to seek clarification from Police Chief of Meghalaya as to which provision of the State laws or orders of the competent authority or the Police Act, 1861, or the Meghalaya police Act, 2011, that the uniformed men at Umling toll gate are extracting money from people like us who are engaged in small time business such as ferrying goods to earn our livelihood? Such incidents have occurred not only with me but with many others too. Police stop our vehicles and check to see what we carry. On seeing that we

carry personal goods (like stationeries, goods etc) in private vehicles they ask us to produce documents for the goods. This is needless harassment because they know what those goods are and why we are carrying them. In the end we are forced to grease their palms to avoid further confrontation.

Does the Constitution prohibit us to carry out our trade and profession in a manner we deem fit, as long as it is legal? Moreover this extortion racket is unwarranted and may force the employed youth of our state to lose faith in the system and indulge in activities similar to what these uniformed men callously carry out without any shame. Or if everything else fails we are also free to form counter organizations and in the end get Government jobs after

surrendering our arms. And worse we can get ourselves enrolled in such forces and commit white collar crimes to earn our livelihood. And is the toll gate meant for such purposes?

This is to inform our well educated uniformed people posted at the Umling toll Gate not to force us to misuse our knowledge and qualifications to counter your greed and disrespectful nature towards your state, uniform, people and the country. Don't bring us more shame than we already find ourselves in. Aren't we always in the limelight for the wrong reasons anyway?

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Arise, awake and stop not.....

Editor,

Let's also be aware of people and political parties that have mastered the art of changing uniforms every now and again for their own vested interests. And why does the party in power accept such people in its

fold? Does it need their experience in promoting red-tapism and diverting funds so that they can fool people? Let us strengthen our Dorbar Shnong which practice direct democracy. Women can build up their Seng Longkmie. Youths who have completed their studies can strengthen their Seng Samla. Those who excel in sport can strengthen their sports clubs. Genuine people must take up genuine issues. We can achieve this only when the fourth pillar of democracy i.e. the media, both print and electronic stand firmly on the foundation of truth and help all of the above to work with accountability and transparency.

Indian youth, a click away

Self-employment an option in this creative field

By Bobby Jha

How’s this for the perfect hangout? A place where you get to meet the youth of India, all 231,878,057 of them in the age group of 15-24. No kidding. A new, user-friendly portal — YouthInfoIndia.org — for the first time puts together on a single platform all the available data on the country’s young population culled from the 2011 census, the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and many other credible sources. What’s more, this website, which is supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is both fun and easy to browse — with a one-click access to the data, put together in a manner that addresses various requirements. Besides, it is extensive in reach and — most delightful of all — is absolutely free!

If you are wondering why such a portal is significant, Frederika Meijer, UNFPA representative for India/ Bhutan, has an answer. She believes that youth in this country can be a great asset if they receive adequate developmental inputs. However, in order to ensure this policy-makers and society in general must get the big picture.

According to Meijer, “To make sure that policy-makers have relevant data, analysis, and young people’s views while they formulate policies, UNFPA and its partners have developed YouthInfo India. The portal is a lively place where you can spend time getting to know more about India’s young people.”

The website is envisaged as comprising two broad sections. The first has to do with data presented on 190 indicators. There is a data bank that allows the user to access information quickly with the help of parameters like keyword, topic and region. There’s an exciting feature that facilitates visitors to create their own colour-coded infographics, pie charts and maps.

A portal puts together all data on the country’s young population



The website has a data bank that allows the user to access information quickly with the help of parameters like keyword, topic and region

All that is required is to feed the requirements into ‘DevInfo India’, a dashboard that displays the socio-economic profiles for states in India with up-to-date data, and generate impressive looking graphics. For instance, if you want to make a graph on changes in the age of marriage in Mumbai between 1971 and 2011, go ahead with your clicks and wait for a nifty downloadable graph to appear. Should you need to map the demographic profile of a particular geographic area, then that too is possible with a few smart moves.

Seriously fun is the section called ‘Your Voice’. Here you get to share your opinion on what needs to change in order to make India a better place. You never know, your views, which you may secretly consider insignificant and unexceptional, could actually find resonance in the highest echelons of power and help set the development agendas of the future! After all, never

has the country been more prepared to listen to its young than today.

Youth — those in the age group of 15-24 years — comprise 19.2 percent of the country’s population and are certainly the flavour of the times. That half its population is below 25 years potentially gives India a demographic edge over countries with ageing populations because it means that it has a large workforce with able bodies and innovative minds who can contribute decisively to social and economic development over the next twenty years.

Already the disproportionate impact of the youth cohort in achieving transfor-mations in the social and political landscape is becoming more apparent with each passing day. In 2011, it was the networking and activism of young volunteers that helped multiply support for social activist Anna Hazare’s India Against Corruption campaign. In

2012, it was their outrage that forced the government to change its criminal justice policies and reform the law on sexual assault. In 2013, once again it was Indian youth who were credited with having brought a debutante political entity like the Aam Aadmi Party to power in Delhi.

So youth is a happening group, no doubt about that. But there are also major challenges they are faced with today, as the data from YouthInfoIndia.org makes abundantly clear. Employment is an area of great concern, especially for urban youngsters. Work participation rate for those in the 20-24 age group in our urban pockets is as low as 37.5 per cent. Significant too is the fact that a high percentage of employed youth from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities are working in agriculture.

Early marriage is still very much a grim reality, with women bearing the unfortunate consequences of this age-old ‘tradition’. According to District Level

Household and Facility Survey DLHS-3 (2007-08) data, the percentage of girls who married before the legal age 18 was still a high 22.1 percent, with the percentage of women aged 20-24 who had given birth by 18 standing at 21.7 per cent. This is an eloquent pointer to low contraceptive use in this cohort — at 22.2 percent. Not surprisingly then, the percentage of women aged 15-19, who reported any level of anaemia in 2005-2006 was 55.8, with the percentage of men in the same age group at a lower, but still disturbing, 30.2 percent.

Inequalities continue to stare at us in the face even six decades after constitutional guarantees of equality came into force. We know, for instance, that literacy levels dip if you happen to be a Dalit or tribal youth; it is also lower for young people who live in Rural India.

But, of course, the most conspicuous inequality of all is that between girls and boys, women and men, and nothing perhaps highlights it more than the fact that the gender sex ratio among adolescents aged 10-19, is 898 girls for every 1,000 boys. Occasionally, the comparisons work against the male sex: the percentage of male youth aged 15-24 who are current users of any tobacco product stood at 27.4 percent, with females faring better at 8.3 percent.

Numbers tell stories, and the stories that emerge from the website should encourage young people everywhere in India to advocate for change and be the change themselves. At the same time, these numbers should also give policy-makers the perspective they’d need to create policies that effectively address the needs of this demographic, which is the future. (WFS)

Jewellery design is the art or profession of designing and creating jewellery. This is one of civilisation’s earliest forms of decoration, dating back at least 7,000 years to the oldest known human societies in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The art has taken many forms throughout the centuries, from the simple beadwork of ancient times to the sophisticated metalworking and gem-cutting known in the modern day.

A course in jewellery designing is a comprehensive one, dealing with all the fine details of jewellery making and designing. Specially meant for those who are creative and have an artistic bent of mind, these courses give basic information on the different kinds of stones, colour coding, schemes, polishing and finishing, presentation and framing, drawing techniques, ornament making and designing and so on.

Apart from these, they could also learn special skills like electroplating, metal colouring, anodising, enamelling, stone setting and silversmithing. Numerous institutes all over India offer various courses in jewellery designing. In most of the institutes, this is incorporated with other designing courses.

Some of the courses related to it are Advance Diploma in Accessory and Lifestyle Products, Advance Diploma in Jewellery Design, B.Sc Jewellery Design, Bachelor of Jewellery Design, Certificate Course in Jewellery Designing, Certificate Programme in Casting Technology, Certificate Programme in Engraving and Enamelling, Certificate Programme in Lapidary, Computer-Aided Jewellery Design, Diploma in Accessory and Lifestyle Prod-

CAREER GUIDE

Jewellery Designing~2

Nowadays, computer-aided design (CAD) software is used in the manufacturing firms to facilitate product design and avoid flaws during the designing process. There are many courses related to jewellery deigning and different institutes offer those courses. Apart from the bachelor level courses, there are also short-term diplomas related to the course. After successful completion of a course in jewellery designing, one can find outstanding job prospects in various jewellery manufactures and designing houses, export houses and renowned jewellery brand names, like Nakshatra and Tanishq.

Students from Meghalaya or other north-eastern states can also think for career option in this field. The region has rich jewellery design and they can be marketed well or with creativity new innovations can be made. Different tribes have their traditional ornaments and they can be marketed well with new designs and looking into the needs of the people. One can be an entrepreneur and self-employed related to this career option.

Updates:

Overseas Scholarships and Passage Grant for ST Student: The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is offering national overseas scholarships and passage grant for limited students belonging to Scheduled Tribe and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Golden Jubilee Scholarship Scheme from LIC: The objective of the scheme is to award scholarships to meritorious students belonging to economically weaker families so as to provide them better opportunities for higher education. Last date is September 23.

Adobe India-Women in Technology Scholarship: Applications are invited for Adobe India-Women in Technology Scholarship for the 2016-2017 academic year. This scholarship recognises outstanding female students in the technology field. Last date for applying is September 30.

Siemens Scholarship Programme-Empowering the Future: Siemens Scholarship Programme aims to encourage and promote engineering education amongst meritorious students from less privileged families, who share the vision and values to become future engineers.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career or employment-related queries)

Amazing Andaman

By Sunayana B. Goswami

The finesse of expression through flamboyant words is not quite my forte. Yet my heart yearned to share my experience of the picturesque Andaman Island. Last year, my husband and I chose the Indian archipelago in the Bay of Bengal as our destination. We reserved our tickets from Umroi Airport to Kolkata with one-night halt and from Kolkata to Port Blair the next morning at 5am. After two-and-a-half hours, we landed at the Veer Savarkar International Airport.

DAY 1: It was a hot and sultry March morning. Our dedicated vehicle (booked through a travel agency) was waiting at the airport and took us to the hotel. A quick bath and a light breakfast invigorated and refreshed our tired souls and soon we started off on sightseeing. The first site was the Anthropological Museum, showcasing and demonstrating the culture and values of the island dating back to the indigenous primordial dwellers of the island, enlightening us about different clans, like Jarawas, Sentinelese, Great Andamanese, Onges and their lifestyles.

After the museum, our next halt was the ‘Aquarium’ (a marine museum) of the Department of Fisheries. This museum exhibits the diversity of aquatic life. It gave us a virtual experience of the world underneath the gigantic blue ocean. We were awestruck by the wonders of marine ecosystem and praised the design of the mastermind behind, the Almighty.

Our next destination was the infamous Cellular Jail, also known as the Kala-Pani of Andaman. Today’s national memorial testament was once upon a time’s colonial prison for political prisoners and non-conformists.

Secluded from the mainland, this place considered suitable by the British to penalise the independence activists, is still bearing the attestation of the sacrifices of the many notable



The author in front of Cellular Jail

freedom fighters like Veer Savarkar and Batukeshwar Dutt. The jail has seven wings of three storeys and a total of 693 cells. The cells barred its apostates and heretics to communicate with each other.

After that we went to Carbyn’s Cove Beach to enjoy the shoreline and the gentle wind for an hour or two.

In the evening, we decided go to the nearby emporiums to buy mementos and souvenirs before going to the light-and-sound show at the Cellular Jail. The beguiling light and sound show narrates the chronicle of the heroes of freedom fights, the tortures meted out to them. And with that we wrapped up our first day.

DAY 2: The second day started with our sail from Water Sports Complex to Ross Island on a motor boat. The island is located around 2 km from Port Blair, the then administrative headquarters for Andaman and Nicobar Island before it was trembled by an earthquake and later shifted to Port Blair. Remnants of ruined buildings, broken churches, on its last legs chief commissioner’s house, hospital, government house, water treatment plant, power house, this island houses a cache of archaeological remains.

(To be continued)

We are all hungry for a story

By Elayne Clift

Years ago, when I was working in the women’s health movement, I was fortunate to attend the last of the three UN Decade for Women conferences in Nairobi, Kenya. Ten years later, I also attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. During the intervening years I was present at various other fora where women spoke, often giving testimony about their experiences and sharing the challenges they had faced and overcome.

Bearing witness to those moving testimonials was an unforgettable experience. Whether through individual conversation or a particularly compelling speech, the impact of the stories those women told is still with me, and while I don’t recall many individual stories now, I still remember the profound effect of listening to those collective voices from courageous women bringing their reality to life for all the world to hear.

Their first-person accounts, painful as they often were to hear, gave me, and all who heard them, a far greater understanding and a deeper empathy than any speeches riddled with statistics could ever have done. One woman talking about her own experience with female genital mutilation because of patriarchal-driven custom, or one woman relating her experience of spousal abuse or rape during war, sears itself into your soul as no official document can.

I thought about those conferences and about the



First-person narratives provide a far greater understanding and evoke a deeper empathy than any speech riddled with statistics could ever do

importance and power of story, particularly as a writer, while watching the Democratic convention. The video of Humayun Khan, the brave soldier who died in America’s war, and the now-famous appearance of his parents at the convention, as well as Michelle Obama’s reflections on how she and her husband raised their daughters during the White House years, and other memories shared by speakers in the course of their remarks, all served to remind me of how compelling personal narratives are and of their importance in political discourse.

We all have stories to tell. And those stories are important. They matter — to us, and for others. As a British faith-based

organisation called Stethelburgas put it on their website: ‘Hearing the stories of others breaks down the fears that underlie prejudice, and opens us up to the perspectives of others. Through story we see more easily the unique challenges of every individual and how their beliefs and attitudes make sense within the context of their own experience. We may still disagree with a particular perspective but begin to see how that view makes sense within the story of that person’s life.

As a result, we tend not to argue with story as we might with opinion. Stories change the ‘contract’ with the listener.’

I can think of so many narratives, often shared through extraordinary

oratory that changed the contract with listeners. Sojourner Truth, an illiterate slave who was a small woman with a huge heart and a big voice, told a story when she asked of her all-white male audience, “And ain’t I a Woman?” Martin Luther King Jr did it when he said dream.” Gandhi inspired his followers when he admonished, “be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

Alice Paul, who fought so hard for women’s right to vote, shared a bit of political poetry and wisdom when she said, “When you put your hand to the plow, you can’t put it down until you get to the end of the row.”

Vivian Gornick understood the central role narration — story — plays from a writer’s perspective. In her book ‘The Situation

and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative’, she points out that memoirists always explore a situation through the story embedded in it. “The situation is the context or circumstance; the story is the emotional experience that preoccupies the writer: the insight, the wisdom, the thing one has come to say.” And she adds, “The memoirist must engage with the world... must convince readers they have some wisdom, and are writing as honestly as possible to arrive at what they know.”

Gornick’s words, it seems to me, are relevant for speakers and listeners as much as for readers, never more so than within a political context, especially during this unprecedented election. The stories, and the oral narrative within which they reside, afford us an opportunity to break down fear, to open up to others, to truly listen, and to see the unique challenges ahead of us in new ways, ways that no doctrinaire speechmaking or facile sound bite can.

The truth is we are all hungry for story, child and elder alike. The love of a good tale never leaves us, especially when it’s about someone’s dreams, the reclaiming of our better natures, or striving together for “the golden fleece” promise of a positive future.

Whether those stories come to us by way of books, visual narratives or spoken words, we owe it to ourselves as never before to be paying attention to them, and to be seeking their gifts in this time of challenging governance. (WFS)

Sound of Silence

Living in parasitic world

By Pushpanjali Gupta

It is said that wireless communication that we are so used to today, was invented by a person who could neither hear nor speak. This invention makes us think what must have gone through the person who was denied the finest blessings of nature — that is the sense of hearing.

But that’s not the scenario right now. This field has undergone a sea change. In fact, this community of the deaf celebrates their status. A child of deaf parents, also known as CODA, is supposed to be very sharp because of his language acquiring abilities. We all know the benefits of teaching language to a child in his formative years. So when a hearing child learns the sign language from his deaf parents, he picks up good vocabulary at a very tender age. It also gives the child an added advantage over other children.

In fact, society and societal norms have become a challenge for the deaf. The society just refuses to accept them as ‘normal’ human beings. In reality, each of us lacks some qualities.

Identification of deaf children is, in fact, done in the pre-natal stage depending on the technology available. After birth, medical professionals, like paediatrician, gynaecologists, audiologists and ENT specialists can identify this condition. In a family, the mother is the best person to identify her child’s deafness. When she realises that the child is not responding to sound, then there is an urgent need to take the child to a medical specialist.

The word ‘DEAF’ has been universally accepted. The deaf community feels proud in calling themselves so. Rather than calling or labelling them by any other name, it is the most appropriate word to refer to them. It not only depicts their identity but also unites them as a group.

The deaf communicate with ‘sign language’, which is also their mother tongue. Each country has a different sign language just as there are different spoken languages. In India, the deaf community uses Indian sign languages, which are rich in themselves. They have their own grammar. Apart from these languages, there are a few sign dialects, which do not hamper the functioning of the main sign language that is also called ‘Sanketik Bhasha’ in Hindi.

Sign language is acquired effortlessly by the deaf. But the problem arises when the family is hearing and they do not have any knowledge of sign language. In that case, it is the responsibility of the school where the child is admitted to provide a linguistically rich environment.

Deaf adults also play an important role as they are matured sign language users and they can transfer their knowledge of sign language to young children who are at a critical age of development. In case of aware hearing parents, it is seen that they go for sign language courses so that they can communicate with their

Each country has a different sign language just as there are different spoken languages. In India, the deaf community uses Indian sign languages, which are rich in themselves. They have their own grammar too

children and teach them.

Another interesting and important fact to be noted in the community of the deaf is that sign language varies with age. Just as hearing children speak a lighter level of spoken language according to their age, same is true for deaf children. Teenagers have their level of communication and as they grow older maturity happens eventually and it becomes more standardised.

More importantly, teachers and parents should be sensitive towards the social and academic levels of the deaf. One should not talk to an adult deaf in a very childish manner. Similarly, an adult deaf should not talk to a child using more complicated language structure.

In family gatherings, people who do not understand sign language casually ask the deaf guests questions like “Had food? How are you? Doing fine?”. This annoys them and affects their social behaviour. As a result, the deaf start withdrawing from such gatherings, and this is alarming.

This may go to such an extent that they start withdrawing from society, community and religion. It is seen that children of deaf parents become independent and shoulder responsibilities at a very young age. For instance when the doorbell rings, the child knows that he is the only person who will have to answer it. Whereas it may be the other way round in case of hearing parents.

Also, when in a restaurant, it is assumed that the head of the family i.e. the father would call the waiter and order food. With Deaf parents, the child

knows he has to take the first initiative.

As far as education of the deaf is concerned, a deaf child can seek admission in any school provided his needs and requirements are met. In some schools, teachers tend to learn sign language from the deaf students, which is again dangerous and ethically wrong. A school must ensure that the teachers undergo proper training before teaching the deaf. Moreover, it is sad that some parents have negative attitudes towards the education of their deaf children. The reason may be attributed to the absence of role models of educated deaf persons. On the contrary, in foreign countries, a lot of emphasis is given on deaf education and the deaf are high achievers.

Many studies show that the deaf are high achievers. Lastly, technology has proved to be a blessing for them. They acquire computer knowledge and related skills with great ease.

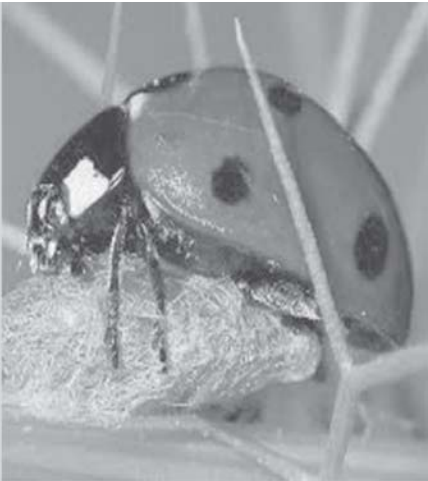
Through WhatsApp and Skype, they really enjoy chatting with friends and family. It has truly revolutionised the mode of communication of the deaf. They are more independent now and life has become easier for them. The difference is quite visible in their behaviour and life as a whole.

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that with modern technology and changed parental and societal attitude, the deaf will rise further and make a mark for themselves and pose as role models for the generations to come.

The author is Special Educator, visual impairment

TAKE IT ALL

- Parasites living inside their host are known as endoparasites, whereas those found outside their hosts are ectoparasites. The majority of parasites in the animal kingdom are invertebrates
- Some parasites capture the mind of their hosts and make them change their behaviour to benefit them — in effect creating a zombie
- The *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* fungus invades ants and compels them to go to a low leaf, bite a vein on the underside and die hanging upside down
- A wasp species targets ladybugs (in picture). A single egg is laid in the abdomen. The larva eats its way out and spins a cocoon underneath the ladybug
- The parasitic barnacle, *Sacculina carcini*, invades crabs. It sprouts tendrils that reach throughout the victim’s body, even coiling around its eyestalks



By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

One of the most disturbing movies I have seen was in 1975 – a virus comes through the water system of a building and turns everyone into sex-crazed monsters before they die in agony. I have still not forgotten it. An entire horror movie genre is devoted to parasites — the extremely popular vampire movies are one example.

The word parasite means, “one who eats at the table of another”; Parasitism — a survival strategy that involves hijacking a host’s nutrients for one’s own benefit — has emerged in the animal kingdom in at least 223 species, according to a study published on July 19 in the journal *Biology Letters*.

Those inside their host are known as endoparasites, whereas those found outside their hosts are ectoparasites. The majority of parasites in the animal kingdom are invertebrates — virus, fungi, bacteria, amoebae, flagellates and sporozoa (such as the malarial parasites).

Worms and flukes are very important parasites of man and mammals — 1.4 billion people have roundworms. In fact, 342 kinds of worm parasites affect all people. Endoparasites include ticks, mites, lice and fleas.

If parasitism was simply the sucking of food/blood from the host, that would be bad enough. But some parasites also capture the mind and make the host change its behaviour to benefit them — in effect creating a zombie.

The *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* fungus prefers the undersides of leaves of plants growing on the forest floor as temperature, humidity and sunlight are ideal for it to grow and reproduce.

The parasite invades ants and compels them to go to a low leaf, bite a vein on the underside and die hanging upside down. The fungus erupts a long stalk from the ant’s head with which it sprinkles its spores onto other ants.

The chest-bursting alien in Ridley Scott’s *Alien* was inspired by parasitoid wasps. These wasps lay their eggs in caterpillars, beetles and other insects. When the eggs hatch, they crunch their way out of their living incubators. One wasp species, *Dinocampus coccinellae*, targets ladybugs.

A single egg is laid in the abdomen. The larva eats its way out and spins a cocoon underneath the ladybug who lives on as one of the undead, partially paralyzed on top of the cocoon. The wasp larva provides resources to keep the ladybug alive, while the ladybug provides protection from bugs that might otherwise eat the larva.

The female *Hymenopimella argyraphaga* wasp hunts down the *Plesiometa argyra* spider and paralyses it for about 10 minutes with a sting. In that time, she lays an egg, attaches it to the spider’s belly and departs. When the spider recovers it goes about its business as though nothing has happened. A

If the while the wasp egg is growing. Some days later it hatches, stabs a hole in the spider’s stomach and begins feeding off it. The infant wasp injects some kind of psychoactive substance that convinces the

spider to spin a new kind of web designed to provide shelter from the weather and predators. When it’s done, the wasp kills the spider, eats it and then uses the freshly spun web to wind itself into a cocoon. Two weeks later, a fully grown wasp emerges.

Glyptapanteles wasps lay up to 80 eggs on a live caterpillar. When these hatch, the larvae snack on the host’s body and then attach themselves to a nearby plant and form a cocoon. The caterpillar who is still alive, strangely, turns bodyguard.

It starves itself while standing guard over the cocoons, violently swinging its head to beat away predators. How the parasites cause the caterpillars to turn into faithful guardians is unknown, but unparasitised caterpillars don’t behave like this.

Horsehair worms are parasites of crickets. The larvae live in water and are eaten by mosquitoes, which are then eaten by crickets. The worms burrow into the gut and grow to adulthood. They need to get back into the water to lay eggs.

They cause the cricket to become suicidal. Normally crickets stay away from water, but infected hosts run into it and drown. The worms emerge from the dead body.

The parasitic barnacle, *Sacculina carcini*, invades crabs. It sprouts tendrils that reach throughout the victim’s body, even coiling around its eyestalks.

Living off nutrients from the crab’s blood, this parasite grows a bulge on the host’s underside where it keeps its eggs. It alters the mind of the crab so that the female crab nurtures this knob as she would her own fertilised eggs.

Even the male crab grows

a wide female abdomen to accommodate the barnacle’s knob and protects the eggs just as a female would. Then the parasite directs its host out to deeper waters where it can avoid predators and competition for food.

Toxoplasma gondii, a parasitic protozoan, can grow inside any animal, but loses its fear of cats, is eaten easily and the parasite continues its life cycle. Humans can fall victim to *T. gondii* too, and researchers suspect that the parasite might have links to human mental health, including schizophrenia and brain cancer.

Scientists say a high level of parasite infection in a society could change the entire cultural behaviour.

Some parasites decide the sex of the host. The *Wolbachia* bacteria infest 70 percent of the world’s invertebrates and have evolved strategies to keep spreading. In female hosts, the bacterium attaches itself to the eggs. Since males are useless for the bacteria’s survival, the parasite often eliminates the male embryos to increase the number of females, or turns them into females.

The female crustacean, *Cymothoa exigua*, is the only parasite known to replace an organ. It enters through the gills of the spotted rose snapper and attaches itself to the base of the fish’s tongue, where it drinks its blood.

The bloodsucking causes the tongue to wither away. The crustacean attaches itself to the tongue stub and acts as the fish’s tongue.

A male will crawl up from the gills and mate with the female inside the fish’s mouth. She then releases her babies through the fish’s mouth who go on to other victims.

(To be continued)

True stories show how distorted modern values are

Proposed Fourth Law of Robotics: All robots must have dog memories implanted in them so if they mutiny we can control them with vacuum cleaners and bacon treats.

Essential, right? So how come people aren’t working on it? People focus totally on the wrong things these days. Media reports are screaming that idiot celebrity X is feuding with idiot celebrity Y; chocolate is good for you/bad for you; a dangerous lunatic is likely to be elected president of one country or another; and so on, and I say: tell me something NEW.

Our values have changed. Here’s the sort of typical scenario that would get a modern person excited:

- 1) Can’t find phone, races home from work
- 2) Discovers entire street destroyed by alien attack
- 3) Finds phone at bottom of briefcase
- 4) *screams* THANK YOU GOD.

The scary thing is this distorted value system controls our spending. Hipster: You want the equivalent of \$8 for this book? This is an outrage. Barista: Here’s your latte; that will be \$10.75. Hipster: Thanks.

The biggest worry for me as a journalist is manufactured outrage. Many of my buddies are furious several times a day about “news reports” on the internet, which are entirely untrue, some of which they made up themselves.

A few days ago, famous Cuban activist Coco Farinas ended his two-month hunger strike after reading that the European parliament was taking up his campaign. It turned out to be fake news — but he only found out after dinner.

An Australian reader told me about a woman named Sally in Fremantle, who

recently revealed on the internet that she had been hit with a hefty fine for bad parking when one wheel of her car was just fractionally over the edge of the white line, as she proved with a photo she uploaded.

The internet greeted this as an atrocity on a Hitler-in-vades-Poland scale. But then the traffic officer who wrote the ticket revealed that he’d found her car badly parked across two spaces and ALSO provided photographic proof proving this.

Both individuals came across as truthful, but that could only be the case if some incredibly strong mystery people had physically picked up the car and moved it when neither Sally nor the traffic cop were looking. The mystery was solved when a security video revealed she had

parked really badly and then some incredibly strong mystery people had physically picked up the car and moved it while neither Sally nor the traffic cop were looking.

I like this story because a) it shows that life is weird, and b) goofy folk who do random acts of kindness really exist.

I wish I could meet more of them. There was a video on the internet the other day that I think was real. It showed a guy trying to give away cash in the street. Modern trendy hipster people refused to take it, while ordinary humble folk took it gratefully.

If you are reading this, cash-dispensing-guy, you can repeat the experiment in my front yard. It will be over in seconds.

I have a sack ready. I’ll use the money to buy a book. Or a latte.

(Nury Vittachi is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send comments and ideas via his Facebook page)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, September 25, 2016

'Birthday Forecast'
Some results may fall short of expectation as Moon square Uranus on your solar return chart. Stay grounded so that expectations too are practical and within reach. You could feel discontentment in major projects and even as you unveil your plans. You have been dreaming big and now you put it all to action; you confront old blocks and remove new ones as you move ahead with your plans. You may overestimate your feelings and emotions and the desired results may not be received from a relationship. Avoid hasty decisions. Family will be supportive. A change in profession or career can be expected. Keep stress at bay. Travel will be beneficial.

'This week for you'
Aries: (March 21 - April 20) People and friends look upon you with more respect, tolerance, and acceptance. You are likely to be more strategic in your actions during this period, as you become aware of the subtleties of human interaction. This is a time when your best course of action is to recognize that you need, or rely on, others for support. Efforts at self-promotion might be made now. This is the time when you're noticed for what you've done or haven't done. Do your best to be in top form, make career adjustments if needed, and don't be afraid to show others exactly what you're made of.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21) You would move towards a more positive and objective approach to your professional and personal life this week. You have a great desire to expand your work and knowledge. Your might further your education and it's a fabulous time to do so, or you could broaden your knowledge in a more informal manner. Confidence is the key of success and faith in the universe and in your ability to do the right thing will get you everywhere now. This is the best times for realizing the positive potential you have. You would have a feeling of unrest or dissatisfaction with your environment.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21) Your idealistic nature is stimulated, and you are likely to be more spiritual or idealistic this week. You are sober and serious in professional and personal relationships. You are getting serious about loved ones, family relationships and children. You are likely to take your hobbies more seriously. You would combine your inner and outer strengths to achieve success and happiness in professional aspects. You achieve success as you are brilliant and there is good fortune attending professional, personal and material aspects. It is a period to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22) This week's planetary configuration brings communication, traveling and meeting new people. You have more faith in general regarding your career and the direction in which you are working. Your ideas are higher as teaching may be part of the picture, and your cultural and spiritual awareness increases this week. Pouring your heart and soul into your efforts comes naturally now. You would be able to complete work assignments and personal business this week with good energy and support. Emotional attachments and relationships are rewarded with reciprocation. Some interesting people are drawn to you and invite you to work with them.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23) You are expected to be involved in lectures, debates, and discussions. With your enhanced communication skills you can convey your ideas powerfully to others, and you may be invited to speak in front of many people. A new project or goal begun at this time has a good chance of being successful and long-lasting. It's an excellent time in which you make a lifestyle change, as your ability to concentrate on what really matters to you is enhanced. A short vacation allows you to enjoy natural surroundings with a loved one.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22) There is perfection and beauty in emotional and personal relationships with your loved one. Mental pursuits, new learning, and all forms of intellectual activity are favored. Your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. You are more inclined to put your ideas into action than usual.



Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



“George Washington, as a boy, was ignorant of the commonest accomplishments of youth. He could not even lie.”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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Russia-Pakistan drill

THIS comes at a time when India is going all out to intensify diplomatic pressure against Pakistan which is poised for military action against India. Pakistan and the Soviet Union were cold war enemies. But the situation has changed. Russia and Pakistan are getting ready for the first ever joint military exercise. Friendship 2016 is a development which will be watched with concern by both India and US. A contingent of Russian ground forces has arrived in Pakistan. Russia made it clear that the Russia-Pakistan anti-terror exercise will not be held in PoK or in any other sensitive or problematic areas like Gilgit-Baltistan. It stated that the report of drills taking place at a military school is mischievous. Moscow has been at pains to explain that the exercise is aimed at strengthening and developing military cooperation with Pakistan.

Even if a joint military exercise is not taking place in PoK, the news cannot be heartening to Delhi. Despite India’s growing ties with the US and Israel, it has long treated Russia as a steadfast ally. Pakistan’s relations with Russia have thawed with Moscow lifting the arms embargo on Pakistan in 2014. In 2015, Russia decided to sell Mi-35 attack helicopters to Pakistan. Moscow has also watched India’s growing ties with the US with apprehension. The opposition in India has attacked the Modi government for compromising on strategic autonomy by signing the logistics agreement. India has however explained that the agreement does not lead to a military alliance.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Return of Medieval autocracy

From what I have come to know of the book of this prose stylist, who hit the firmament of frame overnight for his Midnight's Children I do not think he is above reproach. It betrays intellectual scheming from commercial aggrandizement. He has allowed himself to be exploited by the promotional lust of the Western publishers. He has lent his Muslim identity to impart credibility to a slanderous work, which clearly violates the religious sensibility of a community scattered all over the planet. His modern allegory is too transparent to mystify his motivation.

Now he stands sentenced to death by a hired killer, called upon to do so far a fancy price. You may call it a hangman's fee. If this can be done for religious sacrilege, it can also be done for a socio political offence with impunity. It seems the global autocrat's judgement is final and that his wits runs across all continents. By one such sentence the territorial integrity of all nations has been challenged and frontiers running between the states seem to have vanished. The target of such a killing can belong to any land, any faith and any persuasion.

My concern is its political implications and its potential for creating international confrontations and chaos at the drop of a hat or by pulling a trigger. Let us imagine a situation, supposed Rushdie were living in India where he was born. And were he to commit the same kind of `sacrilege' triggering off similar reaction among the fundamentalist faithful, would a similar sentence be passed in a foreign country far away to be carried out by a hired killer? Would it be a serious challenge to the security and integrity of our state or not? Would it challenge the sovereignty of our nation or not?

Let us suppose the fundamentalist Islamic forces had reacted the same way as

they did. And Rushdie was hunted the way he has been. Yet one can imagine that even in such a situation the most inflammable Muslim public opinion, in the best traditions of our nation's democratic values of tolerance, would not have allowed lynching of a man who had gone `astray'.

In India, even earlier there were occasions when attempts were made to denigrate or defame of the Prophet, or distort the teachings of Islam. But never did rational restraints allow the orthodoxy to pass extremists dogmatic sanctions against the errant. Even a man of Maulana Niaz Fatehpuri's eminence had to face violent reactions against provocative unorthodox positions he took. His magazine, Nigar, published from Janpur, was the main vehicle of his thought and ideas and they were by and large nonconformist. But Islamic orthodoxy never arrogated to itself the right to deprive him of his life though some of his writings were found to be blasphemous.

It is this tradition that today one finds asserting itself in the Indian Muslims reaction to the Rushdie episode. They have condemned the writer and his ill-conceived book but expressed bewilderment at the same time, at the sentence passed against Rushdie to snuff out his life, a gift of God Be it Aligarh, Delhi or Bombay, Muslims have shown aversion to the idea of deciding an issue of intellectual deviation and dishonesty with the help of barking gun.

The Jamaat e-Islami head went to the extent of describing a Madras intellectual, Prof M A Lateef, as "highly irresponsible" for supporting Ayotollah Khomeini's judgement. The supporter later said that was because he wanted to express his "intense indignation" over what Rushdie had done.

Water Wars

Inter & Intra state aid vital

The Cauvery water dispute, lingering for decades has now taken a new ugly turn. The States of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are out in the open bickering as none are satisfied with the Supreme Court order (of September 5) directing the former to release 15,000 cusecs water every day to the latter till September 15, which has been revised (on September 12) to 12,000 cusecs a day, following agitation. Neither of the States are happy with the order. Karnataka has seen trouble brewing with violent protests from furious farmers and Kannada organizations, whereas Tamil Nadu too has retaliated with organisations and political parties calling bandhs.

Before going into the intricacies of water sharing, it needs to be pointed out that less water has been flowing down the Cauvery river for both climatic and man-made reasons while the size of the area it irrigates has been increasing in both the States, obviously to boost up agricultural production. This trend is likely to continue and aggravate the crisis in the coming years as monsoon rain is too declining.

One cannot deny the fact that there is no rational behind the violent protests of Karnataka. One may mention here that in the Mandya region of Karnataka around 400 farmers committed suicide last year due to crop failure and the consequences arising out of it. According to sources, these farmers have been able to raise paddy and sugar-cane in only one-third of the fields available for cultivation due to scanty rainfall and availability of adequate water. It is also a fact that the farmers have not heeded the government’s warning to change the crop pattern and avoid paddy cultivation as it requires lot of water.

But farmers are not ready to change their age-old practice as there has not been much intervention and technological guidance to educate farmers about changing the cropping pattern. Thus, one can easily state that in the

given situation, the apex court order may not seem quite justified though, however, the needs of Tamil Nadu cannot be doubted.

It is well known that the Cauvery Water Tribunal Water Sharing tribunal verdict way back in 2007 upheld a pre-independence pact on water sharing and fixed share of Cauvery waters for Tamil Nadu as also small shares for Pondicherry and Kerala. It may be pertinent here to point out that the river basin for Cauvery spans almost double of what exists for it in Karnataka.

Along with this dispute, the Odisha and Chhattisgarh governments have also got embroiled regarding construction of barrages and dams over the Mahanadi by the latter State. Odisha has accused Chhattisgarh of not consulting it while building seven to eight barrages on the Mahanadi though the latter claimed it has not drawn more water.

According to a report prepared by a fact finding team of the Odisha government, Chhattisgarh had kept Odisha in the dark about its projects in the upstream of Mahanadi. The report details six barrages to facilitate supply of water to industries and the possible impact of the projects, specially Hirakud reservoir among others. Meanwhile, an expert committee would look into the issue while the National Institute of Hydrology has been asked to study the entire Mahanadi river basin.

There were also problems in the Indus basin over the Sutlej-Yamuna link canal among the States of Punjab and Haryana and the Supreme Court had to intervene this year too. But this did not linger unlike the above and was eventually settled.

Meanwhile, the problem with water sharing is not limited to inter-State but also with our neighbours. One may refer to the problems with Pakistan regarding sharing of Indus water. As early as 1960, the country signed a treaty that allotted to Pakistan most of the Indus river waters without any quid pro quo. The Indus Water Treaty reserved for India just 19.48 per cent of the total water of

the six-river Indus system.

This treaty was indeed a very generous agreement but now has created problems for the country as the demands for water have been increasing with each passing year. One may mention in this context that J&K’s total hydropower generating capacity in operation or under construction does not equal the size of a single mega dam that Pakistan is currently pursuing such as the 7000 MW Bunjui Dam or the 4500MW Bhasha Dam.

Experts are of the opinion that India cannot afford to give over 80 per cent of the Indus water to Pakistan in view of the country’s impending water crisis and needs to be changed, more so because of the latter’s continued cross-border terrorism. The water needs of Punjab and Haryana, specially in the irrigation sector, may warrant a change in the quantum of water sharing in the treaty.

There are also problems with China which is building mega dams in the Brahmaputra, thereby curtailing the flow of the river into India. In spite of protests by India, the construction of dams are in progress and experts believe that once the dams are in operation, the flow of the Brahmaputra to the North East would be severely curtailed. Reports indicate that China is planning to divert 200 billion cubic metres (bcm) of the Brahmaputra from south to north to feed the Yellow river. If and when this happens, India’s water crises will accentuate further. Of the 1900 bcm of river runoff available in the country, as much as 600 bcm is generated in the Brahmaputra and thus one can imagine the consequences if the bulk of this is diverted by China.

Add to this is the fact that China has also approved construction of three more dams on Brahmaputra river – known as Zangbo in China -- in Tibet in addition to the one being built. A document approved by the Chinese cabinet about projects to be completed during its 12th Five Year Plan mentioned three dams to be built at Dagu, Jiacha and Jiexu on the Brahmaputra, according to Indian Embassy sources in Beijing treaty.

Indeed, shortage of water has become a global problem and reports indicate that by early or mid-next decade, India would become a water stressed country. With such a high rate of population growth and the need to boost up agricultural production and productivity, water needs of the country would increase by leaps and bounds. Some parts of the country, specially a few western and southern States, are already facing acute water crisis.

In such a scenario, there is need for serious rethinking regarding sharing of waters within the country and also with its neighbours. The needs of an expanding irrigation system, increased food production coupled with the need for industrialization would obviously necessitate requirement of more water per capita in the not-very-distant future, if the country has to progress at a fast rate. The imperative now is to create a low-water economy keeping in view the demands of development and economic prosperity.

It needs to be pointed out that India’s per capita storage capacity is significantly lower than that of other countries with the quantum of water that can be stored as a proportion of average run-off pegged at just 50 days. This number subsumes wide variations – from 220 days in the Krishna to just two days in the Brahmaputra/Barak basin. In most other countries, the total national figure is around 250-300 days.

Ismail Serageldin, a former Vice President of the World Bank, had predicted in the late 90s that the wars of this century would be over water and not oil or politics. His meteoric forecast may become a reality if nation States do not cooperate at the global level and amongst each other and also adopt policies and programmes for proper and efficient management of water resources within their own countries.

Water cooperation is thus the need of the hour and the UN has rightly earmarked this year for carrying forward such work judiciously.---INFA

Migrant Workers Abroad Need to formalise arrangements

By S Saraswathi

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj’s advice to the stranded Indian workers in Saudi Arabia to return home offering them free passage at Government cost comes as the best and the only way of protecting the lives and liberties of the migrant workers stuck in that country. She has stated a bitter truth that there is no point in waiting there indefinitely to collect their salary dues. A rude shock for the working force!

It is an advice in the interest of safety and security of the workers, but is born out of a hopelessly bad employment arrangement. Perhaps the dues will be paid when a settlement is reached between the Saudi Government and the employer companies, but the Indian workers are the sufferers in the meantime. This episode is bound to discourage labour migrations.

The situation is definitely grim, if reports of starvation of some migrant Indian workers due to what is described as “food crisis” are true. The problem is beyond the negotiating capacities of the workers and needs to be rectified by the Government of India. Such reports from the Middle East are common. Another report is about 62 fishermen alleged to have been harassed by their employers in Saudi Arabia but unable to return to India as they are bound by a contract. Recall, rports of workers kept as captives in Iraq rocked the nation last year.

According to the estimates made by the ILO for 2013, there were 232 million international migrants in the world, i.e. persons outside their country of origin for 12 months or more. Migrant workers among them numbered about 150.3 million comprising about 83.7 million men (55.7 per cent) and 66.6 million women (44.3 per cent).

Kerala is for years known for its emigrant population. A village is even nicknamed as “Dubai village”, in which at least one member in every household is in Dubai. Tamil Nadu is said to have overtaken Kerala, according to a recent survey on migration, has found that one out of 10 households in the State has a member abroad.

The UN Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families adopted by the General Assembly in 1990 defines migrant worker as “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national”. The definition is broad covering many people working outside their home country. There are millions of foreign workers in several countries. Under this definition, refugees fleeing from their country for safety and security, displaced persons, victims of war and natural calamities, and illegal entrants to a foreign country are excluded. Migrant workers are those who voluntarily move in search of employment or in response to labour demand of host countries.

The agenda for Sustainable Development for 2015-30, which is the follow up of the Millennium Development Goals, targets migrant workers also. Goal No. 8 regarding employment and decent work includes protection of all workers including migrant workers. Goal No.10 on reducing inequalities within and among nations implies well-managed migration policies. Evidently, the contribution of migrant workers to development of the countries of their origin and to their host countries merits inclusion of welfare of this workforce as a global agenda.

Indian migrant workers in the Middle East are mostly skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour force seeking employment or improved economic conditions. Globalisation and resulting income inequalities in the home country have been favouring migrations. The status of migrants and the responsibility of the host countries towards them have become important aspects of international relations today.

An ILO study shows Northern America on top with 24.7 per cent of migrant workers followed by Norway and South-Western Europe with 23.8 per cent. Arab States are hosts to 11.7 per cent migrant workers, and Eastern Europe to 9.2 per cent.

A vast majority of migrant workers (71.7 per cent) are found in the service sector followed by industry comprising construction and manufacturing (17.8 per cent). Domestic workers constitute 7.7 per cent who are the weakest and the most exploited lot.

Interestingly the Arab States have the highest proportion of migrant workers as a share of all workers with 35.6 per cent. The reason is lack of skilled workers and professionals at home, which make them dependent on other countries to provide competent hands to develop their country. In fact, it is a situation that must give the upper hand to the labour and not the employer. But, the reality is exactly opposite. We are going back in social development under the pressure of globalisation and have to re-assert the equality of employers and employees and their inter-dependence.

Migrant workers are behind the growth and development of their host countries and also benefit their motherland by their remittances and work experiences gained abroad. According to reports, remittances from migrant workers – both white collar and blue collar -- amounted to US \$72 billion last year, which was said to be the largest foreign-earned wages in the world.

However important migrant labour is for the two countries involved, there seems to be no proper recognition of its economic significance. Migrant labour is looked upon as a boon turned bane sometimes for the individual worker concerned. Its collective value is sadly ignored at both ends.

The general trend of de-regulation of labour under globalization encourages employment of low-cost migrant labour from poor countries in preference to high cost local labour. It works as a chain in which one country is at the same time provider of low-cost labour to some and receiver of low-cost labour from some others.

Formal employment guarantees and human rights protection are missing in informal and private arrangements. Lured by the possibilities of rewards, the workers fail to see and/or ignore the risks awaiting them. Many of them are tempted to short-cut the procedure and approach unauthorized middle men to make the arrangements.

The challenges involved in governance of migration must be addressed at the earliest as integral part of international relations. Prospective migrant workers need complete knowledge of the implications of service abroad. This is as much applicable to high level technical personnel as to the unskilled workers. Many of them gather information from other people’s experience because of gaps in international legal framework.

In many Gulf Countries including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and UAE, reports mention prevalence of “kafala system” (meaning sponsorship system) which requires the workers to find a local sponsor and legally binds the worker to the employer. It gives undue power and influence to the employer leaving little freedom to the worker. A common practice among employers is to obtain the passports of the employees on their arrival thus virtually depriving them their liberty to leave the job. The practice is condemned by the ILO as a “contemporary form of slavery”. Despite numerous problems, most countries encourage both in-migrants and out-migrants internationally. Both contribute to economic growth. Since migrant labour plays an important role in global economy, nations must converge to sort out the issues and formalise arrangements.---INFA

(The writers is former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

“*Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still exist, but you have ceased to live.*”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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Modi at Kozhikode

ADDRESSING a rally at Kozhikode, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled the sacrifice of 18 jawans at Uri but refused to rush to precipitate action. Instead he said, India will do its best to isolate Pakistan globally and its state-sponsored terrorism. He however drew a line between the Pakistani establishment and the people of the country. It is a much wiser approach than attacking everything connected with Pakistan. The US has realised that its pro-Pakistan policy has run into serious obstacles. It is common knowledge that without billions of dollars in US aid pouring into Islamabad, the country will be on the rocks. It is folly to fund the country which has facilitated terror killing over 3600 soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan. New Delhi should stress the fact that there is no logic in pouring billions of dollars into Pakistan with the result that it loses more than it did on 9/11. What is more, if the Taliban win the war in Afghanistan, a repeat of 9/11 is not unlikely. It should be impressed upon the US that its aid to Pakistan should be replaced by sanctions by hitting out at the Pakistan army and the ISI.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already launched the diplomatic offensive at the G20 meeting. It is true that the powerful moves made by India may not achieve instant success. The recent Russia-Pakistan military joint action should logically undermine the traditional US-Pakistan ties. The cold war tensions between the US and Soviet Russia may be revived as a result of Pakistan getting close to Russia in the military area and be to India's advantage. It should be so even if the anti-Indian Donald Trump finally walks into the Oval room and starts his xenophobic jihad. Delhi and Kabul are Washington's real friends as should be conveyed by India to the US. And this alliance should extend to the EU, the UK, China and the Gulf countries. India itself can initiate sanctions by identifying an extensive list of enterprises doing business with the Pakistan military and its ISI and refusing to have anything to do with them. India should also try to exclude Pakistan from SAARC. Of course Pakistan may retaliate with terror attacks but India can take it.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

PM's Package deal for Punjab

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi today announced in the Lok Sabha a bold package, including the decision to release the remaining Jodhpur detenus, to set in motion the process of a political solution to the Punjab problem.

Mr. Gandhi, who was replying to the replying to the marathon debate on the motion of thanks to President for his address, said the cabinet committee on Punjab would soon start a dialogue with the opposition parties.

The other steps in the package include withdrawal of the draconian amendment to the National Security Act. Restrictive application of Disturbed Areas Act and removal of restrictions on foreigners to visit Punjab.

Mr. Gandhi's announcements drew enthusiastic applause from the house, which later adopted the motion by a voice vote after rejecting all opposition amendments.

Dwelling on Punjab at length in his 75 minute reply, Mr. Gandhi paid handsome encomiums to the people of Punjab and the two Communist parties for supporting the government in the fight against terrorists and successfully delinking them from religious places.

"Terrorists are no longer a political force in Punjab, They are only a terrorists force and the government will not relent in fight to end terrorism Mr Gandhi said amid cheers.

As regards the Jodhpur detenus, he said the authorities would process the charges and prosecute those against whom there were specific criminal

charges.

The Prime Minister clarified to the opposition members that he did not mean to make any charges against them when he said that the government did not get the cooperation in the expected measures from some of the opposition parties in the fight against terrorism in Punjab.

"When I say oppositions leaders, they include those who are not members of Parliament", he said. The Prime Minister wanted to know from Prof. Dandavate what action his party would take against Mr Ram Jethmalani for commending the Bharat Mukti Morcha.

Referring to the repeated opposition charge that "nothing" had been done to bring to book those involved in the Delhi riots of 1984, Mr Gandhi admitted that the process of law and justice as slow in India but he assured them that the "mill is grinding in the right direction".

He said over two thousand persons had been chargesheeted and a few cases already disposed of resulted in the conviction of about 80 persons.

There is no question of soft pedaling of those involved in the Delhi riots". Mr Gandhi reassured the house amid cheers.

Mr Gandhi said the bill on Panchayat Raj (Devolution of Power) would be "hopefully" introduced in the current session or definitely in the next session. He made it clear to the opposition members that proposed bill would not in any way affect the centre-state relations.

Hostage to Tradition

The other day a friend who considers himself and who is socially recognised as a champion of tradition dropped by. We got talking and eventually ended up arguing as to "what exactly is tradition, its role and how does one define it?". Google defines it as "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way". With a gesture of contemptuous disdain, my companion pressed on with his argument that its exactly what the people of Meghalaya have neglected. "We have ignored our past, bartered away our tradition" he said. He vehemently expressed his apprehension that if we don't wake up, if the trend to ape others continues unabated, we would soon lose all aspects of our indigenous character. "Then what will become of our children?" he asked, "They will be condemned to be hewers of wood and drawers of water?" he asserted with all the gloomy authority at his command.

Now these are the sort of arguments and groundless apprehensions one finds difficult to accept or be reconciled to. They are illogical and absurd in what they state yet sound so patriotic and farsighted to the gullible and the unwary. Actually its the other way round. Had the Hynniewtrep and Achik people refused to go along with the changes of time and history; had they remained blindly loyal and steadfast to obsolete practices and habits of yore, today most of us would be exactly what my friend that day had prophesised - simply hewers of wood and drawers of water, menials in the domestic service of others! Fortunately we allowed change to overtake certain outmoded aspects of our tradition. Our forefathers dragged a plough across their paddy fields. Today, in business or in service we are more comfortable dragging a computer mouse. Many of us have accepted a different faith yet we still remain staunch Khasis and Garos. My forefathers walked half naked. I'm fine with jeans, a jacket or a suit and tie. My ancestors walked to wherever they wanted to go, they had no other option. Nowdays we either drive or fly. Its easier and faster. This in no way implies that the tradition and culture of the Khasis and Garos have been

By Toki Blah

abused or discarded. It simply shows the need to adapt with time. Outdated practices must give way to modernity. Its either that or perish!

The most worrisome question before indigenous people is the status we allocate to tradition - where do we place it? Is it something that simply cannot change? Is tradition rigid and inflexible? If this view is taken then change will always be seen as a threat to tradition; a menace and a challenge to our indigenous beliefs, practices and identity. The fear of upsetting tradition will always prevent us from moving forward. Sadly its what we have been doing for the last 30 years. In reality, whether we like it or not, change is always happening. Paradoxically only change remains constant everything else changes. Even life has to yield to change. Only inanimate objects like stones are impervious to change. So by this logic, we in Meghalaya, ably aided by so called leaders, have consistently been identifying tradition with something lifeless that should remain insensitive to change! Its most worrisome to note how visionless and puny minds; ignorant minds driven more by opportunistic self interest and vote bank politics rather than any vision of leadership, have time and again dragged back our people from embracing change that could have established a better life for us all. Upholders of unreasonable tradition is limited to a few vested interests, but these few, in the name of tradition have caused irreparable harm to the development of the state and its people. The worst victim of such stupidity has been our system of traditional governance (ka synshar khaddar tynrai). It has been suppressed and forestalled from making itself relevant and pertinent to the demands and needs of our times to an extent that it might now, unless checked, even pose a danger to ourselves.

Let us take the governance and management of lewduh as an example. Lewduh is a traditional market. In fact one of the largest traditional markets in Asia. It is managed and administered by the Dorbar of the Syiem of Myllem which in turn is traditionally composed of elders from some elitist clans of the Hima. Today a question needs to be

answered - whose interest does Lewduh serve. The interest of the Dorbar Hima or the interest of u khun u hajar (the common citizen)? Lewduh is one of the direst and filthiest places in Meghalaya, yet continues to serve as the main market from where all of us derive our food, meat, vegetables, fish and other consumables. Hygiene and cleanliness are nowhere to be found and when it rains the slush is worse than a paddy field. Pickpockets and petty thieves have a free run of the place and by dusk the whole market shuts down because by then it becomes the most dangerous place in town. Meanwhile 21st century non traditional markets in Laban, Rynjah, Umpling and Jail Road do a roaring business till late in the evening. Security in this traditional public place is something the Syiem and his dorbar have failed to provide. Its a bloody disgrace!

Its a crying shame and we put up with it simply because, we think it is improper to question tradition. What poppycock! Control of lewduh serves the interest of the Syiem and a few of his mytris. In return however the service provided to u 'khun u hajar' who depend on lewduh for their everyday needs falls way below expectations. Lewduh is basically a woman's market, manned by women and frequented mostly by women commuters. The place however remains one of the most gender unfriendly, hostile and dangerous spots on planet Earth. Its overcrowded, unhygienic, lacking sanitation and public amenities, lacks complete security where women are pushed, pinched, robbed, pawed at and molested everyday. The Syiem and his all male Dorbar will continue to remain indifferent and uncaring to such issues. Talk to women; ask them; empathise with them and the horrible truth will come pouring out. A gender related study on this aspect by an authority such as the State Commission for Women would reveal the atrocious scandal people are forced to bear in lewduh, all in the name of Tradition. Here is where tradition needs to be questioned. If tradition is unwilling or unable to keep up with the times; if its profile continues to be anti people, antidevelopment , anti progress; if it is unable to orient itself towards better public service then is it still relevant to the needs of the

times? The time to speak out has come and educated women together with women organisations of Meghalaya, who realise the discrimination they face in the name of tradition, need to speak out.

As we speak of tradition one cannot overlook the fact that tradition is being overwhelmed by eroding aspects of modern life. Of alarm is the fact that governance in our durbar system has deteriorated more towards attainment of political power and pecuniary assets than genuine service to the people. One hastens to add that not every dorbar and its office bearers have yielded to this temptation but the downward slide appear universal and unstoppable. There are emerging horror stories from certain durbars in the suburbs of Shillong that the traditional office of the Rangbah Shnong and the Semg Samla Shnong are being used for extortion and to forcefully extract money from contractors involved in construction work within the jurisdiction of such dorbar. Contractors are forced to purchase material, sand, rods, boulders, chips and cement only from agents approved of by the dorbar authorities. Those who refuse to comply are harassed and bullied. Is this a legal activity for any dorbar? The traditional service profile of the dorbar system has been overtaken by muscle and greed of the mafia. If not curbed immediately, it might not be long before such durbars become active participants in more serious criminal activities such as the lucrative supply of drugs etc. After all if money starts dictating the role of tradition, it can lead anywhere.

Its frighteningly possible yet people are afraid to speak out since it is carried out in the name of tradition. In contrast a simple suggestion to empower women in dorbar affairs and to empower the dorbar system with direct elections is sure to cause a general uproar. Ladies and gentlemen, let us admit a home truth that can no longer be hidden. We are a gullible society and in the name of tradition, been barred and hampered from taking positive decisions aimed at improving our welfare and wellbeing. For how much longer will we allow ourselves to be held hostage by Tradition?

Symbolism and Myth

By Ananya Guha

We are a nation of symbols. Symbolism works in every aspect of our nation. But the symbolism is external; internally there are contradictions. What do I mean, you may ask? Well, on the face of it there are secessionist proclivities in many parts of the country. But you probe within there is impassioned talk of being Indian, fighting for the cause of a nation, national identity and being Indian. That is fine. But the outward and the inward manifestations contradict. They contradict in such a manner that the problem becomes overtly political and stereotypically social. Take the example of Azadi in Kashmir. It means, as everyone knows freedom. But does that mean independence? Does that mean merger with another nation? Those who uphold such convictions must also understand that a particular state has perhaps felt manacled over years. And the political situation of it since independence countenances a social and political turmoil. So, perhaps it is freedom from that unrest, freedom from always seeing men in uniforms, freedom from having been told that its people are lackeys of another country, an out an

under-currents of ethnocentricity this ultimate symbol of the country's constitutional aspirations is turning towards a myth. I am trying to say these as objective realisations of what is happening around us in the past and not as the spokesperson of any group. Group feelings and cliques, manifestations of which are everywhere must be abhorred. But we must place the country above everything and the self. Its historical imagination has captivated people the world over. Its massive Constitution enunciating democracy has attracted international acclaim and critical thought. But overriding all considerations are those of inequality, poverty, lack of education, health care and slums. If we are fighting with one another as our predilections show historically, we are sounding the death knell of a historical edifice built over the years, with painstaking labour and with the emergence of eclectic thought such as Sufi thought. It is exactly this emancipation which forces are out to destroy, as this is a witness to the large underpinnings of a country,

The very country they brought under a semblance of geographical and political unity, was the country that rose into uprising, even since the nineteenth century in one form or the other, and gave it final nationalist urges, which resulted in independence from a foreign rule. Paradoxes still remain. The use of English for one and the creative flowering of Indian English, which the past imperialists now use for design, perpetuation of a myth, at least dominate them culturally so that they will be thrown into a pacific abyss, and still continue to laud us and our literature.

out enemy of ours?

Azadi in the country itself has now become a symbol. Not only in Kashmir. But it is the kind of freedom the people need from poverty, shackles of bonded labour, deprivation of the most needed things, education, heath; in fact survival. Azadi from the onslaught of floods, bad crops, suicide of farmers, within which community there two types - the moneyed farmer , and the crop farmer eking out sustenance and day to day survival. They want freedom, the latter and when they do not have it they commit suicide.

Azadi has shades of connotation in a country with disparities in the social and economic fronts. It is a symbol of desires, freedom from the shackles of bondage and destitution. So if there is a cry for azadi in one part of the country, in another, manifestations may be different. What about Nandigram and Singur some years back? Was that not symbolic of a class of people who wanted to be free and live free on mother earth? Or the tussle for land in Assam?

The nation works through a pattern of symbols, a symbolism representing trauma, freedom of expression and dissent. Students too want it. They feel that they have a right to self determination, not to carve out an independent nation, but to read and act upon the charisma of others, of whom they have read or want to read.

In school we read about a mystique surrounding the country and its ethos, "Unity In Diversity". Now with religious fundamentalism and still

and a reproof to insular minds.

The large repository of culture and the climax of the freedom movement shaped its own historical processes, which the British with their acumen for imperialism instinctively realised. But history weaves its own destiny, with its own inner logic of reprobate. The very country they brought under a semblance of geographical and political unity, was the country that rose into uprising, even since the nineteenth century in one form or the other, and gave it final nationalist urges, which resulted in independence from a foreign rule. Paradoxes still remain. The use of English for one and the creative flowering of Indian English, which the past imperialists now use for design, perpetuation of a myth, at least dominate them culturally so that they will be thrown into a pacific abyss, and still continue to laud us and our literature. Such paradoxes, and there are many others entangle the country in sharp and infirm wedges of ethnicity and fundamentalism.

On the one hand is talk of amorphous and distorted nationalism, on the other of ethnic rights. Fundamental approaches to the polity and sociology of the country, differ throwing all this into polemical hub and crisis.

If we are to maintain stoically the grandiose unity of the country, we must come out of our fetters, and our immediate gains, political, social or religious. The symbol of the country must blend both inward and outward without the inherent contradictions, so apparent and obvious.

“Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with.”
--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 43 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

Crime is business as usual
IN Meghalaya, crimes against women have skyrocketed. The latest is that of a young girl whose body was seen floating in a stream in Mawlai. Before that the bodies of two young women were fished out from Umiam Lake. It will take some time before the Police can zero in on the killers, in each case. Since conviction rates in Meghalaya are abysmally low, criminals have a field day and repeat their crimes with impunity. It is not known why the investigators fail to file a fool-proof charge sheet. Is it a lackadaisical approach to investigation which is supposed to be a specialized process? The fact that police are never held accountable for failing to improve conviction rates is one reason why they don't care about outcomes. In the last five years Meghalaya Police statistics show 20,145 cognizable crime cases reported of which only 1,576 cases reached conviction which is approximately 8%.

This low conviction rates have puzzled legal counsels. They point out that the filing of a charge-sheet means the police have thoroughly investigated a crime; it also signifies that law-enforcers have a prima facie case, with strong evidence, to establish that the accused person committed the offence. So why does a police case fall apart when the trial starts in court? Why are the defence lawyers able to punch holes in police contentions, eventually securing freedom for their clients? Perhaps the absence of a Directorate of Prosecution which frees up policemen to concentrate on crime investigation is one reason. Once the Directorate of Prosecution is in place it would be prudent to appoint policemen with a law background in this institution apart from also deputing some of the bright, young officers to get a law degree. Hopefully that would reduce the bungling. It is expected that police should file the charge-sheet as far as possible within the stipulated time limit of 90 days. Equally importantly, they should ensure that the evidence, gathered scientifically, is incontestable because when cases are not solved over a prolonged period the police can close them by filing 'A' summary reports. But the cops forget that what is just another case for them could be a matter of life and death for a rape survivor whose trauma is exacerbated. But more troubling is the fact that the rapist who walks free can repeat his crime several times over. The Meghalaya Police can no longer take their crime investigation job with a 'business as usual' attitude!

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

City's cobalt therapy unit in a Moribund State

The cobalt therapy unit of the Shillong Civil Hospital has remained non functional even after three months of its inauguration by the Chief Minister. The project which languished in a dormant state for over a decade, is the State's only cancer treatment unit. According to informed sources, the Cobalt therapy unit has been going without a radio Therapist who is supposed to marshal the entire treatment course of the cancer patients. A senior doctor commented it is like a ship without a captain. The Govt has launched the unit with a lot of fanfare but is all hollow. After the publicity it received, cancer patients have been regularly trickling into the Civil Hospital for treatment. They have been coming from the Govt Hospitals as well as from private practitioners. Cancer patients with solvency lose no time to rush to the metropolis. It is the poorer section who come hoping for free treatment are the worst sufferers. Sources said that a few years ago the State Govt had appointed Dr G G Ahmed a Guwahati-based Radio Therapist, on a part time basis. It is not known whether the contract still

holds good or not. In any case Dr. Ahmed has not been visiting the civil Hospital for quite sometime now. The Civil Hospital appears to the hamstrung because of lack of Medical Specialist for the last five years. In fact, the whole capitol, town has just one Govt Medical Specialist posted at Ganeshdas Hospital which is not a general hospital. Besides, the Civil Hospital has been going without unit incharge of Surgical Unit I since Dr S P Bhattacharjee left on promotion as DHS last year. It is generally felt that the Govt should fill up these posts without any loss of time. **Budget sans policy: Palkhivala** Noted economist and taxation expert Nani Palkhivala today dubbed the last budget of the present government as purely an exercise in political symbolism. Addressing a public gathering under the auspices of the Forum of Free Enterprise here, Mr Palkhivala said the budget took the form of election rhetoric and party manoeuvre.

“Nudging” the NITI Aayog- the Behavioural Economics way

Behavioural economics is the field of economics that tries to interpret economics and market based on psychological, social, cognitive and emotional factors that influence decision making of an individual. Behavioural models typically encompass psychology, neuroscience and microeconomic theory to cover a wide array for concepts, theories and pattern. In the last few decades, behavioural economics has began to make an increased impact in how nations frame their social and economic policies.

In essence, Behavioural Economics deals with economic / market decisions that are made and the mechanisms that go behind making such decisions. United Kingdom has a fully dedicated Behavioural Insight Team (BIT) which functions as a social purpose company. The BIT team is attached to the Cabinet and looks into economics and psychology together impacting policy decisions. The recent BIT report offers fascinating insights into how interventions have helped policymaking at different levels. For example, students who were issued alerts on their academic performance before exams, improved their pass percentages by 12 per cent. There was visible impact of letters sent to those individuals who had history of tax arrears and defaults. Positive encouragement towards tax payment in letters also yielded positive results. In Manchester, the use of social norms to instil a sense of civic duty resulted in increased payments by 11 per cent. Changes to social care statement letters in Surrey increased payments amongst those who had just started receiving adult social care by 32 per cent. While Britain is the first example of a completely independent nudge unit being set up to serve governance, governments around the world have acted on the paradigm of behavioural economics from time to time. US President recently signed an executive order encompassing nudge

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

units into policymaking matters. Australia has set up a nudge unit called the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA). The Ministry of Manpower in Singapore is sending "pink letters" instead of white ones, to those employing foreign domestic workers who default in paying levies. The power bills in Singapore come with the users power usage printed at the back. It makes them mindful of their wastage and not the bills alone. The "Clean Love to Copenhagen" campaign put green footprints leading to rubbish bins on the streets. It helped in reducing litter by 46% as residents followed a nudge that spotlighted good social behaviour. In France, teachers in French schools use different names for technical drawing after a study found that boys do better if the subject is called "geometry" while girls do equally well or better if it is called "drawing". Increasingly around the world, Behavioural Economics is being used as a policy tool.

In 2015, the World Bank drew up a study which discussed the need for nudging government policies and how psychology and behaviour factors into decision making. It elucidated the fact that people make some decisions automatically, they think socially and derive from mental models around them. Thus it can be safely concluded that social and cultural paradigms matter in decision making. For too long, governments around the world have warped theories market or social theories. Less attention has been paid to failure of certain policies on account of behavioural models. Thus it is no surprise that India too made foray into setting up a "nudging unit". The government think tank Niti Aayog has tied up with the Melinda and Bill Gates foundation to set up a nudge unit that will encourage behavioural changes and work towards policy correction, for those campaigns and schemes which have a strong social connotation. The government of India has

started a number of major social campaigns including Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, giving up LPG subsidy, among many others . While the schemes have performed reasonably well, to sustain that momentum, a push is needed. This push can be in form of a behavioural nudge which will make the policy better. For example, the Swachh Bharat targets open defecation free society as one of its goals. Towards this a large number of toilets are being built. Yet open defecation is not a question of inadequate toilets alone. It also has a mentality element to it. For example, what motivates a person to use a toilet for defecation? Or should the proper question be what demotivates a person from using a toilet. The answer to the second is easier to arrive at- social pressure. Thus the real question is how the action of the rural community would impact the decision making of an individual. This would seem to be the bedrock of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. And it is in these crucial matters that the question of "Nudge Units" would come into play.

In India too, there have been successful models of nudging the public into action albeit in a smaller manner. The Delhi Metro, through the yellow lines, often seeks to act as a nudge, dissuading people from crossing the line which could result in death. Hence because of that warning although a phenomenal number of passengers ride in the Delhi Metro every year, the number of accidents remains small. This is akin to the Copenhagen experiment when residents were guided to dustbins via green arrows. ThinkScream, a Mumbai based company, has proposed Wi-Fi garbage bins as an incentive (Free Wifi) to encourage the habit of using dustbins, which can act as another potential nudge.

Yet one must be careful of the pitfalls while determining how much of the nudging factors to include in policymaking. For example, India is a vast

country with different languages, cultures and social norms and a nudging unit that caters to one particular community system may not produce desired effects in others. While comparing nudging experiments with other countries, one must remember that India is essentially a heterogeneous country and any direct comparison with countries that are more homogenous in nature may be a fallacy. India does not have one language, religion or one cultural identity. Hence the question of evolving one particular appealing model is difficult. Secondly, another factor that has to be kept in mind is how much of nudging is required. What will be the parameters where behaviour of the society itself will determine the policies directed towards them? There is a view that some schemes may fall prey to the prejudicial views of the planners themselves. The third most important aspect relates to the pace at which India is growing and the myriad challenges that it faces today. Today India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world and yet, issues of inequality and economic disparity persist. Many of these issues require immediate long term growth. At such a juncture, the incorporation of a more long term based "nudge unit" may take time to bear results.

Nevertheless, as Justin Fox would tell us in his brilliant article "From Economics Man to Behavioural Economics," the use of "heuristics and biases research" (which form the bedrock of behavioural economics) might not tell us the right decision to make, but would definitely warn us of the wrong steps. Thus, despite the obvious challenges, the introduction of a Nudge Unit within the NITI AAYOG is a welcome step that would herald a new era in policy and decision making.

(The author looks at policy issues. He has a special interest in North East India, the ethnic contentions and the multifarious dimensions).

Talaq, Talaq, Talaq

What about equality?

By Poonam I Kaushish

Little did thirty-five year old Shayara Bano realize she would create waves, big waves. Shayara who? In the sleepy town of Uttarakhand's Kashipur her worst fears came true when her husband of fifteen years sent her the talaq-nama from Allahabad. She decided to move the Supreme Court seeking a ban on instantaneous triple talaq (talaq-e-bidat), polygamy and halala (a practice where divorced women, in case they want to go back to their husbands, have to consummate a second marriage). Shayara Bano became the first Muslim woman to challenge a personal law practice, citing her fundamental rights

In 2007 Dilshad Pathan too had moved the Bombay High Court challenging the arbitrary pronouncement of the word "talaq" by asserting that this wasn't a sufficient condition for divorce. The Court held that clear reasons for the divorce must be provided. Moreover, arbitrators must be appointed to initiate attempts at reconciliation.

Earlier in 2002 in the Shamira Ara case the Supreme Court had taken measures to reduce the arbitrary nature of the Triple Talaq provision in Muslim Law and to regulate it, thereby somewhat strengthening the position of a Muslim wife.

In 2005, 28-year-old Imrana a mother of five children, is raped by her father-in-law in Muzzaffarnagar. She files a complaint with the Islamic panchayat seeking justice. Instead, the panchayat dissolves her marriage to her husband. Further, the Darul-uloom of Deoband endorses this and issues a fatwa denying her marital rights. As under the Shariat Law, she is now symbolically her husband's 'mother.' A shattered Imrana and her husband meekly state that they will abide by the Deoband fatwa. Even though the father-in-law is arrested but what about the poor rape victim?

Remember 62-year-old Shah Bano from Indore, a mother of five who was divorced by her husband in 1978. She filed a criminal suit in the Supreme Court in 1985. A five-member Constitution Bench overruled the Muslim Personal Law and allowed her maintenance from her husband.

Predictably, the Muslim clergy opposed the judgment. The then Congress Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi decided to curry favour with the Muslims and got Parliament to pass a new legislation, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act. This reinforced denial by the Muslim Personal Law of any maintenance to divorced women. True, neither Shayara, Dilshad, Shamira, Imrana or Shah Bano talked of the contentious Uniform Civil Code, nor asked for codification of the Muslim Personal Law. All they sought is equality before law and protection against discrimination on the basis of their gender and religion, thereby raising many questions: Can a fatwa overturn the sanctity of marriage? Does the fatwa not tantamount to violation of human rights? Does a woman have equal rights in a democracy? Can they be discriminated on the basis of religion? Can a woman be victimized for no fault of hers? Should she be denied her marital rights? What about her feelings?

Is there no appeal against a husband's monstrous and arbitrary order? Can the clergy trample on individual rights? Importantly does the Muslim Personal Law take precedence over the law of the land? Does Islamic Law oppose the idea of equality enshrined in the Constitution? Are triple talaq and nikah halala not Islamic? Should the State discriminate by religion?

The NDA Government stand is clear. It is opposed to the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board plea that divorce by triple talaq is derived from the Quran and sanctified by the Sharia law. Instead the practice is a

violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution in secular India. As it stands, regulating matrimonial laws is acknowledged in Islamic countries and not considered contrary to the Sharia. In fact, many Islamic countries have codified and reformed the Muslim Personal Law to check its abuse. Polygamy has been banned in 22 Islamic countries, including Syria, Iran, Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Echoing the Centre's view is the Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMMA) which states that both triple talaq and nikah halala are unIslamic, and antithetical to Islam itself. To underscore this it cites the example of the Prophet's wife who was a widowed businesswoman, fifteen years older to him while his youngest wife Ayesha led a contingent to battle; proof of Islam being inherently equalising.

Moreover, practices from 'jahiliya', the so-called age of ignorance before Islam, like the purdah, chador etc have left their mark on regional practices and now being confused with Islamic practice as it stands.

Pertinently, liberal Muslim clerics hoot for gender equality, citing Islamic feminism as modern. Consequently, many Indian Muslim women today interrogate 'the spirit of Islam', and their place in it. According to a recent national survey 88% of Muslim women want a stop to patriarchal legal practices such as triple talaq and polygamy. They want the State to explicitly oversee traditional Islamic courts, while 95% hadn't even heard of the Muslim Personal Law Board.

What next? All eyes are affixed on the Apex Court. Will it lead by example and unshackle the 21st century Muslim woman trapped in archaic medieval Personal Laws? Will it again suggest implementation of the Common Civil Code? And emphasise Babasaheb Ambedkar's advocacy of an optional common civil code?

Remember, during the Constituent Assembly debate on Article 35 (now 44) on November 3, 1948, Babasaheb had argued that according to him there was no connection between religious and personal law in a civilized society. Appropriately he made two observations: One, the Muslim Personal Law is not immutable and uniform throughout India, contrary to what had been stated in amendments (moved by Muslim members), reminding all that up to 1935 the North West Frontier Province was not subject to the Shariat Law instead it followed the Hindu Law in succession and other matters. So much so that it was only in 1939 that the Central Legislature abrogated the application of Hindu Law to the Muslims of the North West Frontier Province and applied the Shariat Law to them. In North Malabar, the Marumakkathayam Law, a matriarchal form of law and not a patriarchal form of law is applicable.

It is time our Muslim brethren remembered that there is no mysticism in the secular character of the State. The State is neither anti-God nor pro-God. It does not differentiate by sex. It is expected to treat all religions and people --- men and women alike, be it the devout, agnostic and the atheist. It only ensures that no one is discriminated against on the grounds of religion. Ultimately, no one should be allowed to decide, dictate or ruin another individual's life. From successfully granting Shah Bano her alimony in 1985 to allowing an unwed Christian mother to be her child's sole guardian, without the approval of the absentee father in 2003 to now deciding whether to heed Shayara Bano's pleas all eyes are fixed on the Court. Will it break new grounds and unshackle minority women? ---- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Misreading of Soso Tham's verses!

Editor,
I was reading Bah Toki Blah's article in your esteemed paper (ST Sep 27, 2016) titled " Hostage To Traditions", and a train of thought occurred to me, not directly related to the article, which I have jotted down as follows:
Everyone who wishes or thinks he/ she is speaking for the "jaitybnriew" would, ad infinitum quote our poet - laureate, late U SosoTham's lines from one of his compositions -- where he lamented that locals would become 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' for someone else. I have always felt bemused by the quotes. The venerable U Soso Tham must have penned these lines in the forties, at the height of his creative work. It was a time when everyone in the city of Shillong was using firewood for all cooking purposes. Now, non-Khasis were not expected to go to the forest to fetch wood. It is the locals who fetch the wood and sell it to non- locals. So in a sense, they were hewers of wood.
Coming to fetching water, in those days, most of the clerical and officer cadres in government offices were non- locals,

with very few locals amongst them. On the other hand, most of the peons were locals, and they were the ones who have to fetch water/ tea etc for the "babus". The tea sellers were also locals. So, there too, they were drawers of water. Perhaps the poet-laureate was warning in a poetic way, that the locals should not remain complacent and be satisfied with these menial jobs, but to have ambitions to become educated and rise socially and professionally.
Compared to those days of yore, I think we would agree that today, it is the locals who dominate the "babu" scene in all govt. offices, though most grade IV staff are also locals , and they still do those menial jobs for their bosses, mostly their own flesh and blood. But their children would not end up likewise if their parents educate them properly and they don't drop out of school. The earlier generation has done that to their children. So there is no fear there. Perhaps we still lack people in the upper echelons of bureaucracy, and our youth should concentrate there instead of forever lamenting.
I would therefore venture out to say that U SosoTham's fear for the "jaitybnriew" becoming simply menial workers for others has now passed, except perhaps at the political level?!!
A comment also on Bah

Toki's observation that Iewduh is a women's market. I would say it used to be - a local women's market, hats off to our plucky womenfolk. However, a casual walk down any lane in Iewduh today, be it the vegetable stalls, the potato-onions shops, the egg sellers, the miscellaneous sellers, the book/stationery sellers, and now (sacrilege) even the tea sellers, how many shops can you count that are still with the women and the locals? It is only in the fish market, dry fish and chicken stalls that the invasion has consciously been halted. Anyone has a solution? KHADC? Syiem? Myntiris? Is anyone listening? Is there any hope of Iewduh being restored to its former glory? Personally I don't think so. It's a lost cause. Money, not the cause, nor hard work matters.

Yours etc.,
R Wallang,
Via email

A unique inaugural function!

Editor,
The inauguration of Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies, an initiative of Department of Philosophy at Lady Keane College (LKC) on Tuesday by Prof Mrinal Miri has several takeaways apart from the main ideals with which this centre is established. At the inaugural session, Prof. Miri, his wife

Sujata, a monk from the Santhigiri Ashram, New Delhi and the principal of LKC was present on the dais. Prof. Miri was asked to speak on the occasion and at the outset he greeted the monk, the principal and said "the other professor" when it came to his own wife, evoking peals of laughter among the audience. All expected the monk to deliver a lecture but he wasn't given a chance and had to leave the stage after both the Miris spoke. All in the audience wondered why the monk was actually called for. Another special invitee was Prof. GK Sasidharan, former VC, Calicut University, Kerala who was reluctant to accept the felicitation shawl from the college vice - principal because it was not less than an insult for not accommodating him at the inaugural session given the reputed national level scientist he is and one who is regarded by universities and institutions world over. Nonetheless, the good part of it is that there was no conflict due to the slipshod handling of protocol as far as dignitaries were concerned and peace prevailed unconditionally. Or else the first case of conflict would have emerged from this very inauguration for this centre to deal with.

Yours etc.,
PK Dwivedi,
Shillong-1

“An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven't been done before.”
--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 50SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

Sushma Swaraj speaks
INDIA'S external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj delivered a measured speech at the United Nations General Assembly. She said that Narendra Modi's government had started by being very accommodating to Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had been invited to New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had pressed for secretary-level dialogue on all issues. But then came a series of terrorist attacks on Kashmir which stymied the dialogue process. Violence in Kashmir mounted with infiltration across the LoC. Terrorism is sponsored by a number of nation-states. That is supposed to promote their national interest. But it undermines economic growth and goes against efforts to reduce poverty. India proposed the Comprehensive Convention of International Terrorism in 1996 but the Convention has been deadlocked since. Sushma Swaraj knows that it would be difficult to turn logic into diplomacy. Bangladesh and Afghanistan are perhaps on India's side. But other countries do not wish to antagonise Pakistan.

The US has lately been impatient with Pakistan's attitude, especially its military exercise with Russia. But it has been always vacillating in going against Islamabad. The UK looks upon Pakistan as a counter-terrorism ally. China is consistently pro Pakistan and anti India as was proved by its opposition to New Delhi's move to join the NSG. Swaraj emphasised India's commitment to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It has ratified the Paris treaty to subscribe to the shared aims of the global community. India will soon hopefully find a place in the UN Security Council. It will soon cease to be a regional power and acquire greater diplomatic maneuverability.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Centre to appoint Commissioner for Women’s Rights

A commissioner for rights of women will be appointed to ensure, among other things, timely action in cases of the atrocities against women. Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi announced in the Rajya Sabha today. Steps would also be taken to provide reservation for women on important institutions like the Planning Commission and the Union Public Service Commission. The state would also be advised to do so. He said efforts would also be made to give 30 percent reservation to women in local bodies. Mr. Gandhi listed various other measures for the uplift of women while intervening in a four day discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the motion of thanks on President's address to the joint session of Parliament.

Army P.R. Cell
The army is reported to be preparing to launch a major public relations offensive in the north eastern states, especially Manipur. The need for it arose when it is recalled, the national Press was agog with reports of the Oinam incidents of mid 1987. The reports were highly critical of the role of the force, particularly of the Assam Rifles, about 75% of whose officers and men are generally drawn from the Army. Why it has taken so much time to decide on a counter offensive and opening a public relations cell is a mystery, knowing as we do that the Army is known for its expedition as it should be. The local Human Rights groups meanwhile field a writ petition in Guwahati High Court, which makes the Army version rather difficult of presentation independent of the Court proceedings for fear of inviting contempt of

Prime Minister Modi's absence from the 17th Non-Aligned Summit (NAM) held recently in Venezuela gave rise to speculation regarding India's foreign policy, both from friends and foes of the NDA Government. Notably, it has triggered debates on NAM's relevance and even the future of this movement in the context of increasing globalization.

The Prime Minister missed the Summit, but India was very much present and represented by Vice-President Hamid Ansari. Perhaps, this was to establish Modi's contention that NAM is one of "India's Heritage" though not its "core principle". Questionably, should one respect, promote and use this heritage instrument to encounter the challenges of today? Or dump it in the backyard as a relic of the past to be remembered ceremonially without any attachment or great expectations?

Pertinently, in the 55 years since NAM's inception in 1961, tremendous changes have taken place in global politics and economics totally altering the basics of international relations. Given, bilateral, multilateral and global agreements are all presently governed by factors far different from those which were at work in the 1960s.

Remember, NAM emerged in the context of the bitter Cold War which divided the world into two antagonistic camps --- USA and its friends on one side and the Soviet Union and its associates on the other. Moreover, alignment of countries which were strongly driven by feelings of nationalism, anti-colonialism and economic under-development and which were disinclined to join either bloc in the bi-polar politics, gave rise to the Non-Alignment Movement on the initiative of Tito, Nasser, and Nehru. At the time of its creation, NAM had 25 members.

Of the three leading nations, Tito's Yugoslavia broke into six independent nations in the early 1990s. Nasser's Egypt has undergone internal upheavals culminating in the big Tahrir Square uprising in 2011. And

Further, many of NAM members today have several kinds of bilateral relations and have formed blocs for international cooperation and development in various spheres. Thus they cannot assume a pose as anti-Western, anti-imperialism or even anti-colonialism. But, they can stand against hegemony politics to some extent.

Surely, non-alignment in Cold War politics cannot be transformed into anti-US or anti-developed countries under the pretext of safeguarding the interests and independence of

Non-Aligned Movement

Heritage or core principle?

By S Saraswathi

Nehru's India is systematically and democratically redefining Peruvian politics and economics. NAM Summit meetings, except those held in 1979 and 2016 were attended by all Indian Prime Ministers. Primarily as it is the second biggest international organization after the UNO. Currently, it has 120 member States, 17 observer States and 10 observer organizations. A bulk of members are from Africa, totaling 53.

India's Modi was not alone as several other top leaders also skipped the Summit this year and sent their representatives instead. Bangladesh, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were not represented by their Prime Ministers.

Interestingly, China is not a NAM member but has been attending Summit meetings as observer since the 1980s. Indeed, being present in international forums wherever possible is a strategy in foreign policy adopted by many upcoming countries keen on playing a role in international politics to make their presence felt and their voice heard.

Undoubtedly, the relevance of NAM post the Cold War is a big question. However, the over-all thinking seems to be in favour of redefining its role, which is to assert the independence of individual countries against Western imperialism of any kind.

Consequently, it has led to enlarging the scope of non-alignment from international politics to various other non-political global issues. Given that politics today is inextricably intertwined with non-political affairs. There is no pure politics in International dealings.

The Summit also condemned the practice of issuing unilateral sanctions, expressed alarm at climate change and urged developed countries to fulfill their commitments even as it welcomed a high-level meeting to discuss the refugees and migrants problem.

Also, the situation in the Middle East and terrorism were considered as destabilizing factors requiring united action. While the Declaration was common, NAM countries themselves might have different approaches on these issues.

What's more, NAM

developing countries which constitute bulk of NAM membership.

Think. Indo-US relations is an important aspect of our foreign policy as also our interest in forging economic ties with South and South-Eastern nations. Brazil, China, Russia and South Africa are India's partners in different blocs to present a united front and safeguard their common interests.

As it stands, in today's world there are multiple poles competing for primacy while the USA remains undisputed on top. New power centres cultivate relationships with emerging nations in their struggle for removal of inequalities and imbalances in social and economic progress. Towards that end, the theme for this year's NAM Summit was chosen to defend the rights of nations for "Peace, Sovereignty, and Solidarity for Development". The task set was to review the international situation vis-à-vis these goals thus fitting NAM in the global march towards "development". Hence, the question of debating NAM's relevance is irrelevant.

Besides, the Summit Declaration touches a variety of objectives like revitalizing the movement, strengthening international peace, security, self-determination, human rights, international solidarity and fighting terrorism.

It stressed the importance of dialogue, democratization of economic governance, South-South cooperation, New World Information and Communication Order, education, science and technology for development and cooperation for fulfilling the goals of Sustainable Development.

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Also, the situation in the Middle East and terrorism were considered as destabilizing factors requiring united action. While the Declaration was common, NAM countries themselves might have different approaches on these issues.

What's more, NAM

declared that the UN peace keeping operation must adhere to the principles and purposes enshrined in its Charter. While voting for UN reforms it plumed for strengthening the UN General Assembly for which concerted pressure of many countries in every international platforms is required.

Certainly, continuing NAM membership cannot be an embarrassment to India though it has a number of separate agreements with several countries including USA and China. Globalization or global economic integration allows every country to have more freedom in its foreign relations without being understood as taking sides.

There is no concept as equal relationship with every country under NAM. Additionally, non-alignment is as much an economic strategy as political and helps a nation to frame its economic policy to promote national interests.

Critics are inclined to remark that India's foreign policy is slowly and definitely changing with more importance being given to regional organizations and bilateral agreements. ASEAN, BRICS, BIMSTEC and even EU appear to be more important to India than NAM.

So also are G 20 and East Asia Summit. India's Logistic Agreement with the USA is seen as a shift in its foreign policy involving a move away from non-alignment.

But, this is not so as NAM is also undergoing changes in its priorities and outlook. Its struggle is now entering a new phase with the object of establishing a more equitable international order in which politics (in the sense of regime changes, war and peace) is but one aspect of international relations.

Clearly, for India every international platform is important to gather strength and support for its fight against terrorism. And every international agreement which benefits the country in some way is worth pursuing. Participation by the Government is important and not who represents the country. --- INFA

(The writer is former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

and traditions from time to time, to make the tribe alive and kicking, and fit to challenge the new circumstances of life emerging from generation to generation. U Soso Tham was clear in his mind when he said, "Ngim iaid shuh tang ha ka jingshai u kshem kum kiba rim, hynei hakhmat ka Sngi" (we no are no longer led by a firebrand like our ancestors, but by the light of the sun). The light of the sun is modern knowledge and understanding which we have all availed today. I agree with Toki Blah that if our immediate ancestors had remained blindly loyal and steadfast to obsolete practices and habits of yore, today most of us would exactly be condemned to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for someone else.

Yours etc.,
Dr Fabian Lyngdoh,
Via email

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

Class & Caste Discrimination

Neglect of Dalits

Need to be Checked

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

The country is witnessing cries of alleged indifference to Dalits, tribals and those from the lower castes. Reportedly, nothing new as the lower classes and castes have always been at the receiving end. Some political analysts think this is a fall-out of neo liberalism which has manifested itself in protecting the interests of the rich and middle income sections. Alongside, the emphasis on the urban sector and stagnation of the rural area has aggravated the situation over the years.

Obviously, the widening inequality and discrimination of low castes cannot continue for long. This manifested in the late 60's when the Naxalites revolted violently against the social order. Though the problem is under control except in a few places, the latest Dalit upsurge poses a big challenge for the Government.

Recently, Prime Minister Modi while acknowledging that a few incidents had been "very shameful", underscored that divisive elements were politicizing issues relating to Dalits. Stating that discrimination among people was unacceptable Modi urged the need to "give due respect to our Dalit brothers and sisters". Add to this, a Dalit Mahasammelan organized by Gujarat's Una Atyachar Ladat Samity (UDALS) pledged to break free from century old practices of disposing off animal carcasses and took an oath not to clean underground drains by going down manholes. Highlighting oppression of Dalits and lower castes the meet decided to stand against this humiliation, even as it criticized the Prime Minister for neglecting the welfare of the community.

However, fearing the backlash a section of the BJP, led by Chairman of All India Confederation of SC/ST Organizations Udit Raj resolved to hold agitations across the country in an effort to curb violence and discrimination against Dalits. He hit out at those who talked about nationalism and protecting Hindu religion in the same breath while ill-treating lower castes and Dalits. Pertinently, Dalit mobilization has gained momentum post Hyderabad student Rohith Vemula's suicide which reflected the structural issues. Certainly, reservations has given birth to Dalit entrepreneurs and a middle class benefiting from Government jobs. But in spite of this or because of this, anti-Dalit attitudes, sometimes leading to violent protests are on the rise.

Notably, according to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) cases of anti-Dalit atrocities are notoriously under-reported, but despite this the number has jumped by 17.1 per cent in 2013 and was 19.4 per cent in 2014. Whereby, the word 'atrocities' needs to be fleshed out, else it will become another bureaucratic, abstract euphemism. Besides, Article 23 prohibits bonded labour and Article 15(2) stipulates that no citizen should be subject to restriction with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of entertainment, use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort on the grounds of caste.

In 1955, the Untouchability (Offences) Act reasserted that Dalits should not be prevented from entering any public place. Again in 1976 the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was passed. In 1989, why did a new, detailed law have to be made which listed instances of "offences and atrocities"?

Alas, in spite of these legal commitments, there has not been much difference to the social status of Dalits in society even after 69 years of Independence. Think. In many villages the nature of certain social equations has

not changed for centuries. Such villages continue to remain what. Ambedkar called "sinks of localism, dens of ignorance and narrow-mindedness".

Consequently, how else should one view several incidents wherein Dalits are being exploited, dis-allowed from being equal members of society and even their families are treated like pariahs where temple festivities are out of bounds for them.

Undoubtedly, these are not isolated incidents as discrimination against Dalits is widespread and ingrained in our psyche across India, particularly in rural areas. In some places it takes the form of violent oppression, in others it is disguised yet omnipresent.

True, in recent years the State has been responsive to harassment of Dalits, but recurring acts and persisting practices against the community makes one wonder whether State response and Constitutionalism alone are enough to overcome longstanding social injustice and prejudices in India's villages.

Importantly, the overall performance of successive Governments has been poor as little was done to emphasize on Dalit education and bringing them into the social mainstream. Shockingly, a mere 5-7 per cent of Dalits have been able to establish themselves, gain social standing and erase past stigmas. Given, the political establishment is weighed in favour of upper castes, they did not have the vision and lack initiative to alleviate Dalit sufferings.

Moreover, a large numbers of Dalits students in college and universities are first generation entrants like Rohith Vemula. This is significant given their difficult living conditions.

Scandalously, according to a recent survey, 21 per cent Dalit families live in houses with thatch or bamboo roofs compared with 15 per cent overall, 78 per cent in one or two rooms compared with 69 per cent overall, 35 per cent have drinking water source within the house compared with 47 per cent overall, 47 per cent have no electricity compared with 33 per cent overall and 66 per cent do not have toilets compared with 53 per cent overall.

Apart from this backwardness, lack of progressive social consciousness permeating society, Constitutionalism, State actions and political equations simply do not suffice. It would have helped if the political actors who accommodated Dalits in their Parties and governance structures, due to their sheer weight of numbers as a representative section, also believed in and worked as conduits for social transformation. In sum, there is an imperative need to give Dalits leadership roles in Parties so that they could bring issues before the Governments and aid the process of social and economic transformation.

Arguably, barring the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), leadership of major Parties suffers from a clear diversity deficit, with Dalits being severely under-represented in leadership across Parties. True, being made part of the political leadership -- one way of being among the elite -- will not by itself guarantee eradication of social prejudice, nevertheless it would be a step in the right direction. .

As Babasaheb Ambedkar observed: "The castes are anti-national because they bring separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality". --- INFA

“*Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear.*”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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India wins diplomatic point

INDIA'S persistent efforts following the Pakistani terror attack at Uri have achieved a major success. It has succeeded in isolating Pakistan from SAARC. It has not merely decided to opt out of the SAARC summit slated to be held in Islamabad it has also persuaded Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan to boycott the summit. That gives the lie to the notion in western countries that terror sponsored by the Pakistani establishment is triggered by religious differences. Bangladesh and Afghanistan are Muslim countries but they are also opposed to terrorism facilitated by the Pakistani civilian government, its army and the ISI. Their latest decision proves it. It appears that sub-groupings are more effective than SAARC itself in promoting mutual assistance to further economic growth. At SAARC, Pakistan always scuttles Indian initiatives, especially to develop trade and connectivity. It is to be hoped that the boycotting of Pakistan by some Asian countries will change Islamabad's militant attitude and make it refocus on its policies towards the region. It will also realise that its aid to cross-country terrorism on Kashmir will not serve any fruitful purpose.

India has also reason to be aggrieved about Pakistan's shilly-shallying on its commitment to grant MFN status to India sooner or later. Two decades have passed without negotiations bearing fruit. Indian moves to normalise trade and connectivity have not been reciprocated by Pakistan. Maybe, it is because Islamabad is afraid that such normalisation may lead to normalisation of political relations. The bilateral format of talks on Kashmir should not then run into such major hurdles. India should therefore represent to the WTO against Pakistan over the MFN issue.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Added vigilance in WB Border on issue of FP Cards

The authorities of the West Bengal districts adjacent to the Bangladesh border are exercising stricter vigilance in the issue of ration cards, according to informed sources. This follows the state government's observation that the problem of sustained infiltration from Bangladesh was getting compounded by the apparent case with which a large number of illegal immigrants seeking to settle permanently in the state's border districts were securing ration cards and eventually getting their names included in the electoral rolls. Sources say that the more judicious approach to the issue of ration cards has been persisted with despite initial protest. West Bengal feels that the continuous infiltration is not only a economic burden but a source of law and order problems as well say the sources, observing that communal relations were almost always polluted by foreigners. According to the sources however, the Left parties are divided on the issue of "Infiltration". While a section of the Left sees "petrodollar mischief" behind the infiltration, another section feels that the worsening economic situation in Bangladesh has forced the cross border exodus. At the same time, all the sections are convinced that the situation my get out of hand if administrative measures are not taken in due course.

TRUGP alleges conspiracy to dissolve District Council

Tripura Rajya Upojati Ganamukti Parishad, a frontal organization of of CPI (M) has expressed concern over the alleged “conspiracy” of the ruling Congress (I) TUJS alliance to “dissolve” the

elected autonomous District Council for the tribal areas. After a three day meeting of the Parishad's central council a spokesman told newsmen here yesterday that the threatened agitation of the ruling partners including the Tripura upajati Yuva Samity was nothing but a “stabbing in the back” of the tribals interests. He appealed to all tribals not to join in such “suicidal movement”. He alleged that the autonomy of the ADC was threatened, the reservation quota for the tribals ignored and the government was not filling up the vacancies of about eight hundred teachers for the tribal language- Kok Barak. The spokesman alleged that “unauthorized allocation” for settlement of nontribal families in the ADC areas without the approval of the autonomous body was causing great concern. He claimed that nearly 50,000 non tribal families have recently been allowed to settle in the ADC areas which he feared, would “disturb the composite character of the ADC areas”. Answering a question he said nearly 60,000 tribals and about 200,000 non tribals live in the ADC areas. The Parishad wanted that the ADC should be consulted before allotting rights to others for settlement in the contiguous tribal areas. He also expressed grave concern over the steady influx of people through the international border. The spokesman alleged that the people in the rural areas were in the grip of serious crisis “with the stoppage of all anti poverty schemes”. He claimed that five people had died of starvation in the state and several families from the remove areas had migrated to Assam.

Time for Meghalaya to find its niche

By Patricia Mukhim

Of the host of tourists who visit Meghalaya and who one has occasion to meet some are very interesting, others are outright rude, noisy and uncultured while many go gaga about the states' picturesque beauty. Facebook posts are replete with pictures of Wah Umngot, Sohra, Mawlynnong, Nongriat and the new destinations that our tourism entrepreneurs have been able to identify, develop and sell to upmarket tourists. The BaMeiRi resort run by Robert Badaplak (Baluk) Blah near Mamgar, an awesome spot has been able to attract a good number of visitors and local tourists as well. So too the Café Cherrapunjee and Kharsati Park (Ri Bhoi) and many others whose owners have decided they want to leave anonymous and are sold by word of mouth. Almost all of these are booked to capacity through the year barring perhaps the winter months. One only wishes the approach roads to these resorts and eco-camps were not so back-breaking, particularly when travelling to places like Nongkhnum Falls beyond Nongstion. Then you have the Jaintia Hills region and the War Jaintia area with their verdant forests (in areas that are not yet captured by the mining lobby), rich flora and fauna amongst which is the Pitcher Plant. Then there's so much heritage and history in Jaintia Hills! Even Garo Hills, with the law and order problem, still has curious visitors to some of the most pristine nature spots which Facebookers regularly post. This region too has so much to offer and I am sure with better control over militant activities tourism will take off here too. Hence while our strengths lie in nature which comes to us free of cost the only investment that governments are supposed to make fall far short of our expectations and that of tourists who visit here. However, from what one has gathered so far, the tourists by and large carry back happy memories of the personal relationships built with the owners of these resorts and he local people they meet and that's the unique selling point (USP) of Meghalaya. That the owners themselves are

often present to entertain their guests was what made the Rock On 2 team feel so special and so much at home in Meghalaya.

Nature camps such as those hosted by CampFire Trails a venture by Aaron Laloo, Zorba Laloo and their team have been holding regular camps for groups of young people. Mountain biking and other endurance sports away from the city help the youth to discover their untapped energy and prod them to overcome their fears. Then there are the kayakers from the UK and elsewhere who spend several months here exploring the rivers of Meghalaya which they find fascinating. Meghalaya now is dotted with village and urban home-stays, eco parks and guest houses that are thriving and doing good business. This creates an entire value chain of food suppliers, a team of young tour guides, managers, house-keepers, transport operators, chefs and what have you. Nearly all of this operates outside of the government system. The least that government can do is to provide better roads and other supporting infrastructure. But government should on no account get into the business side of tourism because those in government have neither the imagination nor the drive to do a good job of what they are supposed to do. Most government ventures end up being outsourced to people who know the business. A good example is Jiva Restaurant at Nongpoh which used to be run by the Meghalaya Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). It had become decrepit two years ago and the place was going to seed. Now that the Bamboo Hut people have taken over they have transformed the entire place making it worthwhile to take a selfie in. What tourists admire the most at Jiva are the swish toilets which are spick and span and a pleasure to visit. Now government would never have the right human resource for such things would it? So government policy should change. They should stop building hotels big or small. One Crowborough in a lifetime is enough! You don't need to repeat failures. At the moment there's a buzz about the newly released Rock On 2 song

album amongst which is a Khasi song "Hoi-Kiw" put together by the SummerSalt team of Kitkupar Shangpliang and Pynsuklin Syiemiong which is the flavour of the season. The song is shared several hundred times over on Facebook. So there is scope for music from here to gain entry into Bollywood as well and we don't know what doors this will open up. While I agree that Bollywood is not the yardstick for Indian cinema it has a commercial side to it which we need to tap, for, at the end of the day music cannot just be food for the soul; musicians and songwriters who put in so much effort need to be justifiably remunerated. Another buzz doing the rounds is that of the movie Pink which features Andrea Tariang, a local youth who is also a singer, songwriter and guitarist. What makes it even better is that the co-producer of Pink is Shillong's own Ronnie Lahiri. It was delightful to read Ronnie's interview in a news web portal where he reminisces about his growing up years in Shillong. The idea for a movie like Pink could only have emerged from someone who grew up in Shillong, has moved to the metros and to movie making and who knows the travails that the average North Easterner, especially the young women face in Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Bangalore et al. Ronnie has paid generous tributes to Pradip Kurbah the national award winning film director whose films have always had a strong social message. What Ronnie is trying to say here is that despite the financial hurdles that regional movies face in that they never ever recover their investments, they continue to bravely venture into film making to give vent to their passion and creativity. Can the government not pitch in by way of assistance as it practiced in Assam, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu etc., where Government puts in 60% of the cost of making the movie depending on its annual budget. Film making too offers employment to several people, young and old. A policy is what is needed to drive government in the right direction. Unfortunately our elected representatives have never been seen to push the government to adopt a policy they have crafted on one or more areas of

development. The role of the Opposition party MLAs is not just to fault the government. They also have to work to think of futuristic policies where our youth can find their niche. Leilana Quinger from New Zealand who I met recently was surprised when I told her that the tribes in this region all sing and have mellifluous voices. Those who cannot sing are negligible. She said she had never sung because she did not have a voice. So yes we have a voice but have we been able to capitalize on that VOICE? Do we even have a recording studio that is affordable to the average singer who wants to make a song CD? Should that not have been Government's mandate? There are private recording studios but they cost money which someone with a good voice but no sponsorship will not be able to afford. Talking about sponsorship, we find several business houses here that pay only when extorted by sundry pressure groups and the powers that be but will not volitionally identify or promote talents whether they be sporting, singing, music, acting, film making and other aptitudes. We need to have a policy for those with commercial interests in Meghalaya that they have to declare their corporate social responsibility layout for a particular year and in what areas. This includes public sector undertakings and banks as well. Let all this be part of Government policy for anyone doing business here. Enough of paying bribes under the table and only to those with the power to intimidate! The footfalls of such bribe givers in the Secretariat is monumental. Let them start giving to genuine causes and declare that upfront! I am sorry to end this feel good article on a dour note. Meanwhile let the talents bloom and cheers to Ronnie, Andrea, Pradip, the Shillong Chamber Choir, the Serenity Choir and all those artists and painters and songwriters and music creators - Lou Majaw, Rudy Wallang, Tiprity Kharbangar, Ribor MB...who are bursting with creative energies! The list is not exhaustive. May you soar ahead and make history! Thank you all for the Music for Cinema for the Arts! And to the tour promoters, three cheers...

Time to focus on our strengths

By Gary Marbianang

The ongoing debate about our state's financial health is worth delving into. An important point was raised by the Chief Minister regarding the state's strong position in terms of debt-GSDP ratio. It just raised my curiosity a notch that I decided to dig a little deeper into the subject. And surprisingly our State is doing tremendously well on this front compared to other north-eastern states. According to RBI State Budget Study 2011-12, Meghalaya's debt-GSDP ratios stood at 29.1% in 2011-12 whereas states like Manipur and Mizoram debt-GSDP ratios for the same period is more than 60%. A high debt to GSDP ratio should raised serious alarm bells considering the fact that in the last global financial crisis major European countries collapsed under the weight of staggeringly high debt levels. Our dependence on grants from the Centre on the other hand is almost at the same level as other North-Eastern states except Assam.

At this critical juncture it is very important for us to focus on sectors where there is potential for growth. And it was very heartening to see a news report in your paper about the increased in exports of horticultural products owing to the bandh on coal mining. I would like to share here some family history stories to show that Agriculture could be a productive means of livelihood. My father's ancestors were one of the first Khasi farmers to practice farming on a commercial scale. They own large part of agricultural land in a village called Sandor where they would stay for almost nine months to cultivate the famous Khasi Mandarin Oranges and returned to their own village and stayed back for a period of barely three months. It was large scale commercial farming that enabled them to export this famous horticultural product as far as the shores of the Middle East. Naturally this afforded them a higher standard of living which also afforded them the high cost of higher education which is a rarity in those days. My paternal grandfather's younger brother was one of the first Khasis to study in Kolkata. Contrasting this with my mother's family background where the only kind of farming they knew is subsistence farming. This is still the method of farming practiced by majority of farmers in the state. If you're living in an urban setting this kind of farming would barely pay the rent these days. It just struck me that had my mother been raised in a more favourable environment she would have gone really far in life since she possesses a high I.Q for a woman whose only education was primary schooling up to Class 3 in a village where accessibility to good roads and other facilities is still lacking even today. My ancestors' farming

days was before India became independent. Then when we got our independence my paternal ancestors had to return home to their village. With the formation of a new country it opened up avenues of trade for the people living in the border areas. Trade was flourishing post independence and my paternal grandfather seized the opportunity with both hands. He had no formal education since his family had decided against educating him so that he could take care of the family business, so trade was the only way for him to earn a livelihood post independence. My father was actively engaged in the family business up to his mid twenties when the tumultuous years leading to the formation of Bangladesh makes border trade almost impossible. My grandfather initially was against my father joining government service since they were doing really well relying on trade. He spent his entire college days in Shillong studying and working at the same time. As it is, the end of border trade means a loss of livelihoods for many people living in the border areas. Trade was really flourishing in those days especially in those years when we first got our independence. My father would narrate stories about how their house in Mawsynram would overflow with the textile articles that they would purchase from Shillong and export to that newly created country. The theory of Absolute Advantage would be the best theory to show the gains to be made from trade. A simplistic explanation of this theory could be done with the help of two farmers in Nongpoh and Nongnah. Suppose the farmer in Nongpoh could produce 10 pineapples and 5 oranges and the farmer in Nongnah could produce 10 oranges and 5 pineapples. That means each farmer can produce a total amount of 15 quantity with the resources available to both of them. Their productivity increased by 5 each to 20 if they only cultivate the fruit they have an advantage in, in terms of productivity and cost of production. This is just a small example to show the beauty of focusing on where our strength lies rather than putting the spotlight on our weaknesses. I cannot help but mention this. I would like to end this write up by reminding our people young and old alike that flashing your English speaking skills in a taxi (like the two ladies I shared taxi space with on September 28) doesn't necessarily make our state more developed and neither does it make the rest of us who can't do the same, inferior to them. If your English language skills can land you a high end job in a Fortune 500 company then that is something we can all be proud of.

happen, is the surest way of promoting the spread of this social evil. In close knit societies like ours, drug usage in any form, using or pushing, cannot be a secret for long and it's only a question of time before it comes to the notice of the local dorbar. Swift and immediate Dorbar intervention with the full support of the local people can go a long way in keeping our shnongs drug free. Other Rangbah Shnongs especially those from the Dorbar Ki Shipweh Shnong of Jaiaw and Mawprem areas are also deeply concerned about the rapid manifestation of the drug menace in their respective shnongs. High

time that coordination amongst these concerned durbars begins. Involvement of the Seng Samla and the Seng kynthei is crucial in stemming this menace. It is a blessing in coincidence that the DGP Meghalaya had also recently given a call for greater interaction and coordination between the local traditional bodies and the police. This opportunity should not be missed. Working together with the Government than against it, is sure to bring in desired results. We have to work together to fight the menace of drugs.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah,
Via email

TO THE EDITOR

Is this justice?

Editor, The judicial system seems to be making a mockery of life and people when crime and punishment do not seem balanced. Reading the news item in your daily "Man gets 10-yr RI for raping minor in 2011," I was left with a lot of pain and grief as the sentence awarded to the rapist was just as small as his name, Small Phawa. In comparison to the physical and mental trauma that the 10 year old went through at that time which is unimaginable, the punishment awarded is not commensurate to the crime. To top she will have to live with this scar for life. A heinous act that she will have to bear for life for no fault of hers! Small Phawa was sentenced to a mere 10 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 5000 to which if he fails to pay, then he has to serve another one year in jail. Let us try and look at this equation: one year imprisonment for a failure of payment of Rs. 5000 and 10 years for raping a 10 year old minor against a life time of pain, emotional and mental that

the girl is made to go through for life. The rapist, being the main culprit gets only 10 years and a Rs. 5000 fine after which he may just repeat the same crime. Is this fair? Certainly not! However ours is a legal system that often functions on justice delayed and justice denied. A mere 10 year imprisonment for such a heinous crime is a travesty of justice! There is something amiss with the law that must be corrected, amended and set right in such a way that it would act as a deterrent for others. Perhaps then, such crimes that are rampant will be checked.

Yours etc.,
Jenniefer Dkhar,
Via email

Shillong degenerating every day

Editor, Shillong once named the Scotland of the East was proud of its clean and pollution free environment and attracts thousands of tourists both domestic and international. But it is losing its glamorous image if one goes by the news article

published in a regional daily, captioned, 'Shillong back to being dirty". There are several instances to support this. One is the heart of the city Khyndailad (Police Bazar) point has become a place where one has the experience of being in crematorium as in the evening it is exuding burning fumes from road side food stalls which not only pollutes the air around but defies the noble mission of Swachh Bharat. It also hinders the smooth flow of traffic and obstructs even pedestrians. Meghalaya Tourism Department is doing its best to promote the state but mere advertisement is not enough. It needs action for cleanliness. In this, connection I would urge upon the authorities concerned, especially the Food and Civil Supplies officials and Shillong Municipal Board to take appropriate steps.

Yours etc.,
Krishnendu Deb,
Via email

Response to the drug menace

Editor, Media and press reports