

*“Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking.”*

--- Marcus Aurelius

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.81 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2017

### Corruption: Its impact

VIGILANCE Awareness Week is observed between 30th October to 4th November every year in all Government and public sector organisations. Over the years this observance has become just a symbolic gesture where some persons of repute are invited to give a pep talk and its business as usual after that. Corruption in India is endemic. However, the Global Corruption Index (GCI) shows India at 75th position out of 175 countries. In 2014 India was at 96th position. While the GCI is all about perception as opposed to ground realities there is some hope that at least in the ease of doing business India might fare better than it used to. Corruption is not easy to define in tangible terms but it essentially means misuse or abuse of power by people who are supposed to be custodians of public money. They are essentially politicians, bureaucrats and managers of corporations etc. However, corruption is not just about giving or receiving bribes; it is also about nepotism and the injudicious use of resources. When resources are wasted because of poor deployment it is the poor that are hurt the most. This is seen especially in health care and education. Government health departments are known to procure medicines which are spurious or with a short shelf life mainly because there is a collusion between the drug suppliers and the Health Minister or the Health bureaucracy. The same is true of education too where teachers who are not qualified are appointed because they have political clout or because they have paid money to the appointing authorities.

In government and semi government institutions and sometimes even in banks, the 'red tape' is a way of making it difficult to do straight and transparent transactions. The more convoluted the rules the more the opportunities for bureaucrats to bend them by taking cuts from contractors/suppliers. One way of doing away with corruption is to simplify the rules and make the bidding process transparent. Also in the age of digital technology a robust system of check and balances can be created where the chances of human interface are reduced. India is yet to develop a zero-tolerance policy for corruption where the corrupt are given exemplary punishment. In fact, in India, it is the bureaucracy that is the problem and which hinders good governance. When this will change is a difficult question to answer!

Corruption impacts on quality of service delivered to the people. A good example is the quality of roads in Meghalaya. Driving licenses are issued without a test drive, resulting in careless driving and accidents galore. Polluting industries are allowed to continue because they are given a clean chit by the Pollution Control Boards. These are just a few examples. Others abound but with a passive citizenry and a dearth of whistle blowers corruption continues unabated.

### LOOKING BACK

May 3, 1989

### Shillong Zonal Co-op seminar

A Seminar on "involvement of Women in Cooperatives" was inaugurated in Shillong on Friday by the Meghalaya Minister of State for Cooperation Mr H S Shylla. The seminar, the first of its kind to be held in Meghalaya, was attended by 96 delegates from all over the State. In his inaugural address, Mr Shylla emphasized the need for economic self-sufficiency among the women and stressed the importance of disseminating information about the ideology, principles and practices of cooperatives so as to enhance the involvement of women in them. Mr Shylla released a special souvenir to mark the occasion. The seminar was also addressed by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Mr S S Gupta who termed the co-operative movement as a people's movement which should be aimed at eliminating middlemen. In his presidential address, the Chairman of the Meghalaya Cooperative Apex Bank, Mr G Mylliemngap noted that women, who labour more than men, have a great role to play in developing their families and societies and while cooperative societies are the main instruments to bring about socio economic development, the movement for this cannot be complete with out women's participation in cooperatives. The seminar was also addressed by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Mr S S Gupta who termed the co-operative movement as a people's movement which should be aimed at eliminating

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## US' Asia Policy

# Af-India & terrorism

By Dr DK. Giri

New Delhi hosted three important foreign dignitaries last week, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, followed by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni. All three had their respective agendas, but India, interestingly, focused on cross-border terrorism as its principal concern.

Ghani came for a day-long working visit to review ongoing ties. Tillerson attempted to impress upon India to play a bigger role in Asia, in particular Afghanistan, and Gentiloni was here to mend relations, after the infamous marines' case. The relations between New Delhi and Rome had plummeted since, but thawed with Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to the Vatican for canonisation of Mother Teresa, and Gentiloni's visit after 10 years since former PM Romand Prodi visited India. Gentiloni and Modi signed six treaties on various trades, discussed FTA negotiations between India and EU, shared mutual concerns on terrorism and promised cooperation in fighting it.

However, of more strategic importance were the visits of Ghani and Tillerson. Ghani was on the same page as India on Pakistan sponsoring terrorism against both countries. He sought India's help in building and training its military and police in the wake of gradual withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghan soil. India is by far the biggest development-donor of Afghanistan in the region with \$3 billion aid so far. But New Delhi has refused to send soldiers to Afghanistan not to antagonize Pakistan, Kabul feels that India's distancing militarily is not helping the situation.

Kabul has warned Islamabad that unless it opens Wagha and Attari borders for India-Afghanistan trade to transit through Pakistan, it will deny access to Pakistan to Central Asia. As an alternate route, New Delhi and Kabul broke new grounds by using Chabahar port in Iran, by sending the first consignment of wheat from Kandla port to Chabahar, and from there it was to be sent by trucks to land-locked Afghanistan. A project to build rail route is underway from Chabahar to Zahedan, Afghan border, by New

Delhi and Teheran for over \$1 billion. Furthermore, an India-Afghanistan airfreight corridor has been set up. This covers the full spectrum of connectivity between the two.

Ghani also sought to invoke the provision in Special Partnership Agreement (SPA) for military support. India has supplied four combat helicopters Mi-25 in 2015 which were "life-savers" according to Afghan military. It needs ammunition and engineers to maintain the aircrafts. India is mulling over it.

The SPA signed in 2011 between the two will be upgraded to a New Development partnership. It should be noted that India has been heavily engaged in reconstruction of war-torn Afghanistan and has so far built over 200 public and private schools, sponsored 1000 scholarships and hosts over 16,000 Afghan students. It has built a state-of-the-art Parliament building and its past projects covered, education, health, infrastructure, etc. India would implement some important new projects - Shatoun Dam and Drinking Water Project, low cost housing for refugees returning to Naharpar province, gypsum manufacturing plant in Kabul, poly-clinic in Mazhar-e-Sharif, etc. India will also undertake 116 high impact projects in 31 provinces. All in all, the development programme would continue till 2022.

However, Kabul's biggest worry is the Taliban and would want all support it can garner to combat it. In the recent past, the Quadrilateral group of US, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan met in Qatar to resolve the conflict between Afghan government and Taliban. Kabul felt Pakistan was trying to impose a solution in favour of Taliban, as it did in the past by installing a pro-Pakistan Taliban government. Kabul wants a solution "initiated, controlled, and managed by Afghanistan". In his speech here, Ghani stated: "with India we have alignment of interests". It would like India to play a greater, high-profile role including military engagement. Will New Delhi bite the bullet?

Likewise, Tillerson would like to nudge India to play a pivotal role in Asia, and the

Indo-Pacific region. Obviously, America wants to counter China, which aims to gradually replace the US as the super power. On the eve of his visit to S Asia, Tillerson made a forceful case for US-India partnership in his speech at Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC titled "Defining our Relationship with India for the Next Century".

"India and the US share common values and vision" and are natural allies, he said and blamed China, in no uncertain terms, for destabilising the global order, as he promised to deepen co-operation with India. He observed: "China, while rising alongside India, has done so less responsibly, at times, undermining the international rule-based order, even as countries like India operate within a framework that protects other nations' sovereignty". Beijing was further blamed for subverting the sovereignty of neighbouring countries by pursuing "predatory economics" and extending "bad debt".

A more powerful pro-India statement by Tillerson was: "security issues that concern India are concerns of the US too." The speech was music to South Block in Delhi as it came after the 'New Afghan Policy' and South Asia Strategy announced by the US earlier this year, which charged Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism. It said: "Pakistan provides safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror. Pakistan should stop it." The strategy singled out India for greater engagement in Afghanistan.

On India-Pakistan relations, both New Delhi and Washington agree as it was reiterated during Tillerson's visit, "that renunciation of violence and terror, and closure of cross-border safe havens and sanctuaries were essential for any meaningful progress and lasting peace". It is evident that Islamabad's unfettered support to terror groups is destabilising the entire region. Ghani was clear on

Pakistan's negative and vicious role, but US tries to balance India and Pakistan. A section in US External Relations want condition-based relations with Pakistan, not to isolate it totally, while others want India in, and Pakistan out of the equation. Many observers would say that the US' New Afghan Policy is a 'game-changer'.

Undeniably, the US wants to sketch out an important role for India in S Asia and Indo-Pacific region. We may recall that it has been nudging India to rise to counter China. In 2012, the then Defence Secretary Leon Panetta had underlined: "India is linchpin of the US pivot to Asia strategy." Even under Obama leadership, preceded by Bush Administration, the attempt was to deepen Indo-US ties -- economic, cultural and diplomatic. But the UPA government declined to play that role for US in Asia.

India is perhaps wary of Trump's inconsistency, US ambivalence on Pakistan, its mixed approach to China, attitude to Iran, and nearer home, the issue of HIB visa for Indian-IT professionals. Although there are frequent allusions to India and US being two big democracies and multi-cultural politics, foreign policies are based on self-interest and what John J. Mearsheimer called the 'offensive realism' in his book Tragedy of Great Power Politics.

It is self interest that counts in the ultimate analysis. So does India's self-interest align with US policy or should it continue to play an autonomous world role, a throw-back to the days of non-alignment? Realists would advocate that India should sign a defence pact with US to counter China and Pakistan. It may be too soon to do so. But playing an active and engaging role in Asia alongside, US, Japan and Australia to combat the menace of terror, to promote peace and prosperity, democracy and freedom etc, is a role India should be ready to embrace. The world is watching as we too keep a watchful eye. --INFA

(The author teaches at Jama Milia Islamia University)

## Congress depending on caste equation in Gujarat elections

# Bjp struggling to break Hardik's alliance with dalits

By Kalyani Shankar

New caste equations are taking shape for the next December's Gujarat Assembly polls even as two opinion polls - one by Times Now-VMR and another by India Today-Axis My India - have given the BJP between 118-134 and 115-125 seats respectively in the 182-member Assembly. Despite facing double anti incumbency, the ruling BJP exudes confidence about returning to power for 5th consecutive term based on its own calculations but the ground situation is complex. Interestingly, for the first time, the major opponent Congress is fancying a win since 1995 in the state. While the BJP won 115 seats in 2012 Assembly elections, the Congress has not crossed the figure of 61 in the state Assembly since 1995.

When all else has failed, the caste is the last resort for political parties. A demoralised Congress is hedging on the hope that caste polarization is the most effective counter to the

even chants in his rallies 'Jai Bhim', 'Jai Mataji' and 'Jai Sardar' to woo the three agitating groups of Dalits, OBCs and Patels. Former Chief Minister Madhvsinh Solanki was the author of this formula but it had later alienated the dominant castes.

Going for a caste coalition is all very well in paper but it is a complex issue. The support of 37 per cent OBCs and 16 per cent Patels are crucial for both the parties. Together they can influence 111 seats. Of the 4.33 crore voters, 65 per cent are young voters in the 20-35 year age group and participants in the reservation movements. Lack of jobs is a big problem faced by them.

Hardik wants Patels included in the OBC list. The OBCs in Gujarat constitute 37 per cent of the state's population and enjoy 27 per cent reservation. The dilemma for any government would be how to provide reservation to a socially

*Sonia Gandhi's political secretary Ahmed Patel has deep roots in the state and the Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi, is also in the forefront holding secret parleys with the youth icons with whose help he wants to win the state.*

religiosity polarization by the BJP and is pinning its hopes on three emerging young caste leaders.

The Congress has fielded the old war-horse former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot to stitch the new coalition. Sonia Gandhi's political secretary Ahmed Patel has deep roots in the state and the Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi, is also in the forefront holding secret parleys with the youth icons with whose help he wants to win the state.

A day after Diwali, the Congress offered tickets to Hardik Patel, Jignesh Mevani and Alpesh Thakore - the three leaders who are fighting at different levels to oust the BJP from power in Gujarat. The state Congress president Bharat Solanki calls them three important factors with crucial vote bases - Patidars, OBCs and Dalits. While Hardik Patel (24) has led a protracted Patidar agitation for quotas for Patels, Mevani (36) left his legal practice to lead protests against public flogging of Dalits at Una last year. Thakore emerged as the face of Gujarat's OBCs-about 37 per cent of the state's population-when he began a protest against liquor addition.

While Hardik Patel, convener of the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS) and Jignesh Mevani, convener of the Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch have openly declared their anti-BJP stand, Alpesh Thakore, backward castes (OBC) leader and convener of Gujarat Kshatriya Thakore Sena has joined the Congress recently boosting its morale. Thakore Sena claims to have a team of 27-28 lakh volunteers, spread across 9,500 villages in Gujarat. Interestingly, the Congress also extended its invitation to Aam Admi Party (AAP).

Why is the Congress adopting this course? It is because of its original vision of KHAM (Kshatriyas, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) formula that brought the party to power in 1980 with a record victory. Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi

dominant caste without alienating the OBCs already benefiting from the quota. The Congress talks a formula keeping 49 per cent reservation for OBC, SC/ST intact while providing additional 20 per cent reservation to the other communities by passing a resolution in the State Assembly once in power.

Secondly, it is clear that with the entry of Thakore, the Congress proposes to target the OBCs as its core constituency. The challenge would be how to accommodate the demands of Hardik and Alpesh, as there is traditional rivalry between the OBCs and Patels.

There is also friction between the OBCs and the Dalits in the villages as the latter feel they are suppressed by the former. It is not known how the Congress proposes to handle the contradictions.

However, this new caste coalition has made the BJP nervous. The remarkable response to the young trio's campaign to defeat the BJP, has made the party uncertain. Demonetisation and GST have upset the traditional vote base of traders and small businessmen. The diamond merchants are on the warpath.

The BJP strategists think that Alpesh and Mevani represent competing caste groups and would find it difficult to come together on the ground. Also all the three caste leaders are untested in polls so far though they are crowd pullers. Whether they can convert their popularity into votes, is a question mark.

Rahul Gandhi has certainly emerged better in his Gujarat campaign so far but his efforts are only a shot in the dark. The results depend on a lot of factors including the booth management, converting the crowds into votes, and proper ticket distribution but caste is indeed a dominant factor. The KHAM experiment might work if Lady Luck smiles at him. One week is said to be a long time in politics and we have more than six weeks to wait before the Gujarat elections. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Writing on the wall

Editor,

One of the most open secrets of the state of Meghalaya is the wayward and errant manner in which our MLAs and elected representatives carry out and operate the so called MLA Scheme. For the uninitiated, the MLA Scheme is a conspiracy on how MLAs spend public money (your money and mine) as if it were their own personal money. Now finally all suspicions have been confirmed; the secret laid wide open; wrongdoings exposed to one and all.

The news headlines of the Oct 26, 2017 speaks of the unearthing of a huge scam in the MLA schemes run by the Laban MLA. This expose came through a RTI sting operation mounted none other than by his own supporters, people who knew but who decided to back up their accusations with facts and figures. Unaccounted expenditures of public funds running into crores; arbitrary appointment, without a tendering process, of a single man supplier; gifting away utensils and dinner sets raises the question: what do these have to do with development; with the eradication of poverty or with the building of infrastructure? This is how MLAs squander scarce resources. It's not their personal money! It's public money!

The shameless excuse

that this is all part of a political vendetta against the MLA, Mr Sanbor Shullai does not hold water. There is strong suspicion that 99% of all our MLAs indulge in similar illegal activities as far as the MLA scheme is concerned. It is useless to demand for an enquiry by the Govt. It's like asking a thief to catch a thief. I would request the public minded group from Kynjat Phutbol, who had moved the RTI against their own MLA, to take their campaign to clean politics one step further. Please move a PIL in the High Court or the Supreme Court for an investigation into how Meghalaya MLAs utilise their MLA funds. The RTI findings are evidence enough for admission of such a writ. Misappropriation and embezzlement of the public exchequer, to the tune of hundreds of crores of rupees, must be exposed. The criminals must be arrested and punished. No one is above the law! Please read the writing on the wall.

Yours etc.,  
P Wahlang,  
Shillong- 4

#### Snub to Modi or sheer ignorance?

Editor,

CNN News 18 headlines on Oct 29 last reported that data of 300 Aadhar numbers of pensioners were stolen in Hyderabad. This reminds of the utter disregard for Prime Minister Modi's pro-poor and pro-people push on Aadhar Cards by the local postal authority of Tura West Garo

Hills. Firstly, the Aadhar cards of all individuals enrolled were sent by post from UIDAI (GOI) and were to be delivered to each individual Aadhar card holder in their mailing address. But to my shock and surprise these Aadhar cards are lying unattended outside the glass enclosure counter of the Tura Post Office for anybody to grab and run away with. If there is shortage of manpower to deliver the Aadhar cards, the postal department should have made use of the public address system of the DIPR, Tura and also the media to give wide publicity asking those enrolled for the Aadhar to collect the cards personally from the post office after showing valid proof of identity. But the casual handling of this important matter by the post is a direct insult to the PM and his Govt. In my tenure as a former journalist of the IPR department Tura there were all kinds of requests to publicise government schemes, programmes etc., in greater public interest. Will the postal authorities please take note?

Another of the PM's pet scheme the PMAY (Prime Minister's Awaas Yojna) which received wide response from the people when notified by the TMB (Tura Municipal Board) seems to have lost traction and got stuck elsewhere since most of the

applicants had drawn "ZERO" answer and the PMAY scheme seems to have vaporized into thin air. Who is to be held accountable for this tangle? Will the PMO please take note of this?

Coming back to the Aadhar enrolment most of those enrolled at Tura Upper Chandmery SSA School premises including myself, have got the UID Card but some housewives are yet to get theirs. On being told that Aadhar photograph is being taken at the DC's Office Tura some housewives scurried to the spot only to be told that it's only for Govt. employees. The same happened with the TMB (Tura Municipal Board)! The million dollar question is: who will be answerable for this fiasco and flip-flop because Tura town has maximum number of women contractors whose bank accounts will have to be linked with Aadhar cards on or before 31st December according to diktat from the RBI and Finance Ministry. Of course this is extended up to March 31, 2018 for those who had not yet obtained their UID cards. Will the concerned authorities look into the matter seriously please?

Yours etc.,  
Sonaram M Sangma,  
Tura

*"Democracy encourages the majority to decide things about which the majority is ignorant."*

--- Woodrow T. Wilson

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.82 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2017

### Economic reforms

THERE is good news for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India has made considerable progress in ensuring ease of doing business. The World Bank's annual ease of doing business global ranking proves that. It has gone up by thirty places this year and ranks 100th among 190 countries reviewed. What is more, India is among the top improvers. The ranking shows the growing of close rapport between the government and entrepreneurs, especially of MSME's. It also indicates a huge improvement in the country's economic environment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserves special praise as he has been pursuing this objective with maximum effort. India has done best in protecting minority shareholders. It holds the fourth position in the world in this regard thanks to significant changes in the laws governing party transactions. The country has done well in getting electricity connections and maximizing tax payments. Changes in business processes have simplified performance of small entrepreneurs. What is also impressive is that there has been an absolute improvement on India's score in the ease of doing business. It has done better not merely than other countries but has also made a big improvement on earlier showing.

The ranking should be viewed in proper perspective so that progress in this area is not merely sustained but also pushed forward. The World Bank Survey has however covered only the country's large cities of Mumbai and Delhi. But that should be a fair index. Indicators on the ease of doing business are primarily based on laws and regulations. About two thirds of the data are related to a reading of the law. The government should make sure that the biggies in officialdom understand the law in its letter and its spirit. Strict implementation of the law is of the utmost importance. All in all, India's improvement in this sphere is a great leap forward and should set an example to countries that rank lower. Ease of doing business cannot be isolated from business with other countries.

### LOOKING BACK

May 3, 1989

### Goodwill mission to Bodo areas

An all party goodwill mission of the Assam Assembly headed by Speaker Mr Pulakesh Barua will visit Udalguri sub-division and Kokrajhar district from May 9 to restore peace in the areas affected in the wake of agitation by the All Bodo Students Union (Upendra Faction). Members of the mission will meet the people personally to receive their representation and memorandum, official

sources said.

### Supreme Court's directive on holding private lotteries

The Supreme Court today directed all the state governments not to permit holding of any draw by private lotteries unless the entire prize amount for each draw is either deposited in a nationalized bank or bank guarantees to this effect are secured.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Flaws in NEHU Employment Notice

Editor,

I would like to draw the attention of NEHU authorities through your esteemed column on the recent Employment Notice issued by the University for filling up various Non-Teaching Group "A" posts. In the advertisement it was specified that for SC/ST candidates and departmental candidates of NEHU, there would be relaxation of 5% marks in Master's Degree subject to the minimum of 50 per cent marks. It may be pointed out that the vacant post falls under "UR" category i.e. General category. Relaxation of 5 per cent marks for SC/ST candidates and departmental candidates of NEHU is in violation of UGC Regulations.

Take for instance the recent advertisement called by NIT Meghalaya for filling up various Non-Teaching Group "A" posts. They have not given any kind of relaxation in the marks for SC/ST candidates as the vacant post falls under "UR" category i.e. General category. This is in line with UGC Regulations.

I therefore urge the concerned NEHU authorities through your esteemed column to revisit their recent Employment Notice.

Yours etc.,

Name withheld on request

### NEHU does injustice to students

Editor,

We wish to express our grievances against the functioning of the NEHU Examination Department. Having received our end semester results on the September 22, 2017 and being disappointed with the marks obtained in our Honours paper, we decided to file an RTI. However before doing so we decided to wait for the arrival of our mark sheets to ascertain the marks obtained. We received the mark sheet on October 10 and filed the RTI the next day. After due procedure was followed the person in-charge assured us that she would contact us personally when the photocopy of our answer scripts arrives. We waited for weeks for the

phone call which we never received. On personally enquiring about the matter again, we learnt that they had never even considered taking photocopies of our answer scripts. Only after we approached the person in-charge again were our answer scripts were sent to be photocopied on October 26. On receiving the answer scripts we showed them to the teachers concerned and they advised us to send our paper for re-evaluation.

As advised, we went to the UG Assistant Registrar, NEHU Shillong on October 30, to request for re-evaluation of our paper but she refused to accept them stating that the last date for re-evaluation was October 22. When the NEHU officials have themselves failed to provide us the photocopies of our answer scripts on time how can they expect us to submit our papers for re-evaluation on October 22 when we received the photocopies of our answer scripts only on the October 26, much after the specified date for re-evaluation? We tried to approach the UG Assistant Registrar with the application stating all the genuine reasons for the late

submission for re-evaluation but this too was rejected on the plea that "the counter for re-evaluation has been closed." In doing so the NEHU authorities have blatantly ignored their own failure to carry out their duties by providing us the photocopies of our answer scripts on time. This is a grievous case of injustice towards students and we will be left with no alternative but to approach a court of law with all the documents. But the question is whether NEHU was created to serve the interests of students or to protect itself and its errand officials and faculty members.

Yours etc.,

Names withheld on request

### Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners

Editor,

Come November and pensioners will face hurdles from the pension disbursing authority for getting a life certificate for transfer of pension amount for the next twelve months. This causes much hardship and

### Inner Party Democracy

# No model worth a copy

By Dr S Saraswathi

Addressing a festive gathering at the BJP headquarters last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the media to raise a debate on "internal democracy in political parties" - an essential prerequisite for democratic system of government. The issue arising from un-concealed family leadership and its absolute control in a number of parties has suddenly gained extraordinary significance in the context of the forthcoming elevation of Rahul Gandhi as the President of the oldest political party in the country, the Congress, though no reference was made to this.

Modi has asked the media to particularly watch how the parties function, how leadership emerges, and how democratic values and ideologies are practised within the parties. In his view, democratic processes involved in decision-making in parties deserve more attention than party funding which is widely debated. He also observed that only through political parties, a person could go up or come down in a democracy like India.

There can be no dispute over his contention that parties with a "true democratic spirit" are essential for a healthy democracy in the country as the world has seen the fate of many countries in the West and the East that have gone through dictatorial single party regime.

The practice of declaring a leader as "permanent head" is a noteworthy undemocratic contribution to the party system itself by some parties in India. It is enough to make the party undemocratic in letter and spirit and to reduce it as a private property. Unfortunately, the masses seem to trust the leader they adore as a demi-God and so are unable to realise the consequences of supporting unquestioned leadership.

There are a total of 1841 parties registered with the Election Commission -- 7 national, 49 State, and 1785 unrecognised. Not all of them are serious contenders to power even at the State or local level. But all are interested in having a group of supporters to some cause or interests and in many cases to a particular leader.

The Representation of People Act 1951 prescribes

that only an association or body of individual citizens of India calling itself a political party and intending to avail itself of the provisions of Part IV A of the Act regarding registration of political parties is required to register with the EC.

For this, the association or body must have a memorandum or rules and regulations which should contain a specific provision that the association or body "shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to the principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy, and uphold sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India".

It may well be expected that the principle of democracy mentioned in the provision first covers internal democracy of the party so as to get equipped to uphold national democracy. Unfortunately, caste associations, religious groups, social movements, and personality-based groups like fan clubs of film stars transformed as political parties are common in India. Some of them groomed in a tradition of hero worship continue to indulge in non-democratic modes of functioning in parties.

Democracy does not come into operation automatically or spontaneously in any organisation. Democratic principles and regulations have to be adopted consciously and followed vigorously with eternal vigilance. Even the founder's charisma, wisdom, and commitment to the welfare of the people cannot guarantee a party's democratic set up and functioning unless party rules provide for that and followed strictly by the organisation. On the contrary, charisma may work against inner organisational democracy and lead to the party's demise along with the charismatic leader.

Multi-party democracies, theoretically, do not give much room for emergence of charismatic leadership. But, the reality in India falsifies the proposition as most of the parties are restricted in space and interests. Competitive skill, knowledge, commitment, and virtue are required for leadership and scope for participation, opportunities, and recognition for all members are needed for

liberal traditions consider external control detrimental to genuine party contests and are reluctant to impose external regulations on political associations. Freedom of the parties to set and govern their own internal structures and processes is insisted by liberal parties.

The Prime Minister, in the talk referred to, also urged the media to discuss how values and ideology are imparted in political parties. He cited at "different voices" heard within the BJP contrasting it with similarity of views that prevailed from central leaders to junior-most members of the party in the Jan Sangh era. He attributed this loss of "unanimity" within the party to its expansion that has made "intense training sessions" and "regular communication" within the party impossible.

Inner party democracy and inner ideological unity exist in different proportions in political parties in India and abroad. They are set in the constitution of committees and selection of leaders, the process for formulation of ideology and policies, identification of candidates to contest elections, extent of transparency and participation in decision-making, and freedom of discussion and criticism within the party. They are regulated by law in some countries.

The Federal Republic of Germany is considered a model for strong inner party democracy. Its Basic Law contains a provision that requires political parties' internal organisation "to conform to democratic principle". A person can be named as candidate of a party in a constituency only if he or she has been selected in an assembly of party members for selection of a candidate or in a special general assembly of party representatives. Another provision prescribes that the candidate and the representatives for the assemblies of representatives shall be selected by secret ballot.

Parties that have emerged from labour movements in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand are founded on an understanding that policies would be decided by members and approved at the conference and not the other way of originating from the party elite and endorsed by members.

But, parties grown in

liberal traditions consider external control detrimental to genuine party contests and are reluctant to impose external regulations on political associations. Freedom of the parties to set and govern their own internal structures and processes is insisted by liberal parties.

The Spanish Constitution says that the internal structure and operation of political parties must be democratic. Political parties in Portugal are to be governed by the principles of transparency, democratic organisation and management, and participation by all members. In Finland, the Act on Political Parties adopted in 1969 prescribes that the structure and management of political parties must be democratic and regulates their functioning. A "plebiscitary model of intra-party democracy" is taking shape in Canada.

Green parties have strong faith in grassroots democracy and provide suitable institutions and processes for participation, power sharing, and consensus decision-making. As these have their origin from social movements, they stress decentralisation, local autonomy, and mass participation.

In Indian politics, most of these developments seem to be absent. Similar situations produce different types of parties, and some causes yield opposite results. For example, smaller parties in western countries are seen to encourage greater participation of members and more transparency in functioning. But, there are more cases of autocratic functioning and singular head in smaller parties in India. Even grassroots movements fighting for people's rights end up in solo performance.

There is no model worth copying from abroad. Tight regulations may democratise the party organisation, but democratic functioning depends on the spirit of members and supporters and the silent public. - INFA

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

Aadhaar are not in place for residents of Assam. The enrolment is being conducted by the office of the Registrar General of India which is responsible for preparing the National Population Register (NPR). Since verification of NRC document is yet to be completed, the Aadhaar work has not started in Assam. But Aadhaar is now the identity of 1.3 billion population of India linked with LPG subsidy, Bank account, registration of flats etc. Aadhaar is now linked to ATM, Ration cards, MGNREGS database, Passports, PAN Card, Voter ID, etc. There is no other alternative available other than the UIDAI generated Aadhaar. The only way out is for UIDAI is to authorise banks to process the Aadhaar applications for its customers. The state government should draw up action plans to implement Aadhaar as early as possible for the interest of pensioners otherwise they will have to continue with the Physical Life Certificates in November too.

Yours etc.,  
Kamal Baruah,  
Guwahati

# Games People Play

By Ananya S Guha

It is interesting how we play cleverly with paradoxes. We make the ploy of having the National Anthem in every event, although we know that this is not a new thing. We had it being played in cinema halls in the past. But the insouciance of the public amounted to disrespect and the venture was called off. We are reinventing the past now and inviting needless controversy, a diet on which the media thrives and, survives. There is nothing wrong in playing the National Anthem in public places; in fact it is a sign of respect but we love to spawn debates, degenerating into anger and vilification. We could have had this done silently without much overt publicity. People who are arguing for and against both sides forget that in the past many people objected to the National Anthem, yes objected to it for not mentioning some parts of the country. Isn't that too objectionable? Must the National Anthem be sung or written to assuage the sentiments of each and every member of all the communities of the country? And now some of us insist

These intriguing references to past personalities show sometimes a warped way of looking at national events. The blow hot, blow cold display rather obfuscates thinking conjoined to short term political strategies. The sudden glorification of Swami Vivekananda, quoted out of context seems to be nothing short of religious fanning.

The next question is: what does all this serve? A historical and of course, a political bias? Understood. But Patel's legacy is suddenly being showered with praise as never before. Is it regionalism, or is it because he was a votary of the two nation theory, giving it sustenance and credibility? But so did Nehru. Gandhi was the only one who saw in this a dismemberment of the country.

The fact is that history has become apocryphal. As Ramchandra Guha recently remarked in a television show, the silence on Indira Gandhi is also bemusing. The other Gandhis are pilloried, but Indira Gandhi known for her authoritarianism is spared the rod. Why? This is not to suggest that the players

**The fact is that history has become apocryphal. As Ramchandra Guha recently remarked in a television show, the silence on Indira Gandhi is also bemusing. The other Gandhis are pilloried, but Indira Gandhi known for her authoritarianism is spared the rod. Why? This is not to suggest that the players in this drama are innocuous players of roles. No, they know the facts very well, but facts have to be given out according to sentiments. So at this point a dismantling of Muslim history is required. There must be an assortment of myth, history and religion. We must be wakeful towards Gandhi, but don't forget the Godse part and Sardar Patel must be rejuvenated etc.**

that it must be sung anytime, anywhere. Of course we must respect it as we must the Indian flag. Let us also not forget its author. Very recently he did not seem to go down well with some of the right wing types who insisted that he and his supposed world views were and are being overplayed.

Secondly, the myth and falsification surrounding Gandhi. While we mouth reverence towards him, we do not celebrate his birthday with much ado, keep largely silent, yet invoke his name at the slightest opportunity. Don't forget the Nehru connection.

Thirdly, Sardar Vallabhai Patel. Suddenly realization about his historical significance in nationalist struggles has suddenly dawned on us although he was not very enamoured of the right wing. There is nothing wrong in showing respect for Patel, but the sudden aspect of it is overwhelming if not flabbergasting. Remembrances are long, memories are short. Why do we forget Lal Bahadur Shastri?

It is in these clever paradoxes and muddles that we celebrate nationalism and history these days. A dig at the Mughals, ambivalence on Gandhi, silence on some leaders, celebrating 25th December as also the birthday of a former Prime Minister, suddenly having a National Education day, or a National Youth day in one year, and then being circumspect of them in the remaining years. Of course Teachers Day and Children's Day are extant.

in this drama are innocuous players of roles. No, they know the facts very well, but facts have to be given out according to sentiments. So at this point a dismantling of Muslim history is required. There must be an assortment of myth, history and religion. We must be wakeful towards Gandhi, but don't forget the Godse part and Sardar Patel must be rejuvenated etc.

So what is happening in the process is that we are treading murky waters while our children are getting confused view points; our academia is crying hoarse and our media is having a whale of a time.

Such deft mingling of fact with fiction and paradoxes is an inexorable quizzing. Think what they think. Keep them guessing, keep the element of surprise always. And then slam the National Anthem part. Old wine in new bottle.

Then of course came the Taj Mahal game, a cat and mouse interplay, a hide and seek of immaculate precision and timing. The UP Chief Minister and his entourage paying a visit there is now history. All's well that ends well. But all is not well if you look at some crass remarks made by elected representatives, verbal bashing culminating in physical bashing of tourists.

Paradoxes in verbiage, adulation, diatribe seems the order of the day in putting small people in their place. All, however are not fools, despite the tomfoolery taking place. The Idiot Box is at its wits' end and of course that is one shining example that we are at the crossroads of democracy.

*“Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.”*

--- Walter Gropius

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.84 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2017

### Dhumal for Himachal

Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh are on November 9. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has belatedly announced the name of Prem Kumar Dhumal as the chief ministerial candidate. It had not decided to do so in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. But its decision to announce the name of Sarvananda Sanowal in Assam and Manohar Parrikar in Goa had paid rich dividends. Dhumal is popular in the party in Himachal Pradesh and has served as chief minister twice. He is therefore an able contender for the high office against the Congress chief minister Virbhadra Singh who faces corruption charges. If electoral battle is on local issues, the Congress may be up against it. The outcome of assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand was largely due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and active participation in the campaign. He is also going full steam ahead in the aggressive campaign in Gujarat. The announcement of Dhumal's name in Himachal Pradesh may be on account of the BJP's intention to lessen the burden of Modi who obviously has urgent business in Delhi. In Himachal Pradesh, the BJP has chosen between Dhumal who has party MLAs under his flag and Union Health Minister J.P Nadda who is an ace organisation man. The state unit has tilted the scales in favour of Dhumal.

The BJP evidently looks forward to its success in Himachal Pradesh the way it won in Assam and Goa where the announcement of a chief ministerial candidate was backed by alliance partners. The party should in future project local leaders and not bank on a Modi personality cult. That means giving them more power and authorities. It will do well to name a chief ministerial candidate in Gujarat as well now that Modi has done the groundwork.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### HPU president's denial

President of the HPU, Dr Milton Sangma has denied that the Central Executive Committee has served strictures on Mr S D Khongwir for writing open letter to the Chief Minister on the railhead issue. In a statement issued in Shillong on Thursday, he said that the report appearing in the *Shillong Times* in its issue of 2nd May was not totally correct.

Dr Sangma said that although the issue of Byrnihat railhead was discussed in the CEC meeting on April 24 last the discussions remained inclusive since Mr Khongwir who attend the meeting of the Opposition parties convened by the Chief Minister, was not in station. He also denied that Dr B. Pakem was authorized to convey the CFC's displeasure in this regard. Regarding setting up of HPU candidate for the forthcoming Lok Sabha election, Dr Sangma said that decision would be taken only after ascertaining the views of the party's district units.

Following in the text of the statement: "The News item appeared in the *Shillong Times* dated 2-5-89 under caption "HPU leader rap Khongwir on Byrnihat Railhead Issue" has taken me by surprise. Therefore, I would like to clarify to the general public about the decisions taken at the meeting of the Central Executive Committee held at Shillong on 24-4-89 on this issue. "In the first place, the Byrnihat Railway Head Issue was not even in the official agenda. However, it came up for discussion, some members also asked about the

outcome of the meeting between the Chief Minister and the Opposition leaders convened to discuss on this issue in response to Mr Khongwir's open letter. It was then explained to them that Mr Khongwir has sent the open letter to the Chief Minister in consultation with me and other leaders of the party, but we will not be in a position to debate on it as Mr Khongwir is absent and none of us knows anything about it.

Therefore, it was finally decided to discuss in the next meeting of the Central Executive Committee to be held before June. As such, the question of serving strictures on Mr Khongwir does not arise. Neither was Dr B Pakem authorized to convey its displeasure to Mr Khongwir not did he write anything to him.

"On the question of M P Elections, some members pointed out that the *Shillong Times* has mentioned about the possibility of holding the MP Elections in the month of June. However, after some discussions, it was finally resolved that the views of all the District Units of the party should be ascertained first before the final decision is taken. Hence the question of setting up its own candidates does not arise. "It pains me that the Party which was taken by the people as an alternative to Congress I, as is shown in the last District Council elections, has been rapped and maligned by a few people to suit their own interests."

# School Education Distressing; Needs Reforms

By Dr Oishee Mukherjee

The recently released UNESCO report monitoring education has pointed out that 2.8 million children are out of school, 11 million out of lower secondary school and 47 million out of upper secondary school. Moreover, the fact that a quarter of the nation's children not completing lower secondary education and 266 million adults and 33 million young people unable to read and write is indeed distressing for a large country like India with reasonably high economic growth.

Obviously, what has been reiterated again and again is the relatively low spend on education – around 3.8 per cent of GDP – contributing to the current state of affairs. Added to this is the lack of commitment and sincerity of teachers as also lack of monitoring of welfare schemes relating to education. In fact, education infrastructure in most rural areas is quite deplorable. The lack of single sex toilets, water, healthy classrooms, etc. may be attributed as the major reasons for children unwilling to go to schools.

In the urban sector, recent reports of shabby treatment of children in elite private schools have necessitated the need to re-examine the state of school education in the country which, by all accounts, has been quite poor. School education is, no doubt, a crucial issue and the problems are being highlighted in the media from time to time. The issues involved include standards of teaching, discipline in schools, relevance of curriculum and the treatment meted out to children. As is revealed from various surveys, while standards have deteriorated, primarily due to the negligence of teachers, new laws deter teachers from physically beating their wards to discipline them.

The primary point that is of concern is the quality of teachers and their sincerity in teaching. The report States that in India, estimates differed among studies. "A representative panel of 1,297 villages found almost 24% of rural teachers

were absent during unannounced school visits in 2010. Another study of 619 schools in six States found 18.5% of teachers absent: 9% on leave, 7% on official duties and 2.5% on unauthorised absence."

It has to be admitted that teaching standards are quite poor in most government schools across the country though the performance of the southern States is a little better. The reason for this is not far to seek. The report notes: Effective policy responses are complicated by the many factors influencing teacher absenteeism, e.g. distance to school, pupil/teacher ratio and poor working conditions."

The report provides an insight into private tuition, which is on the rise. This "can increase students' academic burden and stress...while remedial or individualised help may benefit students, the time and money allocated to tutoring can undermine student well-being and strain household budgets," cautions the report.

The craze for private tuitions has been increasing with every passing year. Even parents think that without private tuition, his child will not be able to do well in examinations. For a few years we have been seeing that students studying in Class II or III need private tutors.

The second reason for deterioration in standards is the lack of discipline in schools. While teachers are afraid of taking disciplinary action against their students, the latter do not take care about preparing their homework. Moreover, with some States having decided to stop the pass-fail system up to Class VIII, most students take little interest in studies.

The urgency of passing out with good marks is present among a small section of students. The entry of politics in schools has further deteriorated the climate. Discipline is missing in schools and specially among male students studying in upper classes. One is reminded of the

saying – "spare the rod and spoil the child" – but this is not implemented now due to legal stipulations.

There is a debate among educationists whether sparing the rod is required while others believe that strictness is necessary to ensure that students study, do their homework and are attentive to teachers. On the other hand, the lack of love and affection for children has made them defiant and disrespectful towards teachers, specially those who do not take interest in teaching. Communicating is an art and unless teachers are aware of this, they would not be able to enter the children's mind and obviously would not be effective.

The third factor is the curriculum, specially those of the State boards. This is outdated and not revised reflecting the issues and concerns of the day. Those at the State level do not think it necessary to revise the syllabus. In some States, environmental studies was earlier being taught as a subject but for the last three years or so, this has been done away with.

Apart from the above factors, there is lack of sincerity towards school education. Whether there is lack of focus on developing and maintaining proper infrastructure in schools, curriculum development is too not revised periodically. The budgetary allotment towards this end is not sufficient enough as a result of which the infrastructure in rural areas is quite poor.

One may mention here reports that have surfaced in the media regarding non-functional toilets or girls' toilets not having water. Also water logging in front of schools make it inconvenient for students, specially younger ones, to enter schools during the rainy season. It is understood that the

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, a pet project of the Prime Minister, may resolve this issue of setting up toilets in all schools.

The problems affecting school education are varied and it is indeed quite difficult to resolve these in the immediate future. But some action can definitely be taken to improve the quality and standards of education. The foremost thing that is necessary is strict monitoring of teachers in all government schools that is normally done in missionary institutions.

For this, the government may induct retired government officers to strictly monitor the performance of teachers and their attitude towards children – whether they are at the primary level or those studying from Class IX to Class XII. A very small honorarium may be given for this work and these officials should report, say quarterly, directly to the District Magistrate

They could also point out the problems being faced by the schools in the block and take measures to ensure that at least some of these are addressed, if not immediately but in the near future. Since they are retired people, they could also create some pressure to ensure that the demands of the schools are addressed.

Better education is crucial for narrowing inequality gap as also for the country's long term growth scenario. The story of the demographic dividend can go completely wrong unless we undertake reforms in school education on an urgent footing. While resources are no doubt necessary for upgrading primary education, there is need for sincere monitoring at the district and block levels which are unfortunately very poor or non-existent. If 100 million children do not learn the basic skills of reading and arithmetic, it is unlikely that India will grow into a mature economy or a democracy. ---INFA

## Deficit Flawed G20 Need to relook beyond GST

By Shivaji Sarkar

India's is a fledgling economy. It needs to be tended with care. It is like a yogi. As long as it practices yoga, it balances its health between good and not so good. A little un-tending can throw it off track.

It is still a developing economy trying to be bracketed with the highly developed ones. India wants to have G8 expanded to G10 to include the two largest but jerky economies, itself and China. That may change global perception but realities may not be different.

Revenue Secretary Hansmukh Adhia has rightly diagnosed it. The GST is uncomfortable for the small and medium sector. He wants it to be revisited for their comfort and indicates that recent price rises of many commodities, including textile, garment, vegetables and other items have a link to the GST.

What Adhia says is true of all its taxes. India has to have a relook beyond the GST. Remember, 2014 was a landmark. It came with many hopes. Taxes would be rationalised – come down; prices would be affordable, banks would behave better and reduce charges, jobs would grow and the nation would feel the real prosperity.

Many happened. Most somehow are yet to happen. The hope is still there with a 'dynamic' Prime Minister Narendra Modi, despite the Opposition brouhaha. He has the reputation of doing the undone. A beginning has to be made. The GST has one good aspect. Except its implementation, nobody is rigid about its framework. It is changing and possibly with Adhia's comments, it is in for more changes.

This good part has to extend to other aspects of the economy as well. Many realise it, many try to ignore it. This is the most taxed country with irrational rules. Its obsession with black money, which as the note-ban figures denoted is not more than one percent of the total currency notes circulated at approximately Rs 16,000 crore that did not come back to the RBI coffers.

It is also true as per an Oxfam study that a mere one percent people have grabbed 58 per cent of the wealth here. So it is no more a guess who may be having the black money. The rest 99 per cent shares a mere 42 per cent of the wealth.

Let this country rethink about what is black. In reality, it has grown in proportion to the free public sector bank lending post 2008 US-Euro sub-prime crisis. India was untouched by it but the irrational lending has led the country to a trap of Rs 12 lakh crore unpaid debt – people's money that was swindled away by large corporate as per the Economic Survey 2016.

Trade, business and the common earners have long been cherishing an easier income-tax and bank operations. This hope is still there. All want an affordable tax and charges. All these classes are in an exploitative multi-tax regime. Personal income-tax (PIT) robs them of almost five months of their earnings.

Bank charges, demand for identity, TDS on deposits, tolls on highways, various rising local body taxes and charges, medical expenses, fuel and transport costs including spiralling train, bus, metro and taxi fares, electricity and water rates, parking charges, property

stamp duties and many others are robbing the people of whatever they earn.

If the State or its wings usurp whatever they earn, they are left with little to spend. In terms of economy it is called lack of disposable income – key to the progress. The State has to make a beginning with the (PIT), the most irrational of all and then move on to the tolls, said to be the highest in the world.

The Income Tax revenue loss would be about Rs 3 lakh crore plus. The direct savings in tax administration would be over Rs 1 lakh crore, inspections another at least Rs 50 lakh crore – the net notional revenue loss approximately Rs 1.5 lakh crore. The net gain to the economy is Rs 3 lakh plus crore – including the compliance costs. It would be an important lubricant.

Taxpayers would have a greater relief that they would also be freed of tax terror and can spend their money with confidence without a prying eye. Is there a rational that if a person sells any belonging he is made to deduct a TDS of one per cent of the buyer's payment, deposit it in his IT account, which the seller claims next financial year and paid possibly a year later?

Is there any rationale for such utopian procedure? Does it really save black money generation? No. It only complicates procedures, blocks money circulation and slows the economy down. The flip side is many avoid transactions altogether. That is the net loss to the State and compounded loss to the economy.

Euphoria alone does not create a thriving economy. It would be if there is flow of money. Choking it and channelising it through banks add to the costs, causes inflation, drives away buyers, the policymakers do a merry-go-round and nothing thrives. In economy, wishes can never be horses.

A cash of Rs 100 even after a lakh of transactions remain Rs 100. If it is moved through banks or digital system with charges of 1 to 2.5 per cent each time it would be adding to almost Rs 2 lakh of charges to be gobbled up by the one per cent rich. The poor and middle class would lose and they would not be able to go to the market. UNCTAD has rightly given a call against such financialisation. Let us rethink.

This has to extend to all other charges. The State is a creation of the citizens. It has to work in their interest and not for the profit of the few. Most levies can be reduced. Ultimately, being the largest entity it helps the State as its expenses -- fiscal deficit -- would come down.

The State cannot be a guzzler of people's money and pauperise them. The G-20 prescription of tough tax regime and control of finances is flawed. Mere deficit control would not be a solution.

The country does not need incentives but rational taxes and levies. It needs a wider discussion to change the nation's financial system. Trust the people, lower taxes and levies, make transactions simpler, the economy would thrive. The bonus, nobody would try to save taxes and generate what is called the black.---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### Cherry Blossom Festival

Editor, Apropos the news items in your esteemed newspaper, (October 17 and 29, 2017) last, I wish to bluntly point out here for the benefit of the public readers to know and understand, and for our Government to immediately refrain from draining out public precious funds in the name of holding festivals, of which most are held for self aggrandizement and enhancement of someone's insatiable pockets of those in the government and outside it.

During the last many years, especially since 6-8 years back, too many festivals were held by various government departments or by some unknown and shady agencies sponsored by the government departments. None of these festivals brought any benefits to the state; in fact they brought huge financial losses to the public exchequer, but the government agencies had the guts to justify these wasteful events. For goodness sake, please stop all these shameful and criminal practices. The government said that it had no money to repair the roads, the dilapidated public infrastructures like school buildings, health centres, no money for the sick and the infirm and landless farmers, and labourers, but it has crores of rupees to spend on these festivals like New Year and, Christmas celebrations, Music Festivals, 18 degrees festivals, film festivals,

Independence day celebrations, Spring festivals, Winter festivals, Autumn festivals and you name them. Many of them are for the sole purpose of siphoning off public funds and spoiling the youth in many ways, in the name of these shady events.

Coming to the Cherry Blossom festival, I am constrained to say that this again has the same objective - to siphon off public funds for self aggrandizement. In fact this year, knowing the intention of the government agencies, the Cherry Blossoms refused to bloom, and they remain bare, dry and empty. In fact they are conveying the clear and loud message not to mess up with them. Last year alone the government, through its agencies, has allegedly wasted approximately Rs 91 lakh for the event. This year the earmarked money might be much more and the government has unashamedly justified to hold the events as appeared in the paper. This is a big hoax. Government, you are being closely scrutinized and scanned and remember that this is being done on the eve of the general elections-2018. Besides, the Social Audit will be followed immediately after the event.

Yours etc., Philip Marwein, Via email

### Global Hunger Index

Editor, Apropos your editorial, "Economic reforms" (ST, Nov 2, 2017), India has successfully gone up the ladder of ease of doing business (EODB) but at the

same time gone down in the Global Hunger Index. This happens because capital intensive business enterprises fail to generate sufficient employment. We can never expect trickle down effect from a big business house when it produces very little jobs. So, the success in EODB must now be translated into the labour intensive business enterprises such as farming, cottage, micro and tourism.

Yours etc., Sujit De, Kolkata

### Frequent load shedding in Mawpat

Editor, The residents of Mawpat village (a suburb of Shillong) are in deep anguish over the unscheduled, frequent load shedding by the MeECL on a daily basis. After the corporatization of MeSEB load shedding has become a common feature and Mawpat bears the brunt. Power cuts occur almost throughout the day at different intervals ranging from 30 mins to hours at a time. This has caused tremendous hardships and inconvenience to the people through no fault of theirs. During the lean season, the lame excuse given by the MeECL for load shedding is due to shortage of water in the Umiam dam. What reasons does MeECL have when the water level reaches its maximum during summer? According to the print

media reports, during this summer water from the Umiam dam has been released on a number of occasions. Hence MeECL cannot put the blame on shortage of water for frequent power cuts. As most of the households in the village use electricity for cooking, they had to incur additional expenses for other means of energy for their cooking during power cuts. A power cut no matter how short a duration at any time of the day is undesirable. After sunset, it also causes inconvenience to the students when they are deprived of power for their studies especially when they are preparing for their exams. To bear the heavy additional expenses on other means of energy for cooking and for lighting as well for such a long period, is a great burden for the poor and under-privileged section of the community. If the consumers fail to pay their bills on time, they are penalized. The same yardstick should also apply to the MeECL. A pertinent question arises as to whether the Corporation would agree to compensate (in terms of money) for its interrupted power supply to each and every household and for each day of the month? Will the MeECL rectify its failure to provide uninterrupted power supply at the earliest without inviting the consumers to take to the streets to voice their grievances or to take legal recourse?

Yours etc., Pynshailang Wahlang, Via email

*“No democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the recognition of the rights of minorities.”*

--- Norman Mailer

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.86 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2017

### Trump's Odyssey

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has set out on a mission to the Far East at a most appropriate time when he is beleaguered at home by charges assailing some of his principal aides. His foreign objectives may go against the concept of isolationism-America for Americans-but should help him out of domestic vulnerabilities. Trump first arrived in Japan with which he has always had cordial relations but what is more important is that the trip will put him in face-to-face meetings with authoritarian leaders whom he appears to admire. He will meet Chinese President Xi Jinping whom he has called a king. Then comes the Philippines' Roderigo Duterte who has sanctioned the extra-judicial killing of drug dealers. Trump may also have an opportunity to get a second private audience with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the summit in Vietnam. However, Donald Trump's focus will be on North Korean nuclear designs. North Korean President Kim Jong-un's growing missiles arsenal threatens the capitals Trump will visit.

The White House emphasising the fact that during his visits Donald Trump will push US economic interests. But the North Korean threat will undoubtedly be predominant. Trump will make major speeches in the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea. He will not however visit the demilitarised zone, the stark border between North and South Korea. He will urge the host countries to squeeze North Korea by stopping trade with that country and sending home its citizens working abroad. He will try to persuade even Beijing to take the same line with Pyongyang. China provides much of North Korea's economic life blood. Many in the Asian capitals that Trump will visit may nevertheless be cautious in their dealings with him. It is because his early withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership has undone Barack Obama's effort to boost trade with some of the world's fastest growing economies and to sustain US strategic commitments to Asia.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Financial crisis in DC

The newly elected Chief Executive Member of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council Mr G S Massar recently told newsmen in Shillong that the Council was in financial doldrums. The District coffer has just enough to meet the salary Bill for another three months. This is an appalling situation, the District Council, according to Mr Massar, has an annual revenue of Rs. 1.26 crore. Of these royalty from forest alone fetches over Rs one crore. The other sources of revenue are professional taxes, share on transport, mines & minor minerals, trading licence fees which together accrue some Rs. 25 lakh. Evidently the Council is heavily dependent on royalty on forest Rs. One crore is a big sum of revenue which is also an indication of the volume of forest being denuded annually.

Ecologists and scientists have been crying their voice hoarse about the banal effects of wanton felling of trees. The Members of the Assembly, including Mr Massar himself, have often decried the unchecked destructions of our forest wealth. Laws are enacted but the enforcement is shoddy. The greedy new rich class of forest owners seem to be having their way. Thus forest worth several lakh of rupees are being destroyed every month. This is an appalling situation. If the District

Council has to depend on forest royalty for its survival, then Meghalaya is in for a big ecological catastrophe. It is, therefore, of paramount importance for all concerned to sit up and find out a newer resource base for the District Councils.

Over the years District Councils have virtually turned into inconsequential archaic bodies which neither have the funds to do anything substantial for the people nor do they have the machinery to take up any worthwhile project. The Khasi Hills District Council in particular has been hamstrung on both counts. According to Mr Massar, the Council could not take up any developmental schemes during the last year in view of resource crunch. The State Govt. has for the last five years been extending only 50 percent as matching grant for each approved project. Obviously, the State Govt feels that the District Councils have been diverting the developmental funds for non-productive purposes. The Council has not been able to repudiate the allegation convincingly so far. It will be in the interest of the Council that it takes steps to streamline its financial management.

# On the Ancient Royal Trail

By HH Mohrmen

The megalithic structures dotting the landscape of Jaintia hills from Nartiang to Muktapur which then cross the border to Jaintiapur which is now in Bangladesh are not only the remnants of the lost glory of the Jaintia Kingdom, but the track is a major goldmine for research for those who are interested in understanding the culture of the people and the history of the erstwhile Jaintia Kingdom. Unfortunately except for some write-ups on the two bathing-ghats, the stone bridges and the temple in Syndai and another temple in Borkhat, no in-depth study on the subject has been done on these important historical monuments of the Kingdom.

It was a joint effort by the District Basin Development Unit West Jaintia hills, the State Science and Technology Centre, Shillong and the History department of Thomas Jones College, Jowai which helped shed some light on the deteriorating condition of the paths known as 'the royal path (luti u syiem)' by the Pnars in Jaintia hills. A minor project was conceived at the office of DM Wallang Deputy Commissioner West Jaintia and through a convergence mode the two government agencies along with History Department of Thomas Jones College, a study was conducted and now the report has been submitted to the concerned authority.

The project is a classic example of how government agencies which have the funds collaborate with educational institutions which have the expertise to conduct a research which would not have been possible if there is no convergence among the respective institutions. The project which was aptly titled, 'Research on the historical monuments of Jaintia hills: the need for their preservation and promotion of eco-tourism in the region,' was completed in a record time of less than a year.

According to the report much of the approximately more than seventy kilometre path which spans across the two countries have disappeared and even the remaining portion is in a dilapidated condition. The path comprises of monoliths which consist of standing stones or menhirs and table stones or dolmens on many sections of the paths which also are the resting area (kor shongthait). Another

significant aspect of the royal paths are the stone bridges which include those at Thlumuwi, Umiaknieh/Amjaknieh near the famous Krangshuri waterfall and the other two stones bridges near Syndai and over the river Umpubon.

The study of these megalithic structures is important in the light of the findings from the excavation at Lumsopetbneng which revealed that human settlements in the area existed since the Neolithic age. It may also be mentioned that Monolithic culture or the practice of erecting dolmens and laying of menhirs is one of the common activities practiced by people in the Neolithic age which was prevalent in Britain, France and Ireland. But the study of these megalithic structures will remain incomplete as the report has mentioned because there are monoliths across the border at

the cave which represents Shiva lingam was worshiped during the days of yore. Unfortunately like many other structures, the wall at Borkhat on the banks of river Myntdu was dismantled to make way for a bridge across the river which connects West and East Jaintia hills district. The wall under the shade of a huge banyan tree is believed to be an altar from where the Jaintia Kings used to perform human sacrifices.

More study will also help us understand the influence of Hinduism on the culture and traditions of the Pnars in Jaintia hills and perhaps the study of the forty odd families which are the remaining Pnar Diaspora in Jaintiapur will also help us understand the culture of those who live very close to the palace of the

**The study has documented the remaining part of the old path is still visible today but major part of the path is now gone. The construction of the PWD roads from Amlarem to Muktapur has demolished most of the path and the road from Amlarem to Jowai and Jowai to Nartiang has destroyed the remaining part of the path.**

Jaintiapur, the winter capital of the Jaintia kingdom which is now in Bangladesh.

The sheer size of the structures which include stone slaps used to span the bridges qualify to class to be classed as megaliths. Of course the megaliths are not as big as the Stonehenge in England, but they are not as small as those found in the different parts of the British Isles either. Megaliths can also be found in Jaintiapur which is in the plains and far away from the hills from where the stones are most likely carved and then carried to the erstwhile palace.

Further study of the royal path will also shed more light on the religious lives of the royalty then. Fortunately, till now there are three temples which are still standing along the path, one in Syndai and another at Borkhat and the other one near Muktapur on the Indo-Bangla border. The Syndai cave was used as a place of worship. Perhaps the stalactites or stalagmites in

kingdom. Although there are regular efforts from their fellow Khasi-Pnar who are Christians and live in the other parts of Bangladesh to convert them to Christianity, yet the families persist and continue to uphold their faith and tradition.

Carving on stones and sculpture on rocks also abound along the path and the most prominent is the image of Ganesh near the Syndai cave. Carvings can be found on the stone bridges at Umiaknieh and near the Bathing ghat and the sculpture of a limless elephant are some prominent stone images in the area. The Rupasor bathing ghat and the Queen's bathing ghat nearby are also interesting case studies because not only were the bathing ghats carved on one single rock, but the engineering techniques used to bring constant flow of fresh water to the bathtub made

of rock and the provision for an outlet which also continuously discharges water is also an interesting study.

The study has documented the remaining part of the old path is still visible today but major part of the path is now gone. The construction of the PWD roads from Amlarem to Muktapur has demolished most of the path and the road from Amlarem to Jowai and Jowai to Nartiang has destroyed the remaining part of the path. The study conducted by Thomas Jones College has painstakingly documented the remnants of the royal path from Jaintiapur to Nartiang and the remaining part of the project lies with the State Council of Science, Technology and Environment, Meghalaya to provide the GPS location of the important parts of the royal path.

The objective of the study is to preserve and promote eco-tourism in the area and the study has already identified potential tourist spots and perhaps trekking from Nartiang to Muktapur will also be an interesting tourist activity. Trekking on the ancient royal trail can be good adventure trail that one can promote. Although the bathing ghats and the Stonebridge at Thlumuwi have been identified as protected areas by the Archaeological Survey of India, yet not much effort has gone into the protection and preservation of these important monuments. Every Sunday one can see truck drivers washing their trucks at the stone bridge in Thlumuwi and the bathing ghat is surrounded by tanks use for fermenting betel nuts which give out a foul smell.

The other problem that the land where these historical monuments are located, are currently owned by private parties, hence the government needs to immediately come out with laws to nationalize these sites so that they can be under the purview of the government. In fact, government should acquire these lands and the land owners duly compensated.

Hopefully the study will help the government preserve this very important part of the history of the Jaintia Kingdom.

## Cleansing Politics Special courts a remedy?

By Insaif

It's about time both the Centre and States act to decriminalise politics. Forget citizens, it's even the Supreme Court which is getting exasperated. Its order of March 2014 to the Union government to conclude criminal trials against sitting MPs and MLAs, against whom charges had been framed, expeditiously 'within a year' has had no impact. Till Wednesday last, it was clueless about how many of the 1,581 cases on the list had been finally decided and how many ended in acquittal and convictions. Enough is enough was message and the Centre must report back by December 13 on the cases, for it noted that it takes years, probably decades, to complete the trial against a politician. Worse, there is the absurd situation that by the time the case is decided the politician would have served as a minister or legislator several times over. At the same time, it asked the Centre to work out a scheme for setting up special courts across the country to establish a time-bound and exclusive judicial mechanism to expedite the trials involving the politicians. It must furnish details of the funding necessary to set up these courts and indicate that State governments be involved in the exercise. The aim, which remains to be elusive, is to cleanse politics of criminality and corruption. Will these courts be the ideal tool, time will tell.

**NE No To Aadhaar**  
Meghalaya is firm about wanting to opt out of Aadhaar, as it's different from other States. With illegal immigration and influx being a known major concern, there are fears that the Aadhaar may provide illegal immigrants a way to claim citizenship and upset the demographic balance of the tribal State. Chief Minister Mukul Sangma has in fact given a boost to the Meghalaya People Committee on Aadhaar (MPCA), an umbrella organisation against Aadhaar enrolment, and said last week that he has yet to enrol himself. In addition to the thorny illegal migrants' issue, this north eastern State is too concerned about the bigger issue that the exercise impinges the right to privacy. What comes as a pleasant surprise is that BJP-ruled State, Assam is on the same page as this one, Congress-ruled. "Our stand remains and we (his counterpart Sonowal) are moving together", said Sangma. Will the centre heed and give the desired exemption, is worth a watch.

**Delhi Govt sees Hope?**  
Delhi government is keeping fingers crossed. Will the Supreme Court eventually see Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's anguish and provide relief by clipping the Lt Governor's wings? The government has knocked on the apex door to lay down the law on whether the LG can unilaterally administer the National Capital without being bound by the "aid and advice" of the AAP government. It has done so by challenging Delhi High Court judgement of April 2016 which declared the LG to have 'complete control of all matters of the NCT of Delhi and that nothing with could happen without his concurrence.' This, argued the petitioners suggests the LG has special powers 'greater than the President and other Governors of States!' Has the point been well taken? Well, in his oral observation Justice Chandrachud said: 'LG cannot stultify proposals/schemes forwarded by the Council of Ministers to him by simply sitting on these....He is bound to pass the difference of opinions to the President for early resolution.' How should Kejriwal and team view this-

- "Is the glass half empty or half full?"

**TN Claim Falls Flat**  
Put to test again by the rain god, the Tamil Nadu government has failed miserably and is far from being 'well prepared.' The torrential downpour in Chennai has brought the capital city and suburbs to a standstill and eight people have died so far in rain-related incidents. While claims of working on a war-footing are being made, the residents are livid as the administration hasn't learnt a lesson from the past. Memories of December 2015 floods flash back as water surges into their homes and people have to wade through knee-deep dirty water. Obviously precious little has been done to improve the storm water drain or canal network since. Life is thrown out of gear with schools and colleges shut since October 31 and private firms being requested to allow their staff to work from home. Chief Minister Palaniswami will do well to heed to the idiom 'once bitten twice shy'.

**Punjab's Scholarship Scam**

Trust the system not to spare even scholarships meant for the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward classes, to make a quick buck. This time it's in Punjab, after Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ordered a special audit of all the educational institutions pertaining to 'Post Matric Scholarship Scheme' for SC/OBC from 2011 to 2017. While the intent may be to unearth corruption in the previous regime, it's unfortunate that thousands of deserving candidates have been short changed, as the scandal multi-crore. Since June, the audit of 249 institutions has been conducted leading to the education department making a claim of Rs 53.76 crore to be returned. The modus operandi of the institutions was to show bogus students by way of giving names of dropout students, or claiming funds for unsigned applications of students etc. While the department has asked for FIRs to be filed against two institutions and suspended some employees so far, the scam may well turn out to be tip of the iceberg, as the Congress government proposes to look into other schemes. More revelations are on the cards.

**Positive Energy**

Want 'positive energy' to work better in office and home then do as the Mayor of Jaipur, capital city of Rajasthan, says. Last week, Ashok Lahoty made it mandatory for all employees of Jaipur Municipal Corporation to sing the national anthem at 9.55 a.m. and national song at 5.55 p.m. Other than instilling 'patriotism and love for country' his reasoning: "At the institution where we work, we should begin our day with positive energy.

In any government office, there cannot be a bigger positive sense or positive energy than the national anthem." And for the evening song: "A person returns home with work fatigue, (but) he should leave office temperment in office itself... They should go home with positive energy from singing the national song and give quality time to people at home." While, no one at the work place had an objection to the order, some were peeved about the Mayor adding that anyone opposing this decision "should go to Pakistan". The order shall soon apply to all zonal offices and fire stations. But given that it would do wonders, perhaps the Centre should take a cue and apply it in all offices! --INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Kudos to committed NGOs!

Editor,  
Through your paper, I would like to congratulate our women organization C.S.W.O and T.U.R. for pursuing the Education Scam in the High Court and the recent Order/Ruling has given new hope to those rejected deserving L.P. School teachers. I would also like to remind them to take up another mess of 435 mass appointments and regularization of their appointment as regular ones, without calling for open interview in the Assembly Secretariat. No doubt, the skeletons will tumble out of the cupboard and justice will finally be delivered at the end of the day.

Yours etc.,  
M. Synrem,  
Via email

#### Problem of garbage disposal

Editor,

I am a resident of Laitumkhras and had received notification that the garbage dumps are closed and the trucks do not pick them up anymore, so the alternative put into place for this occurrence is that a truck will come by three times a week and we are supposed to throw our garbage directly into the truck. However I and a few others face a problem. I for one leave home by 08:10 Monday till Saturday. What are we supposed to do with our garbage? A person from the Municipal Board had advised me to collect my garbage and then dispose it of. He does not understand that the truck comes between 08:30 and 09:30 (a time by which I have long left home). I stay alone and there's no one else who can dispose of my trash for me. What are people like us supposed to do? I've been told that if I throw into the garbage dump then I would be fined. What was the problem with using the garbage dump? The new plan does not cater to all residents and not all residents can sit at home and wait for the dump truck to arrive. We have work or college to attend. Can there be an alternative

arrangements for such residents?

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request

#### Rise in cyber crime

Editor,  
The article, "Rise of cyber crime, Nigerian gang and how to avoid it," is a timely and well written one especially because it's authored by a police officer, B K Mishra who has first-hand experience in dealing with and solving such cases. With the rise in cyber crime which is stated to be the crime of the future we need to be aware especially of the frauds committed through ATMs, online transactions and Facebook to name a few. In Meghalaya not many cyber criminals have been arrested but the recent arrest of 7 people, six of whom are foreign nationals including a Nigerian national, reveals the involvement of Nigerian gangs. When we read other national papers we learn of the involvement of Nigerians in most of the

cyber frauds except the ATM fraud where the Jamtara gang is involved. These gangs which are based in the metros have a unique way of committing crime. Firstly, it's very difficult to arrest them though the writer and one other officer have been successful in apprehending them earlier. The write up should be read diligently by citizens and the points mentioned on how to avoid becoming victims of cyber crimes should be kept in mind when using social media and online transactions etc. This will help prevent our hard earned money from being swindled and in some cases to be victims of cyber bullying. We should remember that the ultimate aim of these cyber criminals is to cheat people of their money.

Yours etc.,  
Raju Thapa  
Shillong -1

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.

*"Democracy is not so much a form of government as a set of principles."*

--- Franklin D. Roosevelt

## The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2017

### The contractor-official nexus

ASSAM Chief Minister, Sarbananda Sonowal has warned contractors and officials of a jail term for sub-standard work while implementing government schemes, especially those related to the infrastructure sector. PWD Minister of Assam, Parimal Suklabaidya himself inspected the road repair site near the hockey stadium at Guwahati. This is a much needed intervention in the area of governance. That the Chief Minister should threaten a jail term against defaulting contractors and officials means he is aware of the poor road condition in Assam of which Silchar the second largest city after Guwahati is a clear example. There are other areas in Upper Assam too that are not yet been connected by good roads. For decades the politician-contractor-bureaucrat- technocrat nexus in most states has turned our roads into rough, uneven, exposed paths with huge craters that could cause accidents.

Meghalaya's roads used to be one of the best in the region but in the last five years they have exposed the rot in the system. The Public Works Department was ministered by a contractor. This is like giving the house keys to a thief and expecting him to safeguard the belongings in there. The repairs that are being undertaken during the dry season are cosmetic in nature and the roads are unlikely to survive the next monsoons. It is intuitive that the Meghalaya High Court had to step in and order the National Highways Authority of India to urgently repair the stretch of highway at Umsning which had degenerated to a point where it had become dangerous for vehicles with passengers to ply on. While we appreciate the High Court for stepping into the area of governance, it is also a sad commentary on the complete failure of the executive which has been vested with that power, to deliver on its mandate. The Assam Chief Minister has taken a commendable initiative. Can the next Chief Minister of Meghalaya follow in his footsteps?

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Eat mud for health!

Carol Loveland wouldn't advise replacing meat and potatoes with a plate of dirt but after studying what's called geophagia she says a mouthful of just the right soil may sometimes be goods for what ails you. "Some soils may contribute minerals that can be absorbed," said the Utah State University anthropologist. She warns, however, that "some people can become very anemic" from eating dirt, ingesting chemicals that interrupt the body's exchange of nutrients or can be sickened by harmful microbes.

Her study, to be published in the June issue of the journal Food and Foodways, found dirt and clay eating throughout history. In Roman times, Galen the 2nd century

physicians known as the father of experimental physiology acquired 20,000 lozenges of dirt and goat blood from the Mediterranean Island of Lemnos and dispensed them for various ailments.

In America's rural south clay eating remains a resilient subculture. While the practice may have been imported by African slaves, she said, it no longer can be subscribed as limited to particular social, ethnic or racial groups. "Other people are using clay, too," she said, noting that capsules and tablets of dirt and clay are showing up in health food stores, touted for their mineral content and as remedies for certain stomach and intestinal ailments.

# Election Time: fleeting manifestation of peoples' sovereignty

By FabianLyngdoh

According to the Constitution of India, ultimate sovereignty in the State rests with the people as equal citizens, and not with the people in the Government. But in a young democratic society like India the citizens are sharply divided into a comparatively minority group of elites and a vast majority of common citizens including the poor and the marginalised. The Indian social system is in a fundamental disorder in spite of angelic virtues enumerated in the social norms of the society, or in the democratic constitution of the State because there are visibly wide spread injustices and inequalities in the distribution of social, political and economic resources among the people.

The idea of popular sovereignty appears only in visible manifestation of the right of the people to remove political representatives, and elect new ones in the election process every five years. But in reality however, judging from existing data and existing trend, it seems that people have little actual power even in removing the existing representatives in spite of the fact that there seems to be wide-spread dissatisfaction with their performances, as comparatively few existing representatives were removed and few new representatives got elected at the end of every five-year period. On the contrary, most of the existing representatives have been elected again and again for a fifth and sixth term to their comfortable chairs. The political destiny of the society is driven by the interests of the elite section of the society. But, since the determining factor in a democratic election is the number, the elites need the votes of the vast majority of the underprivileged poor to authenticate their choice of a government to run their affairs. So the masses are mobilised in various directions on the rhetoric of popular sovereignty; with humble appeals to the masses as the lords of the political system. All types of electioneering tactics are employed and respective supporters submerged heart and soul in the dust and steam of the 'popular-sovereignty' festival.

Though it seems that in Meghalaya, everyone is fed up with the existing MLAs and MDCs, who are mockingly being referred to, as 'lei-san-nem' (five-year-gods), and that everyone wants a change for the better, but supporters of every party who constitute the adult population are

happy and hopeful for the success of their own parties when the existing 'lei-san-nem' get affiliated to their own respective parties. The Congress party, the BJP, the NPP, the HSPDP, the PDF, et al try to woo the existing MLAs and MDCs to come and contest from their own party tickets for a supposedly better change. If the existing representatives had for the past twenty five or thirty years in the chair could not bring about the required change how could they possibly bring that change only after the 2018 - elections? Should we ask the question whether there is a real need for change? If there is a real need for change, is there a real burning desire for it? Real change will come only when the people who are adversely affected by the status quo, move and act against the existing system under the leaders who identify themselves with the affected, not by leaders who make empty promises to convert everyone into a millionaire under the existing system. There is sufficient wealth in the world for every human being to have enough food, enough clothing and decent shelter; but there isn't enough wealth in the whole world to make everybody a millionaire, unless someone can show us the way how to enter into profitable trading with the aliens from Mars.

There is no natural or biologically inherent inferiority, lethargy, or docility in the vast majority of underprivileged people, but they are forced to become so, by social, political and economic situations prevailing in an unjust and repressive society. On the other hand, there is inherent courage, capabilities, and respectability in every human being. But when there are repressive external forces, these qualities recoil within; the individual accepts surrender and walks as an insignificant social being under the huge feet of colossuses.

These respectable characteristics of the common people can be observed during the campaign period for the elections at the end of every five years. I would advise researchers on people's political behaviour in underdeveloped democratic societies to seize the opportunity to undertake their field studies during these three months of campaign period before the election-2018 in Meghalaya. A person who was a Minister or a high bureaucrat with magnificent countenance and great pride yesterday, now appears as a small,

humble and smiling human being with folded hands approaching the common people with extreme care and begging for their support to elect or re-elect him as 'their humble servant,' Or so he would say.

These lowly and humble characteristic expressions of the aspiring candidates embolden the common people and awaken their dormant respectability as equal human beings. We would observe that a poor, humble human being, who in the past, walked with fear under the feet of the greats, now raises his head high with a sense of respectability and greatness and expects the aspiring candidates to walk under his feet, to which they too comply. The lowly, humble and docile people, now for a fleeting period, appear great, intelligent, respectable, courageous, cunning and aggressive. They would even speak to the candidates in bold and aggressive tones, putting forward their bargain and demands with no sense of shyness or fear, and the candidates have to handle them with extreme care because they have become hyper-sensitive about their right as the 'sovereign' electors. It is a liberation period for them, however brief it might be.

But as soon as the elections are over and the results declared, the glow from the faces of the people would disappear; the sovereignty which was in the hands of the electors would instantly shift to the hands of the elected, and they who thought that the fate of the victor rested in their hands, now find that the victory of the victor rests on himself. He is flying up, up, and away! They become ignorant, small, humble and docile again, and ever willing to walk in expectation and fear under his feet as inferiors.

This situational behaviour of the people should enlighten us on the inherent respectability of every human being, and should instil in us a faith in the natural equality of human persons, which a lopsided society had unjustly transformed their realm into stratifications of caste and class. In a situation of discrimination and injustice, every one has the right to speak, to complain and demand, especially those who are discriminated and marginalised. But we usually observe that the millions of marginalised are

expected to keep silent and listen attentively like docile sheep to the flowery speeches of those who have more than enough to eat and much more to waste.

Democracy in India in the academic and intellectual discourse is at par with the rest of the world, but democracy at the grassroots is still a dream; it is still under experiment; but it is a costly experiment in which thoughtful and worthy people are cautious to volunteer. It is the time now for the experiment to draw conclusions or to begin anew with fresh variables. More avenues should be opened for the masses to exercise and express their sovereignty if we ever dream of constituting India into a genuine Democratic Republic not only in letter but also in spirit. People are capable of growing into fully democratic beings with courage and respectability if there are ways which can liberate them from the burdening social oppressions.

People should exercise their sovereignty not only once in five years during election time, but they should be able to do so from day to day. A new democratic variable, like the process of recall might be useful to be introduced, so that non-performing or corrupt representatives may be recalled, and fresh ones may be elected. We have also witnessed that in the existing system a person was elected even by securing less than thirty per cent of the total votes. Those who did not elect him/her constitute more than seventy percent. Hence, he/she is not mandated to represent them.

People seem ignorant, poor, indifferent, docile and lethargic because their sovereignty in a democratic system is only a myth, which manifests only in a 'once-in-a-five-year' street cultural festival. It is encouraging that a Social Audit Council was constituted in the State of Meghalaya so as to provide more opportunities for the people to exercise their sovereignty over the activities of the Government and the political representatives. With a capable and sincere person like Mr Toki Blah as the Chairman of the Council, we hope that Social Audit establishment would not be a Government agency to gloss itself, but a people's agency for exercising sovereignty.

# Doing Business in India

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

## BEATING THE RHETORIC

Every year the World Bank releases 'Ease of Doing Business Report' after studying the regulatory environment in a country to set up and run a business. It evaluates 190 countries every year and comes out with rankings. In its report released last month India has increased its rankings by 37 places from 137 in 2016 it has climbed to 100 in the latest rankings. This jump is indeed laudable when seen in the context of global economic slowdown.

So before we sit down to analyse the rankings let us look at the report itself and how it is constructed by the World Bank. The ease of doing business rankings are based on a country's performance on ten different

become relatively easier in India. With the introduction of Companies Act 2013 and rapid use of IT services by government departments to issue PAN as well as TAN numbers have resulted in the further easing of time and efforts taken towards the starting of a company. There has been a remarkable increase in the ease of paying taxes. The rules and regulations towards payment of corporate taxes, deduction of provident funds, and deduction of TDS/TCS have become relatively easier.

The recently implemented Banking and Insolvency Code is a pathbreaking step towards corporate governance. Till the implementation of this

**For India, the jump by a respectable thirty places can be attributed to a number of structural changes that have happened in the past one year. Starting a business has become relatively easier in India. With the introduction of Companies Act 2013 and rapid use of IT services by government departments to issue PAN as well as TAN numbers have resulted in the further easing of time and efforts taken towards the starting of a company. There has been a remarkable increase in the ease of paying taxes.**

parameters. These include enforcing contracts, starting a business, paying taxes, resolving insolvency among others. In India, these rankings are based on the business environment in Mumbai and Delhi. A lower rank indicates better performance on that parameter, whereas a higher rank indicates worse performance on the indicator. India's ranking improved in most of the ten parameters over the previous year.

An important point that needs to be emphasized at this point is that in India these parameters are regulated by different agencies across the three

bill the issue of insolvency was not being addressed in India in a structured manner. If a company failed the rules were not clear on how the assets of the company would be classified and distributed. The recently implemented code brings in a new paradigm. The bill clearly states how an asset of a company that has declared insolvency is to be treated. It also sets up special legal mechanism to address the question of insolvency in a time bound manner.

The export import compliance in ports have reduced and the system has become much more efficient. The easing of norms has

**The export import compliance in ports have reduced and the system has become much more efficient. The easing of norms has also resulted in remarkable improvements in trade compliance as well as export import issues. Enforcing contracts has also become easier due to the establishment of the National Judicial Data Grid through comprehensive legislative management. India has achieved remarkable progress in the past two years. Yet the road ahead is more daunting and difficult.**

tiers of government i.e. central, state and municipal. For example, for starting a business, registration and other clearances are granted by central ministries such as Finance and Corporate Affairs. Electricity and water connections for a business are granted by the state electricity and water boards. The municipal corporations grant building permits and various other no objection certificates to businesses. So in order to achieve better rankings means robust improvement in working across all levels of governance.

For India, the jump by a respectable thirty places can be attributed to a number of structural changes that have happened in the past one year. Starting a business has

also resulted in remarkable improvements in trade compliance as well as export import issues. Enforcing contracts has also become easier due to the establishment of the National Judicial Data Grid through comprehensive legislative management.

India has achieved remarkable progress in the past two years. Yet the road ahead is more daunting and difficult. To further improve its business image India must work towards easing land clearances, acquiring land and property and further easing of other regulations. Yet despite the challenges of the road ahead, India will undoubtedly be able to further improve its rankings. (Views expressed by the author are personal)

### TO THE EDITOR

### BJP and tainted MLAs

Editor,

Your column of 3rd November on patronage politics via MLA LAD funds was timely. As always, we are thankful to you for flagging the issue of deep-seated corruption in Meghalaya made possible by unbridled misuse of MLA funds. A brazen Rs 10 crore in five years is a lot of money in the hands of an elected representative to squander. Worse, they bully the officers and underlings to fall in line with their whims and fancies. The system has become totally rotten. There has to be a complete overhaul of the system. The critical question is who is going to bell the cat? Many in Meghalaya who are great admirers of Modi's inspired leadership and back his crusade against corruption, had hopes that perhaps BJP would do the trick. But one is dismayed by the way the State BJP is working at cross purposes--- just to win a few seats here and there. Indeed we sincerely appreciate Prime Minister Modi's indomitable courage

of conviction about rooting out corruption from the country. While we stand rock solid behind him in this arduous mission, we are greatly disturbed by some of the ominous portents when it comes to BJP's quest for power in Meghalaya. For the coming February election, the party leaders in their attempt to gain a foothold in the Assembly (where there is none at the moment), have mindlessly sacrificed the core component of Modi's battle against corruption and good governance. Today, we see the State BJP leaders trying to rope in all kinds of undesirable elements for grabbing power.

Take the example of the 19-South Shillong Constituency where the tainted sitting MLA who is known for large scale corruption, swindling of MLA funds, besides being a known dubious character, is being projected as the party's candidate. This person, it is apt to mention here, was responsible for fomenting communal riot in Shillong in 1992. Despite

appeals from various quarters, these elements refused to withdraw the call for road blockade during Durga Puja festival. This led to the loss of nearly 40 precious lives. He was detained by the State Government under Meghalaya Preventive Detention Ordination and was jailed for six months in Assam. I hope, therefore, that the Prime Minister's crusade against corruption and good governance is not sacrificed for achieving petty political gains. The BJP should make sure that the ends and means are not lost sight of. The temptation to gain power through dubious means will not only have a negative impact on the election prospects of the BJP but also cast aspersions on Modi's own image.

Yours etc.,  
P.Wallang,  
Shillong-4.

### Case of blatant corruption!

Editor,

As a discerning reader of

your esteemed daily, I am amazed by certain intriguing news items appearing in recent weeks. I refer in particular to the RTI expose of misuse of MLA funds in 19-South Shillong Constituency. The RTI applicant is a political rival of the sitting MLA and therefore it is no surprise that he has bravely gone to town with his findings. That he has chosen to do so now with barely a hundred days before the election has a lot to do with electoral politics. Be that as it may, we cannot fight shy of the fact that all is fair in love, war and politics! Having said that, let me add that most people in the constituency had half expected this kind of exposes to embarrass the sitting MLA. Frankly, we subconsciously knew that all these must have been occurring behind our back. The RTI findings tell their own story based on official records as furnished by the Government. Therefore, there can be no counter-argument about the authenticity of the beans spilled by the RTI applicant. I am not amazed at all these

sordid developments. What hits me is the fact that he has cleverly selected a bogus firm to supply materials ranging from sand to computers. This firm, we are told, belongs to a person based at Sohra. It is obviously a plot for siphoning off money made available to the MLA. But what takes the cake is that the entire transaction between this firm and the MLA has taken place in cash. This is a clear evidence that things have been manipulated. Indeed, the government has put a ban on cash transactions beyond Rs 20,000. In this case, how on earth did the MLA pay as high as Rs 34 lakh in cash? The MLA's attempt to defend the indefensible through a press conference to clear his name has compounded his case. Instead of providing documentary evidence to counter the charges brought forth by his political rival, he has chosen to duck under the cover of polemics. To say that the RTI findings are political may be right, but to dismiss them as wrong

and incorrect only help to thicken the air of suspicion that hangs heavy in the constituency. To us, his brave front is an eye wash and it simply cuts no ice.

In this situation, the Government should consider suspending further release of MLA funds to all MLAs against whom there are serious charges of corruption and misuse of public money. It is unlikely that the Government of the day will accede to the plea of the RTI applicant for an official enquiry into these allegations, given the fact that the MLA concerned is an ally of the ruling group. However, the Chief Vigilance Commissioner may act suo-motu for the sake of ending this corruption raj.

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request,  
Shillong-4.

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.

*"Keep your face always toward the  
sunshine - and shadows will  
fall behind you."*

--- Walt Whitman

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.88 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

### Sexual Harassment

SEXUAL harassment at the workplace is now discussed everywhere. A couple of lists have been featured on the social media accusing male professors, research students and student activists of sexual harassment. It has caused considerable disagreement and triggered bitter debate. The names of account holders who had posted the lists are not unknown. If such incidents occur in the higher echelons of academic life, nothing can be more deplorable. The ruling dispensation also gets a bad name. Feminists are sadly divided on such issues. Court rulings cannot be put in the correct perspective. The Delhi High Court has recently ruled that all unwanted physical contact between men and women should be construed as sexual harassment. However, accidental physical contact does not conform to this definition. The Delhi High Court ruling rightly puts the emphasis on intent and intent should be carefully distinguished from consent.

The case tried at the Delhi High Court raises a number of points. A female scientist from the Central Road Research Institute had appealed to the court in April 2005 against the complaints committee and the disciplinary authority in the institution. She alleged that her senior colleague had been unjustifiably cleared off the charge of sexual harassment. She was apparently pushed out of a room by the senior male scientist. The court decided that it was a case of altercation and not sexual harassment though the conduct of the senior scientist was deplorable. Why did the female scientist of CRRRI complain? She says that if she had been a man, she could not have been pushed out. But that cannot be a serious charge. An ethics committee should be set up in academic institutions to back the complaints committee. What emerges from the judicial proceedings is that different instances of sexual harassment should not be lumped together.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Decision on Bihar, Gujarat soon: PM

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today indicated that some decision would be taken soon on various is-sues including the leader-ship in Bihar and Gujarat are shuffle in the union minis-try and reorganization of the AICC. During an informal chat, after he had inau-gramed the two day Chief Min-ister's conference here newsmen asked Mr Gandhi what he was going to do about various pending is-sues as there was not much time left

with the budget ses-sion of Parliament scheduled to begin from February 21. When the Prime Minister asked what were the pending issues, newsmen referred to the leadership issue in Bihar, a possible cabinet reshuffle at the centre and re organization of the AICC. The Prime Minister said "we have to do something. Some things have to be done in a number of areas."

### TO THE EDITOR

### We Want Change!

Editor,  
Everybody speaks of change. But what sort of change they want is what one fails to understand. Change is possible only if we can change our mindsets and habits. If we are really sincere and determined that our state should prosper and develop then before welcoming 2018 let us welcome the New Year with a new outlook for the upcoming elections. Before choosing our representatives let us examine and question ourselves and pray and seek wisdom from God. As the saying goes, "They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval." Accordingly let us cast our precious and valuable votes with the following points in mind. (1) Is the person educated and qualified? (2) Does the person have a mission and a vision? (3) Is the person a social worker or a leader/ law maker? (4) Is the person capable of discussing issues of state with the bureaucracy? (5) Is the person competent to make policies? (6) Is the person free from corruption? (6) Does the person have a

reputation for integrity?

The need of the hour is to elect a person who understands laws and policies. We need a legislator to legislate rules and not a fool or a bully. Voters let us not waste our precious votes without examining the above questions. Let us wake up and think for the betterment of our State, our children and great grand children for a better tomorrow.

Yours etc.,  
Phyllis Rani  
Shillong - 4

### MHIS-A blessing turned curse!

Editor,

I had a horrible experience whilst using the MHIS service that I enrolled for and I am wondering if the general public has to undergo the same stressful procedure. This happened at a well-known hospital (without any intention to tarnish any) within Shillong city. As I had to admit my wife late evening on a Friday, I had to register at the MHIS counter the next morning as they had closed

### Quadrilateralism Policy

# Stemming China?

By Dr. D.K. Giri

"China rises to Conquer" was the catchphrase that echoed around the world, mainly in Asia, after Xi Jinping became the exalted leader of the Communist Party of China at the 19th Congress last month. Buoyed by nationalism and capitalism, twin pillars of Xi's ideology, China aspires for a world role. It seeks to fill the spot vacated by the US that looks more inward, and withdraws from positions of influence. Beijing's strategic thinking is, in the absence of US backing, its neighbours would take an accommodative stance. China is putting this thinking into test by means of both inducements and pressure.

As the investments from Japan and the western countries dwindle, China is stepping into extending loan or investment to the developing countries, mainly in the Asia. Nepalese Ambassador to India Deep Upadhyay said in a seminar: "we have kith-and-kin relation with India, but we would like tap the surplus money that China has."

India faces the brunt of Chinese world ambition, and its jealousy as a competitor in Asia. Beijing wants to scuttle India's regional and global rise. For the fourth time, it has blocked India, the US and other countries' bid to list the mastermind of Pathankot terror attack Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. It plans to build Pakistan at par with India. The China-Pakistan axis is precisely meant to stem India, in Asia's new geo-politics. Some observers in both these countries would say that their friendship is "deeper than the ocean, and taller than the mountains". These are, of course, political hyperboles; there are no permanent friends or foes in international politics. It is national interest that guides relations.

On the other hand, China is abrasive in diplomacy, not making any sacrifices to install itself in the leadership position. It should open its markets, take a magnanimous position on territorial disputes, and be firm with volatile leadership of North Korea and so on. The economic and security concerns vis-à-vis Beijing has not abated. Therefore, India should prepare itself economically, militarily and diplomatically for a long-term rivalry with it.

How is New Delhi preparing to deal with Beijing? Two current

initiatives merit mention in this context. One is the recent visit of Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk last week with his wife queen and one-year-old crown prince. The visit was significant for at least two reasons. It followed the 73-day Doklam standoff between Indian and Chinese armies. Second, Thimpu is New Delhi's close friend. India is Bhutan's largest trading partner, 82% of Bhutan's total imports are accounted for by India and 90% of its exports come to India.

Prime Minister Modi, after assuming office, chose Bhutan to be his first visit abroad. Bhutan does not have diplomatic contact with China. But Beijing wants to bypass New Delhi, in dealing with Thimpu. New Delhi will want to thwart this maneuver, hosted the king to review the 'whole gamut of relations', and to discuss preparation for the golden jubilee celebration of diplomatic ties in 2018.

New Delhi has two other projects with Bhutan, one strategic, and the other economic. It has mooted the idea of BIMSTEC - Bay of Bengal initiative for multi-sectoral, technical and economic co-operation. This project is conceived as an alternative to SAARC, which is defunct owing to irreconcilable differences between India and Pakistan on cross-border terrorism etc.

Bhutan is the key partner in this initiative. BIMSTEC comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. These countries constitute 21% of the world population, totaling 1.5 billion people, and have the GDP of \$2.5 trillion. The second is to tap into the huge potential of hydel power in Bhutan.

After India's flip-flop on Tibet under Nehru, Bhutan remains the buffer between the two major Asian powers, hence becoming the key to India's China strategy. Let us recall that Tibet was kept as a buffer between India and China by the British, but Nehru gave away all our influence over it without reciprocal guarantees from Beijing. Now, New Delhi considers Tibetans as a State-in-exile, where as Beijing treats Tibet as one of its provinces. India's support to and perception of Tibet is like crying over spilt milk. Be that as it may, New Delhi cannot afford to equivocate or fumble on Bhutan, and

must avoid repeating the blunder.

The other grand strategy New Delhi is contemplating is in fact, the brainchild of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who just won a landslide victory to run the fourth term in office. This is the policy of Quadrilateralism involving Japan, US, India and Australia. The project was conceived in 2007, but got aborted next year as Australia developed cold feet about antagonizing China. After a resounding victory in the elections, and in the wake of North Korean missile threat, backed tacitly by China, Abe has revived the project, and other three countries have responded positively.

This is Abe's pet project in Asian Multilateralism. Obviously, China's unilateralism and expansionism drive makes other Asian powers to band together. In an interview, Japanese foreign minister said, "Japan will propose a top-level dialogue with the US, India, and Australia to promote free-trade and defence cooperation across Indian Ocean, from South China Sea to Africa." Japan would like to see deep and substantive cooperation among the four on defence, maritime security and infrastructure development. In 2007, Abe had foreseen an "arc of freedom and prosperity along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent."

The 'Quad', a broader Asian network will allow the free flow of people, goods, capital and knowledge. Its principle is shared and established only the purpose and process have to evolve. For the US, they withdrew from the G-2 joint leadership with China, and wanted to install India as a pivot to their Asia strategy. For New Delhi, it is an extension of joint military exercise called "Exercise Malabar". It was initially between US and India, Japan later joined as a permanent member; Australia and Singapore also have sent their warships. China calls Quad the Asian 'NATO'.

In response to Tokyo's revived initiative on 'Quad', India, unlike in the past, has responded readily. The closer India-

Japan relation, what I call Japindia vs Chinpak has speeded up the new initiative. New Delhi has stated unambiguously that it will be open to any move that aligns with India's interest and promotes its view point. Although Japindia predate NaMo, he has added greater depth and substance. Tokyo would like to look beyond the US, and India beyond non-alignment. New Delhi is ready to embark on any complex geo-political jousting in Asia in order to advance its interest. However, Anthony Yazaki, an expert on India-Japan relations, comments, "for India, embracing Japan is work in progress". But, it is on the right track.

On containing China, New Delhi can out-manuever Beijing. Admittedly, India, as of now, does not have the financial wherewithal to compete in a like-for-like fashion, observed Andrew Small, of German Marshall Fund, an expert of China, US and Pakistan relations. In South-Asia India, does not have outside partners to contain China which makes forays. The OBOR - One Belt-One-Road, the biggest Chinese power game, is not met with any collective response. 'Quad' may provide one.

Significantly, India is embedded in a network of strategic relationships, unlike China, which will surely, have an edge. That is precisely Beijing's concern.

Finally, India could play the Chinese game. China took Japanese and Western investment, by offering its cheap labour, India could do the same. China promises \$85 billion investment in India. So, for India, it need not be a zero-sum geo-politics with China. India could maneuver some of the development accruing out of China's wealth to India's advantage.

At the end of the day, all these boil down to deft diplomacy. Abe said after his election victory, "strong support at home helps one pursue bold policy abroad." Can NaMo say the same after De Mo, GST clutter, and religious vigilantism etc? -INFA

(The writers is Prof. International Politics, JMI)

that the bill had been sent to the billing counter and that once it passes from there we could clear the same and leave the premises. I headed straight to the billing section and requested for a status update and I was informed that all my bills were at the MHIS desk. I knew what was coming as the previous day's thoughts haunted me. However, I calmly approached the desk and requested them for the bill status upon which I was told that a patient had to spend 48 hours before any calculations could be made and that literally meant I had to wait until 5:30PM before they would even look at my wife's file.

I didn't buy that advice as I was of the opinion that it is 24 hours from the time of registration. I expressed the same to the hospital staff sitting at the desk and she retorted, "So, you are going to teach us how to do our job?" I felt a bit humiliated as there were people surrounding the desk and they heard her statement. That was when I decided to dig out information for myself and not be so ignorant about MHIS policies. After some phone calls I was provided with a land-line

number 0364-2507477. I spoke to a very kind gentleman and learnt that as per guideline it was indeed 24 and not 48 hours. After narrating the incident to him, he asked me to pass the phone to the attendant at the MHIS desk. It was only after his conversation with the attendant that my wife's file was taken up at around 2:00PM and the necessary calculations made and then moved to the billing counter. What if I did not get the number I could call to reconfirm my doubts? I would have silently had to wait till 5:30PM before they even opened the file. This is sheer harassment!

I wonder if there is some kind of a benefit that these MHIS desks at different hospitals avail by releasing patients late? Are these MHIS booths-actually intended to ease the burden of the general public-performing their jobs sincerely? Is the information being passed on to the beneficiaries accurate? What are the checks in this regard? Do we have transparency on the amount covered or do we need to agree with the information given to us as a rebate? The government

launched the MHIS Phase-3 in order to lessen the woes of the people in times of distress. Surprisingly, I have only heard negative feedback from people who avail MHIS assistance. A few concerns are (a) incorrect and unclear information (b) long queues and insufficient coverage amounts. I strongly feel that the MHIS team needs to have a helpline number flashed across all hospitals which the general public can call when in doubt. After my experience, I do not know if the people manning these desks at the hospitals are efficient and trustworthy. Once again, I have no intention to tarnish any name in this write up, but this comes as a general concern so that no one else has to face what I did on that day.

Yours etc.,  
Rupert Lyngdoh  
Viaemail

**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.**

# Iewduh: The Eyesore of Shillong

By Barnes Mawrie

Iew or Markets have a special significance for the Khasi people since time immemorial. No wonder the ancient Khasis speak of the Iew ki laiphew-mrad (Market of animals) where humans and animals did business transactions together. That famous market culminated on a sad note when there was total chaos which led the market to be known as Iewluri lura (Market of Chaos). It is not surprising therefore that the Khasis value the market as an age-old institution. In fact, the traditional Khasi reckoning of days of the week is based on market days. Even now, the older generation still keep track of market days like Iew-umni, Iew-lyngka, Iew-nongpoh, Iew-shillong etc. Iewduh of course, is the biggest market as the name indicates.

This is the reason why when our ancestors would establish a market in any place, they would always offer sacrifices to God and seek his divine sanction. Then they would continue to perform the ritual periodically. Thus a market is truly a sacred ground. For this reason, it is expected that no cheating or unfair means be practiced in such places.

Socio-culturally, Iewduh is a place of social interaction between people coming from different parts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. In the olden days, it used to be a privileged place where citizens of the Hima Myllem used to conglomerate and share with each other not only economically but culturally as well. Once a year during the annual

*"Economically, Iewduh is literally the "rice bowl" of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. People from East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Ri Bhoi, come to this place either to sell or buy goods. Every day hundreds of vehicles converge at this important place for daily business transactions. In fact, the business is growing year after year as is seen by the increasing number of shops, traders and customers."*

Sad to say that one of the places in Shillong which has never seen any development or change even with the passage of time, is Iewduh (known to non-Khasis as Barabazar). I have witnessed the same old rickety sheds, the same narrow and water clogged paths, the same dirty drains and felt the same stench. During rainy seasons, the condition becomes unbearable. The market itself is infested with rodents of massive sizes. Considering the fact the Iewduh is a place of great cultural significance, it is unthinkable how the responsible authority has been blind to such a plight and left this place to become an "eyesore" of the city. Perhaps it may benefit the readers to enumerate the multi-dimensional significance of this particular market.

Economically, Iewduh is literally the "rice bowl" of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. People from East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Ri Bhoi, come to this place either to sell or buy goods. Every day hundreds of vehicles converge at this important place for daily business transactions. In fact, the business is growing year after year as is seen by the increasing number of shops, traders and customers. For every Khasi, Iewduh is still the best place for business enterprises. On important occasions like Christmas, Iewduh is literally packed with people. So, if there is one place in Shillong which has the greatest economic significance, it is undoubtedly Iewduh.

From the point of view of religion, Iewduh is not merely a business centre or a place for shopping, but it is a holy ground under the supervision of the Hima Myllem. The Hima has been offering an annual sacrifice to the Shillong deity since the genesis of this market. There is in fact, a place for such a ritual somewhere in the market. This religious significance of a market goes back to that ancient "Market of men and animals." It is believed that this market was ordained by God himself as a manner of expressing the interdependence between

sacrifice, the cultural identity of the people is also displayed. Iewduh is a traditional institution of the Khasi people which pertains to the fundamental essence of their culture and tradition.

Today Iewduh has become an eye-sore of the city. It has turned out to be a matter of shame not only for the Hima Myllem but for the Khasi society in general. Perhaps if we have a leader like Chandrababu Naidu, Iewduh would have been transformed into the most attractive shopping location in the whole of Northeast India. Unfortunately, we have Syiems in the Hima Myllem who have neither a vision nor a sense of mission. To say that there is no finance to develop Iewduh, is not acceptable. We all know that a lot of revenue is generated from the thousands of shops located here. Perhaps the annual revenue would run into crores of rupees. Taking into account the collection of the last ten years, it would be a whopping amount.

I do not want to level any accusations of corruption on the Syiems of Myllem since I still respect our traditional institutions. But what I want to voice here is our concern for the total absence of any sign of development of this place. I believe, nowadays it is not difficult even to get some international funding agencies to take up developmental work of this market. I believe if Iewduh is properly done up with modern planning (shopping malls, public parks, gardens, of course a prominent place for the annual sacrifice), it would definitely become the best tourist attraction of the city. Up to now, there seems to be no master plan for Iewduh for if there is one, we would have known about it by now. It looks like we are condemned to live with the misery of this place for another century. Can the District Council do anything about it? I believe it can, since the traditional institutions come under its purview. I am still optimistic about the future of Iewduh for I believe someday visionary leaders would emerge to change the face of this important place.

*"If you create an act, you create a habit.  
If you create a habit, you create a  
character. If you create a character, you  
create a destiny."*

--- Anthony Robbins

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.89 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2017

### Gun politics in US

EASY access to guns makes mass shootings a regular phenomenon in the US. The killing of 26 people in a Texan Church is the latest such case. Some say that the tragedy is due to a domestic situation. President Donald Trump attributes it to a mental health problem. There is no doubt that a mass shooter is a psychopath. But mental illness prevails in all countries. That does not account for mass shootings as happens in the US. The Second Amendment to the American Constitution gives citizens the right to carry guns and to arm themselves though they are not licensed to kill like James Bond. American politicians are mostly reluctant to question the Second Amendment and fall foul of the formidable gun lobby. Maybe, certain racial codes apply to categorizing shooters as madmen, gangsters or terrorists. There is a school of thought which advocates doing nothing. Another school of thought calls for extreme vetting of immigrants. It has however been seen that immigrants are responsible for few incidents of mass gun shooting. American cinema somehow glorifies the cult of the gun since the days of James Cagney.

What about the situation in India? While there can be no parallels here as far as mass shooting is concerned, we have had trigger happy men from the nouveau-riche class and mainly sons of politicians brandishing their guns to demonstrate power and patronage. The brazen murder of Jessica Lall, a young model by the son of a politician because she refused to serve him drinks at a pub as it was well past the hour, still rankles. Many journalists have been shot for following stories that are inconvenient to politicians and the mafia. The murder of Gauri Lankesh, a journalist, just a few weeks ago is another case in point. Indians too are not far behind as far as gun use is concerned. With the rule of law functioning in the breach and justice going out of the grasp of the common citizen, those who own guns seem to have the best of both worlds.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Bodo ultras continue violence, arson

Bodo extremist set on fire about 136 shanties, eight shops, a lower primary school and a wooden bridge in Anandabazar area of Nalbari district of Assam, a delayed official report said.

High civil and police officials are rushing to spot to study the situation. Security measures were also

further tightened in the area though no person was arrested. Meanwhile, reports of stray incidents of attack on police and others by the extremists continued to pour in from the Bodo inhabited areas of Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division of the state, the report said.

## Terrorism & Extremism

# Kamal's strategic entry

By Dr S Saraswathi

The entry of Kamal Haasan into politics, even before it actually takes place, has raised heated debates over some observations attributed to him regarding "Hindu extremism." He was responding to a query from the Kerala Chief Minister in his weekly column in a popular Tamil magazine in which he mentioned about the existence of "Hindu terror."

What he actually said and what he meant, and the context of his remarks may be left in the domain of his political supporters and opponents at various levels to settle among themselves.

For the general public, the advent of a famous film personality into active politics in a State used to this kind of linkage politics is not any big excitement by itself. But, its timing is significant as the State is undergoing prolonged political uncertainties and awaiting court decisions on many crucial political issues to decide the future of the State's politics. Haasan's plunge into politics with a big bang raising a storm over a loaded statement is bound to receive nationwide reaction for some time.

The controversy has brought out the need to understand the meaning and connotation of the two terms "terrorism" and "extremism" along with associated term "radicalism" which are in common use all over the world and bother governments and people alike. Equivalent terms in Indian languages also need precise definition.

For, they are often used by speakers and writers not to speak of readers and listeners thoughtlessly as synonyms to refer to any degree of disturbance to prevailing thoughts and pattern of life with actual, potential or perceived violence. Terrorism and extremism are different, but are considered as interrelated concepts associated with violence. Loose usage of the terms creates panic and needless exchanges among people. Secondary reports of Haasan's observation are not careful in reporting.

A lawyer from Varanasi has filed a complaint in a local court against the actor for hurting his religious sentiments by his comments linking Hindu religion and terror. Strong reaction from

some members of the Hindu Maha Sabha has added substance to the issue which perhaps would have escaped discussion had it been ignored.

The situation has only pointed to existing political atmosphere and the urgency to cleanse Indian party and electoral politics by wiping out the use of communal, caste, religious, linguistic, ethnic and other such expressions indicating the presence of narrow attachments in political speeches and actions which encourage divisive politics. While real extremists, terrorists, and radicals may not listen to the voice of democratic and peace-loving people, political organisations eager to play a fair political game can join the cleansing operation.

Haasan is reported to have stated that he was aware of the difference between "extremist" and "terrorist" and that he deliberately did not use the latter word. So much the better.

Extremism literally means the quality or State of being extreme or the advocacy of extreme measures or views. It is an ideology considered to be far beyond the acceptable mainstream attitudes of majority of people. The term is usually meant to be pejorative, i.e. to express strong disapproval. However, it can also be used in purely descriptive sense without condemning anything. The term was popularised by centrist sociologists in the 1960s and 70s. Extremists are usually contrasted with moderates or centrists. The first big split in the Congress Party occurred between moderates and extremists. The Freedom Movement in India included both moderates and extremists and not all extremists believed in violence. Moderates believed in constitutional reforms and gradual progress towards freedom while extremists wanted swaraj in one go.

Besides political parties, several religions have split into sects due to differences between staunch adherents to the original beliefs and reformers willing to adjust to changes required.

Several traits of political extremists have been identified from "name calling and labeling" to "threat and

intimidation". They produce extremists in varying degrees of conviction in their ideals.

Violent extremism refers to use of ideologically motivated force to realise some radical ideals. In 2015, the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism was launched. It emphasised the importance of education in preventing violent extremism and radicalisation.

American President Robert Kennedy once stated: "What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant. The evil is not what they say about their cause, but what they say about their opponents".

In these days, extremism is generally associated with uncompromising political and/or religious beliefs. In this sense, it becomes inconsistent with democratic principles though holding some extreme views by itself does not make anybody undemocratic. When these views are sought to be advocated or forced on others with violence or any undemocratic methods, extremism will undermine democracy. Canadian government describes it as "violent extremism" which may become a threat to national security.

Extremism is vociferous or active opposition to a nation's fundamental values expressing intolerance of different views. It is considered as enemy of democratic freedom, but sometimes extremists arise to establish a democratic system in quick and drastic steps.

Extremists can be found all across the world, but many of them have no capacity or will to cause destruction to the society. Such extremists concentrate on converting people to their convictions and cause. In this way, they become unacceptable and targets for individual attack by their opponents, who may too be extremists at another end.

The menace of terrorism is widely recognised and felt. Its extreme form was

experienced in France after the French Revolution during 1793-94 - the period known as the Reign of Terror.

In the post-War world, until the destruction of the World Trade Centre in 2001, there was no consensus on the meaning of terrorism. After this ghastly event, it is widely agreed that use of force or violence to indulge in acts that cause destruction of property and loss of innocent lives are acts of terrorism.

Historically, terrorism is receiving support from organisations nurturing political ambitions or promoting any cause(s) that requires political support. Such organizations need the wherewithal to create terror in those sections considered enemies to the concerned group of terrorists. They may be in active politics or remain an organised group with strong conviction in some political ideology.

Terrorists want to intimidate their opponents i.e. those obstructing their way. They are action-oriented group and need publicity. They are totally opposed to moderation and generally resent mediation as they are firm and uncompromising on their beliefs.

The Terrorism Act 2000 adopted in the UK defines terrorism as "use of threat of action designed to influence the government or intimidate the public which is done for the pursuit of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause and which endangers or causes serious harm to people or property or seriously disrupts or interferes with an electronic system".

Democratic governments and parties want to uproot terrorism. But, the story is different with non-violent extremism that can be encountered without using force or hate speech.

Meanwhile, it is better to avoid using these controversial terms in normal political speeches and election campaigns to malign opposition parties and legally recognised organisations and confuse common people. ---INFA

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

## Tathagata roy can't stay on as Tripura Governor

# Abuse of constitutional position is unacceptable

By Amulya Ganguli

Unlike Ramnath Kovind, who was a model governor before he became the president since he hardly spoke a word out of turn when in the Patna Raj Bhavan, Tathagata Roy has been one of the most voluble holders of the gubernatorial office.

More than all the other governors who have been elevated to the post because of their association with the ruling dispensation, as is the custom in India, Roy, who is the governor of Tripura, has been holding forth freely on whatever catches his fancy.

Moreover, in doing so, he adheres unerringly to the party line which is the BJP's, and is sometimes even a little more extremist, although as the occupant of a constitutional position, he is expected to be neutral.

To overcome this difficulty, he claims to speak as a Hindu even if it can be asked whether a governor can wear his religious affiliation on his sleeve. After all, none other than the prime minister took umbrage over former vice-president Hamid Ansari's last interview in which he referred to the prevailing insecurity among Muslims.

all).

Given this dire prognosis, it is not surprising that Roy once urged his fellow Bengalis to "chuck" their "secular and politically correct values and polarize". Otherwise, they faced annihilation or conversion, he feared, unless the Hindus of Bengal fight like those of Gujarat as in 2002.

It is not known whether the governor gives similar advice to the people of Tripura, but given his anti-Muslim tirades, it is open to question whether he is a fit person to hold a high constitutional position.

That no other party in India would have given him the post except the BJP, which undoubtedly shares his views even if it is less forthright in public at present, is obvious! But his continuance in the present position can only bring shame and disgrace to the governor's office.

This is all the more so when he said that the bodies of Islamic terrorists should be wrapped in pigskins and buried face downwards in pig excreta, adding "no chance of Houris" as a result of such abominable treatment of the dead. Roy

**The governor's concern for keeping a watch on jihadis is understandable because he apparently believes in his hero, Jan Sangh leader Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's belief, as expressed in the latter's diary in 1946, which Roy quoted with approbation, that the Hindu-Muslim problem won't be solved without a civil war. "So much like Lincoln!", Roy concluded. Or Sadhvi Rithambara, who said in an incendiary cassette during the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation: "Khoon kharaba hona hai toh ek bar ho jane do". (If there has to be bloodshed, let it happen once and for all).**

It was possible that Ansari was speaking as an ordinary citizen who had noted the fear and unease among Muslims. But Narendra Modi chose to see it in communal terms.

Since Ansari's reading of the situation did not tally with the government's, Modi virtually welcomed his departure and said in a sarcastic vein that the outgoing vice-president would no longer be bound by any formal constraints. "You can now follow your basic ideology", he told the retiring vice-president with a notable lack of grace at a time of saying farewell.

Roy, however, does not appear to be bothered about any constraints because of his position and has been unabashedly following his "basic ideology". He was freely speaking his mind, therefore, as when he advised the police to keep a watch on those who attend Yakub Memon's funeral since they were bound to be either real or potential terrorists.

The governor's concern for keeping a watch on jihadis is understandable because he apparently believes in his hero, Jan Sangh leader Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's belief, as expressed in the latter's diary in 1946, which Roy quoted with approbation, that the Hindu-Muslim problem won't be solved without a civil war. "So much like Lincoln!", Roy concluded.

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clearly lets his imagination run riot when talking of the Internal Enemies, as identified by his guru, M.S. Golwalkar.

Roy's latest is his belief that the judiciary might ban cremations after the ban on crackers during Diwali. In view of his disgraceful track record, one can expect more such venomous outpourings from His Excellency.

What these comments do reveal, however, is the real face of the Hindutva Gestapo, which the BJP generally tries to keep under wraps lest they scare away the few non-communal voters who still support the party because of a belief in Modi's promise of development. Roy, from this standpoint, is an asset to the "anti-Hindu, anti-national, sickulars".

But why is he so different from the other governors who also have a BJP background but generally choose to remain silent. Is it because he has been allotted a small and relatively unimportant state in a far corner of the country and not a major one in the heartland or near it? Does he regard this as a failure on the part of the Sangh Parivar to recognize his talent for vituperation? Or is he trying to impress the powers that be by spewing saffron venom?

Since he comes from a state where the BJP has little influence, Roy probably feels the need to establish his Hindutva credentials by being even more virulent than a saffronite from, say, North or West India. As the saying goes, naya Musalman zyada gosht khata hai (a new Muslim eats a lot of meat). (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Tips for candidates in upcoming Assembly elections

Editor,  
Through your esteemed daily, I have a few suggestions for the candidates to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Election 2018. I am not an expert in election strategy, but an ordinary voter who empathises with the candidates who lose sleep about contesting the election since there is no guarantee of a positive outcome.

My first suggestion is that the candidate should not waste time and energy to visit every bereaved family in his/her constituency. Sometimes candidates visit more than three bereaved families a day. Your visit would not bring the dead to life. You may say that you go there to pay your last respects. But the first respect is more important when the voter was alive. As soon as the election is over you could have visited every family in the constituency to enquire about their wellbeing; what they lack and what they need. Enquire whether they have

clean water at home or access to affordable healthcare, and what can be done, so that they can live long and vote for you. This will reduce the death rates in your constituency. This will save your time and money as you will not need to visit so many bereaved families in the next election. Secondly, do not give money to the bereaved family because it is an insult to the dead voter as he/she will not get to enjoy the money. He/she will curse you from the grave. Please do not count your votes by the number of bereaved families you had visited, as the other candidates also would have visited the same families.

My second suggestion is do not waste money in organizing tournaments, concerts and picnics just so that the organizers will invite you to speak, dance, laugh etc. This will affect your health and when the time comes for you to speak in the assembly, you instead be spending your time in medical checkups in hospitals and nursing homes. If you do not go to the events, they will think you are just buying them. It is better that you invest

the money somewhere else so that you can use it when there is a delay in getting the money for the sanctioned schemes. If you do this the voters will consider you generous, smart and faithful. For those who seek re-election, it is better they use the money to document their achievements and justify their failures. The document can be distributed to all voters. Most of the voters now can read.

My third suggestion is do not inaugurate toilets, footpaths etc now, because it will make you a laughing stock before the voters. They don't start using toilets, nor start walking only during election time. The voters will think you are coming from outer space and mind you, there is no provision in the Constitution for aliens to contest elections. The opponents too will get a chance to criticize you.

My final suggestion is do not go to church meetings or any religious meetings too frequently during election season. If you think you need to go and worship God, then go as a normal worshipper, sit quietly at the back and pray. God who sees you in secret will reward you

in public. Otherwise God will curse you for making yourself an idol in a place where He is worshipped.

Finally, my plea to all candidates is to please take the above advice seriously. If you don't win the election this time you will win next time.

Yours etc.,  
M Lyndem,  
Viaemail

## On JNNURM red buses

Editor,  
Apropos the front page news item, "Mistake to lease JNNURM buses to private parties: Ronnie" (ST Nov 8, 2017), I wish to comment that the Urban Affairs Minister, Ronnie Lyngdoh, right told the scribes right from day one when he took over the Dept that he would immediately scrap the deal entered upon by his predecessor and the top officials with the private parties which run the buses and the maxi-taxis. Lyngdoh had stated that he found the deal entered upon between the Department and public parties very defective and that it tilted heavily in favour of the latter while leaving the Urban Affairs Department

high and dry. Actually the JNNURM buses have benefited the private parties and most buses are now ready to be condemned.

Till date, Ronnie Lyngdoh, the Minister concerned, has done nothing to rectify the anomalies in the agreements made with the private parties which run the JNNURM buses, commonly known as "Red Buses." Indeed these red buses have got the Urban Affairs Dept running in the red. Yes, in the red because the vehicles earn huge incomes per day but they give peanuts to the Department. Now of course quite a number of buses and maxi-taxis are off the road and are lying somewhere unutilized or in dilapidated condition. This arrangement has enriched only the private parties and some at the helms of affairs in the Department, especially the top officials responsible for crafting the agreement in the beginning. Mr Ronnie Lyngdoh knew the ins and outs of this arrangement while he was not a minister and had questioned the anomalies

in the agreement during one of the meetings where this issue was discussed.

What is urgently needed to end the mess is for the Minister to scrap the former deals (agreements) and make new ones by inserting strict conditions in them to benefit the government and the private parties equally by increasing the rent/lease by double or even triple per day. The other option is to hand over the buses to some other parties with fresh rational agreements. It is a proven fact that Government cannot do business and in fact the JNNURM buses were earlier handed over to the MTC for operation but because of some disagreements and logistical problems the MTC refused to run the buses. But this does not mean that Govt should do a bad deal!

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
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.

*If you create an act, you create a habit. If you create a habit, you create a character. If you create a character, you create a destiny.*

--- André Maurois

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.91 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2017

### Setback for Donald Trump

US President Donald Trump's first anniversary of his very dramatic victory last year was marked by major reverses. The changes in his cabinet have already undermined his political stature. Though he claims that the US economy is on a sound footing, the business honchos in the US are mostly against him. The recent election results have been an acid test for his electoral charisma. The latest debacle was in Virginia's gubernatorial contest. Recently Trump had sullied his image in Charlottesville, Virginia. Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam, a Democrat trounced his rival Republican governor Ed Gillespie. In New Jersey, Democrat Phil Murphy reclaimed the governorship with a victory of several percentage points ousting his rival, Republican governor Chris Christie who had been in power for 8 years. Christie was once a stout ally of Donald Trump. In New York, progressive Mayor Bill de Blasio rode a wave of distaste for Trumpism, to victory.

Does all this signify a revival of political fortunes for the Democratic Party which had been in decline for some time? It has been said that the recent election results are a referendum on American values. Gillespie's victory would have validated Trump's aggressive style of running the presidency. Following Gillespie's defeat, Trump has promptly distanced himself from his candidate. Virginia was a blood bath for Republicans. Gillespie aired ads that fuelled a debate on race, guns, illegal immigrants and the fate of Confederate statues. It is difficult to win without Trump, difficult to fight with him. Republicans had suffered a defeat in the recent past on Obamacare legislation in Congress.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### 'Akalis should have faith in Centre'

Minister of State for Home Mr P Chidambaram today appealed to all political parties to cooperate with the Government in finding a solution to the Punjab problem. Intervening in the debate on a non-official resolution on Punjab by Lt. Gen J S Aurora (Akali Dal), Mr Chidambaram appealed to them to have faith in the Government and give concrete suggestions.

He said as a follow up of the Prime Minister's package on Punjab the Government had called a meeting of all political parties but regretted that this meeting had been boycotted by the Akalis. He wondered how a dialogue could be initiated when parties like the Akali Dal had boycotted the meeting. The Government was holding a meeting with leaders of opposition this evening, he said.

Mr Chidambaram said the Government had already initiated a democratic process by holding consultations and appealed to all parties to join in these consultations. He said the Government had taken action on implementation of the package and the Punjab Governor had told him this morning that village district development committee would be announced this evening or tomorrow. He admitted that there had been an increase in killing of innocent people by terrorists in Punjab during the past two years. The situation had become "complex" due to Mr S S Barnals rule. He said it took almost two years for the Government to execute operation Black Thunder, and release Jodhpur detainees.

# Do People Get The Leaders They Deserve?

By K L Tariang

In less than three months from now Meghalaya will go to the polls for election of representatives to the State Legislative Assembly. Many who have participated in the process soon after the state was created have done so with the fond hope that positive changes will come. This is what actually motivates the citizens to participate in the elections although there is also a sense of pessimism which pervades because down the years the changes as perceived by them have fallen short of the expectations or have not materialised. This time however many may also feel humiliated if they have to drive or walk on the prevailing dilapidated roads towards their respective polling stations. It is unfortunate that even long established roads have today fallen into disrepair. This leaves them with the uncomfortable thought that these we may be regressing instead of progressing. The situation is quite upsetting for the elderly voters as they may have very few opportunities left to participate again in the polls before their innings are over and with the unending hope of positive results for their efforts.

Roads are usually the prominent index of progress and development. Their reach and satisfactory condition would encourage further expansion of activities which contribute towards further growth and advancement. However, if the road condition is poor and there is lack of urgency to overhaul them then it would certainly be a hurdle towards expansion of such activities which could otherwise be nourishing opportunities. The recent report in a local newspaper that a tourism development initiative at Shella village may be adversely affected by a road hurdle is a case in point. Ironically, this old and much used road leading towards this village comes under the LA constituency of a veteran and prominent political leader of the state. This therefore leaves us with the thought that the roads in other constituencies of the state under less known leaders could perhaps be in a far worse condition. Consequently if many roads are in poor condition then one can conclude that the other less pronounced but essential public facilities and services could be inadequate too and therefore there could be disappointments here as well.

One certainly cannot expect the best of

everything and we have learnt to live with such disappointments because, for one, we are a patient lot and secondly we are accommodative enough to adjust with any shortcomings because we believe that these shortfalls occur due to prevailing complexities within the system even though these may be self created. Nevertheless, under whatever circumstances, it would be expected that many such disappointments should have been eased to a reasonable extent by now, more so by this present government which has had a long period of stability under a single continuous leadership. If instead the results are contrary to the expectations then it does rule out government stability as one of the contributory factors towards good governance and efficient delivery as often asserted. Conversely it could be that

opposition reflects sincerity of purpose and also changes people's perception of their seeming indifference if any because, they are likely to be in government too where they are also expected to effectively deliver.

Meanwhile, speculations are also rife as to the reason for this poor aggressive stand as opportunism post election is not ruled out since politics does make strange bedfellows. There had been instances when opposite sides fought against each other before the elections only to reconcile soon after and join hands to form the government ostensibly in the interest of the people. But there are ambiguities as to what people would gain from such post-electoral coalitions.

From what is assessed lately, it appears that there is a growing

representatives accountable during their term which contributes to what we perceive as apathy on their part instead.

Under the prevailing atmosphere one wonders sometimes if Joseph de Maistre, the French scholar, lawyer, and diplomat in the eighteenth century was right when he said, "In a democracy, people get the leaders they deserve," or could there be a veiled meaning to the statement which is beyond other interpretations.

In the light of what has been stated above, we have to consider whether the call to educate, organise and agitate in a democracy would assume significance. Education is a prerequisite as only then can people organise themselves in a more guided and meaningful way. But there is still a lot of distance to cover in order to make the reach of refined education universal. It is also still vague and incomprehensible as to whether or when such a goal will be reached as it is not certain if the present approach towards this is on target. As such any organisation which intends to delve wholly into the realm of activities mentioned will have to explore new territory where the road map is not always reliable.

Considering the complexity of the matter, it is uncertain as to what the immediate future holds but as of now, to vote or not to vote in the election is not the question since we still need representatives regardless of who or how they are. In any case, it would be unfair to tar all of them with an unflattering brush because there are representatives who are public spirited, hard working and highly competent. These will be more responsible and productive if we have democratic engagements with them especially on matters concerning the larger good. We hope for more of such representatives to emerge and that the two way relationship is strengthened through a greater use of informed and systematic reasoning about the most important needs of the people. As the saying goes, 'amidst dark clouds and drening showers there will also be unblemished sunny days which we can take advantage of.'

**Education is a prerequisite as only then can people organise themselves in a more guided and meaningful way. But there is still a lot of distance to cover in order to make the reach of refined education universal.**

such stability has not been effectively capitalised upon by those in the present government to especially foster collective thoughts which would otherwise provide constructive and meaningful proposals towards positive outcomes. Hence it could be an opportunity lost which may never be regained.

When such disappointments occur, it is but natural that those at the helm of affairs in government will face public ire since they have the mandate to deliver the public goods and that too suitably. However, there is a growing realisation now that the representatives from the opposition parties down the years and presently also cannot absolve themselves of blame either. While their raising of public issues during the short Assembly sessions is laudable and criticisms made individually as reflected in the media reports are appreciated, we expect them to be more aggressive on the ground by taking along the people with them whenever necessary, to take on the government on its failures. These aggressive steps should not necessarily be only at the fag end of their term before the elections. An aggressive

disillusionment with our leaders regardless of which side they belong to. What is seen as their inefficient delivery has certainly led to a sort of pessimism that things will not change for the better but probably for the worse after every election. To be too idealistic and optimistic that change for the better is around the corner is again unrealistic. For many, democracy is still seen as a once in five year electoral jamboree without realising that it should instead give space for vigorous public reasoning and for expanding public understanding of issues involved, where grievances should be widely aired. Moreover, if the demand for societal needs is superseded by the demand for personal needs as expected in a society where people are subjected to deprived economic situations then this will be exploited to the hilt by those who continue to seek power but who in the first instance are responsible for such an unfavourable environment. Above all, it could be our own complacency, indifference, lack of cohesiveness and our failure to hold our

# Pollution Catastrophe Think beyond Delhi

By Shivaji Sarkar

Each time Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) suffers smoggy conditions, the courts, National Green Tribunal and now the Environmental Pollution Control Authority (EPCA), come up with impractical ideas to punish citizens.

It also overlooks the fact that Delhi's weather is impacted by its neighbourhood - Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal and even Pakistan. Industries or agriculture there cause problems for Delhi. Penalising farmers for burning stubbles is most impractical. The farmers are in distress and there is no cheaper solution to burning of paddy residues. A government that does it would face severe political implications.

It has also been forgotten that industries around Delhi have been growing since 1980s. It's the highest concentrated industrial and populated area that went on increasing with competitive politics among the neighbouring States. Fog in Delhi started in mid-1980s. It became smog later.

The idea of increasing parking charge has robbed the citizens to benefit parking mafia. Now quadrupling it to Rs 400 a day helps none but the mafia again. Previous studies have found that vehicular traffic contributes not more than two per cent of carbon emission. Besides, one pays hefty parking fee at the time of purchase of vehicles. It is not counted while suggesting such irrational charges. After such hefty fee, parking ought to be free in Delhi. Every problem should not be a way to dump penalties on citizens, who are not at fault.

Then there was the EPCA suggestion for reducing metro fares which went unheard. The Odd-Even II in April 2016 had miserably failed. Despite that once again Delhi has to suffer it. It has not succeeded anywhere in the world.

While the agencies focus on Delhi they forget about Ferozabad and Moradabad, which have ten times higher particulate matter than Delhi. Who cares for such remote places! It would not help them be in the eyes of media blitzkrieg.

Likewise, the NGT order of banning 15-year-old petrol vehicles and 10-year-old diesel vehicles is another quixotic idea. Such steps are not taken even in the most affluent and advanced countries. There they do not mind driving even a 40-year-old vehicle. Such thoughtless decision helps the car manufacturers - a process that is not less environmentally pollutant - rake in profit.

But the agencies forget that dumping of usable vehicles of any age creates problems adding to severe pollution and ruins what in India is known as the recycling industry. It robs lakhs of their jobs and prevents wealth formation. This apart such EPCA or NGT quixotic rules lead to rent seeking by the police and transport authorities. It irks the citizens - disorganised voters, and builds up wrath against the system.

It is just the opposite what the UK has done in September 2017. It has set a 40-year-mark and allowed vehicles older than 40 years to skip an annual test costing pound 54.85 to check if they are roadworthy. It saves the UK of enormous dumping space and environmental pollution. Additionally, it adds to the wealth of the citizens.

The fledgling Indian economy cannot withstand quixotic decisions. Petrol, diesel, battery or any other fuel is equally pollutant. But till such time a viable transport system is

available, there is no reason to disrupt the nation.

Interestingly, this time the agencies have found out that vehicles raise dusts. The reality is this nation builds bad roads that are uneven, full of potholes, no method for cleaning and worse footpaths. Each of these adds to the dust. Swachha Bharat without properly maintained roads is not possible. The Supreme Court order on vacuuming and repairing of roads is hardly followed. The three Delhi municipal bodies have only 19 sweeping machines!

It is true that the number of private cars is steadily rising. But who is responsible? The citizens have to move out. The public transport system is awful and expensive. The metro travel costs have increased with October increase to around Rs 200 or more a day, including the last mile. A car costs almost the same for an average 40 km travel. In New York, the subway metro charges remain highly affordable for decades.

It is a governance failure. In fact, Delhi authorities have not been able to obtain new buses since 2009-10 and operate less than half the buses. The Ola/Uber taxis have moody fares and not easily affordable with their surge prices. Everybody thinks in terms of the rich. What would the poor do? The odd-even makes their buses overcrowded and they cannot travel by expensive metro. The additional parking fee burdens their two-wheelers too.

Delhi has to reduce parking charges. Owning a car is a compulsion and not an indication of being rich as everyone has to travel to work.

Kolkata, Chennai or Mumbai too have pollution. Thoughtfully they did not resort to thoughtless Delhi solutions. Commuting remains affordable in these cities. Delhi has not learnt from them. It is the problem of the nation's large cities. It needs practical approach. But mostly the solutions are mooted in a way that it benefits one or the other organised mafia. While the nation bothers for Delhi, it forgets the dust, degradation and health problems that cement industries in hilly regions of Himachal create.

So pollution is not just the problem of large cities. Away from prying eyes, various States are taking steps without caring for pollution. Solutions can neither be piecemeal nor quixotic. This time the sheet of smog is spread far and wide from UP to Pakistan. Air pollution during winter months has become a large problem of northern Indian sub-continent. How would Delhi-specific steps clean the region? Farm practices in Pakistan are not different.

India is an aspiring super power. It needs to call for a regional solution. Myopic ways of concentrating in Delhi will not solve it. The steps suggested by authorities are half-baked and have implications on economy. It should be avoided. The nation needs concrete measures to tackle the severe air pollution. It has to think beyond Delhi, vehicles and punitive measures that lead to rent seeking. Let organisations such as NGT or EPCA be manned by professionals. For clearing the air these should not throw spanners or make India an unpredictable market but concentrate on comprehensive regional studies. The aim should be to help growth and not stall it with high costs and knee-jerk reactions. ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### MBoSE syllabus revamp!

Editor,

So the MBoSE is in the process of overhauling the entire syllabus from Class I to Class X and has floated the expression of interest which has generated a response from leading publishers from across the country who then submitted their manuscripts for further action.

Now, why should the MBoSE shop for manuscripts when the National Council Of Educational Research And Training (NCERT) syllabus is already there? Maybe because doing business with NCERT will not give the required cut or slice to those who want the revamp? MBoSE textbooks are not at par with NCERT textbooks and hence for the majority of students studying in schools under MBoSE, there is an automatic disadvantage for them when it comes to sitting

for competitive exams like NEET, JEE, etc., simply because NCERT syllabus equips the student to perform better in such exams than the MBoSE syllabus does. This in turn generates a positive impact for their future career. And that too at a cheaper price than 'leading publisher's syllabus. It seems that the student's future is not really a priority for the ones going ahead with this revamp!!

Yours etc.,  
A Lyngdoh,  
Via email

### A State of Festivals

Editor,

A sort of 'tourism promotion' of the state by authorities of the government through the Cherry Blossom Festival that is currently being held here is ironically becoming a laughing stock on social

media platforms. People are criticizing the way public money is being spent. Those who are true experts in the tourism industry will agree that such festivals have nothing or very little impact to the tourism sector here. Our roads that are the lifeline to every nook and corner of the State are in a shameful condition and lie unrepaired. The question here is, what exactly is the goal of holding such a fanfare festival? The tourism and the forest department have all the money in the world to spend for such unproductive feasts while our budding tourism entrepreneurs have to fend for themselves with no financial assistance whatsoever. Perhaps these festivals are a ploy to loot public money than to promote tourism.

Yours etc...

Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong

### Vote for Change!

Editor,

We have three months to go for the 13th Assembly election. Some aspirants have made up their minds which boat to sail on while others are not in hurry. It's a wait and watch situation for reasons best known to them. But the electorate this time has learned so much from past experiences and is determined to vote for a change. They are done with the present government. In the last few years people have become wiser, more sensible and much more aware of what is going on around them. They are more conscious of their rights thanks largely to various social media.

It is worth mentioning here that according to some observers, 30% of the electorate are the intellectuals and educated class who understand good

governance. All they want is a functioning and corruption free government. About 20% are those who vote in favour of someone because he or she is a relative or a friend. (self interest, indifferent attitudes towards performances of the elected). Another 20% are the merry making class who just go with the flow. The louder the party is the better. They are ignorant, insensitive and oblivious of what the future will become when we are ruled by criminals. The next and the last category of electorate which constitute 30% are the migrants which includes the infiltrators. Their interest is to establish themselves here as permanent settlers (who through some notorious politicians, to serve his selfish interests i.e to gain vote bank has granted these migrants the right

to settle here). Now which category are you in?

Good governance is not about distributing gifts (a way to woo the voters). It is not about building or installing statues or busts. It is not about organizing social meets, inauguration of various useless projects and countless numbers of festivals. What better excuse than the chance to squander public money. Indeed this is how public money has been drained out year after year with the hefty portion finding its way into the politicians' pockets. So let us all hope that the 2018 election brings a wind of change.

Yours etc.,  
M.L  
Kharmawphlang,  
Shillong-4.

**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.**

# 'I was in awe of Hazarika'

**D**ocumentary filmmaker **Joor Baruah** grew up in the Brahmaputra plains. But his inquisitiveness always made him wonder about the life and culture of the unseen "beautiful people" of other northeastern states. *Adi: At The Confluence*, a documentary on the tribal Adi people residing along the Himalayan border of India and China, is the outcome of his quest.

Born in Assam, Baruah has been deeply influenced by the life and works of his uncle, Dr Bhupen Hazarika. For Baruah, music was in the family. His mother, who was an active member of the IPTA movement and a renowned Assamese singer, also influenced young Baruah's thoughts. In fact, "I inherit my passion for music from her," he says.

After MBA, Baruah pursued a career in management consulting. Though he did reasonably well, he felt a void.

Baruah wanted to pursue social and creative projects. In 2012, the year his father died, he dropped out of the rat race, came back, spent time in a monastery in Arunachal Pradesh and then moved to Berkeley California where he studied Buddhism and helped the Nyingma community start a school for mind studies in downtown Berkeley.

"After that I got a fellowship to complete a two-year M.A. in filmmaking from University of California, Santa Cruz and spent an intense two years studying filmmaking. In 2017 I was selected as one of the twelve filmmakers for the Investigative Reporting Program in the School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley," he said in an email interview.

Now, Baruah is in India to complete the full-length version of *Adi* as part of a Ministry of Broadcasting and Public Service Broadcasting Trust film fellowship. "I want to continue working for northeastern issues and split my time between northeast India and California."

Baruah tells *The Shillong Times* about the beginning of *Adi*, his other works and platform for documentary makers in India.

**Both your parents had a long association with films and filmmaking. Who among the two has influenced you the most? Anyone else other than parents who has influenced you and your work?**

My mother Kavita Baruah (Rose) was one of the first few women singers to record Assamese songs like Gaduhli Ahil Tora Jilikil, Radha Sura Phul Guji (tea community folk song) for the label of those times, His Masters Voice (HMV), in their makeshift recording set-up in Guwahati.

She recorded songs for films like Prathama Prohoro Ratri (with Ila Bose for the 1961 film *Shakuntala*) and All India Radio. She was also closely involved in the making of various Assamese films by Bhupen Hazarika contributing to various aspects of production and music.

Filed in Assam and Tollygunge, Kolkata — where she lived and studied with her brother, some of these productions include *Lotighoti*, *Pratidhyoni*. *Chik*



A scene from *Adi* and the director (below left); during shooting of the documentary



Mik Bijuli, Erabator Xur and Mon Proja Poti (co-produced by her husband, my father Upendra Kumar Baruah).

My mother also acted in *Chik Mik Bijuli*, narrated and sang Bihu with Moghai Uja for *Pratidhyoni* and performed folk dances for *Erabator Xur*. In her youth, she was an Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) activist and worked alongside luminaries like Hemango Biswas. My mother inspires me to value indigenous culture and use art for social change.

Apart from his contribution to the North East as an architect, my father's socio-cultural works include production of the early Assamese movie *Mon Proja Poti*, involvement with the Civil Rights movement in Chicago in the 60's culminating in authoring of 'A Portrait of A Gandhian — A Biography of Dr. Martin Luther King' with foreword from Mrs King and Mrs Gandhi. My father inspires me to pursue projects related to social justice.

I am also inspired by the work of Santiago Alvarez, Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Spike Lee, Bhupen Hazarika, Satyajit Ray and Heubert Sauper.



## TALKING POINT

**What prompted you to delve into the subject as in *Adi*?**

Though I grew up in the valley I would always engage with and learn about the ways of life of the beautiful people of the surrounding states. I think I developed an interest in tribes and folklore from my mother. I also grew up hearing my uncle, Dr Bhupen Hazarika's songs like Tirap Ximanto and Koto Juwanor Mrityu Hol about the 1962 Indo-China war. These songs would echo in my mind and I would wonder about the people in the far away villages of Arunachal Pradesh.

When I was trying to finalise a subject for my filmmaking thesis at University of California, I decided to focus on the Adis of Arunachal, especially with the recent developments related to the Indo-China border, the river Siang and intersection of their indigenous culture and modernity.

Essentially a series encounters with the Adis in villages near the old town of Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh, the documentary *Adi | At The Confluence* (short version) has already been screened in over 30 international film festivals in 10 countries with English, Greek and Spanish subtitles. It has also bagged awards in six festivals, including Best Documentary awards at 15th Santa Cruz, California and 8th Hamilton, New York Film Festival; Edmund Hillary Award at the 10th Mountain Film Festival Sierra Nevada, California; Best Newcomer Award at the International Academic Forum (IAFOR) Documentary Awards, Japan; and Emerging Filmmaker award at the BLUM Center for Emerging Economies. I am now excited to be working on its feature length version.

I am thankful to the Ministry of Broadcasting and the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT) for commissioning the feature length version of *Adi*. The creative treatment and the narrative style of a feature length film are different from a shorter length version. The subject involved is multi-layered with intersections between issues of identity, land (territory)

and water (environment).

In the short version I decided to portray the story in the form of a series of encounters. I am still working on finalising my approach for the longer version but I am hopeful that I will get more frames to narrate the story. Also, the feedback that I have received on the short version from juries and audiences of the festivals and the PBS POV as well as UC Berkeley IRP filmmakers workshops has given me new ideas that I want to incorporate.

**Adi has a strong political message too. Do you think working as a film fellow under the ministry will dilute the message in the film? Will you be under pressure of making the film in a particular way?**

Hopefully not! PSBT (in partnership with the Ford Foundation and Prasar Bharati) has been the flagship organisation providing a platform for documentary filmmakers in India. Led by veterans like Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Kiran Karnik, Fali S Nariman, Sunita Narain, Sharmila Tagore and Rajiv Mehrotra, I am confident that PSBT will extend freedom of content and creativity.

**Are you writing the script? Who are you planning to cast?**

Yes. My script is now being reviewed by experts. I plan to work with the same participants that were involved in my shorter version with perhaps a few new ones. I am privileged that my interlocutors and experts on Arunachal Pradesh and Assam involved in the film include cultural activist Oshang Ering, writer Kalim Borang, environmentalist Pradip Bhuyan, journalist Tongam Rina and political analyst Nani Bath, among others.

**Is there any time frame to finish the film? Will you venture into more feature films or continue with documentary?**

I aim to complete the film within the first quarter of 2018. I have a dream to work on a fiction film soon. I am sketching out a few probable story ideas and intend to develop them into scripts. Hopefully I will be able to find a producer who will trust and support me.

**There are many documentary filmmakers in the NE as well as other parts of India. But good documentaries are hardly screened though there are sincere viewers. What do you think about the market in India?**

India has made good progress but can do better to create alternate channels for documentary viewers. Networks need to provide more channels dedicated to documentaries. Leading Indian channels can and should devote more time for documentaries and serious cinema.

Film festivals can create a space for documentaries in addition to films. It is good to see Video on Demand (VOD) platforms like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime getting popular but the content can be better curated to meet regional needs as well. Fortunately, film festivals dedicated to documentaries Full Frame Festival are emerging.

I think India is now going through

emergence of documentaries as a serious medium for education, infotainment, activism and social change.

**Your mother is a renowned singer. What role has music played in shaping your thoughts or you as a person? What role does music play in your films?**

My mother loves folk music. She would learn from and sing with folk artistes like Protima Pandey and Aroop Baruah (son of late Pramathesh Barua). Her personality and music inspire me every day. She decided to stop singing commercially early and hence our new generation does not know much about her originals.

Perhaps I will convince her to record a few songs again. She guided me and my cousin Niyor Hazarika in the making of a musical album 'Brothers' where we sang seven songs as a tribute to the work of the famous brothers Bhupen and Jayanta Hazarika. I inherit my passion for music from her.

I feel music or for that matter sounds or silences are integral narrative elements for documentaries and films. I like to use music and sound in a way that is subtle and does not force the audience to feel a certain way. For *Adi* I have had the privilege to work with Berlin-based Israeli musician Ittai Rosenbaum who composed original pieces inspired by the Adi rhythms and Paul Zahnley who did the sound mix at the famous Disher Music in San Francisco.

I also remember enjoying directing the music for *Vanastree* (Women of The Forest) a documentary by Kelly Sky and Megan Toth where I used the original compositions of sarod maestro Tarun Kalita from Assam.

**You have worked with Dr Bhupen Hazarika. How much influence does he have on you/your work?**

My personal relationship apart (as his nephew), I am a fan of Dr Bhupen Hazarika like million others and continue to relish and discover his work every day. Professionally, I got the opportunity to learn from him when I worked with him during the making of the docu-series *Glimpses of The Misty East* subjects ranging from Mohjuj in Morigaon (Assam's traditional bull fight) to the Syiems (Khasi judicial system in Meghalaya).

My memory of him during that time was as of a filmmaker (than a musician). I was in awe of the way he would interact with other artistes, make them feel comfortable and get the best interviews or performances out of them. My favourite session was his interaction with Padmashri Helen Giri, Khasi musicologist and historian from Meghalaya over the fireplace of Hemen Baruah's house in Shillong.

It was an experience of a lifetime. I am sure the years of growing up hearing his music, watching his films and reading his lyrics will have some influence on my creative work. I don't think about that much. But his life and work (especially in Assam and Kolkata, before he moved to Mumbai) is truly an inspiration for millions of people, including myself.

## Growing Migration in Nongpoh

**M**igration, which is a worldwide issue from time immemorial, is commonly understood as the mobility of individual, group or community from one place to another place.

A number of development issues has emerged in the literature on migration, most notably relationship between migration and urbanisation, industrial growth, agriculture, family structure, gender roles and ideology, among others. One of the characteristics of migration is its relationship with development (Robbin, 1996A).

Migration has been perceived as an important component of social and economic change. Like in Nongpoh town, where population boom and diverse patterns of growth reveal the direct impact of migration on population size.

Nongpoh town being one of the areas which are considered as the main economy place has recorded a growing concentration of migrants. The predominant reason for migration seems to be economic in this place.

Nongpoh town development is a multifaceted phenomenon with multiplier linkage and ramification. However, we have seen the fluctuating trends in these recent years.

Migration is a two-way process. It is a cause of development as well as cause for development (Simmon, 1984). Infrastructure and better services have led to migration trends of different people coming and residing in Nongpoh town.

Nongpoh town acts as the major economic base and provide diverse employment opportunities. The employment potential has promoted the development of the town. This has resulted in the concentration of social, economic and commercial activities in the town. Consequently it is attracting



Road connectivity, expansion of commercial hub and better healthcare in Nongpoh are fuelling migration

vast population from rural areas, with the availability of jobs, transport, educational and several other amenities and facilities.

Intra district, inter district and interstate migration are taking place in the town. Mounting number of construction of new buildings, expansion of commercial and residential land, more roads connecting villages, good educational and healthcare infrastructure are

among the major rationales which have acted as motivating factors for migration in the area.

Hence the main reason for migration is rooted in the social, economic and political opportunities.

The phenomenon of migration occurs due to variety of reasons. Giving the continual increasing of migration from different parts of the country, it is having a potent effect on the native society, its

people and the environment that requires detailed investigation into who are coming to this place and what is the impact of these settlements on the native society.

(A study by Dr Sandeep Gupta, Assistance Professor, and Phiralin Amy Marsing, PhD Research Scholar at University of Science and Technology in Meghalaya)

## Envoy from Ukhrul feted

**M**asakui Rungsum (*second from left in picture*), the Indian Ambassador to Zimbabwe, was recently facilitated at his hometown, Lamlang in Ukhrul district in Manipur by Tangkhul civil organisations.

Masakui is not the first from the Tangkhul Naga community to serve as ambassador. Late Major Ralengnao Khathing served as Indian Ambassador to Burma in 1972. Primrose Raikhan, daughter of Mazachang Raikhan of Talui village in the district, served as India's Ambassador to Portugal in 2008.

Currently, out of 90 diplomats serving as ambassadors round the world, LD Ralte and Nengcha Lhouvum are from the North East. Ralte serves as Indian ambassador to Philippines and Lhouvum is ambassador to Indonesia.

**Masakui's struggle**

Narrating his struggle as a student, on the day he was facilitated, Masakui recalls

how his mother supported his education by selling guavas. Lamlang Leisandung, Lamlang Seikhor, Lamlang Pharung, Lamlang Happy Ground and Lamlang Gate are places popular for guava plantation. His younger brother, who served in the paramilitary also supported him financially while in college.

While studying BA at St Edmund's college in Shillong, Masakui stayed at 8T hostel. Humble and down to earth, he was like any other student. He played volleyball. He recalls that once he could not go home during Christmas owing to financial constraints. He cried. Masakui, as Ambassador of India told the media in August this year that Zimbabwe should strive to get \$400-500 million aid from India out of the \$10 billion credit line for African countries. Recently, on behalf of India, Masakui differed with President Robert Mugabe's UN policies.

(Contributed Zimik Wungkui)



# On a memorable road trip

(Continued from last week)

Having slept soundly the previous night, we woke up fully recharged for the journey on October 21. Our plan that day was to reach Siliguri, an ambitious plan because we had to make up for the shortfall of 190 km from the previous day's journey. Instead of taking the bypass, we decided to drive through the city, which would connect us with highway AH47.

The scenic part of our journey on the stretch till Padora was like a green landscape. Padora is a small junction town on the road, which has the diversion to Jhansi, bypassing the town of Shivpuri. On our road-trip we made the conscious effort to bypass towns wherever possible, as we were completely dependent on Google maps. Turning left at the junction, and bidding adieu to AH47, we drove onward to join highway NH27. After that, the road conditions improved drastically.

While lazing away on the seat next to the driver, I suddenly thought how a road trip can be unpredictable, and once over, how indescribable. It is indeed because the exhaustion that we experienced after a close shave with a tempo and the fatigue after hours of journey on the road cannot be described in words.

By 9am, 40 km from Jhansi, we pulled over for a break. This was more from the temptation to try another dhaba considering our previous day's experience. We settled in for a brunch at the dhaba, but the experience felt short, needless to say, didn't meet our expectations at all.

By the time we entered Uttar Pradesh, we had a completely different impression of the road conditions that we may encounter. We were expecting bad roads, but our impression of the roads changed in Uttar Pradesh.

The entire stretch of NH27 was smooth. The area around the road seemed densely populated; hence the high volume of traffic, but that didn't slow us down.

We moved at a good pace through the slow moving vehicles, maintaining a steady speed be-

tween 80 km to 100 km per hour.

Around about 4:30pm, we entered Lucknow. This was one amazing city. As we drove through the city, we could see it had a lot of history, but at the same time this ancient city like most Indian cities was touched with modernity. Lucknow appeared organised and clean; one could easily compare its infrastructure with any one of the global cities around the world. With our enthusiasm, we had to remind ourselves not to stray too far into Lucknow and loose time. As we were bound by our deadlines, we had to keep focused on the GPS. The best part of going through the city of Lucknow was that it was very well-planned and straightforward. We drove through the city to the interception, which meets with highway NH27. We had to be careful to take a left turn on NH27, because making a right would take us to Delhi.

We traversed several places in Uttar Pradesh and gathered unique experiences.

At one spot on the road, after the tollgates and the bypass, it was busy again with idol processions for immersion. Again, one lane of the road was shared by traffic from the opposite direction. At certain portions of the road, it was completely dark. Not a car in sight, travelling on the lonely stretch of the road, our minds began playing games with stories told by truckers and the fuel pump manager.

Then glancing at our clock, we noticed it was already passed 11pm, and our ambition to drive through Bihar was starting to wane. We began making plans to stop for the night, and the only available place or option for us was in Kushinagar. And after Kushinagar, we would be entering Bihar, and in between there were no towns or cities. And so we continued driving towards Kushinagar, and by 11:30pm we entered Kushinagar. There we did an online search for a hotel and found a place called Olive Tree. This hotel was right on the highway, in Kushinagar, but it was closed. We decided to knock on the doors of the hotel for someone to open them. When one of the staff opened the doors, we enquired about the rooms but did not like the sight of it. So we



(Top) Through the red canyon range in Madhya Pradesh; an old fort in the state and a group of banjaras, or nomads, with all belongings on camels in search of a new destination.

*The best part of going through the city of Lucknow was that it was very well-planned and straightforward. We drove through the city to the interception, which meets with highway NH27. We had to be careful to take a left turn on NH27, because making a right would take us to Delhi*

started looking for an alternative. But it was very nice of the staff at the hotel to recommend another hotel called Adelphi Grande. This place had good online reviews; and we drove to it. The hotel was in the center of town. In the dark we concluded that the area around the hotel appeared to be catering to South East Asians.

There were signboards in Japanese or Korean, and the area had some western influence. When we reached the hotel, it was already fully booked. Unfortunately we got there late, the hotel had just checked in a bus full of Russian tourists. We went off to sleep only to be awoken by guests leaving the hotel and boarding their bus. These were the Russian guests who had checked in the previous night. We were very curious as to where were they going? Too tired to think or analyse, went back to sleep. Slept like a log.

(To be continued)

(Contributed by Prasanta Phukan)

# NE opens up opportunities

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have published about tourist guides as career option in the last edition. This time, we will talk more about the topic as Meghalaya has immense potential for tourist guides. There are also scopes for state-level guides or district-level guides.

The state-level guides will also be eligible to apply for licences to work as regional guides provided they qualify (a) the common selection process based on merit as detailed above for the selection of various categories of RLGs and (b) the examination and viva voce after the training. The applicant should be at least 20 years of age on the date of the first advertisement appearing in the media for selection.

The assessment of the requirement of Tourist Guides, region-wise, could be as per the inbound tourist arrivals, number of ASI monuments, available licensed guides, growth potential, availability of assignments to guides and all other relevant factors and would normally be done once in two years by the Ministry through a pre-defined process involving the stake holders. The process of selection would be undertaken by the Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management, Gwalior or any other Institute designated by the Ministry of Tourism for conducting this process.

An entrance test would be conducted to evaluate the general intelligence and suitability of applicants for admission to guide training. The contents of test would be knowledge of monuments/tourism destinations in the region, Indian history and Indian Culture; General

Knowledge for Linguist Guides, the written test would be conducted in the concerned foreign language.

The area of operation of the Regional Level Guides are as under:

**North East:** States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim & Tripura.

**North:** Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Union Territory of Chandigarh.

**South:** Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and UTs of Pondicherry & Lakshadweep.

**Western & Central:** States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gu-



jarat, Goa and Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu.

**Eastern:** West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

One may become guides approved from the ministry or they may be independent. Meghalaya and NE has many tourist destinations and our students may think of becoming tourist guides and earn their livelihood. (With inputs from the Ministry of Tourism website) (Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkrjanjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, NOVEMBER 12, 2017

Moon sextile Venus on your solar return chart suggests a good year ahead. You're coming shortly into a solid building period of your life, so for this year use the influence to dig into what you really hope to accomplish in your life and pay attention to learning how to bring your deepest inner dreams into a solid and viable source outside yourself. Mid year brings some solid opportunities and 'good fortune' and allows you to bring about conditions that enhance and support your growth. It also greatly intensifies your outgoing and extroverted need to explore. Since partnerships are dynamically active as well during the year making sure that you keep working within the confines of a commitment and partnership promise a rewarding and empowering 12 months. There are ways to honor both your sparkling curiosity and your obligations to others in your life and bring strength to both.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

The week begins on a positive note. The planetary configuration indicates that your efforts, confidence and courage brings success in monetary gains and your energy increases for work projects. Your outlook on life has been a little more serious and responsible. In the past while, you might have reached out to others in an attempt to validate yourself, looking for ways to boost your confidence. Health is likely to prosper and medical procedures or programs, if necessary, are more likely to be successful.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

This week brings love, harmony and entertainment in professional and personal relations. Your physical body and mannerisms are a focus. There would be a newfound identity and a realistic understanding of your own limitations and your capabilities as well. In terms of career and projects, outward signs of progress would lay a foundation for future success and progress. Lifeless or outworn relationships may have been especially hard to bear for you. You could take up some form of physical program that completely changes the way you feel about yourself. The things that give you joy and positive feedback figure prominently and you feel renewed and regenerated.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

This phase brings success in professional and personal relations. You would feel particularly strong and personally powerful. There is no such thing as playing the victim, you're the victor and you feel it. You enjoy an increased ability to concentrate and focus on what really matters to you. It would be wise to make something of your hobbies—even if it doesn't bring an income, you might find that expressing yourself creatively really helps to define yourself and to understand yourself better. Health is likely to be balanced.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

This is favorable period for hobbies, sports and competitive exams. Your creative abilities are reflected in your outlook on life and love and romance are life experiences you strongly identify with. You display great skills in sports or physical activity that wins you appreciation and an opportunity to travel. Try to be just and fair when making decisions, as you do your best to see both sides of an issue. People notice and admire you for your pleasant and cheerful personality. You are bolder in expressing your love, yet not aggressive either. Artistic self-expression is important, possibly through music, fashion and writing. A strong desire for companionship dominates at this time.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

The first phase of this year increases confidence and courage at work place. It's a great time to do something entirely new and pioneering. Discussions and ideas about finances and material security figure strongly. Although you like the good things of life and may spend quite a bit on clothes, furniture, and entertainment, your innate sense of security will not permit you to go overboard to the point of extravagance. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this planetary placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**

An excellent week for money, career, and romance awaits you. Friends and loved ones take priority. You don't find yourself lacking in opportunities to socialize. You are likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in

friendship, or with groups of like-minded individuals. You are more peace loving than usual and slightly detached on a personal level as you feel drawn towards religion and spiritualism. This is a good time for research and meditation; but do avoid being dragged down by issues that have outgrown their worth and purpose. Examining the past in order to improve the future is certainly worthwhile, as long as you don't waste your energy.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

The planetary configuration brings success, responsibility and maturity. You have much energy for new moneymaking projects, or for stepping up existing ones. Matters of the heart touch you deeply. You may willingly play a supportive role to the family and offer compassion and selfless love. This is a rather happy, goal-oriented time on the professional front. Relationships take on a fun outlook and activities with children increase. You possess extra charm in your professional interactions. A new affair is in the offing for the unattached. More opportunities to socialize and network could present themselves now.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

This period is good for money, family, status and happiness. Money matters come into focus for you. You adopt a serious approach to business because you are in the spotlight. The desire for some form of recognition and financial success is apparent. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. Your love life is more attractive and charming. Public relations work, marketing, promotional activities and other such endeavors are favored now. You may face some minor ailments on the health front.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

Diplomacy, correctness in manner, finesse, and charm will be a big plus in aiding financial gains, especially in areas requiring public contact. You feel drawn to intellectuals with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas. You know how to relate to others and you do so in a natural and warm manner. Your vision is practical right now, and you want to see tangible results for your efforts. Recognition is likely to come your way whether you ask for it or not along with the responsibility that comes right along with it. Do what you feel is right, keeping in mind that you are in the limelight during this phase.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

This is an excellent time to create a budget or financial plan, or to rid yourself of old habits that undermine your sense of personal power and self-mastery. Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy. If single, you are more than willing to enter into a committed relationship. In general, you are adaptable when it comes to your affections. You pour more energy into self-promotion or business activities. Foreign places may particularly appeal now. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love. Dealing with one situation at a time releases some tension and anxiety.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering at this time. On a more practical level, you may be dealing with joint finances and shared resources. Social life takes priority in your life. You would become serious about family relations and feel responsible towards them. Social interactions of a personal, one-on-one kind are emphasized. Conflicts with a partner over values or personal possessions are likely to occur. You are more willing than usual to explore life's secrets. Taking care of business is your main focus. A health routine started now is likely to be successful.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

This is a generous, pleasantly emotional, and creative phase. Striking a balance between your attention to your career and to your family life is necessary. Taking steps to improve your family and home life as well as your career and public life will be in order. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, especially in the company of a loved one. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. It's important to include others rather than to go solo for the time being. However, bending too much to the will of another is not advised either.

# Smart class for IAS prep



A smart class in progress

Moreau Institute of Integral Training and Research Society, an initiative of the Fathers of Holy Cross, is helping the youth in Shillong realise their dream of cracking the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

The institute acts as a facilitator for UPSC coaching network ALS, or Alternative Learning Systems, Satellite Education. Civil service aspirants in the city and from other parts of the state are trained for the competitive examination through real-time online classes. Experts at ALS's main centre in New Delhi teach as well as answer the queries of students online. Each smart class has a screen and a projector.

"The institute started in July 2015 after (Shillong MP) Vincent Pala requested us. ALS gives us the opportunity to extend our educational and training services to civil aspirants in the North East at a fraction of the cost of attending these coaching classes in Delhi," says Father Abraham of Moreau Institute.

There are 129 students in each batch. There are both morning and evening classes. Father Abraham says there are many students from Garo Hills too. "Because of the lack of sponsorship, many talented but socio and economically backward students could not enroll for the coaching classes. So we approached the government for help and received funds from both the Chief Minister's Ca-

reer Guidance Scheme in 2015-16 and the North Eastern Council from 2016 onwards. Sponsorship candidates are chosen using eligibility tests conducted by ALS Delhi," explains Father Abraham.

Altogether 340 candidates through regular courses and around 90 candidates through supplementary courses have undergone training since the commencement of the institute. Some candidates also cleared the UPSC prelims and "we are hopeful our candidates will also clear the Mains and interview in the future", says Father Abraham.

He adds that those who are unable to crack the elite exam also gain in the form of the knowledge that they gather, the self-confidence they develop and the self-esteem they gain from the training help them later in life.

Qay Khongsai, the 27-year-old student from Manipur, says he chose to join the ALS centre in Shillong because it was a "cheaper option" than studying in Delhi. "Moreover, I have been staying in Shillong since 2011. So it was a viable option. When I was planning to prepare for the civil services exams, I asked around and got good reviews of the

place," says Khongsai.

With more youths from the region opting for plum central government jobs, ALS has been a real pathfinder for aspirants here. Kamminsat Haokip from Manipur, a student at ALS, says since Shillong is a peaceful city, it becomes the obvious choice for UPSC aspirants and ALS is guiding the youths on the right path.

Haokip, who left Manipur because of the political volatility, will appear for UPSC next year for the second time. Talking to The Shillong Times, Haokip said, "I had been preparing for IAS examinations for some time now. But after joining ALS I think I have learned more in three months. However, I have not joined the full course and I find my subjects being comprehensively prepared at ALS. The standard of questions here is also higher than other institutes," says the UPSC aspirant, whose father works in Shillong.

ALS is a venture started by Shashank Atom, Jojo Mathew and Manoj Kumar Singh and has centres across the country. The IAS coaching centre started as Interaction IAS Study Circle in 1991. ALS was incorporated in 2003.

*“Democracy is not so much a form of government as a set of principles.”*

--- Franklin D. Roosevelt

## The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2017

### Mary Kom's strikes gold

MARY Kom won her fifth gold medal at the Asian Women's Boxing Championship 14 years after she had won her first gold in the same event. A brilliant career followed and in 2012 she won the Olympic Bronze. Thereafter she got married, had three children and became a member of the Rajya Sabha. It seemed that her boxing life had come to an end. But that was not to be. She did not retire when she had a family and age crept upon her. There was nothing negative about her life. The latest success proves that. She came of a family of landless labour in Manipur and how such a prodigy was born in such an ambience is one of nature's mysteries. She gave the lie to the myth that boxing was not for women. Her early career was not so much in the public eye. After 2012 however she became a legend in her lifetime and gathered around her millions of fans. Today at 34, she has repeated her success with an Asian gold and it is a landmark in the annals of sporting life.

Women do not as a rule attract the glare of publicity especially in the field of sports. Mary Kom is an exception. Her victories have been recorded by media as a saga of heroism. Her ethnic origins have not gone against her. She has proved that her career is no less exciting than any sportsman's and her passion for a bloody sport has not been condemned. Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra has proved that in her biopic.

## LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Centre offers help to solve Bodo issue

The centre has offered its good offices to sort out the explosive Bodo problem which has assumed "dangerous" proportions in the north-eastern state of Assam. The Union Government has no intention of interfering in the matter by the Assam Government to extend help, it will be willing to do so, Home Minister Mr Buta Singh today told the consultative committee attached to his ministry.

Mr Buta Singh informed the members that he had assured the state chief Minister of centre's willingness to cooperate and told him that steps must be taken to solve the problem. He said greater attention should be paid by the state

government to the economic development of plains tribals and to reducing inter-regional disparities. A meaningful dialogue should be held with representatives of the tribals on these issues and matters relating to language and land alienation. Minister of State for Home Mr Santosh Mohan Dev urged the state government to involve various Bodo organizations in talks to find a solution. Members who participated in the discussion, felt that the Bodo problem must be viewed as part of the general tribal problem and their just demands must be looked into.

# Time to do away with MLA Scheme for a free and fair election

By H H Mohrmen

community halls, additional classrooms in the school and improvement of village play ground.

There is no denying the fact that individuals and the community come with a long list of demands that they wish the MLA to ultimately address. Also each MLA has hundreds of villages to cater to, so the question is how does the MLA decide which of the projects to fund. The point is there is no mechanism used to rank the needs of the people because even the list of demands of the community are decided by the executive community of the Dorbar Shong. The MLA seldom uses the opportunity to start grass roots engagement with the people. They rely on the headman and the village council only. That is the only grass root level engagement they have.

The utilisation of the MLA LAD scheme also lacks the basic aspects of monitoring except through RTI application, but the sad truth is very few people choose to file RTI on the utilisation of the scheme. It is true that the utilisation of the funds has to be channelled through the Deputy Commissioner's and the Block Development Office but the question is can these officers raise any question on how the funds are being used or misused by the local representative?

Perhaps it is not wrong to say that the MLA LADs is the root cause of money changing hands during election because the MLAs themselves purposely chose to hand doles from the scheme at the fag-end of their tenure as the local representative of the area. It is as clear as daylight that the intention is obviously to bribe people to re-elect them as the MLAs of the area.

The influence of money power during election also started raising its ugly head only since MLA LAD was introduced in the State. Elders in the community till now reminiscence the first few elections after independence when supporters brought stuffs like rice, vegetables etc to the candidates residence so that he can feed party workers who work for his/her success. Candidates those days did not have to spend money because it is the

supporters who donate all that the candidate needs for the election. But now the voters are waiting for their own share of money from the candidate or sometimes from many candidates.

It is the candidates themselves who had ushered the kind of election that we have now where a poor man, no matter how good a leader he is or how articulate he is and how visionary he is, does not stand a chance to win because he does not have money.

The other pertinent question is how and where will the MLAs use the funds from the LAD when we already have schemes, programs and projects funded by the State and the central government for development and the welfare of the people? The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is the mother of all schemes where communities come up with ideas to develop their villages and even for improvement of their livelihoods. If the community needs a footpath, a playground, improvement of drainage system and what have you, they can avail funds for the same from MNREGS. They only need to have an active Village Employment Council which can complete the works in time and demand more work from the office of the BDO after completion of the previous project.

MNREGS is not only meant to help create assets for the community or the village, but it can also be used for creating livelihood opportunities for the people in the villages. The problem with the implementation of MNREGS is the zest and vitality of the VEC or to be specific the secretary VEC. We have communities which can complete projects worth a crore of rupees in one financial year just because they have a secretary who is very active. The truth is villages have developed and changed now not because they have a good MLA or MDC but because they have a very active VEC. Therefore it is not the

MLA LAD scheme which helps bring change and development to the village, but the MNREGS and the important thing is that it is a bottoms-up approach where the community comes up with their own ideas and they don't have to wait for the consent of the MLA or MDC to do the work.

MLA LAD scheme also encourages corruption in the sense that it is a duplication of the many programs, schemes and project for rural development and livelihood promotion in the village. This duplication of work benefits only the supporters of the MLA or the MDC because there is no proper mechanism to monitor the flow of funds.

The most startling development is when we read media reports that the cabinet is yet to sit and decided on the remaining MLA LAD scheme for the assembly tenure ending 2018. The very fact that the cabinet is yet to decide on the remaining MLA LADs in spite of the fact that we are already in the mid November raises a lot of questions about how the MLAs wish to use this fund.

In two months time the state is going to the polls again so how can we expect the MLAs to do justice to the remaining of their allotted MLA scheme in this short span of time? How can the MLAs dispose two crore rupees of public money in two months? How else will they spend the money if not for buying votes when the fund is purposely allotted at the end of the tenure of the House? I hope the governor will do something on this, otherwise the claim that we are going to have a fair election will not hold water because the huge sum of money in the hands of the current MLAs will help influence the voters to vote for them.

This development also vindicates the claim that we all along made that MLA LAD is redundant because the MLAs are only using it for their vested interest. It is about time that we do away with the MLA scheme because more often than not, the scheme is misused.

## Black is not just cash, it is far beyond Despite fanfare for fairness, Indians crave for everything black

By Anjan Roy

On the first anniversary of demonization, it has been demonised. Politicians and commentators pointed out a litany of woes that afflicted India and its poor from the decision to cancel 85% of circulating currency bills. It has been held guilty by high-minded economists for the subsequent slow down of the India economy – to a mere 5.7% in the last as a culmination of the process of deceleration. It has been found useless as most of the cancelled currency had come back into the system through banks.

There is this last issue – return of the money in circulation is almost full. This single fact has been taken up above all to vindicate that the entire exercise was utterly useless. This had run counter to the government's earlier claim that a good part of the demonetised currency would not return into the system as their holders would not be able to account for it. That should thus provide a bonanza to the government – getting so much money without doing anything. Before the fruit was in its hands, the government was watering in the mouth about the prospects of a free meal.

None of that happened. Instead it was saddled with this enormous embarrassment. Faced with this public humiliation, the union finance minister, in particular, shifted gear to the moral issue. It was moral to try to capture "black money" and it would continue to make that effort by tracking down the large "converters" of money through the regular banking channels whose names were now available. What would happen now is unknown.

But the mere fact of conversion of the old notes into new ones has proved one thing: there is no black money.

We as a nation are perpetually obsessed with "black money", just as we are in a sense deeply and essentially apartheid. Why else should the fairness creams sell so briskly and families go for bland fair looking girls over beautiful dark ones. There are the ubiquitous "black tickets" for cinema shows or cricket matches when these are not available across the counters. When people are talking of black money there is very little clarity about what is black about it.

Loosely speaking, black money is what has been stashed away without paying taxes. When you are talking about the informal sector of the Indian economy – which most commentators in the present context agree to be as large as 40% -- most of it bypasses the tax net. But then, the larger part of the tax avoidance is legitimate; either these units are too small to come under the tax net or too diverse to pay taxes.

A German diplomat friend of mine, who lived in Friends' Colony in Delhi, used to relate to me his experience of a pan-shop owner around the corner in his colony, who he once found having a dinner with friends and family in a five-star hotel in the Diplomatic enclave area. He had even recognised the diplomat and invited him to join. So my diplomat friend used to say India is not a poor country. It is rich country with poor people. The pan-shop owner would have at least some "black money" as presumably he did not pay income tax on his plentiful income from selling pan to rich buyers in a tiny Delhi colony.

But then, his "black" earnings would surely have been converted into physical wealth by the time the Modi government thought of demonisation. Raids might reveal the panwallah's gold holdings – and this looks escapable, given India's import of gold

day in and day out. You cannot catch the black by cancelling currency but by chasing the glimmer of gold. But then, which government would dare do a family wise accounting of gold hoardings? Just a small duty on gold had created such a ruckus that the government had to back track on it.

This process of conversion of black income into physical assets is relentless. A small furniture shop owner on one of Delhi major routes has a home valued at around Rs10 crore. The shop employs about thirty workers, who are all genuinely poor but exquisitely skilled. They produce beautiful furniture pieces and the common wood turns into objects of art in their hands. So much so, that the pieces were often exported. The supervisor among them gets about Rs24,000 a month in cash and those working on the wood gets varying amounts. Until GST was levied, none such shop had ever spoken of charging a tax on their sale of furniture and the practice was taken to be a normal state.

After GST, the furniture maker was furious. He felt the Modi government was strangulating the small businessmen. He was bringing down employment, as they might have to cut down on their workers. The outrage was complete as the CST and SGST incidence was 28%, which none of the buyers was willing to pay. They had invented short circuiting the tax to survive.

To any "right thinking person" that would appear totally justified. Paying the tax honestly and risking closing down the entire business would have been hara-kiri. Even for the Indian economy as a whole, it would have been disastrous.

In a way, black money and the current problem of stubble burning in a handful of north India states are similar. Both generate a lot of smoke and pollute; but then the inherent compulsions are not often seen and therefore remain unaddressed.

Farmers burn stubble to clear the fields for the next crop for which little time would otherwise have been available. But consider if the stubble fetched a high price, it would have been recovered from the fields and sold as fodder.

People do not pay taxes because of economic reasons. The rates are often high. If these were minimal, they would have complied. But then, even if taxes are being avoided by genuinely small businesses – and these are huge in numbers – they are playing a useful economic role. For a government, minding for development, they are better neglected.

Where black economy should be attacked is a limited area. This is big business and government deals. Politicians and bureaucrats earning a premium from their positions of power, asking for money for clearing large projects or bending rules and policies to favour the few, should be relentlessly attacked. That "black wealth" generated and remaining in the hands of a few, has a huge economic cost.

When a government avoids proper auction and grants, say airwaves or mines or clearance, to some companies over more efficient ones, that has an economic cost. When there are organised over or under invoicing of large purchases for remitting unaccounted monies to overseas entities – and these are being revealed through "leaks" – these need to be pursued.

Black is not just cash. It is far beyond. This was the basic fallacy of demonisation. (IPA Service)

## TO THE EDITOR

### Sanbor Shullai defending the indefensible!

Editor,

In response to my RTI findings, Mr Sanbor Shullai, MLA, addressed a press conference on 26th October last for explaining his position. As per your newspaper report (ST Oct 27,2014), he has not touched upon any of the glaring discrepancies in the spending of the MLA funds as revealed by the documents released by the Shillong Municipal Board. I am not surprised that he has tried hard to deflect the charges by giving laughable political explanations. To me, he has only attempted to divert the attention of the people by raising some non-issues. He has made personal comments about those who appeared with me at my press conference, and who are totally opposed to rampant corruption and his autocratic style of functioning as MLA.

In his explanation, Mr Shullai has asked, "What's wrong about purchasing goods from Sohra or Nongstoin?" Yes, he is at liberty to buy goods from anywhere on earth, if it concerns his personal money. When it involves Government money, he should have adhered to the Government norms. The critical question that arises in my mind is why all the goods

were purchased through only one supplier? I thought, K. Lynrah the man who is the beneficiary of the deals made by Mr Shullai, would come out and clear his name. I waited long enough for his clarification and in the absence of it we will have to come to the conclusion that there is no credible firm by the name of K. Lynrah, supposedly a Registered Government Contractor and Supplier located at Kongthong Sohra. The silence of K. Lynrah is a clear evidence that it is a fake firm created by Mr Shullai for filling his own coffers.

If the facts were otherwise, why has Mr Shullai remained silent on the fraudulent manner of withdrawing cash from the Bank Account of the Monitoring-cum-Implementation Committee and purchasing all the goods by cash? Some transactions were as huge as Rs 34 lakh? Will Mr Shullai explain?

His defence of purchasing all items, from sand to computers during the last four and half years, to the lowest bidder is equally laughable. The RTI documents have revealed that while purchasing all items, there were three common bidders. These are: 1. K.Lynrah of Kongthong, Sohra. 2. B.Khongsit of Mawdok (near Sohra) and 3. M/s R.Shabong of Kongthup Sohra.

Invariably, K.Lynrah was the lowest bidder in all the cases. How will Mr Shullai explain that all the bidders were from Sohra? Why did not approach the authorised dealers located in Shillong or Guwahati? Is it not because he cannot manipulate the vouchers to compromise on price, quantity and quality of goods purchased?

Besides, Mr Shullai's brave attempt at giving a political spin to the RTI revelations does not hold water. In a democracy it is the duty of the political opponents to expose all wrong deeds and swindling of public funds. In exposing him thoroughly, I have merely done my duty as a clean and upright political activist. To say that I am "jealous" is childish. By offering a political explanation to an essentially economic offence, Mr Shullai has unwittingly admitted that he has been caught pants down!

Through RTI I had posed a challenge to Shullai to come clean. Instead of offering convincing explanation, he has started using familiar diversionary tactics and this time it is not going to work for him. As they say, "You can fool some people all the time, some people for some time, but not all the people all the time." We are now absolutely sure that everybody has seen through Mr Shullai's game.

The writing on the wall is, "His time is up!"

Yours etc.,  
Banri Kupar Wahlang,  
Shillong-4.

### Necessity to Set up Board Exams in Classes V and VIII

Editor,

As a teacher I am worried about the education system in Meghalaya and the SSLC results we get year after year especially from Garo Hills. As teachers, we give our best to impart knowledge and quality education to our students but after all the hard work, we get to see a poor pass percentage every year. We are also disillusioned that our students are faring so badly in their SSLC exams. What could be the possible reason for the poor results in Garo Hills?

Garo Hills has a mixture of schools like Deficit system, Government aided Schools and Private Schools. The Private schools always shine with good result over the years but students in Government aided or Deficit schools don't seem to cope. The students who attend these schools are economically backward, and many are forced to attend school. Hence their interests and concentration level is also low. This is due to lack of proper foundation in their early schooling. Also they

don't get any support at home as parents are not educated and cannot supervise and care for them. For such children going to school is just killing time. Their early schooling is the villages was in poor settings with inadequate teachers. They are promoted from one class to another without any guidance and preparation. Even when they fail in four or five subjects they are promoted to a higher class because it is the done thing or because teachers feel sorry for them. When these students join urban schools they have not acquired enough knowledge and understanding to cope up with the syllabus. They fail in the same classes for many years. Some schools promote them out of concern but without monitoring whether they can cope with the upper classes. When they reach class X, even in the pre-selection, they fail in more than 4 subjects but teachers and school authorities push them to sit for the final exam thinking that they should be given a chance.

While it is good to have such consideration, nobody cares how these students would fare in their final examinations. Most students do not even understand the questions. Hence the poor

SSLC exams results! Yet when the result come out, everybody questions the teachers and the schools. As a concerned teacher I truly want my students to do well in their exams and check the poor pass percentage in Garo Hills. So why can't we set up board exams in class V and class VIII for the students to gradually progress? Those coming from rural backgrounds will also benefit even if their rural schools have not done much for them.

So if we set up one board exam when they reach class V, we will be able to monitor and train our students who are not able to cope up with the school system before sending them to higher classes. When they reach class VIII, there must be another board exam to finally check whether they are capable of sitting for the SSLC. They can be given remedial teaching to prime them up for the SSLC exam. I really wish the policy makers make this change in the system so as to be able to bring about better results in the future.

Yours, etc. ...  
Benjo Marak  
Araimile, Tura

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.

*"Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking."*

--- Marcus Aurelius

## The Shillong Times

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### Leave cinema alone

THE fringe elements of certain political parties are crying foul over the Sanjay Leela Bhansali film 'Padmavati,' an excerpt from India's medieval history. Padmavati or Rani Padmini was the wife of Ratnasimha the Rajpur ruler of Chittor, Rajasthan. Padmavati's beauty was legendary. So much so that Alauddin Khilji, the Sultan of Delhi laid siege to Chittor to win her. But before Alauddin Khilji could reach her, Padmavati and her attendants had committed Sati by jumping into the fire, to protect their honour. However, there are disclaimers that the story of Padmavati was never part of history although Alauddin did lay siege to Chittor. Now Bhansali has made a film based on the life of Padmavati but he is not acknowledging that the film is part fiction. The situation in the country today is such that a story where the protagonist is a Muslim who tries to win over a Rajput queen is seen as sacrilegious.

The film is scheduled to be released on December 1, but even before seeing it lumpen groups have threatened Bhansali and warned him of dire consequences if the film is released. Meanwhile the Indian film fraternity have decided to fight back and resist the growing attack on cinematic freedom. After all there can be no ban on creativity and if at all a film does not meet up with certain laid down parameters then there is the Central Board for Film Certification (CBFC) which is mandated to take a call. A film based on historical narratives need not stick to the script. The director has every right to fictionalise parts of the narrative. That is directorial license. Bhansali has in the past diverted from certain historical storylines and those who consider history as sacred have not forgiven him for that. But that's another matter. You can criticise a director but you cannot threaten him. This reflects the growing culture of intolerance in India today. It is a sure way to kill creativity which is the essence of film making. From banning books and artists we have now come to banning films. What next?

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Plea for central intervention in Assam

The Bodo People's Action Committee has called for immediate central intervention in starting dialogue on the movement launched by the tribal community in Assam for a separate homeland. A committee delegation met President Venkataraman here yesterday and submitted a memorandum stressing the need for an autonomous state for the tribal community on the North Bank of the Bramaputra and Autonomous District Council on the South Bank of the river.

Quotas and queues are back on the political platter wherein our netagan are busy indulging in one-upmanship, populist bravado and mindlessness. Doling out promises of reservation like moongphalis to service their vote-banks. Underscoring, 21st Century India still remains the same: Quota is the all-seasons favourites!

See how our politicians continue to bask in reckless ad-hocism and announce reservations albeit in the garb of meting out social justice. Telengana has pledged 12% quota for minorities in Government jobs and educational institutions. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and BSP Dalit messiah Mayawati have gone one step further. Both pitched for Dalits and OBC job reservation in the private sector.

Last year Haryana's BJP Sarkar provided six% reservation for Jats and four other castes in Government jobs and educational institutions. And another 10% for the five castes in class 3 and 4 Government jobs and learning establishments. Happily, the Rajasthan High Court struck down a similar policy in the State. In Gujarat the Congress is busy trying to strike a quota bargain with Patel community leader Hardik Patel.

Raising a moot point: Are quotas the answer for maintaining India's social fabric and harmony? How does it better the lot of the Dalits and OBC's if a few persons get jobs? Has anyone assessed whether those provided reservation have gained or continue to lose? Said a former Chairman of the National Commission on Backward Classes, "the politicians have converted reservation into a circus".

Whatever happened to merit and excellence? Is it fair that a meritorious person is denied admission or a job because his quota is full? Where do they head? Does it make sense if someone with 90% in engineering sells medicines while a Dalit with 40% becomes a doctor, thanks to reservation? What purposes does reservation serve when an officer is unable to cope with the decision-making process?

Is reservation an end in itself? How will the

Government respond if each caste begins to complain of non-representation in Parties or Government departments? When does backwardness supercede equality assured by our Constitution? How is the Government going to avoid reverse discrimination?

Importantly, why do the champions of Reservation Raj never talk about reserving 50% seats in Parliament and State Legislatures for SCs, STs and OBCs? And how about having at least 27% reserved ministerial posts? Answer? Our leaders don't want to slice their cake. After all, politics is all about conning the electorate, skimming their votes with 'feel good' populism and sound bites.

Alas, over the years our netagan have made quotas into a political milch cow. Merrily converting positive affirmation into vote percentages wherein social and economic upliftment is weighed on the scale of vote-bank politics. And merit is a dirty word.

That said, undoubtedly, the Government's fundamental mission is to uplift the poor and have-nots, educate and provide them equal opportunities and better quality of life. But when education and job reservations are calculated on the basis of belonging to a particular caste or religion per se, it goes against the Constitution's Article 15(1) of providing equal opportunity to all. More, it not only divides people but also harms national unity and fraternity.

Clearly, the Mandal Frankenstein created by our polity has come to bite them. Worse, given the level of dishonesty and irresponsibility which increasingly governs our political system, no leader is willing to look us in the eye and confess that we are the cause of this mess thanks to our fixation for self-satiation of vote-banks politics.

It was all hunky dory and still is as they merrily satiate their greed for power by continuing to reap a political windfall of over 70 per cent votes via reservation. However, all forget a time comes when caste-based quotas becomes divisive, self-defeating and could boomerang. By further

## Quotas and queues

# How do we spell merit?

By Poonam I Kaushish

dividing people and widening India's burgeoning divide between the haves and have-nots.

Unfortunately, ground realities and make-believe sociology do not always correspond. Reservations by themselves will not transform village society whose social structure is built on an edifice of illiteracy and ignorance which in turn perpetuates an iniquitous caste system.

True, many backward castes families are poverty-stricken. But we need to realize that poverty exists in a family and not at the caste level per se. If one has to eradicate it, then all poor families belonging to a caste should be eligible for State privileges. Also, one cannot ostracize the poor belonging to other castes.

Moreover, the danger in imposing arbitrary quotas in the private sector is two-fold. One, deterioration in work culture which results in short-changing Brand India and two, jeopardize economic growth. Remember, India's USPLies in brains, skills and expertise of its educated manpower. This, in turn, could lead to an economic slowdown and hurt chances of economic upliftment of people at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Alongside, lead to brain drain and disillusionment among students and workforce.

Time our leaders rise above mindless populism, petty politricks and cry a halt to quotas as they are detrimental to long-term growth. They need to think creatively about how to achieve the goal of putting everyone on equal footing. Merely having quotas will not spell excellence. Specially in today's increasingly competitive global village.

Further, our polity has to deal with a savvy Gen Next between 18-35 years who constitute 50% population and believe in deliverables and achievables. They seek jobs on merit in an overcrowded employment market where the labour force is growing 2.5%

annually, employment is rising by 2% resulting in increasing joblessness. Thus, none has given thought to the challenge of absorbing new entrants in the job market, 12 million every year and clearing the backlog. In this scenario where do quotas fit?

Certainly, social justice is a desirable and laudable goal. But it cannot be at the cost of nurturing mediocrity. Pertinently, there is no place for double standards or Orwellian concept of 'more equal than others' in a democracy. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The Fundamental Rights provide for equal opportunities for all irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Let's not fudge or forget this.

Consequently, our netas must call truce with their progenies as social justice and equal opportunity is not the prerogative of a chosen few. Already, caste-based quotas have become divisive and self-defeating. The Government has to end this evil of casteism which is eating into our democracy's vitals.

Think. Suppose there are 70% reservations for communities of State posts and only 30% are unreserved, is this satisfactory vis-à-vis providing equality of opportunity? No. As Ambedkar said, "If you want different societies to come together, I think it is time that we decide that the use of the word 'caste' be banned in this country." Adding, "Reservation too should be done away with because it becomes a hindrance to development."

Time now for our petty power-at-all cost polity to think beyond vote-bank politics and look at the long-term implications. They must not be allowed to continue recklessly and play havoc with India's progress. No longer will young India accept that power in privilege can be transformed through electoral competition into power in numbers. Else reconcile to becoming a nation of mediocrity! --- INFA

# Arsenic Poisoning in the Northeast

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

## Beating the Rhetoric

Arsenic poisoning is a relatively new phenomenon that is being witnessed in the past few decades. However, within this short span of time it has morphed into one of the biggest challenges towards the goal of providing safe drinking water for all. The South Asian region is one of the biggest sufferers of arsenic poisoning of water with the Ganga-Brahmaputra alluvial plains in India and the Padma alluvial plain in

first evidence of it in Northeast was found in Assam in 2004 when government officials flagged the issue that arsenic poisoning had indeed made an entry in the Northeast. In Assam since then Jorhat, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts have fallen prey to this menace including the world famous heritage site of Majuli, which has recently been declared a district in itself. In 2007, arsenic poisoning was

*"Arsenic is an odourless and tasteless metalloid that is widely distributed over the Earth's crust. It can combine with other elements to exist in a variety of forms in the Earth's surface and is the twenty sixth most abundant element on the earth."*

Bangladesh being the biggest victims. Assam and Manipur are suffering from the scourge of arsenic poisoning the most in the Northeast.

Arsenic is an odourless and tasteless metalloid that is widely distributed over the Earth's surface and is the twenty sixth most abundant element on the earth. Due to its existence in the anthropogenic forms arsenic can enter the human body easily through food and through water contamination. Arsenic in drinking water enters the bloodstream and then travels to different organs of the human body. If the arsenic intake is small the body can naturally get rid of the same through urine, however the problem is that once arsenic enters the body in large quantity it starts to accumulate in the body.

Arsenic accumulation in the body in large quantities has the nomenclature of Arsenicosis. Arsenicosis

also reported from Thuobal block in Manipur. In recent times however this has further spread to Nagaland in Mokokchung, Mon and a few other districts; in Arunachal Pradesh in Dibang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Tirap and Lower Subhanshiri districts and in North Tripura. While there are no evidences of arsenic poisoning in other states yet, it is however only a matter of time before the scourge perhaps spreads.

The state government of these states have woken up to the challenge and are now engaged in a number of steps towards combating the scourge of arsenic poisoning. Yet it poses its own challenges. One of the most basic steps to remove a number of water contaminants is boiling. However, boiling has no effect on Arsenic poisoning. And this is what makes combating arsenic poisoning difficult at the grassroots level unless it's a government backed common system. Arsenic removal plants or ARP are often the first and strongest line of defence against

*"The people of Northeast india solely depend on naturally occurring water sources which increases their chance of falling prey to arsenic poisoning. The first evidence of it in Northeast was found in Assam in 2004 when government officials flagged the issue that arsenic poisoning had indeed made an entry in the Northeast."*

leads to inhibition of important enzymes that are produced by the human body often resulting in multi-organ failure. However what makes arsenic poisoning more worrisome is the fact that the complete adverse effects have not been completely identified yet. Arsenic poisoning also leads to skin damage including keratosis and skin cancer, internal cancers such as that of the lung and bladder, and diseases of the vascular system. Further other health problems, such as diabetes, cancers of the other organs and adverse effects on the reproductive organs and outcomes have been observed, but the evidence is not yet conclusive, although it has kept on steadily increasing.

The people of Northeast india solely depend on naturally occurring water sources which increases their chance of falling prey to arsenic poisoning. The

These are three step plants through which groundwater first enters this system and its treated and then the water released for public consumption. While this method has proved effective towards combating arsenic poisoning yet the scalability of such plants pose a serious challenge. While ARPs have demonstrated success in combating arsenic poisoning yet the scales of the plants have to be increased. Also more information about this must be spread among the public so that they become aware of the problem and are able to identify the symptoms. This will save valuable time in treating the disease.

Further new steps must be thought of to combat arsenic poisoning. Arsenic poisoning poses a serious threat and all steps must be taken towards eradicating the same.

(The views expressed by the author are personal)

## Nepotism in Agriculture Department!

Editor,

It is unbelievable that the current director of the State's Agriculture department who is said to have officially retired in December last year has oddly defied the superannuation bar and has, instead, been enjoying multiple windfall benefits by way of holding a few more enviable posts equivalent to the director level created within the broad manpower framework of the Agriculture department. There is a belief that what has made this director avail such package of fortuitous fortunes is because she is in the good books of Dr. Mukul Sangma, the CM of Meghalaya, who is coincidentally Minister in-charge, Agriculture. These undue privileges showered on this incumbent has made her not give a toss about the extant service rules laid down in the Meghalaya Fundamental Rules & Subsidiary Rules, 1984 that govern each and every employee of the State Govt. This has set a very bad precedence among her peers in other departments. And for that matter, several negative complaints have been splashing in the media

against this Director but she has remained indifferent to the complaints.

Lastly it impelled a person of the caliber of Mr. Jemino Mawthoh, MLA, to speak to the media of the official irregularities that are going on in Agriculture department where the arbitrary role of the said Director is brought to the limelight and this media interaction had featured in your daily (ST Oct 2, 17). In the wake of this media report and after eight days, to be precise, a flood gate of promotions, transfers etc., were opened up for all the eligible officers who have been long stranded in the same posts. The aggrieved officers ought to be indebted to Mr. Mawthoh for having singularly brought to light the hush-hush affairs prevailing in the Agriculture department.

Interestingly, the Director in question who is said to retire on December 31st next is leaving no stone unturned to seek extension of service till March end next year coinciding with the end of a financial year. This undue ambition contrasts sharply with that of her immediate predecessor, Mr. KM Brahma, who sportingly refused to comply with the

reported request of the Govt. to extend his retirement time till the end of a financial year, given that he was to retire a few months preceding March 31st. This case in point was unerringly, a moral consciousness on the latter's part not to deny the timely promotional scope of his junior co-staffers waiting in the wings.

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request

## Gender Gap Report

Editor,

The World Economic Forum's ~ Global Gender Gap Report ranks countries according to calculated gender gap between women and men in four key areas namely ~ health, education, economy and politics. It measures women's disadvantage compared to men. Last year, India had climbed 21 places to go up the ladder from 108th to 87th rank. But this year, India has unfortunately slipped 21 places to get back again to the 2015 position at 108.

In spite of its vast population, Bangladesh has done extremely well to get a good rank at 47. This year's report also shows that Iceland has closed nearly 88

per cent of its gaps. Iceland has been the world's most gender-equal country for nine years and is followed by its Scandinavian cousins ~ Norway and Finland. However, Norway is the leader in both human development and happiness indices.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report, 2017, India's position on "health and survival" is undoubtedly the most important area to focus. India ranks fourth lowest in the world on "health and survival" and ranks 141st among 144 countries which is the number one reason for our overall lowly position at 108. To combat it, our national food, khichdi can be served in midday meal along with boiled eggs and bananas to children at schools. Students must also be given some extra khichdi so that they can have it just after the last period. Just by cooking some extra khichdi, students can be provided with an afternoon meal along with the existing midday meal.

The number two area of concern is that of "economic participation and opportunity," in which our country is ranked 139th. One of the ways to address this issue is to provide substantial amount of scholarships to the poor girl children up to the age of 21

years to make child marriage a less attractive option and to ensure women's participation in the economic field. This can also change, so to speak, the tag of a girl from a "dowry-debit" to a "scholarship-credit" and thus ensure her survival by helping her to cross the hurdle of foeticide, infanticide and nutritional discrimination. So, this will also go on to repair the most problem number one that is her "health and survival".

The third area is "workplace gender gap" in which our country is ranked 136th. Quick justice delivery system is a must to give women a level playing field with men so that they can take part in economic activities without any difficulty. Also, there should be an effective administrative radar to ensure equal wage for equal work.

However, as the saying goes ~ "every cloud has a silver lining". Indeed, our country has become successful in fully closing its primary and secondary education enrolment gender gaps and is nearly closing its tertiary education gender - gap.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

## Initiatives in tourism promotion

Editor,

The tourism sector in small pockets of our state is gradually picking up. This is due to the great efforts and open mindedness of the people in these areas in understanding the importance of people to people contact. For example your paper highlighted the successful development of tourism in parts of East and West Khasi Hills and also West Jaintia Hills but this has not been without dedicated entrepreneurs who have come from within the local communities which is a success story to script. The story of Mawryngkhang at Wakhken village of East Khasi Hills near Pynursla is a story of innovation, ideas and dedication without even the local MLA's support. This has been in the news. We look forward to more local entrepreneurs making positive efforts in this sector.

Yours etc.,  
Dominic S. Wankar,  
Via email

*“Do not mind anything that anyone tells you about anyone else. Judge everyone and everything for yourself.”*

--- Henry James

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.95 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2017

### The Quadrilateral

INDIA, the US, Japan and Australia have revived an alliance on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Manila. A meeting was held among the four countries to form this quadrilateral. It has been prompted by the need to take on the aggressive stance of China which has put South East Asian nations on the alert. Free trade in the South and East China seas has been threatened by China which has also been prickly from time to time about borders with India and Bhutan. The quadrilateral stands for a free, prosperous and inclusive India-Pacific region. The move is very much in India's interest. When it is implemented, New Delhi can project its image in East Asia and coordinate strategies with friendly neighbours in the region. That will give a boost to its Act East policy. It was reported earlier that India was somewhat guarded in its approach to the initiative for fear of antagonising China with which it is trying to promote amicable relations for an economic partnership.

With Sushma Swaraj piloting India's external relations policy, New Delhi may have been a wee bit compromising. New Delhi should be assertive about the country being a major Asian power. It is also a fact that India's interests spread all over the Asian continent and should not be confined to Chinese concerns. China overrides Indian interests almost as a routine exercise. India for its part should not be over-deferential to China. It has significant strategic opportunities in the present geopolitical scenario. New Delhi should try to move centre stage instead of sitting on the fence. That should win greater respect from King Xi's Beijing.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Lucrative human hair trade

The sheen and luster of Indian hair makes it a top favourite in the fashion centres of the world. It is considered second only to Italian hair in quality. In fact, before the arrival of synthetic wigs in the market recently, Indian hair enjoyed some sort of monopoly. In 1981-82 exports of Indian hair reached an all time high of Rs. 8.55 million. It has since tapered off and the last year's export stood at Rs. 3.15 million. Synthetic hair has proved to be more durable and is now being preferred in the exorbitant fashion markets of the United States and Europe. The bulk of Indian human hair comes from the southern parts of the country, especially from the temple town and abode of

Lord Venkateshwara in Andhra Pradesh Tirupati. Millions of devotees of Lord Venkateshwara shave off their heads on the fulfillment of their vows. In some of the South Indian temples, male devotees can pay their obeisance only after they have undergone tonsuring. North India also has religious practices calling for tonsuring before certain rituals but more devotees offer hair to the holy rivers. Thanks to the practice in the south, a booming business network has developed in the Tirupati shrines, the abode of the gods. Tirumala is the tonsuring centre and Tirupati, about 25 kms down the road, hosts the famous auction hall.

### TO THE EDITOR

### MPSC Examination!

Editor,  
The protest against the age limit set by MPSC for the Meghalaya Civil Service Examination has caught public attention in the last few months. But what is more poignant is the gap between the current notification which came out in July this year and the last MCS exam. When the notification for the last MCS exam came out almost ten years ago, I was still in college, and like many of my friends, we missed out on the golden opportunity to sit for an examination which should produce administrators who under "normal circumstances" carry the burden of being agents of change and economic growth. And even though I and a lot of my friends are still eligible to appear for the exam, the vibe I am getting from most of them is that the drive, the hunger and the desire to do well in the examination has evaporated. What is baffling to many is the reluctance on the part of the concerned authorities to conduct the examination on a more frequent basis. Almost all the North Eastern States now conduct

the examinations annually thereby ensuring that only the cream of the crop gets selected. This in turn will lead to an administration with fresh ideas to run the State. Let's hope that in the next few years, young budding aspiring candidates will not be denied the opportunity to be agents of growth and development for the State and flexible capable administrators will be selected on the basis of merit alone who we hope will also be given the priceless responsibility of aiding the government in the art of policy making.

Yours etc.,  
Gary Marbanian,  
Via email

### Illusion of Paradise

Editor,  
India boasts of having one of the largest and expensive modern mansions in the world – second only to the palace built by the Sultan of Brunei. That belongs to none other than the filthy rich Mukesh Ambani. But very contrastingly, India has also often been disgraced for its maximum

# China's socialist path baffles western media Marxism with fresh edge is the toast of leadership

By Kenny Coyle

Nearly 30 years ago, the "death of communism" was announced following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the much-quoted words of the right-wing commentator Francis Fukuyama, it was "the end of history," marked "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Now it appears that, maybe after all, just like the great anti-imperialist writer Mark Twain, reports of communism's demise have been greatly exaggerated.

Last month's 19th congress of the Communist Party of China provoked a wave of reluctant second opinions, with the corpse declared to be in dangerously rude health. A Washington Post columnist expressed the anxiety of the Beltway liberals by talking of "Xi Jinping's quest to revive Stalin's communist ideology." The bipartisan journal Foreign Affairs warned ominously of the "The Bolsheviks in Beijing—What the Chinese Communists Learned from Lenin." Socially concerned Guardian readers were told that "Xi Jinping's Leninist quest for a dynasty inspires congressional love-in," and BBC blogs talked of China's "unreformed Leninist political system."

It is an especially anxious time for North Atlanticist liberals and social democrats in Britain. The two once sturdy pillars supporting their beliefs, a U.S.-led NATO and a market-led European Union, have never looked shakier. The Guardian's Martin Kettle, the offspring of British communist intellectuals and who briefly held a CP card himself, offered a comment piece that was typical in its bleak perspective. Headlined "We are obsessed with Brexit and Trump: We should be thinking about China," Kettle sketched out his modern version of the Zhdanov Doctrine—a world divided neatly into two camps. "The competition between the liberal democracies and the socialist authoritarians is not yet a new cold war. But the rivalry will redefine the next 30 years, whether any of us likes it or not." And Kettle does not like it. Not one bit.

Liberal democracy is essentially a polite euphemism for capitalism and Chinese leader Xi Jinping's vision of socialist modernization is, as Kettle rightly notes, at odds with it. "The New York Times calculates that he [Xi] used the word 'market' only 19 times in the speech, compared with 51 times by Jiang Zemin at the 1997 party congress. All that may be music to Jeremy Corbyn's ears," Kettle wrote, adding an obligatory sideswipe at the British Labour leader. Western commentators have frequently got China wrong because of their inability to appreciate that, far from acting as window-dressing, Marxism has remained an important component of Chinese political thinking.

very different perspective, and, had their views been acknowledged, Xi Jinping's emphasis on defending and developing Marxism would have come as less of a shock. Tied in with the 19th party congress, China's media, including international television news network CGTN, the multi-edition newspaper China Daily and its more combative counterpart Global Times, have provided platforms for discussions on the contemporary relevance of Marxism. These offer a glimpse for those outside China into the much broader debate in the Chinese-language mass media.

Substantial resources have also been invested in

*Next year, to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, Peking University in Beijing will hold the 2nd World Congress on Marxism on May 5-6. Around 300 academics will gather to discuss Marxism in the 21st century and its development in China.*

They have also misunderstood China—and other places in the world, too, of course—by their own conceits that capitalism is the only conceivable social system and that "liberal democracy," assuming there is a common understanding of the term, is its natural political form. This is a paradigm that many media commentators and academics in the West simply cannot bring themselves to question.

Writing in Global Times recently, Han Zhu of Fudan University noted that "gaining insights into the nature of modern China needs a clear understanding of the nation's historical process over the last 40 years... "In sum, the difference between China's development path and the Western mode lies in socialism. Socialism with Chinese characteristics was the basic feature of the country's development. "For a thorough understanding of China, one must learn much about this country's socialism." Chinese writers have a

promoting Marxism in academia. All Chinese universities have some form of political education, ranging from classes in the fundamentals of Marxism for general students to sophisticated research centers specializing in all aspects of Marxist-Leninist theory.

At Sichuan University in Chengdu in south-west China, for example, the campus Marxism School organizes a series of programs such as "Basic Principles of Marxism," "Mao Zedong Thought and Introduction to the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," as well as offering full doctorate programs in Marxism. In the case of general political education, students are introduced to the traditional communist canon of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, with Stalin often included, along with the theories associated with Chinese leaders such as Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and now, of course, Xi Jinping too. However, there are a

number of citizens who spend their nights, their weeks, their months and years on the open pavement even in the biting cold of winter. Yes, the country bears the burden of the largest number of poor people in the world – approximately 276 million people who live below poverty line. What a vast difference between the haves – the super-rich, and the have-nots.

The loot of nation's wealth by the "ultra-rich" of the country had been going on quietly until the German newspaper brought out to the open the details from Appleby, the Bermuda-based legal service provider. Needless to say, for the ultra-rich, the name of the game is "tax planning", offshore finance, the creation of off-shore entities, et al. In the eyes of our authorities, it is about "deemed lapses in corporate governance, alleged fund diversion, irregularities in disclosure norms," and so on. One wonders, in this scenario, what is at stake for the common man? For the common man, his humble "paradise" is being looted; his God-given right to share his due is throttled. His children's chances to come up in life, if at all there

are any, are choked. His right to a "fair living" is all a farce because the very means of his life is plundered by a few ultra-rich. His opportunities to grow and shine are just stunted in every respect. On a wider outlook, at the national level, the country's wealth is burgled and robbed. Then who are these plunderers?

There are more than 700 of them from our country in the recently disclosed list of Paradise papers. The disclosure is still incomplete. Very funnily, these names include persons, who the common man relies on, workshops, holds in high esteem and vows to give his life for. Film star Amitabh Bachchan, who is often seen as a super role model and worshipped too, Union Minister of State Jayant Sinha, BJP Rajya Sabha M.P., R.K. Sinha, Corporate tycoon Vijay Mallya, Corporate lobbyist Niira Radia, Harsha Moily, son of former UPA Minister Veerappa Moily, Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt's wife Dilnashin, son of former UPA powerhouse and Central Minister P. Chidambaram, former Union Minister Sachin Pilot, and several others who are the who's who of India's Corporate world, politics, and other fields.

large number of research centers that take a more heterodox approach to socialist ideas, such as the Centre for Contemporary Marxism in Foreign Countries at Fudan University in Shanghai. The center publishes a regular journal, Contemporary Foreign Marxism Review, which has included recent studies on the works of Perry Anderson, literary theorist Terry Eagleton, regular updates on the status of British Marxism, as well as critical reviews of Slavoj Zizek's work on George Lukacs, interviews with the Brazilian Trotskyist Michael Lowy, and countless other topics.

This multi-disciplinary engagement with such eclectic currents shows that far from being a frozen official dogma, Marxism in China continues to stimulate intellectual fascination and exploration. Interest in socialist feminism and eco-socialism is also more noticeable, and Chinese scholars are now regular participants in many international seminars and congresses. China has in turn hosted numerous gatherings on modern Marxist trends.

Next year, to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, Peking University in Beijing will hold the 2nd World Congress on Marxism on May 5-6. Around 300 academics will gather to discuss Marxism in the 21st century and its development in China. Liu Zhiqin of Beijing's Renmin University wrote recently: "How Marxism and socialism would develop has baffled the international community for almost 30 years.

"However, China, with the fruitful results of its reform and opening-up over the last 40 years, announced to the world that Marxism and socialism are still an attractive theoretical guide and development path, full of vitality for developing countries. "China, through countless facts, has proven a simple truth: Adapting Marxism to a country's reality is the most effective guiding ideology to develop its politics and economy and also to modernise its culture." (IPA Service)

the world, their forceful argument is "offshore" banking which is legal. But, this is practiced by only the ultra-rich to evade tax. They take advantage of the legal loop-holes by taking shelter under the tax treaties of our Government.

The trillion dollar question here is whether they will ever be able to "use" that wealth in their lifetimes? I don't think it's possible in the practical world. They can't even see, touch and feel the wealth they have once dispatched. They might not "use" it at all even after 500 years -- if they ever could live. Because these super-rich people already have mountains of wealth which are in their various kind of treasury vaults within their own countries. The offshore money is only in the "Paradise papers". Is Paradise not an illusion then?

Yours etc.,  
Salil Gwali,  
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.

# Shadows cast by cherry blossoms

By Janet Moore Hujon

"By celebrating the Cherry Blossom we are celebrating nature". So said Clement Marak, (Minister of Forests and Environment), when he inaugurated the 2017 Cherry Blossom Festival in Meghalaya. Taken in isolation, who would argue with his statement? After all isn't the minister telling us that the cherry blossom is but one of the wonders of Nature we must celebrate? But was that what he really meant? Set against the fiasco of the non-appearance of the cherry blossoms, the minister's words can only be seen as a hastily dreamed up homily to justify the considerable government revenue spent on a single event.

A Meghalaya in physical and moral decline needs tender, loving constant care not a brief dazzle of hype to 'showcase the cultural and natural resources of the

our homeland. He marvels but not with any intention to exploit but simply to encourage respect, and all his work has been carried out without any fanfare. Work like his is of extreme importance and should be given due and urgent recognition. It deeply concerns me that most of the people he acknowledges as sources of information, are no longer alive. So had it not been for Bah So their wisdom would have died with them. What more proof do we need to grasp the tenuous nature of our disappearing world?

As Meghalaya teeters on the brink as she has done for so many years, we need to think clearly about a radical change. It has been patently clear for decades that the old guard does not care and the electorate must learn to live without them. You can only do this by

*The old nudge-nudge-wink-wink style of functioning has got to be recognized as morally polluting trash and accordingly dealt with. Then maybe grassroots Meghalaya might have a look in. Maybe the Bah Sos of this world will receive the patronage they deserve. Maybe the selfless, inclusive initiative of the Kali Kit Kotproject will receive a boost.*

state" – as that overworked and overused phrase keeps telling us. I despair at this easy adoption of cliché and jargon. If all we ever do is borrow readymade phrases and ideas then it must mean that we cannot think for ourselves or speak with our own voice or, far worse, that we are afraid to believe we can be original. If only we really did sear and feel the natural wonder laid out for us we would continually revere nature adding a deeper dimension to the ritual of celebration.

Fortunately, there is one person who does just that. His name is Bah So Khongsit—a gentle folk hero if ever there was one. Look no further if you want to know the meaning of the expression 'Labour of Love'. For years he has celebrated the diverse wonder of our homeland with the help of other like-minded custodians of the environment. He is the author of several books in Khasi on indigenous flowers, trees, birds and the local traditions of weaving, dyeing and beekeeping. As naturalist, ecologist and poet he undoubtedly holds the distinction of being the ideal mentor for our beleaguered times.

From the way he writes it is obvious that his efforts are solely moved by an intense love for his homeland and the strength of his self-belief – one nourishes the other. Here is someone who closely observes the interdependence of life in these hills and is pained by the steady defacement and theft of what supports this relationship. In his foreword to his book on the birds of the Khasi Hills he pens a stark warning against the willful neglect and destruction of the natural world. It is only by safeguarding the forest's wealth, he says, can we truly claim to love our land.

Needless to say I do not question or doubt Bah So's integrity as I do the government's. This is because Bah So is not into mere 'showcasing'. Unlike those in power he does not just talk about 'cultural and natural resources' and 'biodiversity hotspots' he chronicles and explains them underscoring the critical significance of preserving this great museum of diversity that is

asking yourself the most probing and uncomfortable questions such as why do I elect this person to represent me? Does s/he have a vision for the whole state or does s/he not look beyond the comfort of his or her own zone? The people you elect will not only reflect the answers to your questions but more importantly will tell you a great deal about yourself. Are you willing and happy to then live in peace with the self you see in front of you? Be true to yourself and your representatives will be true to you.

The old nudge-nudge-wink-wink style of functioning has got to be recognized as morally polluting trash and accordingly dealt with. Then maybe grassroots Meghalaya might have a look in. Maybe the Bah Sos of this world will receive the patronage they deserve. Maybe the selfless, inclusive initiative of the Kali Kit Kotproject will receive a boost. Maybe there will be a shift in focus from the money-haloed capital to the quiet corners of villages. Maybe our trees will not be stripped of wild orchids as a desperate means to earn a living. Maybe the majesty of our pines will be evoked and the grace of the utilitarian bamboo cherished. Maybe artists, weavers, cane and wood workers will be recognized as repositories of ancient skills in their own right instead of being trotted out from time to time by an administration keen to show the rest of the world it is so in touch with its own culture.

*Forget the clamour  
That trademark of  
festivals  
Move away from the  
din  
Making us deaf to the  
pain  
Of a long-suffering  
land*

*Pause look listen  
Perchance you will  
stumble  
Upon some quiet  
delight  
And like the ancient  
haiku master  
You will catch your  
breath  
To softly wonder*

*Violets  
how precious on  
a mountain path  
(Basho)*

*“A modern democracy is a tyranny whose borders are undefined; one discovers how far one can go only by traveling in a straight line until one is stopped.”*

--- Bruce Barton

**The Shillong Times**

Vol No: LX No.96 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2017

**BASIC on climate**

AT a time when India is under severe attack from the Press in the US and the UK for the overhanging cloud of pollution affecting its capital, Delhi, the constructive deliberations held in Bonn by BASIC-Brazil, South Africa, India and China are most welcome. BASIC has resolved to take up all critical issues like access to finance and technology in the last few days of the UN Climate Conference (COP23). That will help enable implementation of the historic Paris Agreement in 2015. Representatives of the four nations unaligned that the issue of free 2020 actions should be given equal treatment at COP23. They demanded that the issue be included in the agenda of the ongoing conference. COP23 should give clarity in the design of the facilitative dialogue in 2018. The BASIC also urged the developed countries to take the lead towards closing the ambition gap so as to avoid transferring the burden to developing countries from the pre 2020 to the post 2020 period. The pre 2020 actions are mandated for only rich nations under the Kyoto Protocol. The post 2020 actions under the Paris Agreement are meant for all countries in keeping with their voluntarily stated goals in the global deal.

At the high level segment, which began on Wednesday had German chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron progressing towards a political approach regarding a collective stand of developing countries for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. However, it remains to be seen how the Paris Agreement can be actualised as US President Donald Trump has pulled the US, the most unreliable developed country in this sphere, out of the Paris treaty saying its country has been 'conned'.

**LOOKING BACK**

May 5, 1989

**Engineers want more say in administration**

Hurdles in the speedy implementation of engineering projects and how can such delay be best remedies are the main topics being deliberated at the first ever Annual General Conference of the Meghalaya Engineering Service Association at the State Central Library, Shillong on Friday and Saturday.

The causes and effects of this delay has to be considered the context of geo-political and climatic conditions, according to Dr R N Hazarika who introduced the theme of the conference at the inaugural session. Among the factors responsible for the delay are non-availability of construction materials, failure on the part of the contractor, climatic factors (heat-rain-sub zero cold-epidemic in labour camps), and socio-political factors like strikes, agitations, student unrest. This is responsible in the escalation of project costs, loss of revenue, blocking of capital and loss in terms of interest payments on loans.

The main thrust of the speakers at the inaugural function however, was the demand for greater responsibility to be given to the engineers in administration of various departments. Most of the speakers played the present system of administration which was geared to the interests of the bureaucrats, who were non-technical t the cost of highly qualified technical persons. Highly qualified engineers, who are responsible for literally building up the nation can rarely hope to achieve the

status and pay of Secretaries of Ministry, it was felt. The decision of the Govt of Meghalaya to give Special Secretary status to an engineer in the P.W.D. was greatly appreciated.

Minister for Commerce and Industry Mr Upstar Kharbuli who was the Chief guest praised the role of the engineers in the development of the State, and agreed that technical experts should also be involved in the administration of certain department. Mr O L Nongtdu Minister for PWD, who charred the function said that the engineers should think in terms of building earthquake resistant structures and hoped that the general conference would not only mean the exchange of technical knowledge but also provide an opportunity to the visiting engineers to know the culture, nature and problems of the people in the state.

Earlier, in this address, President of the MESA Mr E R Passah said that the status, responsibility, duty, accountability and the role of the engineers were greatly felt by the leaders of the Nation and appealed to all engineers to work with the spirit of dedication and personal involvement in every task. Among those who spoke were Chairman of NEEPCO, Mr S N Phukan, Chairman of Indian Engineers Federation Capt Singh, and representatives from various Engineering Association in the East and North East.

**North Eastern Tribals and the Indian Mainstream**

By Fabian Lyngdoh

It was only during the colonial rule that an entity called 'British India' which included the present India, Pakistan and Bangladesh came into existence. The British India was Gandhi's dream of an independent India, while the present India was created according to Mountbatten's Plan which effected the division of the British India into two Dominions: India and Pakistan on 15th August, 1947. Mr. Jinnah's dream of an independent Pakistan that would include the whole of Bengal and Assam in the East and the Punjab in the West also did not materialise. So, in truth, the India we have today is a modern historical entity which is still struggling to achieve its constitutional ideals.

Before the advent of the British rule, the various tribes in North East India had their own well-defined ethnic identities and cultural boundaries, though their territorial boundaries could have changed from one generation to another according to their migratory occupations and existential encounters. These tribes had no idea of a realm such as an India or an Indian culture. They knew and recognised only their own identities and cultures, and that of their immediate tribal neighbours. Today, the North Eastern Region is surrounded by four countries: China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, and share a 4500 km international border, but linked to the Indian mainland only by a 22 km wide corridor, which connects the State of Assam and the northern part of the State of Bengal. All the other States of North East India have no direct geographical connection with mainland India, and from the context of ethnicity and culture, North East India is a part of South East Asia rather than that of India. This is an established fact which cannot be manipulated otherwise, but to be accepted as the baseline.

Since independence and partition, the idea of integrating the tribals into the Indian mainstream came into being as if that mainstream is already in existence. But the people of India have agreed to constitute India into a 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic.' These are the ideals of the mainstream to which not only the tribals, but all Indians should be integrated. Since India is a multi-cultural society, the concept of unity does not presume the existence of a monolithic culture. Hindu

culture cannot be the mainstream because Hindu society itself needs to undergo drastic changes to establish a casteless and classless society with justice and equality as prescribed by the Constitution. Till today reference is still made to the effect that every Indian is a member of a caste. The process of integration which we should follow is the principle of 'unity in diversity' with justice and equality. Each group must be integrated into the common political economy with the ideals of the Constitution as the cultural mainstream.

There are many academics and intellectuals from the mainland who have a clear concept of the tribals' situations and the issue of national integration. But there are also those who seem to take overcharge after the British colonists and continue to view the tribals as exotic primitive and backward beings whose value lie only as objects of academic study and elites' intellectual discussions. Perhaps they had borrowed certain theories about primitive peoples from western academics and try to cut and paste the tribals just to fit into their terms of reference. Some assumed to have discovered that large chunk of the tribal population still reels under poverty, social backwardness and illiteracy, and that a large section of the tribal communities is to be brought at par with the advanced sections of the Indian society. Some even charged the tribals of refusal to be identified with the 'mainstream' or to get absorbed into an imaginary universalistic culture and hence assert their separate identities. What does it mean that tribals are socially backward? What categories constitute that advanced section of the Indian society? And, what is that 'mainstream' to which the tribals refused to identify? If a study with reference to social backwardness, poverty, gender inequality, illiteracy and injustice be undertaken among the rural villages in mainland India, these negatives would be found to be more rampant there than among the tribals in the North East India.

There are people among the tribals who are as rich as people in the mainland, and there are tribals who are as educated as the educated Brahmins. But there could be families among the Hindu society who are poorer than the poorest tribals. The high caste elites and economically powerful would do injustice to their fellow caste members

if they try to convince them that they are superior beings in spite of abject poverty and injustices, just because they are born in a superior caste. Cultural protection is prescribed in the Constitution for the cultural minorities, but economic protection is the prerogative of the poor majority regardless of castes, race, tribe, gender, faiths and beliefs. That is the tenet of our constitutional justice. Just because a minority section of the upper castes in the Hindu society are prosperous and in control of academic, political and economic powers, and hence, constitute the advanced section of the Indian society, it does not mean that the majority population of Hindus are educated, rich, developed and free from inequalities and injustice.

The tribals of North East India had already looked to the east and to the south and conducted traditional trades with the neighbouring people in Myanmar and the present Bangladesh since time immemorial, and they had survived well in their traditional international trades. It is only after independence and the partition that their traditional trades have been blocked. In the new look east policy, trade between India and South East Asian countries is conducted mainly by sea routes, and the North East has been bypassed because it is considered not as safe enough to act as a gateway to South East Asia. Not safe enough as a gateway for whom? It is safe for the tribes of the North East, and safe for all Indians with justifiable and equitable relationships; but it might actually be unsafe for some people from the mainland who try to squeeze through the 22 km Siliguri corridor only to take advantage of whatever opportunities available and keep the people of the region alienated from their own lands and the opportunities provided by their strategic locations.

In the Chinese aggression in 1962, the Chinese troops had advanced up to Tezpur and India was clearly on the defensive. Our teacher in primary school had told us that Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru had morally surrendered, and had given the farewell message to the people of North East India through the radio. There are also

apprehensions that since the tribals of North East India have ethnic and cultural ties across the borders, serious security problems may arise if their activities are not effectively monitored, and hence, required to be heavily militarized. So, national security could be the main concern, while development of the Region is only an entry-point.

The North Eastern Region requires basic socio-economic infrastructural development to pave the way for local capacities and capabilities for the region's sustainable development. The tribes prefer to be in India and to defend India than with any other country; what they dread is that people from other parts of India might, in the name of development, squeeze through the narrow corridor and suffocate their minds and hearts with oppressive and stratified cultures; and their lands, which they consider as legacies from their ancestors, might be overtaken by others beyond redemption. Let the tribals of the North East find economic and cultural security with India, and let the tribal lands be the realms where the tribals thrive, and not as virgin lands to be invaded. If on the other hand, the people of the North East find their life more comfortable and secure with Myanmar, with China, or with Bangladesh than with India, what right have the people of the mainland to object? Other tribal communities in India are right in the middle of the mainland unlike the tribals of North East who live separately on the frontiers. There is nothing much to interfere other than mutual help and mutual respect. Indian nation can be built on political maturity in democracy, not on racial, cultural or religious ground. It would be futile to delve into the mythical Ramayana or Mahabharata in an attempt to invent a cultural context of linking the tribes of this region with the mainland because it is a glaring fact that they are very much closer to China and Myanmar than India on that count. At present, there is no established ideal mainstream even in the mainland India. The Indian mainstream which all communities in India have to be integrated is prescribed in the Constitution which we still have to achieve.

A huge establishment in the form of IBDLP and agencies under it created just to re-employ sycophants and divert development budgets of other Departments and what is the end result? Maybe the Chief Minister will explain 'in his typical extempore which makes the entire crowd in the Assembly to go to sleep. Today, nobody in the State Government, ministers or bureaucrat, can stand up to the Chief Minister even if he is wrong. He has a dictatorial and know-all and arrogant attitude and anybody differing is either transferred or booted out. Unfortunately the state is left with a bureaucracy which is totally lethargic and a disgrace to the service and only concerned with a plush assignment after retirement. Let us hope that the citizens judge the present government considering their performance and the number of scams while casting their votes during the upcoming state elections.

Yours etc.,  
B. Syiem Shillong-3

**Murder in School & Child Abuse Coarse correction vital**

By Dr. S Saraswathi

A shocking incident of a teenage murder two months ago at a school in Gurugram in the NCR has added urgency to deal with juvenile crime and justice which are becoming important aspects of children welfare and adolescents. The arrest of a Class XI 16-year old student for knifing a Class II 7-year old boy along-with another boy suspected to be his accomplice in the crime by the CBI has sent shockwaves.

Interestingly, the CBI's findings are different from the earlier police investigations which put the blame on the school bus conductor, encapsulating the murder as child sexual abuse. As these offences are common, people believed the police.

Preliminary CBI investigations revealed that the student's motive for murder, was to get the examinations postponed and the scheduled parent-teacher meeting cancelled. Undoubtedly, this is not only odd and perverse but reflects ill-prepared students state of mind to face examinations or teachers' direct report to parents. Also, the murderer, whoever he be, had come prepared to commit the crime with a knife.

If the murder is proved, it will be a terrible case of juvenile crime and stark reality of vulnerability of children. Alas, teenage crimes including murder and victimization of children in all conceivable forms are growing in India along-with increasing demand for child rights, protection and genuine juvenile justice. When both the offender and the victim are minors, it becomes a challenge for law enforcing and judicial authorities to deal with the case without prejudice to everyone's interests.

Besides, given the crime was committed in the school washroom it exposes the lack of elementary protection for children in schools which are expected to take care of the wards in their premises. Alarming, crimes against children are growing in India. The National Crime Research Bureau reported nearly one lakh offenses in 2015 which included 1,758 murders. Kidnapping and abduction top the crime list with 41,893 registered cases followed by 14,913 sexual offences and 10,854 rapes.

Besides, there is no separate classification of offences against children or child abuse. Such offences in which children are victims are categorized as Crime Against Children. The Indian Penal Code and Local and Special Laws specifically mention 20 offences in which children are victims.

According to reports, the Delhi police receive about 20 calls every day pertaining to fights breaking out inside or around schools involving hot-headed students and drop-outs on an average. Further, many offences against children go unreported to avoid public gaze and gossip, irksome police questions and escape stigma attached to victims particularly in regard to sexual offences. What comes out are mostly cases of murder and abduction of boys.

Pertinently, child abuse is considered as a social problem only in recent years though child maltreatment is not a modern crime. Physical punishment of children, now shunned by most societies was common in ancient times. Infanticide, abolished by law in India, was practised in many other countries like Australia, China, Africa, and France to get rid of handicapped and unhealthy children.

Certainly, there is no dearth of a national policy and laws for the protection and welfare of children. But, they have not been effective in curbing child victimization with the result that we today face cases of crimes against children by children.

Questionably, are we going to deal with the Gurugram child murder case from the angle of crime against children or as a juvenile delinquent eligible for special treatment? Child activists and people with school-age children will naturally demand severe punishment for the

murderer(s) with no consideration of his/their age.

Juvenile activists who are relentlessly advocating extra humane treatment for young offenders of even the most heinous crimes might seek application of special juvenile justice in the event of exposure of juvenile crime in this ghastly incident.

Both have valid points in their favour but whether any of them come to the rescue of vulnerable children or reform delinquent adolescents in society are open to debate.

Importantly, a vital amendment to the Juvenile Justice Act has reduced the age for trying a minor as an adult for serious crimes from 18 to 16 years. The Philippines Government tried to push a law in 2016 to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 9 in a bid to track drug traffickers who were using young boys as narcotic couriers. So serious is the problem of child vulnerability that children in schools and out of schools become easy targets of crimes and suitable shield for criminals.

Yet another feature of this capital lawlessness is the role of police in catching the culprit and its relationship with people of different status which have come under media and public scrutiny. Though it is common to all criminal investigations, child-related cases get additional significance.

In the Gurugram case the findings of the police and CBI are vastly different whereby there is convergence on only one fact: The student's murder took place in a school. Moreover, it involves several social problems apart from the crime itself. Schools are becoming the venue for offences against children in many instances which raises the question of the responsibility of the school management in imparting character building of children and youth and for the safety of pupils.

Scandalously, child abuse and neglect are openly practised in India and numerous forms of exploitation of children are reported daily. Worse, laws are rarely implemented in full or in the right spirit. However, murder cases in schools, that too by a juvenile, are mostly unheard of.

Indeed, gun culture is foreign to students in India. In the US its Department of Education and Department of Justice publish an annual report on school crimes and safety of students covering data on victimization, teacher injury, bullying, school conditions, fights, weapons, and use of drugs and alcohol.

A similar data covering child abuse cases in our schools might be useful for improving our school environment from the point of student safety. Children and youth are exposed to various good and bad influences pervading across society. Consequently, it has become an urgent task to harness adolescent and youth energy into constructive thinking and socially productive activities so as to wean them away from crimes and unsocial behaviour.

A child's murder is an extreme form of child abuse committed more by adults than children or youth. If it is a planned murder, its gravity is more than an unplanned kill caused by sudden provocation. If juvenile(s) are involved in the crime it is more dangerous for children's future safety in schools.

Notably, physical harassment of children for disciplining them at home and in schools goes on as a matter of rights of parents and school authorities. Clearly, a lot of changes are required in our relationship with children. For, they cannot defend themselves and depend on healthy parenting, protective school environment and equalitarian administration of institutions. ---- INFA

**TO THE EDITOR**

**Teachers Dress Code**

Editor,  
What is a teacher's dress code? Can someone enlighten me on what the exact dress code of a lady teacher in a college is? In a generation where women are still fighting for emancipation and gender equality and also when so much of discussion on Women's Empowerment and Feminism is happening all over the world... Women's college is busy feuding with jealousy and utter sarcasm towards the daily attire of the lady faculty despite it being an all women's institution. Only a fool would fail to understand deep within oneself the decency and modesty of carrying oneself as a teacher. This particular institution instead should focus more on the academic growth of the students and the faculty and other very important matters because at present it also fails to provide students with the basic computer facility due to the expiry of MS Word software for over a year now, that too in the college library, leave alone its lab. The point one is trying to make here is that, a teacher does not have to be told this except if it has

caused a riot in the streets. Colleges should not waste so much time in petty things but instead do something useful like working salary hikes, fixing the broken flush in the student's toilets, providing the students with the facilities promised in the prospectus and for heaven's sake, "GET A LIFE, CHILL OUT AND HAVE SOME FUN".

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request

**Will voters learn any lessons?**

Editor,  
Recently a Parliamentary Committee visited the State to review the rural development works in the State of Meghalaya. This is a High-Powered Committee composed of MPs and other high ranking officials. Surprisingly the State team was headed by a junior Secretary level officer in the meeting. One wonders whether this was a deliberate attempt to insult the Committee since there is a BJP led government in the centre. One also wonders where the Chief Secretary or the Additional Chief Secretaries were. It seems even the

Deputy Commissioner was not available during the field visits.

The state has no scarcity of Additional Chief Secretaries, which is unique to Meghalaya, but where were they during the visit of the Committee? Absence of all these top officials points to the fact that this was an intentional act at the behest of the highest power in the State Govt. Can we as a State take such an arrogant and insulting stand? Are we not ashamed that today Meghalaya is amongst the laggard states, almost last even amongst the north-eastern states and we project only pride and arrogance?

This government under Mukul Sangma has brought the State to its knees. Only lip service and big dreams but nothing in the ground. So many study trips abroad with big teams but at the end of the term only distributing chicken and bamboo saplings! Look around. Streets are filled with hawkers, teachers up in arms, health sector in doldrums, road condition pathetic, ministers riddled in scams, no new job opportunities for the future generation etc.

*“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.”*

--- Vince Lombardi

## The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2017

### Indian students in US

THE US has shown greater pliability recently in sharing strategic concerns with India. But that does not apply to the field of knowledge. The craze for British University education in the past has in recent years been outpaced by growing interest among Indians in studies in the US. But the trend has now been stemmed. Unfair barriers have been raised against the entry of Indian students. The latest Open Doors survey by the Institute of International Education shows that the percentage of increase in fresh enrolments by Indians halved in 2016-17 to 12.3% from almost 25% in the previous year. Indians constitute the second largest community of foreign students in the US in per capita terms. But they have now descended to the bottom. China has doubled the number of students in the US and South Korea comes third. There is evidence to prove that US universities are pursuing a policy of racial balancing and campus diversity at the expense of Indian and other Asian students. Indian students require to have more SAT points for admission to Harvard University, the most desired destination, than Whites, Hispanics and Blacks. That means there is need for a higher proficiency requirement for Indians to get admission to Harvard University. The command of English that Indians have is not considered an advantage. No importance is attached to the fact that Indians contribute 17% of the total earnings from overseas students at US universities. In fact, they are willing to contribute even a higher percentage.

The bias against Indian students is difficult to understand. US universities have on their faculty such eminent teachers as Jagdish Bhagwati, Pranab Bardhan and Raghuram Rajan. It had Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen teaching at Harvard and Berkeley. Indian techs are highly rated in Silicon Valley and in other parts of the US. India's liberalisation in 1991 brought it closer to the US economy and the Indo-US nuclear energy deal has further strengthened ties. One wonders if the restriction on the admission of Indian students to US universities is due to the fear of their putting pressure on indigenous employment. But that will be a disaster for globalisation of knowledge.

## LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Rajiv must intervene

About three dozen lives have been lost during the five days of the Bodo bandh just over. The number matches with the AASU agitation in Assam, not counting of course, the Great Killing perpetrated in one single holocaust at Nellie in the Nowgong suburbs during the closing year of that fateful agitation. A similar holocaust in the case of the Bodo agitation

may not be ruled out, since it resembles the AASU model even limits minutes details. The Bodo stir seems to have attained even greater depth because of the limited extent it is spread over in terms of geographical coverage; the intensity of it has therefore been inevitably more than what the AASU stir could generate.

# Gagging the Press through legal notices

By Patricia Mukhim

This week I want to focus on the cash for job scam in Assam. Also I would like to share with readers that our story with a dateline from West Khasi Hills where job seekers alleged that non-official members (political appointees) in the District Selection Committees (DSC) and the Meghalaya Public Service Commission (MPSC) very often pad up the marks of the candidates of their choice during the personal interview even when they have fared badly in their written examinations. Those who spoke to our correspondent did so, on condition of anonymity since they were still job seekers and feared that they might be victimised if their names were known. This report, instead of being taken in the right spirit, resulted in a knee jerk reaction from the Chairman, MPSC who served a legal notice on the editor and publisher of this newspaper. Indeed this is the modus operandi adopted by government officials and politicians when they are criticised for failing in their duties. They believe that by intimidating the media they would be able to carry on with the anomalies in their respective departments. Considering that the Education Scam that deprived meritorious candidates of their jobs while those with political clout were appointed, is yet to be decided by the High Court, let us not assume that IN Meghalaya everything is alright with the MPSC and DSC. While the present Chairperson of the MPSC has tried to bring in several changes to make the system more transparent, there have been several allegations of wrongdoings by those who held this august post in the past. So when the MPSC is called to account its past misdemeanours cannot be brushed aside.

I am sure most job seekers here are keenly following the cash for job scam in Assam where the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) has been hung dry. Last week the Assam Police arrested 17 people who paid for their jobs, which included 11 officers from the Assam Civil Services (ACS) and Assam Police Service (APS). Amongst those arrested are relatives of ministers in the present BJP Government and also the son of a minister in the Congress Government of Tarun Gogoi. In fact a whistle blower from inside the Assam Police Department had brought to light the scam in its early stages. Rakesh Paul the APSC Chairman has a c c u u l a t e d unprecedented wealth and owned flats in Guwahati, Delhi and Bengaluru. But the police officer was

instead transferred from his post by the Tarun Gogoi Government.

In March, 2015, the CBI wrote to the Assam Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Wing mentioning large scale manipulation in APSC's recruitment process. The CBI alleged that Rakesh Paul the Chairman was collecting between Rs - 40 lakh from candidates, and had already amassed between Rs 20 crore to Rs 40 crore. Even then the State Government failed to act. Later, the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader Akhil Gogoi, approached the Gauhati High Court seeking enquiry into Paul's alleged disproportionate wealth, and into APSC's functioning. Thankfully Gogoi's petition was accepted and the High Court recorded that among the candidates selected for the Assam Civil Service in 2013-14, was an ex-minister's son, a minister's son, a DIG's son, two daughters of two MLAs, and two close relatives of two journalists. On October 15, 2015, the court ordered a CBI probe into Paul's assets, and directed the state government to set up an inquiry headed by a retired High Court (HC) judge and go into the details of the functioning of the APSC. But a month later on November 21, Paul obtained a stay from the Supreme Court on the HC's order. This stay gave him a respite until he was arrested on November 4, 2016.

It was the timely and strategic action of the Dibrugarh Police that led to the arrest of Nabakanta Patir a government engineer while he was collecting Rs 10 lakh from a dentist who had applied for a job in the APSC. Patir and two others, Basanta Kumar Doley and Samedur Rahman were engaged to send out feelers to candidates who were willing to pay money for a job. It was then that Rahman, Paul and Doley were arrested, and so were Rahman's personal security officer and an assistant controller of exams in the APSC. By November 2016, altogether 11 people were arrested.

In June 2017, the Dibrugarh Additional SP, Surjit Singh Panesar seized the answer scripts of all 241 candidates who had been successful in the 2013 APSC exams, and gave a handwriting test to 25 candidates who had by then completed their training and taken up posts in the districts. What the police found was what they suspected. The handwriting samples did

not match with the APSC exam answer scripts. Evidently each of these officers paid between Rs 15 and Rs 30 lakh for their jobs. How Rakesh Paul ingratiated himself with the Tarun Gogoi government and how he managed to become the APSC Chairman is a story of political collusion at the highest levels. In 2008, during Tarun Gogoi's second term, Paul was appointed member of the APSC. In 2013, he was appointed acting chairman and, within a few days he asked Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi to make him full-fledged Chairman. This appointment violated all moral and ethical considerations since Paul had 11 years of service (five years as member and six years as Chairman) thereby allowing him to manipulate his way through for all those 11 years. A senior official of the Personnel Department and Paul was confirmed in December 2013.

Thankfully, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has acted quickly after his Government came to power in May 2016. Now police are compelled to act. They have seized 1212 answer sheets of candidates who were appointed in 2015 and 1080 of those appointed in 2016. This has happened because some people chose to blow the whistle. Does anyone in Meghalaya have such courage?

Ironically what happens instead is that when governments and those in it who head various institutions are called out for various acts of omission and commission they seek protection under the defamation clause of the law. The attempt is to prevent any further investigation by gagging the media.

Insofar as transparency is concerned the MPSC still hides behind archaic rules to get past the RTI Act 2005 in not allowing examinees to see their answer scripts. The MPSC website still has the following paragraph:

The Right to Information Act, 2005 came into force on 21st June, 2005 and its provision extend to all Public Authorities in the whole of India except the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The Meghalaya Public Service Commission being a public authority came under the purview of the Act. It may be seen that the Constitutional responsibilities entrusted upon Public Service Commissions are of such a nature that certain aspects of its work are necessary to be protected by the law/principle of "Non Disclosure". In accordance with this principle the following items of records are never disclosed and

treated as confidential records (Section 8 (1) (e) and 8 (1) (j) of the RTI Act, 2005.)

Identity of Question Setters and Examiners. Evaluated Answer Scripts.

Marks scored in the Written/Viva Voce Test, when not requested by a candidate to whom the records relate.

Proceeding of Personal Interview.

Such other kinds of

information which in the opinion of the Commission are likely to undermine its functioning and render the system unworkable.

This non-disclosure clause goes against a Supreme Court ruling of February 4, 2016. The apex court asked the Kerala Public Service Commission and Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission to disclose answer papers and marks tabulated during the oral interviews. The Court maintained that when a candidate is preparing for the best career option in the country, he needs to know how he performed in the exam and how his answer papers have been evaluated. "How will an exam conducting body establish transparency and accountability without disclosing answer papers and marks obtained?"

In the same ruling the Supreme Court said: "So far as the information sought for by the respondents with regard to the supply of scanned copies of the answer sheets of the written test, copy of the tabulation sheet and other information, we are of the opinion that the view taken in the impugned judgment with regard to the disclosure of these information, does not suffer from error of law and the same is fully justified. Disclosing the marks and the answer sheets to the candidates will ensure that the candidates have been given marks according to their performance in the exam. This practice will ensure fair play in this competitive environment, where a candidate puts his time in preparing for the competitive exams," the court observed."

For a long time the civil service aspirants have desired that the exams be conducted in a transparent manner where every candidate knows what she/he scored and where she/he faltered. One hopes the MPSC and DSCs maintain the highest norms of transparency and fairness and reduce the opportunity for corruption in this very important area of employment in the government sector.

constituencies whose representatives are not on the ruling side or perhaps who are not privileged with a cabinet berth lack funds for much-needed development. So he conceptualized and started the MLA-LADs. The vision was clear, clean and honest - sharing of funds for overall development. But men's hearts and minds are easily corrupted. And as in all cases, the visionary's vision and of the ones who follow them are never in sync. Somewhere along the way, as time passes the vision slowly faded from people's minds and went haywire. The funds were misused and abused which perhaps has led to the corrosion we see today. I wonder then of what use is the local MLA if he is not doing anything for his own people who elected him. Sometimes I begin to wonder who is really against the 'ri and the jaitbnyri' - is it the 'outsider' who provides us

with so much opportunity or the 'insider' whom we so lovingly elected to represent us, stand for our rights but has backstabbed us instead. I love reading Mohrmen's articles, but this time I beg to differ on the one point where it is said that the root cause of all evil is the MLA-LADs, for in doing so, the onus of corruption and misdeeds is placed on the funds rather on the character of the person who is its custodian. With that said, perhaps as every right-thinking citizen agrees, the MLA-LADs should be scrapped. Not to put too much onus on our local MLAs, let us just say that the MLA-LADs has outlived its usefulness. As someone said - the writing on the wall is "Its time is up".

Yours etc.,  
Pyntngen Nongpluh,  
Viamail

## Employment Generation

# Forget talk, action vital

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi criticized the Modi Government's neglect of small and medium enterprises (SME) as the primary reason for the looming job crisis recently. Undoubtedly, not only is there alarming unemployment but also a slow growth rate of these enterprises. True, the previous UPA Government had not done much for this sector but its condition was much better then compared to the present.

Addressing the PHD Chamber of Commerce Rahul observed that six crore small, micro and medium enterprises, which are the backbone of the economy, get very little support. These SMEs are situated in thousands of clusters across the country and are "rich with knowledge and skill and make up the heart of our economic legacy", he said. Adding that development and modernization of these enterprises are only capable of meeting the Chinese challenge in terms of jobs.

Meanwhile, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy has reported 15 lakh jobs were lost during January-April 2017 due to closure of micro and small enterprises. Notably, joblessness and lack of economic opportunities due to the after effects of demonetisation have created this situation.

Former Finance Minister Congress's Chidambaram queried: "Was it ethical to damage vibrant industrial hubs like Surat, Bhiwandi, Moradabad, Agra, Ludhiana, and Tirpur? Was it ethical to give an easy way for converting black money into white as discovered by the Government?"

Besides, 45% of bank loans are going to only 300 companies whereby the extreme concentration of bank credit to the top end of the corporate sector has begun to border on the ridiculous. Pointed out INFC Bank CEO Rajiv Lall, "the Prime Minister's announcements may help rebalance this by encouraging loans to small business where the framework has already been created with the help of payment systems and bank accounts".

Agrees Rahul, "all SMEs get as much credit as the 10 largest businesses even though this money generates 30 times more employment". However, the recent bank recapitalization targets only India's big corporate and throws crumbs to the SMEs who do not have the power to get their due from high profile banks.

Thus, Rahul has rightly questioned the economic flawed policy of the Modi Sarkar. "Why is the Government treating their most powerful weapon in the fight against unemployment without dignity? Why does it disrespect them and treat them like thieves?"

Asserting, jargons like "lab-to-land, organic farming, real-time data, soil health card have not been implemented as the Government lacked proper vision." Of course, this has been in the air for more than a decade without much effective action. But now the NDA Government has been talking more than implementing action at the grass-root levels.

The culture of rewarding and lending support in various ways to big businesses has been part of our planning strategy since the last two-three decades.. From making land available at subsidized prices to environment clearance --- even if the industry pollutes the area --- has been going on for a few years.

Add to this, land for nursing homes and higher

educational institutions have been made available in prime locations at subsidized rates which are used only by the rich and upper middle class due to very high rates. An example: Lakhs of people are affected by dengue in Bengal and over 100 have already died as very few visit private nursing homes and make do at crowded Government hospitals.

Sadly, the only concern of the Government is to ensure high GDP growth and not all-round development which reaches the lowest tiers of the population. Also, the 'Make in India' thrust is yet to become reality coupled with the wrong mindset of business houses and lack of technical expertise in increasing productivity has resulted in labour-intensive industries not prospering though wages in the country are still quite low compared to China and other Asian countries.

Pertinently, small items like scissors, nail cutters and electronic goods are mostly manufactured in China and have flooded the Indian market. Do we not have the skill or are we incapable in developing these?

Moreover, even as the Congress leader was critical of the NDA Government, it also did very little to transform the country's planning and development policy and percolate down to the block level. There was very little encouragement to boosting the manufacturing spirit of micro and small enterprises and identifying items which should be produced herein and not allow these being imported.

Indeed, the situation is alarming with a backlog of 'surplus workers' that includes under-employment in all sectors according to the India Employment Report 2016 whereby it exceeded 50 million workers which does not include women. Therefore, this is not because the GDP growth has come down but due to the fact that unemployment and under-employment has been increasing and rural incomes been stagnant.

Moreover, there is virtual stagnant agriculture with reports of farmers' suicides indicating once again that farming is becoming an un-remunerative proposition. Technical know-how has been missing, crop losses are rampant and in most areas given the irrigation facilities three crops are not possible.

Clearly, it is time to decide whether manufacturing --- and subsequent export--- or agri development and exports should be our priority, alternatively whether a balance of both is necessary.

Further, there is the social effect of joblessness leading the young generation to anti-social activities. Already, the NDA is playing politics with religion and trying to prove the superiority of Hinduism and that India belongs to Hindus and whatever good or creative work has been carried out has been by them. Caste politics is rampant which become violent with groups trying to assert authority.

In this scenario, there is every likelihood that youths, even those educated, with no jobs might fall into a trap and get misled. Consequently, activities like armed robbery, rapes and killing people might intensify in the coming years if social and economic balance in society is not maintained.

--- INFA

## TO THE EDITOR

### On the MLA-LADS!

Editor,  
On November 11, 2017, I went to visit my adopted village after a long time and was surprised with the developments in the village. Where there was once a dirt road, it was now all blacktopped. Previously in the rainy seasons, I had to park my car and travel on foot for at least 30 mins to reach my destination as the road was motorable only on four-wheel drive but today one can travel even with a sedan. I thought the local MLA had done a commendable job only to be corrected later that it was the MNREGA effect. Although the local MLA did chip in here vide the MLA-LADS, yet I was told that the MLA-LADS roads lasted one season while the MNREGA roads are still holding up even after two

years and I was easily able to travel at 40KM/hr with my hatchback.

On reaching the village I saw many new CGI sheet roofs on plots of lands where it was once all farmland. I thought the human population had exploded, but as it turns out MNREGA has provided the village with many new tin roofs for different purposes.

Most households in the village now have their own living rooms, all sponsored by MNREGA. Many families were provided financial assistance to start farming activities like poultry, piggery, silkworm rearing, etc. A small amount for a start-up was provided. Where there is a success story more funds were provided for expansion. Very recently they were also provided financial assistance for cattle farming [and the work for the same has just started and is

progressing by the looks of it]. I am hopeful perhaps in the near future we will be self-sufficient in livestock and meat production.

My guess is the government is working very hard to motivate people from the village to not move to the city where jobs are now scarce. And this is done by providing strong financial assistance and technical knowhow through various training, free of cost to the beneficiaries, in the state wherever possible and also many times outside the state where the training facility is not available locally. Thanks to MNREGA, honest Government officials and the village authorities who performed their task diligently. People need to understand that if they work to develop their area/locality/village the ones who will reap the benefit are their children and grandchildren and the future generations that follow [if, the benefits are not

reaped immediately]. Now it all depends on the respective village authorities and members concerned to decide on how the scheme is to be utilised. I am no expert here but the general feeling is villagers now do not need any more MLAs; all they need is MNREGA, a clean, honest BDO and a group of dedicated, selfless, honest village authorities. It is time people stand up and rise by themselves and for themselves.

Then on Monday (Nov 13, 2017) your paper carried HH Mohrmen's piece, "Time to do away with MLA Scheme for a fair election". Well, I thought, this couldn't come at a better time. Earlier, I had heard a story that the MLA-LADS was conceptualized in the abode of the clouds by none other than the famous (late) BB Lyngdoh. This visionary saw that

*“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”*

--- Maya Angelou

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.98 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2017

### SC upholds creative freedom

THE Supreme Court of India has become the custodian of the democratic rights of Indian citizens. On Thursday the apex Court ruled that, “freedom of speech and expression is sacrosanct and the said rights should not ordinarily be interfered with by the courts.” The Supreme Court was hearing a petition from Nachiketa Walhekar who had sprinkled ink on Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal in 2013. Walhekar was objecting to the making of a film on Arvind Kejriwal where a video clip showing him throwing ink at Kejriwal is being used in the movie. His contention is that his case which is now pending with a lower court could be affected by the visuals.

This judgment comes close on the heels of the Karni Sena’s aggressive stance against showing the film Padmavati which stars Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh and Shahid Kapoor. When a trailer of the film schedule to be released on December 2, was shown in cinema halls the Karni Sena chose to vandalise the cinema halls. Sanjay Leela Bhansali was slapped right from the time he was shooting the film in Rajasthan. Now the so-called Maharanis of Rajasthan, who live in their past glories since the Privy Purse was abolished several decades ago, are asserting their long lost royalty and defending the legendary figure of Padmini the Rajput Queen. The ladies of means were led by Diya Kumar who is currently an MLA in Rajasthan, but who won’t lift a finger to punish the Karni Sena goons. A news television channel recently showed visuals of the Karni Sena leaders threatening to cut off Deepika Padukone’s nose and Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s head. This is outrageous. So far, the case of Bhansali’s film Padmavati has not come to the Supreme Court. We hope that when it does, the apex court would remain consistent in its stance that, “A film or a drama or novel or a book is a creation of art. An artist has his own freedom to express himself in a manner which is not prohibited in law and such prohibitions are not read by implication to crucify the rights of expressive mind.”

Two recent TV advertisements show teenage girls displaying their keenness for playing football and basket ball. While pushing their respective products, the advertisers unwittingly give a social message: Need for girls to be active in sports.

Importantly, current trends underscore that girls have come into sports in a big way. Lately, they have earned fresh laurels and this year has brought in a rich harvest of achievements in women’s sports. Remember, in July the women’s cricket team came within sniffing distance of victory in the 2017 ICC Women’s World Cup. They were well on their way to win it but seemingly were seized with an attack of nerves only to narrowly lose the match to England by a mere 9 runs.

Nonetheless, there were some very outstanding performances during the tournament. While skipper Mithali Raj ended up as the tallest scorer in the world of women’s cricket, there were very commendable performances from Punam Raut, Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Jhoolan Goswami etc. Indeed, all of them deservedly won the country’s gratitude as well as admiration.

Others too have taken off from eventful July. The country’s ace woman shuttler PV Sindhu fought hard at Glasgow at the World Badminton Championships finals only to lose to her Japanese opponent very narrowly. Like at the Cricket World Cup, it was a matter of so close yet so far. But Sindhu is only 22 and has a long way to go. Recently she lost to Saina Nehwal in the National Championship. The win brought Nehwal back into the reckoning after Sindhu had lately wrested the initiative from her.

On the heels of this superb performance came the news of the Indian Women’s Hockey team’s victory at the Asia Cup final. They beat rivals China in a penalty shoot-out. Significantly, the team won the Asia Cup after a long hiatus of more than ten years. Now that a competent coach is taking care of the team its performances are going to be keenly watched. The team is likely to prepare hard for the next Olympics.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Greed at the root of environmental catastrophe

Editor,  
The Annual Catholic Eucharistic Procession under the Archdiocese of Shillong that was significant because the Archbishop of Shillong, Rt Rev Dominic Jala spoke about human greed and selfishness that has almost finished off Mother Earth (Mei Ramew). That the Catholic Church has taken a path which Pope Francis has often emphasized, which is that human greed, hostility and intolerance will gradually destroy what the Almighty has given, is encouraging. The truth is surely out with climate change happening all around. The biological clock is going against nature and God’s plan. This is the beginning of man’s destruction. If only governments and societies take initiative to arrest this catastrophe in the making.

Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar

### Some thoughts on cherry blossoms

Editor,  
Cherry blossoms are quite beautiful to look at. No

wonder the Meghalaya Government readily gravitated towards these little flowers in their bid to distract people from their ineptitude and mismanagement! I am referring, of course, to the recently concluded India International Cherry Blossom Festival which ran from the 8th to the 11th of November 2017. It is quite interesting to note how the state government has sought to make this “international” by suggesting associations with Japan where the cherry blossoms have become an important part of Japanese culture, poetry and painting. In Japan this cherry blossom culture is “natural”, it has been celebrated, in some form or the other, over hundreds of years. It didn’t grow out of a need to impress tourists or to be an “international” PR event. “International” is the new buzz word which hurts my ears! And then I have to ask, why cherry blossoms? Why not ‘sohphoh’ blossoms? (a member of the apple family found widely in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills) Those blossoms are quite beautiful as well. At least the hardy and indigenous ‘sohphoh’ gives you fruits as well. Many locals use it to make jams, preserves and ciders as well so I am for the ‘non-international sohphoh’. Additionally the last fruits of the season

make for a durable weapon in self-defense. Yet another benefit.

In Japan, the sakura or cherry blossom has a mottled history. It has been the favourite symbol of choice for ultra-nationalists and militant right-wingers (are you listening, government?) for quite some time. The Sakurakai were one such group of hard-liners who, in the 1930s, wanted to establish a complete dictatorial monarchy in the country and throw out ‘outsider inventions’ like parliamentary elections. In World War II, Japanese pilots painted sakura onto their kamikaze warplanes before embarking on suicide missions to “die like beautiful falling cherry petals for the emperor”. So the soft, delicate, pink (dare I say effeminate) flower has carried favour with tough soldiers and rough warriors. Quite an irony.

But again perhaps the male-female/tough-weak dichotomy is only a modern lens of bias. This rather strange non-polar veneration is probably something that’s come down from the age of the feudal despotic samurai, a tradition many still long for if we are to go by a sizable portion of Japanese media. If you look at a number of “tough guys” in anime, for instance, you will find an “unusual” blend of male AND female features within

them. Flowers often feature prominently alongside these characters. Byakuya Kuchiki from Bleach, for example, is a stoic, serious (also beautiful) soul-reaper (a sort of spirit samurai) who seems to have a very “girly” obsession with cherry blossoms. Another “beautiful” tough-guy who likes flowers (roses in this case) is Kurama from Yu Yu Hakusho. Similarly the “beautiful” titular warrior in Nurarihyon no Mago – Nurarihyon – is also associated with cherry blossoms. The list goes on. This then is another dimension to the humble little angiosperm.

Maybe because they are so transient and wilt rapidly, the cherry blossom flowers lend themselves to a lot of poetic meanings related to the temporary nature of human existence. It makes sense then that men facing death would latch onto them as a symbol of hope and purpose. Well now that the serene image is completely ruined for you I would like to conclude by saying that it would all be fine if these sorts of stunts by the Meghalaya government didn’t cost the Public money but sadly they do. The MUA II government is basically just a glorified event-management firm anyway. They are probably doomed in the upcoming 2018 elections but it won’t bother them much. They have been saving up for such a situation the past five years. Now that they are

population of more than 1.26 billion.

In a telling article the Financial Times said “With more than 1.2 billion people, of whom 65 per cent are under 35, India would presumably have vast reserves of athletic talent. Yet it has been unable to convert its human potential into global competitive success: a problem not confined to the sports field.”

Shockingly, India has won only 23 medals since Independence and at the Rio Olympics, though it sent as many as 117

*“Just the other day news came of the fifth Gold won by Mary Kom at the Asian Boxing Championships held at Ho Chi Minh City. She has been consistently winning medals despite her age and increasing obligations.”*

been consistently winning medals despite her age and increasing obligations. Besides running her family, she takes her duties as a Parliamentarian very seriously. And yet she always thanks Jesus for her extraordinary performances.

Numerous others have been known for extraordinary performances in various sporting events. Akanksha Singh for one, belonging to the famous Varanasi Sisters, a few years back was acknowledged as the “most valuable player” in the Indian Women’s Basket Ball team. She currently is its captain.

Likewise, Deepika Palikal has earned a name for herself in Women’s Squash championships. She has been playing squash from an early age and is still active in the international arena having won several domestic and international titles.

Importantly, these are instances of girls mostly belonging to the middle classes coming good in sports. They have done so despite lack of adequate opportunities. A vast majority do not get even this much despite the huge

participants only two sportspersons won medals and both were women.

Undoubtedly, Indian women are up against various kinds of handicaps that restrain them from participating in sporting events. First, there is a pathetic absence of infrastructure for sports, particularly, at the grassroots level in rural areas. Besides, for centuries women have been subjected to patriarchy which, in fact, translated into outdoor games or athletics were not meant for them.

Scandalously, unborn girls have been the subjects of male chauvinism in various States. It is a great tribute to the guts and determination of Sakshi Malik and her ilk to pursue a carrier in wrestling in Haryana where the sex ratio is highly skewed in favour of boys whereby men have to import brides from eastern States. Sakshi Malik, perhaps was inspired by her seniors like the Phogat sisters, six of whom launched

themselves in the wrestling ring and three of them won several Commonwealth Championship medals.

Apart from Hindu conservatism similar considerations among Muslims do not allow their girls to take part in outdoor events or athletics. However, it is a matter of great satisfaction that women in the Muslim majority Jammu and Kashmir have organized themselves into a team to participate in the Inter-State Women’s Cricket Championships.

Women are also held back from sports by lecherous sports officials who also are venal. The fair sex has always got the wrong end of the stick and is cruelly been confined to play their stereotypical role of playing the housewife. Girls from their very childhood have drilled into their heads that activities like sports are for only boys and not for them as they have to be modest and feminine.

Consequently, a “gender gap” is built from childhood, particularly in rural areas where education of the girl child is yet to make inroads. Educational deprivation as also nutritional deficiency for girls starts from here holding them back from any strenuous sporting activities. The narrow-mindedness of the parents in rural households is largely responsible for keeping the girls away from schools and its various activities, including sports.

But with 24x7 news and sports channels beaming news about various sporting activities in the country, things seem to be changing. The regional press publishes numerous items of girls’ creditable performances in the sporting arena. Numerous success stories of the fair sex in sports have stoked what they see on TV. The Central and State Governments have also allocated generous funds for girls’ education and their sporting activities. Hopefully, a decade from now, things are likely to be very different. --- INFA

plump, they can go into hibernation. Much like the cherry blossoms they can disappear and re-appear when the storms have abated and the warm sun has deadened peoples’ wrath.

Yours etc.,  
Avner Pariat,  
Via email

### The India-Bharat divide

Editor,  
Salil Gewali must be congratulated for his letter, “Illusion of Paradise” (ST, Nov 15, 2017). The growth in GDP cannot improve the common man’s lot in a country where inequality is widening day by day. It is indeed horrifying that rich India is climbing in the ladder of inequality leaving poor Bharat far behind. Inequality is measured in Gini index where higher index value indicates greater inequality. India has got the dubious distinction of getting very high marks in widespread inequality.

This India - Bharat divide has also come out in two international reports. While in the New World Wealth Report, India is ranked 7th in the list of top wealthiest countries in the world, the World Bank’s Report, ‘Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016’ shows

that close to 30 per cent of the world’s poor live in our country. Our growth shows a sign of malignancy as the richest 10 per cent of our population has whooping 76.3 per cent of nation’s wealth, on the other hand more than half of our population is reeling with a meagre 4.1 per cent.

The irony is that some rich people are still getting on using, so to speak, from one long unscrupulous spoon to another larger one, namely ~ Panama, Non Performing Assets, Paradise etc. to gulp down almost the entire cake and thus forcing 194.6 million Indians go to bed on an empty stomach day in, day out!

This glaring inequality must immediately be bridged by inclusive growth, developing social sectors, adopting labour intensive technology and ensuring social security for the needy. Otherwise, such barbaric inequality will force us to live in a dog-eat-dog environment where equality and fraternity are absolute no-no.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

**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.**

# Laughter the best medicine

By Ananya S Guha

The latest howler one is reading about is that of a university in Pune says that to be eligible for a gold medal a student must be a vegetarian or a strict teetotaler. Of course, after protests, the University in its post wisdom has struck it off. That is beside the point. We can still make an issue of it and we will. Firstly what is so great or untainted

bright students, want appreciation, for intelligence, wit, hard work and co curricular activities. The last and least they want are moral prescriptions. You can’t have strictures as guidelines to do well and perform. I am sure many in the past were deterred to get what must have transpired to be an elusive gold medal indeed. Following Indian

*“We can still make an issue of it and we will. Firstly what is so great or untainted about being a vegetarian? Does vegetarianism have some moral stamp about it? I know many vegetarians who love to hit the bottle. So moral standard number one cancels immoral standard number one! Such people I suppose figure in the world of the amoral, not to forget their mystic chants and so on.”*

about being a vegetarian? Does vegetarianism have some moral stamp about it? I know many vegetarians who love to hit the bottle. Some of the paradigms are: So moral standard number one cancels immoral standard number one! Such people I suppose figure in the world of the amoral, not to forget their mystic chants and so on. Secondly, what purpose did this ten year old notification serve? To discover gold medalists or holier than thou university products? Thirdly, how would the authorities ensure that the winners did not eat or drink on the sly? Were there periodic alcoholic tests? And, fourthly to which domain did egg consuming belong?

Well, I suppose ridiculous decrees must spurt some equally ridiculous questions.

This brings us to how

culture another stipulation, is not only vague but also a reinvented ploy of a monolithic Indian culture. Some of the paradigms are: yoga, vegetarianism, sun worship, cow worship, reciting mantras etc. Such vagueness can be a source of irritant to young minds. Those who are already doing them, need not be reminded.

I wonder what ails our culture vultures today? Do they not have the satisfaction of witnessing Indians across all walks of life, embracing one in the many, and many in the one? Are they not seeing how the Hindi language is unifying the country across North, South and even North East and East, the last two albeit previously recalcitrant? Then what is happening to the burgeoning culture of reality

*“The cow is holy, vegetarian food is the best, we must be votaries of our culture, practice yoga scrupulously, then we stand on threshold of attaining ‘pure living and high thinking.’ Bertrand Russell once wrote an essay: “The Harm That Good Men Do” where he debunked neatly the belief of a moral code, stratified and coded.”*

morality is transfiguring or rather making societies and people demented. The cow is holy, vegetarian food is the best, we must be votaries of our culture, practice yoga scrupulously, then we stand on threshold of attaining ‘pure living and high thinking.’ Bertrand Russell once wrote an essay: “The Harm That Good Men Do” where he debunked neatly the belief of a moral code, stratified and coded. I forget further details, but remember it as a hilarious subversion of a pitiful morality of ‘do and be good’. But such thing, protagonists he asserted did more harm than good!

Also bringing in the mention of consumption of alcohol, in the university precincts is itself a temptation, to ‘break bounds,’ what else? College and university students are very vulnerable, and love to take up challenges, invert niceties and have a big laugh. Let’s see whether I can get away from this and still get the gold medal.

This is the first time I heard an academic institution behaving in such a holier than thou and off-putting manner. Young

shows, some of which like Big Boss openly use vulgar and profane language? What about the burgeoning television culture of non edifying serials? Can they put a restriction to these, so that children will at least study, gold medal or no? Culture has become a travesty, curriculum, caricature. Instead of busy dishing out gold medals, universities must rework syllabus, making them relevant to work and real life situations, test aptitude for the discipline, with practical applications of knowledge.

That this order has been revoked is certainly a good thing. The world is very conscious today of rights and wrongs. Indians too, are quick to react to rigidity and moral spam. But what is irksome, if not worrying, is the institutional proclivity to favour, please and blandish political authorities. Education bungled with politics is a throwaway. History has been lacerated, and now studies sought to be redefined, with ‘moral’ admonishment? Laughter certainly is the best medicine in such caricatured situations. The Readers’ Digest Publication is absolutely right!

# 'Gun is never a solution'

**I**ftikhar Gilani, Editor of Strategic Affairs at DNA, recently visited the city on the occasion of National Press Day. The son-in-law of Kashmiri separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Iftikhar has faced police excesses several times. He was arrested in 2002 on false charges of violating the Official Secrets Act. A decade later, he was again detained after Afzal Guru's execution. But nothing could change the soft-spoken but determined Kashmiri and the lopsided system in the country could not invoke an iota of hatred in him. **Daiaphira Kharsati** caught up with the renowned journalist at Shillong Club on his first visit to any northeastern state. He shared anecdotes on the ongoing chaos in Jammu and Kashmir and the transformation of journalism. He also commented on the freedom of expression in an atmosphere where there is a government which has its own ideology on the Kashmir issue and separatists who have different ideology. Excerpts:

## How the Jammu and Kashmir problem can be solved?

The problem in Jammu and Kashmir is not something which is only 70 years old and the main problem in Jammu & Kashmir had been that for the last 400 years, people have not identified themselves with the rulers as there have been occupations by Mughals, Dogras, Sikhs and Afghans. After 1947, there should have been a kind of a sense given to the people that now onwards they are not under occupation but under democratic rule. That unfortunately, has not happened in Kashmir which is a main and much bigger problem. It has been given a kind of a political, social and economic disempowerment, ingrained in the minds of the people and that actually need to be settled down.

There had been successive hijacking of the elections and then the systems in the country like the media, Election Commission, Supreme Court and other system did not come to the rescue of J&K, which has given the some kind of impression in Kashmir that there is nobody in India listening to them not even the national media.

That is why I mentioned that in 1987 elections where there was mass participation of youth and it is those youth who have come to vote for a particular candidate or a particular political party but their mandate was hijacked, elections were rigged, counting halls were hijacked, persons who won were declared defeated and then thrown into jail for many years. This incident threw J&K in a tailspin as people who had chosen the ballot instead chose the bullet, went for training and started the arms movement which is continuing till now and it has consumed more than 1 lakh lives now.

Gun is never a solution. It was not even a solution, gun in Kashmir were taken out by youth under compulsion. If you had removed the compulsion, they would not have taken up



**Journalism has undergone technological transformation. But the technological transformation has brought some issues also in which journalists to not adhere to those standards in which journalists should. Sometimes, they go overboard. Some reporters, mostly of electronic media, tend to support one group or the other and become a tool of that system. The governments have become very clever and tend to make the media a forced multiplier. I think we should desist and resist from becoming a forced multiplier**

~ Iftikhar Gilani

the gun. The issue is that what exactly compels a person to take up the gun? Once he takes up the gun, he knows that he will be killed. The problem for those who rule the country/state is to remove those issues where

a young man finds himself compelled to be killed. They have a far greater responsibility than the one taking up the gun. Connectivity and movement of people from place to place can address the problem of insurgency, de-

spondency and issues of the gun.

**What are the difficulties you face working in a trouble-torn area where there are varied views on the Kashmir issue? How do you define freedom of expression in the current situation?**

The separatists' ideology is not in a vacuum. When Sheikh Omar Abdullah, who was the biggest separatist in Kashmir and the tallest leader of Kashmir, became chief minister he tried to address some things. That was a peaceful period in Kashmir. If Sheikh Abdullah who is a separatist can come into the mainstream, others can also come but you need to address the issues that make them separatists.

**Role of media...**

The role of media is important. Look at the 1987 elections in which the media did not report that elections were rigged, they did not make a kind of an issue.

**You are the son-in-law of Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani who is opposing forcible Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. Has this affected your profession?**

I became a journalist first and after many years, became the son-in-law of Geelani. You can ask anybody who have worked with me in Delhi. I have tried my best to be objective, fair, to be at least fearless as well and I spent almost one year also in Delhi Tihar jail in between 2002 and 2003. (Gilani's stint in jail prompted him to write a book after his release, *My days in prison*, published by Penguin in 2005 and in 2007, he won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the book)

**How has journalism changed?**

Journalism has undergone technological transformation. But the technological transformation has brought some issues also in which journalists to not adhere to those standards in which journalists should. Sometimes, they go overboard. Some reporters, mostly of electronic media, tend to support one group or the other and become a tool of that system. The governments have become very clever and tend to make the media a forced multiplier. I think we should desist and resist from becoming a forced multiplier.

## Need for more pros

By Ranjan K Baruah

**W**e do not talk much about mental health. When we see someone's health is deteriorating like sudden weight loss then we talk about our health and consult doctors. On the other hand it is very difficult to know about our mental health, which is important. There are many career options related to mental health.

Mental health is a level of psychological well-being, or an absence of mental illness. It is the "psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioural adjustment". From the perspective of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

According to the World Health Organisation 'mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'.

The positive dimension of mental health is in focus in WHO's definition of health as contained in its constitution: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Depression and anxiety are common mental disorders which have an impact on our ability to work productively. Globally, more than 300 million people suffer from depression, the leading cause of disability. More than 260 million are living with anxiety disorders. Many of them live with both. A recent WHO-led study estimates that depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity.

According to the National Mental Health Survey (2016), 1 in 20 people suffer from depression in India. It says 10 per cent of the Indian population suffers from common mental disorders. Data from

the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare shows that the country needs 11,500 psychiatrists while India only has 3,500 psychiatrists. India's entire mental health workforce, comprising clinical psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric social workers and psychiatric nurses, stands at 7,000 while the actual requirement is 54,750.

WHO estimated that in India, the economic loss due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is \$1.03 trillion. Mental health workforce in India (per 100,000 populations) includes psychiatrists (0.3), nurses (0.12), psychologists (0.07) and social workers (0.07).

There are endless opportunities as trained individuals are less in this area but one must have patience. As the data says and looking at the need in India mainly areas where one may choose to get engaged includes Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Nursing, Social Work, etc. Apart from these there might be some other avenues like Counsellors, Dietician, Occupational Therapist, Peer Support Worker, etc.

**Updates**

**Sainik School Entrance:** Aspiring students may apply for the All India Sainik Schools Entrance Exam to be held on January 7. Admission in Sainik School Goalpara is only in Class VI & IX and last date to submit application form is December 5. Selection is made through all Indian entrance followed by medical test and interview. Scholarships from government are also available for the students.

**JNV Entrance:** Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas are co-educational residential schools providing quality modern education to the talented students predominantly from rural areas from class VI to class XII. Applications are being collected for admission to class VI during 2018-19. Last date November 25.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at [bkranjan@gmail.com](mailto:bkranjan@gmail.com) or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)



## Matrilineal not matriarchal: Role of Khasi men in society

By Pynkupbor M Sviemlieh

**M**atrilineal is the tracing of descent through the female line. The word 'lineal' refers to someone's lineage, so matrilineal describes anything related to kinship through a female line. In a matrilineal tradition, the children take their mother's last name.

Some of the traditional societies which still practice matrilineality are the Lao of Thailand, the Anis of Taiwan, the Minangkabau of Indonesia and the Musuo of China. In India, the matrilineal societies are distributed in the southwest region (the Nairs of Kerala and the Buns of Karnataka) and in the Northeast region (the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo of Meghalaya).

The matrilineal Khasi were the first among all the mongoloid people of the North East to achieve a high culture level, even prior to intensive contact with outsiders.

Energy and prominent personality and education to democracy in a basic family structure of matriline; these are the con-

tributions which the matrilineal order of society has to offer. Khasi women for instance carry their goods to the weekly markets, selling and shopping, and are entirely trusted by their men folk, a characteristic not peculiar in patrilineal societies like in the rest of India.

Some scholars believe that the Khasis adopted their matrilineal family on their way in the past to these present hills. Whatever might be the reason, one thing is sure this matrilineal system has established itself very firmly that they have come to be convinced that this matrilineal system is their unique characteristic that distinguishes them from the rest of the human race.

Khasis, who have always had to explain their distinctive matrilineal system, have a story of how it originated long back in prehistory.

Oral traditions state that man gave up naming their off-springs after themselves because they were busy in war and hunting, with little time for child rearing.

The uncertainties of war also gradually led to men's voluntary abandonment

of inheritance rights. Therefore, all the responsibilities were handed over to the women folk, which consequently increase their social status to equals of men.

As a Khasi student studying in a college with many diverse communities like the Mizos, Meteis, Nagas, lots of explanation I have to do to make them aware of our matrilineal system.

The questions they would ask are "is it true that after marriage, you have to move to your wife house?", "is your mother the head of the family?" and some of them would ask "why are you allowing females to control over you?"

So what is the role and status of a Khasi man in his society? When the son marries and lives with his wife, the mother claims the 'person' of the son as hers but the son of his wife become the child of the new family and also the son becomes the father of the family through his wife. In one word, a Khasi man is the head of his wife's family.

His position in the family is an honoured one and as the bread-earner and as

the protector of his mother, his sisters and young daughters and sons and his position as the exalted defender of his mother's family. A Khasi man is 'u Kñi' or maternal uncle and he is 'u Kpa' or a father, without whom worship and religion would be an act of sacrilege.

His position may appear in the eyes of foreigners (also in the eyes of my friends) as somewhat ridiculous, but to a Khasi man the foundation of his self and person in the family which centres round his own thought, and that his life and his soul and the life and soul of those near to him.

Many social scientists both foreign and Indian who have made studies on these Khasi social system have made a mistake by coming to a conclusion that a Khasi society is matriarchal in nature. Matriarchy is a social system in which females hold the primary power position in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property at the specific exclusion of man. But this is not true in case with the Khasi society which makes it matrilineal and not matriarchal.

In fact, Khasis have matrilineal residence and material descent only. Though descent is traced through the mother, yet father is the head of the family. While the father is the head of the family and the main earner for the family's income, the mother is the mere keeper of all earnings.

While the mother nurses the children, it is the father that the children will expect to get the most advice and decision regarding the future. It is the father who is expected to be the defender of the family and family's property.

So now, I can say, so what if I move to my wife's house after marriage, so what if my children don't bear my name, I am still a man and a father of my children and also an uncle of my sister's children.

Dear brothers, who are living in a matrilineal society, we should be proud of our matrilineal culture and embrace it until the last breath.

(The author is a third year student of BVSc & AH, College of Veterinary Science and AHCAU, Aizawl)

**Oral traditions state that man gave up naming their off-springs after themselves because they were busy in war and hunting, with little time for child rearing. The uncertainties of war also gradually led to men's voluntary abandonment of inheritance rights**

# Getting away with crimes

A few days ago, this columnist was using an ATM machine while travelling and it warned me to "beware of robbery attempts" while simultaneously stealing my money through ridiculous bank fees. It inspired me to call my network for a crime stories roundup. Who took the toilets? The Patel family of Amarpur, a village near Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh, central India, recently registered a case of stolen lavatories with police. "It's shocking what people will take these days," said M Yadav, who sent the story. A China correspondent said toilet theft must sometimes happen in her country, too. Hotels in the West have an in-room price so they can charge guests who take bathrobes, but the Guangdong hotel price lists sometimes include toilets, sinks and TVs. "Apparently some hotel users carry serious plumbing gear with them," she said.

been to fail to realise that you can't really steal a hole and the second was the lack of motive. Robbers are busy, financially savvy people. They don't have time to steal holes in the ground. In the current missing toilets case, the police theory is that a grant was issued to officials to finance the building of toilets, but someone pocketed the money and filed "work completed" paperwork, leaving the family with no recourse but to file a multiple toilet theft case. This appears to be "non-crime crimes month" as far as the universe is concerned. This columnist's US correspondent said a woman was recently charged with stealing paving stones from outside the home of a neighbour in Port Richey, Florida. "She hurt her back moving the 42 heavy stones and threatened to take out a criminal lawsuit against the owner," she said. This proves my theory that the main difference between humans and other organisms is excessive chutzpah. But maybe not just us. In Japan, police reported an attempted murder case after an old lady was found with nasty cuts. But there were no signs of any break-in at her apartment in Mifune. The mystery was solved as a neighbour spotted the blood-stained villain lurking in the neighborhood: A grumpy, mean-looking cat. "The cat cannot be charged with attempted murder because he is a cat," said our tipster. So once more, the real villains, such as that cat and my bank, get away with their crimes. Grrrr.

Something about the missing toilet story rang a bell. Some time ago, this columnist was tipped-off about a man in India who reported a stolen hole in the ground. One day the hole was there and the next day it wasn't, he said. Showing people his hole-free land, he displayed a letter certifying that he had been given a grant to dig a well and a police report confirming the well had been inspected. Now villains had taken it and he wanted compensation. That story came from reader K. Sriram, who told me that police soon worked out what really happened. The man got a grant to dig a well but spent the cash on other things. So he had decided to complain that wicked thieves had run off with his hole in the hope of getting a victim-of-crime cash payment. His first mistake had

**THE FUNNY SIDE**  
Nury Vittachi

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

# Sr Maria: Martyr for justice

By Fr George Chathanatt

Sister Rani Maria, a Kerala born Catholic nun, a member of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation, was beatified in Indore, on November 4. Beatification is the last step before the Church formally declares someone a Saint. "Rani Maria's beatification is a great blessing for India," said Most Rev Chacko Thottumarickal, Bishop of Indore, participating in the solemn ceremony.

Sr Rani Maria (Mariam Vattalil) was born at Pulluvazhy in Kerala's Ernakulam district on January 29, 1954, as the second child of Paily and Eliswa. They had seven children. Marykunju (little Mary), as she was affectionately called, was brought up in a deeply Christian atmosphere. No wonder that the intense religious atmosphere of her family imbibed in her, at a very young age itself, the thought of becoming a nun and give herself totally to God.

Her mother says: "Marykunju was different from my other children; she was an exceptionally obedient child." Her brother Stephen adds, "She was a girl of few words and had no interest in adorning herself with ornaments of gold or silver. She would never hurt anyone."

Even as a school-going girl she found time to help her father in the field and her mother in her domestic duties. But she felt her true goal in life was to serve God as a religious nun.

So after her studies, on July 3, 1971, she joined Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC). She started her novitiate on May 1, 1973. With the appointment of Msgr Gratian Mundadan as the Bishop of Bijnor (Uttar Pradesh), Mariam's desire to work in the missions was strengthened and she made up her mind to work outside Kerala among the poor. On May 1, 1974, she made her First Religious Profession, taking the new name, Rani Maria. She made her final commitment on May 22, 1980.

Rani Maria had already requested her superiors to be allowed to go to the missions and so her superiors now told her that her request was granted, and Rani Maria gladly responded: "I am very happy to work among the



Samundar Singh at the memorial constructed on the spot where Sister Rani Maria (right) was murdered

poor and the oppressed, for they are God's children, our brothers and sisters. I feel sadly very few opt to work in this field."

Reaching Bijnor, she soon studied the local languages and the new social surroundings. Initially, the villagers used to get frightened seeing the sisters, mistaking them for forest officials. They even used to run away for life throwing away the head-load of the firewood they were carrying. But once they were won over, the Sisters became their best friends and they were ready to do anything for them.

Rani Maria soon observed the big difference that existed between the "haves" and the "have-nots". The have-nots were so illiterate that they were not even aware of their own human dignity, their rights and duties and simply accepted their miserable lot. Seeing this, she decided to help by empowering them. She was well aware that this would cost her life. All the same, she was determined to change their dilapidated huts into modest houses, educate their children, get water supply, electricity and better road facilities. She also equipped herself with more theoretical knowledge of Sociology, by graduating from the University of Bhopal and later did her

MA from the University of Rewa. Equipped with the theoretical knowledge and practical wisdom she now began to provide educational facilities to villagers; for the older people she conducted awareness programmes. She worked tirelessly day and night to make them aware of human and Christian values, of their rights and duties, of justice, etc. Soon Rani Maria came to be called "Mother of the Poor" and "Indore Rani". This infuriated the oppressors; they began looking for opportunities to get rid of her.

During the Panchayat election in December 1994, there was a clash between two factions of Kannad village and those of Selmi. Jeevan Singh instigated the police to take action against the poor and police jailed some innocent ones. Sr Rani Maria with the help of a good lawyer got them out on bail and fought their case in court. Jeevan Singh was infuriated as she thwarted his plans. He decided to get rid of her at any cost; he hired a thug and waited for an opportune moment.

At 8.30 in the evening, February 25, 1995, Sr Rani boarded a bus for Indore. A group of three, Jeevan Singh, Dharmendra Singh and Samundar Singh also boarded the



same bus. The first two had done meticulous hatching of a plot to kill Rani Maria while the third committed the atrocious crime. When the bus reached a secluded spot, it stopped for a while for the passengers to ease themselves.

The trio now went out and split opened a coconut and performed pooja on the stone deity nearby. They came back to the bus and distributed the kernel among the passengers, in a happy mood. Rani Maria asked him: "Why are you so happy and excited today?"

As if answering her question, he stabbed her on her face and dragged her out of the bus and kept on stabbing her till he made sure that she was dead. All the while, Sr Maria kept on uttering just one word: "Jesus, Jesus...!"

The co-passengers were afraid to intervene, frightened for their life. The two who masterminded the gruesome crime soon disappeared into the thick forest. The murderer was the last to flee the scene, after inflicting as many as fifty-four wounds on Rani Maria.

The little known village of Udainagar where Rani Maria's mortal remains were laid to rest, achieved overnight fame and a sea of mourners and admirers of the martyred Nun visited the place on the funeral day and continue to visit it ever since. The words of Bishop Anathil who officiated the funeral services were really prophetic: "Sr Rani Maria is a martyr, her tomb will become a pilgrim centre. She preached the Good News of liberation to the poor... the people of this place will receive abundant blessings through her." The prophecy came true when Pope Francis approved the cause of her beatification on March 23 in Indore.

Samundar Singh was convicted of Sr Rani's murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Sr Rani's younger sister, also a nun of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation, and her mother visited Singh in prison and conveyed their forgiveness. The Sister went a step further, and tied rakhi on his hand on Raksha Bandhan.

Singh was released from prison in 2006 after the Vattalil family pleaded that he be released as they consider him part of their family. At the beatification ceremony Samundar Singh was seated next to Blessed Maria's sister, Sr Selmi. "I cannot undo what happened. That was also God's call. This, too, is God's call. She was a saint, and now she'll be declared one too," said Singh with tears in his eyes.

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, NOVEMBER 19, 2017

Mercury is forming an angle of 40 degrees with Jupiter on your solar return chart, which indicates a mixed year. You may have talent, you may be getting the desired opportunities, but nothing will come to work unless you work. Don't be a work shirkers, or you may find yourself in trouble, especially when the deadlines approach, around the second half of the year. If you are a student, you shall have to work even harder to get success. In love, you will have the stars on your side for the most part of the year. It is possible that a loving relationship may flower from an old friendship or acquaintance. For married ones, enhanced passion and warmth shall be the order of the day. Health-wise, things look set to remain largely stable, yet that should not give you a reason to ignore it. Lifestyle diseases are likely if you refuse to re-align and balance your lifestyle. **Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

Your career, reputation, and public life are influenced by the planetary combination. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this period. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. Reliability and creativity will take you places now. The more willing you are to put yourself in the limelight, the more positive the rewards. You are outgoing and your initiative is stronger than ever. You would brilliantly and effectively handle difficult projects at work. **Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

Friendship, love, romance and children are highlighted. You would have new attitudes towards family, finance, and social relationships. Home and family matters capture your attention and are a strong source of pride. It is a time when worldly matters are not so important to you. Use this energy to find ways to improve your interpersonal relations and your home and work environment. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and for joining new courses to improve your professional skills and efficiency. Your family would be more supportive. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines. **Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

With communication, creativity and judgment you gain money and influence in business ventures. Success brings status and respect as you dominate the professional scene. This is the right time to participate in community events and share views, ideas and feelings with people around you. This phase brings rewards and recognition in your professional life. You would also work hard with an inclination towards more detailed work, and it can get to you at times. Personal projects are on an upswing. You are in a position to inspire others through what you create. Income from foreign sources could also figure this time. You feel on top of things and replete with good health and energy. **Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

A period of hard work and effort is in your forecast. You would be taking on new responsibilities and will enjoy the challenges. A new set-up in an existing home or a new home altogether may be part of the picture in the coming weeks. There will also be a sense of renewal and reinvigoration with regard to your domestic routines, comfort, and feeling of security. This is a phase when you have an increased awareness of your need for a solid foundation—a place to return to when the rest of the world gets to you. Do not isolate yourself when you are feeling down. **Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

Practical matters come into strong focus and demand attention. An opportunity to expand on a global level arrives now. You would have more energy for work and your daily routine tend to speed up now. You are required to do a balancing act, and something big is in the pipeline. Give yourself time to digest everything before you make a move. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, especially in the company of a loved one. You instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Increased energy for health routines and work is with you. **Virgo: (August 24 - September 24)**

There may be debates and discussions in family and you may face some opposition. You are likely to exert your energy and initiative into actively pursuing a rewarding love

life, social amusement, and pleasure in general. You have a likeable and competitive temperament. There is a stronger desire for creative endeavors, athletics and risk-taking pursuits. It might be hard for you to work with others in a harmonious manner and a few conflicts are possible. You especially enjoy games that involve competing with others on a mental level. You have a stronger need than usual for intellectual stimulation.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

This phase brings good-luck for love and romance. Ego confrontations with family members are possible now, but the best way to handle this is to do your best to strengthen your relationship with your family and your home base. This is a time to do what you can to build trust in your family life and a strong foundation within yourself, so that regardless of what you meet in the outside world over the next weeks, you have a secure place to return to. Besides spending more time tending to domestic affairs, the focus can be on cultivating and nourishing your inner foundation that support you and your growth.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

Associates at work might find you less sociable, as you are busier than ever and you focus on your activities and your needs. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you status. You can improve your love life by bringing more understanding and sharing views with each other. You are more inclined to seek a broad understanding of people and of your immediate environment. Concentrating on listening, connecting, communicating, and learning is your best bet now. If health is affected, fevers or infections are more likely.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

This period brings new horizons in your romantic and love life. You explore and search, make new connections, and pay attention to your immediate environment. Give other people a little extra time and attention, notice their efforts on your behalf, and strengthen your connections. You are more curious and alert than usual, and you could be quite busy with work. Much energy is expended in understanding and adapting to your immediate environment. Siblings, neighbours, close relatives, friends, and co-workers may play a more important role than usual in your life. You are eager to investigate new things, whether scientific or technical.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

The planetary configuration promotes your luck in work related areas. You would be especially fond of home and family life. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental now. Loyalty and sensitivity in your relationships are more important to you. There would be a bright opportunity to travel, learning or the publishing of a project. Do your best to avoid letting emotions rule over good judgment when it comes to expenses and other financial matters. Share your thoughts and feelings with others and you may be surprised at the support you receive from close friends and loved ones.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

Pay close attention to performance, it will be rewarded and continuity to perform work would be visible to senior colleagues and people in authority. You will have the ability to build up financial and monetary pursuits and can expect good returns from overseas business. Your idealistic nature is stimulated, and you are likely to yearn for a connection to more spiritual or idealistic pursuits. A sense of belonging through connection to something larger than yourself is something that is entering your life now. There may be a development of romance at your work place. You turn your attention on fitness and diet programs.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

There would be happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening of your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background. Your dreams and ideas about intimacy come into focus, but could also bring the flaws in this area of your life to light. An income boost is likely in this period. This is a phase when you have an increased awareness of the physical world of the senses, and this is a time to start fresh in terms of how you arrange your life in order to feel a sense of value and worthiness. It is also a wonderful time for taking moments to please yourself through earthy, tactile, and comforting endeavors.

# On a memorable road trip

(Continued from last week)

Kushinagar, the place where we spent the night was the final resting place of Buddha.

We were back on the road by 6 am. As soon we entered Bihar the road conditions started to deteriorate. It was blessing in disguise for us for not continuing last night. As we were driving by the broken patch we noticed at a distance a group of boys wielding bamboo sticks and logs were trying to stop vehicles. The vehicle in front of us without heeding the group just drove past by, it took us sometime to realise what was happening. Then our instincts worked and we did exactly what the vehicle in front of us did. It was an attempt to rob us. We were very weary of the road by now.

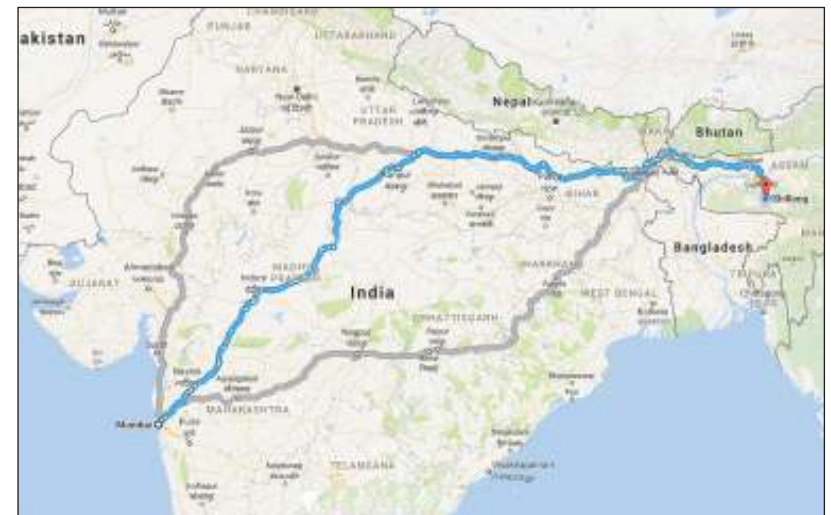
That drive through the patch was strenuous and required a lot of patience, with a fresh drive on the wheel the speed picked up. Google suggested a couple of routes but in the dark we didn't have the heart to follow. The best option was to stop and enquire with the truckers and figure out a way to connect back to NH27 which we had to leave because of Kali puja.

We followed the route as suggested by Google but somehow we bungled up again and missed a turn and headed to NH317, which we were asked to avoid. So long the road was clear it didn't bother us. There was rarely any vehicle in sight. We saw imported Toyota trucks with red number plates — Bhutan border was close by. We kept on driving because NH317 also connected back to NH27 but it would cost us additional 150 km approximately.

Entire was route in NH317 was a great thrill. The route took us through the middle of Buxa Wildlife Sanctuary. We saw a bus with AR registration. The driver knew the route and we followed it. We finally caught NH27 just before crossing the Ghadhar river.

We proceeded ahead with a decent speed, we were very happy to be back on NH27. But the happiness was short-lived. After reaching a toll plaza we realised that one of the purses that sponsored the entire trip was missing from the car. It contained identity cards, driver's licence, Car RC, debit/credit and many other possible valuables. We somehow managed to pay the toll with the change that was being collected in the dashboard throughout the journey.

By 11.30 pm we reached the Assam-West Bengal border. In Gosaigan the



road was miserable and we were driving at 20 km/hour. Almost every bridge we crossed there had a caution board mentioning the bridge was weak.

By 1 am we entered Kokrajhar, the area has a reputation of its recent ethnic turbulence. At a distance we saw lights flicker. As we went near the lights, we realised they were men with assault rifles. Realising that they were police we immediately lowered the headlight beam so that they could see us. At first they interacted in Hindi and when we responded in Assamese the dynamics changed. The cops addressed us with respect and after enquiring they let us go.

After 10-20 km we went through the same process. We went through seven such check points. By 2 am, we made to Bongaigaon.

On Day 4, we got up at 6 am, we were still exhausted with body ache but the excitement of reaching Shillong motivated us. By 10.30 am we reached Guwahati and by the time we reached Khanapara it started to rain. For the first time in our journey we let our window glasses down to feel the fresh air and feel the droplet in our faces.

By 12.30 pm we reached Umiam and felt that we were already home. We could not resist stopping for Jadoh and Doh khleh. And by 2 pm we were back home in Shillong. It was a moment of jubilation and triumph.

This journey is not the end but just the beginning and two brothers started planning the next trip while relaxing after having home-made food.

(Concluded)  
(Contributed by Prasanta Phukan)

*"Tis all a Checker-board of Nights and days where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays: Hither and thither moves, and mates and slays, and one by one back in the Closet lays."*

--- Benjamin Disraeli

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.100 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2017

### Moody's Rating

MOODY'S Investors Service upgraded the Indian government's debt ratings after almost 14 years. India's economy is said to have improved from stable to positive. The boost it provides will encourage private investors to invest more. Besides, Indian companies will be allowed to raise debt overseas at lower interest rates. Moody's upgrade emphasises the role and the need for structural changes to juice up the Indian economy. All this is despite the fact that the Indian government's debt ratio to the GDP is much higher than the median rate among comparable countries. India's bright outlook is attributed to structural reforms. The GST recently rolled out is a major factor. Aadhaar linked direct benefit transfer and reforms in factors of production like land and labour will be the indicators of economic uplift. India is on an upward trajectory as successive governments since liberalisation of the economy in 1991 have put their best foot forward to incentivise economic reforms.

The GST is but only one measure for development to fulfil its economic potential, the country needs other significant reforms. It goes without saying that economic prosperity depends on increased productivity. That will be possible only if the skills of the workforce are developed. The Indian government needs to put maximum stress on raising educational standards. The Microsoft giant has drawn attention to the country's backwardness in that as well as in the health sector. These reforms are part of the welfare segment and of the utmost importance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be upbeat about the optimism generated by rating of economic growth as positive. Things should look up in the long run if the political problems are solved. The centre and the state governments should sink regional differences and go full steam ahead in implementing reform so that the country's economic potential is actualised to the maximum extent.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Lathi charge on violent mob in Agartala

Police used lathis to disperse a group of people, who turned violent near the CPI(M) state headquarters here tonight. Director General of state police Mr R P Sharma told UNI that a section of processionists, who were going round the area, suddenly turned violent and damage several vehicles parked in front of the CPI(M) office.

He said the processionists disappeared after police resorted to a "mild" lathi charge. Intensive patrolling had been started in the town he added. Acting Chief Minister Mr Nagendra Jamatia said that police was directed to take a firm step to prevent any untoward incidents.

# Relevance of Regional Party Politics in Meghalaya

By H H Mohrmen

Many a time regional parties were written off as irrelevant and they are often labelled as parties whose time has ended and whose influences is restricted within the boundaries of Meghalaya only. 'The reach of the regional parties cannot go beyond Byrnihat,' is a common tag one often hears people ascribing to the regional parties in the state. This of course is an argument which does not hold water but regional parties are themselves to blame for the kind of negative attributions that people have of them. The very fact that there are many regional parties and that they cannot even for a second unite as one unit or come under one umbrella justifies this common man's perception that they cannot be trusted because they exist for their own vested interests.

It is precisely because of all these negative attitudes that people have of the regional parties that it is also all the more important to try and understand the relevance of regional party politics in the state and the country as a whole. And I am willing to take this onus even at the risk of (this time) being called spokesperson of the regional parties because a few weeks back it was alleged that I write on behalf of the Congress.

Supporters of national parties often mockingly question what the regional parties can do? They are just a drop in the political ocean of the country and they won't be able to make any difference at all is the common refrain. At the end of the day, in a democracy majority wins, they would conclude. But democracy also ensures that the rights of minorities is also protected or that the majority cannot overrule the right of the minority. Equality is also the most important principle of the Constitution. The very fact that there is a special provision in the constitution which is mandated to protect the rights, customs and traditions of the tribal minority in India validates the fact that regional interests need to be protected and hence the necessity of having regional political parties in the state which will voice this same aspiration to the world at large.

Perhaps the two predominant national parties that are present in the state give us the idea of how diverse they both are in their objectives as well as their approaches. The objective of the Congress is to be a

pan-India party which to some extent also respects regional interests and aspirations and its popular slogan is 'unity in diversity'. On the contrary, the BJP's approach is assimilation of all the differences that we have into one national identity. In the BJP's scheme of thing there is no room for regional interests and aspirations. It is therefore all the more important that the voices from the region are projected more vociferously because of the very fact that the foundation of this country is based on the idea of respecting the diversity that we have as a nation.

Therefore the one and the most important reason for the existence of the regional parties is because we all admit that people who live in this state are unique in their own right. We have our own culture and tradition, which of course is dynamic and

**The Khasi-Pnars are also the most hospitable and most welcoming and the very few open tribes in the region. The fact that we have a tradition of tang jait where we welcome those who wish to be part of our community is one such example.**

evolves with time, yet we are also proud of our history which is again unique in itself. To me the much hated slogan during the heyday of the Khasi Students' Union agitation, 'Khasi by blood, Indian by accident,' portrayed a very profound notion that the young people those days (who are of course not so young now) had and that is, the fact that our being Indian is only seven decades old, but being a unique tribe or community is in our flesh, bones and blood - in fact it is in our whole being.

The distinctiveness of the region is not only on the kind of looks that we have, the language that we speak but it is embedded more prominently in the way of life that we follow. The kinship that we follow which extends even to the animal kingdom, the kind of relationship we have with the hills the rivers, the waterfalls and the trees finds no parallel anywhere else in the world.

The kind of food we eat which are mostly indigenous and wild which has not only kept us alive since time immemorial but it has through ages provided us a balanced diet that kept us strong and healthy. Take cow's milk for example. It has never been

part of our diet and making other milk products is not in our culture, but somehow it was supplemented by other edibles that we consumed.

The way of life which includes both the dying arts, the festivals and other folk tradition that we have, are all unique and in case of those that are dying, we must at least try to document it, if we cannot revive them anymore. Of course throughout history, we have also lost some of the important parts of our culture, but nevertheless documenting the same will make it become part of our cherished histories.

The kind of traditional agriculture that we practiced since the time our ancestors first learnt how to farm and when they stopped being mere collectors and gatherers of food, and which has

survived the onslaught of nature through trial and error method is also unique in itself. And in this context it is all the more important that when the world is going back to organic farming, we are lucky that our traditional farming practices be it in agriculture or in livestock rearing, has always been organic.

The Khasi-Pnars are also the most hospitable and most welcoming and the very few open tribes in the region. The fact that we have a tradition of tang jait where we welcome those who wish to be part of our community is one such example. The many clans that originated from outside and became part of the community are testimony to this fact and in Jaintia hills; the progenitor (lawbei) of the Dkhar clan is believed to have originated from Jaintiapur.

Strengthening the Autonomous District Councils will stand in good stead in our effort to protect, preserve and promote our culture. I think it is also in the spirit of protecting, preserving and promoting the culture and the interests of the people, that state government should do away with the

department of Art and Culture and let the ADCs be the sole authority on the subject of culture and traditions. In fact it is also in the interest of the tribal community that the state government supports the different ADCs and avoids any confrontation or conflict between the two.

I believe the ideas mentioned above and many more elements of our culture that we cannot find space to mention here should be the basis on which the regional parties should frame their policies and programs. Our unique history and our culture are our foundation and strength; it should be the foothold on which we stand and decide where we want to go. Our focus should be on the strength of the community not on its weakness. The emphasis should be on strengthening our roots and I also believe this is the reason why we have many regional parties working for the same cause.

Many regional parties have emerged because of the different ideas that we have on how we can best work for the interest of the tribal community and there are at least two prominent schools of thoughts on this subject. One school of thought which is progressive, believes that regional aspirations can be achieved by focusing on the inner strength of the community, while the other which is more radical and protective in nature believes that regional aspirations can only be protected by formulating mechanisms to protect us from the influx of outsiders. This school of thought believes that the threat to the community is from outside; while in the other school of thought the threat is more from inside when we are not proud of our history, our culture and even our language. And it is compounded when we don't even want to know or learn of who we are and where we come from?

In my opinion the two major regional parties which have entered into a pre-poll alliance with each other take the two different approaches in their efforts to achieve theirs. The goal is the same and only the approaches to reach the goal are different. It is here that we see a possibility of this alliance being successful because the two schools of thoughts share the same goal. The approaches the two political parties take complement each other.

Does having the tag help? Yes, as it aids in maintaining the brand and locational value. An example: The quality of Dehradun basmati rice and what Pakistan claims as basmati is different. The aroma is not the same and the confusion was hitting Indian exports. Hence, the GI label helps keep the ownership as under WTO and TRIPS the member nations have respect for geographical indications.

## Bitter War On Sweet Rosogolla India needs to be watchful

By Shivaji Sarkar

It is great news for West Bengal. It has won the paternity of India's savoured sweet dish rosogolla's geographical indication (GI). It might mean little for the rest of the country but could open up a war on the international arena marked by trade related intellectual property rights (TRIPS), patents and GI. Now it is to be seen how Bengal can lead the move to create an international rosogolla market with the new tag. This would require an aggressive campaign to sell the newly authenticated dish.

Undoubtedly, that is the positive aspect of a simple tug of war between Bengal and Odisha, which claims rosogolla originated therein at the Central Government's patent office. Countering this Bengal went to the Chennai-based GI registry to prove the delicious sweet belongs to it and was invented by a famous sweetseller Nabin Chandra Das in 1868.

Pertinently, vacuum-canned rosogollas are exported across the globe from Kolkata, Nagpur and some even from Nepal. It earns millions of precious dollars given that export growth otherwise is stagnated in a critical world situation.

Certainly, there are many other dishes across the country which have and can claim such GI status. Karnataka's Dharwad pedha, Andhra Pradesh's Tirupathi laddu, Rajasthan's Bikaneri bhujia, Hyderabad's Haleel, Bengal's Joynagar moa and Madya Pradesh's Ratlami sev have the GI tag.

Now, as some other countries have started selling their tea as Darjeeling tea, the GI tagging of Darjeeling and Kangra tea as agricultural products have saved the Indian brands.

Besides, many agricultural products including 79 farm items have got this tag which includes Basmati rice, chillies, orange/mandarin types like Nagpur, Coorg, Khasi and Arunachal, a variety of bananas, spices, Tripura's pineapple and Madurai malli jasmine. Add to this Kolhapuri chappals, Kashmiri pashmina, Pochampalli saris which too have the GI tag.

Does having the tag help? Yes, as it aids in maintaining the brand and locational value. An example: The quality of Dehradun basmati rice and what Pakistan claims as basmati is different. The aroma is not the same and the confusion was hitting Indian exports. Hence, the GI label helps keep the ownership as under WTO and TRIPS the member nations have respect for geographical indications.

However, the basmati war is on and after much negotiations India and Pakistan have decided to get a joint GI for the fine-grained aromatic rice. Recall, the talks came to a halt after the 26/11 attack in Mumbai. Now Bangladesh also wants to share the tag. Meanwhile, some countries like Philippines are selling their rice as basmati in the EU and US despite the fact that this rice is native to the Indian sub-continent.

Notably, measures have been taken to prevent violation of GI rights wherein the custom authorities have powers to seize bogus products. If a product enjoys GI status in a member nation, then no other member nation can grant a trade mark for any other product of similar nature.

Even Indian haldi (turmeric) said to have special therapeutic properties has benefited. A variety of haldi from Kandhamal in Odisha has got a separate GI for its properties even as the State's battle for rosogolla continues.

The GI prevents counterfeiting and protects the original producers' market. For example, Darjeeling tea has got GI

under Indian law. So if someone inside the country sells fake Darjeeling tea, he could be jailed or fined. But if a Sri Lankan company fakes Darjeeling tea and exports to Germany nothing can be done in India. For this a separate petition has to be filed in Germany or the Central Government has to pursue it through the WTO. To prevent such problem, a fresh move has to be made for GI status European Union's office for "Protected GI" (PGI).

Moreover, there is another problem. Once a GI is granted by a country, the WTO informs all member nations. But this has not been given the status of a registry. So it is treated as information but has no legal status.

Additionally, multilateral registry is still not in vogue. Thus, getting a GI in one country is not automatically protected across the world. Presently, multilateral registry is being insisted by the EU as it would save duplication of efforts. However, China and Hong Kong want this system to be compulsory for only those countries that agree to participate in it.

Further, countries which are faking products are opposing one-registration across the world. As it helps these nations export their products under false identity and rake in profits. To prevent them or make them liable for legal offence numerous registrations have to be done. This is expensive and a time-consuming cumbersome process. The counterfeiters benefit for this legal loophole.

Conversely, lobbies of different products are resorting to different methods. The powerful European wine and liquor business groups have managed to get WTO to negotiate for multilateral GI register for wine and liquor. This has helped them save their brands and even penetrated sales across the world, including India.

Importantly, GI rights are given to an association of persons, producers, organisation as a community right. The concept is that such indications are not build up by one individual but by a community of persons. So the community, in the case of Bengal's rosogolla is protected.

Indeed, if a sari made somewhere else is sought to be sold as Banarasi, it would not only be considered a violation of GI but also considered punishable in India. But for any other country a separate process has to be adopted.

Certainly, there is an apprehension that powerful nations or lobbies can create fake identifications. If such are granted registration, it could create a chaos in the world trade system. Think. India had to fight in the US to get neem patents deregistered after a prolonged legal battle. Even on various agricultural issues the Doha agreement has yet to be agreed upon. Similarly there is yet no unanimity of non-agricultural market access (NAMA). There has also not been any agreement on a free market for the labour. Add to this another lacuna in the system. A GI is not a one-time achievement. It is valid for ten years and has to be renewed after that.

In sum, notwithstanding WTO and globalization the world is at war in the trade front. A nation has to be innovative and aggressive to save their brands to rake in the maximum profit. India has the advantage that its various scientific organisations like the CSIR, science and technology department, industry, handicraft and agriculture are continuously making efforts to protect our heritage and cultural specifications. Remember, this war will not end soon. The one who remains alert will win it. --- INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### Holiday to honour Thomas Jones?

Editor, The decision of the state government to declare June 22 as a holiday is a hasty and ill-disguised ploy. The coming of Christianity to these hills has been a double-edged sword. Undoubtedly, the advent of Christian education has contributed immeasurably to progress and development, but Christianization and in its wake, Westernization, has damaged culture irreparably. Many of the youth of our state lack cultural confidence and pride, and suffer from identity confusion.

For a balanced well-researched account, one may read Welsh missionaries and British imperialism: The Empire of Clouds in north-east India written by Melbourne University historian, Andrew May, and none other than the great-grand nephew of Thomas Jones. The title implies and the book makes clear case for the double-pronged domination of the colonial doctrine of manifest

destiny. Declaring a holiday is easy. If the government truly wanted to honour the man who gave Khasis the alphabet, they should start with school education, clean up the mess of the poor learning indices of our children, which are the poorest in the northeast region. They should do something about the dropout rate, highest in the country.

After almost half a century of statehood, there is no Education Policy, for obvious reasons. Why not create an education policy and name it after Thomas Jones? That would do him proper honour. Jones was a proponent of vocational education, a fact not known to many. Instead only seminaries have been erected in his name.

For all his accomplishments, Thomas Jones had no impact in the Garo Hills, so why should it be a state holiday? The creation of this holiday is nothing but a pre-election sop to the conservative Khasi Christian community. Yours etc., Glenn C Khar Kongor, Via email

### Dress code important!

Editor, A dress code is of utmost importance. A formal occasion demands a suitable formal manner of dress and this basic dress sense does not have to be enforced; it should be inculcated along with our education. Should one err in such a situation, persons in authority, seniors, and elders are expected to intervene and address the errant member, who should accept it gracefully because the advisor cares. Propriety, appropriateness, dignity, neatness, tidiness, cleanliness, smartness add up to a dress code. It is sad to note that a stake holder had to be reminded of this professional ethics.

A college is an institution run by a Management comprising the principal, faculty, staff, working together for the welfare of the prime segment - the students. Women's College is now over three decades old and internal matters such as those relating to computer software, salary

hikes and broken flushes are in the custody of good and reliable hands. Let us leave such matters to the rightful custodians and strive to excel in our respective roles and thus serve the student community to the best of our capability.

Yours etc.,  
Principal, faculty and staff  
Women's College,  
Shillong

### Consequences of flooding

Editor One of the most common challenges across South Asia during the seasonal monsoon is flooding; and with flooding there are two serious threats that endanger human life, namely, communicable diseases and snake bites. Although the outbreak of diseases capture our major attention; however, the numerous reported and unreported deaths due to snake bites in the rural areas is grossly neglected and misrepresented. The flood water that enters the local forest areas, plug the nesting

holes of the snakes with water forcing them to come out in the open. The snakes in the flood hit areas of remote and rural spaces then start looking for dry areas and unfortunately come in close encounter with the local human habitants resulting in disasters. The overflow of flood water, results in snake outbreak in the water bodies as well as adjoining river banks, around forest fringes, agricultural fields, granaries and even in the inundated villages and rural homes.

The deaths due to snake bites result due to the following unfortunate factors: lack of proper transportation to the nearby health centers for quick injection of anti-venom, inadequate supply of anti-venoms in the remote, rural health centers or even in district hospitals, lack of enough skilled medical personnel properly trained in diagnosing and treating victims of snake bites, lack of education and awareness among rural communities and above all superstitions regarding snakes. It is sad to note that

many rural families turn to traditional healers for treating snake bite victims who only delay the process of proper medical treatment through their useless and fake show ups for treating the unfortunate victims. Mass education and awareness regarding all kinds of snakes; both non-poisonous and highly poisonous (like the cobras, king cobras, kraits and viper) species are necessary for the rural communities. As long as lack of awareness, infrastructure and communication bottlenecks exists in the rural and remote areas and superstitions as well as inadequate and improper treatments remain the challenge deaths due to snake bites will continue unabated every year.

Yours etc.,  
Saikat Kumar Basu  
Lethbridge AB  
Canada T1J 4B3

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.

*“A consistent man believes in destiny, a capricious man in chance.”*

--- Benjamin Disraeli

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX.No.101 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2017

### Sense on Padmavati

THE furore over Padmavati has ended for now. Controversy raged for a few weeks over the Viacom 18 Motion Pictures' production which was to be released on December 1. The release is said to have been deferred voluntarily. The studio would soon announce the next release date. It claims that it has the highest regard for the law of the land and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). As a law abiding corporate citizen, it is committed to follow the established procedure and convention. CBFC chief Praseon Joshi slammed the filmmakers for trying to release the film before getting a certificate from the CBFC. It is difficult to understand how Bhansali could think of releasing the film without a certificate under the present system. The decision of the producers could not in any case be otherwise. What is a pity is that a film which was not expected to make international rounds aroused such a loud protest from Rajasthan to South India. The Supreme Court ruled that artistic freedom should not be curtailed by Puritanism. But every specific case should be judged on its own merit.

What is wrong is not that the film deviated from historical accuracy for requirements of cinema which can be justified. It seems objectionable that the film produced a hodgepodge of historical and non-historical material for no reason at all. Director Bhansali said that the conception of Padmavati was inspired by a Sufi poet and reference was also made to Amrapali, a film on the Buddhist period. Why then was Padmavati portrayed as Padmini, the Rani of Mewar whose self-immolation for the kingdom is a historic legend? Why was the name Padmavati chosen and not Padmini as she was always in the history books. At the same time Alauddin Khilji was thrown in unnecessarily with his real name. The Muslim community in India is not likely to like it much. Departure from reality cannot be buried in a Wellsian time-machine.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Mahanta discusses Bodo problem with PM

Assam Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta met Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi here today and discussed the Bodo problem and his state's boundary disputes with Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Mr Mahanta also referred to the state's financial position, adversely affected by successive floods and the "wrong policy." Adopted by the centre, a State

Government spokesman said. The Chief Minister submitted notes on the protection of the Manas Tiger Reserve, transportation of essential commodities to the northeast and shifting of the Tea Board office from Calcutta to Assam.

The Prime Minister assured him that he would look into the matters, the spokesman said.

The Government's initiative on sanitation to make the country "open defecation free" by October 2, 2019 is well meaning but difficult to achieve. While some of the States have been quite efficient in constructing toilets in the countryside, as per the national plan, many problems have arisen putting a question mark on the plan's success.

According to reports, in the past three years about 50 million toilets have been constructed in rural India and 3.8 million in cities and towns. Moreover, 2.48 lakh villages, 203 districts and five States – Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand and Haryana – claim to be now open defecation free. In fact surveys undertaken show that 85 per cent of toilets built under Swachh Bharat mission are being used.

Though there has been lot of endeavour to persuade people to use toilets, the biggest problem is the lack of water. Widespread media reports suggest that at least 25 to 30 per cent, if not more, do not have any water connection as a result of which these are unused. The chronic lack of water in some regions of the country is a well known fact and the planners have not quite realised that the sanitation initiative can only become a success if water connection is ensured at the time of construction of toilets.

Notably, a senior representative of the United Nations (Leo Heller) found there was incorrect labelling of places as open defecation free, inaccurate government claims about toilets for school girls and that there was still a potential for continuation of manual scavenging. Though it is understood that 53 million toilets have been built in rural areas in the years since the launch of Swachh Bharat, the report further noted and quite rightly that "eliminating open defecation is not only about building latrines but requires adequate methods for behavioural change and sufficient water supply is a pre-requisite for the sustainable and safe use of adequate, low-cost latrines".

A significant aspect of the UN report is that the twin-pit toilets mandated by

# Sanitation Initiative Build people's campaign

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

Swachh Bharat may perpetuate manual scavenging in a caste-based society. It advocated better management of wastewater, which commonly flows into open drains in India. In fact, studies suggest a rise in construction of single-pit latrines in several States, increasing the risks of manual scavenging, the report warned.

The benefits of sanitation cannot be doubted. Re 1 invested in improving sanitation helps save Rs 4.30, according to a recent study by UNICEF, which was done to estimate the cost of benefits of government's Swachh Bharat Mission. Sharing the findings of an independent survey carried

human health, an important aspect of the problem in the rural sector is the use of ponds for both bathing and for procuring water for cooking and drinking. In most areas, there is no system of cleaning the ponds at regular intervals through chlorination or other means and very few panchayats are aware of this. Water bodies are grossly polluted where, for example, faecal coli form count would vary between 5000 and 50,000 mpn 100 ml-1. As is well known, the Ganga is one such river which in spite of all efforts still remains unfit even for bathing.

Delving into initiatives

**The challenge of making the country defecation free is not quite easy due to lack of adequate water availability – both viewed from financial and social angles.**

out across 10,000 rural households randomly selected across 12 States, chief of WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) UNICEF India, Nicholas Osbert stated: "In a fully open defecation free (ODF) community, considering medical costs averted, the value of time savings and the value of mortality averted, the financial savings for each household is Rs 50,000 per year".

The study on a misconceived premise that 85 per cent of household members use their latrines, found the financial savings due to improved sanitation resulted in a cost benefit ratio of 430 per cent on average; this means that "Rs 3 invested allows a saving of Rs 4.3". Whatever be the usage, benefits are obviously the highest among poor sections of the population. The UN agency has also observed that beyond the hundreds of thousands of toilets being built, "a genuine prioritisation of behaviour change interventions is taking place.

On the question if water, wherein its availability and potability is intrinsically related to sanitation and

in the realm of sanitation, a decade ago only 237 of over 5000 towns had a partially complete sewerage system. But this has changed significantly. Now 70-odd per cent of urban population has access to sanitation i.e. safe disposal of human excreta while in rural areas the figure has jumped to 40-odd per cent from the earlier figure of a mere 20 per cent, obviously due to the special thrust provided by the present government. However, open defecation is still the most important form of toileting in rural India.

Thus it can safely be assumed that though presently over 50 to 60 per cent of households have access to sanitation facilities, only 30-35 per cent of the generated wastewater and sewage gets treated before being let into rivers and streams. The obvious effect has been that an estimated four lakh children die of diseases such as cholera, dysentery and suffer from stunted growth due to poor sanitation each year. This aspect needs special attention and the Government's programme

Rashtriya Swachh Ganga Mission (National Clean Ganga Mission) and setting up treatment plants in the major towns to ensure that the river is not polluted may be positive steps, if action proceeds according to targets set. Similar action needs to be taken for the Yamuna too.

It is necessary to consider here the problem of manual scavenging and the official figure for India stands at 13,369 though most States are in denial mode. According to the 2011 census, 21 lakh households use dry latrines or open drains while the Socio Economic Caste Census noted that in rural India, 1.82 lakh households have at least one member working as a manual scavenger.

The challenge of making the country defecation free is not quite easy due to lack of adequate water availability – both viewed from financial and social angles. The NDA government has, no doubt, come forward in by providing necessary financial resources, demonstrating its political will and commitment. But the private sector too must play an active role in constructing toilets in schools and educational institutions in villages and doubly ensure availability of water as it has been found that some girls' toilets are not used due to lack of water.

The creation of a totally sanitised environment as pointed out by Prime Minister Modi, is imperative at this juncture not just through Government's dedicated action but also of the private sector through community involvement. While resources are no doubt essential, claims only cannot yield desired results as this has to become a people's campaign, transcending class, caste and communities. Moreover, adequate water supply has to be taken care of as sanitation and water go hand in hand. Careful planning and execution could usher in the requisite change if we care for our neighbourhood and cleanliness. As the saying goes, if there is a will there is a way. ---INFA

## The Smog of Delhi and questions on the same

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

### BEATING THE RHETORIC

On 5th December 1952 the residents of London woke up to a particularly hazy morning. The winter had set in and yet there was something different about that day. The air was filled with smog and haze making it almost impossible for the people to breathe. It stayed the same for the next four days. Government reports suggested that during those four days close to four thousand people had died of the smog while more than one hundred thousand others were affected severely by the smog. It was termed the 'Great Smog of London'. And since then never has London woken up to such a dreadful day ever again.

The situation in the capital city of India reminds one of the same hazy days. For the past few years, every winter has brought a brutal challenge and fight to Delhi and its residents. Every year now during the winter a few days of hazy smog invariably sets in. During those few days it becomes impossible to breathe, the air quality deteriorates and visibility is reduced. This year around things went so bad that schools had to be closed for a few days because the health hazard undoubtedly affects the children more severely than others. The air quality was extremely poor with measure of particulate matter that is ten times more than the safe levels. The health condition in Delhi has become so precarious that embassy staff of various countries also put forward their concern to the Delhi diplomatic corps.

A number of measures were taken by the government once the pollution had reached dangerous levels. Water was sprayed in central Delhi roads so that road dust particles would come down. Water was also strewn on trees by the fire department so that dust settled would get cleaned away. Construction activities and industrial plants around Delhi were asked to temporarily stop their operations. The government contemplated bringing in the Odd-Even scheme before the National Green Tribunal intervened and the government of Delhi took back that step. During Diwali in 2017 the Supreme Court of the country had also issued a ban on sale of crackers in the NCR region and the air quality undoubtedly had seen an improvement during Diwali this year compared to the past three years. Yet these activities must be seen as stop gap measures and more reactionary in nature. To solve the long standing problem of air pollution in Delhi a larger framework and strategy is required.

So what is the reason and why does Delhi encounter the trouble of smog every winter. Climate change and global warming have undoubtedly become the fulcrum for this change. Yet at a micro level the reasons could be broken down to far smaller reasons. Once the problem is broken down to a micro level maybe the solutions are easier to forge. Air pollution in Delhi can be broken down to the presence of PM 2.5 and PM 10 particles or particulate matters that are present in the air. These particulate matters enter the human body through the air one breathes, and causes problems to the respiratory tracts which might also lead to loss of human life. The reason for the particulate matters are road dust, dust from construction activities, and vehicle emissions among other reasons. Stubble burning in areas nearby Delhi and dust storm from across the borders – including from the Middle East – further complicates the

issue of pollution and its control in India.

Thus from the causal point of view it is perhaps clear that vehicles and vehicular emission are not the sole reason for smog and pollution. The causes are multi-faceted hence any attempt to combat the same should be multi-pronged and long term strategies. During this year the Delhi government had formulated a strategy. The Graded Action Plan was developed as a plan to combat air pollution in winter. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) would monitor air quality from various stations located across Delhi-NCR. Daily reports would be sent to the Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA), the implementing authority of the plan, which will take a decision on the future course of action. Each level of danger warning would kick in a new higher elevated response from the government. Though it had its faults yet it was indeed laudable that for the first time agencies showed intent of a plan that was targeted towards prevention rather than reaction.

The action points included shutting down construction activities, banning entry of trucks and heavy motor vehicles into Delhi, closing down the industrial plants in Badarpur among others. In fact by 2018 the plans in Badarpur for example would close down permanently. While these steps are laudable they have shown that they are not adequate to address air pollution in Delhi. One of the first things the government must do is increase public transportation. Delhi today needs more than 10,000 buses and the government fleet is far below that threshold. There is an immediate need to increase the number of buses, to increase the reach of metro transport and other legislations like further encouragement of electric vehicles among others. The government's decision to pre-pone the implementation of vehicles with Bharat VI is a welcome step in this regard.

The second major step that can be taken in this regard is change in the way we envision urban planning. Road dust often comes from roads are not properly built and gravel remains. There is an urgent need to address infrastructural issues regarding the same. There must also be stricter urban planning norms in terms of how industrial and residential areas are segregated and new ways such as building green walls around industrial areas. Innovative measures such as green vertical walls around buildings have also proved successful and should be replicated across the country and made a major component of urban planning and design.

The third step is undoubtedly the repeated larger benefits of developing a green consciousness. Children must be encouraged to plant trees, urban afforestation must be taken up in an expedite manner and the scope and limit of such programs must be expanded. Trees naturally suck up the carbon present in the air and would undoubtedly help towards improving the oxygen quality in the air. Hence awareness about the same must be propagated at an even more vociferous intensity. The lessons from Delhi must not be limited to Delhi alone and must be read and reread across the country. Air pollution is an environmental hazard and it is here to stay unless we find ways to combat it.

(Views expressed are personal)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Kudos Rotary Club of Shillong!

Editor,  
Through your medium I would like to applaud one of the best service NGO's that I have heard of. I have never been a part of this NGO but whatever and whenever I hear about it, simply spell bounds me. I am taking about the Rotary Club of Shillong. The club is engaged in a range of activities with the sole aim of making the society a better place to live in, without much of fanfare and publicity. For example, they have constructed a state of the art public toilet at Jhalupara bang on the highway, much along the lines of the Swachh Bharat mission. They may not have got any funds from any Government agency for the same (as no credit to them is mentioned on the plaque) but the very fact that they made it possible is praise-worthy. I hope it lives up to the expectations. Also, recently I have heard from a friend of mine that the NGO was instrumental in saving the life of a four year old child of a farmer from a village by assisting the child to undergo a heart surgery in a renowned hospital.

When I hear such news, I

wonder about the purpose of our lives if it's not meant to be of any use to help others? And such news gives the much needed motivation to do good to the society in general and thank the said NGO and others for giving such direction to life. May your tribe increase!

Yours etc.,  
Albert Lyngdoh,  
Via email

### India's women sportspersons!

Editor,  
This is in response to Proloy Bagchi's article, "Making India proud" (ST, Nov 18, 2017). India's star sportswomen namely PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza, Arunima Sinha, Sakshi Malik, MC Mary Kom, Dipa Karmakar, Mithali Raj, Jhulan Goswami and many others have indeed made India proud. As a matter of fact, they have given a slap in the face of those who killed their girl children in the womb (foeticide) or in the cradle (infanticide), or deprived their own daughters of nutritional and emotional discrimination. Because of female foeticide and infanticide, India's child sex ratio (0-6 years) came down from 945 girls per 1000 boys in 1991 to 914 girls in 2011.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### Daylight robbery by Reliance mobile

Editor,  
Reliance Communication (Mobile) launched its mobile venture in Meghalaya, probably about 20 years back but has suddenly and silently packed up and left without prior notice to its valued customers -- as if a robber runs away from the place of crime. Two weeks ago one very upset customer exclaimed in fury "Reliance came, it plundered us, and now leaves behind only the ugly impression because we customers have been facing untold problems. We have been moving from pillar to post to port out the old number. I think this devious company must have felt that it can't further squeeze out easy money from us."

The age of materialism is always littered with such unethical activities. Who edged out Reliance mobile? It's Jio Reliance – his big brother descended from the same womb. 'Reliance Industries' of his brother, who has eyes bigger than

the stomach, is only hurting the stomach of 100 million other Indian. From high category industries to the middle and the cottage industries, all are slowly under the grip of this invincible and rapacious Reliance Industries. Where do Delhiites buy one kg apple now? It's not from a poor vendor who has not eaten since yesterday, but from the 'Reliance Fresh' which has over 700 state-of-the-art outlets across the country. Now just guess what is in store for the crores of poverty-stricken citizens of India if a few tycoons are thus allowed to fulfill their insatiable greed by encroaching upon the business avenues of small traders and petty vendors? What are RELIANCE MALLS for? Here you find anything under one roof. Have they not badly affected the business of small traders? Why is PM Modi silent on this? Why is he willfully and unfairly facilitating the corporate business expansionism at the cost of lakhs of small-scale traders?

Perhaps we still have in our vivid memory how this 'Reliance Communication' charged from the customers for each call. Initially, it's probably about Rs 13 per minute and incoming rate was Rs 7. People were so excited when it reduced the incoming calls to Rs 5 and then Rs 3.

Those were the days when people would save their hard-earned money to buy a black and white Nokia set and rush for a new connection at Reliance office. This way the company minted huge amount of money since it had no competitors to roar at it. But now his "own brother" Mukesh Ambani has kicked him out. One wonders, how other companies will survive when Jio with its cutting-edge infrastructure entices the customers with the endless charm of glamour and filthy entertainment – though, at the end of the day, they mislead and corrupt our youths!

Due to the abrupt suspension of mobile services the citizens of Meghalaya have been suffering indescribable inconvenience. Particularly, the business communities have been hit badly. They could not contact the potential business customers for a while now and this resulted in a heavy loss of business. What action is the Meghalaya Government going to take against the company that has left countless consumers in dire straits? What about the security deposit, which is to the tune of crores of rupees,

that the company has collected from the customers -- which has been lying with it for over a decade? When customers contacted the company for porting out the SIM connection the staff of the company asked them to clear the "outstanding dues". When reminded of their security deposit of Rs 2000 or so, they just talked back that they don't know anything about that? Is it not a crime for Reliance to not refund the money taken as security deposit from customers and earning interest on it? Is it not a case of daylight robbery – because this company of swift communication has yet not communicated to the customers about the "refund" of the security deposit?

Are all harsh laws, formidable courts and police only to incriminate and harass the middle and the lower class – who can't at all appoint a battery of devious lawyers to save them from any inadvertent misstep? I would like to know 100 names of big shots who are in jail for their series of grave crimes?

Yours etc.,  
Salil Gwalali,  
Via email

*"I believe in process. I believe in four seasons. I believe that winter's tough, but spring's coming. I believe that there's a growing season. And I think that you realize that in life, you grow. You get better."*

--- Steve Southerland

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.102 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

### MBOSE text book imbroglio

TEXTBOOKS are principle instructional materials. A textbook is often defined as an instrument of instruction that facilitates the teaching learning process. Textbooks for different subjects are written on the basis of a prescribed syllabus in which the major ideals of the subject matter are selected and summarized judiciously. They are organized logically according to the mental makeup, mental age and psychological requirements of the students so as to facilitate teaching. Hence text books are often called the teacher in print.

Textbooks are important because they give us a flavour of our history, culture, geography, society and its values and help us form healthy and liberal ideologies which we carry into college. In many nations debates over the content and format of school textbooks are sites of considerable educational and political conflict. A study of the national education systems across the globe suggest that the manufacture of textbook content is the result of competition between powerful groups who see it as being central in the creation of collective national memory designed to meet specific cultural, economic, ideological and social imperatives.

In India today, school textbooks are sought to be written and based on the cultural, ideological and political power of dominant groups with the intention of enforcing and reinforcing cultural homogeneity through the promotion of shared attitudes and the construction of shared historical memories. In country as diverse as India with many histories and cultures; each of them unique, such construction of history can be problematic. Hence even the choice of text books is not innocent of politics as the attempt often is to manufacture and control popular memory. However, what is interesting about the recent attempt to overhaul the MBOSE textbooks is that the content does not seem to matter but the publishers have become the dominant players when they are but merchants plying a trade. To reduce an important process such as the selection of text books simply to a short-listing of publishers suggests that a sinister game is at play. It is important for civil society to blow the whistle now!

Talk about throwing pearls to the pigs! Our MBOSE is at it again! At the very outset it begs the question, 'do we focus on quality or shall we continue with deception and denial?' At a time when our Board is playing catch up with others, it seems we have shot ourselves on the foot. Fact being, the issue of revamping textbooks was long overdue; so the entire initiative is commendable; but the procedure is not. If anything, it has raised more questions than answers. As such and on all counts, it looks as though this entire exercise has led us back to naught and a feeling of tasting old wine in a new bottle. Accordingly, I place the following pointers -

Firstly, why is the Board giving so much of importance to publishers and who exactly is a publisher? By all means, a publisher is more of a medium for developing and marketing a manuscript. In the true sense of the term, they do not involve in writing manuscripts. They are more of middle men. In the value chain of 'writing a manuscript (the start)-reviewing a manuscript-its publication and marketing-disseminating the manuscript to the students (the end)' the publishers fall smack right in the middle. As such, they have a minimal role on the content of the manuscript. Their only job is to print and bind the manuscript. Hence, the task of our board in relation to the publisher is to analyse and evaluate which publisher is willing to develop and commercialise the textbook at the most economical rate. The relationship is at best only financial in nature and surely not academic. Now, in such a context; if indeed the Shillong based publishers do win the bid, then why not; as it is fair and square. However, putting publishers at the forefront of the entire process of revamping textbooks has undoubtedly raised a plethora of questions; and in the public domain most of them circle around bribery and corruption.

Secondly, the process adopted beats all manner and effort of understanding the issue. There is a term which we all are familiar with. It is called 'research and development'. Development

# MBOSE and its textbooks

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

cannot come before research. Research is primary. Now, when it comes to writing a manuscript; it is a matter of research. Here comes the primary and the most important role of a teacher. Teachers write manuscripts and not publishers. As such, the board should not involve teachers only as reviewers; rather earnestly and wholeheartedly involve them as writers on the various subject matters. Hence, the best and most logical approach that should have been adopted was to judiciously select experienced-senior teachers

development wrong. The fact is, a textbook represents and reflects upon the learning and knowledge of a student. Hence, utmost care must be exercised while framing a manuscript. It would have been far better if our board could have taken a longer-deeper thought on this initiative and through following a logical and time-tested process.

As such, we may not start with the new textbooks in 2018; but rather 2019. In addition, the issue of pricing is important, but so is the

*"The important thing is to make our textbooks attractive and colourful. This is because studies have shown that the quality of paper, the colours, the pictures, the fonts, the aesthetics and so forth do have an impact on the learning interest and information reception of a child."*

and involve them in writing the manuscripts across all subjects. This would have produced far meaningful and better results. This is the hallmark of research. After that we can move on to development, which is where the publisher's role comes in. Publishers develop and commercialise.

This completes the logical cycle of research and development. However, currently our Board is giving more importance to the development aspect (which is secondary and subservient to research). This is a sad plight to find ourselves in!

Thirdly, this textbook issue seems inverted throughout. Any effort concerning writing of books of any form and kind is actually a long-term matter. The time consumed will run into months and years together. That we have completed the entire process in months is baffling. Now, even if the matter is argued on the basis of the review of manuscripts alone, that they were reviewed so hastily is again a question. This is what happens when we get the process of research and

quality of the papers used in printing and binding. The important thing is to make our textbooks attractive and colourful. This is because studies have shown that the quality of paper, the colours, the pictures, the fonts, the aesthetics and so forth do have an impact on the learning interest and information reception of a child. This should be one of the critical factors for selecting a publisher. Yes, in this case the textbooks will be dearer. However, in a situation where the government has increased the salary of employees handsomely; why not further subsidise textbooks as well?

Fourthly, I agree with the Letter to The Editor (ST dated 11th November, 2017) by A. Lyngdoh titled 'MBOSE syllabus revamp!' and I believe this is a view shared by many in the teaching fraternity and across stakeholders. NCERT textbooks are already there. Further and with due respects to our Board, we must accept that NCERT textbooks are far better than our textbooks.

In such a case, why not explore the possibilities of using these readily available resources in our education system. Things will be far better then. The Board can retain its present structure and organizational design. It can retain its current process and procedures of administering work. Let everything remain as it is in terms of structure and operations, but let us look at the possibility of using NCERT textbooks earnestly. However, in a case where this is not possible for want of will or desire or otherwise, we can involve our very own teachers to devise manuscripts in line with the NCERT model. Our teachers are more than capable of doing it. Importantly, the real catch here is this; in addition to knowledge, the marking system will also change thereby making our students at par with the national mainstream.

Lastly, why are the pressure groups like KSU, FKJGP, HYC and so forth so silent? This is a student matter, your matter; so speak up and take action. Talk to the government, file an RTI, discuss and if need be, protest. At least contribute towards this issue and its possible course correction. Studentship is the real citizenship. More so, school education is everything! It is the bedrock of education. At the college and university levels only value addition happens. The real substance of a student-citizen is formed and shaped at the school. That is why school teachers are the most valuable and most critical of all the teachers in the teaching fraternity. However, they will fail in their roles if they are not given the correct means and assets. Hence, this issue of MBOSE and its textbooks is current and critical and it will shape the next generation of citizens of our state. Thus, to start with let us give them what they deserve; proper and excellent textbooks!

(The Author teaches at NEHU Benjamin Lyngdoh NEHU Campus Shillong - 793022)

### Foreign investors unfazed by demonetization

## But domestic companies still hesitant

By Subrata Majumder

Paradox prevails between domestic and foreign investors in the post-demonetization period. While domestic investors were in a subdued mood, foreign investors were upbeat to invest in India in the post-demonetization period. This means that despite the general negativity about demonetization, foreign investors continued to repose confidence in the strong macro-economic parameters of India.

In the post-demonetization period, nearly half of FDI in 2016 -- the best year ever for FDI in the country -- flowed in the first half of 2017 (US \$ 8 billion in January-June 2017). In contrast, investment by domestic investors plunged. New investment by the private sector declined by over 62 percent during January - September 2017 over the corresponding period last year - from Rs. 6,287 billion in January - September 2016 to Rs 3,921 billion in January - September 2017 (CMIE report).

The FDI flow revealed that sectors like services (such as finances, banking, insurance, e-commerce and others), computer software and hardware (mainly software), telecommunication and trading continued to be attractive areas for foreign investment even in the post-demonetization period. The affected sectors were construction and automobile.

What does it show? Eventually, the manufacturing sectors (excepting telecommunication), or say, Make in India initiative, stood downplayed. The slide was due to the downturn in the informal sectors (Including small scale sector), which are more reliant on cash and unaccounted money for investment.

Partially due to policy restriction for foreign investment in small scale sector (FDI is not permitted beyond 76 percent in small scale) and the unorganized nature of the informal sector, FDI has been concentrated in the organized sector. As such, FDI remained insulated from the demerits of demonetization, which affected the informal sector most.

Apparently, during the Modi period, the pattern of FDI has greatly changed. The major foreign investors during this period were not the big honchos in global manufacturing, but private equity (PE) firms and the round-trip money, especially from Mauritius. The PE funds flowed mainly in e-commerce-related sectors, which emerged as a high profit business. According to a professor of Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, PE funds accounted for 60 percent of the total foreign investment inflow in 2014-15, and the top three recipients were Flipkart, Paytm and Snapdeal. These funds were used to finance retail trade in mostly imported goods. Critics argue that PE funds do not add to any capital formation and technology transfer, as expected from FDI.

Although PE fund and round-trip money have not helped gear up the Make in India initiative, India has emerged as a hotbed for foreign investment in the world. Its strong macro-

economic parameters have become the main attraction for foreign investors. Unlike domestic investors, foreign investors were not swayed by the demerits of demonetization, which they considered as short term and with limited impact on the economy against the strong macro-economic parameters of the country. According to Bain & Company, "They (foreign investors) believe that while demonetization may affect short term growth... it should have a long term benefit". It argued that "despite these policy changes, the Indian stock market (Sensex) remained more or less stable during this period".

FDI has a multi-dimensional impact on the manufacturing sector. It turbocharged the manufacturing of digital related products and reinvented the potential for the revival of import substitution programme.

A close nexus has been established between the manufacturing of mobile phones and FDI. It has become an important engine of growth for the mobile phone manufacturing in the country. Today, the country is producing nearly 45 - 50 percent of the mobile phone demand in the country.

Currently, mobile phone industry contributes 6.5 percent of GDP and this is likely to go up to 8.2 percent by 2020. As India becomes the fastest smart phone maker in the world, the handset industry is poised to overtake America as the second biggest market in the next few years. With the slew of incentives offered, such as PMP (Phased Manufacturing Programme), India is poised to be the manufacturing hub for mobile phones and parts. Foxconn, Samsung and a chunk of Chinese players are setting up their manufacturing units in India. This led a spurt in FDI in telecommunication, defying demonetization blues. In 2016-17, FDI in telecommunication spiked five times higher to US \$5.6 billion, from US \$1.3 billion in 2015-16. Telecommunication was the second biggest receiver of FDI in 2016-17, after service sectors.

Relying on India's growing attraction for foreign investment and to boost the Make in India initiative, Government of India reverted to import substitution programme. With the initiation of new policy framework relating to procurement of metro coaches, the government decided to procure more metro coaches produced in India. It decided that metro railways should procure 75 percent of the coaches and critical signaling equipment from domestic sources. This led to a big foray by the foreign investors to establish their manufacturing units in India. Currently, of the three metro coach factories in the country, two are run by FDI and many more are in the offing.

Coupled with a big leap in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business and Moody's rating upgrade of India from Baa3, just above 'junk status', to 'positive', foreign investors' confidence in India's consolidated economic strength and political stability is unlikely to be dissipated due to demonetization issues. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Not a contempt of court?

Editor,  
The Modi Sarkar had publicly affirmed in no uncertain terms that pending the apex court verdict, on the Aadhaar deadline fixed for March 31st next, none of the citizens would be asked to link his/her Aadhaar numbers to their respective bank accounts. Incidentally, the Supreme Court has come down heavily on the banking institutions and other social service providers for perversely creating panic and uncertainty for the masses on the Aadhaar linkage, thus setting at rest the unwarranted warning issued by these govt. controlled establishments. Oddly enough, on November 15, I was literally taken aback when a message from SBI was transmitted into my cell phone which read, thus: "Provide your AADHAAR & Pan in your A/C No. otherwise operation in A/C will be stopped after 31.12.2017". Such cynical blackmailing is unerringly a blatant cognizable offence as it tantamount, to use of legal parlance, contempt of court given that this specific case is sub-judice and as such those responsible for issuing such gratuitous threat are per se liable to be prosecuted and put behind bars. Alas, such intimidation could not by any

means have come without the tacit directive of the saffron government. Hence who can take the bull by the horns? It infers, therefore that even the judiciary, the protector of the commoners is given a kick in the teeth by those at the helm of the executive. Just like the notorious Gau rakshaks who go on killing sprees with impunity at the slightest suspicion of anyone carrying beef and which subsequently made PM Modi, to shed crocodile tears for the poor victims only for the crime to recur at an opportune time with inexorable regularity, are we not, therefore, regressing to a state of intolerance under the very nose of Mr Modi?

Yours etc.,  
Jerome K. Diengdoh,  
Via email

#### Development must be human-centric

Editor,  
It has been reported that fines for drunken driving in Norway are based on the defendant's income. We must learn from Norway how to make our citizens happy. This fine structure on the basis of one's income is one of the secrets of Norway becoming the happiest country of the world in terms of World

Happiness Index, 2017. Also, Norway has given top priority to the welfare of its citizens. That makes it remain at the top of the list of Human Development Index for a long time. It shows that to make people happy; laws and development should entirely be human centric in the best way possible.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

#### Landmark judgment!

Editor,  
The landmark verdict by the Honorable Meghalaya High Court to strike down the posts of parliamentary secretary is indeed a very welcome step and a positive one. The PIL by Madal Sumer raising genuine questions even leading to gross misuse of constitutional provisions by the government is an eye opener that once again brings into question the validity and justification of appointing non-experts as Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons etc., which is a waste of tax payers' money. The state government has always been in the habit of appointing outsiders/consultants as if they know Meghalaya better than the locals here. This is bypassing local indigenous

talent, knowledge and expertise and is a great injustice. The High Court's verdict is a death knell to uncontrolled wastage of public taxes.

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

#### Need to accept LGBT community

Editor,  
The LGBT community represents a significant proportion of the populations across this 21st century South Asia. Unfortunately, though they are grossly misunderstood and discriminated; and are subjected to regular humiliation, rude behavior, social prejudices and even life threatening physical attacks leading to death and injury. Our society needs to reflect with empathy the pain and sufferings such community members suffer every day of their lives and provide them a path of social justice and equal opportunity in various works of life. More so since LGBT members are grossly misrepresented and/or underrepresented in most parliamentary democracies across South Asia. Although some of their rights have been protected through constitution and judiciary,

still much needs to be done to accommodate them more inclusively and respectfully in our society. They are no less human than any other individual member of our society and have the right to live a life of respect and dignity. Sensitization and awareness regarding LGBT community members is the first step towards bridging the gap in accepting them as equal and respectful members of our South Asian society and community life.

Yours etc.,  
Saiikat Kumar Basu,  
Via email

#### Global sports extravaganza

Editor,  
Just after FIFA U-17 and T20, now ISL and Youth Women World Boxing are being played back to back in Guwahati. The city is able to attract global attention. Now the priority is to conclude these games successfully. Crowd behaviour often flares up in games. Guwahati is no different in that the history of crowd violence makes it undeserving of holding international events after the cricketing event recently where the bus carrying Australian players was allegedly stoned. The administration

works hard to control the crowd and ensure security of players at these high voltage stadia. These mega events have provided the NE fans with an opportunity to witness high standard games. Also North East players proved to be great competitors beyond organizing such international events. And magnificent Mary has shown the world that she is unstoppable. Guwahati is in IPL fray after Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab sought to change their bases from Jaipur and Mohali respectively. Now BCCI is keen to experiment on unexplored markets. Women's IPL is also part the agenda. With five star hotels, and other games infrastructure in the offing Guwahati has attained the status which is at par with other test venues. Hope these sports extravaganza serve to provide enriching experience for sports enthusiasts and kindle sporting passion in the North East.

Yours etc.,  
Kamal Baruah,  
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.

*“Adapt yourself to the things among which your lot has been cast and love sincerely the fellow creatures with whom destiny has ordained that you shall live.”*

--- R. D. Laing

## The Shillong Times

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### About Rohingyas

CHINA has set an example in Rohingya diplomacy. It has announced that it is a friend of both Myanmar and Bangladesh, the two countries entangled in the crisis. China wants to be constructive in resolving the Rakhine state issue. In Sri Lanka and Pakistan, Beijing has always turned a blind eye on human rights, emphasizing only economic and strategic interests. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has outlined a three stage plan. It includes ceasefire on the ground which will pave the way for the end of the Rohingya exodus, talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar to work out modalities for the return of the Rohingyas from their camps in Bangladesh and finally poverty alleviation. Myanmar state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has said that Bangladesh has responded to the proposal very warmly. It is in line with her own country's point of view. Myanmar wanted to resolve the crisis with Bangladesh bilaterally. It has welcomed the Chinese stand following Wang Yi's talks with Aung San Suu Kyi and the Myanmar President.

What is a pity is that India has been outplayed in this matter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Myanmar in September and could have taken the initiative. But the NDA government's views on the Rohingya issue are far from clear. India is afraid of antagonizing Myanmar and driving it into the arms of China. Bangladesh has already taken a dim view of India's stand. Its initiative has come too late. China has already moved in.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### PM urged to solve Chakma refugee problem

The Indian Buddhist Council has urged Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to find an early solution to the problem of Bangladesh Chakma refugees, sheltered in five camps in Tripura. After an on-the-spot assessment of the situation in the refugee camps, an eight-member delegation of the council met Mr Gandhi on April 25 and sought his intervention in solving the problem of the "innocent people" of the Chittagong hill tract. The delegation said the problem "required immediate attention on humanitarian grounds."

The Council said pending

the return of the refugees to their own country, the government should make available more facilities including increasing the quantum of the food and clothing supplies. It also pleaded for providing encouragement in education and to help them improve their standard of living.

The delegation was led by Council General Secretary P Mahathero, according to its executive member B. Chakma here yesterday. More than 45,000 tribal refugee are now living in the five camps.

# Psychology of 'Ka Rngiew' in Khasi thought

By FabianLyngdoh

Mental health is one of the major issues that are being seriously discussed today because mental health problem is said to be on the increase in every society in the world. Factors leading to mental health or mental illness are partly personal and partly social, and the Khasi elders of old had understood this reality and expressed it in terms of 'ka rngiew' (spiritual personality). As human beings we live in two worlds throughout our physical existence. First, is the inner world of our own minds, hearts and souls; and second, is the outer world of the thesocial milieu existing outside our selves. There is an intermediate realm between these two worlds, and that is the family. It takes at least two human beings to make a family. 'A family', implies not only that of father, mother and children, but also any closed group of human beings committed to lifelong, intimate and primary relationships. In the Khasi context, the family always represents the 'kur' (clan) which is the fountain of all supports, physical, mental and spiritual. The family is the continuum of the inner world of the self, as well as the continuum of the social milieu. It is the abode where the individual's physical, mental and spiritual balance is maintained. In the traditional Khasi clan, all members, males and females are equal. Every female carries the image of a mother, and every male carries the image of 'u kni' (maternal uncle). The 'kur' guides and arms its members with the power to transcend all existential barriers. Love and happiness are the ultimate ideals that human beings are seeking for, and the family which lies in between is the care centre that sets a balance of human personality in the growing youths, the active adults and the retiring olds as well. If a person finds no identification with the outer world, and the family itself totally reflects that disagreeable outer world, he/she would retract deep into his/her inner world trying to find peace in loneliness and narcissism, and this may ultimately lead to mental imbalance.

According to Khasi belief, man is a physical as well as a spiritual being who has a unique position and status among other beings. Every human being has 'ka rngiew' which may be conceived of as the spiritual personality or identity of the body and the spirit combined. 'ka rngiew' means the place or position or status of each human being, man or woman, among other human beings and among other spiritual beings like 'ki ksuid' (demons), 'kipuri' (nymphs), 'ki blei ki dken' (gods and goddesses), 'ki sna-iap' (ghosts) and other beings, physical and spiritual within the cosmos. It is not man's personality in the social frame of reference, but it is his personality that is balanced in the spiritual frame of reference. When a person is in this balance, the Khasis say that he/she is 'dang eh-rngiew' (spiritual personality intact).

The Khasis speak of a person who is 'u ba la jem-rngiew', meaning that he is out of position or in unstable equilibrium. In that unstable position a man's spiritual status is degraded or disfigured and evil may befall on him. To bring him back to his original status it requires first of all his own personal resolution, and second, the help of others especially through religious rites. These religious rites reflect the love and concern that his clan members have for him/her. The process of recovery according to the Khasis is to re-establish a person's status as a human being with body and soul, created by God Himself, who has such and such a recognized name given and confirmed in the ceremony of 'ka jer ka thoh', belonging to such and such a clan, born from such and such a mother, who holds such and such a position in society, etc., the more we can recall of his/her various aspects of identity and human relationships, the better it would be. A man 'ba dang eh rngiew' (whose spiritual personality still intact), 'ha'ka tynrai' (origin), 'ka dew' (reason to exist), and 'ka jingidei' (relationships) is part of the human community and the entire cosmos.

To manifest his existence as a being, he stands by his name that was religiously confirmed, as a particular person who has 'ki kur and ki kha' (agnates and cognates), who was born to the world through a real human mother, and who has a relationship in the family and the society. He/she is like an important thread in the

cloth of the mystery of God's creation. If somehow the thread is pulled out of the cloth and stands alone, it becomes useless and without purpose. Similarly the man who becomes 'uba la jem rngiew' (losing status and spiritual identity) stands alone without purpose.

A person's 'ka rngiew' is not fixed but keeps on changing according to his changing relationships and actions. For example, if a man kills another man, justly or unjustly, his 'ka rngiew' shall carry the mark of 'ka tyrud' (killer spiritual force) which is added to his spiritual personality. 'ka tyrud' becomes personified in him, and every one in the society would as far as possible avoid personal relationship with such a person. Among various aspects of his identity, all beings in the cosmos shall know him also as the killer of so and so. If a person kills a man or woman intentionally without cause, then he would be dealt with as a criminal by the political authority. But if he happens to kill a person unintentionally or on proper ground of self defense, then the rite of 'ka mait tyrud' would be performed to clear his 'ka rngiew' from such unwanted identity and keep in mind and heart at peace.

Not only the physical environment and the human society, but the entire cosmos is understood by the Khasis as the medium where human beings live with their respective 'Ka rngiew', like water is to the fishes. Man cannot be a human being without 'ka rngiew' which is his overall personality, physical, mental and spiritual as recognized by his fellow human beings, by all creature animate and inanimate and also recognized by spiritual beings. It is on this reason that the Khasis believe that man should not stand against nature, but adjust himself with it according to the requirements of his human existence.

In the traditional Khasi milieu, everyone has concern and respect for everyone else's 'Ka rngiew'. For example, if we measure the length of a

coffin with the height of a living man we 'pynjemrngiew' him (tarnish his spiritual status). The coffin is meant for the dead not for the living. A living man has a place among the living not among the dead. So by measuring the height of a living man with the coffin we push him to take a place among the dead. If we call a man, 'a dog', we 'pynjemrngiew' him because the identity of a dog is not in his 'Ka rngiew' as recognized in the cosmos. If we call a male adult 'pha' or 'ka', the words addressed to females, we would 'pynjemrngiew' that person because a man is recognized as a male in the cosmos. The Khasis are very careful in this matter and they would be seriously offended by such actions. Except in the cases of heinous and culpable homicide, and intra-clan incest, the Khasis have all the necessary rites to re-establish a balance in the spiritual personality of their clan members through their traditional counseling psychology. Understanding this concept of social support available in intimate human relationships we may say that in the past, majority of mental illness in the Khasi society could have been due to natural and physiological factors rather than social factors.

According to Khasi belief, if a person's 'ka rngiew' is intact he/she would always be fully healthy and strong; all physical and mental illnesses are attributed to the reason of 'ka jemrngiew', and the final curative process is 'ka pynehrngiew' to re-establish a balance in the spiritual personality even if the observable disease had been cured through herbal medicine. So, it would be good if indigenous psychologists who understand the concept of 'ka rngiew' from the point of view of the tribe undertake scientific research to what extent this traditional psychology had played a role in the past to deal with mental and spiritual wellbeing, and to what extent the Khasis' perception and attitude are governed by it in the social situations of today.

presented a deficit budget in the House. Hence, it would be wise on the part of the government of Meghalaya to put on hold the construction of the new Assembly building till a surplus budget can be presented in the House. Perhaps the Government can spend a few lakhs of rupees to upgrade and modify the Arts and Culture Auditorium in Riblong as per the needs and requirements of the House and convert it into a permanent Assembly Building, no matter how humble the building is. Legislators don't require a palatial building to carry out their business.

The urgent need of the hour in Meghalaya is for a multi crore, hi-tech, state of the art Auditorium befitting the 21st century and built according to international standards which will contribute towards the development of hundreds of thousands of our young unemployed talented (present and future) generation in Arts and Culture. The talents of our people have gone to waste because of the absence of such an Auditorium which is one of the basic structural

foundations of the society. It may be pointed out here that the present Soso Tham Auditorium at the State Central Library is already outdated and at the point of collapse with parts of the ceiling peeling off. The need for a hi-tech, multi-stage Auditorium is long overdue.

Unlike the Assembly building, this facility will be in use 365 days a year and it will benefit the entire society, particularly the young talents in the art of singing, dancing, acting and other social activities. Further it will serve as a platform for young artist to express and demonstrate their talents. It will also generate revenue for the State. I am sure many more talents of the likes of the Shillong Chamber Choir will come up once this facility is set up. I hope the readers of this esteemed daily and concerned citizens will commend and write something on this humble suggestion.

Yours etc.,  
N. Hynniewta  
Shillong-1

Tracking the modus-operandi of its successful intervention in Manipur that led to the of the recent homecoming of 68 militants, it's obvious that Art of Living loops in the authorities once the contact is established with the cadres or the group and their intention to come overground verified. This is not only understandable but also pragmatic keeping in mind the sensitivities of such work.

To convince the cadres to give up arms is a very challenging task and is possible only when they have total trust in the process. Somehow, Sri Sri has successfully cultivated this image of being someone

## Track 2 route is a necessity in NE, must not be hounded

By Jarpum Gamlin

Venturing into the North East of India to sort out its conflicts is like taking a risky gambit in an online war game and finding oneself completely trapped in adversities. The only difference is: here it's for real! This must be one of the toughest lessons that the two Art of Living volunteers who were taken into custody by Meghalaya Police on Monday are learning. They must be contemplating where their noble intention of convincing the misguided youths to join the mainstream has landed them.

For the records, senior faculty of the Art of Living Samir Jolly, accompanied by Khroo Lamsalanki Pariat, was on a peace mission to establish contact with the misguided youths who are operating in Meghalaya and convince them to eschew violence and come overground. Based on some misinformation, they got arrested at Dawki before they could cross the border to meet some people connected with banned outfit Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC).

The question being asked now is, why did they

who is genuinely concerned about bringing peace to this troubled region and without any ulterior motives! Thanks to his track record on this front, it's safe to grant that the cadres were more likely to open up to the independent effort of the Art of Living. Once that trust is established, it would become easier for the authorities to push through the process.

At a conference of leaders of 67 different organisations, including those who have formerly taken up arms, in Guwahati this September, Sri Sri had openly announced that "we will not stop till the last gun is laid down". He even reached out to Paresch Baruah, the commander of the ULFA faction which is still underground and believed to be camping in either China.

From healing the trauma of militancy to facilitating dialogue and reforming those who are lodged in prisons, Sri Sri has a well-directed strategy to channelise misguided youth towards constructive pursuits. The Art of Living is engaged in bringing them

## Tracking the modus-operandi of its successful intervention in Manipur that led to the of the recent homecoming of 68 militants, it's obvious that Art of Living loops in the authorities once the contact is established with the cadres or the group and their intention to come overground verified. This is not only understandable but also pragmatic keeping in mind the sensitivities of such work.

keep the authorities in the dark about such a risky intervention. This is perhaps the biggest dilemma any Track 2 negotiator faces at the initial stage of any peace-making effort.

It's clear that their mission was in a preliminary stage of establishing contact. They apparently ventured into this inspired by their guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's vision of engaging the misguided youth of the region and facilitating the process of making them come overground once they got the information that some cadres of the group may be willing to do so.

It's natural that any impression that this peace initiative is in the know of the government would have derailed the whole process as there is a huge trust deficit. Sri Sri has often articulated that youth who have strayed into militancy need a healing touch. Undoubtedly, they need assurance of justice and trust before being convinced to join the mainstream. That explains why the Art of Living doesn't act on behalf of government agencies and pursues the same purely on humanitarian grounds.

Tracking the modus-operandi of its successful intervention in Manipur that led to the of the recent homecoming of 68 militants, it's obvious that Art of Living loops in the authorities once the contact is established with the cadres or the group and their intention to come overground verified. This is not only understandable but also pragmatic keeping in mind the sensitivities of such work.

To convince the cadres to give up arms is a very challenging task and is possible only when they have total trust in the process. Somehow, Sri Sri has successfully cultivated this image of being someone

to the mainstream by providing skills-training and other means of livelihood. It has trained and rehabilitated hundreds of cadres from United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Manipur-based outfits who have laid down their arms.

Like thousand others, Samir and Lamsalanki seemed sold to this visionary pursuit and risked their own lives to deepen the rich of the intervention by reaching out to HNLC cadres. Unfortunately, they themselves became the victims of the prevailing trust deficit in the region.

It's reliably established that Samir Jolly has no criminal records or history of any clandestine dealings. On the contrary, he seems to be an expert hand in transforming the hearts and minds of misguided youth. According to publicly available information about him, he worked for many years with youth in Naxalite-hit areas including the dreaded Bastar in Chattisgarh. He also led a project of rehabilitating surrendered militants from Manipur in 2010. Over the years, he has been working in the North East and seemingly emerged as a channel of communication for many who want to come out of violence.

Seen from that perspective, the authorities must not go by the later of the case and see the spirit and co-op the process with the Art of Living and explore the possibilities of bringing the HNLC rebels to the mainstream. Portraying it as an illegal nexus with militants and hounding the messengers would be depriving the state of a chance for peace. Can we expect the dispensation in Shillong to show that foresightedness?

(The writer is founder Editor, Eastern Sentinel, Arunachal Pradesh)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Glut-and-shortage of essential commodities

Editor,

The irony of agriculture in India is that while there is glut in production of vegetables and crops there is a shortage of the same in the market. This impacts both on farmers and consumers. Tomato prices have shot up due to severe supply shortage. Potato and onion prices have also been creeping up. Is that a seasonal factor? Profiteers and black marketeers take advantage of government failure to intervene. Onion crops in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have got spoiled due to excessive rains recently. Also Maharashtra and South Indian farmers have switched from cultivating tomatoes to other crops due to hardship and uncertainties created by pestilence and low yields for several years. And bio-engineered seed variety later has proven to be susceptible to virus attacks. Indifferent weather like good rains in winter spoil their rabi crops but is good for kharif crops

then. The government has not developed infrastructure to help farmers producing perishable vegetables. The Consumer Affairs Ministry has been criticized for failing to monitor the supply and price situation of essential commodities. Designated agencies like NAFED, SFAC, FCI are supposed to promote co-operative marketing and carry out a procurement drive to keep buffer stock. When markets are flooded with produce, farmers get even below minimum support price (MSP) for their crops. It is characterized by inefficiency and high costs to the exchequer and procurement of pulses has never been fulfilled. More number of cold storage chains would be useful in helping farmers get better price for the produce and thereby increase their income.

India exports tomatoes to Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Traders have to fulfill pre-arranged orders before filling up local mandis that impact domestic distribution. Despite the fact that the country's onion exports declined due to high

minimum export price (MEP), it failed to meet adequate domestic supply and to contain price rise. Hope the kharif crop from central and western India soon arrives in mandis. Farmers have been demanding for inclusion of MSP for vegetables. After the indirect tax regime is rolled out on July 1, day to day commodities such as food grains, cereals, pulses, milk, vegetables and fruits are exempted from GST to make them cheaper for the common man. However middlemen have disrupted the market economy. Should government remain indifferent this time until the rabi crops arrives? Introduction of GI tag may help to promote economic prosperity of the farmers.

Yours etc.,  
Kamal Baruah  
Guwahati

### 'Assembly Building'

Editor,

As per the report in your esteemed daily (Oct 24, 2017), it is understood that the construction for the new Assembly building is likely to start from November 2017. For sixteen years since 2001

after the prestigious Assembly Building at Khyndailad was reduced to ashes because of someone's negligence and carelessness, the Government of Meghalaya has not been able to rebuild or construct a new building. However, another report that appeared on Nov 17, 20 17 says that the High Powered Committee on the new Assembly Building has cancelled the tender given to certain construction firms.

In fact, it is not surprising that the jinx would continue. Even if the construction work starts, it will remain under construction for many decades like other unfinished or abandoned projects that Meghalaya is famous for. If one carefully analyses the performance of our honorable legislators, they are doing quite well in the Arts and Culture auditorium in the premises of Brookside in Riblong. The standard and level of debates, discussions and legislation does not justify for a new multi-crore Assembly building. Out of 365 days, legislators spend hardly sixty days a year in the Assembly building hence it is sheer waste of public money to construct a new building.

During the last budget session, the Chief Minister

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.

*“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.”*

--- Helen Keller

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.104 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2017

### Journalists at receiving end

TWO journalists from Tripura have lost their lives this year. This is not a matter to be taken lightly by the press fraternity. The Editor's Guild of India needs to do more than just condemn the murder. They need to seek justice for their colleagues by pushing the Union Home Ministry to take up the cases and not leave things to be handled by respective state governments. In September this year, Shantanu Bhowmik a television journalist was killed by a mob at a political rally allegedly in the presence of the state police. And now Sudip Datta Bhowmik, a senior reporter of Syandan Patrika was shot at by no less than a constable of the 2nd Tripura State Rifles (TSR) inside its headquarters. Apparently Bhowmik had written a series of reports on corruption cases involving a commander of the TSR. Considering that Tripura is headed for the polls in February- March next year, things are very fluid and it cannot be expected that the state police would take matters seriously and be completely objective in investigating these two criminal acts. The state police everywhere are suffering from a trust deficit and crisis of confidence. They have been used as political tools and have not shown the spine to stand up to their mandate of providing security to citizens. Across the country the police are being compromised. They now serve only the interests of the political class.

The press fraternity of India too needs to stand in solidarity with their colleagues in the North Eastern region where the death of journalists hardly makes news. There is a palpable attempt to throttle dissent in this country. Journalists who dare to speak up against the establishment are being eliminated and their killers are never arrested. We are yet to know who killed Gauri Lankesh and other journalists in the obscure rural outback. Clearly journalists are an abandoned community. They have been given a bad name and left to fend for themselves. Journalism is today the most dangerous profession. Is India worried about the slow demise of free speech? Or is there an attempt to curb freedom of speech? If India values a free press then the murderers of journalists need to be apprehended sooner than later.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### A legal issue of NEHU

The North Eastern Hills University may get a regular Vice-Chancellor any day now; but there is a legal question which needs to be attended to by the visitors otherwise the centre will be making NEHU a laughing stock for the thinkers. That Dr. Rajendra Kumar Mishra was to handover charge on the 26th February this year was not unknown to the Ministry of Human Resource Development. New Delhi must know everything because it has means to collect information. For

example, the SIB, SSB and the State Intelligence services are here to keep it abreast of the development. Besides the visitors in his capacity as President of India has both the military and air force intelligence services at his disposal only the will to act prudently seems to be lacking. In fact, with the exception of a questionable telegraphic message of March 2, nothing tangible has come from the centre.

# Gender, sexuality and society in tribal northeast India

By Patricia Mukhim

Recently Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) organized a seminar on the above this week. The theme is intriguing yet challenging and one that most colleges and universities shy away from. Seminars on the topic that young people seek to understand such as that of that of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) are not easy topics. Yet more and more young people are today choosing not to be male or female because their sexual orientation does not fit that binary. Besides, the church is not open to giving this issue the weightage it deserves, perhaps because church elders are themselves in denial about a natural proclivity that some people have and are living with.

To meld the issues of gender, sexuality and society, each of which require stand-alone discussions, is indeed a bold step. As far as gender is concerned, for over two decades we have tossed around, prised open, deconstructed and reconstructed its meaning and arrived at a point from where gender transcended its grammatical function to that of understanding that 'gender' is society's way of constructing the roles of male and female based on their sex. We also know that it is patriarchy that has defined that role since women's voices are hardly captured in literatures of all kinds except after the rise of feminism in the west in the 1960's.

In India the awareness about gender and its concerns - which essentially traps women in domestic roles and does not see any economic product in the nature of their domestic duties, even though when someone else other than the wife or mother does it then it becomes an economic activity - came rather late.

Most of us were introduced to its meaning and metaphor in the late 1980's or early 90's but even now most institutions of governance do not understand the underpinnings of gender and have therefore failed to evolve gender friendly policies. Why, even at home, women continue to bear the burden of patriarchy and are slaves of gender constructs which strictly define their roles. Trying to break out of that mould has consequences which many women would not dare contemplate. Hence governments have taken the easy route of using the word 'women's empowerment,' to appease gender activists. Women's empowerment essentially adds up to external interventions by way of schemes etc., without touching the core which is to deconstruct the present meaning of gender and reconstruct it to ensure that women and men are equal

citizens deserving of equal rights not just outside the home but especially in the domestic sphere. Women's empowerment remains only an ideal if women themselves fail to assert their voices and claim their rights and if they have not come out of the gender trap that is enforced, reinforced and has become part of their consciousness and which they act out as a matter of habit. This is the most difficult part. The easy part is to study, research and write about gender - its discourses - its implications - how it limits women from emerging as equal partners in development.

And now that we are at a juncture where a third gender has emerged that wish to assert their rights and to claim their space in society we seem to be twiddling our thumbs and don't know how to deal with this new social identity. In the past it was male and female - now it's more than that. But what is the society's response? We don't seem ready to embrace this gender yet.

This is where the understanding of sexuality matters. Sexuality is a person's sexual orientation or preference. A person's sexual orientation influences that person's sexual interest and attraction for another person. Sexuality involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social and spiritual feelings and behaviour. The term is broad and is evolving hence it lacks a precise definition. The biological and physical aspects of sexuality involve the human reproductive functions. The physical and emotional aspects of sexuality include bonds between individuals that is expressed through profound feelings or physical manifestations of love, trust, and care. The social aspect means the impact of sexuality on society. And the last, spirituality concerns an individual's spiritual connection with others. Sexuality therefore affects and is affected by cultural, political, legal, philosophical, moral, ethical, and religious aspects of life. Considering that sexuality has an overpowering effect on humans which in turn affects society, we need to talk about such issues so that we can begin to understand them better and get out of our conservative moulds.

Ironically, some societies, while they appear to be progressive in the way they dress, speak and socialize, as a result of western education are resistant to speak about sexuality. Societal conversations on emerging social issues such as the LGBT issue or rape etc., which should involve the church, the traditional institutions and educational institutions don't happen. In fact society itself, which includes the social circle that a person moves around in, does not encourage conversations that are ostensibly

'embarrassing.' The Khasis are overly concerned with 'Ka akor ka burom' (ethics and respectability) to allow any such discussions. I have stated times without number that discussing sexuality or family planning in Khasi is difficult because of the absence of appropriate vocabulary, especially when both male and female are present in a discussion.

But now that societies have evolved and progressive laws allow the expression of more than one form of sexuality we ought to grapple with these changes to move from a position of being judgmental to acceptance and perhaps even to redefine the very notion of gender.

Let's now come to society. What is society? Society essentially comprises a group of people involved in frequent social interaction and sharing a geographical or social space and who are subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Society can also be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members. Sociologist Peter L. Berger defines society as, "a human product, and nothing but a human product, that continuously acts upon its producers." According to him, society was created by humans but this creation turns back and creates or moulds humans every day. Hence while we create our own societies we also pose questions which the creation itself is often forced to provide answers to. Society is a complex subject as its study is not confined to the social sciences but also to its metaphysical realities. Like human beings, societies too carry the problem of hatred, hubris, narcissism and nativism. And yet at times societies can rise to the occasion and bring much good, when faced with an existential crisis.

Our problem in this whole complex chain of issues is the dialogue bit. So who in society is talking to whom about whom and about what? To expect consensus in society is to undermine the diversity of the human mind and to imagine that humans are designed to work together on a rational module.

While there can emerge a consensus on certain areas of conflict among scholars at academic seminars, because that is the only space where people listen respectfully to each other, the reality of life outside the precincts of academia is something else. There will be resistance to ideas thrown

up in seminar halls; people will challenge those ideas. Do academics then engage with these dissenting voices? Should there be a jingialang (public conclave) for explaining the outcomes of such seminars? Or are colleges and universities happy with only a press release?

How do we engage with people (you can call them society) outside academia? That is the persistent challenge that academia fails to address. Those resistant to such ideas are not people from academia - they are the people running institutions with whom one must engage with - not once - not twice but consistently - in a language they are familiar with not with jargons.

Who will take up this challenge? Do we dare call a meeting of heads of traditional institutions and speak of the above challenges before them since they are the ones who can and have to take the conversation forward.

The other group we can call a 'society' are 'women's groups,' but they have always taken safe stances. They can't rebel against tradition and how it defines their roles. How do we take the conversation to them and engage them to become agents of change? Can we do that or is the task too daunting? Or is that beyond the ambit of the university? How much can universities do? Which social agents do they engage as force multipliers are questions to grapple with!

Then there are the youth. They are society too. So who is talking to them? Who is engaging them? Who is interested in listening to them? Who is having a conversation with them? Currently they are the most troubled members of society despite living in one of the most fascinating periods of history.

Technologically they are supermen and women. But technology is not leading to social change at the local level. We are a society that still believes in human interaction and human conversations. This is where the cyber space fails us.

Do we care to find out where the youth of our localities congregate? Let's find out and begin the conversation with them as they are the future change-makers. They need to understand gender, sexuality and society as much as researchers and scholars do. That the Khasis are a matrilineal society does not mean anything. On the contrary matrilineality itself impinges on male sexuality and masculinity. But this will be discussed in another article.

# What is history?

By Ananya S Guha

The recent ongoing controversy on the film "Padmavati" is an eye opener once again on the current discourses prevailing on historical tensions in the country. Here, it is perhaps not so much a question of reworking history, but a parallel narrative on historical facts. The issue here is that the film has

because of a Hindu-Muslim entanglement. And that is what some people want; that the sparks must continue, the atmosphere vitiated so that we are not free from the clutches of hatred, vitriol and perverse animosity.

To make this discussion a little more academic: what

*“Now the question is to what extent can fact and fiction work at tandem in cinema, or in a work of art? Or is it only strict adherence to history, in so called historical films? Secondly the controversy started raging even before the film was released.”*

touched sentiments and angered the Rajputs. Now the question is to what extent can fact and fiction work at tandem in cinema, or in a work of art? Or is it only strict adherence to history, in so called historical films? Secondly the controversy started raging even before the film was released. It was apparently shown privately to some groups, something which the Film Censorship Board objected to, stating that the papers on the film were incomplete.

Now, what is a historical fact and what is fiction? The crux of the protest is the objection to Padmini and Allaudin Khilji's relationship, apparently depicted in the film, which makes the committing of Jauhar meaningless. Hence the protesters say that this is distortion of a historical truth. However the actor Deepika Padukone maintains that no such relationship is shown.

Hurting sentiments can be accepted. But can death threats, putting a price on the head of the director and actor be tolerated? Is this not a sign of primeval brutishness, in a contemporary, modern society? And most of us including politicians are silent. Fixing overhead prices like auctioning using actually the word "head" or "price" is shamelessly atavistic and brazenly hateful. Yes, to correct history we are rewriting the past, because this was the custom in medieval or ancient times. Although some actors have protested strongly, hardly any mention has been made in the ongoing Goa Film

is history, or what is a historical fact? A historical fact is something which changes course of events, ushers in the new, a cataclysmic battle or downfall of a powerful or turbulent empire, the founding of a kingdom, the invasion of territory or country.

Padmini's committing Jauhar may or may not be of historical inclusion. It may have been a fact, but the point of the matter is whether it is historically inclusive, as portent for turn of events. Was the lust of a King for a Queen a part of history, or was it a privately induced happening? What exactly goes down in the annals of history? So when an episode of 'love' is exclusively taken into a making of a film, is it a historical movie, like say a movie on the building of Rome, or on a Caesar? Distorting facts may not be distorting history. History is a configuration of forces, changing destiny, bringing or introducing new eras, it is culture, literature and architecture. Did Khilji's falling in love with the Queen determine the forces of history? The praxis of history is change, laws of determinants taking further course into the future- it is futuristic. It is past as well, because of moments, past, present and future. If we make an episode exclusive without neatly weaving it into a fabric of a whole, we have only fragmented versions of history; historical views bludgeoned only with sentiments to nurse or assuage.

So, once again when we are enmeshed in fragile

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Festival, of such bizarre threats. And one of them has been made by a sitting Member of a Legislative Assembly.

The entire point is that at this juncture, how many have seen the film? Interpretive analysis is fine, but can we be come to conclusions prior to viewing the film? Can we comment on a book without reading it? Again is the theory that is now floated, that politics and coming elections in some states of the country are the genesis for this? This is a possibility, because politicians are digging noses into everything from history to culture. But what is evident is that once again an issue has taken place

history, religion and clannish sentiments, we gruel history with the most difficult question- what is it? The politics part of this furious debate cannot be ruled out. Rajputs are major stakeholders in the polity of many states apart also from Rajasthan. But what rankles are two things: murderous assault, dire threats and the movie not yet being released. Rumours may have a basis, but they also can be specious. What is tragic is the verbal attack on some, the physical attack on the producer of the film and the overall hate tirades. Amicable discussions across the table are certainly a thing of the past. But that, obviously is Not History.

### TO THE EDITOR

### “Capacity 5 in all”

Editor,  
“Capacity 5 in all” is a phrase we often come across while boarding cabs/taxis. Sadly most of us do not understand the simple meaning of the phrase—not the passengers, let alone the drivers of the very vehicles. The cabs plying in the region have a limited carrying capacity of maximum three good-sized passengers in the back seat and one in the front. Unfortunately, this is not the case in our city and the adjacent areas. Even autos have raised their own ‘standard’ capacity. The plight here is such that cabs will not run unless the back seats are filled with four passengers behind and two in front irrespective of one's size or health condition, no matter how much time the wait may last.

Let me narrate an incident

that happened to me a few months back. One late evening, I boarded a cab from the Police Point at Bara Bazaar to Laitumkhrach, in which there were two middle-aged lady passengers already seated in the back seat and one man seated beside the driver. The driver then informed that he would take another passenger in the front seat and started complaining how the size of the two ladies hindered him from taking in another passenger. He then asked the two ladies to compensate for the loss and pay an extra fare of Rs.10 to which the ladies refused and said they were willing to adjust if he wants to take in another person. On the contrary the driver asked them to disembark from the cab! I was the third passenger in the back witnessing the injustice that was happening. I could no longer hold back my silence at the misdemeanour of the

driver in asking the ladies to vacate the cab only because they refused to pay the extra amount which was neither his right nor their duty to pay. I finally spoke up for them and questioned the driver if it was necessary to make them leave on the basis of their body size and if there is a need to check our sizes from now on before boarding a cab. I further added that there is no such rule for filling the seats with four passengers behind and two in front. Rather, it is clearly written that the capacity is “5 in all” and instead we should be complaining against the driver if he insists on his selfish point.

The driver was annoyed and demanded that I should also leave the cab adding that I could go complain as well. Without a second thought, I walked away in resentment but realizing that somebody has to stand up to this menace, I turned back, noted the vehicle number

and headed to complain the matter to the Traffic Police on duty. The Policeman was kind enough to listen to the narration of the incident after which he asked the cab driver to pull over and chided him, after which the driver apologized to both the Policeman and me.

The whole point behind this write-up is not to seek an apology from the driver but to also highlight the mindset of the drivers and the passengers alike. The need is to not compromise on safety and to send a message to everyone that we have a right and duty to stand against this self-made rule and to give respect to our fellow beings irrespective of their size, gender, age, colour or community they may belong to.

In another similar incident, this issue was raised by an elderly man to which one lady-passenger instead of agreeing that this has become a deeply rooted problem said that if anybody

has a problem adjusting then one should pay extra instead of complaining. After all it is only Rs.10! This is the attitude of some of our educated and civilized people. I am not talking about situations where four people can actually fit in comfortably or willingly agree to make adjustments. But where have the taxi drivers earned the right to allot the new seating capacity from? Surprisingly, most people do not seem to have a problem with this arrangement where they are being sandwiched between passengers. Often, one is barely even sitting on the seats; just hanging with legs crammed up. Tourists from all over are forced to adjust with the ‘warm-hearted and welcoming’ people of Shillong. Even expecting mothers, at times with toddlers on their laps, are

no exceptions.

It is noteworthy to mention that just as the new rule on fastening of seat-belts has been implemented successfully through the cooperation of the law-makers and implementers along with the general public at large, so also this menace can be tackled. In the long run, it is us, the passengers, who are the real sufferers. Our Constitution has provided for the right to livelihood but not at the cost of causing inconvenience or injustice to any human being no matter how trivial the matter may be. It is a sad truth that we show we can become civilized ‘only’ when we are forced by law rather than choosing to be law abiding citizens spontaneously. We must be the change, if we want to see one!

Yours etc.,

Dahunmon M Hadem, Shillong-3

*"All the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy."*

--- Gore Vidal

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.105 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2017

### Sarma's bizarre philosophy

ASSAM Health and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has made an unpardonable statement. He has rationalised cancer suffering as divine justice for sins committed. It is true that a government cannot do very much to relieve the suffering of cancer patients. But a Health Minister, irrespective of which party he belongs to, cannot blame cancer patients for their suffering and on non-medical grounds. Sarma has refused to take back his irresponsible comment and on the contrary quoted from Hindu philosophical doctrines to attribute cancer suffering to punishment for karma. In these circumstances, disease is mystified and even vaccination comes under attack. Very often politicians blame victims of crime such as lynching by cow vigilantes and assault on women. The failure of governments to uphold the rule of law is thus justified. Sarma's statement can be taken as a rationalisation of Assam's failure to look after public health. Cancer, according to Biswa Sarma, is said to be the result of sins committed in past life. Public health service is then deemed to be tantamount to disrupting the course of divine justice. In such a case, Biswa Sarma does not have to take his office as Health Minister seriously.

A recent study reveals that cancer has caused a much higher percentage of deaths in the 40-69 age group in the North East compared to other backward states. Assam has the lowest life expectancy and highest disease burden. Biswa Sarma himself has regretted the lack of adequate treatment facilities in his state. As Health Minister, it is he who is responsible for remedying this state of affairs. Cancer sufferers may be blamed if smoking causes the illness. But not karma as Biswa Sarma has done.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### Satyajit Ray to direct movie on Golden Temple

Noted producer director Satyajit Ray will direct a documentary film titled "Dawn to Dusk" on the Golden Temple as part of its fourth centenary celebrations. Disclosing this to newsmen here last

evening, Shiramani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) secretary Majit Singh said the documentary will record the day-to-day proceedings in the holy shrine.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Should we doubt the integrity of MBOSE review experts?

Editor, Being associated with the text book trade for the past three decades I quite know where the shoe pinches. So, with reference to the article "Small time booksellers given preference over reputed publishing houses by MBOSE" (ST, Nov 20, 2017), I would like to question how the book publishers from outside the state spell doom for the locals? How can the local publishers be sidelined and discouraged by the academic board like MBOSE? Is there any state policy that seeks to dampen the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship of the local wannabes?

What if the 'Shillong Chamber Choir' was not patted on the back by the local folks during its trying time? What if the pop songs of UK and USA were allowed to drown out the songs of Neil Nongkynrih and his dedicated team? Could it then have brought so many laurels for the state? My dispassionate investigation gave me the real insight into MBOSE. I now understand how the board operates as far as textbooks selection exercise is concerned. MBOSE felt the need of changing the old textbooks. Before that, it called for a series of meetings and conducted symposiums. It posted questionnaires to seek opinions from the concerned public.

Taking a cue from past

"misunderstandings," MBOSE has this time adopted all precautionary measures in the book selection process. It drove home the point that it would not budge an inch on the quality of the manuscripts. It informed the publishers that their books must measure up to the set standards and laid down syllabus. The Chairman and his team also demanded from all the publishers that the books from Classes 1 to 5 must include chapters from Meghalaya, be well-customized, with sufficient inputs on the state's culture, tradition, and values.

In order to achieve the set goal impeccably, MBOSE conceived the ideas and methodology so that utmost transparency and secrecy is maintained. All the names of the authors, labels of publishing houses were removed and systematically codified so that no subject experts reviewing the books would know about the authorship and ownership of the submitted manuscripts. MBOSE roped in over 300 experts to review the books subject-wise. On their part, having thoroughly reviewed the submitted manuscripts, they presented their "verdicts" in the most confidential manner. As informed by the academic team, even the Chairman was not aware what books have been selected by the respective review committees.

But now, to the sheer

# Eroding social bonds of the Khasi clan system

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

Relationship is word we often use but fail to delve and measure its dynamics and how to build it. The world at large and people globally suffer because enemies are being created everyday but not purposeful brotherhood. Thanks to social media and other social networking medium that somehow keep people around the globe connected even in distance locations irrespective of different status and faith in life. Franklin D Roosevelt once said "If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships - the ability of all people, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace". This made me realize that everything within the universe is wonderfully and scientifically made and the human being is the wonder of all. When we say science of relationship it signifies the principles on how relationships are built because science refers to and deals with structures within the system or element. On the other hand, art is the method or skill on how to manage and maintain that relationship.

The best example of this scientific aspect of relationship or union is a family that has been distinctly designed by the Creator as a basic institution of human society. A family itself has scientific origin and the union of families further creates a society of kinship where the kindred ties are identified by the lineage system and in our Khasi-Pnar society, it is from the mother's side. The matrilineal system that we have been following and practicing so far has become a very distinct and unique identity for our society. And this has served as the core property for community relationships and community bonding. Thus we can say that the identity of any particular community or race lies not on the colour of the skin or the physical appearance but primarily on the culture they practice and have followed from generation to generation. As a Khasi-Pnar community we are uniquely and distinctly

identified by the 'clan' system or 'Kur' from where we have derived our second name or surname from. And this is not a mistake!

The Khasi (including the Pnar) have logically demarcated the boundary of relationship and kinship between the 'Kur' (relations from the mother's side) and the 'Kha' (relations from the father's side). Here lies another distinct fact in our society that the 'Kha' cannot be from among the same 'Kur' (clan) or the adopted clan 'ting-kur'. They have judiciously developed this mechanism to trace the lineage of related kinships. The bonds of kinship in a society are like the sub-atomic particles of an atom. Any attempt to split and destabilize this bond will trigger a devastating atomic reaction. This destabilization can be in the form of an attempt to reverse this cycle of lineage, another form can be a marriage between persons belonging to the same 'Kur' or clan which is strictly forbidden. This is not new but has been inculcated in our minds since childhood by our elders that marriage within the 'Kur' is considered as incest or 'ka sang'.

Out of this clan system there evolved a unique system of community management which in the past our people have strictly followed and adhered to. This management includes land and essential resources, society or social management in the form of Dorbar. Let us not forget that transparency was once upon a time the cornerstone that defined action and resolution of the then Khasi dorbar. Thus, it is said that in the true Khasi dorbar a tainted person is forbidden to participate. Such was the level of sanctity then but which is currently the contrary. The sad thing is to see that the social bonding in our society is silently eroding in the course of expansion and population explosion coupled with greed that is rampant these days. Relationships are estranged either purposely or unknowingly especially at present where craziness

dominates those with intention to exploit the opportunity to satisfy and benefit oneself. People care not to intrude and infringe into forbidden boundaries on the pretext of modernity when in fact it is stupidity to abandon one's cultural identity.

Modernity does not mean adopting a completely new system of tradition or reversing the order. But modern civilization transforms itself by aligning the basic principles in a much tangible and identifiable way for easy access to everyone without compromising the core identity. The primary reason for this deviation and fallacy is the administrative failure of our traditional institutions and the District Council which has been established with the purpose of safeguarding these traditions and to devise strategies in this regard. And this is due to the fact that the law making process within these traditional institutions has completely collapsed because most of the elected members are not the people who are fit to explore such delicate and complex processes of codification of traditional practices that are appropriate.

Erosion of cultural identity occurs at various levels both seen and unseen, but the greatest danger is when marriages happen between couple from the same clan. The reason that I am compelled to write about this is because of incidences that I am personally aware of. It may be due to ignorance about the history of their own clan or a willful act of lust and greed to achieve their personal satisfaction. As far as the 'Kur Lyngdoh Mawphlang' is concerned, we cannot enter into any marriage relationship with 'the Lyngdoh Nongpiur', the Khongngsi, Khongsthi or Khongstia, Khongsthi, Rapsang-Nongpiur, Rapphath, Pompyrthath, Thawmuit, Lyngdoh

Nonglwai, Sangriang, Mawlieh, Lyngwa-Rapthap, because these are all born from the great ancestor Khmah Lyngdoh Mawphlang the architect of the Lawkyntang Mawphlang which includes the clan 'Kur Lyngwa' too. This particular paragraph is purely intended to benefit all those who are not aware about kinship ties and for the future generation as well.

Similarly, other 'Kur' or clans have their own biological relationships and connections which their forefathers have done with a clear sense of understanding. Unlike other tribes where marriages are strictly confined to individuals from the same clan but with distant blood relationship, the Khasis decided to adopt a different practice because the kinship ties expand when a person from a different 'kur' or clan enters into a marriage alliance with another. The decision in this regard including other aspect of the culture such as the 'niam' (religion) and (synshar-khadar) governance are mostly taken by the male counterparts in consultation with others members and it becomes a binding practice. Therefore, as male members of society we have a great role to play in this process of building strong community relationships to strengthen the cultural ties. But the sad thing is that many are still enslaved in a narrow mindset of being deprived of ancestral or family property. Out of this they secretly undermined this community bonding which is likely to perpetuate to the subsequent generation. The time is still right for corrective measures and alignment and to seriously think how to develop appropriate mechanisms to prevent any recurrence of errors by helping youngsters to take proper and legitimate decision.

No doubt we boast of a highly advanced medical care system in our country, but forget that the system of healthcare delivery which we have developed makes advanced healthcare unthinkable for 80 percent of the population. Many of the corporate hospitals have been given land on lease at throw-away prices. They are under obligation to give free healthcare to the poor strata of the society. But in actual practice this is not happening. Last year the Dayanand Medical College and Hospital in Ludhiana, a private concern, had issued a circular that unless an advance deposit of Rs. 20,000 for ICU and Rs. 30,000 for ventilator is made, a patient will not be admitted. This is completely in contravention to the Supreme Court directions, which say that no one can be denied medical care on the consideration of money. It was only after lot of agitation by the people and intervention by the Punjab Medical Council on complaints by the people of the area that the hospital withdrew the notice.

The incidence of Fortis hospital has thoroughly exposed the utter failure of the government to provide healthcare to the citizens. What else can be expected when the central government's spending on health is a meager 0.26 percent of the GDP as against a minimum of 5 percent required to meet the basic health needs. The current policy proposes a financial investment of 2.5

like to express my gratitude to Albert Lyngdoh for his appreciation of the Rotary Club of Shillong in his letter published in your daily captioned, "Kudos Rotary Club of Shillong." The Rotary Club of Shillong in its 60 years of existence has contributed towards the welfare of the community in different ways namely, Mother Teresa's Lepers' Colony at Nongpoh, Gastroscope in H. Gordon Presbyterian Hospital, Ultrasound machine to R.K Mission dispensary, ICU at Nazareth Hospital, X-Ray machine to Bharat Sewashram, clean drinking water to several schools in Shillong and outside Shillong and more than 8 (eight) heart operations in Delhi's hospitals for the children coming from underprivileged society under our scheme titled "Gift of Life". There are a number of other contributions made as and when the need arises and it is the generosity of Shillongites who have come forward to assist the club in its Fund Raising Programmes for the welfare of the society. I have narrated a few instances whereas the list of beneficiaries is quite long. As our motto says, "Service above Self", it is well defined and understood by the humanitarian projects undertaken by the Rotary Club of Shillong.

Yours etc., S.L. Singhania Past President Rotary Club of Shillong

## Revamp Healthcare Delivery System Fortis incident signifies utter failure of government

By Dr. Arun Mitra

That a family had to pay 16 lakh rupees for the Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon, for the treatment of dengue fever, that too when their child did not survive, and a similar case from Medanta Hospital Gurgaon is a matter of shame for the nation, which is aspiring to be world economic leader. This is a pathetic situation and total failure of the healthcare delivery system. In our country 30 percent of the population lives below poverty line with a per capita earning of Rs.32 in rural and Rs.47 in urban areas and another 50 percent population is marginally above the poverty line. It is beyond comprehension that how these people can afford even basic healthcare what to talk of tertiary advanced

per cent of the GDP-not now but in 2025. In contrast, the high level expert group of the Planning Commission (2012) had made a financial estimate of at least 2.5 percent of the GDP by the end of the 12th Plan and 3 percent by 2022 (Imrana Quadeer).

Disease is not by choice. There are several factors beyond the control of an individual that become the cause of illness. Therefore, all these have to be addressed to make a healthy society. In the present scenario the onus of illness is being put on the individuals. Therefore, instead of tackling the causes as a whole, focus is being laid only on healthy diets, regular exercise, avoidance of stress etc. by

**The social determinants of health, such as access to balanced food, sufficient wages, proper living conditions, education, conditions in work place are being down-played. Major attention is towards non-communicable diseases. Even though they form an important component of the disease pattern, the infectious diseases like resistant tuberculosis, sepsis, malaria, dengue and chikungunya still form a major part of the disease pattern in our country.**

care like the one being provided by Fortis hospital and the like. Even the middle class population, which is nearly 26 crores and who, by accepted definition, earn Rs.60,000 approximately per month, find it difficult to bear such huge expenditure. That is why 6.3 crore people are pushed below poverty line because of out of pocket health expenditure.

the individual. The social determinants of health, such as access to balanced food, sufficient wages, proper living conditions, education, conditions in work place are being down-played. Major attention is towards non-communicable diseases. Even though they form an important component of the disease pattern, the infectious diseases like resistant tuberculosis, sepsis, malaria, dengue and chikungunya still form a major part of the disease pattern in our country. There is an attempt for complete distortion of the concept of health care, as is evident from the statement of the Health Minister of Assam, who links the disease to Karma and says "God makes us suffer when we sin. Sometimes we come across young men getting inflicted with cancer or young men meeting with accidents. If you observe their background you will come to know that it's divine justice. Nothing else. We have to suffer that divine justice." He also said, "In this lifetime or in our previous life, or perhaps my father or mother... perhaps that young man did not do anything, but his father has done something wrong... no one can escape divine justice."

The healthcare system has to be revamped. It is high time the medical profession as a whole plays a proactive role on these issues and joins hands with social groups to change the health scenario; otherwise we will be having a sick society devoid of healthcare facilities in time to come. (IPA Service)

*The writer is senior vice President Indian Doctors for Peace and Development, Former Chairman Ethical Committee Punjab Medical Council & Member core committee ADEH (Alliance of Doctors on Ethical Healthcare).*

only tiny school kids but the entire teaching community of Meghalaya. Should we not take pride in this good product of Meghalaya?

Should the Government not be pleased with the local publishing houses that picked out the "gems" from the crowd and paraded them before the state academia? Let's learn to be self-reliant than being dependent.

Yours etc., Salil Gewali, Via email

### Kudos HDFC Bank!

Editor, Your esteemed newspaper highlighted about the Company Social Responsibility (CSR) or Parivartan, being executed by HDFC Bank at Umphath village near Nongpoh, Ri Bhoi District, through Mr Paresh Sukthankar, Deputy Managing Director of HDFC Bank with the objective of transforming the lives of the 500 odd villagers of this hamlet. This is praiseworthy indeed. Though this is just being launched and the outcome is yet to be seen on the ground, yet it is hoped that this step will definitely yield the desired results. I would like to ask other banks and companies located here as to what CSR activity they have taken up? Or are they here only to loot and plunder?

Many private banks are set up here in Meghalaya, including many financial agencies, including Chit Fund agencies. Even public sector banks were set up in

Meghalaya to meet the banking needs of the people here but almost all of them are least interested in advancing loans to the needy, especially the genuine local tribals here, forget about CSR. They are interested only in deposits, offer the lowest of interests in the market today and invest the precious savings of the people outside the state to enrich elsewhere. This has already brought about imbalance in development. The reports placed at the various SLBC meetings clearly prove the point that the credit-deposit (CD) ratio of the banks here are the lowest in the country, with precious little or nil CSR. If at all, they spend a measly amounts only for this vital component which is mandated upon them as per the CSR Regulations which directs all companies to spend two percent of their profits as CSR.

It is time for banks and other companies to redeem themselves by unleashing the locked up CSR and extend the same to the many neglected villages in Meghalaya, to contribute to the development of the state through transforming people's lives.

Yours etc., Philip Marwein, Via email

### Rotary Club's outreach!

Editor, Through your esteemed column, I would

# Winning the talkathon

Vidya Balan is busy promoting her new movie where she plays a Radio Jockey. But who are these people behind the scene? Sudipto Maity finds out



For Sunny, a truck driver in his mid-20s, the FM has been a friend, “a saviour” as he puts it. “I don’t stick to any particular station. I randomly flick through and listen to the songs I like. It’s the only thing that helps me get through while ferrying goods during the wee hours of the morning.”

However, radio or the modern FM as we call it, has not always been like this. Think about the early 90s and it was a lot more sedate. Life in general was more slow-paced too and it reflected on the radio programmes too.

In India, private FM was launched in Delhi in 1993. Phase 1 auctioning started for separate frequencies in 2001. From the 128 bids, around 21 stations went on air. In the second phase, which took place in 2005/06, 338 frequencies were offered for auction and about 237 were sold. Phase 3 is witnessing over 800 frequencies being auctioned across the country.

“I have been listening to the radio since childhood in the 90s. There were occasional programmes like ‘Sunday Suspense’ for which I waited eagerly. Then by 2007, with a smart mobile phone with special FM facility, I became quite addicted to Red FM and Radio Mirchi. FM channels have almost become a mandatory part of my life now,” recalls Aninnya Sarkar, a post-graduate student.

## Of changes and retention

Everyday-use and street language in FM channels have played an important part, not just in India, but globally too in its increased popularity.

“It’s a lot more dynamic, definitely more high-tech and much more accessible than what it was,” says Jimmy Tangree, one of the most recognisable voices in the industry.

Tangree, the station head of ABP Group owned Friends FM, has been a RJ for over two decades now.

Weighing in on the topic of what has been the biggest change in Radio/FM, RJ Roy of Radio One says that the style of presentation has gone through a sea change. “Earlier, and I’m talking about the 60s and 70s, it was a lot slower compared to today. The language of communication has changed not only in India, but globally too. It’s a lot funkier now.”



Vidya Balan in her new movie Tumhari Sulu; and renowned radio jockey Jimmy Tangree

Not all has changed though, feels Tangree. “If one looks way back, I feel the warmth and closeness has been retained, but, with a wacky and more engaging attitude,” he says.

Agrees Abhinanda Bhattacharya, an HR administrator, “Previously the presentation was kind of wooden. Now people listen more to the FM because the RJs interact in a more friendly manner.”

However, Taniya Mukherjee, post-grad student, finds that, “Earlier, listening to the RJ speak was relaxing to some extent as they would talk about life in general; often I could relate to them too. But these days there are too many ridiculous jokes and ads in-between songs. It’s kind of irritating sometimes and that’s why I flick through the channels.”

## What it takes to an RJ

Radio or FM may not match the reach of the World Wide Web (internet), nor can it compete with the television in terms of audience, but it

still is a very powerful medium, accounting for 7 to 8 percent of the advertiser’s expenditures around the world.

Most of it is because of the women or men who keep us glued to the medium, otherwise known as Radio Jockeys (RJ).

So, what is Radio Jockeying (RJing) and what goes into the making of a good RJ?

In simple terms, an RJ is a host who presents a programme on air. However, while the definition of RJ hasn’t changed much, the way one goes about the job has.

A faster world requires faster responses and an effective way to deal with the change is to keep oneself updated about various things.

“Preparing for my show is a lengthy process,” says Roy, “My show starts at 7 am and goes on till 12 noon. During this time, I try and gather information which I share with my listeners. There are various places from where you can pick the information. Grab a newspaper, a magazine or just browse the web, but read. It’s very important

to keep your ears and eyes open.”

Both Tangree and Roy opine that a good RJ must be ‘spontaneous’. As Roy says, “It’s still about the voice.”

Listing out other qualities that an ‘Ideal RJ’ should possess, Tangree says, “One must have a decent knowledge of music; she/he must know the city well; must have good computer skills; good interview skills, needs to be well organised in terms of research and points to go on air. Most importantly, she/he must be accessible to the listeners and should never have an attitude.”

## Tick-tock

RJing is never a one-show-wonder business. RJs slog day in and out to make their presence felt and it only through hard and sincere work, does one build a brand.

The hard work takes time. While some acknowledge the ‘changes’ they have had to make for their longevity, others believe that their ‘love’ for the job that kept them ticking.

In an interview last year, when asked about his secret, popular American RJ Howard Stern had revealed, “I couldn’t have done the show I’m doing now 20 years ago. I’ve changed a lot. I’d be sort of pathetic if I’d reached this point in my life and I hadn’t. How else do you have longevity?”

Stern added that a number of his contemporaries “who started out with me in radio have disappeared, because they couldn’t broaden their view about what entertainment should be, or get in touch with what they find to be exciting and fun and funny.”

Roy says, “The constant love from fans...I have been told by my listeners that I have a sense of humour and that is heartening to hear. It keeps me ticking.”

Loving what he does helps Tangree continue what he has been doing for over 24 years now. Says the radio veteran, “Well, I love what I do and totally enjoy it. One needs to have a lot of dedication and I feel success comes from loving what you do.”

The reason behind the success of FM is perhaps best described by this comment by Guy Gugliotta, journalist from the USA, “Perhaps no invention of modern times has delivered so much while initially promising so little.”

(TWF)

## Indolence is an art form

Lazy dad tip: You can answer any question asked by your child with “Go ask your mama”, including “Where’s mama?”

The tragedy of modern life is that people look down on lazy individuals, not realising that Advanced Indolence is an art form.

And it’s better than working. Consider this. A man was sacked recently for working too hard. Bosses at Lidl supermarket in Barcelona gave Jean P. the boot after seeing security footage which showed him toiling from five o’clock in the morning.

A news cutting about this was put on this columnist’s desk by a colleague with a note saying it should be added to a file headed: “Things Which Will Never Happen To You.” Ha ha, very funny.

But it did reinforce my belief that hard work may actually be a bad thing, and I phoned a friend in human resources who confirmed it.

“Actually, you’d be surprised, but working over long hours is considered bad for the company,” she said, and sent me a link to the work of HR expert Suzanne Lucas, who showed that people who over-work prevent bosses from knowing how many man-hours any particular job needs.

But I’ll admit this is mostly a Western attitude. Bosses in Asia take an opposite stance, as shown by the case of Li Jianhua, who worked himself to death at his desk in Beijing in 2015.

His employers, the Chinese Banking Regulatory Commission, held him up as an example other staff should follow, saying (and I am not making this up): “We can all learn

from Comrade Li Jianhua... who gave an unremitting struggle to perform his best and to sacrifice everything.”

Then a report flashed up on the news monitor that said Richard Thaler, who just won the Nobel Prize for Economics, revealed the secret of his success: “Terminal laziness.” His “default tendency of avoiding work” led him to focus only on the most intriguing puzzles, leading directly to his winning the Nobel Prize. So there you have it. Your boss thinks you are a “work-shy waste of space suffering from terminal laziness” (to quote the sort of phrases used in this writer’s school reports) when actually this is the secret of high achievement.

Top role model? My files have two people tied in first place, both from India.

Government engineer AK Verma stopped going into work in 1990 but wasn’t actually sacked for 23 years.

Teacher S. Kashyap who was fired only after bosses noticed she’d been absent for 23 years of her 24-year career.

But I also have a soft spot for police officer Albert Muraglia, 53, of San Remo, Italy. He lived in same block as the police station, so every day he would wake up, walk down to the time-clock in his underpants and check himself in to work. Then he would go back to bed. Sometimes he was too lazy to even do that, and he sent his child, in her pajamas, to clock in for him.

Bonus lazy dad tip: When your wife tells you to round up the children for dinner, you don’t have to move. Just reach for the router and turn the wi-fi off. The kids will appear like magic.

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

**THE FUNNY SIDE**  
Nury Vittachi

# A sign of royalty, good luck & bankruptcy

## CK Nayak in Nay Pye Taw

One must have read about the white elephants and might have seen it in the film ‘Safed Hati’. But a visit to this capital city of Myanmar one can see the real animals.

A white elephant, an albino, is a rare kind of elephant but not a distinct species. Its skin is soft reddish-brown turns light pink when wet. It has fair eyelashes and toenails.

White elephants are only ostensibly white. Of those currently kept by then Burmese rulers — General Than Shwe — one is grey and the other three are pinkish, but all are officially white. Albinos are much rarer among African elephants than in Asia.

The elephants are currently kept in a huge enclosure opposite Uppatasanti Pagoda also called the “Peace Pagoda”

with Buddha’s tooth relic is a prominent landmark in new capital of Myanmar. They are chained to the ground and keep in munching sugar cane, bamboo leaves or something else all the time. In the evening they are taken to nearby open jungle and allowed to roam freely for some time. There are similar white elephants in a park at old capital Yangon. One was even caught in wild some months ago in Myanmar.

People who come to see the Pagoda also get an opportunity to see the rare jumbos. There is even a small market surrounding the elephant enclosure and the pagoda. There are souvenirs available depicting white elephants as well as the pagoda.

Though white elephants are seen in Myanmar and South East Asian countries, there is mention of this animal in Hindu religion.

Lord Indra was said to have one such

animal named Airabat who, according to mythology, could even fly.

Lord Budha’s mother was said to have dreamt of a white elephant before he was born considered to be an auspicious sign. Buddha himself was said to have had an incarnation in the form of a white elephant in the wild.

The king of Thailand used to keep a number of white elephants some of which are still alive. Former US Vice President Spiro Agnew once presented a white elephant to King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia. There have been white elephants in the army of the Sasanian king Khusrav II. According to South East Asian history, a white elephant killed the commander of the Arab Muslims in one of the fierce battles.

According to belief, if a monarch possessed one or more ‘white’ elephants, it was a glorious and happy sign. They were not worshipped for themselves and

were regarded as an appendage to the King’s majesty. They are also considered sacred and are a symbol of royal power. In this part of the world the status of kings has been evaluated by the number of white elephants in their possession.

In the past, lower grade white elephants were given as gifts to the king’s friends and allies. The animals needed a lot of care and, being sacred, could not be put to work, so were a great financial burden on the recipient — only the monarch and the very rich could afford them.

According to one story, white elephants were sometimes given as a present to some enemy (often a lesser noble with whom the king was displeased). The unfortunate recipient, unable to make any use of it, and obliged to take care of it, would suffer bankruptcy and ruin ultimately. But despite their contradictions the white elephants drew huge crowds, especially among the children.



A painting depicting a Thai royal family member on a white elephant. Wikipedia

# Helping hand for mentally challenged

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have published about career opportunities related to the field of mental health. In this edition, we will publish some of the options in particular. Young people in our region may choose to take up careers related to mental health as there is a need for more human resources in this field.

We should be aware that there is a national mental health policy in India. This policy was announced in October 2014 and is based, inter-alia, on the values and principles of equity, justice, integrated and evidence based care, quality, participatory and holistic approach to mental health.

The policy's goals and objectives include to reduce distress, disability, exclusion, morbidity and premature mortality associated with mental health problems of a person, to enhance understanding of mental health in the country, provide universal access to mental healthcare, increase access to mental health services for vulnerable groups, reduce risk and incidence of suicide and attempted suicide, ensure respect for rights and protection from harm of persons with mental health problems, and reduce stigma associated with mental health problems, enhance availability and distribution of skilled human resources for mental health.

Some of the career options related to mental health includes:

**Psychiatrist:** A psychiatrist is a physician who specialises in psychiatry, the branch of medicine devoted to the diagnosis, prevention, study and treatment of mental disorders.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors, unlike psychologists and must evaluate patients to determine whether their symptoms are the result of a physical illness, a combination of physical and mental ailments, or strictly psychiatric.

Doctors who have successfully completed the entire MBBS programme are eligible for specialisation in psychiatry.

**Psychologist:** Psychology is the science of behaviour and mind, embracing all aspects of conscious and unconscious experience as well as thought. It is an academic discipline and a social science which seeks to understand individuals and

groups by establishing general principles and researching specific cases. In this field, a professional practitioner or researcher is called a psychologist and can be classified as a social, behavioural, or cognitive scientist. Psychologists attempt to understand the role of mental functions in individual and social behaviour, while also exploring the physiological and biological processes that underlie cognitive functions and behaviours. There is more demand for psychologists and this is a subject that can be chosen by our students for their vibrant future.

A Clinical Psychologist can be hired at hospitals or as a counsellor. School psychologists take care of behavioural problems of children in schools. Industrial psychologists can use their knowledge at an organisation to motivate employees and a social psychologist examines individuals and trends of a society.

**Occupational Therapists:** An occupational therapist works with a client to help them achieve a fulfilled and satisfied state in life through the use of "purposeful activity or interventions designed to achieve functional outcomes which promote health, prevent injury or disability and which develop, improve, sustain or restore the highest possible level of independence. Occupational therapists help people of all ages to improve their ability to perform in

their daily living and working environments. They work with individuals who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, socially or emotionally disabling. They also help them to develop, recover, or maintain daily living and work skills.

**Psychiatric Social Work:** There are many specialisations in the field of social work and psychiatric social work is related to mental health. Psychiatric social workers provide mental health services to individuals with high needs. They may perform psychotherapy and even diagnose mental illness. Social workers who are employed at psychiatric hospitals also do psychosocial assessments and provide therapy.

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



# DNA & Indian legal system

By BK Mishra

DNA test or 'DNA Profiling' as popularly known is a technique in which a sample of DNA is run through a laboratory to generate information about it, looking specifically for DNA which could identify the source of the sample, or be used as a base of comparison between two samples. This technique is used at various places for different purposes ranging from law enforcement to Medical Treatment.

The technology of DNA Test was first reported in 1984 by Sir Alec Jeffrey at the University of Leicester in England. Soon after this incident, it became one of the most important technologies to be used in the Forensic Science.

In the publications in 1985 by Jeffery and his colleagues, the term 'DNA Fingerprint' carried the connotation of absolute identification. Forensic DNA typing which was first used in the year 1985 in case-work in the United Kingdom was initiated in the US in the late 1986 by the Commercial Laboratories and in 1988 by The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is now used in a number of cases relating to crime, divorce, adultery etc. In forensic application, minutiae in the fingerprint patterns, not ridge counts, are used for personal identification.

The test for the admissibility of scientific technique enunciated in Fyre v. United States has been the most frequently invoked one in American case law. But in practice, the court is much more involved in applying the law which was enunciated in Fyre case, there are various factors which are being determined by the court which includes the identification of the authenticity of the evidence. Its applicability has been varied from case to case in the US, but the principle evolved in the Fyre's case soon became quite helpful in solving many cases relating to various issues with the help of DNA Technology.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is broadly termed as building the genetic blueprint of life. It was first described by the scientists ...

Francis HC Crick and James D Watson in 1953. Crick and Watson identified the double-helix structure of DNA, which resembles a twisted ladder, and established the role of DNA as the material that makes up the genetic code of living organisms.

DNA is the same in every cell throughout an individual's body, whether it is a skin cell, sperm cell, or blood cell. With the exception of identical twins, no two individuals have the same DNA blueprint.

The Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act were enacted at a time when modern scientific advancement and DNA tests were not even in the contemplation of Parliament or legislature. Worldwide, it has been proven that the results of DNA test, if conducted in conformity with modern and latest protocol on the subject, are scientifically accurate. There is an urgent need to incorporate some provisions in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, to manage science and technology issues. Due to lack of such provision, investigating officers face trouble in collecting evidence that involves modern mechanism to prove the accused guilty.

Section 53 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, authorises a police officer to get the assistance of a medical practitioner in good faith for the purpose of the investigation. But, it does not enable a complainant collect



Google images

blood, semen etc for bringing criminal charges against the accused. The CrPC (Amendment) Act, 2005, has brought two new sections which authorise the investigating officer to collect DNA sample from the body of the accused and the victim with the help of medical practitioners.

## Perspective on admissibility of DNA in Indian Legal System

Its use as evidence in criminal investigations has grown in recent times in Indian legal system. DNA testing has helped law enforcement, identify criminals and solve difficult crimes. On the other hand, DNA-supported evidence helps in proving that many convicted people are actually innocent.

The introduction of DNA technology is being perceived to pose serious challenge to some legal and functional rights of an individual such as 'Right to privacy' and 'Right against Self-incrimination'. And this is the most important reason why courts sometimes are reluctant in accepting the evidence based on DNA technology. Right to Privacy has been included under right to life and personal liberty or Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Article 20(3) provides Right against Self-Incrimination that protects an accused in criminal cases from providing evidence against himself or evidence which can make him guilty.

Among the many new tools that science has provided for the analysis of forensic evidence is the powerful and controversial analysis of deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, the material that makes up the genetic code of most organisms. DNA analysis, also called DNA typing or DNA profiling, examines DNA found in physical evidence such as blood, hair, and semen, and determines whether it can be matched to DNA taken from specific individuals. DNA analysis has become a common form of evidence in criminal trials. It is also used in civil litigation, particularly in cases involving the determination of paternity of identity.

The admissibility of the DNA evidence before the court always depends on its accurate and proper collection, preservation and documentation which can satisfy the court that the evidence which has been put

in front of it is reliable. There is no specific legislation which is present.

In India that can provide specific guidelines to the investigating agencies and the court, and the procedure to be adopted in the cases involving DNA as its evidence.

Moreover, some provisions allow examination of person accused of rape by medical practitioner and the medical examination of the rape victim respectively. But the admissibility of these evidences has remained in a state of doubt as the opinion of the Supreme Court and high courts in various decisions remained conflicting. Judges do not deny the scientific accuracy and conclusiveness of DNA testing.

But in some cases, they do not admit this evidence on the ground of legal or constitutional prohibition and, sometimes, the public policy.

Many developed countries have been forced to change their legislation after the introduction of the DNA testing in the legal system.

There are certain provisions which are present in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, such as Section 112, which determine child's parentage and states that a child born in a valid marriage between a mother and a man within 280 days of the dissolution of ...the marriage, and the mother remaining unmarried shows that the child belongs to the man, unless proved otherwise but again no specific provision which would cover modern scientific techniques.

DNA analysis is of utmost importance in determining the paternity of a child in the cases of civil disputes. Need of this evidence is most significant in the criminal cases, civil cases, and in the maintenance proceeding in the criminal courts under Section 125 of the CrPC. But it has been held by the Supreme Court on several occasions that right to life and personal liberty is not an absolute right. In Govind Singh vs State of Madhya Pradesh, the Supreme Court held that a that a fundamental right must be subject to restriction on the basis of compelling public interest.

DNA analysis for a criminal investigation uses highly sophisticated scientific equipment – first a DNA molecule from the suspect is disassembled and selected segments are isolated and measured. Then the suspect's DNA profile is compared with one derived from a sample of physical evidence to see whether the two match. If a conclusive non-match occurs, the suspect may be eliminated from consideration. If a match occurs, a statistical analysis is performed to determine the probability that the sample of physical evidence came from another person with the same DNA profile as the suspect's. Juries use this statistical result in determining whether a suspect is guilty or innocent.

The Supreme Court dismissed the Delhi High Court's decision ordering ND Tiwari to undergo the DNA test is very important from the viewpoint of the admissibility of such evidence. In this case, Rohit Shekhar had claimed to be the biological son of Tiwari, but ND Tiwari was reluctant to undergo such test stating that it would be the violation of his right to privacy and would cause him public humiliation. But the Supreme Court rejected this point stating when the result of the test would not be revealed to anyone and it would be in a sealed envelope, there is no point of getting humiliated.

The Supreme Court further stated that we want the young man to get justice; he should not be left without any remedy. It would be very interesting to see that how courts in India would allow the admissibility of DNA technology in the future.

(mishrabasant24@yahoo.in)

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, NOVEMBER 26, 2017

Moon sextile Mercury on your solar return chart suggests a good year ahead. This can be a year when you put your mind into full focus and create the world you have longed to live in. Love and romance is likely to be a profound growing and building field in 2017 as it is directly open to your ability to bring stability and security into this realm. Children in some capacity play a role in the year ahead and require a sense of responsibility and dedication. Make sure you access and allow your inner child ample time to play and enjoy the things you have discovered in life. Expect the sparkle of romance to be an integral part of 2017.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

You are committed, bold and adventurous right now. You are more effective in general, in attempts to express your creativity. You have a stronger ability to hold the attention of an audience. Love, love affairs, and other social activities help to enhance a healthy self-image. You may spend extra money on things that will make your life more comfortable and pleasant, and work that needs to be done in and around the home becomes a priority.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

By the present planetary combination you would focus on having fun, enjoying sports and expressing yourself efficiently. A love affair may become a little more serious now. Spending time with someone special is a focus. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You receive pleasure from anything that expands your horizons, both physically and mentally. You derive pleasure from your health regimen.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

This is an excellent time for travel, education, communications, and higher learning. You might consider furthering your education and hobbies; it is a fabulous time to do so or simply broadening your knowledge in a more informal manner. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional success, and leadership during this period. Some form of pleasant results in your education or profession brings rewards and recognition.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

This phase brings fabulous results for domestic and work related matters. Sports person also benefit from this planetary alignment as they are infused with positive energy and gain recognition for their talents and hard work. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional and your ideas are original and progressive now. This is a time to follow your dreams and ideas, and to plant a seed in the form of a wish for the future. People at work might be surprised by your ability to assert yourself and your needs. Speculation, as long as it's reasonable, may prove worthwhile. Your creativity is stronger than usual, and children can figure prominently in your life.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

This period enhances funds, brings monetary gains and you may earn from previous investments. You have more faith in general regarding your career and the direction in which you are headed. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits. You are far less inhibited when it comes to expressing yourself creatively, and you are a lot more fun to be around. Children, romantic trips, hobbies and other forms of communication and making connections would strongly appeal.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**

You would enjoy making things that are beautiful and you succeed in areas that require an aesthetic sense as well as artistic ability. Matters concerning your career come to the fore. You are likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in friendship and love. This is a good time for

research and meditation; but do avoid being dragged down by issues that have outgrown their worth and purpose. Examining the past in order to improve the future is certainly worthwhile, as long as you don't get caught up in the past. You are physically fit and on top of things.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

This is a period of romance, creative activities, entertainment and children. There would be cooperation and harmony in relationships and this is the time in which you can work on resolving differences with loved ones. You are in a position to inspire others through your work. Income from foreign sources could also figure this time. You work on your effectiveness and examine exactly what has been holding you back from achieving the results you want. The challenge here is to capture the newly found and defined self-confidence you have gained. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities or a structured exercise routine.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

This phase brings responsibilities, seriousness and sensitivity in relations. The purpose of this combination is for you to make the connection between your own feelings of self-worth and what you produce in the real world or get back from the real world. Your career, reputation, and public life are influenced. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this time. Health issues will settle down as you get back into your normal rhythm.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

The planetary configuration brings financial gains and profits from business. This can be a time of achievement, career advancement, and success in business. Work-related travel is possible now. It is more about how you express yourself than the specifics of what you are saying that helps away others to your position. More contact with authority figures is likely at this time. Do what you feel is right, keeping in mind that you are in the forefront of things.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

You pour more energy into self-promotion or business activities. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love and relations. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. More freedom is likely to be experienced in several aspects of your career. This is an especially spiritual time for you. You enjoy doing things with others at work and home, as synergy and cooperation are available to you now.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

Taking care of business is primary during this phase. You need the energies, companionship and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. More freedom is likely to be experienced in your career. You are called upon to deal with the details and practicalities of everyday life, to become more organized, and to take charge of your routines. It's time to formulate some clear goals and plans. Circumstances are such that you need to develop some healthy habits, routines, and schedules.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

You may begin to take on more responsibilities on the job or at a place where you are a volunteer. Your job could become rather tedious and boring, or working conditions may be poor, demanding, or frustrating. Believing in a grand plan is fine, but practical concerns need to be dealt with as well. Recognizing your personal limitations in terms of just how much you can give to others and just how much compassion and understanding you can show is essential now. It's time to structure your life. Issues of guilt, worry, and anxiety could crowd your mind - relaxation techniques and drawing on your inner strength would be beneficial.

# Goa matters: An insight

By Eduardo Faleiro

The government recently announced a provision of Rs 400 per month per student of primary schools which impart education through Konkani or Marathi as an incentive to them.

Indeed, in Goa, the language of study at the primary level should be either Konkani or Marathi. Konkani is the mother tongue of the people of Goa. Marathi is and has always been the literary language of a large segment of our population. There is no justification for English as a medium of instruction at the primary level. It should be the second language from the third standard onwards.

The Diocesan Society of Education should ensure that its primary schools teach through Konkani and Marathi and stop teaching through the English medium. Konkani should be taught in the Devnagri script as it will provide access to Marathi and Hindi which is the national language. Children will learn the romi script when they learn English.

The importance of national languages and the assertion of national cultural identity is growing everywhere in the world. In emerging India it will be necessary to be fluent in at least two Indian languages, the local language and Hindi for success.

English is at present the main international language. In this globalised world, the importance of English is inescapable and English may be taught as a subject from the third standard. Parents have the right to decide on the medium of instruction for their children. However, under Article 21 A of the Constitution, it is for the state to determine the medium of instruction in schools to which it will provide grants for free education.

It is incorrect to say studying at the primary level in local language impairs academic performance. During the colonial rule some children would study in Marathi primary schools and then enrol themselves in the Portuguese Lyceum. They performed as well, and sometimes better, than their counterparts who did their primary education through the Portuguese medium. Some of them went on to become ministers in the

Portuguese Government.

Every child should get quality education. It is essential that schools should be equipped with qualified teachers. It is of fundamental importance to have quality training programmes for Konkani and Marathi teachers. There are some such training programmes at present but they need to be more comprehensive and effective.

The government should schedule programmes to sensitise parents as to the need for their children to learn in the mother tongue. The state government and the schools may collaborate with the West Zone Cultural Centre under the Union Ministry of Culture to conduct programmes for children so that they appreciate their national heritage and culture. There are also private organisations like SPICMACAY and INTACH that conduct similar programmes for children.

The government declared last month that it will grant a one-time financial assistance on humanitarian grounds to those persons who were directly or indirectly involved in the freedom struggle of Goa but could not be declared as freedom fighters for failing to meet the eligibility conditions as provided under the Freedom Fighters Welfare Rules. It is necessary that the specific criteria to identify the recipients of this proposed financial assistance are made public.

It is very important to preserve the memory and teachings of the leaders of our Freedom Movement. In 2011, I arranged for a portrait of Dr TB da Cunha, known as the Father of our Freedom Struggle, and at my instance it was unveiled in the Central Hall of Parliament on December 19, the 50th Anniversary of Goa Liberation by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, in the presence of the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Leaders of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Congress President and the three Goan MPs. The portrait is now on permanent display at the Parliament House along with those of the foremost national leaders.

Selected writings of da Cunha were published in 1961 under the caption "Goa's Freedom Struggle". The book is presently out of print. It should be reprinted and included in the curriculum

of schools and colleges so that it provides a much needed sense of direction to our society.

There is concern expressed in Goa about the large-scale influx of migrants into our state. Goa needs migrant labour. However, uncontrolled migration into the state can upset its demographic composition and lead to social and economic problems. There are several laws to control migration into the State but these laws are not being implemented effectively and remain largely on paper.

The Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1979, The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act of 1970 and the Goa Daman and Diu Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Rules 1982 are some such laws.

The State Government is required to appoint inspectors to oversee implementation of the Act. The law directs builders and labour contractors to provide residential accommodation, sanitation and other facilities to the workers engaged by them. Yet, these provisions are ignored and much of the migrant labour lives in slums under the most unhygienic conditions which pose major health hazards to the migrants as well as to the local people. The machinery for implementation of the Labour legislation needs to be strengthened urgently and it should not fall prey to inducements from big employers and contractors.

All migrant workers should be registered compulsorily in the Panchayats and Municipalities. Aadhar cards as well as Public Distribution System (PDS) cards should be issued to them to avoid having to buy foodgrains and kerosene at high prices. The State Government should hold a yearly audit of all contractors who employ migrant workers and submit a report to the State Legislature for its scrutiny. It should also open an Internet portal indicating the contractors and migrant workers in Goa for public information and verification.

(The author is a former Union minister)

*"The law of harvest is to reap more than you sow. Sow an act, and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny."*

--- Omar Khayyam

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.107 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2017

### Pakistan and terror-mongering

HAFIZ Saeed has been released from house arrest once again. It is the 7th time that the head of the JuD/LeT has been arrested and the 6th time that he has been released. The release came a few days after the US Congress dropped the LeT from a provision in a bill linking financial aid to Pakistan with action by Pakistan against terrorist groups. The Pakistan army had said that Saeed was detained in the national interest. The house arrest came a few days after Donald Trump took office as President of the US. Trump was vitriolic in his attack on terror in Pakistan and Saeed's term of house arrest was extended. Pakistan surprised India by putting the JuD offshoot, Tehri-e-Azadi Kashmir on the list of prosecuted organisations. Back in 2009, two FIRs were registered against Hafiz Saeed. But these were short lived. JuD was not listed as a terrorist organisation and the civilian government of Pakistan in Islamabad was taken to task by Pakistan High Court for working under pressure from India and the US. The High Court's recent order releasing Hafiz Saeed from house arrest was only to be expected.

All this shows how really serious/unserious Pakistan is about turning its heat on terrorism in that country. It is significant that Saeed's release coincides with the anniversary of the Mumbai attacks. The trial of those belonging to Saeed's organisation, who were arrested by Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency is still pending and there is no assurance that the criminals will be convicted in the near future. Unless Pakistan takes prompt action in this regard, relations between India and Pakistan can never improve. Pakistan itself is a victim of terrorism. There was suicide bombing in Peshawar at the same time as Saeed was released. What really is the difference between good and bad terrorists?

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### AICC(I) Body recommends 3-Tier Panchayat Raj

The policy and programme committee of AICC (I) has recommended a three-tier Panchayat Raj structure - at village, block and district levels. The report of the committee, headed by party general secretary Mr V N Gadgil, was presented to Congress (I) president Mr Rajiv Gandhi.

The report will be considered at the meeting of the working committee tomorrow while recommending its resolution

on Panchayati Raj to the AICC (I) meeting on May 10. The Panchayati Raj bodies at all the three levels should be elected for five years through statutory and mandatory elections, the committee has suggested.

The constitution should provide the role, authority and jurisdiction of Panchayati Raj institutions indicating a minimum list of subjects in respect of such institutions.

# Election: A game of aligning and realigning

By H.H. Mohrmen

If politics is all about power then election is simply the time for the politicians to align and realign themselves to achieve that goal. Potential and opportunistic candidates are switching side from one party to another for the sake of a ticket to contest in the next election and almost every party has at least one sly candidate who had hopped from one party to another. Rather, this time around almost the entire of list candidates of some of the political parties comprises those who had at least defected from one party.

Will a politician who had not defected even once from one party to another raise his or her hand? Surely, except for the first timers in politics, almost all politicians have defected, because even if those who were elected as independent MLAs join another party, it means they have defected. This raises the pertinent question as to whether politicians have any principles at all. Do they stand for any principle or ideology at all because we have examples of politicians switching sides from a party with a liberal ideology to that of religious oriented party with right wing inclination and then back to a party with a similar ideology again?

Do party ideologies really matter to them? This is the question that voters should ask because nowadays politician change sides like chameleons. In the past when we had only the Congress and few regional parties as major contenders for power in the state, it was easy because the politicians are either regionalists or liberal nationalists, but now things have changed. Now we have many national parties with different ideologies and even within the regional parties we have what we can call liberal progressive regional parties and those with radical protective ideologies but even between these two ideologies, politicians move seamlessly from one border to another, not bothering to prove where or what they stand for.

It is therefore proven beyond doubt that ideology or making a stand on any issue is the last thing that politicians and political parties have in their scheme of things because their only

goal is to capture power. Politicians also think that they can only perform if they are in power, so aligning with any party which they expect to come to power after the election is their only goal. But then we also have politicians who switch sides because they are not allotted party tickets and join another party which has a completely different ideology from the previous one if the party guarantees that the candidate will get a ticket to contest in the next election.

I am fortunate that my interest in community work takes me to different places and I have the opportunity to visit particularly villages in the Jaintia hills and of course since it is also election time, it also give me the opportunity get the local perspective of the villagers on different matters pertaining to the election. This helps me acquire some point of view on the villagers concept of an ideal leader or who according to them is a good leader or rather what do they look for in a person to elect as an MLA. It is also an opportunity to understand their perspective of development or what exactly is that which they consider as development?

In some areas that I have visited, development means having black-topped roads which connect their villages with a town or a city. If this is done they consider that the MLA has done his job. Of course roads are the backbone of development but the important question is whether the mandate of an MLA is merely to ensure that all the roads are blacktopped. Is all that the MLA has to do for five years? And if it is the duty of the politicians to bring blacktopped roads then what do we need the engineers for? Is access to better health-care, higher education and creating livelihood opportunities for the people to improve their economy not equally important?

But the most common grounds on which the people vote a person to be an MLA is because he is accessible, which means he is a good person with whom they can talk to whenever and whatever they feel like. And of course the voters

also expect the MLA to (without fail) visit them during bereavements and show-up during their children's birthday celebration and weddings. This is one of the most important qualifications for a candidate to be elected as an MLA, because if the MLA visits the family during these social occasions, then the family is considered to be in a better pecking order in the community.

Voters also expect the candidates to arrange ambulances or a mortuary van if and when they need one and in some extreme cases even if some member of their family is arrested, they expect the MLA being a powerful man in the government to intervene or interfere with the law of the land on their behalf.

Then there are people who hero worship their MLAs. They consider their MLAs almost like a demi-god. No wonder we also call them 'lei san snem' because people create a larger than life image of their hero. Right now in my opinion there are two set politicians that people worship as heroes. The first category is the extremely rich politicians. Their followers believe that they can buy their way to anything anywhere. They believe that there is nothing that their hero cannot do because money after all can buy anything.

These politicians or rather these political families can set up whosoever they choose as candidates (as long as he/she is member of the family) and yet people will follow them without question. It matters not if the candidate is educated or not; or if he/she has any experience in public life or not. The hero worshiper will follow the leader like the mice in the story of the pied piper of Hamelin. People follow them or their candidates because they say that they are too rich to lose the election or for that matter anything at all.

Then there is another group who hero-worship their leaders, because they see them as the messiah and believe that they are only ones who can save the "jaidbyrniew," (the

community). The reason is merely because their leaders are the only few MLAs that dare to challenge authority. At one point of time they even have the audacity to compare one of them with u Tirot Sing Syiem and there are plenty of such hero worshippers lurking in the different social media platforms on the internet.

There are also other factors that influence people to vote for a candidate. It could be because he or she is from the same village or the same area, the same clan, belongs to the same church or faith tradition; the list is not exhaustive. It is really funny to learn the reason or the basis on which the people elect their MLAs, because they elect them for all sort of reasons except their capacity to be a legislator.

Recently, a private meeting was convened by the UDP MLAs and candidates contesting from different legislative assembly constituencies under the Shillong city and the attempt was to have an informal consultation with some prominent personalities of the city before they hit the campaign trail. Of course this is not the first time that the party has engaged in this kind of exercise, but this one has raised a very challenging question. A renowned and only Khasi who had served in the United Nations challenged the party leadership by asking the people on the dais, if they dare go to the people and take the issue of corruption as the party's agenda.

We are yet to see parties which take corruption as the main plank to contest the election. However forward looking the manifesto is, as long as there is corruption the state will not go anywhere. The prevailing situation gives rise to spineless candidates who would dance to any tune if it only suits his or her interest. In situations like that, this course of aligning and realigning for the benefit of the politicians will continue and the state will also continue to have the same kind of politicians albeit in a different uniform.

Will Rahul succeed as Congress President?

## Lessons from his predecessors are aplenty

By Harihar Swarup

Rahul Gandhi has improved tremendously, sooner than expected as he prepares to take-over the mantle of the Congress President, a position held by his mother, father, grandmother and great-grandfather. He is no longer called "Pappu" by his critics. He has now become a leader by his own right and matured as he campaigns in Gujarat where a shattered Congress has emerged as a formidable force to face the BJP in the coming assembly elections. It is said in lighter vein that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made him a leader by his sustained attack on Gandhi scion. On his part, Rahul replied with same ferocity and learnt the tactic of political brinkmanship.

Rahul appears to be a young man in hurry and his impulses are almost like his great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru. It is early to say if his tempers will be like famous Nehruvian temper. He does not have poise and calm of his father Rajiv Gandhi.

If the Congress wins in Gujarat—party has doubtless improved enormously—Rahul's image will sky-rocket. He will takeover as the Congress chief before the first phase of polling in the state on December 9. Gujarat may prove a turning point in Rahul's political career; luck appears to be smiling on him. He will also lead the poll campaign in next year's election in Madhya Pradesh where Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan's image has touched rock-bottom, besides the heavy anti-incumbency. The other elections due are in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in the run up to Lok Sabha poll in 2019.

Apart from elections, the Himalayan task Rahul faces is to revive the Congress which is at its lowest ebb, electorally and politically, in its 133-year history. The party has survived debilitating splits, humiliating electoral defeats and ferocious internal power struggles, but never faced an existential crisis of the kind it faces today.

As Rahul taken up the gigantic challenging of reviving the party, he has certain advantages; he faces no major dissent from within; no ideological divisions either. But this wasn't the case always. The 14 men and two women—giants and dwarfs—who preceded him in the years after Independence faced a range of circumstances that were peculiar to their historical and political contexts, and that of the Congress party of the time. What were they? How did these presidents deal with them?

Kripalani, Congress President in 1947, was a leader and intellectual in his own right, but the party was packed with towering leaders—Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Mahatma Gandhi himself. Nehru backed Kripalani, more so, to counter the conservative Purushottam Das Tandon. But Nehru rejected Kripalani's view that the party should be consulted on important decisions and policy pronouncements of the government. The Prime Minister had the upper hand in the first party versus government tussle in independent India—Kripalani was succeeded by the low-key Pattabhi Sitaramayya at the Congress's Jaipur session in 1948.

A power struggle erupted in 1950 when Tandon, backed by Patel staked claim

to the post. The other contenders were Kriplani and Shankarrao Deo, a member of the Constituent Assembly. Nehru had no particular liking for either, but was vehemently opposed to Tandon. After Tandon was elected, despite Nehru's opposition, he initially refused to be a member of the Working Committee. He relented later, but the crisis came to a head after Tandon did not honour Nehru's wish that his colleague Rafi Ahmed Kidwai be elected in the CWC. Kidwai quit the Congress but stayed on in the cabinet. Tandon objected and Kidwai had to resign.

In July 1951, Nehru forced a showdown by resigning from the CWC. The party was wrecked by a full-blown crisis. Months later, Tandon too resigned. Nehru was elected President. He was succeeded by U N Dhebar, who was President until 1959.

Indira Gandhi succeeded Dhebar in May, 1959 but stayed in the post for only few months. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy took over in January 1960 and, in 1964, the presidency passed on to K. Kamaraj, who had been President of the Tamil Nadu Congress and Chief Minister of Madras. Within months, the party plunged into, perhaps, its biggest crisis since independence.

On May 27, 1964, Nehru died, and Kamaraj, then President for four months, faced the challenge of negotiating the transition. Morarji Desai, the heavyweight from Gujarat, had thrown hat in the ring even as Kamaraj began a massive exercise to consult the party chief ministers and MPs. A meeting of the extended CWC at the end of May produced no decision. By then Kamaraj had realized that Lal Bahadur Shastri had popular support; Morarji too understood he was not the first choice of most leaders. Kamaraj persuaded him to withdraw, and Shastri became Prime Minister.

The next big challenge came in January, 1966 when Shastri passed away unexpectedly in Tashkent. Kamaraj faced managing the transition again. Morarji, for the second time, staked his claim. But Kamaraj had other plans. He wanted Indira to take over. He consulted CMs, who ensured Indira's candidature. Morarji lobbied hard, but Kamaraj, with the party old guards, ensured Indira secured a majority in the Congress Parliamentary Party and became the Prime Minister.

The history of the Congress is long with the party having seen extreme ups and downs but the worst time came after 2014 elections when the party plunged in an all-time low; reduced to 44 seats in the Lok Sabha. Rahul takes over the reign of the party at this critical juncture and has to rebuild the organization brick by brick.

Sonia Gandhi took over as the Congress President when the party was disintegrating. Her greatest contribution was to unify the Congress and prevent it from further disintegrating. She is the longest serving Congress President; over 13 years. Under her, the Congress ruled as many as 16 states and ruled the centre for two terms of five years each. She will also be remembered for declining to become Prime Minister and instead putting the crown on the head of Manmohan Singh, a noted economist, known for his integrity and honesty. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Let's talk environment!

Editor,

Everyone talks about the environment these days. It is becoming an increasingly important topic. This is due to the fact that the environment has suffered a lot especially from the dumping of garbage. Looking at our city we see that there are a lot of 'dustbins' and 'dumpsters' everywhere. These are not actually rubbish bins but roadsides and drains and basically any free space near highways. Garbage is basically dumped everywhere as if no one knows the use of dustbins. Most ironically is that now you can see cabs with stickers saying that throwing of rubbish will make you liable to a fine of Rs 5,000 but sometimes people sitting in that cab throw something or the other on the road. Our rivers and streams are also dying a slow death due to pollution especially in the form of car washing. New streams are being discovered not to be preserved but to be polluted. Garbage is still being burnt in non-municipal areas, thereby contributing to air

pollution especially when plastics are involved. There's a reason we refer to the earth as 'Mother Earth' because like our mother who looks after the house and our well being similarly the Earth through the environment is providing us with all that we need. Since we repay our Mother with good deeds, we also need to repay Mother Earth by conserving what she gives us. We don't really pay much attention as yet to the importance of our environment as our climate is still one of the best in the country. It's only till the changes due to our own acts start affecting us that we will realise our follies. Let's hope that day never comes where our natural 'fog' will turn to 'smog' and 'World Environment Day' will be 'World Environment Remembrance Day'. Let's live up to the slogan 'Green and Clean City', as we must first be Green and Clean before becoming and aiming for a 'Smart' One. We still have time and let's use this precious time correctly and start preserving what we have now at every level of the community as environmental change affects all and spares none.

Yours etc.,  
Banmmankhraw  
Lyngdoh,  
Shillong - 793005

### Reliance cheating its customers!

Editor,

Kudos to Mr. Salil Grewal for calling a spade a spade! I fully endorse his views as I am one of the victims of Reliance Telecom who is facing this predicament. My only mobile connection for the past 17 years was "Reliance" and this number was my identity and e-address. But when this company abruptly stopped its services I have suffered tremendously like thousands of my other friends. Some weeks ago when I went for porting out the SIM to another company this shameless Reliance declined as it notified through SMS that I have to first clear the bill amount of Rs 350. But what about my security deposit which is lying with this company. Why is the company is silent on the process of refunding the security deposit but aggressively collecting

outstanding dues from its old customers. This is a shame and also a big crime. Is the Meghalaya Government listening? We the victims would like to know what the Government proposes to do to recover help recover public money. Yes we want our money back with full compound interest and the company must also be taken to task.

Sarad Joshi  
Viaemail

### Doctors or mercenaries?

Editor,

We know how poor children were made to work as chimney sweepers in the United Kingdom after the industrial revolution. It bears testimony to the fate of the poor when a State leaves the general people to the mercy of the market players. Similarly, when Gurugram's Fortis Memorial Hospital charged a seven-year-old girl Adya Singh's parents Rs.18 lakh for her 15 days of treatment in the hospital and that too after her death, it clearly shows the results of allowing profiteers to hijack the health sector without any control. Lack of Government's participation,

involvement and control in the health sector is responsible for what is happening in Gurugram and also in many other hospitals in our country.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### Why an undertaking on attendance?

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to express my views on a recent development in St. Edmund's College relating to students. As parents we have come to learn that all students of the college are required to sign an undertaking with regard to their attendance. One may say that the College is only seeking to ensure regular attendance on the part of the students which is a good thing. But the question that arises is, when the requisite minimum attendance for students has been clearly laid down and stipulated in the College Prospectus and when similar rule of NEHU in that respect is also often

referred to by the college, where was the need for such undertakings? Is the Principal so weak and helpless that he cannot enforce the existing rules on student attendance? Is the Prospectus, with a very high price tag, only a decorative piece that should not be taken seriously? If the college administration is so keen to deal with students through undertakings, then I think it would only be fair that there should be undertakings of a binding nature on the college as well to fulfil its part of the obligations towards the students insofar as the services and needs paid for by them are concerned. Unfortunately, this is where the college has failed miserably. All is not well especially since the last few years after a new dispensation took over the administration of the college. Accountability is not of the students and parents only but of the college administration as well.

Yours etc.  
A Concerned Parent  
(Name withheld on request)

*“Pride is an admission of weakness; it secretly fears all competition and dreads all rivals.”*

--- William Morris

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.108 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2017

### North East and ASEAN

IT should be reassuring to the north eastern states that they will for the first time play a big role during the ASEAN summit in January. India's external affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj called the governors of all north eastern states to a meeting recently with the objective of integrating foreign and domestic policy concerning these states. Raveesh Kumar of the ministry said that the interactive discussions at this meeting would feed into the deliberations of the ASEAN summit. Suggestions made by governors were prioritised. As a first step, Bhutan will open a consulate in Guwahati. India's Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal initiatives will be highlighted in its Act East policy. The new initiatives will be run by some specific departments.

For the first time Assam will host an 'Invest ASEAN' summit. Heads of states of all ASEAN countries will take steps to create economic linkages between the NE and ASEAN countries. The Northeast Development summit was recently opened by India's President Ram Nath Kovind. The top priority focused at the summit was connectivity. Security challenges in the north eastern states have diminished in the recent past as the militants are on the retreat. There have been several years of misunderstanding between the Northeast and mainland India. The trilateral highway through Myanmar should open by 2020. The same goes for the Kaladan multi-modal project, which is currently lagging because of the unrest caused by the Rohingya exodus. With Bangladesh, the connectivity linkages that existed before 1965 would be revived. Northeastern music and dance groups will travel more, particularly to ASEAN countries. Funds are being earmarked from the other departments to upgrade medical colleges and hospitals in Assam and Meghalaya to receive patients from Myanmar and Bangladesh. Finally, areas which need an inner line permit to travel will be reduced. Thus, there will be emphasis on making the Northeast the gateway to the East.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### 37 Bodo ultras held, arms hauled

Police arrested 37 Bodo extremists and recovered a 303 rifle, three stolen scooters, one handmade pistol and eleven live cartridges during search operation in a number of villages in Kokrajhar district of Assam yesterday, an official report said. The rifle was earlier stolen from police. Meanwhile, extremists stabbed to death a chowkidar, Jatin Basumatari, of Salekari NHPC, under Basugaon police station of the same district.

A Congress (I) worker Hiranya Goswami was severely assaulted by some miscreants at Kamrup in Nagaon district last night. He was shifted to the hospital where he later died. Meanwhile, Home Minister Mr Bhriku Kumar Phukan has warned that Mr Upendra Nath Brahma, president of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) would be responsible if the traditional harmony, existing among different communities in the state, is shattered.

Talking to newsmen at Bhabanipur in Barpeta district yesterday, he said that the government would take all steps for the security of life and property of the people. Mr Phukan accompanied by Law Minister Mr Surendra Nath Nedhi, Mr Charan Narzary and Mr Kumar Deepak Das, both MLAs, and Director General of Police, visited Salbari and Ruphai Bazar in Barpeta district where Bodo extremists killed three persons including an Assistant Engineer and set on fire a higher secondary school recently. He said there were reports

that Christian missionaries were helping the Bodo agitators. Later, he discussed the latest law and order situation with the District Commissioner, the Director General of Police, the Superintendent of Police and other high officials.

### ‘Jawahar Yojana is election stunt’

Opposition in the Lok Sabha today described the Jawahar Yojana announced by Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi as an "election stunt" and "old wine in new bottle" and said it was no solution to the massive unemployment problem in the rural areas. Participating in a special discussion on the yojana opposition members asked how could a "revolution" be brought about by giving employment to people only for fifty to one hundred days in a year. They were particularly critical of the proposal to give central assistance directly to the zilla parishads for implementation of rural employment programme.

Strongly supporting the yojana, Congress-I members said they could not understand opposition members stand on a programme that aimed at mitigating rural unemployment. Defending the proposal to give central funds to zilla parish, they said, what was attempted was "bypass surgery" to improve matters. They wanted more such plans to help the urban poor and educated unemployed.

# Meghalaya: Dead Last

By Glenn C Kharkongor

In the last fortnight, two definitive studies on developmental and social indices have been published. Both studies covered a national spectrum and provided detailed indices, state by state. One is the 15th annual survey called "State of the States", conducted by India's most widely circulated weekly, India Today.

This survey, conducted by Nielsen, a global information, data and measurement company, covered the parameters of education, entrepreneurship, environment and cleanliness, inclusive development, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, governance, economy and health. The 30 states were divided into large and small categories. In the 10 small states, Meghalaya stands last in the overall rankings. Our state is last in tourism and infrastructure, ninth in law and order and education.

The other study was published in Lancet, a prestigious medical journal. Entitled, "Nations within a nation: variations... across the states of India 1990-2016, in the Global Disease Study". The study was based on cumulative data compiled by the Indian Council of Medical Research and the Public Health Foundation of India. They noted that health indices in the states of India, many as large as countries elsewhere on the globe, varied markedly from state to state.

So the Indian states were clumped into four categories. The top group included Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Goa and Kerala. Some of the health standards in these states approach those in developed countries. The two intermediary groups have health indices comparable to other middle income countries. Group 1, the lowest ranked, includes Bihar, Jharkhand, UP, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Assam, Chhattisgarh, MP and Odisha, have health indices similar to the most backward countries on the planet. So it's now official. Meghalaya sits among the bimar states of India, alongside many in the Hindi-Hindutva heartland.

In the low health indices,

women and children are the main sufferers. Reflecting the highest fertility rate in the country, caused by low contraceptive use, the proportion of children aged 0-6 years is the highest in the country (2011 Census). In large families that are poor, the children tend to be malnourished. Our state has the highest prevalence of stunting and vitamin A deficiency. For certain cancer sites, the highest rates occur in Meghalaya, such as laryngeal and esophageal cancer for both men and women.

Because of complex social trends, single-mother headed households are on the rise. Meghalaya has the highest percentage of abandoned women, deserted mostly in the age range of 25-40. Kerala has more woman headed households, but this is accounted for by male work migration. The children of single mothers in our state are less healthy and more prone to dropping out of school.

In education our state has many dubious distinctions. Among them are the lowest ability of children in the Northeast region, highest dropout rate in the country, and lowest pass percentage in the school board examinations. Meghalaya recorded the highest decadal population growth percentage among all states in India between Census 2001 and Census 2011. Our population pyramid with a preponderance of children and youth dictates certain strategic approaches to health and education.

### Failure of governance

Bibek Debroy, an eminent economist, member of the Economic Advisory Council and NitiAayog, says that the road to development starts with good governance. The India Today Survey highlights some strengths of successful states. Most importantly is a good policy regime. Other good indices have surfaced such as safety of women (Puducherry), decentralisation and devolution of powers and functions (Kerala), separate toilets for girl students in 100% of schools (Telangana). Meghalaya figures nowhere in lists of best practices. In

fact, Meghalaya went back-wards and institutionalised centralization of powers through the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority.

At a seminar last week we heard from the Mission Director, State Resource Centre for Women, Government of Meghalaya that the number of rapes, 93 in 2015, has strikingly risen to more than four hundred so far in the incomplete year of 2017. She also reported that among rapes in Meghalaya, in 95.5% of the cases, the rapist is known to the victim.

### The Church: mute bystander

In the overall ranking of small states in the India Today Survey, the three Christian majority states are ranked 6, 7, and 10, the intervening states being Manipur and Tripura. Surely this is a sad commentary on the state of the Christian community, so Westernised in their mindset, but unable to forge ahead developmentally like the frang societies we admire so unashamedly. But the greater failure is the neglect of the poor, widows, orphans, the socially disadvantaged groups that our Bible exhorts us to care for.

Between the opulence of the city churches and the eloquence of the preachers, the poor and needy are shoved aside. A few individual pastors do yeoman work for the marginalized but very little is done by the churches in an organized way. One hears the oft-repeated phrase that the educational institutions serve the community, but many of the prestigious schools and colleges cater mostly to the elite. The Catholic hospitals are run well, other churches are adept at institutional mismanagement.

However hotly one may argue, there is no escaping the fact that in Christian states, the majority of people, themselves Christian, are poor,

and inadequately educated. The throngs of fashionably dressed churchgoers that crowd the streets on Sundays with Bibles and hymnals in hand are not the true face of the Christian community. A prominent pastor once told me that many Christians in the rural areas are ashamed to go to church because they don't have good clothes or cannot afford the bus or sumo fare.

It's not just the apathy of the Church, it's worse than that. Patriarchal policies and practices in the Church have a direct impact on women's health. The high fertility rate, reluctance to use contraception stem from the teaching "that God has given". The inability of women to negotiate safe and protected sex, is because their disadvantaged position in relationships is reinforced by teachings like, "wives should submit themselves to their husbands". These are important factors that contribute to the extraordinarily high maternal mortality rate in the state.

So while in the end we must conclude that the continuing backwardness of our state is a collective failure, those of us who are fortunate to be better off in terms of education and means, must bear a larger share than the more marginalised. But ultimately, culpability lies at the door of government. This government is not solely to blame, but it is surely the latest in a long line of ineffectual governments of unconscionable leaders, carrying forward for almost half a century, a deadly neglect of minimum forms of governance such as policy making. And finally to quote Deuteronomy 5:9 for the sake of our church leaders, the sins of the past are now being visited upon the young innocents into the third and fourth generation.

(The author is from Martin Luther Christian University)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Wine making a potential livelihood

Editor,  
The recently concluded Annual Shillong Wine Festival that was held with much pomp and show had drawn entrepreneurs from far and near to showcase their products. So far the State Government has only provided space for holding this festival. It will have to do more than that. The other factor is that most licensed wine shops which actually are liquor shops that we see around, are misusing the term wine and calling their shops wine stores. Liquor includes a whole range of alcoholic drinks and not just wine. The state authorities should recognize that wine making in Meghalaya can become a thriving livelihood and encourage this nascent activity. There is scope for improving and implementing the same. However, it all depends on whether those in the Excise Department are actually encouraging the production of local wine or they are interested in revenue generation from the liquor business.

Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar,  
Via email

### Neglected roads in Jowai Town

Editor,  
The road opposite Ripnar Gas Agency Jowai, is in an

extremely dilapidated condition and one finds it difficult to ply on this road. Though many pot holes in Jowai Town are being filled up but this particular road is neglected. This road actually needs major repair works. Interestingly this road leads to the Inspection Bungalow and to the Office of the Superintendent Police Jowai. I wonder why this old and much used road is left unattended by the authorities concerned. It shows that the District Administration and the Public Works Department have failed this road. This road is also located behind the Office of the Deputy Commissioner Jowai. We see pebbles scattered all along this road. VIPS who come to stay in the Inspection Bungalow are astonished to find such poor road condition. Elections are approaching yet many road projects are left untouched. This is how public money is drained year after year. Can we be optimistic that a good leader will emerge in 2018?

Meanwhile the road from Jowai to Dawki up to Pynthor Village is equally damaged. Many tourists frequent this road to visit some of the tourist spots in Jaintia Hills hence this road at least should have been in a better condition, but in vain. What are our elected representatives doing? These roads are an indicator of a failed government and a failed public representative. Will anyone listen to our please?

Yours etc.,

Omarga Laloo  
Mynthong  
Jowai.

### Is Govt wrong to ask for Aadhar Card?

Editor,  
Nothing would be as disgusting as the "warning" that you cannot withdraw your money, or you can't even do the normal transactions in your bank accounts. Is this not a threat-like message we are being endlessly bombarded by most of the banks, share-market agencies nowadays? They are bullying us to link all our accounts to our 'Aadhar' ID number. What if we do not share Aadhar card ID with the financial agencies? How could they suspend the bank accounts of citizens? First, the Government asked all citizens, including the poor and deprived sections to open bank accounts. Now it's saying that they cannot withdraw that money if they do not link them to their Aadhar no. Does it not sound suspicious? Is this not the character of a fraudster? Yes, it is a serious crime. It's an unpardonable sin not to allow the public to withdraw its hard-earned money.

Perhaps many are coming to know now what 'Aadhar' is all about. Well, what do we share

with the government to obtain this Aadhar ID card? We share those things which we have not shared with our most beloved wife/husband/parents. The government can reach up to the bone-marrow of our identity. Our ten fingerprints aside, the non-identical images of our two iris (eyes) will be in the kitty of the Government. What might lead to this generous sharing? It could be portentously sinister. It could shake the very "Aadhar" (foundation) of our being on the surface of the Earth. Many logically fear that one could be, fairly or unfairly, tainted with some kind of guilt and offenses.

Of course, for such crucially ambiguous reasons the Supreme Court of India has withheld the linking of Aadhar to our bank accounts. The case is sub-judice now how can the banking sector and mobile companies issue warning after warning and make people nervous?

Government should be a modern day Shylock by asking for a pound of our DNA (identity) so rudely.  
Yours etc.,  
Salil Gewali,  
Shillong

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.

# Antibiotics Resistance and India

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

## BEATING THE RHETORIC

World Antibiotic Awareness week was held in the third week of November. The theme this year centred on the question of safe use of antibiotics in a prescribed form. It also tackles the increasing global problem of antibiotic resistance. To understand the term antibiotic resistance first we have to understand the meaning of the generic term - antibiotic. An antibiotic is a medicine that is used to cure a disease caused by bacteria. This means antibiotics are useful only against bacterial infections. Antibiotic resistance as the term suggests is a phenomenon which refers to resistance developed by bacteria against antibiotics or the ability of bacteria to mutate or change so as to resist the effects of antibiotics. The more a person uses antibiotics the greater his/her resistance becomes to antibiotics. This in turn can pose a serious health hazard when a person suffering from a life-threatening disease cannot recover because the antibiotic administered to the person will not act since the person's body has developed a resistance towards the same. And this problem is the crux of the need for global awareness

critical antibiotics such as cephalosporins and carbapenems, the sales of which are tightly controlled.

Schedule H is a class of prescription drugs in India appearing as an appendix to the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. These are drugs which cannot be purchased over the counter without the prescription of a qualified doctor. The manufacture and sale of all drugs are covered under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules. They are revised from time to time based on the advice of the Drugs Technical Advisory Board, part of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The Schedule H1 list was introduced in 2011 with the hope that it would control the unregulated use of over the counter sale of antibiotics while curbing the problem of antibiotics resistance. However this program has not been as successful as it was envisaged to be. Unlike Schedule X drugs for which a mandatory documentation trail is required, there is no such provision for Schedule H1 drugs which has resulted in flouting of norms. Pharmacists often do not adhere to the rules while manufactures cannot keep

## The Schedule H1 list was introduced in 2011 with the hope that it would control the unregulated use of over the counter sale of antibiotics while curbing the problem of antibiotics resistance.

on antibiotic resistance.

In a country where antibiotics are easily available for sale over and under the counter the chances of antibiotic resistance rises exponentially. In India the infectious disease burden is among the highest in the world and recent reports have shown that the inappropriate and irrational use of anti-microbial agents against bacterial diseases, have led to far more increased anti-microbial resistance compared to other countries of the world. Studies have also indicated that because the health sector in India suffers from inadequacy of public finance in some levels, the chances for conditions favourable for development of drug resistance further increases. Anti-microbial resistance results in difficulty in controlling the diseases in the community and ineffective delivery of health care services.

In 2015, WHO conducted a survey in India which revealed a widespread misunderstanding about the use of antibiotics as well as antibiotic resistance. In India the problem of antibiotic resistance is unique. Those who need antibiotics do not have access to it while others who do not need it have it in large amounts. A large part of the almost 40,000 children who die of pneumonia every year in India do so due to non-availability of requisite antibiotics while others are administered the same indiscriminately. India is perpetually torn between these two sides which therefore hampers efforts to issue any blanket order on administration of antibiotics and regulation on the same. To counter this, the government in 2011 came with the concept of Schedule H1 drugs. The Schedule H1 list, contains 24

track, thereby making the process less effective.

The lack of awareness regarding antibiotic resistance further complicates the issue. As antibiotics are the bedrock of modern medicine needed in a large variety of reasons, increased antibiotic resistance will also result in increased costs thereby making the medicines less affordable for an average consumer or patient. Thus there is an increasing need to address these issues so that the problem of antibiotic resistance does not exacerbate.

The first step towards combating this menace is large scale public awareness. The problem of resistance towards a certain kind of drug had taken the shape of an epidemic in Australia. But over a period of time with sustained efforts the antibiotic resistance has been cut down remarkably. India must follow a similar trend. The general population as well as the health practitioners must be made aware of the dangerous implications of self administration of antibiotics. Doctors and other health practitioners must also teach and counsel patients regarding the same. Pharmacists can be leveraged to counsel those who come to their shops without consultation to buy antibiotics. These people should be encouraged to seek the advice of qualified health experts first. If these small steps are followed then the problem can definitely be solved and the National Action Plan on Antibiotic Resistance is a right step in this direction. As we move into a new era, health challenges are going to morph themselves into increasingly different forms and as a nation we must keep reinventing ourselves to meet such challenges.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

*"If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride - and never quit, you'll be a winner. The price of victory is high but so are the rewards."*

--- Paul Bryant

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.109 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2017

### Heat on ULFA (I)

WHILE former ULFA militants are now mostly for peace, the faction under Paresh Barua called ULFA (Independent) continues to be aggressive. It has been trying to subvert peace talks and extorting money from two tea estates. Fears have been raised about the possibility of the banned outfit causing havoc during the proposed Global Investors Summit due to be held in Guwahati in February. Counter-insurgency forces led by the Army have begun what they call 'area domination' to turn the heat on the rebel group under Paresh Barua. Over the past few weeks, the outfit has been serving extortion notices on the authorities of at least two tea gardens, one of them owned by an MNC, in Tinsukia district. These notices are sent through WhatsApp. Most of Assam's 850 tea estates dot the upper Assam districts of Tinsukia and Sibsagar and they produce more than half of the total annual output of 600 million kg of tea. The two districts have long borders with Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland and are vulnerable to attacks by ULFA (I) militants sheltering in Myanmar.

The ULFA (I) is perhaps on a last ditch offensive as it is facing a severe financial crisis. It is also acutely short of manpower. No wonder the outfit is engaged in the familiar extortion bid ahead of the Global Investors Summit (GIS). The police are trying to prevent any flow of funds to the ULFA (I). The rebels must be disarmed before the Summit as their depredations may adversely affect future investment in Assam from inside the country and abroad.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### An absurd demand

Dr Rongpi, the newly elected Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council has summarily rejected the plea of rigging as accounting for the astounding success of his party in the recent Council election. This is too common a plea advanced by those defeated in an electoral fight and therefore has lost its validity also in this process. The weaker the party, the more glaring is the margin of defeat and therefore the plea of rigging is even less acceptable on that account to an impartial assessment. The rout for the AGP Opposition in the Council has been total

and this alone should have silenced all adverse criticized from a sense of sheer shame implied in it. A more absurd demand is that since there has been rigging, there should be Governor's Rule imposed on the Council. There has been precedent to such an action during the fairly long years the Sixth Schedule has been in operation, and therefore the demand has at least the merit of novelty however thoughtless and absurd in its concept. We surmise that the most vehement in his opposition to the idea would be the Governor himself.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Rule of law imperative in a democracy

Editor,  
On November 26, 1949, the Constituent Assembly under the chairmanship of Dr BR Ambedkar adopted the Constitution of India. Later this day was celebrated as "Law Day." It was the day when the people of the India gave themselves a valuable manuscript, namely the Constitution of India to govern their national life. The framers of the Constitution have drafted it in such a way that makes India a "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic," as mentioned in the Preamble or the introduction to the Constitution. The fundamental aim of the Constitution is to give power to the people. "WE, THE PEOPLE" in the Preamble, permeates all other provisions in the Indian Constitution and is the guiding spirit of the Constitution.

In India, the Constitution vests all power on the people and not on the elected representatives. Dr Ambedkar said that the Preamble embodies the desire of every member of the House that the Constitution should draw its authority and sovereignty

from the people. The fundamental objective behind this celebration is that we submit ourselves to the rule of law. The Constitution mandates India to be governed by the rule of law, which is the basic feature of the Constitution. Henry de Bracton, an English jurist said, "The King is under no man but under God and the law". The dictum, "Be you ever so high, the law is above you" is applicable to all. No person is above the law irrespective of his authority, status, culture, caste, creed and religion. Article 13(2) states that no law should be enacted which runs contrary to the fundamental rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution.

The rule of law is not merely public order but social justice based on public order. The law exists in a society to ensure proper social life. However, social life is not a goal in itself but a means to allow the individual to live with dignity. Indian Democracy stands on the three pillars of legislature, executive and the judiciary, of which the last is the guiding pillar. The Supreme Court is the custodian of the Indian Constitution and exercises its powers of judicial activism and judicial review over the acts of the legislature and the executive. The Supreme Court and High Courts are the defenders of the Constitution, the guardians

of human rights, promoters of peace, cordiality and balance between the different organs of the government. However, the concept of justice does not rest on the judiciary alone. Other organs of democracy also play their part in justice delivery. The press and media are great influencing factors as they help in shaping public opinion. In the 178th Report of the Law Commission, there are a number of simple non-controversial changes suggested in several civil and criminal laws (called miscellaneous). These relate to CPC, CrPC, Transfer of Property Act, Specific Relief Act, Motor Vehicles Act, etc. and can bring about significant changes to speed up the justice delivery system of the country. Let us understand that the Constitution is not just a lawyer's Bible but a sheet anchor of the country's democracy and the charter of the basic rights and responsibilities of its citizens.

Yet, even as there is palpable relief that he has finally become serious after nearly 12 years of 'disappearing and dithering' juxtaposed with "I am anti-dynasty" and "power is poison" eruptions, many wonder how long the 'runaway prince's earnest stint will last given his staccato outbursts and political-organisational experiments as 'de facto leader'

Undoubtedly, given Congressmen's obsession with the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, Rahul will surely act as the glue in a Party with giant sized egos and opinions. Moreover, it is better late than never to formalise the inevitable transition than live in a lingering state of organisational confusion and drift. The new confidence in Rahul stems from his recent pronouncements in US and domestic tours. Make no mistake his elevation marks the beginning of the "Modi Vs Rahul 2019 battle".

Further, with Modi's development plank floundering coupled with rising unemployment, economic slowdown, GST pains, farmers distress etc., are proving to be Rahul's political propeller which is giving the Party a ray of hope. Add to this the social fault-lines with the minorities and Dalits upset over the Sangh Parivar's overdrive.

Certainly, Sonia has been working on this since her ladla's coronation as Vice-President at the 2013 Jaipur AICC session and his ascendancy is her dream come true with her now shifting to being his mentor and guide.

But the moot point is: In a Party which banks and draws sustenance and energy from the Nehru-Gandhi brand, what is

of human rights, promoters of peace, cordiality and balance between the different organs of the government. However, the concept of justice does not rest on the judiciary alone. Other organs of democracy also play their part in justice delivery. The press and media are great influencing factors as they help in shaping public opinion. In the 178th Report of the Law Commission, there are a number of simple non-controversial changes suggested in several civil and criminal laws (called miscellaneous). These relate to CPC, CrPC, Transfer of Property Act, Specific Relief Act, Motor Vehicles Act, etc. and can bring about significant changes to speed up the justice delivery system of the country. Let us understand that the Constitution is not just a lawyer's Bible but a sheet anchor of the country's democracy and the charter of the basic rights and responsibilities of its citizens.

Yours etc.,  
Melamshwa Allya Pakma  
Law Student, 5th  
Semester,  
NEHU

### No hatred for the killers

Editor,  
An unforgettable terror

Rahul's vision, ideas and direction to provide a new disha and a fresh sandesh to take India forward? Does he have the guts and leadership to revamp a Party caught between old timers and his new blood brood? Become a catalyst of an amorphous Party? Are winds of change sweeping the moribund 131-year-old Grand Old Party? Or will he remain our desi Hamlet?

The Congress has put itself where it cannot survive without him. In fact, the Party is today saddled with small time netas who at best can come up with tokenism and "me-tooism". As it has become a prisoner of the highly personalized, even feudal, functioning and outlook. Only those who serve loyalty flourish in the "nomination culture".

The most unpleasant aspect of all this is the withering of internal democracy. It has made the Party hopelessly dependent on initiatives from above and tragically immobile in its absence. Being political parasites, they cannot survive on their own and are as loyal as Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita.

Succinctly diagnosed by a senior leader, "Rahul is sincere, sharply focused and strongly believes in deliverance and output." But is this enough? Given that he will face a complex situation while establishing his status. Others argue that the Party has touched its nadir and can only climb up. In their perception Modi's popularity seems to have peaked and could begin to drop. Yet, they have their fingers crossed as the Gujarat outcome would show whether the Party is headed north or south.

Also, the perennially hopeful Congress believes that its 2014 meltdown can be nursed back with time, political imagination and a lot of luck. They are banking on the time-tested desi theory of political gravity which seasoned politicians in the business of experimenting with power along-with search of political forgiveness and electoral redemption believe in --- no political high-ride can last smoothly forever. Similarly, no crash-landing can be permanently crippling in the periodic love-hate

attack happened on 13 November 2015 in Paris. France has just witnessed another terrorist attack on October 1. Now France has become a stage to manifest hatred versus compassion. While terrorists have shown supreme hatred for human values, marked by an almost cannibalistic pleasure in killing as many people as possible, the taxi drivers in Paris personify compassion against the backdrop of hatred as they silently rescue victims from the danger zone to a safer area or to a hospital without charge. The stage looks like a battlefield. However, it is not a battle between nations or religions but between cultures, specifically between the progressive, secular, liberal variety on the one hand and the dogmatic, fanatical, and medieval at another. It is a battle, so to speak, between Malala Yousufzai and the Taliban.

Society cannot advance without cooperation and tolerance. They are the keys for mutual existence. Our body cannot function if there is a dissonance among its parts. Simple common sense tells us that coordination among all of its parts is a must for smooth running of a machine. Unfortunately, inhumanity is not a Taliban monopoly. Cut throat competition is the hallmark of modern society. Market economy foment

reflexes of Indian voters.

Asserted another senior leader, "Experience shows whenever a Government begins to disappoint people, they turn to the Congress as the natural Party of governance which remains the default system of Indian politics that nobody can wish away. Our electoral history stands testimony to this." However, all is not honky dory given that the Party and the Gandhis' now face unprecedented existential crisis and political challenges, especially when pitted against the ruthless Modi-Amit Shah-led BJP. The task is a steep uphill one as Rahul suffers from an image crisis, aloofness, self-defeating reluctance, political experiments, dithering decision-making etc.

The Party would need to work overtime to rid him of the Pappu' tagline and pay back in the same coin: Trash-the-rival. And if the apolitical foreign-origin Sonia could master her rival's game and come up trumps why can't Rahul? It has a social media team to match the fire of the BJP which is putting across Gandhi's and Congress' counter perspective and highlighting the Modi Government's failures.

However, first Rahul has to pass the internal test to prove his leadership, organisational and political acumen, especially in rebuilding the Congress in States across the country, specially the Hindu heartland where it has been decimated. All eyes are on his performance in the Assembly polls en-route the next Lok Sabha elections.

This is all the more imperative as most of Rahul's solo initiatives since 2013 like holding Youth Congress elections, distancing himself from senior leaders and cosying up to lightweight neo-Congress converts', election strategists read Prashant Kishore have boomeranged. This had created tensions among battle-hardened senior leaders who are by-

products of the Indira-Sanjay school of real politik and propelled up by status-quoist Sonia who dismiss a bookish approach as a non-starter.

In the past several months Gandhi has been making an effort in consultations with many seniors to harmonise the internal equations through a give-and-take collective leadership team to face the Modi-led BJP combine. This marks a balancing act --- acknowledging the wisdom in retaining many with wealth of experience and the need to empower the younger future team.

"There is room for both seniors and youngsters in the party. Yet, with most senior leaders now in their late 60s or 70s, it is an occupational hazard to empower a younger team for the inevitable generational shift," said a Party functionary.

Undeniably, Rahul will face a complex situation while establishing his leadership. The timid mindset which has been developed over the years in the Congress, which attaches a premium to loyalty and sycophancy, will be hard to counter. The darbari culture, which he seems allergic to, can't be genuinely replaced without his own credentials coming under scrutiny. Hence, Rahul will have to be less radical as he establishes himself.

True, he is fighting against his legacy with earnestness but his success will depend on how he acts on changing the moribund Party replete with feudal mindset and move beyond the politics of entitlement, in to a Gen-Next organization to fulfill the surging aspirations of the aam aadmi rearing to go. Having taken expectations sky high with his words, promises and a pledge to put systems right within the Congress, it remains to be seen how much he will be able to deliver and how it will impact his future politics if he is unable to deliver what he has promised. Will he be the Party's Kohli and lead it to victory? Remember, politics is a heartless and unforgiving mistress. ---- INFA

cleanse the greed for pleasure at the cost of others and to take concrete safety measures to thwart such attacks in future.

Now, we will again hear what a Frenchman whose wife has sacrificed her life in the Paris massacre to save their only child, is saying to the terrorists. "On Friday night you stole away the life of an exceptional being, the love of my life, the mother of my son, but you will not have my hatred. I do not know who you are and I don't want to know. You are dead souls. If the God for whom you kill so blindly made us in His image, each bullet in my wife's body would have been a wound in His heart. I will not give you the gift of hating you. You have obviously sought it but responding to hatred with anger would be to give in to the same ignorance that has made you what you are. We are only two, my son and I, but every day of his life this little boy will insult you with his happiness and freedom. Because you don't have his hatred either!"

His words convey a hint of a better tomorrow. There is every reason to be optimistic.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### Huge electoral challenge ahead for Rahul

## Gandhi scion must deliver as Congress chief

By Kalyani Shankar

Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi is likely to take over the reins of his party ending the suspense on December 5. He will be fifth member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to become the president of the 132-year grand old party. The Congress strategists are delighted that in the run up to the elections in Gujarat next month, Rahul Gandhi is getting good response.

Rahul seems to have engineered a remarkable makeover by shedding his reticence and adding a chatty approach to his public image. He has been doing much better campaign and his delivery of speech, the issues he has taken up to attack the BJP clearly indicates a carefully crafted

agenda and a new narrative. The Pachmarhi conclave and Shimla conclave brainstorming sessions had yielded new ideas in the past.

In 2004, the Congress came up with the concept of "Aam Aadmi" which clicked. He needs to have some out-of-the-box thinking to woo the voters.

Secondly, it is vital to build the organisation, which is in shambles. Unfortunately both the mother and son had taken little initiative in the organization all these years. Unless this is done, the Congress has no hope to rule again. The BJP has a strong leader, organisational strength, the support of the Sangh Parivar and unlimited finance.

*"Rahul has reasons to smile as he is being taken seriously. His newfound humour in his tweets and responses are catching up in the social media perhaps because he is able to catch the imagination of the people. Moreover he is no longer just a shrill critic of Modi but raises much calmer issues of importance - both political as well as economic."*

strategy of the party managers. His September US trip showed that he had some careful coaching. After dilly-dallying for 14 years, Rahul himself declared from the US that he was ready to become the Congress party's prime ministerial candidate.

Rahul has reasons to smile as he is being taken seriously. His newfound humour in his tweets and responses are catching up in the social media perhaps because he is able to catch the imagination of the people. Moreover he is no longer just a shrill critic of Modi but raises much calmer issues of importance - both political as well as economic. The GST and demonetisation - the two economic issues he has taken up are important as they represent the discontent among the traders, middle class and others. People who were dismissing him as "Pappu" have sat up to look at him afresh. The bigger change is that the BJP has been responding to the issues he has raised instead of ridiculing him.

Not only senior cabinet ministers but also Modi and Amit Shah have reacted to Rahul Gandhi's charges on economy and other issues. A senior congress leader says, "I don't know what is happening. Earlier we used to request most newspapers and channels to give us some space and they never did. Today, on their own, the media coverage on Rahul and the Congress has increased considerably." The strategists believe that he is on the way to becoming a 24/7 politician. "Once he takes over as the party chief, he might even become more accessible if he wants to make a mark", claims a Congress working committee member.

All this improvement will disappear if Rahul as Congress President does not deliver. It is too early to say whether Rahul's presidency will make a positive difference to the Congress Party because the task ahead is stupendous. Though in the short run nothing much might change, in the long run, Rahul needs to think of a strategy if he is serious about emerging an alternate to Modi. Clearly, Modi-bashing alone is not enough. There are no short cuts except to build an alternative development

Thirdly, the party needs second rung leaders. The Congress had in the past strong state leaders like B.C. Roy, Sanjiva Reddy, Morarji Desai and Y.B. Chavan and also national leaders like Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, and Sardar Patel. An insecure Indira Gandhi had put puppets in the state, which continues still.

Fourthly, a good team with a blend of old guards and the younger leaders is required. The old guard will provide the experience while the younger ones will induce fresh blood. Pedigreed leaders like Jyotiraditya Scindia, Sachin Pilot and Deepender Huda are in his inner circle. Though it cannot be a disqualification he has to ensure others also get importance.

Fifthly, the party has to find ways of connecting with the people. Only this will retain old voters and get new voters. Chanting Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi will not help any more as many youth voters have no clue about who they are. They have aspirations, which need to be fulfilled.

The sixth is to build a good caste coalition. In the past the congress had a winning caste combination of Brahmins, Dalits, Muslims and Backward classes. But they had all moved away due to the emergence of caste and identity based parties. Rahul has to find ways of getting them back by way of social engineering.

The seventh is to build credible alliances. Sonia Gandhi was able to build the UPA in 2004 but it is shrinking. Since it may take a while for the Congress to come to power on its own, the alliance is the next best way to fight the BJP. After all Modi had come to power with just 31 per cent of votes and the rest all are scattered. The efforts should be to ensure that the opposition votes are not split.

It still remains to be seen whether the Gandhi scion can emerge as a formidable opponent to Prime Minister Modi. He has to show his determination, dedication and political astuteness to match Modi's leadership. One visible thing is for the first time the Gandhi scion is enjoying his role as opposition leader. (IPA Service)

“Competition is a process or variety of habitual behavior that grows out of a habit of mind.”

--- Henry Ford

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.110 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2017

### Data Protection

A high-level government committee of experts headed by Justice B N Srikrishna has asked for views from relevant people on data protection. It is an issue of great importance and has special relevance to the increasing scope of Aadhaar linking for different services. The matter is awaiting adjudication by the apex court. The Aadhaar biometric data are now being used for every area of activity ranging from school admission to obtaining a death certificate. What is open to question is that the data provided can be leaked or misused. Besides, the method of collecting data is also questionable. Personal information gets shared among different third parties. Aadhaar linking in day to day transactions is likely to make personal life an open book. The whole exercise violates the right to privacy upheld by the Supreme Court. Such information can be used against an individual for profit or crime. It can profile him on the basis of his caste, religion, sexual orientation, political views and so on. Such exposure naturally causes concern and underscores the need for data protection. It is necessary to institute an independent data protection authority to deal with the use of information by governments and corporations.

It should be ensured that data collected should be used only for the purpose for which such details are collected. The limitation must not be breached and if that is done strict penalties should be imposed. That may include financial compensation or even or even criminal prosecution. A strong cyber security system is definitely called for. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's reassertion of net-neutrality may not be consistent with the official stress on data protection which is becoming all the more important with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Digital India.

### LOOKING BACK

May 5, 1989

### High Court to decide Babri Masjid dispute

The Babri Masjid-Ram Janma Bhoomi dispute will be decided by a three judge division bench of the Allahabad High Court, Home Minister Mr Buta Singh announced in the Lok Sabha today. He said the government of Uttar Pradesh would be moving the matter before the division bench on July 10 when he expected all the parties to the dispute to be present.

Mr Buta Singh was replying to an animated special discussion on the communal situation in the country. A noteworthy

feature of the debate which cut across party lines was that the participants were unanimous in condemning communalism and demanding a statutory ban on all organizations professing communalism.

The Home Minister reaffirmed the government's resolve to combat communalism with a heavy hand but regretted that no state government barring the Uttar Pradesh government had so far set up a "composite" police force for dealing with communal tension.

# Traditional spiritual healing among the Khasis

By FabianLyngdoh

The *kur* (clan) was an institution around which the Khasi thought revolves. Therefore, understanding of the individual life and collective life of the Khasis can only be understood in the context of the *kur*. This article is in continuation of my article, 'Psychology of 'ka rngiew' in Khasi thought.' According to the principles of Khasi thought, the *rngiew* (spirit) of a departed member of the *kur* can be transferred to the new born members in the *kur*. This can be found out through divination or through some signs in the child which reveal the personality of the deceased *kur* member. For example, if there was a maternal uncle in the *kur* who has lost his finger in an accident, or who has been murdered by strangulation, such facts would be recorded in the memory of the *kur* from generation to generation. If in a later generation, a child is born in the *kur* with a particular finger missing, or with black spots around the neck, that child would be 'pynkam-kyrteng' (declared as a replica) of the ancestor who had met with such a fate in his life time because he is considered to have replaced of filled up the position or *rngiew* of the deceased maternal uncle of the *kur* and in society.

This is called 'ban mih-kyrteng' or 'mih-salan.'

A girl child can also take the *rngiew* of one of the departed mothers in the clan. This concept of 'kamih-kyrteng' among the Khasis is different from the doctrine of transmigration of souls in Hinduism. *U kyrteng* (ancestor) whose *rngiew* is temporarily transferred to a boy is considered a guardian angel or caretaker of the boy until he attains adulthood when he has acquired his own *ka rngiew*. The boy on the other hand is considered 'u mih-salan' or 'u kyrteng' which means one who takes the place or fills the gap in the *kur* left by the departed maternal uncle. In the transmigration of souls of the Hindus, the *rngiew* and soul can immigrate from man to man or from man to animal. In the *mih-kyrteng* of the Khasis the *rngiew* can shift only from one human being to another but not to animals. In the transmigration of souls, the soul of a dead man can be reborn in another man, but in *ka mih-kyrteng* the soul

of the dead person is not reborn. The soul of the departed uncle has a separate spiritual existence, and the boy on whom the uncle's *rngiew* is transferred has his own separate soul given by God. The boy as *u mih-salan* simply takes over the footsteps, the position and status of the deceased uncle temporarily for as long as he does attain adulthood and build a *rngiew* of his own. The Khasi elders believe that when a child is sick, it is not due to his/her sin or fault because he/she has not attained the age of discernment. Therefore they appeal to his/her *u/ka kyrteng* not to be disappointed on account of any reason, and to intercede with God for the health of the child. But when a person attains adulthood and has built up his/her own *ka rngiew*, his sickness is attributed to his/her own faults and failings which caused him/her to meet the condition of *ka jem rngiew* (imbalance).

We can observe man's physical form by the eyes; we can gauge his mentality through knowledge of psychology, but to know or see his spiritual personality we have to be able to stand from the spiritual realm. All beings in the cosmos, except man, can clearly see their own spiritual status and the status of others. Even a tiger, a bear or an elephant can see *ka rngiew* of every man and woman, and they can see among men and women who are *ba la jem rngiew* (deranged spiritual personality) or whose spirituality is intact (*ba dang eh rngiew*). Among the living humans, only those persons who have been ordained with spiritual authority as priests of the *kur* can stand from the spiritual realm and see the spiritual personality not only of their own clan members, but of every human being.

As in any other tribe, the Khasis too believe that diseases are caused by the hostile spirits, the ghosts, and even by the spirits of dead clan members, as a punishment for some commissions or omissions which displeased them. They also believe that such spiritually caused diseases must be cured spiritually. There is something among the Khasis called 'ka stad', or 'ka slu-ka pyrsad' or the mysterious spiritual power

which enables the *jha* (practitioner) to heal people from sickness. In the original traditional belief and practices of the Khasis, the chief maternal uncle was the closest in lineage to *ka iawbei* (ancestral mother) who was the chief guru or *jha* of the clan.

The chief maternal uncle of each *kur* keeps a memory of everything about the *kur* together with the names of *ka iawbei*, *u suidnia* and other departed members of the *kur* of many generations in his heart, which are unknown to the other members of the *kur*. The Khasis believe that people would not get sick if there is no reason which displeases the spirits of ancestors, or other gods and goddesses or the demons of the hills and valleys. There must have been some lapses on the part of the sick person or his other *kur* members that weakens his *ka rngiew* and opens an opportunity for the evil spirits to attack. To heal him the *kur* has to submit before God the creator through the intercession of *ka iawbei* and *suidnia*, by calling upon their personal names. If the sick person is a child, it is sufficient to call upon the spirits of *u kyrteng* or *ka kyrteng* of the child. When the *kur* religion is well instituted and powerful, all religious rites necessary for the healing are done by the chief maternal uncle of the *kur* itself, and not by any *jha* from east or west, from left or right. *Ki nongshat-nongkheih* (priests and diviners) of the true religion of the Khasis are the uncles of the *kurs* in each and every *kur* religion who invoked the spirits of *ka iawbei*, *u suidnia* and other ancestors of his own *kurs*, and not the spirits of gurus from the east and the west. *Ki nongshat-nongkheih* in the community religions are those who are appointed by the particular *kurs* who hold religious offices as *lyngdoh* and *sobhlei* or any other religious position in the raid and the hima. No individual man can without the authority of *ka sad ka sunon* (rituals) of his own *kur* appoint himself as a *u*

*nongshat-nongkheih* (priest and diviner) either in the *kur* religion or in the religion of the raid or hima.

Today, many of the so called *nongshat-nongkheih* and *nongkhriam* no longer stand on the holy cult of the *kur*-religion. It was discovered that most of the important secrets of all the present spiritual practices are no longer reckoned to the spirits of *ka iawbei* and *suidnia* of the clans but to the spirits of the dead gurus by calling upon their personal names, which the practitioner has to secretly and reverently invoke during his ritual. Some examples of spiritual mantras are: :- "Sngin la pa snginsngan la pa sngan, u Lak u Shing..."; "koLuhko Duh, Biskorom..."; "ko san guru man guru..."; "heiko Bari bhai Sari b h a i . . . . ."; "lekthiallengshunait bormanigunmathakhabi..."; "O Ramphukamar, BamonKamar" The dots after the mantras indicate the names of the gurus to be called upon from their spiritual realm or *om-shanti*. It is in such cases that many of the writers on the subject of the Khasis' religious rites have to simply write that the *lyngdoh* (priest) recites something only to himself, or they just indicate by writing (. . . . .) for the mantras and the names of dead persons or gods or demons whatever they might be. One elder who was involved in this kind of practice told this writer that he starts with a prayer to God: "O God Lord, Master, and Creator," for establishing the legitimacy of his practice. Then he continues by invoking the names of his gurus, whether three-gurus, nine-gurus or twelve-gurus according to the need of the case at hand. His report clearly indicates that his practice has nothing to do with the names of the *iawbei* and *suidnia* of his clan but to spirits of gurus who constitute the line of spiritual practices which mostly come from tantric Hinduism and other occult practices from neighbouring tribes. So, there are many questions still to be answered with the issues of conserving and protecting traditional healing among the Khasis.

## Rating Agencies Time India junks these

By Shivaji Sarkar

The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank have positive outlooks for India. But the credit rating agencies are yet to budge. Moody's have made a minor upgrade after 14 years to Baa2 and S&P has not budged at all. The big question then is: Is India at fault or the rating agencies? Early this year in May, Economic Affairs Secretary Shaktikanta Das had stated that India was being denied an upgrade even as growth and fundamentals improve. He is right but Moody's have a different take. They say Indian banks have a whopping \$136 billion in bad loans (Rs 12 lakh crore as per Indian estimates, including the write-offs). It says India's debt situation was not as rosy as the government maintained and its banks were a cause for concern.

The S&P kept the rating it had given in 2007 unchanged at BBB minus, a notch above the junk status, with stable outlook but commenting that there are vulnerabilities stemming from low per capita income and high government debt balance -- fiscal deficit. Both agencies have doubts about the repaying capacities.

They may be correct. But the agencies also need to answer why they had kept the ratings low during 2004, when the country ruled by NDA I under Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee showed remarkable improvements in forex reserves, GDP growth, fiscal balance, inflation, farm growth, jobs, manufacturing and other related economic and political areas. It gave the country the epithet of 'India shining'.

Most rating agencies had put India even then -- after 13 years of the ushering in of globalisation and liberalisation reforms -- in junk grade. The Government needs to ask them this pointed question. The 2004 was landmark in many ways. For the first time economic growth more than doubled at 8.2 per cent in 2003-04 compared to four per cent a year ago.

Did not the rating agencies overlook this? The effect of this was seen in the subsequent years of the UPA regime, when the growth continued to rise to touch global best. Had India got higher ratings in 2004, today's controversy would not have been there.

This was not reflected in the ratings by international agencies. This should be a matter of deep study. If the Narendra Modi government has raised the issue with them, they have to answer as it may not be about the functioning of the present government but why they have committed the historical blunder.

India continued to lead the global growth even when the US and Europe suffered the worst sub-prime crisis -- upheaval in their financial institutions -- in 2007-08. Even the US and other government banks and financial institutions collapsed under the worst mismanagement of their economies.

India was doing well at that time. The rating agencies played truant despite accepting that India managed its economy well. They have to answer to the Indian people today for reneging. It should be considered either a great failure on their part or if it is willful then a crime.

Moody's Vice President William Foster now says that India's potential is higher than BAA-rated nations. So should the debt alone be the criterion to keep

India-rating suppressed?

But first, let's look at the similarities. Both the agencies foresee stronger GDP growth of approximately 7.5-7.6 per cent over the forecast horizon of next few years. The slowdown to 6.5-6.6 per cent caused by demonetisation and GST implementation-led currency growth, beyond which growth is expected to rebound.

While Moody's attributed the impending growth revival to multiple reform measures taken up by the government recently, S&P linked it to stronger consumption growth, comfortably high foreign currency reserves, political stability and robust democratic institutions.

Well now with so much of positivity, do they have a reason to suppress the outlook? India is definitely showing improvement in many ways. It has an unparalleled political stability. Modi's whirlwind tours have improved the image of the country across the globe. India is having new business partners. It is giving leadership to the world economy not only in BRICS, Pacific region but even is challenging the G-20 and G-8 leadership to reckon it as equal.

China's reported debt surged to 264 per cent of its GDP at the end of 2016, from 193 per cent in 2009. In contrast, India's debt fell to 66 per cent of its GDP from 72 per cent. The World Bank and IMF ratings though accepted as reality by both the agencies are at best ignored. The two have their problems but they accept that India is definitely not in the junk grade.

The S&P says India's rating reflects its strong GDP growth, sound external profile and improving monetary credibility. These, it said, are "balanced against vulnerabilities stemming from the country's low per capita income and relatively high general government debt stock." Even Fitch has ignored the progress of India and kept the rating unchanged. Is it not then tendentious to keep the rating low?

What could be the motive? The agencies certainly are not favourably placed for India. They feel that a higher realistic grade for India would benefit it globally. The Indian corporate could get credit at cheaper rates. But that could be upsetting the pie. India getting credit at lower rates also means it would make credit dearer for western contenders. An India growth is envy for many countries which are still grasping. Even the US sees difficulty in managing its economy despite some positive indications.

A mood surge in Indian markets is still not good news for countries who have been exploiting the country through various machinations. One aspect is to keep the rupee at a low parity. It makes goods in India expensive while the western nations benefit as imports for them become cheaper. In international reckoning India since 1966, the first devaluation of rupee has been a loser.

Globally, howsoever, diplomatically they may look friendly the countries play such games through various bodies like these agencies. India needs to be cautious and challenge, as rightfully now they have done, in accepting the ratings. India needs to promote its own credible rating agency and junk the international ones. ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### Is the law protecting an accused?

Editor,

Apropos the news item carried by your paper on October 7, 2017, "Engineer held in rape of minor," wherein one Mr. Lumlang Nongbri was named as the accused, I would like to raise some disturbing concerns, for reaction from concerned citizens. Already the numerous cases of rape, assault and violence against women in Meghalaya, that have been reported in the media in 2017 and the slow pace of the judicial system, is extremely worrisome for many. In this particular case, the Police Department need to be commended in terms of the swift initial response and registering the case under the relevant sections of the stringent POCSO (Protection of Children From Sexual Offences) Act and completing all the preliminary formalities as far as the victim is concerned.

However, it is extremely puzzling and unfathomable, that the accused was taken

from the Police Station directly to the Civil Hospital, Shillong on October 5, 2017. Here, he enjoyed protection and the comfort of the hospital for a considerable amount of time. It is nearly two months since the incident and the accused is still undergoing treatment, now in a private hospital of the city, with the permission of the court. Some shockingly disturbing questions need to be asked: Did the incident lead to such a serious illness in the accused that he requires nearly two months of treatment? When was the last time the accused was in hospital for such a long time and for what illness? Has there been a Medical Board constituted to examine the seriousness of the ailment/s of the accused? Has an investigation been carried out about any earlier incident concerning the accused? Is it so easy to callously evade arrest even under a stringent POCSO Act? Isn't this an invitation to other such persons that they have nothing to worry

from the Police Station directly to the Civil Hospital, Shillong on October 5, 2017. Here, he enjoyed protection and the comfort of the hospital for a considerable amount of time. It is nearly two months since the incident and the accused is still undergoing treatment, now in a private hospital of the city, with the permission of the court. Some shockingly disturbing questions need to be asked: Did the incident lead to such a serious illness in the accused that he requires nearly two months of treatment? When was the last time the accused was in hospital for such a long time and for what illness? Has there been a Medical Board constituted to examine the seriousness of the ailment/s of the accused? Has an investigation been carried out about any earlier incident concerning the accused? Is it so easy to callously evade arrest even under a stringent POCSO Act? Isn't this an invitation to other such persons that they have nothing to worry

traffic...) will take its course?" All of us experience daily, the speed of the Shillong traffic - "dead slow and stop!" Parents and citizens need to be really, really concerned that even if the accused in such a case (where the child is a minor) is apprehended he can enjoy long periods of relief in hospital. The real question is: WHO IS BEING PROTECTED?

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to alert the citizens of the State regarding this matter. I would also urgently appeal to the Honorable Chief Minister and Home Minister of Meghalaya, in the interest of so many suffering victims, (particularly children), to intervene so that speedy justice is seen to be done.

Yours etc.,  
C. Noronha,  
Via email

### Let's "Vote for Change"

Editor,  
Election is at the

threshold and we can feel the highly charged political atmosphere in the State. Politicians are busy visiting houses, meeting people, attending functions etc. Political parties vie with each other to woo the voters through their political scheming. Candidates of rural constituencies, especially those in far flung areas, are seen frequenting those places where they were seldom seen at other times. As usual they will dupe the simple people with yet another list of development projects. Once the elections are over and they are elected, you can be sure that not even their shadows would be seen in those places. All of them would have cosy homes in the city where they can live a comfortable life. Therefore they will never experience the hardships of those people who live in those villages. This is the reason why roads in rural areas remain as miserable as they were three decades ago. Just think of the roads going to Rangblang, to Rambrai, to Balat or to Mawkyrwat which are important

townships (I am sure in Garo Hills the condition of rural roads would be equally bad if not worse). If roads to these towns are as bad as they are, how would the condition of roads be to the interior villages? In most of these villages, electricity is a distant dream. Besides these, health care and education are in a deplorable condition. If missionary schools and dispensaries were not there, these poor people would have been deprived of the most basic human needs. All these things prove that our veteran politicians have failed to deliver on their promises. Some of them have been in power for fifteen to twenty five years but without much impact on development.

The West Khasi Hills has typical leaders of this sort who rank very low in the scale of development. It is time now that veterans should make way for young blood. It is a fact that many young politicians in our State, are performing exceptionally

well. They seem to be more development-oriented than their predecessors. Given the chance, many of the budding politicians could spring surprises. The people of Meghalaya should now "vote for a change" or "vote for development" and nothing else. Issues of religion, denomination or ethnicity, should be put behind. People should also put an end to selfish motives and think of community development. At times it is the craving for such personal benefits that facilitates political manipulation of the voters. The culture of "money for vote" should never be tolerated by any right-thinking citizen of our State.

Yours etc.,  
Barnes Mawrie sdb  
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.