

“*Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard, are sweeter*”
--- John Keats

The Shillong Times

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Unnao rape: Slur on modern India

STATES likes Uttar Pradesh have been a byword for lawlessness for ages. A bifurcation of the large state into two some years ago did not help Uttar Pradesh change its ways. The case of gang-rape of a teenage girl in Unnao by a BJP MLA in 2017 scripted a new chapter in the state's history of lawlessness. Under tremendous public pressure, the MLA has been jailed and a CBI inquiry ordered, apparently to silence the people. But, the persecution of the girl as also her family, who filed a complaint with the police, continues. The latest was the incident in Rae Bareli, Sunday, when the vehicle in which the girl, her lawyer and relatives were travelling was hit upon by a truck that had its number plate blacked before the hit - a usual tactic adopted by gangs in premeditated road rages. The past two years saw several incidents of persecution of the family, even as the girl approached the chief minister and state police chief for protection. Surprisingly, the police protection that had been given to her did not help avert the present tragedy - in which the girl is fighting for her life in a hospital and two of her relatives were killed as a result of the truck hit. The security personnel assigned to the girl's protection avoided accompanying her when the incident took place.

So much was happening after the girl filed her complaint about rape. Her father had been attacked by the MLA's kin and the man died while in police custody after he - and not the MLA's kin -- was arrested for "illegal possession" of firearms. An uncle of the girl too had been killed allegedly by the family of the MLA. Another uncle is now in jail on real or false charges slapped on him. All these go to show that the government of Yogi Adityanath has failed to protect the life of a harried girl and her family who are facing grave provocations and threat to their lives. It is not unusual for cops in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar to side with the accused and harass the victims in similar situations. Politicians in power have the extra edge. What cannot go unnoticed is India's numero uno chowkidar himself is silence personified. The chowkidar who promised to guard the lives of the people and the girl-child and the wealth of the nation did not speak a word so far on this matter. This goes to show that the election gimmicks that PM Narendra Modi and others play have no real meaning.

TO THE EDITOR

Shame of Unnao

Editor,
The Unnao rape incident has indeed shaken and shattered the very fabric of democracy in our country. Is ours really a democratic or plutocratic government? Going by the shocking story of the ordeal of the rape victim, a girl aged only seventeen years is beyond description. She and her family's untold miseries and mishaps that were inflicted upon them by the Unnao sitting MLA and his stooges reeks of completely lawlessness in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is a classic example of how the powerful and the influential can commit heinous crime and easily escape the strong arms of the law here.

As per the statement of the girl, prior to the tragic events, it was the Unnao MLA, Kuldeep Singh Sengar who raped her at his residence on June 04, 2017, when she went in to seek the help of the MLA to find her a job. Her father was arrested on false charges and beaten by the police and the MLA's men when he wanted to lodge a complaint with the police. Some days later her father was

succumbed to his injuries.

On July 28, 2019 the rape victim and her lawyer were seriously injured and her two family members died when a truck struck their car. This tragic incident has not happened naturally but as per a well-scripted conspiratorial plan. Moreover, the truck had blackened the license plates, and the police officers assigned to provide security to the alleged victim were not present. The lame excuse offered by the security was that there was not enough space to accompany the victim in the car. This is a glaring lapse on the part of the police security as well. Why is the UP government not taking action against the erring MLA?

Why does the UP government dilly-dally on the decision of arresting the MLA and all his other accomplices even after they committed such heinous crimes? Whom is Yogi Adityanath afraid of? The UP government is not supposed to take too much time on this case especially when the issue has shaken the conscience of the country. So, everyone is

looking to the UP government to see them whether they are taking strict and stringent action against the MLA who is believed to be the mastermind behind all the connected crimes subsequent to the rape.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
Via email

The illogical logic

Editor,
When logic turns malleable like warm plastic it may lead to disastrous consequences. When no logic was respected in the matter of the Balakot Air strike then the satellite imagery of Reuters and World View-2 are in vain. No sound reasoning was ever used to correlate damaged mobiles (300 of them) with the alleged slain terrorists. It is a fact that the Jaish-e-Mohammed terror camp is intact, though jingoism and nationalism had invented an unprecedented tsunami that had done the job. It was designed to win elections for the BJP with the exception of Kerala thanks

Fast-Track Legislations

Speed not haste needed

By Dr S. Saraswathi

Opposition parties in the well of the House, and the remark of a Congress leader that the government had "acted in blatant disregard of the traditions" are mainly against the legislative procedure in the Parliament.

The Bill to replace the Companies (Amendment) Ordinance 2019 in the Lok Sabha was opposed by several parties for introducing the Bill without prior notice or inclusion in the list of business for the day showing haste in enacting the law.

The Unlawful Activities Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2019, which allows the government to declare an individual as a terrorist was passed in the Lok Sabha with 284 members voting for and eight against. The

The Bill to replace the Companies (Amendment) Ordinance 2019 in the Lok Sabha was opposed by several parties for introducing the Bill without prior notice or inclusion in the list of business for the day showing haste in enacting the law.

Opposition walked out calling the law "draconian". A global survey may show that such a legal provision already exists in many countries. Opposition parties, fearing misuse of the law against them, want its reference to a standing committee.

Lok Sabha passed the Triple Talaq Bill to replace the ordinance passed earlier. Suspecting the motive of the government in introducing the "criminality" clause and pushing the legislation, the Opposition parties demand reference to a select parliamentary committee.

At the background of this demand is the passing of some crucial Bills introduced by the government. Among them is the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill 2019, which seeks to bring in changes in the salaries and tenures of the Chief Information Commissioner and the Information Commissioners and placing them on a status equal to similar officials of the Election Commission. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha defeating the motion moved by the Opposition to send it to a Select Committee. Protest by

Bills word by word and line by line to save Parliament's time. But their recommendations are not binding.

Statutory committees are indispensable aid for law-making in all democracies. Being small in size with flexible functional arrangement and assigned a specific purpose, they are able to examine Bills more minutely than a large assembly. They serve the twin purpose of saving Parliament's time and providing thorough scrutiny of issues. The importance of stakeholder consultation to address all related issues was recently stressed by the parliamentary committee examining the Land Acquisition Bill. But, laws are part of politics and very often, reference to committees is a strategy to delay, postpone and kill

legislations.

All Bills undergo three readings in Parliament as in Britain. In the second reading, a Bill may be referred to a Select committee of the Rajya Sabha or Joint committee of the two Houses or circulated to elicit opinion. Clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill follows after the report of the Committee. It may be passed only on the third reading.

Despite all precautions, our legislative enactments sometimes betray clear marks of hasty drafting and absence of parliamentary scrutiny to the annoyance of both implementers and affected persons. There are several examples of hasty legislations requiring amendments in quick succession.

In this first session of Modi II government, 15 Bills have been cleared so far without reference to a standing or select committee. Whether it is a sign of "enhanced" productivity of Parliament or "hasty legislation" is not difficult to find out and will openly show when the laws come into force.

Fast-tracking legislative procedure has become necessary due to obstructive tactics often

played by parties in stalling legislations at various stages and disrupting the proceedings of the Houses for days at a stretch upsetting the legislative programme of the elected government.

Fast-tracking does not mean inadequate consideration and should not be confused with hasty legislation which implies insufficient scrutiny and indifference to details. It denotes speed, but not haste.

Fast-track legislations are common in other countries also. The British Parliament passed The Surrogacy Arrangement Act in 1985 in a rush to meet public uproar over commercial surrogacy and made it a criminal act. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974, The Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Security) Act 1998, Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, and Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 may be cited as fast-track legislations in Britain necessitated to counter serious national security problems.

However, such legislations are criticised for various reasons like constrained parliamentary scrutiny and possibility of enacting bad and unwanted legislation. They cause undue pressure on the process of legislation and on campaigners to convince the stakeholders. Executive dominance is seen in fast-track legislations, which is wanted in dealing with emergencies and long pending problems and when parliamentary Opposition is non-cooperative.

"Parliament should never legislate at the speed at which I am proposing unless it is convinced that there are overwhelming reasons for doing so", said a former Secretary of State for Justice in Britain questioning the need for speed in a case. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) noted some years ago that a good number of countries often were making hasty legislations against the media in the interest of security.

India presently needs fast-track legislation to make up for the loss of parliamentary time, but not hasty and half-baked laws.--INFA

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

any end to this anytime soon.

Regarding water from the moon and the possibility of human settlements there I have listed some of the world's wealthiest who could avail of the prospects. They are Jeff Bezos, Jim Radcliffe, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Bernard Arnault, Carlos Slim and Amencia Ortega. The earth would take one billion years to cool down after the Big Bang.

From space Neil Armstrong looked at the beautiful earth but feared its fragility. Thus, since 1969, we had plundered mother earth to the extreme. It appears there is nothing left at all for our children and grand children. If we substitute war and hate with peace and love, we have a fighting chance to survive. Thus amidst scientific explorations and achievements there is no space or time to gloat whatsoever.

Yours etc.
M.Khyriem.
Shillong- 15

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New Foreign Minister
Diplomatic Deftness Vs Political Acumen

By Dr D.K. Giri

S u b r a h m a n y a m Jaishankar has been the 'most surprise' choice of our Prime Minister, as the Foreign Minister, in Modi 2:0 Cabinet. By now, we all know that Modi is capable of springing surprises every now and then, in policy making, government formation, and appointment to other key positions and so on. No problem there. But if some surprises militate against the fundamental organising principle of democracy, we may have to worry about its long-term consequences.

Let me share the source of my discomfiture and apprehension that prompted me to do this piece. It was the remark of a senior politician, who rose from grassroots to be an MLA for 20- odd years, a Cabinet Minister in the State for 15 plus years, Chief Minister for a year and Member of Parliament now in his fourth term. He made a serious point on democracy, in passing, as I assist him with research support in his parliamentary works. He said, "Dr. Giri, you, as an intellectual could be my advisor, a sounding-board, you cannot be my leader, as you are not elected by the people". I grudged a bit as my instant but quiet reaction was that merit may not get due recognition if election becomes the sole criterion.

This is exactly what is being cited and commended: 'Modi chooses merit over other considerations' in the appointment of Dr. Jaishankar, the former Foreign Secretary. But, as a student of politics, I saw the veteran politician's point, and he was spot on, that in democracy what comes first is people's mandate. It is another matter that due to various practical distortions and structural anomalies in our electoral system, not-so-desirable candidates get elected.

Surely, we cannot throw the baby (democratic norms) with the bath water (unwanted winners). Can we? Our leaders seem to be doing the same. As they do not find talented leaders, they are drafting them from other professions, beyond the electoral (democratic) process. The late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi started this process, and the present Prime Minister is copying him.

Rajiv Gandhi brought in quite a few individuals and made them Ministers. Prominent among them is Dr. Manmohan Singh, who went to become the Prime Minister for 10 years, two consecutive terms, without winning any election. He is, indubitably, one of the most qualified persons, was the most educated Prime Ministers of the world. But look at his leadership as the PM, it leaves a lot to desire. He was "an accidental Prime Minister", said his media advisor, in a book, and many commentators regarded him as a lame-duck Prime Minister.

Is the present situation or appointment comparable? Will Jaishankar prove to be a weakling of the Prime Minister? As a civil servant he was a policy wonk, an astute thinker, a talented diplomat. He has had a great personal equation with Modi. When he was an ambassador in China, Modi visited the country to apprise himself of Chinese model of growth and development. Modi was in USA as the Prime Minister after his visa ban, and Jaishankar was then the Ambassador in Washington DC.

Then he was brought as a Foreign Secretary by Modi in supersession of his senior in the Foreign Service. He served ably for three years including an extension of one year. After his retirement, he was heading the global affairs department of Tata until Modi won a bigger victory in Parliament elections and called Jaishankar back as the Minister for External Affairs. Observers point out that it has not happened for the first time. K. Natwar Singh was MoS in the same Ministry. He too was a career diplomat. Anyway, Natwar Singh's

stint as a Minister was not so commendable; he left the party afterwards and spilled the beans about the 1st family of the Congress, namely Sonia Gandhi. Not a happy ending to his political career.

At any rate, why do I pick Jaishankar when Modi has five Ministers in the Cabinet with bureaucratic background? Jaishankar comes from my alma mater, in-news Jawaharlal Nehru University; from an able bureaucratic family; his father was an IAS officer with deep knowledge of defence matters, headed Indian Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis for 13 years or so. While I wish Jaishankar well in his new position and tasks, I am taking him as a case in point for two reasons.

First, he is individually and professionally highly competent, and second, foreign affairs is considered to be 'high politics', too sophisticated to be comprehended by traditional politicians. These two reasons would perhaps have prompted Modi to choose Jaishankar to be the Minister of External Affairs, and thereby a member of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

Again these two points are contentious, seen from a political-democratic perspective. When a Minister is chosen by a party-in-government, the individual should have embraced the ethos, ideology, perspectives and policies of the party. This is a simple, universally accepted political parameter, which a politically astute Prime Minister Modi should not miss. Having said that and disappointed to see that, in competitive electoral, majoritarian politics, the numbers matter.

So even BJP, 'a party with a difference' is accommodating anybody into the party regardless of any party political scruples. This is 'compulsion of numbers', as Manmohan Singh reckoned with 'coalition compulsion' in compromising with things that he perhaps did not want to. Without such political grooming and grounding, even a fine diplomat like Jaishankar may dither. Let me illustrate this point. In Raisina Dialogue in 2018, the former US General David Petraeus said, "India has to decide; India has to take side, in the new world order shaped by rising China and resurgent Russia". Jaishankar is said to have replied, "India indeed must take a side -- its own one". Here is the moot point. Is this BJP-led government's position? Such a stand reminds one of non-alignment, neutrality, etc.

From an anti-colonialism, then non-alignment, then engagement, and now to taking positions,

India's foreign policy has evolved. Jaishankar has worked with the BJP-led governments for 10 years and 30 years with non-BJP (mostly Congress) governments.

The other reason is the so-called high politics of foreign affairs, what are the objectives of our foreign policy. They are to promote our national interest, ensure our security, safeguard our sovereignty, contribute to our growth and prosperity, enhance our stature, influence, and role in the comity of nations. These are aspirations that can be articulated by those who have lived through conditions obtaining across the country. These are experiential wisdom and aspirations which can be gained only from the ground where democracy rests. One wonders, if bureaucrats who leaf through files and spend all their time in conferences and meetings can imbibe these people's aspirations. I would like to be wrong. But am I?---INFA

(The writer is Prof. International Politics, JMI)

“*Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality.*”

--- Carl Sagan

The Shillong Times

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Firm no to triple talaq

IN a historic moment, the Triple Talaq Bill has turned into law. While uncertainties plagued this initiative of the Modi government since its first term, the way was clear with Parliament passing the bill via careful canvassing of selective Opposition support. The Presidential assent turned the Bill into an Act and the proclamation through a gazette notification has been issued. Admittedly, there is some disquiet about certain aspects of the new law, like making the talaq system a criminal act. This would mean a jail of three years for such men, as also a fine. On the positive side, the Modi government has mustered courage to effect a social transformation even if this is limited only to the Muslim community. Muslim women were at the receiving end for long years. An order by the Supreme Court in the Shah Bano case in 1985 to make men committing triple talaq accountable had been nullified by the then Congress government headed by Rajiv Gandhi. The issue persisted and acquired more seriousness in the new age when rights and dignity of women are increasingly acknowledged and respected. A divorce, irrespective of religions, has to be a much contemplated act and a last resort after all avenues of reconciliation have failed on the part of a married couple. The law of the land is clear about this.

Chanting the talaq word thrice or sending a text message in a jiffy and effecting a marital separation is among the harshest of human acts. The claim that there is religious sanction for this is questioned by progressive Muslims themselves. Notably, even Islamic nations are among the over 20 nations that have banned the system. A question raised by those who opposed the legislation in Parliament, including AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, was on the criminality and jailing clauses in the law. Their poser was how a man can provide maintenance to the divorced woman if he served a jail term for three years. Point to note is also that if criminality is not attributed to talaq, the tendency to resort to it will be more. It can be argued that the BJP-led government has a vested interest in promulgating this law on Muslims, who are seen to be anti-BJP and pro-Congress. On the surface, this might look likely. But, the significance of the new law as a revolutionary step cannot be ignored or wished away. This law is welcome.

TO THE EDITOR

Potable water a fundamental right!

Editor,
For various reason we don't find too many underground water sources (springs) in Shillong nowadays. In my earlier days we used to get our drinking water from these sources. Now we get water from the Municipality but it is heavily polluted for reasons best known to the authorities. For over a year now we have been getting water laced with grease which remains even after boiling the water twice over and filtering it. In this regard I suggest to the Municipal authorities that 'Dissolved Air Flootation' treatment would be successful in delivering 500 million liters of potable water every day to the Shillong population. The Bengaluru Water Supply Board has adopted this technology eight years ago. Dissolved Air Flootation system is used for the primary stage removal of suspended particles in water which is distinctly different from the conventional methods of reducing turbidity. Our conventional methods involve chemical coagulation to group particles into flocks

and giving them time to settle down. In the Dissolved Air Flootation system, tiny air bubbles are injected to the water; particles adhere to the bubbles and float to the surface forming a layer of froth that is removed intermittently. The conventional method in fact is not able to take advantage of the low turbidity in the water here because coagulants are necessary for flocculation of suspended particles. By adopting this technology turbidity in the raw water remains well under 10 NTU (Nephelometric Turbidity Units). This will make it possible for the plant to run in what is called direct filtration mode, where water is taken directly to the filtration tank, by-passing the clarifiers thereby reducing chemical and electrical consumption. This will also reduce costs. This technology would require less civil works and therefore lower the cost. This technology is now acceptable in many Indian cities since it also tackles the problem of algae. Algae can choke filters, which is common in the conventional settling systems. I suggest that our Shillong Municipal Board

can contact The Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board to get the technology in order to provide good drinking water for the Shillong residents.

Yours etc.,
Kamakhya Bhattacharjee
Shillong -3

Death of a coffee dream

Editor,
The tragic death of Cafe Coffee Day founder V G Sidhartha has resulted in a political slugfest and also corporate boardroom wars over 'tax terrorism' that allegedly played a role in driving the 55-year old businessman to death. Fishermen preparing to set out to sea found Sidhartha's body about 5km from Netravati Bridge from where he is believed to have jumped into the river. Speculations are running rife that he took this extreme step due to the torment by federal tax sleuths and relentless pressure from a private equity investor to buy back the shares it held in Coffee Day Enterprises, which owns and runs the Cafe Coffee Day chain. At the same time, the opposition

leaders slammed the Narendra Modi government for terrorising businessmen who are anything less than effusive in their support of its policies. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said, "I hear from different sources that captains of industry in the country are under pressure. Some of them have left the country, and others are planning to move out." A tweet from the Karnataka Congress's Twitter handle squarely blamed the tragedy on the harassment by income tax officials, and the former Karnataka chief minister and senior Congress leader Siddaramaiah said Sidhartha's death is both disturbing and mysterious. The reasons and the invisible hands that ended his life in this tragic way should be unearthed through impartial and fair investigation. Something is fishy about the circumstances that led to Sidhartha's death. It must be thoroughly investigated, and the truth regarding this should come out without delay. Yours etc., TK Nandanam, Via email

Meghalaya: Where Government is the enemy

By Patricia Mukhim

different business ecosystem and insists on timely delivery of products would rather cancel the deal. And this is actually happening with manufacturers in Meghalaya! This is just one of the problems. There are many others. I wish the Chief Minister gives a patient hearing to these young entrepreneurs before they throw up their hands in disgust! Also first generation entrepreneurs are not in a position to bribe their way through. They prefer to do clean business; not to make deals! Those who have had a tryst with the bureaucracy know exactly how frustrating it is to deal with them. In fact they believe in confounding you to the point of exasperation. One thing that the bureaucrat will throw on your face is the rule book. But that rule book is kept aside when the greedy palm is greased. The rules are such an easy alibi. And there are innumerable rules all entangled and impenetrable. If you want to see the cold, distant, unconcerned, inhuman face of the state, then think bureaucracy! This is a cohort (with some honourable exceptions) that attaches a lot of unnecessary self-importance to itself. They can look without seeing and listen without hearing and like someone has rightly quipped, "They proclaim decisions that can change people's lives with the indifference of a butcher slicing a piece of steak." Bureaucrats thrive in ambiguity and avoid giving their independent judgment even when they know full well that a decision is crucial to someone's well-being. Now let me come to another issue that has been hanging fire in this state for a long time now. Bureaucrats would have us believe that the decision is pending because it is a hot potato. That is a decision concerning minority institutions. Article 30 of the Constitution mandates the setting up of minority institutions for which purpose the National Commission for Minorities Educational Institutions (NCMEI) Act, 2004 was enacted. Under this Act certain provisions are laid down for the establishment

and administration of minority educational institutions. While some Christian institutions have already been given minority status in Meghalaya others have not been accorded that for reasons best known to the Government. This despite enlightened rulings by the Supreme Court from time to time. It appears that the Social Welfare Department has to list out the institutions deserving of that status and notify that. But fearing that there may be some kind of political backlash, governments in the past have decided to keep this matter in the freezer. Samples of some Supreme Court decisions in the matter of according minority status to an institution are cited here. In Andhra Pradesh Christian Medical Association vs. Government of Andhra Pradesh, AIR 1986 SC 1490, the Supreme Court held that the Government, the University and ultimately the Court can go behind the claim that the institution in question is a minority institution and "to investigate and satisfy itself whether the claim is well founded or ill founded." A minority educational institution continues to be so whether the Government declares it as such or not. When the Government declares an educational institution as a minority institution, it merely recognizes a factual position that the institution was established and is being administered by a minority community. The declaration is merely an open acceptance of the legal character of the institution which must necessarily have existed antecedent to such declaration (N. Ammad vs. Emjay High School (1998) 6 SCC 674). A Society or Trust consisting of members of a minority community, or even a single member of a minority community, may establish an institution. This position has been clarified by the Supreme Court in State of Kerala vs. Mother Provincial AIR 1970 SC 2079, where it was observed that "Establishment means bringing into being of an institution and it must be by a minority community. It matters not if a single philanthropic individual with his own means starts an institution or the

community at large founds the institution or the community at large contributes the funds. The position in law is the same and the intention in either case must be to found an institution for the benefit of a minority community by a member of that community. It is equally irrelevant to this right that in addition to the minority community, others from other minority communities or even from the majority community can take advantage of these institutions." In the light of this and other decisions it is high time that the Government of Meghalaya gives an impartial treatment to all institutions deserving of minority status and not sit on this issue, ostensibly for political reasons, before someone approaches the court of law for redressal. Another matter that is of concern is that even universities set up by the State of Meghalaya find it so difficult to get clearance for purchase of land to set up a permanent campus. While the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) repeatedly marks institutions negatively for not having their own campuses, when the institutions do try to acquire the necessary land for creating necessary infrastructure the Government (Revenue Dept) itself sets up several hurdles. This is halting the progress of education in Meghalaya. But why would bureaucrats bother? Their children are all educated in premier schools, colleges and universities outside Meghalaya and many of them abroad. Hence they have this dog in the manger attitude when it comes to institutions in their state. It almost appears as if the Khasi Thlen is out to devour its own. The Education Minister of Meghalaya should learn to override silly bureaucratic decisions. He has to inform himself from other sources as well and not rely on an abstruse, rule-bound, insensitive bureaucracy. The reason why so many people approach the courts is precisely because the bureaucracy has become the enemy of the people. I would, however, add a rider here. There are bureaucrats and there are bureaucrats. Not all fit the mold above: some are, in fact, progressive but they are too few to make a difference.

Divided Opposition facilitates BJP Supremacy

Congress fails as a credible leader

By Arun Srivastava

Once again the same old story was seen to be replayed on the floor of Rajya Sabha. Notwithstanding their pledge to defeat the Triple Talaq Bill the left and secular parties helped the BJP government to turn into a law abstaining from voting. If these forces had not abstained from the voting the bill must have been defeated. What made these parties to turn their back to the pledges made to the people, particularly to the Muslims is not clear but there is no denying the fact they betrayed their trust in them. It is really incomprehensible that in a house where the opposition outnumbers the BJP government, how could the controversial bill sail through? At least 22 opposition members including five each from the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, were not present in Rajya Sabha during voting. Besides, Congress and SP, senior NCP leaders Sharad Pawar and Praful Patel and one member each of Trinamool Congress, DMK, IUML, CPI and Kerala Congress were also missing during voting. This certainly smacks of a well-planned design. Significantly just before laying of the Bill on the table of the house, the BJP had issued a whip and directed its members to be present in the house. But the opposition parties and their leaders, except the Congress, did not issue any directive to their members. Obviously this raises many questions. Though the Congress has issued a whip it is unlikely the five MPs who abstained from the upper house would prefer to clarify their conduct. The Modu government got the 'The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019', passed in Rajya Sabha with 99 members voting in favour and 84 against it. Tactically instead of being absent from the House the opposition could have used its strength for forcing the government to send the bill to a Select Committee of the house. This could have saved the prestige and image of the members. Since the 22 members were already committed to Modi they did not resort to this mechanism. In fact the resignation of Congress RS MP Sanjay Singh on the same day from the house and also from the party makes their intention clear. The other four Congress MPs who abstained were Vivek Tankha, Pratap Singh Bajwa, Mukut Mithi and Ranjib Biswal. Their deception projected Modi as the hero of modern India. It provided a historic victory facilitating the government to clear Raj Sabha test to pass a bill ban the practice of instant oral divorce. The United opposition that claimed to stand like a rock to block Narendra Modi's agenda crumbled miserably. The absenteeism of the CPI sent the message that the party lacks political wisdom. There is huge difference between what the Party practices and preaches. There is no command of the Party on its legislative wing. The Party leadership must have issued concrete directive to the MP. Abstaining from the vote does not boost the image of the party. The most deplorable has been the stance and approach of the JD(U) on this issue. Its supremo Nitish Kumar has been giving the impression that he was opposed to the Bill and had asked his MPs to oppose it using their full might. The decision of four parties AIADMK (13), Janata Dal-United (6), BJD (7) and BSP (4), to walk out at the time of voting tilted the balance in the government's favour in this game of nerves. Another big jolt to the

opposition came with NCP Supremo Sharad Pawar and his party colleague and former civil aviation minister Praful Patel abstaining during the voting. The fact of the matter is these parties actually supported the Bill. They were aware of the fact that their absenteeism from the house will help the government achieve its mission. True enough its members spoke against the Bill during the debate but later walked out at the time of voting. Undeniably Nitish fooled the Muslims. Actually he was dancing to the tunes of the BJP. It is a fact that JD(U)'s decision to walk out of the Upper House tilted the delicate balance in favour of the government and against the opposition's unity. The behaviour of the leaders of these parties has forced Muslims to speak of alternate mechanism. It underlines that they have been completely marginalised?' What was most surprising was the stand of Lalu Prasad's RJD. He claims to enjoy the support of Mu. His M-Y combination is famous across the country. But the RJD members too went out of the House during the voting. Did they resort to this after taking the Muslims into confidence? These secular parties take Muslims for a ride and frighten them by saying that if Muslims don't vote for them, then the BJP will come and establish the Hindu Rashtra. Yesterday's development is fraught with a perilous situation. It cannot be denied that Muslims may develop apathy towards the electoral system. This would be the most serious situation for the country and its polity. In fact a discussion is going on in Muslim society that they must hold onto the Congress party only, but there is a small percentage of Muslims who say it does not make any sense to be with the Congress, instead focus on education and economic development. It is a known fact that JD(U)'s opposition to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill had in fact derailed Modi's effort to pass the law just before the Lok Sabha 2019 election. Once Modi came to power second time, Nitish did not change his stance. It has to face stiff resistance in introducing the bill in the newly constituted Lok Sabha. But suddenly JD(U) made a volte face and helped the Modi government to grab the desired object. This is not the first time that the opposition leaders helped Modi and his government. They favoured him on the issue of Right to Information bill. The opposition was badly divided on the RTI Bill. The situation was bad that the opposition could not force a division on the issue. Congress deputy leader in Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma said: The government is disrupting Parliament by hurriedly passing legislations without scrutiny. Sensitive Bills that impact a substantial mass of society must be debated thoroughly". Paradoxically the opposition leaders are not concerned about their prestige and dignity and also their image. They willfully fell victim to Modi's machinations. He ensured complete absence of cohesion in the opposition rank. The role of the opposition parties on the issue of passage of the NIA Amendment Bill was questionable. The Congress ended up voting for the Bill. It is yet to come out with a candid explanation. (IPA Service)

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“ *To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float. ”*

--- Alan Watts

The Shillong Times

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Water is Life

MEGHALAYA has recently come up with a Water Policy but implementing the Policy will require that some things are streamlined. The State had legislated the Meghalaya Protection of Catchment Areas Act 1990 but discovered that implementing the Act is a tall order because of the multiplicity of institutions whose jurisdictions overlap. As a result the Act is infructuous and water sources have been surreptitiously privatized. Incidentally the Water Policy in its draft form was not discussed with the major stakeholders - the people of Meghalaya. Yet again this is a top-down approach. Ironically the Deputy Chief Minister, Prestone Tynsong said that community participation alone can make this Policy work. If a Policy is already in place, then people are only expected to conform without being consulted. Does the Government have all the wisdom? Aren't the users of water more able to throw light on the daily problems they face? Unless problems are clearly understood how can Government come up with solutions? Most of our rivers including the two major ones that flow through Shillong, namely the Umshyrpi and Umkhrah have been heavily polluted through anthropogenic activities throughout their length and breadth. People are now in the habit of dumping garbage into rivers. Will they stop doing that merely because a Water Policy is in place?

Government language is of course loaded with purple prose. It says the "Water Policy intends to achieve sustainable development, management and use of water resources with community participation. This will improve health and livelihood and reduce vulnerability among the people. This will also assure of good governance for present and future generations through integrated water resources management and environmental sustainability." This looks good on paper. It is the implementation part that is challenging.

The Policy has also outlined the protection of catchment areas and prevention of river pollution. As rightly envisaged, community participation is integral. The Government says it will reach the villages with this Policy. Considering the water stress around the world today, Meghalaya had better take heed. Many localities still allow drilling of underground water. Today when the ground water levels have receded so drastically the Policy must ensure that drilling of underground water is halted and that rain water harvesting is executed in more scientific ways so that surface water does not run off but is recharged into the ground. In fact there is need today to even recycle and reuse grey water from the kitchen and bathrooms excluding sewage water and directing it into a filtration tank for use in gardens and toilets etc. These are matters that require public awareness. The Water Policy will work only if the public accepts it in good faith. However, the Policy is a welcome step!

Water crisis has taken global dimensions

Time for United Nations to intervene

By Conn Hallinan

It is written that "Enannatum, ruler of Lagash," slew "60 soldiers" from Umma. The battle between the two ancient city states took place 4,500 years ago near where the great Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together in what is today Iraq. The matter in dispute? Water.

More than four millennia have passed since the two armies clashed over one city state's attempt to steal water from another, but while the instruments of war have changed, the issue is much the same: whoever controls the rivers controls the land.

And those rivers are drying up, partly because of overuse and wastage, and partly because climate change has pounded the region with punishing multi-year droughts.

Syria and Iraq are at odds with Turkey over the Tigris-Euphrates. Egypt's relations with Sudan and Ethiopia over the Nile are tense. Jordan and the Palestinians accuse Israel of plundering river water to irrigate the Negev Desert and hogging most of the three aquifers that underlie the occupied West Bank.

According to satellites that monitor climate, the Tigris-Euphrates Basin, embracing Turkey, Syria, Iraq and western Iran, is losing water faster than any other area in the world, with the exception of Northern India.

The Middle East's water problems are hardly unique. South Asia-in particular the Indian sub-continent-is also water stressed, and Australia and much of Southern Africa are experiencing severe droughts. Even Europe is struggling with some rivers dropping so low as to hinder shipping.

But the Middle East has been particularly hard hit. According to the Water Stress Index, out of 37 countries in the world facing "extremely high" water distress, 15 are in the Middle East, with Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia heading the list.

For Syria and Iraq, the problem is Turkey and Ankara's mania for dam building. Since 1975, Turkish dams have reduced the flow of water to Syria by 40 percent and to Iraq by 80 percent. According to the Iraqi Union of Farming Associations, up to 50 percent of the country's agricultural land could be deprived of water, removing 124 million acres from production.

Iran and Syria have also built dams that reduce the flow of rivers that feed the Tigris and Euphrates, allowing salt water from the Persian Gulf to infiltrate the Shatt al-Arab waterway where the twin rivers con-

verge. The salt has destroyed rich agricultural land in the south and wiped out much of the huge date farms for which Iraq was famous.

Half a century ago, Israel built the National Water Carrier canal diverting water from the Sea of Galilee, which is fed by the

Ethiopia is currently building an enormous dam for power and irrigation on the Blue Nile. The source of the Blue Nile is Lake Tana in the Ethiopian highlands. The Egyptian Nile is formed where the Blue Nile and the White Nile-its source is Lake Victoria in Uganda-converge in the Sudan at

“*Syria and Iraq are at odds with Turkey over the Tigris-Euphrates. Egypt's relations with Sudan and Ethiopia over the Nile are tense. Jordan and the Palestinians accuse Israel of plundering river water to irrigate the Negev Desert and hogging most of the three aquifers that underlie the occupied West Bank.*”

Jordan River. That turned the Jordan downstream of the Galilee into a muddy stream, which Israel prevents the Palestinians from using.

Jordanian and Syrian dams on the river's tributaries have added to the problem, reducing the flow of the Jordan by 90 percent.

And according to the World Bank, Israel also takes 87 percent of the West Bank aquifers, leaving the Palestinians only 13 percent. The result is that Israelis on the West

Khartoum. Relations between Egypt and Ethiopia were initially tense over water but have eased somewhat with the two sides agreeing to talk about how to share it.

But with climate change accelerating, the issue of water-or the lack thereof-is going to get worse, not better, and resolving the problems will take more than bilateral treaties about sharing. And there is hardly agreement about how to proceed.

Through its International Finance Corporation, the

“*The Middle East's water problems are hardly unique. South Asia-in particular the Indian sub-continent-is also water stressed, and Australia and much of Southern Africa are experiencing severe droughts. Even Europe is struggling with some rivers dropping so low as to hinder shipping.*”

Bank have access to 240 litres a day per person. Israeli settlers get an extra 60 litres a day, leaving the Palestinians with only 75 litres a day. The World Health Organization's standard is 100 litres a day for each individual.

At 4,184 miles in length, the Nile River is the world's longest and traverses 10 African countries. Brazil disputes the claim. It is Egypt's lifeblood providing both water and rich soil for the country's agriculture. But a combination of drought and dams has reduced its flow over the past several decades.

World Bank has been pushing privatizing, arguing that private capital will upgrade systems and guarantee delivery. In practice, however, privatization has generally resulted in poorer quality water at higher prices. Huge transnational companies like SUEZ and Veolia have snapped up resources in the Middle East and global south.

Increasingly, water has become a commodity, either by control of natural sources and distribution, or by cornering the market on bottled water.

Lebanon is a case in point. Historically the coun-

try has had sufficient water resources, but it has been added to the list of 33 countries that will face severe water shortages by 2040.

Part of the current crisis is home-grown. Some 60,000 illegal wells siphon off water from the aquifer that underlies the country, and dams have not solved the problem of chronic water shortages, particularly for the 1.6 million people living in the greater Beirut area. Increasingly people have turned to private water sources, especially bottled water.

There are solutions out there, but they require a level of cooperation and investment that very few countries currently practice. Many countries simply don't have the funds to fix or upgrade their water infrastructure. Pipes lose enormous amounts through leakage, and dams reduce river flow, creating salt pollution problems downstream in places like Iraq and Egypt. In any event, dams eventually silt in.

Wells, both legal and illegal are rapidly draining aquifers, forcing farmers and cities to dig deeper and deeper each year. And, many times, those deep wells draw in pollution from the water table that makes the water impossible to drink or use on crops.

Again, there are solutions. California has made headway refilling the vast aquifer that underlies its rich Central Valley by establishing ponds and recharge basins during the rainy season, and letting water percolate back into the ground. Drip agriculture is also an effective way to reduce water usage, but it requires investment beyond the capacity of many countries, let alone small farmers.

Desalinization is also a strategy, but an expensive one that requires burning hydrocarbons, thus pumping more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and accelerating climate change.

As the Middle East grows drier and populations in the region continue to increase, the situation will get considerably worse in the coming decades.

The Middle East may be drying up, but so is California, much of the American Southwest, southern Africa, parts of Latin America, and virtually all of southern Europe. Since the crisis is global "beggar thy neighbour" strategies will eventually impoverish all of humanity. The solution lies with the only international organization on the planet, the United Nations. (IPA Service)

Yours etc.,
D Bhutia,
Guwahati

Triple Talaq bill has some positive features

Opposition should not judge it through political prism

By Sagarneel Sinha

Since the passage of the Triple Talaq Bill by both Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, there have been criticisms that it was passed by the BJP led NDA government with a selective mentality to criminalise the Muslim men. According to them, BJP, "which is anti-Muslim in nature", is trying to attack the community through this Bill - which has now become a law. Actually, it seems that the problem is not with the Bill but with the BJP government. It is this political prism which is mostly responsible for this criticism.

Truth is it is not about which party - BJP or Congress or Left or some other party - brought this Bill, it is about providing justice to Muslim women who are divorced by this evil practice - which itself is un-Islamic. The bill makes the practice of giving instant divorce common in the Muslim community a punishable offence. Critics say - Why not make it a civil law? They also say that after the historic verdict of the Supreme Court in August, 2017, already the use of instant divorce is void. So when the divorce itself is void then why to bring such a Bill that also criminalises Muslim men?

Obviously, the exercise of instant divorce after the apex court's ruling stands void. But what critics are ignoring is that even after the verdict there have been cases of instant divorce of Muslim women by their husbands. According to Law Minister Ravishankar Prasad on the floor of the Rajya Sabha (July 29) there have been 574 cases of instant triple talaq in the country after the Supreme Court's verdict. It means that despite the Supreme Court banning instant triple talaq, the cruel practice still continues against Muslim women. So, to stop this, obviously a deterrent is required. For that a law is required and that's why the Bill was passed. Not to forget that, even the Supreme Court itself had asked Parliament to bring a legislation on this matter.

It is true that the uttering instant triple talaq now legally does not invalidate the marriage after the Supreme Court's order. But the point is many Muslim men are practicing it - that's why there are 574 cases affected by this practice - even after the verdict. The punishable offence provided in the Bill is to punish those Muslim men who are still practicing this cruel practice against Muslim women.

There is also another question by critics as to who

would offer alimony to the Muslim woman if her husband is sent to jail. Here, I would say that there are laws where married men are criminalised for committing murder, rape or robbery. So, according to this logic, it would means that no criminal men should ever be punished as they are married!

And the section who are saying that when Hindu men are not penalised then why to do the same for the Muslim men, this is not true. First of all, we should understand that instant triple talaq is practiced only in the Muslim community. However, not to forget that, there are laws that penalise Hindu men. If one reads the Hindu Marriage Act (also extended to Sikh, Buddhist and Jain), the individual would find that it criminalises bigamy where Indian Penal Code 494 and 495 are applicable accordingly. IPC 494 has the provision of imprisonment up to 7 years while in IPC 495, the incarceration can extend up to 10 years.

Just compare this with instant triple talaq case, where the provision of imprisonment extends up to 3 years. There is also another law named Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code which applies to husband or relatives of husband for cruelty against women. Cruelty here means driving a woman to suicide or causing any grave injuries to her life or health - including mental health - also including harassment in the name of dowry - and if convicted the person would be sent to jail for up to 3 years under this law.

Another thing is that the common comparison of instant triple talaq with that of the women entry case in the Sabarimala temple is not identical. Because, the case of instant triple talaq is un-Islamic - not related to faith - while in case of Sabarimala, it's a matter of faith. We should remember what the only dissenting judge Indu Malhotra of the Supreme court's panel hearing the case, who also herself happens to be a woman, had to say about the Sabarimala case. She had said that the petitioners demanding for the entry of women in the temple are not directly affected by this and were not the devotees of God Ayappa of the Sabarimala temple. She also further stated that the practice was a tradition based on faith and it doesn't override Article 25, which allows one to practice religion of one's choice.(IPA Service)

Online newspapers for parliamentarians

Editor,

It is heartening to know that the Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha has provided an option for online papers to be delivered to the members in lieu of physical copies from next session onwards The decision taken during Zero hour is a highly appreciable gesture especially towards ensuring paper free environment and encouraging seamless flow of information.

The decision to go paper free is optional but the same needs to be carried out as a mandatory measure. As most of the members have access to emails and technology, it is high time that both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha adopt paper free office environment and implement the

same to ensure seamless communication. The Lok Sabha Secretariat may also adopt the best practises to encourage paper free environment, from the other parliamentary bodies like the European Union, the United Nations Secretariat and the UN General Assembly which follow a robust paper free documentation system.

Further an effort should be made by the Hon'ble Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs to provide details of private member Bills, Bills amended and tabled through a news website regularly. An extensive effort is highly necessary now to reach out to the public to disseminate Parliamentary proceedings of regular updates through news portals and leading newspapers.

Yours etc.,
Varun Dambal
Bangalore -72

Of unfulfilled electoral promises

Editor,

The promise made by Narendra Modi before the 2014 election campaign that Rs15 lakh would be deposited in everyone's Savings Bank account if black money stashed abroad was brought back. The promise has not yet faded from public memory. Recently the people of Munnar were victims of a WhatsApp message. The prank had caused a mad rush for the Munnar post office where everyone tried to open a Savings Bank account expecting to get the promised money of Rs. 15 lakh deposited as the message said, 'Whoever wants the Rs.15 lakh dole should open an account with the India Post Payments Bank.'

It was this mischievous WhatsApp message that

sent people to the nearby post office by the hundreds. But the harried post master, K Murugaiah, though tried his level best to dissuade the people who had lined up before the post office and told them that it was only a rumour and such amount of money would not be disbursed by the Central government. But people were not in a mood to pay heed to his request.

It may be pertinent to note that Modi's 2014 campaign pitch on the Rs.15 lakh deposit had become an issue in the 2019 general election in Kerala, where the BJP did not win a single seat. It may be recalled that Suresh Gopi an erstwhile superstar who contested on a BJP ticket, had thundered before voters that Modi had not said Rs. 15 lakh would be shoved down the gullet of everyone but merely assessed that the

amount could be deposited if the black money was brought back, stressing on the 'if.' However, the majority in Munnar are Tamilians and they might not have listened to the ill-conceived speech of Suresh Gopi. But it is a question of attitude here as to whether people should believe Suresh Gopi or if they even understood what he had spoken regarding the Rs.15 lakh.

What is to be underlined here is the promise of Narendra Modi during the election campaign in 2014 and the promise is deeply embedded in the psyche of people, especially, the rural folks. The poor people of this hill town are still looking forward to this coveted amount. The BJP party has a responsibility to clear this canard doing the rounds in this hill town.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
Via email

Disinvestment of LIC

Editor,

If newspapers reports are to be believed, the Union Government has initiated steps to disinvest the LIC of India, which, as of now is 100% owned by the Government of India. This is extremely sad, more so because there is underlying intention of handing over, perhaps, the best financial institution of the country, to private hands. LIC, despite its shortcomings, has done yeoman's service to the nation, contributing 25% of the five-year plans, all for the purpose of nation building activities.

Though in the first innings of the present NDA government, massive disinvestment programs were kept in abeyance, in the

current innings, it is more than making up by taking such steps which would definitely be harmful for the Country. Disinvestment, as such is not bad, if commoners and retail investors are given an opportunity to be part-owners. But, if the underlying intention is to handover to the private entities, then it would be extremely harmful to the nation.

During Vajpayee-led first NDA government, many public-sector entities were handed over to private owners, without due diligence. The long-serving Chairman of GAIL, recently quit in protest against the Government's move to split the Company into two, and thereby handing over, this public sector company to private entities.

Another move by the Government to garner funds by way of Sovereign Bonds is a matter of concern, as this

Kerala gears up to combat calamities with new tech

Flood-resistant housing is attracting attention in the southern state

By K Rajendran

In the run-up to the observance of the first anniversary of the torrential floods that wreaked havoc in Kerala claiming 483 lives and causing a loss of Rs 310 billion (Rs 31,000 crore), many Keralites are now graciously remembering architect Laurie Baker, who had relentlessly campaigned for building eco-friendly, low-cost houses that could withstand natural disasters in this ecologically fragile state. For a common Keralite who is still passionate about building pompous bungalows, this has been the lesson from the 2018 floods.

“Till last August, I was dreaming of a superb 3,000 sqft multi-storeyed mansion. But today, I prefer a simple and pretty ‘green’ building which can withstand all kinds of natural calamities,” said Mukundan Menon, who lives in Thiruvananthapuram city. His change of heart was despite the fact that last year’s floods had not affected him in any way.

According to the government of Kerala, 2,51,227 houses were damaged in the aftermath of the flood. Of them, 14,886 had collapsed irretrievably. Most of those houses that had collapsed have now been rebuilt or repaired. But, can they withstand yet another calamity?

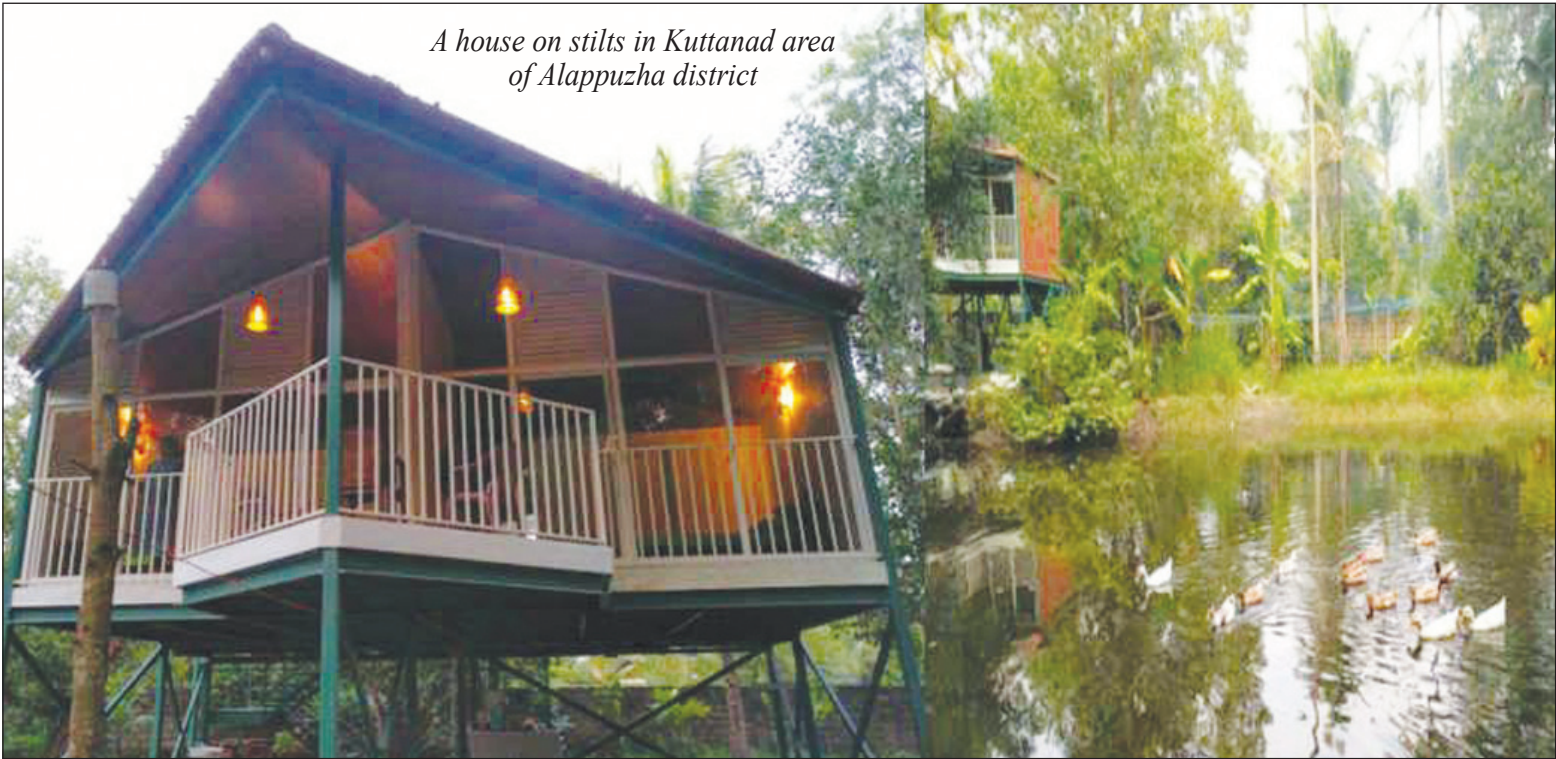
“We cannot ensure safety unless and until all the future constructions in the state strictly adhere to environmental norms,” warned PH Kurian, former convener, Kerala State Disaster Management Authority.

Eco houses thrive in sinking delta island

Villages and urban centres in Kerala were both badly affected by the 2018 flood. Many cities and towns have already recovered. But in the villages situated in the ESAs (environmentally sensitive areas), spread over 9,993 sq km of fragile region, anxiety still persists.

Mundrothuruthu, the ‘sinking delta island’ in Kollam district, which is situated at the confluence of Kallada river and Ashtamudi lake, has been routinely facing climate change-related issues. Houses, offices and roads have been getting flooded during high tides. In the last floods, at least 200 houses in this village collapsed.

P Rajendran, a resident of the island, was one of the victims of the floods. His well-furnished concrete house was completely destroyed. In fact, 10 months after the calamity when Mongabay-India met with Rajendran he sounded unperturbed and optimistic. His new house, a 550-sqft ‘pre-stressed house’ consisting of two bedrooms, a hall, a kitchen and a toilet, was built by the teachers and students of TKM Engineering College, Kollam, funded by



the college alumni.

Since his childhood, floods and climate change-related calamities have been a regular occurrence. In fact, Rajendran sounded confident: “My pre-stressed house can withstand any disaster. Look how strong its foundation is.”

The Rs 600,000 house was built within a short span of 30 days.

“We used pre-fabricated, pre-stressed technology for concrete panels which are 30 times stronger than traditional construction materials. They can hold out against any kind of natural calamities,” said S Ayoob, Principal, TKM Engineering College.

Apart from two more houses that are being built in Mundrothuruthu island, a set of ‘infill houses’, low-cost eco-friendly houses, the brainchild of TKM Engineering College, will be erected in the worst affected Pandanoor and Buthanoor villages in Alapuzha district.

Despite its environmental volatility, tourists continue to visit Mundrothuruthu. The scenario in its low-lying areas, however, does not present a pretty picture. The walls of the traditional houses here, most of them owned by fishermen, look soaked, the persistent rattling of saline wind being the villain. In fact, in the middle of the remnants, on the shore of a rivulet, stands the tiny but striking house owned by 67-year-old Gopinathan.

“Sleepless nights are over, today I am perfectly safe,” asserted Gopinathan. His home, that dovetailed many aspects of the amphibious building style, was donated by a political party.

These days the island is a beehive of researchers, environmentalists and philanthropists with innovations for safe houses.

Nanma Girish, a civil engineer and co-founder of Nestabide, has been trying to experiment with the Maasbommel (situated in the Netherlands) model of amphibious buildings in Mundrothuruthu.

“Related to my research I have recently visited amphibious buildings in Maasbommel. These kinds of buildings can withstand most of the challenges faced by the people of Mundrothuruthu,” said Girish.

During normal days, the Netherlands model amphibious house, like ordinary houses, rests on the ground, but when floodwaters come, its buoyant foundation lifts it up.

“At least 200 houses have to be immediately reconstructed. All models are being meticulously scrutinised. We have to make sure we can afford them,” said Binu Karunakaran, president of Mundrothuruthu Grama Panchayat.

Prefab houses boom in Kuttanad

Like with Mundrothuruthu, flooding was not a new phenomenon in Kuttanad, a region in central Kerala that lies around 1.2 to 3.0 metres below sea level and is famous for its bio-saline farming and houseboat tourism. However, the floods last August were the worst ever here in modern times, with thousands of houses being flooded. About 270,000 people had to be evacuated and 8500 hectares of paddy fields were destroyed.

Here, some elevated houses being constructed in ‘prefab style’ are ushering in fresh hope.

“More than my safety, I want to allay the fear of tourists who come here. That’s why I am erecting a prefab house at a cost of Rs. one

million,” said K. Unnikrishanan, who runs a homestay in Kuttanad.

Another new prefab house situated in Kavalam is owned by Ramani Maniyan whose house had collapsed in the deluge. This house is unique as it has been erected over 1.2-metre high pillars and is made with sun steel, concrete panel and non-asbestos roofing sheets, etc.

“It can resist a deluge of last year’s force and an earthquake of the magnitude of 7 on Richter scale,” assured George Mathew, a construction expert who revealed that Ramani’s house was built through the support of the Kerala Mariners Forum.

‘Not just for the poor’

In urban centres, too many people are now preferring eco-friendly independent houses. Taking a cue from this trend, construction companies are redrawing their plans. The most popular houses in this segment are the ‘Habitat houses’ constructed by noted architect G. Shankar, who was a disciple of Laurie Baker. The house was built in a one-cent plot at a cost of Rs. 500,000. It can resist floods and such other natural calamities, according to G. Shankar who heads the Habitat Technology Group at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala’s capital city.

For spearheading the awareness campaign, a model house has been showcased at the Police Guest House in Thiruvananthapuram. It is a 495-sqft, three-storied house. Its architecture, pillaring, plastering, etc have been meticulously done to withstand natural disasters. Pillars have been constructed with treated bamboo, mud and concrete. Plastering has been done by using mud tiles, coconut shells and treated bamboo. This small but pretty

house has two bedrooms, living area, kitchen and a bathroom.

“This house can sustain itself as any other concrete structure. In case of calamities like floods, the inhabitants can rush to the third storey and stay there until the time they are evacuated,” Shankar explained to Mongabay-India.

In association with the government and various organisations, Habitat has constructed at least 250 such houses in flood-affected regions.

The ‘call to action’ message that has been in circulation in Kerala in the last 10 months, has had its effect. Many construction groups have come up with flood-resistant designs, and some have constructed different kinds of eco-friendly homes across Kerala. No one wants to take chances. Everyone wants to avoid another disaster at any cost.

“Housing literacy” has been a term lingering in all deliberations on rebuilding Kerala. Indeed, Kerala needs a housing policy with the backing of strong but implementable laws.

“We have been focusing on creating awareness. Everyone in Kerala must be made aware of how to protect themselves,” said Sekar Kuriose, Member Secretary, Kerala State Disaster Management Authority.

A handbook on flood and landslide resilient housing in Kerala, published by the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority is being distributed in schools, libraries, etc. No other time is more pertinent than now to remember the vision of the great architect Laurie Baker who had said: “Cost-effective houses are not just for the poor, they are for everyone.”

(Mongabay/IBNS-TWF)

Preen your skills for green jobs

By Ranjan K Baruah

We are always looking for clean air and water and this is possible when we have a clean environment. We are already aware about climate change and how it is affecting our Mother Earth. It is important that everyone of us to contribute to the environment positively.

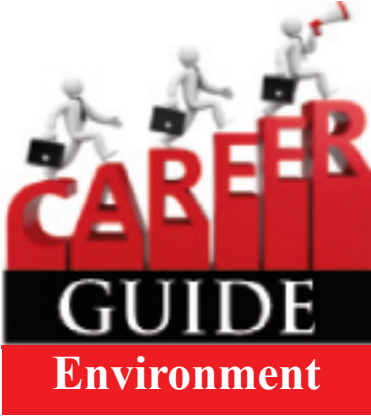
In this regard we can think of our careers related to environment and also think of green skills. Let us understand what are green skills and green jobs. This will help us in choosing our careers related to green future.

According to National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Australia, green skills mean ‘technical skills, knowledge, values and attitudes needed in the workforce to develop and support sustainable social, economic and environmental outcomes in business, industry and the community.’

According to European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), green skills mean ‘abilities needed to live in, develop and support a society which aims to reduce the negative impact of human activity on the environment.’

There might be other definitions but in simple words, we can say skills which are important and necessary for the safeguard of our Mother Earth and which will add towards sustainable development.

Similarly, green jobs are decent jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment, be those in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency. Green jobs are must for mitigating climate



change and preserve our nature. Green jobs are central to sustainable development and respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion.

In today’s column, we are publishing about short-term skill training courses which are offered by different institutions all over India. Interested students may visit the website of ministry of environment forest and climate change for further details. Educational qualification varies from course to course and courses are offered in different locations and may not be available in all regions or states.

Few courses are : Certificate course on Para-taxonomy [including Peoples Bio-diversity Register (PBRs)]; Certificate Course on Pollution Monitoring (Air & Water/Soil Pollution); Certificate Course on Waste Management (Solid Waste, Biomedical Waste, Plastic Waste, E-Waste, Construction & Demolition Waste); Certificate Course in Valuation of Eco-system Services and Green GDP; Certificate Course on Forest Fire Management; Certificate Course on Water Budgeting & Auditing; Certificate Course in River Dolphin Conservation; Certificate Course in Community based conservation of Mangroves Ecosystem; Certificate Course on Plantation Techniques and utilization of Renewable Energy in Arid Zone; Certificate Course on Bird Identification and basic ornithology; Certificate Course on Bird Migration and Migration Study Techniques; Certificate Course on Laboratory technicians/ Technical Assistants for energy efficiency, star labelling and other electrical testing for environmental criteria; Certificate Course on Laboratory Assistant for Eco-friendly Food Testing Laboratory; Certificate Course on Plant Tissue Culture Techniques and its Applications; Certificate Course on Emission inventory; Certificate Course on Wildlife Management using Geospatial Techniques.

Skill Council for Green Jobs is one of the most recently launched initiatives of the Government of India aligned with the National Skill Development Mission. It is promoted by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Confederation of Indian Industry. The creation of the SCGJ was approved in the 10th meeting of National Skill Qualifications Committee held on September 28, 2015. Green skills would lead to green jobs and aspirants from different streams may try and choose courses related to their interest so that they can make their career related to same and contribute towards our environment in a positive way.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor, skill trainer, motivational speaker and can be reached at 8473943734 or bkranjan@gmail.com for any career related queries)

‘Every person’s life story is a lesson’

Actor-lyricist-author **Deepak Ramola**, the founder of Project Fuel that collects life lessons from people, was recently in Kolkata. In an interaction with Swati Gautam, Ramola spoke about his book Itna Toh Main Samaj Gaya Hoon and also his life journey. IBNS brings excerpts of the conversation

Tell us about your relationship with Kolkata.
I never say no to coming to Kolkata. And this is because of two reasons. Firstly, I find myself in the city and secondly, people here are very open-hearted. In last eight years, when I had asked my parents to travel with me, they had chosen Kolkata.

You have repeatedly mentioned relationships and water (rivers) in your poems. Why so?
There is a connection. We are born out of the relationship between mountains and water. I was told by an elderly person during my travel that unexpressed sorrows pile up to become mountains. Too many sorrows make a strong mountain. She also said one should also float the sorrow if one finds it difficult to understand. So mountains and water have so much strength that they can give relief to people suffering from sorrows.

You have also written for films. How did you get such an oppor-



tunity?
I am writing since Class VII. At one point of time I had developed the desire to write songs. I was not sure whether I wanted to write songs for films or people or theatre. I had no such context. I am fortunate to have

written several songs for films. My first film in which I had worked was *Manjhi — The Mountain Man* which starred Nawazuddin Siddiqui. I was 18 then. I was in Mumbai for my education and then I used to act in films. There I came across Sandesh

Shandilya who was working in the film. He introduced me to Gulzar saab who is my favourite lyricist. I spent my first evening as a lyricist with Gulzar saab. Then I met filmmaker Ketan Mehta who had described the protagonist in the film.

How did you get to know so many languages?
Firstly I have a love for languages. I am curious to know languages and poems. I have been teaching in various schools in different cities since 17 years of my age.

How did you get into teaching?
My mother studied till Class V, which is equal to nursery in remote villages. But my mother never seems to be uneducated. She manages the entire finance of our family. On one fine day when I was 14, I asked her how she knows so many things despite not going through formal education. Then my mother replied that she has learnt from life. Then I started looking for other people’s stories. Later, I started my campaign ‘Project Fuel’ which accumulates stories of different people across the world.

How do you get the knowledge?
It depends from place to place. But we all will get knowledge simply by interacting with people. The thing is we don’t talk about lessons from life nowadays on dinner table. If we interact with people, we will get to know a gist of their life lessons. Every person is able to teach a lesson. I have so far interacted with people belonging to different age groups.

(IBNS-TWF)

Of love & oneness

100 years of Tagore’s visit

Sadhguru, Isha Foundation

Is it possible to love a mortal being and, by doing so, feel oneness with God? Or is this just a romantic notion?

Sadhguru: There is a longing in every human being to be something more than what they are right now. If the only thing that you know is your body, it will find expression as sexuality. You may give all kinds of colors, names, and moral structures to your sexuality, but fundamentally, you are trying to make someone that is not you a part of you. If this same longing to include someone as a part of you finds an emotional expression, you say you are in love with someone. If you compare how long a physical union lasts and how long the sense of emotional oneness with someone lasts, the latter has a longer lifespan.

Physical union is momentary while on an emotional level, you can make the sense of oneness last for months or years. If you look at the romantic stories in lore and literature, we eulogise someone who holds on to an emotional union for a period of time, because when people are in love, they are so beautiful. There is a certain beauty to human emotions. Emotions are the strongest force in most people – even in those who believe they are intellectual. By contrast, a true intellectual has almost no emotions, because he is so fascinated with his intellect.

Since we are talking about man-woman relationships — let us say a man and a woman are seriously engaged with each other. But then, one of them finds a wonderful book. Suddenly, fictional characters become more than this beautiful woman or man sitting next to them. Once the intellect is fired up in a certain way, emotions recede. Intellect is dry, but it has a different kind of sparkle.

If you use your intellect properly, it will give you access to things that you never thought possible. Emotions have more beauty and color. But if they turn negative, they are the ugliest things. That is the nature of emotions. At the

same time, the way you think is the way you feel. You cannot think one way and feel another way. If, for example, you think, “She’s so wonderful,” your emotions for her will be sweet.

Is what we think in our control? Are thoughts just sprouting in our heads, or can we direct our thoughts?

Sadhguru: Your thoughts should be directed by you – only then they are sensible. Thoughts do not spring up out of nowhere. They arise from the data that you have gathered. You can only produce permutations and combinations of the existing information. How exquisitely you do that depends on the kind of mind you have. But back to your question – can your love affair make you touch another dimension?

Essentially, it all comes down to a longing to include something that is not you as a part of yourself. This means there are boundaries – the boundaries of your sensations. You consider what is within the boundaries of your sensation to be “you”. You have slowly gathered this body by ingestion. Once the food that you eat gets integrated within you, you consider it as yourself.

So, whether it is sexuality, a love affair, greed, spirituality, or devotion – essentially, you are attempting to break the limitations of your sensory body and experience something else or someone else as a part of yourself. In one way or the other, you do this every day. For instance, when you drink water, it becomes a part of you. If you use your intellect, your emotion, your body, or your energies, you splice through your sensory body and experience something else or someone else as a part of you. That means you are in a state of yoga. If you do it through your body, we call it karma yoga. If you do it through your intellect, we call it gnana yoga. If you do it through your emotions, we call it bhakti yoga. If you do it through your energies, we call it kriya yoga. These are all the ways in which you can achieve a state of yoga.

(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)

By Rita Ghosh

We celebrate the birth and death anniversaries of great personalities so that we can imbibe their great qualities.

Shillong celebrated Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore’s birth centenary in 1961, birth sesquicentenary in 2011-2012 and Tagore’s Nobel prize Centenary Celebration in 2013. Now it’s the time to celebrate the centenary of Tagore’s first visit to Shillong in October 1919.

In 1961, on the occasion of his birth centenary, the Central Celebration Committee erected three altars at the three houses which hosted him in 1919 (Brookside), 1923 (Jithbhum) and 1927 (Sidhli house) under the then chief minister of undivided Assam Bimalaprasad Chaliha, who was an ardent Tagore lover. In 1961, Late Radhika Ranjan Chakraborty, a direct student of Tagore in Santiniketan, organised a musical programme at Brookside mansion. Late Parshanath Chaudhuri, former editor of *The Shillong Times*, was one of the organisers.

In 1972, the state of Meghalaya was born. Shillong became the capital of Meghalaya. At that time all the three heritage houses were the private properties. Brookside’s owner KC Dey’s next generations gave the houses to SIB department to use it as an office complex on rent. Jithbhum and Sidhli House owners were staying in the heritage houses and also maintaining them.

Since 80’s many Tagore lovers started writing in the news daily *The Shillong Times* appealing to the Government for the preservation of the heritage site. Uma Purkayastha was one of them.

In 1961, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Shillong, organised a three-day Tagore Birth Anniversary Celebration in the Parishad Hall with great enthusiasm. It still organises Tagore’s birth and death anniversaries every year. Some other cultural organisations are also doing the



(Top) Late Usha Bhattacharjee, then principal of Lady Keane College, unveiling the plaque at Brooksie in 1961; (above) Late Radhika R Chakraborty and members of Prantik Group celebrating Tagore birth centenary at Brookside in 1961

same later in their own way.

In the same year, Late Helimon Khongphai, the then headmistress of Government Girls High School, in her speech on the occasion of Tagore’s birth centenary celebration said, “If every capital town of India has a Rabindra Bhawan, why Shillong being the capital of Assam should be deprived of the same. I strongly suggest that Brookside be renamed as Rabindra Bhawan or a separate Rabindra Bhawan be constructed in Shillong.”

During 1980s, Amiyo Kumar Samanta from Kolkata came to Shillong as the head of the SIB department. He associated himself closely to Bangiya Sahitya Parishad with a few other high-ranked officers.

In those days, a rumour started doing the rounds that the owners of Brookside were going to sell this heritage site dividing it into several plots. Tagore lovers of Riblong were shocked. They approached Ardhendu Chaudhuri, the then President of Riblong Sports and Cultural Club, who

was a high official in the Government Press of Meghalaya. He was also very close to the then Chief Minister PA Sangma. Chaudhuri assured that he would try to save Tagore memory in this heritage site.

Brookside was then under the SIB Office. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad members under the leadership of Late Prof. Manabendra Bhattacharya took keen interest to save Tagore’s memory in Brookside. They approached Amiyo Kumar Samanta, who was a hardcore Tagore lover. Together they approached PA Sangma, who himself was a Tagore lover.

In 1987, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad organised its Golden Jubilee Celebration and Sangma, in his speech, assured that he would do his best to save Tagore’s memory in Brookside.

Sangma fulfilled his promise and the SIB office was shifted near the Circuit House and Department of Art and Culture took up possession of the compound and started the renovation during 1990-1991. In 1992 Sri Madhukar Dighe, the then Governor of Meghalaya formally inaugurated the Tagore Art Gallery.

Due to some unknown reasons Tagore Art Gallery was closed for a few years. Tagore lovers again started writing to the government for opening a Tagore Museum.

In 2007, Kolkata Doordarshan Kendra organised a programme on Tagore at

Brookside, assisted by the Department of Arts and Culture, Meghalaya. Renowned screen artists from Kolkata took part in a ‘Shruti Natak’ based on Tagore’s Nobel *Yogayog*, which he wrote while staying at ‘Sidli House’ in his third visit to Shillong in 1927. Local Khasi and Bengali singers and dancers also participated in the function. DD Lapang, the then Chief Minister of Meghalaya, in his address announced that Tagore’s memory will be preserved here for the better understanding of the youth, he also expressed that the demand for naming Brookside as “Rabindra Bhawan” will also be considered by the Government.

Tagore lovers started writing to the Government again and again for the same cause. An article published on May 9, 1991, in *The Shillong Times* daily by Uma Purkayastha was as follows, “It would be highly appreciated by all if the bungalow (Brookside) could be preserved as a museum dedicated to the poet. A statue of Tagore could be erected and study room with a collection of Tagore’s literature could also be established so that our people might get a chance to know this universal poet more closely.”

In 2008, Shillong branch of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) started functioning from the backside of the old bungalow on rent. At present, three signboards were

displayed on the road side of Brookside — one for Arts and Culture Department, Government of Meghalaya, one for Meghalaya Assembly and another for ICCR.

In 2010, former MLA Manas Chaudhuri initiated a meeting on the Shillong Club premises to form a Tagore Sesquicentary Birth Celebration Committee. Renowned personalities from different communities of Shillong participated in the meeting. Several plans, including erecting a statue of Tagore, were chalked out.

Several subcommittees were formed for the systematic functioning of these plans. The then Chief Minister Mukul Sangma assured that the statue would be funded by the state government. Accordingly BM Lanong, Manas Chaudhuri, Nababrata Bhattacharjee and some subcommittee members finalised the site to erect the statue in front of the old bungalow at Brookside. Manas Chaudhuri went to Kolkata to contact the artist Shyamal Deb.

On the morning of May 9 on Tagore’s birth anniversary, the statue was unveiled at Brookside by Vincent Pala, the then Union Minister, Water Resources and Minorities Affairs in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister BM Lanong, local MLA Manas Chaudhuri, Nababrata Bhattacharjee, committee members, people of Riblong and Tagore lovers from many parts of the city amidst the singing of Tagore’s songs in six languages.

In 2018 the President of Bangladesh visited Brookside. VIPs from National and International field visit this heritage house regularly.

Since 1961 many Tagore lovers are contributing in different ways for the present position of the preservation of Tagore memory at Brookside, as this is the only heritage house own by the Govt. of Meghalaya. But many more things are there yet to be done as he is more relevant in India and the world’s present socio-political scenario.

In 2010, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad organised Tagore’s famous drama, *Rakta Karabi*, which the poet wrote during his stay at Jithbhoomi. The programme was held at Parishad Hall.

Tagore lovers wish to see Brookside as Rabindra Bhawan and a happening campus like Shankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati where various types of literary and cultural activities in connection with Tagore will be taking place throughout the year. This will certainly add to the tourism industry of Meghalaya too. It gives us immense pleasure that the bard who travelled to many parts of the world loved Shillong, visited it thrice and wished to visit it for fourth time too.

The centenary of his first visit in October 1919 is knocking at the door. Let all of us join hands to create something constructive to spread his message of love, beauty and peace.

(The author is former vice-principal of Laban Bengalee Boys’ Higher Secondary School)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, AUGUST 4, 2019

Sun is forming an angle of 160 degrees with Pluto on your solar return chart which will bring mixed results. Fortune favors the brave. You will have major hurdles but you will take bull by the horns. Problems would not be able to deter you. You would face challenges with brave heart. And ultimately get success too. Your efforts will bring lot of appreciation. And you will remain popular with peers and superiors. You will have no worries on financial front. Your children will shine in studies. Atmosphere in family will remain wonderful. Your mate will be very understandable. Auspicious functions will take place in the family. And there would be lot of joy and cheer in family gathering. Elders will keep supporting and will bless you. There will no major health problems.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

It is time to concentrate on your career prospects and professional skills as a promotion or lucrative business opportunity is likely to emerge consequent to your efforts. You successfully perform tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. Your tendency to control your life through some form of manipulation is strong. This is a phase that highlights romance and love in your family life. You may also experience some tangles in your close personal relationships. You’re at your best when you are showing the world your practical, competent, and responsible side.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You would adapt to new circumstances with ease opening yourself to positive events. You are able to find creative solutions to problems now. You put in a lot of effort and find this has established a strong professional base and it brings in desired and even unexpected gains. Money issues pop up now-the discovery of a way to increase your income, an unexpected gift or reward, or a brief financial crisis that motivates you to find new ways to make money is possible.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You may especially enjoy experiencing different cultures and styles. Your ideas and goals are higher than usual, teaching and mentoring may be part of the whole picture. Your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. You are ready to make new beginnings and invest in new business and relationships. It is a good time to put your needs first, but doing so with respect for others will take you further. Whether you can succeed as a leader is tested right now. Spending time in solitude among natural surroundings is therapeutic.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You are presented with an opportunity to get rid of what doesn’t work in your life, while also discovering what does. You are highly motivated to make money and this enhances quite a bit of energy for new moneymaking projects. You are sorting through the experiences of the last several months, separating the worthwhile from the worthless. You may be drawn into some form of service that will bring deep personal satisfaction. At this time, you seek perfection and distinction in your work and this quality takes you to a more responsible position.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are more aware than before of your mental and physical health, daily routine, everyday working life, and your working methods. Now is the time to realize your own potential through your significant other. You focus on balancing your personal interests and objectives with your social life, or with those of a partner. Circumstances are such that your diplomacy skills are required. Your popularity is increasing, and is reinforced by your own ability to cooperate and harmonize. You would be able to make an impact on people with innovative ideas and work.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You would be successful in creative writing and in the entertainment industry. Your ego and pride are tied up in how you relate to others now. This may be an especially busy time for people who consult or work with clients one-on-one. Relationships are dynamic-full of conflicts and resolutions. You tend to take things quite personally now, and something that someone says or does now can easily

rile you. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to work, health matters, and daily routines.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

It would be wise to be especially clear when it comes to communicating with co-workers. Re-thinking the suitability of your job is possible now, but you should avoid jumping to any premature decisions. Take this time to re-examine issues rather than communicating about them prematurely. A positive and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining the cooperation of important people. You move on the path of betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

A new set-up in an existing relation or a new love affair may be formed. Your professional life brings rewards and recognition now. You are working hard and inclined towards more detailed work. An opportunity to expand business arrives now. Increased connections and experiences come into the picture. This is a period of growth as well as some form of blossoming. This is a very fortunate time to arrange get-togethers, parties and events. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this week. You would become more particular about your health and diet.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

This time takes some kind of pressure on professional and personal aspects. You may begin to take on more responsibilities on the job or in another capacity. Your job could become rather tedious or boring, or working conditions may be tiring and frustrating. You find yourself more accountable than ever when it comes to your work and output. You may have to draw some boundaries with friends and the demands placed on you. You would attach yourself to unusual, more spiritual activities. This is an excellent period for starting new regimens to improve your health and well being, such as regular exercise and a more structured and productive use of your time.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

It would be wiser to face difficult people and situations rather than escape, as there would be victory and success in professional ventures. Don’t take the one you love for granted but show your love and appreciation. Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and they would be profitable. Your professional skills wisdom and craft is appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Personal relationships gain a romantic and exciting quality. Tackle sensitive subjects and difficult people head on and get your point across. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You would achieve a lot in business and professional aspects by combining creativity and practicality. You take on a more mature role in the family and in personal situations by taking on extra responsibility and giving direction. You can expect seniors to support you and stand up for you in tough situations. You can trust your intuition about people and situations when called upon to mediate in conflicts and collaborations. A new work opportunity can change the way you work and relate with people professionally. How willing you are to experiment and explore new approaches will determine your success at this time. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This is a favorable phase for people in sports, competition, game shows and other related fields. You have been more determined and hard working and this brings fulfillment of desires particularly in competitive examinations. This is a good time to be with a friend or get associated with a group with whom you can share your own ideas and thoughts. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you. You are physically energetic and enjoy the feeling of well being and confidence.

Meghalaya beauty on screen

The beauty of Meghalaya’s hills is featured in a Bengali film that was released on August 2. Samsara, produced by three Shillongites Utpal Das, Bobby Dey and Bivash Chakravarty (Indrajit), and directed by Kolkata-based Sudeshna Roy and Abhijit Guha, is the story of three friends played by Ritwick Chakraborty, Rahul Banerjee and Indrajit.

The film was first shot in Kolkata for 11 days and later it was shot in several rural locations in Meghalaya. The shooting spots, mainly in Sohra



and Umnsning, are exceptionally enchanting. All the sites were meticulously chosen by the directors and it is a laudable work as Meghalaya is an album of natural beauty.

In the 1960s, renowned direc-

tor Ritwick Ghatak shot his film ‘Meghe Dhaka Tara’ in Shillong. The beautiful landscape, the dense pine forests and the river flowing between two hills as viewed from Reid Provincial Chest Hospital in Jhalupara were breathtaking.

Meghalaya has the potential to be the protagonist in any story. Its beauty is yet to be explored to the fullest by the film industry. It is a great achievement for the trio to produce a movie that glorifies the state.

(Contributed by Uma Purkayastha)

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.”
--- Isaac Newton

The Shillong Times

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Meghalaya’s educational curriculum

FROM recent statements of former college teachers of Physics it would appear that the MBOSE Science text books for Classes IX–XII are replete with incoherent explanations of principles of Physics. This calls for serious reflection on the part of the State Education Department, instead of burying their ostrich like heads in the sand because they always know better. The least that those manning the Education Department should be doing is to call a meeting of Science teachers from the schools of the city to seek their inputs. Above all, what should concern the Education Department is whether the students who ultimately have to compete for the Joint Entrance Exams (JEE) to the IITs and National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) for medical institutes are competent enough to sit for the excruciatingly demanding all-India exams with the kind of text books that MBOSE is promoting. Why is there a resistance to withdraw the books even when the anomalies are pointed out? Why is Meghalaya hell bent on acquiring books from certain publishers? Why not just adopt the NCERT prescribed books? There has to be a robust social audit on this by the students’ bodies of the state. In fact it is surprising that they are quiet on this issue even while raising several issues that are unrelated to the welfare of our students.

Since music come naturally to tribal students it is time that teachers are exposed to new pedagogies of teaching that use music to enhance the learning capacities of students. According to Howard Gardner, American cognitive psychologist and author, best known for his theory of multiple intelligences, some students learn best through music. So in a regular educational classroom, there are some students who will get a better understanding of their work when music is applied. Early childhood teachers use songs and nursery rhymes to teach reading in their classrooms. Some students are able to remember songs better than spoken words. Using songs and different music components can also help teach mathematics because of the high correlation between music and spatial-temporal reasoning skills. There is a high correlation between learning music and spatial temporal reasoning, which is primarily used for Mathematical skills. Music and Mathematics are closely related because they use identical concepts and skills. Merging the subjects might create a greater connection to help students who are experiencing difficulty in Mathematics. In the light of the above findings is it not time to make good use of music not just for entertainment but to improve the cognitive abilities of students? This however requires a dynamic ecosystem that is open to change and abhors the status quo. Unfortunately Education too is in the grip of a change-resistant bureaucracy.

TO THE EDITOR

Howlers in Physics text books

Editor,
The front page of your newspaper nar the story captioned, “Rymbui writes to Centre on draft education policy”(ST, July 28, 2019). This story sadly points out two facts. (1) The Hon’ble Education Minister does not seem at all bothered by the gross errors, the laughable experiments on vital Physics principles, the fanciful explanations and overhyped ideas of the Classes IX and X Physics books by VK Sally and SK Agarwall (2) He also did not read my question, “Who or what team of expert approved the text?”
Right now I am reading the class XI and XII Physics by V.K. Mehta, Rohit Mehta vis a vis the CBSE XI, XII Physics compiled by a list of fourteen eminent professors of famous Indian Universities and IIT’s. The CBSE under NCERT have down to earth explanations of difficult concepts. Read this on De Broglie Wave: - “In analogy to waves travelling on a string, particle waves too can lead to standing waves

under resonant conditions”. The down to earth concept brought to the level of a guitar string would never be found in ordinary texts. To compile Physics texts, experienced professors are required, who take the level to everyday life and activities.
Another finding is that CBSE texts have four times coverage over MBOSE texts and will pose enormous difficulties for our students to compete in JEE and NEET. To help our class IX and X students from reeling under wrong concepts, I am publishing small pamphlets to guide our students. Finally for the sake of the future of our students let us humbly accept one fact - that in framing the curriculum and compiling texts especially for Science, there is no better or more qualified writers than the experts who have compiled the CBSE texts under NCERT. Let our Science students be exposed to the robust all India level competition.
Yours etc.,
W. Passah,
Ex-HOD Electronics Deptt,
St Edmund’s College

Come on, lets clean up Shillong

By Toki Blah

was moved to initiate positive action on the matter. The Honourable Meghalaya High Court took cognizance of a PIL based on the above mentioned FB post and took immediate steps to come up with measures on how to rejuvenate our dying rivers. The only jarring note was the pregnant silence maintained by the usually strident and cacophonic pressure groups and of course the revered Synjuk Ki Rangbah Shnong. These are the people who have always been so vociferous about almost everything that has to do with survival. Now when it comes to the very survival (ka iap ka im) of their lake, their rivers and their own city, their studied silence is odd to say the least. Have these heroes of the Jaitybnrnew given up on Shillong?

Let us accept a truth and the simple truth is, the ability to clean up Umiam Lake, the Umkhrah and the Umshyrpi is synonymous with our ability to clean up Shillong city. These water bodies do not dirty themselves. No escaping from this practical reality. Their cleanliness or filth depends on what flows into them from their catchment areas and Shillong is the catchment for both the Umkhrah and the Shyrpi as they ultimately empty themselves into the Umiam. The pollution of the two rivers is from waste that flows into them from the nallas, drains, gutters and sewers that crisscross the localities of Shillong , both within the municipal areas as well as those outside municipality. This waste in turn is made up of liquid waste as well as solid waste. In the absence of any industrial activity in and around Shillong, the liquid waste that flows into the two rivers originates mostly from domestic sources, ie our houses, homes and hotels. Walk through any locality of Shillong and the stench of overflowing septic tanks is an ever present nauseating smell. This is simply because almost all structures of the city clean their septic tanks by simply emptying them into the nearest storm drain. This filth in turn ends up in either of the two rivers under discussion. Septic tank discharge from thousand of houses

everyday has turned our rivers into the black stinking sewers they are today. The only way to stop this is through the installation of a sewer system or sewer systems for the entire city.
Saving our rivers from the solid waste Shillong generates will be a bit more complicated and will require a different approach strategy altogether. No sense in wading into the river itself to clean it. Such one day initiatives solve nothing and we simply end up tackling the symptoms and not the root cause. We have to accept and recognise that households are already collecting the garbage they generate. This in turn is collected by the Municipality or by private garbage collectors ie. the SHG run Lasara Society. The throw and forget (bret nuit) concept of disposing off garbage by throwing it into the backyard, mentioned above, has now given way to an economic based approach on how we deal with the solid waste we produce. Households pay for garbage collection services which in turn provides employment at various levels for the collectors. Today waste, especially plastic waste, should no longer be viewed as rubbish but as a resource that can bring in employment and revenue. But so far only half the work is being done. All our collected waste still ends up at the landfill at Marten and 99% of solid waste we produce (plastic bags, PET bottles, junk metal etc) still remains a wasted discarded economic raw resource simply awaiting a final linkage to a waiting market. We have to devise a way to link up our solid waste to such markets. It’s really that simple!

A visit to Marten at Mawiong or to the upper reaches of the Umiam lake will immediately show the number of people earning an income from picking plastic waste. This segregated plastic waste is then sold for recycling. In this exercise, the segregation of plastic waste, and only part of it, takes place after it is collected and dumped. Question is , why can’t segregation take place at the very beginning, ie at the household, shop, market level etc from where plastic waste generates? Actually the whole idea of cleaning up Shillong and its rivers will hinge on our ability to segregate waste at the household level. Three

simple issues need to be addressed. First, people are already collecting household waste. Segregation of organic and inorganic waste at this level will therefore not be difficult. This can be easily done. Second, segregation however at this level, for both households and the collectors, is key to the whole operation and needs to be strictly enforced. Monitoring by the Dorbars, the Municipality and the Syiem, each in their respective areas of jurisdiction, cannot be over emphasised and opportunities for unemployed youth as enforcers, opens up. Third, MUDA or Urban Affairs step in to facilitate the link up with the markets and end users for plastic waste.
At the end of it all , if there is seriousness in the intent to clean up Shillong and its two rivers, the first and foremost task will be for every citizen of the city to be associated with the idea. It cannot be a standalone initiative of only Govt nor should it be the burden of school children alone. Every person should be a participative stakeholder. Therefore for the project to work it should be a people driven enterprise where the Govt acts as the facilitator and not the prime mover; where people, their organisations and institutions work hand in glove with the administration; where MUDA, SMB and Urban Affairs Dept need to get out of a scheme oriented mindset and instead embrace the concept as “a needs to be done” project of their own. Here is where the Involvement of the Deputy Commissioner’s Office is crucial as the entire catchment area , both Municipal and outside Municipapl falls under the DC’s jurisdiction. As a coordinator and supervisor of the project, the DC is tailor made for it. All the Dorbars should be involved as they will act as the real and most effective enforcers for segregation of waste at the Household level. To me the above is the framework we need to work on how to clean/save the Wahumkhrah, Umshyrpi and ultimately the Umiam. Let “Clean up the Umkhrah” be the slogan but the implementation is really the cleaning up of Shillong City itself.
Author is President of ICARE, an organisation that focuses on issues of good Governance.

New MV Act Draconian; Needs Rethink

By Shivaji Sarkar

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill 2019 is draconian. Worse, it is passed at a time when the automobile industry is in a crisis and may be a severe deterrent to its progress. Thus, it calls for an immediate review. Like the Delhi rent control act that was passed over decades ago in a jiffy, it needs reconsideration. The new law needs to be sent back to the Standing Committee for detailed review. It should also follow a public debate.
Some provisions of the law, such as enhancement of compensation for road victims, protecting good Samaritans, fixing responsibility of contractors and road safety boards are in public interest. Some of these may of course result in cumbersome process.
Another problem is with the insurance. As per law it is already a compulsion. The new provisions have not taken into account that insurance charges have increased manifold. Higher the charges, higher would be the default. The rates must be affordable and the law must ensure it.
The new law also has peculiar provisions on penalising guardians of juveniles and even putting them in jail, cancellation of registration and suspension of driving licence. These are not only superfluous but also against the basic concept of empowering citizens. This apart, it would mostly be used as coercive extortive tactics by the law-enforcement agencies. Instead of solving the problem, it only adds to it.
Even today all over the country, millions of impounded vehicles are parked at every police station. These have become junk. Neither the owner is prepared to take these back nor can authorities dispose these off being case properties and thus these are tremendous wastage of wealth.
The law has not respected the concept that a car is a private property and the State cannot on any ground, except severe criminal culpability impound it. Moreover, impounding of vehicles only compounds the problem. Unnecessary provisions need to be scrapped.
Then levying fines for over-speeding have been increased from Rs 1000 to Rs 2000. This too is heavy. Most drivers are fined for driving 2 to 4 km above the 60 km limit. This should better be given up as in normal circumstances even a speed of 80 km is safe. More so, as it has not taken into account that modern vehicles zoom to 60 to 80 km even without pressing the accelerator.
Rash driving is a total different issue. It entails a fine of Rs 5000 and the question is whether it would halt such driving. Besides, it has been observed that these rash drivers often skip notice and are not are prosecuted, whereas a sober driver crossing the limit by a km is penalised!

Why a fine of Rs 100 to 500 has to be increased ten-fold increase? The rationale has neither been explained nor have the social conditions been taken into account. Jumping a signal costs Rs 5000. The premise seems to be that a vehicle owner is the richest person and he has no respect for the basics and must be subjected to the highest level of extortion. The truth is no average citizen can do without a vehicle as public transport does not exist.
The country has been going through some improper narratives so far as vehicle owning is concerned. The lawmakers have not taken into account that in this country a large number of businesses are conducted from the vehicles at roadsides or weekly markets called peths.
It has also not taken into account the chaotic roads that many cities have, including Noida and Bengaluru. In Noida, driving safe through zig-zag roads is itself a problem and in Bengaluru escaping jams is impossible. Nobody wants to stop an ambulance, but can anyone do it in a jam-packed road? And for such traffic mess should a driver alone be penalized?
The entire effort seems to be revenue realisation for an administration that is crying hoarse of its increasing expenses and shortfall in revenue. The practice is to extort the maximum from the common man even to his ruin. This is a prescription for disaster.
The nation forgets that one improper environmental dictum ushered by the National Green Tribunals of junking ten-year-old working vehicles is playing havoc. The NGT’s quixotic order has put a brake on car sales, new and old. Many had alleged that the NGT had issued such orders to boost car sales.
It is also an example of NGT’s concern for the environment! It does not apparently know that manufacturing a new car is more pollutant than the one in use. The US and the West encourage the buying of one-year old cars and pushes resale as a new car pollutes more and allows these to ply for 40 years.
But here the resale industry is in jeopardy. Since resale is difficult, new car sales are affected. The reduced demand is affecting the automobile sector. Sales have come down drastically by over 30 per cent or more. The new MV Act would add to the problem.
Additionally, both transporters and bus operators do not find the law to be practical. Why should having an extra passenger in a taxi be penalized? The taxi aggregators have reason to worry. They would be levied fines of Rs 25,000 to Rs 100,000 – a sure prescription for closure. There are many such arbitrary levies.
The bill seems to create more problems than solving it. It was aimed at weeding out corruption and improving road safety, but is likely to do the contrary. The Yamuna-type expressways are badly designed where tyre bursts are common due to faulty grid-marks. The loops are also inappropriate. But instead of the road operator, drivers are being penalised.
Let the nation and the lawmakers rethink. The need is for a simpler law imposing more responsibility and least fear. Such laws should not be designed for revenue generation.---INFA

good crowd that still appreciates rock and roll music in this age of DJ’s Next we would like to see traditional artists from our rural areas coming on-stage and performing with their traditional and folk music. As they say music has no boundaries.
Yours etc...
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Cost of drunken driving

Editor,
A celebrated IAS officer in Kerala who has often taken on the high and mighty in his crackdown on illegal encroachments sped his car in a rash manner and killed a youth KM Basheer, the chief of bureau of the Siraj daily of Kerala. He was in an inebriated condition. The IAS officer Venkitaraman, 32, fresh from training undergone in the US and posted as Survey and Land Records Director in Thiruvananthapuram was on a high after a party at a posh club in the city early on Saturday. After the late-night bash, he summoned his companion an NRI model Wafa Firoz to drive

home in her car. But he got into the driver’s seat and sped away with the friend beside, and later mowed down Basheer, who was on the phone after parking his bike beside the road.
High drama followed as the police were accused of shielding Venkitaraman, who at the peak of his popularity and as Devikulam sub-collector had courted controversy by razing a giant Cross installed on a large swathe of encroached land by a Christian group in 2017. However, the police finally arrested him.
It is a proven fact that however ideal a man is, he may have his own Achilles’ heel. The three powerful factors, women, wine and wealth may influence an ideal man too. Here wine has proved to be the destroyer of a young man’s career. So, man is fallible and gullible however great is he. The tragic incident is a lesson to all especially high ranking officials who may go berserk after consuming liquor. It is also an example of how powerful liquor is as it reigns over lives and ruins the one who consumes it.
Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
Via email

NEHU:Time to move on

Editor,
With regards to the recent issue of delayed announcement of results for the final year students by the NEHU authorities one wonder why it happens in this age of technology. We have moved on from writing letters to talking over telephone to now the era of smart phones. It is a matter of concern when students have to protest the delay in announcing their results and have to join forces with others Unions/ Organizations. The results were immediately declared what guarantee do we have that this matter won’t be repeated in the coming years. NEHU should address the systemic rot in the system which is equivalent to destroying the careers of students.
What NEHU needs to address here is that there is a huge increase in the number of entering college every year. Hence the number of answer scripts also increases and these have to be evaluated manually by the professors. So, in this era of automation, why not move

“ Probably the happiest period in life most frequently is in middle age, when the eager passions of youth are cooled, and the infirmities of age not yet begun; as we see that the shadows, which are at morning and evening so large, almost entirely disappear at midday. ”

--- Eleanor Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

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Bold steps in J & K

A bold move by the Centre to set things right in long-ailing Jammu and Kashmir was in the offing. The preparations to beef up security in the troubled state had led to speculations that Article 370 of the Constitution would be abrogated along with Article 35A, and a bifurcation was contemplated. Both have happened in a jiffy on Monday. Jammu and Kashmir has been fully integrated with the nation. The autonomous status for the state, which curtailed the authority of the Centre is now a thing of the past.

Ladakh region has been turned into a separate entity with Union Territory status, as does Jammu and Kashmir. The promise from Home Minister Amit Shah in Parliament was that the suspension of state status for Jammu and Kashmir is temporary, and the UT badge would continue only until the law and order remained tense.

This was a natural progression of the promise the ruling BJP had made in the election manifesto for 2019 Lok Sabha polls which saw a resounding victory for the party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The call for such Constitutional changes had been underfoot for many years from the RSS and some other entities. These have come to fruition now. With the Centre having more say in the state and taking ownership of land, citizens from outside the UT can now move in to permanently settle there.

There are of course several ifs and buts. The legality of the present steps could be challenged in Indian courts even while Pakistan made it clear it would go to the UN with a complaint. All the same, this was time for bold action. Amit Shah has stated in Parliament that Article 370 was the single factor that promoted terrorism. He put the blame for the present troubles on the monopoly of “three families”, like the Abdullahs and Muftis. Added to this was the instigations from Pakistan which fuelled militancy and terrorism.

Controversial Article 370 came into being in 1954. The special status meant the Centre had limited roles in the state even in curtailing acts of terrorism. The political process repeatedly proved to be a failure there. Even the involvement of the BJP in a ministry led by PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti did not help. With Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan confabulating with US president Donald Trump and seeking US mediation on Kashmir, the scenario turned worse. The threats from IS, Taliban and other terror outfits added to the strains. For the Centre, this was time for bold action. How that action will play out in the long run is unpredictable.

Rise of the neurotic youth

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

Meghalaya that is free from a neurotic youth'. It is indeed a sad and sorry state of affairs, but true!

Secondly, it is very easy to experience neuroticism amongst the youth. All you have to do is talk and mingle with them. Listen to

lost in thoughts with a frowned (worried) face. On the flipside, with the growing popularity of mobile and online games the situation is turning from worse to worst. The youth now spend a lot on 'screen time' (across phone and compu-

nature, the neurotic youth is not created when one reaches higher levels of education. The seeds of positivity/negativity are sowed while one is at school. Hence, it is crucial that our students are taught on 'cognitive processes' that build and harness on positive energy and thoughts and actions. If we get it right at the school level, then the latter part of their study and career challenges will not be too much of a problem. They can face anything and everything with a positive mind-set. As such, school education in its holistic form (not just subject knowledge) is most vital as everything after that at the college/university level is more a case of 'value addition' only.

Fourthly, the role of governance is equally critical. Under conditions of poor governance; even if the educational organizations do their part in tackling neuroticism, all will be an utter failure. Even worse, it will lead to an uncontrollable and irreversible upsurge of the neurotic youth. At that point there will be no turning back. However, going by the way things are happening now; 'the rise of the neurotic youth' is a clear and present danger. At the top of the pecking order, the role of governance boils down to employment opportunities which are fair and just.

Sadly, looking at the recent past this is far from achievable. Every now and then we will see/read about 'malpractices/unfair practices' in recruitment processes. Figure this, when a youth writes in a newspaper column/letter about nepotism/injustice while 'withholding his/her name'; that is an indication of the deep-rooted chronic prevalence of the neurotic youth. Who is to be blamed for this? Is it not the governance? Indeed, life is tough for the youth already; add to that, the expectations to deliver within the continuum of a system which provides little or no opportunities for growth. No wonder, in Shillong these days we have the menace of drugs and its addiction. The catch point being, when frustrated and lost; turn to 'stuff' that will make you oblivious and blissful to all problems! Lastly, if the youth is neurotic then the society is neurotic. No one is immune to the problem. Moreover, it seems as though we are losing the fight against youth neuroticism. It is time to reverse the trend and it shall require a herculean task at that. Be that as it may, it is time to act; lest this issue of neuroticism turns into 'neuroses'; which is a far more dangerous ball game altogether. (The Author teaches at NEHU)

“In relation, being neurotic/neuroticism can imply and envelope numerous specifics and issues (to the extent of one being depressed and in some cases going totally insane). As a case in point, medical science is mainly concerned with issues/cases of 'neuroses'. However, this article is precisely pinpointed only towards the proliferation of neuroticism while particularly referencing in on the youth.”

them as they analyse and dissect on a particular issue of their interest; you will realize a deep sense of neuroticism in their conclusion. In addition, this is even more interesting; if you mingle with them and raise any topic of life-interest such as 'employment, unemployment, school, education, family, knowl-

ter gadgets and television) thereby contributing more towards their susceptibility towards neuroticism. As a case in point, try calling up any youth for chores/work when he/she is deeply involved in their gadget; for sure you will get an irritated/angry response. This is a face and a phase of neuroticism!

“As a theory it started developing in the 1980's and today it stands as one of the most frequently applied frameworks for assessing personality and to comprehend 'as to why people behave the way they do'. Here, the five traits that forms the basis of it all are, namely; openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Each trait is important in its own way.”

edge, skills, government and governance, local management and administration, alcohol and drugs, etc', right from their opening of the discussion to the main body of their argument up until the ultimate conclusion; there is neuroticism all around. In fact, even if they do not talk; you can see a deep sense of disappointment and defeat in their outlook and behaviour.

In fact, if you do an experiment and walk the streets of Shillong and observe the youth (particularly those who are walking alone); in most cases you will hardly find a youth who is smiling or relaxed. In general, most are

Thirdly, how do we find the remedy for our neurotic youth? Well, before we try to answer this question we must not forget that neuroticism is related to personality (and not character). As such, it shall require a multi-pronged effort across all stakeholders (the home, locality, church, educational organizations, governance, NGO's, etc). The fight against it must be 24X7 and not just the eight hours (on average) when our youth are at work/education. Subsequently, educational organizations and governance have a major role to play in remedying neuroticism (at the macro level). Here, the role of schools is most critical. By its inherent

BJP achieves its goal in Kashmir

Political turmoil in valley to accentuate

By Amulya Ganguli

The dream nurtured by the RSS-Jan Sangh for decades about scrapping Article 370 has finally been sought to be achieved by the BJP. Since dispensing with the Article, which confers a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, will require judicial and parliamentary approval, it is yet to be seen whether the BJP will have the legal arguments or the numbers in parliament to push through the measure.

But the point is not so much the passage of the move which has been called a "second" independence day by a BJP spokesman as the bulldozing methods adopted by the BJP to try to enact a controversial provision.

If Kashmir's "independence" is supposedly the objective of the dramatic step, it is odd that the sun of "freedom" had to rise in the midst of secrecy and subterfuge with the government claiming that the massive deployment of troops, the unprecedented curtailment of the Amarnath yatra and the evacuation of tourists from the valley were due to a terrorist threat.

Before the leaders of the People's Democratic Party, the National Conference and the People's Conference were put under house arrest, they had been assured that no "precipitous step" would be taken in Kashmir.

Now, at one stroke, the unifying idea of Kashmiriyat, insaniyat, jamhooriyat, which has been the guiding principles of successive governments, including that of Atal Behari Vajpayee, extolling the distinctiveness of Kashmir along with the principles of humaneness and peace, has been obliterated.

In its place, the Hindutva mantra of ek bidhan, ek nishan, ek pradhan (one constitution, one flag, one chief), which has a fascistic ring, has been established.

The stationing of a large number of troops and the incarceration of mainstream parties may enable the Narendra Modi government to tide over any immediate problems that can arise from what Omar Abdullah has called an "aggression" against the people of the state.

But the huge contingents of the armed forces cannot remain in Kashmir for long. Nor can the leaders of the established parties be kept in detention indefinitely.

The secrecy which preceded the Union home minister, Amit Shah's announcement recalls the demonetization move which also hit the public like a bolt from the blue. In a way, this is the BJP's style of functioning, especially in contentious matters.

It is not known what the

impact this "aggressive" move will have on the Muslim community elsewhere in the country. Until now, the latter had seemingly appeared to be largely indifferent to the events in Kashmir. But they are unlikely to be enthused by the government's latest initiative.

In Kashmir, there was the peace of the graveyard on the day the fateful step was taken to "integrate" Kashmir into India, as the BJP likes to say. This sepulchral quietness was due to the presence of the security forces and the shutting down of the Internet and even land lines, rendering the whole state incommunicado. But what the popular mood is under this funereal silence will only be known after some time.

For all the disquiet expressed by the BJP's opponents like the Congress, the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party and a few others, the ruling party will be pleased by the support it has received from the BSP, the Biju Janata Dal, the YSR Congress and some others.

These regional parties have virtually been acting as the BJP's "B" team earlier, too, as over the passage of the legislations on the Right to Information or the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

Among the BJP's allies, the Janata Dal (United) is formally opposed to the abrogation of Article 370, but whether it will help the government by walking out at the time of voting is yet to be seen.

There is little doubt that the removal of Article 370 will further boost Modi's image among his supporters by reinforcing his macho, decisive reputation.

What is more, the opposition parties will be careful with their responses lest they are labelled anti-nationals yet again. They are also hamstrung by the absence of capable leaders, especially the Congress (which still has no party chief) so that they can take up the cudgels against the "constitutional monstrosity" enacted by the government.

Although the issue of Articles 370 and 35A have been pending for long on the BJP's agenda, why did it choose the present moment? A possible reason is to divert attention from a critical economic situation. As attention is turned towards the new Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir which may become a victim of both Pakistan-sponsored insurgency and local unrest, the concerns over the economy will take a back seat.

(IPA Service)

To the Editor

A Constitutional lapse!

Editor, I would like to bring to your kind attention a severe lapse, perhaps intentional or otherwise by the Marshal of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly during the recent funeral proceedings of the Honourable Speaker, Dr Donkupar Roy who died in harness. Those of us who are aware and well versed in Parliamentary Procedures and Conventions, know that in Parliament and the States the Marshal is the keeper and protector of Decorum and Discipline in the August House and that is why the Marshal sits next to the Speaker during the Assembly sessions. He is akin to the Aide-de-Camp of the President and Governors. Now this brings me to the recent unprecedented events during the days following Dr. Donkupar

Roy's demise. As a sitting legislator, Late Dr. Roy was entitled to a State Funeral as arranged by the Executive wing of the Government. However, as Head of the State Legislature he was also to be honoured by the Office of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly by the Marshal giving a Guard of Honour during the last journey from the airport to the residence. The Marshal should also have accompanied the mortal remains to Sohra and to stand as Guard of Honour during the funeral ceremonies all of which never happened.

This alleged lapse must have happened either because none in the Office was aware of such Convention, or it may have been intentional, in which case it is a clear case of disrespect and dishonour to the memory of the late Dr Roy. Perhaps the Privileges Committee of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly should inquire

into this matter.

Yours etc., Name withheld on request

Hope of peace in J&K?

Editor, It is indeed very sad that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir remains tense following terror threat and flaring up of hostilities with Pakistan along the Line of Control. The J&K Home department on Friday asked Amarnath pilgrims and tourists to curtail their stay in the Valley in view of the latest intelligence inputs of terror threats with specific targeting of the Amarnath Yatra. The advisory set off panic among the thousands of holiday-makers and pilgrims, who quickly started leaving the Valley in whatever transport was available to them. On the other hand,

the anxious residents were out on a buying spree to stock on essentials even standing in serpentine queues outside shops and fuel stations.

It is also even most unfortunate that the people in Jammu and Kashmir are destined to live in constant fear due to terror threats. People cannot enjoy their freedom in its purest form while being constantly concerned about their safety because anything can happen to them. The state has been passing through such tense situations for decades. Known as the paradise on earth and the top most tourist destination of India, Kashmir Valley is famous for its landscapes, the Himalayas, nature, snow, greenery and more. The state can be converted into a real paradise with comprehensive planning. Millions of tourists from outside and inside India

would flow into this state to enjoy its varied beauties if there is peace in the state. Where there is peace progress will reign. So, people must come forward voluntarily to wipe out terrorism from the soil of the state.

Now with the Central government decision repealing Article 370 of the Constitution which grants special status to J&K, the situation is going to be changed in the state for the better. In this context, Pakistan's statement condemning and rejecting the announcements made by the Indian Government regarding the Indian occupied J&K is unwarranted. They have no business at all in our internal affairs. It is hoped that the new move of the Central Government would bring in peace and prosperity in the state.

Yours etc., TK Nandanam, Via email

Dismemberment of Jammu-Kashmir & Ladakh

Editor, The nation is stunned by the sudden turn of events in Jammu and Kashmir. Monday is a black day for the people of Kashmir, but for the Kashmiri Pandits its celebration time. They feel they have been vindicated after years of subjugation since they were driven out of the valley. While we all knew that something was brewing in Jammu & Kashmir, none anticipated that the NDA Government would set in motion its electoral promise of doing away with Article 370 in a manner that reeks of complete disregard for the manner in which the state of Jammu and Kash-

mir was created. And it is a reflection of things in that state that no one really cares about what the people of Ladakh feel about this new status. All the noise across the country is all about Kashmiris and how they feel and what this abrogation of 370 and with it Article 35 would mean to them.

It is a known fact that the people of Ladakh have been expressing their sense of claustrophobia about being an appendix of J&K. They had been demanding a Union Territory status because they feel that all development funds are concentrated in the Kashmir valley. The Ladakhis in fact wanted an outlet that connects them to the outside world without having to rely on Kashmir. So all is not hunky dory in that state and it is also a fact that for decades only the rulers of Kashmir have lived like monarchs and enjoyed the fruits of development while

ordinary Kashmiris suffer the agony of living in a troubled state that is heavily militarized. They are caught between the militants on one side and the Indian state in the form of the Indian military on the other. What happens to the newly created Union Territory now is a drama that will soon unfold. On social media people are celebrating the loss of special status to J&K because they feel that has prevented the integration of the people of that state with India.

One thing is for sure. The BJP-led NDA is going to fulfill it's electoral promises one by one. The next move will be the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB).

Yours etc., JS Dwivedi, Via email

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

“*Though my soul may set in darkness, it will rise in perfect light; I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night.*”
--- Sarah Williams

The Shillong Times

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Looking beyond Jammu & Kashmir

THE abrogation of Article 370 has divided the opposition. Some Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP) MPs feel that striking down 370 and 35(A) is in line with the mood of the nation and to go against this national mood is to betray peoples' trust. What is ironic however is that the debate on Article 370 continues to revolve only around Kashmir! Those like Ghulam Nabi Azad who once held the reins of governance in Kashmir and who ostensibly represent the elitist voices of the valley are so invested in their own victimhood that they did not once bother about the periphery called Ladakh - an integral part of the map of J&K but a poor cousin when it comes to allocation of funds, creation of districts and job creation. This was pointed out by no less than the BJP MP from Ladakh, Tsering Namgyal in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. In a frontal attack on the two ruling families the Abdullahs and the Muftis, Tsering Namgyal said that the members of these two families believe they are 'ruling' over their ancestral property.

Namgyal made a clear distinction between 'Raj' (rule) and 'Shasan' (governance) and said that in a democracy the word 'rule' is anachronistic. Referring to the complete alienation of Ladakh from the developmental basket of Jammu and Kashmir, Namgyal said that eight districts were created in 2008 when Ghulam Nabi Azad was CM. Kashmir got four districts and Jammu fought for and got the other four. Ladakh did not get a single district. There is no job creation in Ladakh and most Kashmiris have no idea of where Kargil is and what people there actually want. Namgyal informed the House that when Rajnath Singh visited Lakadh as Home Minister the only demand of the people there was for a Union Territory. Development in J&K is at best lopsided. Kashmir has three universities and a National Institute of Technology and Jammu region has four universities besides an IIT and an Indian Institute of Mass Communication. There are also two central universities in J&K. Ladakh which is the region's largest Lok Sabha constituency in India in terms of area and covers more than 53 per cent of the State's total area has only a couple of degree colleges in Kargil and Leh districts and not a single medical, engineering or vocational institution for its young students. It was only in February 2019 that Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation for the first University of Ladakh. That the desperation of the people of Ladakh does not inconvenience the rulers in Kashmir speaks volumes of the alienation of a vital section of this erstwhile state now bifurcated into two Union Territories.

LOOKING BACK

June 21, 1989

National Front powerful alternative to Cong (I): V.P. Singh

Janata Dal president Mr V P Singh today said that the seven party National Front would provide a powerful alternative to the Congress (I) in the coming elections. Talking to newsmen so on after his arrival here from Delhi on a two-day tour of Bihar, Mr Singh expressed hope that the Front would come to power as "people want a change." He said that the Front and been formed on the basis of pre and post election programmes" But, at the same time, dominant partners of the Front in different states would have seat adjustments which other parties like the BJP and the Left to avoid a splitting of opposition votes. The Front had authorised Haryana Chief Minister and Janata Dal parliamentary board chairman Mr Devil Lal to coordinate such seats adjustment, Mr Singh. On prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi's allegation that the opposition were in league with some foreign powers to weaken the country, Mr Singh, said "he Mr Gandhi himself is heading an anti-national and corrupt government, which has exposed national interest to foreign powers by opening doors to the multi-national

Presidential order on scrapping Article 370 is Unconstitutional

Bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir will not stand legal scrutiny

The attack on Article 370 - the most contentious and sensitive article of the Constitution of India - was complete when the Modi government on Monday, August 5, 2019 introduced in the Parliament a draft resolution recommending to the President its abrogation along with a bill to reorganize the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It did not give the MPs adequate time to study and critique the proposals.

This finally explained the puzzle behind the government's move to put several mainstream political leaders of the state under house arrest at midnight, suspending mobile and internet services and imposing curfew-like restrictions in several parts of the state after cancelling the Amarnath Yatra.

Notably, the conditions under which Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India had led to the formation of Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which bestowed a special status on the state. It limited the Centre's ability to enact laws on the subjects apart from those acceded to India by the erstwhile Kingdom. This was a temporary provision in the Constitution to govern the state's relationship with the rest of the Union till such time as the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir met to determine the exact nature of the relationship.

Eventually, the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir enacted the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, which accepted the state's position as an integral part of India while retaining the special status provided under Article 370. It placed a bar on the future Legislative Assembly from interfering with the constitutional relationship between the state and the Union.

The special constitutional status of the state

By Arvind Kurian Abraham

is an example of asymmetrical federalism in India for it is very much possible to be an integral unit of the Union while retaining special powers.

In fact, Article 370 (3) states that the article can cease to operate if the President issues a notification to this effect, provided the recommendation to make it inoperative is obtained from the Constituent Assembly of the state. The latter requirement exists so that the residents of the state can determine the nature of their status in the Union.

But the President invoked modification powers under Article 370 by issuing the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 to substitute the Constituent Assembly of the state with the Legislative Assembly of the state, thereby removing the constitutional requirement to convene a newly elected Constituent Assembly to determine the future of Article 370.

Since President's rule under Article 356 is in operation in Jammu and Kashmir, the government has argued that Parliament can act as the Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir while recommending the abrogation of Article 370, thereby meeting the Article 370 (3) requirement.

When a State is under President's rule, Article 356 (1) (b) empowers the President to vest the powers of the Legislative Assembly of the state with the Parliament. But these powers are an interim arrangement for the enactment of laws till a new Legislative Assembly is elected, so that the state

is not adversely affected due to the absence of an Assembly.

The consent required under Article 370 (3) is not routine legislative power. It is a constituent power which determines the nature of the constitutional relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the rest of India. Article 370 (3) protects the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir by letting its residents determine their status. Thus an elected body of representatives of Jammu and Kashmir must be convened, to clearly express the views of the people of the state. For Parliament to arrogate such powers to itself, flies in the face of the purpose of this provision. This is not only unconstitutional, but also grossly undemocratic.

Pertinently, there are two forms of modification powers under Article 370. The modification power under Article 370 (1) (d) is in relation to the modification of other provisions of the Constitution of India vis-a-vis its application to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, whereas the modification power under Article 370 (3) is wide enough to modify the text of the article itself.

However, to exercise the modification powers under Article 370 (3), the consent of the Constituent Assembly is required. This is why when Article 370 was modified to insert an explanation to state that the Government of the State shall mean the Sadar-i-Riyasat of Jammu and Kashmir, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers of the State for the time being in office, it was modified only after obtaining the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir in

November 1952.

Therefore, the presidential order substituting the term "Constituent Assembly" with the term "Legislative Assembly" appears void as it modifies the text of Article 370, without meeting the requirement under Article 370 (3). Thus, the resolution placed in the Parliament of India in furtherance of the presidential order, recommending the deletion of Article 370, itself looks unconstitutional.

The powers of the Legislative Assembly as provided under Article 370 of the Constitution of India and under the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir cannot be interfered with as long as the "special status" of the state continues to stand. Therefore, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, 2019 which bifurcates the state into two Union Territories, is unconstitutional as Article 370 has not ceased to operate as the government failed to satisfy the requirements under Article 370 (3).

Questions are already being asked over the government move to amend Article 370 through the provisions of the same article besides the presidential decree that ignored the requirement of getting the approval of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir and the way the draft resolution was brought to the Parliament without prior notice to its members.

The government's decision to abolish special status of the state could not have come at a worse time when the region is steeped in alienation. One can only hope and pray that this does not encourage the bullet over the ballot in the Kashmir Valley in the days to come. (IPA Service)

Paying homage to victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Banning of nuclear weapons need of the hour

By Dr Arun Mitra

The world could never imagine the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August 1945 respectively. The two cities were left with over 2 lakh people dead and several times more injured. The effects continued for long as a result of radiation leakage from these bombs which caused acute radiation sickness in the form of burns and bleeding from various organs of the body. The chronic effects of the radiation led to anomalies in the next generation born to the people who survived the catastrophe. Dr Marcel Junod, first foreigner from Red Cross to reach there moved around the blighted city, pieced together what had happened from various first-hand accounts:

At about 8.15 a.m., when the inhabitants were going to work, a sudden blinding light, pink and white, appeared in the sky; this was accompanied by a sort of shudder, followed almost immediately by suffocating heat and a blast-wave sweeping away everything in its path. When we visited the ruined station in Hiroshima, the hands of the clock had stopped at this historic moment, 8.15

In a few seconds ... thousands of human beings in the streets and gardens in the town center, struck by a wave of intense heat, died like

major nuclear powers. This treaty played a critical role in ending the Cold War, and it increased pressure on both countries to reduce their arsenals. Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the treaty would set a devastating precedent for all nuclear armed countries to renege on their disarmament responsibilities'.

The Military Industrial Complex (MIC) continues to act contrary to people's desire to live. Paul Rogers in his article "a winnable nuclear war: Trump revives his generals' dreams" published in Open Democracy 25 July 2019 has quoted the statement of President Trump 'If we wanted to fight a war in Afghanistan and win it, I would win that war in a week. I just don't want to kill 10 million people. Does that make sense to you? Reinforcing the comment, he added: I have plans on Afghanistan that, if I wanted to win that war, Afghanistan would be wiped off the face of the earth, it would be over literally in 10 days. I don't want to go that route'.

Several commentators view it as the use of nuclear weapons, Rogers says. The idea of fighting 'small nuclear wars in far - off places' has been feature of US nuclear planning. Soon

The treaty prohibits development, testing, production, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, transfer directly or indirectly, receive the transfer nuclear explosive devices directly or indirectly, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

flies. Others lay writhing like worms, atrociously burned. All private houses, warehouses, etc, disappeared as if swept away by a supernatural power. Trams were picked up and hurled yards away, as if they were weightless; trains were flung off the rails...

Junod notes the consequences of the bomb for Hiroshima's medical corps: out of 300 doctors, 270 died or were injured; out of 1,780 nurses, 1,654 perished or were injured. He ends with an appeal for the bomb to be banned outright, just as poison gas was outlawed in the aftermath of the First World War.

A recent study done by Dr Ira Helfand shows that even a limited nuclear war using 100 Hiroshima size nuclear bombs would lead to nuclear winter and failure of crops globally. This would put two billion people at risk of starvation and death. The poor countries will be affected more and poor people in these countries will be the worst sufferers.

Doctors around the globe have been warning about these disasters time and again. Commenting on the unilateral withdrawal by the US President from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, the Physicians for Social Responsibility USA said that 'this has turned back the clock to a dangerous era of cold war. This vital landmark treaty entered into force during the Cold War, at the height of elevated tensions between the United States and Russia. As a result of this treaty over 2,600 intermediate-range missiles were eliminated by the two

after the end of the Cold War, there were studies about the potential value of small nuclear weapons in conflicts that might fall well short of world-wide war. Such ideas give a dreadful shiver when we look at the scenario that engulfed post atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The only hope is that the world community understands this danger. That is why despite several pressures, blackmails, threats the countries of the world voted in the UN General Assembly on July 7, 2017 with 122 votes in favour and only one against the resolution declaring the nuclear weapons as illegal. The treaty prohibits development, testing, production, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, transfer directly or indirectly, receive the transfer nuclear explosive devices directly or indirectly, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It also prohibits to allow any stationing, installation or deployment of any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in its territory or at any place under its jurisdiction or control. This is an opportunity to abolish nearly 17000 nuclear weapons that still present on earth. The non-nuclear countries should take lead and impress upon the nuclear weapons possessing countries to join the treaty and make nuclear weapons a thing only of history. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Nepotism in college appointments

Editor, A few months ago a prominent College (that has been in the news lately) advertised for a UGC sanctioned post in Political Science. As a hopeful candidate I applied and waited for the interview call. However, when months passed by and no call was issued I tried to find out what was going on. I came to know from internal sources that the interview had already taken place and the result was also declared. I was shocked and surprised. Of the 24 or so people who applied around 12 candidates attended the interview. The person who got the job had the same qualifications I did- a Master's Degree with NET. So how come I was not called for the interview? What was the deciding factor? Later I found out that his father is part of the elite circle of bureaucrats and his mother teaches in NEHU. While some candidates with better credentials who had a PhD from renowned Universities and years of teaching experience were overlooked, a fresher with no teaching experience and a Masters Degree from an Open University was given preference. While others wait for years and attend many interviews to get even a College Post, only a very exceptional candidate will get a sanctioned post in the first shot and in the very first interview.

My question is how come the colleges in Shillong have a different yardstick for measuring internal marks from other colleges outside. When UGC rules are that points should be given to

candidates with work experience, MPhil degree, PhD degree, papers presented at conferences and publications, why do some colleges in Shillong not give marks for work experience or MPhil degrees? Some don't count conferences presented or articles published. Some colleges even conduct their own entrance test before the interview. Are they trying to discredit the UGC and question the National Eligibility Test conducted by UGC? The manner of allocating internal marks differs from college to college.

Why is there no standard system of marking in such interviews according to UGC norms? Should the present system be allowed? How is this fair to people who do not have connections or well-placed, influential parents but try to earn it based on merit and spend years building their CV? How have the years of sweat, blood and tears spent on trying to complete a research dissertation become unworthy? How has having a good pedigree and being bred in the right family with political connections become a criteria for getting a job in Academics? I am deeply saddened by the state of affairs in Meghalaya where someone with a passion for teaching and has worked for many years trying to rise in this Academic world will be sidelined for someone who looks to teaching as a last resort. It seems to me that the appointments to most of the 'esteemed' colleges are all rigged.

Yours etc., A concerned and dejected candidate Name withheld on request

When commonsense is dead!

Editor, Apropos Shivaji Sarkar's "New MV Act, Draconian: Needs rethink", I would stress, "Rethink seriously with common sense". No one will deny that the new MV Act is made because of serious financial constraints. The utter desperation as stated by Mr Sarkar of NGT dumping ten year old running vehicles is sheer lack of common sense. By USA standards the catalytic converter, the main backbone of emission norms could serve the vehicle for 1.8 lakh kilometers and it is clearly stated that after this, payment had to be made if a new silencer with new catalytic converter has to be replaced. It clearly shows the protection and service that companies in other parts of the world give to their customers. We often see on television how BMW, Nissan etc., recall their vehicles for some emission failures. Alas! In India, we purchase cars blindly enticed by Airbags, and touch switches which prevent our fingers from exercise. Thus when common sense goes out of the window then everything goes awry. The authorities are simply not able to differentiate between careful speed driving and reckless driving. If car owners use common sense, junking of vehicles as said above may not stand judicial scrutiny. If not checked, I am afraid that junking 5 year old working vehicles would make motor car companies smile and the poor become cyclists or pedestrians and the Indian economy now at the 7th rank would move to No 1, and banks would prosper.

Yours etc., M. Khyriem, Shillong-14

“ *The environment will continue to deteriorate until pollution practices are abandoned.*”
--- B. F. Skinner
The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.357 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019

Ayodhya again
AYODHYA is back on centre-stage. A Constitution bench of the Supreme Court began hearing the case on a daily basis from Tuesday after attempts at sorting out the issues through discussions failed. The resumption of hearing must be seen as a positive step forward after the long period of hesitation, contemplation and confabulations to work out a formula acceptable to rival sides.

The Ayodhya dispute is hanging fire prominently since the early 1990s when the Vishwa Hindu Parishad came upfront and aggressively staked claim for the nearly 300 acres of land in which the Babri Masjid and some other installations stood. VHP argument was that the 16th Century mosque was built by Emperor Babur after demolishing a shrine that marked the birthplace of Lord Ram. The offensive in 1992 under the leadership of the late Ashok Singhal, LK Advani and MM Joshi resulted in a reckless demolition of the old, somewhat abandoned structure. It led to riots in various parts of India, killing around 2000 people. The sensitivity of the issue remains high.

Notably, the first term of the Modi-led BJP-NDA government avoided touching upon the matter and left it like a hot potato. The second term of Modi, from its very start, is more aggressive in nature due also to the big win it made in the 2019 LS polls. The issue still has strong political overtones. There are those who blame then Congress Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao for his suspected yet tacit support to pro-RSS entities for the demolition of the Babri structure. Rao thought that if the masjid fell, the principal opposition the BJP would lose its main weapon to win a political war in future against the Congress.

Notably, the resumption of the legal process came after attempts were made to evolve a consensus between representatives of the Hindu and Muslim communities. These attempts failed repeatedly. The last was of the three-member panel appointed by the apex court, which comprised Sri Sri Ravishankar, former SC judge FM Kalifulla and senior advocate Sriram Panchu. Problem was also that while the side of the Hindus was well-represented by the pro-RSS outfits, Muslims in India today do not have a commanding head to take the negotiations forward. They remain a deeply divided lot, unlike the Christians and Sikhs.

There are sections among Hindus who think the VHP and other Hindu outfits are barking up the wrong tree. There are those among Muslims who feel this is no big issue. But, saner elements are numerically weak on both sides.

To the Editor

Chowkidar chor hain!

Editor,
The slogan, 'Chowkidar Chor Hain' had gained notoriety in the last Lok Sabha Elections. Unbeknownst to most of us the repercussions of the refrain did not happen in Delhi but somewhere else where it was least expected. Some have with hindsight proclaimed it as an unheeded prophecy, and its gone viral on WhatsApp, but that's another story. The real story is actually where it happened, how it happened which as we shall see is totally unrelated to its origin and the political ramifications that the original slogan sought to achieve.
The story goes like this. A person was hired and appointed to ring a bell in a local church. After some time he got tired and bored of the monotonous chimings of the belfry. The jingling of coins in the collection box instead caught his attention and it sounded good. So he decided that instead of ringing the bell he would be better off ringing the tiller instead. He rang it once; he rang it twice and when no one noticed, the chap decided to ring it as merrily as often as he could. It was as easy as milking a cow and at the end of 7 years, lo and behold he had milked his employers of more than three and a half crore rupees! Mer-

ciless fate then stepped in and he was nabbed with his hand in the till!
An FIR was lodged. It created a sensation. The police accompanied by the media went to his house to arrest him. Handcuffed and about to be led away, the thief had a last request to make. He asked everyone to join him in prayer and they obliged. The posse of cops dutifully doffed their berets, closed their eyes and bowed their heads in deference to the Almighty. The accompanying media also closed their eyes, switched off their cameras and obediently joined in the prayer. Posterity was thus robbed of witnessing a historical poignant moment when the strong arm of the law; the vigilant whistle blowers of society and a detained crook all came together to entreat the Lord over loot stolen from his Holy House. And to think of the injustice of it all when people accuse us of being a community with no sense of humour!
Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Kashmir: people are important; not land
Editor,
August 6 was indeed a

We create waste which nature cannot digest

By Bapynskhem Shelton Lyngdoh

to mark the beginning of the global plastics industry. However, rapid growth in global plastic production was not realised until the 1950s. Over the next 65 years, annual production of plastics increased nearly 200-fold to 381 million tonnes in 2015. For context, this is roughly equivalent to the mass of two-thirds of the world population. This is assuming a mass of 75 kg per person [(381,000,000*1,000kg)/75kg per person=5,080,000,000 people]
Plastic has become a ubiquitous material and something that mother earth cannot digest. The

each year.
Plastic plates, bags, spoons, glasses, plastic water bottles and other material are readily available in the market. These are economical and easy to use. People prefer using these use-and-throw utensils during gatherings and parties as it shuns the hassle of clearing and cleaning the utensils later. All they need to do is to gather these and throw them away. However, little do they realize that this waste is not disposed off so easily. It continues to remain in the environment and harm us adversely.
Not just plastic utensils

“Plastic pollution is most visible in developing Asian and African nations, where garbage collection systems are often inefficient or nonexistent.”

human dependency on single-use or disposable plastics has become so high that it has resulted in severe plastic pollution threatening ecosystem and life on this planet. Plastic has so many negative impacts on human health and environment. As of 2015, approximately 6300 MT of plastic waste had been generated, around 9% of which had been recycled, 12% was incinerated, and 79% was accumulated in landfills or the natural environment. Around the world, five trillion single-use plastic bags are used every year which is 1,60,000 plastic bags per second. In India, 80 % of total plastic consumption is discarded as waste and official statistics say the country generates 25, 940 tonnes of plastic waste daily.
Plastic pollution is caused due to the accumulation of the waste plastic material in the environment. Plastic is a non biodegradable substance. It doesn't get disposed off in the soil or water and its effect is worse when burnt. It is thus a challenge to dispose it off. It remains in the environment for hundreds of years and causes air, water and land pollution. It is hazardous for humans, animals as well as the plants. Several animals, birds and marine creatures die due to plastic pollution

and carry bags but furniture and various other things made out of plastic are also used extensively the world over. It is high time we realize the harmful effects of plastic pollution and contribute our bit towards bringing it down.
If we keep discussing about plastic pollution we can come up with many problems and solutions.
Personally I urge everyone to let us stop using all kinds of plastic bags, cups and other plastic materials. As it is plastic bags make up more than 70% of plastic waste in Meghalaya.
To stop using plastic is not for us to switch to Oxo-Biodegradable products which are not compostable or organic, or paper bags where more trees are being deforested to get more paper and where ink is inorganic. I take this opportunity to urge everyone to support the use of SE Organic bags for a good cause as it is the best alternative to plastics provided by Saindur Enviro Pvt Ltd. This is a local based initiative which I have seen on Meghamart.com and which I have ordered for my personal use. As a citizen of this State I really congratulate our most eco- friendly leader- Hon'ble Chief Minister Conrad Sangma for launching this bag on World Environment Day 2019.
I wish my best to the team of Saindur Enviro Pvt

Ltd for coming up with this brilliant idea and initiative and above all an alternative to plastic bags which I had been looking for from a long time. The producers of Saindur Enviro Organic Bags have promised us that these bags are 100% compostable carry bags made up of PLA (Polylactic acid) based material extracted from renewable resources and that they are environmentally safe and will get composted under composting conditions in between 90 to 180 days leaving no toxic residue. Instead, the end product is nutrient rich and can be used as manure to enrich soil's fertility. Their organic bag is really organic and are comparable to plastic, Oxo-plastic, bio-degradable plastic bag (which are plastic in nature) and paper bags which demand more trees to be deforested. And the good thing about SE organic bags by Saindur Enviro is that the dye they are using is organic and not synthetic which has negative impacts on the environment.
I urge our Chief Minister and State Government to come out with more positive Environmental Policies to save our environment. I also urge all the Deputy Commissioners of all districts of Meghalaya to enforce a ban on plastics under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and 12 (4) of the Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016, which prohibit the use of polythene with a thickness of less than 50 microns including plastic cups, plates, thermocool etc. Any person found violating the order should be liable to be penalized under section 15 of the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986 with imprisonment of up-to 5 years and a fine which may extend to Rs one lakh or with both and in case of failure or contravention continues, additional fine of Rs 5000 everyday which may be extended. Personally I urge all the readers to join hands to fight against this global and environmental issue and say no to plastic.
Let me conclude with this quote:
“It is the worst of times but it is the best of times because we still have a chance.”
- Sylvia Earle, marine biologist.
The writer is from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Mumbai.

launched Common Services Centres (CSCs) for the benefit of voter verification process. The move is aimed at helping the voters to register, modify or delete the electoral names through a single contact center. ECI should also ensure that such a voter verification process through CSCs is carried as an ongoing activity throughout the year and offer hassle free services similar to Passport registration process.
Further, it is now high time that ECI invests much of its time to update the electoral rolls and also enhance the features of the existing Voter Id card system. The move may be done to enable smooth transition of addition, transposition and deletion of names from the electoral rolls in a seamless manner.
ECI may also adopt the best practices implemented by other electoral bodies such as United Nations Electoral Assistance Division into the existing electoral registration process. ECI should surge ahead with extensive voter registration awareness drive through various channels including print and social media and involve active voter participation in such a process.
Yours etc.,
Mr Varun Dambal
Bangalore - 72

After august 6, India is pitted against Kashmir Scrapping section 370 unilaterally has its own consequences

By Gyan Pathak

Once there was a state in the Union of India named Jammu & Kashmir. It remained so after its accession in 1947 until August 5, 2019 when the state was abolished after a presidential order revoking Article 370 of the constitution of India, reducing it to mere a territory held by the Union, and a significant area carved out to make another territory named Ladakh. It was done by applying brute force in the state silencing the voice of its citizens and by the majority in the parliament without discussion on the matter. Opinions are divided. Some say the action and the manner in which it was done was immoral, unethical, unwise, and unjustified while majority of non-Kashmiri Indians hailed the action bold and historic. Kashmiris termed the fateful event as 'black day'. We, both Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri Indians, will have to face the consequences whatever may come.
As an immediate consequence, the action is being discussed world over in terms of India vs J&K and the issue of Pak sponsored terrorism in the state have been already pushed into the background. It means we are back to 1947 when J&K as an independent state signed an agreement with India for its accession to India. It is certainly a backlash of the unilateral action of BJP led government which did not take forward but 72 years backward. In arrogance of power and brute force, the BJP leaders did unwittingly pushed the country in such a situation in which India and J&K is not one country but reduced to two parties in a dispute, in which one is seen crushed by the other by a brute force, nevertheless India has told the international community that it is an 'internal matter'.
In civil matters, even a state becomes a party as an individual do. When there is an agreement between the two parties, the principle of justice demands that both the parties must adhere to the agreement not only in letter but also in the spirit of the letter. If certain disagreement crops up in due course of time, it must be settled by both the parties by a mutual agreement. It is against the principle of justice that the stronger party violates the agreement by a brute force. Any number of people supporting the stronger cannot justify the application of brute force against the weaker enforcing them to submit or be silent. In the present instance, India is seen as stronger, and J&K is seen as weaker.
Modi Government is not seen to be justified on several counts. The first on account of violating the spirit of the Article 370, the Section 3 which gives a power to the President of India to revoke this article provided that there is a recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the state. Such recommendation was necessary before the President issues such notification. The government first amended the section by replacing 'Constituent Assembly' to 'Legislative Assembly' by a presidential order and then procured recommendation from the Governor of the state, which was considered sufficient to revoke the special provisions of Articles 370 and 35 A.

The critics of the government's action argue that the recommendation of the governor does not reflect the wish of even a single Kashmiri, since he himself is not Kashmiri. It does not reflect the wish of the Legislative Assembly of the state, because there is no assembly at present. It is not even the wish of the government of the state, because the state is under presidential/governor's rule. It was simply a wish of an agent of the Union of India, appointed as governor in the state. By extended logic the Union of India considered the recommendation of the governor equivalent to the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.
The expression 'Constituent Assembly' was replaced by 'Legislative Assembly' because the Constituent Assembly ceased to exist long back in 1957 leaving the Articles 370 and 35 A as it is without any recommendation. Critics say that the government neither followed the letters of the Constitution of India nor its spirit. They first did away with the state government, made the state without assembly, put it under president's rule, large number of forces sent to the state, pilgrims and outsiders evacuated, state was converted into garrison, political leaders were arrested, people put either under prohibitory order of 144 or curfew imposed, internet and phone snapped, the area totally disconnected from the world, and under such a shadow of fear, the action was taken.
It has been noted by several critics that it was not a merger of J&K with India but it was an accession with certain conditions laid down in the instrument of accession signed by both the parties. India was not given the power to do whatever it would like to do with the state in future. The fundamental basis was that J&K would remain a state. India has not only abolished the state, but broken it into two parts, made them mere territories of India. It has created new concerns among other states of the country. It has given the signal that they are states on the mercy of the ruling party at the centre, and if they will not fall in line, their fate as a state may be sealed as mere territory of the Union of India, notwithstanding any provision in the Constitution of India. Abolition of statehood, breaking it into pieces, and reducing it to mere a territory, are also not according to the spirit of the agreement between J&K and India.
As for abolition of the privileges given to Indian citizens of J&K, critics point out that many similar privileges are also given to Indian citizens of several states and regions. This unilateral act of the government has generated a fear among all those citizens of the country enjoying certain privileges including autonomy, culture and property related civil rights. The present action has signalled that all their privileges exist at the mercy of the ruling party at the centre, notwithstanding any provision in the Constitution of India. All the provisions of law can be interpreted to suit the purpose of the ruling establishment in Delhi, could be mischievously amended and implemented by brute force.
A more serious problem may appear in future in respect of Article 7 of the instrument of accession which says: "Nothing in this instrument shall be deemed to commit me [now the state of J&K] in any way to acceptance of any future Constitution of India or to fetter my discretion to enter into arrangements with the Government of India under any such future Constitution." (IPA Service)

“Some people talk about other people’s failures with so much pleasure that you would swear they are talking about their own successes.”

--- Mokokoma Mokhonoana

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.358 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2019

Uneasy calm in Kashmir

Pakistan, obviously caught in a cleft stick after India made major changes to the status of Kashmir, is hemming and hawing. Prima facie, it does not know how to respond to the situation but cannot keep quiet either. The bravado it demonstrated by asking the Indian High Commissioner out and recalling its envoy from India stopped short of a complete snapping of diplomatic relations. At the same time, it managed to show to the world that it has responded adequately and forcefully to register its protest over what India did in Kashmir. Pakistan also snapped bilateral trade, which anyway does not amount to much. Pakistan is also saying it would take up the matter with the UN, something which it did in the past too but without achieving any substantial gains. Prime Minister Imran Khan has asked the army to remain alert in the aftermath of the Indian action in Kashmir. All these do not amount to much if the idea is to set a “wrong” into “right”.

What Pakistan could do in the past, and might be waiting for the nearest opportunity to do again, is to whip up sentiments of the Kashmiri Muslims in the Valley and infiltrate trained terrorists or its own uniformed men camouflaged as terrorists to the Indian side of Kashmir and unleash violence. PM Khan has warned India that more of Pulwama could happen, and this could – he rightly understands – lead to war. A war is what Pakistan can ill afford at this stage. Its economy is in a shambles. Only someone caught with a suicidal tendency can take such a step forward. Besides the Modi-Shah-Doval team in Delhi will not just sit back and watch. For India, Kashmir is a work in progress. Modi is past the first post and so far so good. Friday is crucial, though. The Valley, caught in a curfew since August 2 – a day before the major announcement from Delhi about abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A—remains quiet. Or, an uneasy calm prevails there. The first time people can come out into the streets is August 9, when Friday prayers have to be attended to. Security remains tight and yet some disturbance cannot be ruled out. Despite all precautionary measures, things could turn bad at least for a short while. The government has made it clear it would face the situation head on. It’s time to see how things pan out in the long-harried state.

TO THE EDITOR

Suggestions to ease traffic

Editor,

Apropos the news caption, "CM assures solution to traffic snarls" (ST August 5, 2019), this is a welcome statement of the Hon'ble CM while responding to the concerns of ordinary citizens. It is indeed a burning topic for the state capital, Shillong which is facing serious problems of traffic congestion caused by narrow roads, no parking lots in important places, high levels of car ownership, unbridled attitude and behavior of drivers etc. It is a topic of conversation in weddings, birthdays, funerals, events etc.

As a part of "solutions to traffic snarls," perhaps construction of new parking lots and reconstruction of old parking lots would ease the problem of traffic congestion by relieving the roads of vehicles parking on them. One such area where a massive multilevel parking lot housing office departments and a host of other things is the large open space between the DTO office and the Tourism Director in Lower Lachumiere; the parking lots near Polo Towers and at Motphran where the existing parking lot and the Assam type Education office can be demolished and

redeveloped into a multilevel parking lot with the office floor in it.

I hope this catches the attention of the Hon'ble CM and the concerned department and that they act upon these humble suggestions.

Yours etc.,
Prabhu Kumar,
Viaemail

Menace of two-wheelers in Shillong

Editor,

Since the last one year or so there is a frightening increase of the auto-gear scooties in Shillong. The riders are young boys and girls and they drive quite recklessly as we see in Guwahati. They overtake the cars more often from the left side and that too in high speed which is really startling and often baffles the motorists in their attempt at preventing accidents. This is because the roads in Shillong are now famous for traffic jams; on top of it the moment they notice the green signal by the traffic policemen on duty and that too in the peak hours, they immediately rush their scooties through the gaps availing the slightest opportunity as if they are to catch airplanes.

They overtake risking their lives and give a fright to the ever-cautious car drivers. Further, all the scooties keep their headlights glowing even in the daytime and the silver lights that are extremely harmful for the eyes trouble the car drivers coming from the opposite direction.

The scooty riders do not look either left or right and all of a sudden rush out and turn into intersections without indications creating immense problems for car drivers who have to steel their nerves to avoid collision. It seems as if the car drivers have promised to guard the scooty riders at any cost and the latter are free to create all the inconveniences. Moreover, if a car even inadvertently gently pushes a scooty then the chances are that the rider will be thrown on the road due to the impact and all the blame will squarely fall on the car driver. Further, and if the scooty rider is a woman then the sympathy will be for the scooty rider, no matter whose fault it is.

The Traffic authorities are requested to issue warnings to the scooty riders to drive following the traffic rules and not violate them at will. This is to request the scooty riders also to be extremely careful and to follow the traffic

rules and transform themselves to good Samaritans. They should be aware that the traffic rules are not nonsensical. They are there to be followed and scooties are not exempt from obeying the traffic rules.

Yours etc.,
Bibhash Dhar,
Viaemail

War threat against India

Editor,

The apprehension expressed by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday (07 Aug 2019) in Islamabad that Pulwama-like attacks can follow the scrapping of J & K’s special status is an admission/confirmation of the fact that Pakistan was fully involved in Pulwama attack as a non-state actor. In the guise of apprehension Imran’s use of words “More Pulwama-like attacks bound to happen” is a direct challenge to India with threat of launching of many more terrorist attacks. He is not only dreaming/ contemplating of triggering/waging, but also has already predicted an impending conventional war against India. It appears Imran has forgotten the drubbing Pakistan had received during their misadventures

(war) of 1965 and 1971 in the hands of the sophisticated and modern Indian army.

Re-organization/ Restructuring of any state (defined under Article 1 of the Indian Constitution) by the ruling dispensation is an internal matter of the country. Imran Khan or Pakista , for that matter, has got no business to intervene into/meddling with internal administrative decisions/matters of India.

Before his attack of Indian ideology as racist, Imran should better come out with the stark reality about the living conditions, protection and security status of minority communities in Pakistan. After partition of India the minority communities in Pakistan have been decimated in a planned and systematic manner and the percentage of the total minorities (Hindu, Buddhists, Christians and Others) reduced to 5 percent by ethnic cleansing as on date. Members of Minorities are being harassed, more often than not, at the whims or dictates/diktats of the clerics. False allegation of blasphemy against Asia Bibi and her subsequent trauma, not very long ago and in the recent past, is a case in point which speaks amply about the non-racist philosophy/ policy of Pakistan.

Birds of a feather flock together. It was expected that China being a Big

keep them clean?” He got a resounding “Yes” in response. Like Afroz we should all try and stop using single-use plastics, carry our own shopping bags and our own glasses everywhere; stop having water from disposable water bottles and also stop using thermocol cups. If we as citizens don’t look for the easiest way out we can bring the change.

Afroz also does not buy the NGO concept. He believes in working with volunteers who give freely of their time and resources. Someone or the other offers food after every cleaning drive and that is good enough. When the clean-up of Umkialiar had to be halted on Thursday as it had started getting dark, Afroz asked the volunteers what their feelings were when they waded into the river to retrieve the garbage. Each one of them said they were touched and that they would change their attitudes towards the plastics and their lifestyles too. All of them made a solemn commitment to join hands in the year-long cleaning campaign started by The Shillong Times. This indeed was very heartening because if at all change has to come it must be the present generation that will bring the change.

In fact, “Catch them young,” should be the watchword because today it is kids who keep a check on their parent’s lifestyles.

We hope that Government with all its resources will be sincere in its River Rejuvenation Programme and that they will involve the key stakeholders, namely the schools, colleges and universities and all other institutions and business establishments that must use their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds not to bribe pressure groups but to add value to this city which is home to all of us.

To Afroz we say a huge ‘Thank You’ for being the messiah for cleanliness in a world polluted and overwhelmed by plastics. We look forward to a long-lasting friendship that is bound by a solemn pledge to reduce the use of plastics in this country.

Brother of Pakistan would also oppose India’s move to create a separate Union Territory of Ladakh. China should better restrain its imperialistic expansive designs of grabbing lands and seas in and around south-east & South Asian countries and not interfere in India’s internal affairs by imparting unsolicited and unsought for hegemonistic advice of imposition or fatwa.

China should come out in open with the truth of Tia-nan-men square massacre and their crackdown on UIGHURS (Muslim minority community) in the Xinjiang province for global awareness and appraisal of Amnesty International for preservation and security of human rights.

Pakistan & China both need to see their faces in the mirror on the question of minority protection and protection of human rights in their homeland before slinging mud or pointing fingers at any other country.

Yours etc.,
Samares
Bandyopadhyay,
Advocate, Kolkata
High Court

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

Nagaland Resembles Kashmir

Revisto Marza

Scenario: The Jammu and Kashmir Re-Organisation Bill 2019, passed by both Houses of Parliament, was apparently a political outclass of the majority. Its constitutional validity is substantially contested. A writ petition is being ensued in the Supreme Court challenging the Presidential Order on Article 370 against the 1954 statute protecting Kashmir. Home Minister Amit Shah defends the new Bill on grounds of constitutional failure in the valley, whereby Kashmir was represented by the Centre in fulfilling necessary formalities of legislation. Article 370 of the Indian constitution provided a separate constitution and flag for Jammu and Kashmir, a deal brokered between Jawaharlal Nehru and Shiekh Abdullah since Kashmir’s accession into the Indian Union. The provision barred certain applications like Right to Information, Right to Education, purchase of property and settlement rights (included marriage with Kashmiris), besides others, within Kashmir jurisdiction. Precisely, all laws passed by the Parliament needed legislative approval of the state government, similar to the Nagaland scheme. Interestingly, Amit Shah amended the expression of a clause in Article 370, terming Constituent Assembly to imply Legislative Assembly. Referring the absence of a Constituent Assembly in Kashmir, the State Assembly takes such role in respect to the provisions of exception with India. Virtually, the political run up of President’s rule in Kashmir had let a tactful demise of the 1954 rule by routing in Central power over the place exercised by the State Assembly. This was how the special status of Kashmir collapsed overnight.

Reflections: There are mixed responses in the political spectrum. Sections of the opposition including some Congress leaders had voiced support to the government on ground of national integration. Others had termed it as the darkest day in Indian democracy. China and Pakistan had condemned the unilateral action as dangerous, fuming up the Pakistani leadership to warn India of more Pulwama-like attacks. The Central government justifies that Kashmir problem was endemic to national integration, citing exclusive provisions of 370 not implying on the whole dominion of India. But questions are imminent to the fact that the Centre cannot make new changes on Kashmir without taking the people into confidence, or unless Article 370 was first removed. This invites a new statute to roll out again, towards burying intricacies around the clauses of President Order 1954 and 2019. Indian leaders by and large had predominantly handled the Kashmir situation with a sense of political oblivion to the Kashmiri people. The Indian constitution in total, had problems accepting any governmental representation that threatens national integrity. Nehru, on this aspect, had laid the ‘Objectives Resolution’ in 22nd January 1947 aiming forced union inter alia states, provinces and other areas with/outside British India into the union of India. More recently, the ruling government had glorified the teachings formulated by its philosopher V.D Savarkar proclaiming Hindustan as ‘one country, one emblem and one constitution.’ Similarly, present stalwart Mohan Bhagwat, referred to Kashmir as ‘Necessary constitutional amendments will have to be made and old provisions will have to be changed in that state. Through these mechanisms, the Hindu nationalism carries, that separatists in Kashmir were the cause of autonomy, while it had viewed Article 370 as potentially containing separatism.

Nagaland: Considerable safeguards under Article 371 (A) of the Nagaland state were provided by the constitution of India while dealing with the Naga interest not to join Indian Union. It foregrounds the nature of politics and the cultural aspects linking Nagaland and the Indian constitution. Undeniably, Naga people, following their native values, are distinct from the rest of India. Regular instances, with one studied from opinions through the Indian metropolis, show that the idea of cultural co-existence within India’s dominant structure, is deeply critical. Arguably, the realization of a respectable Naga value may not pair up with the way India looks. The irony remains whether ‘Indian stalwarts’ view Nagaland in continual exception of protection – when would the breakdown come in this era of politikk? Semantically, the rise of Hindu nationalism does not depart from the historical scene of terror and perpetration to humanity. Post-Nagaland-statehood 1963, was long enough for India to ensure sincere development in the state. Very sadly, apart from developmental failure, the successive governments at the Centre had never gained the guts to say sorry for the painful atrocities meted out to the people in Nagaland. Instead, Nagaland continue to grope in political grief with reminiscence of unforeseen times never seem to fade from the Indian State paradigm. The Indian leadership had so far ruled in somewhat triggered by the law of military act, and suspicion against Naga integral respect, coupled by greed of land (not counting the people).

Evidently today, the Indo-Naga dialogue for possible settlement had toiled a ‘toothless framework’ with no results, notwithstanding changes through the process. Considering the political breadth at revoking Article 370 amidst popular pressure, the absence of a mutual outcome in the Naga issue reveals anything with India’s perceived negligence. The nature of Indian dealings at best is instrumental for ‘clueless arguments’ – a kind the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen wrote ‘The Argumentative Indian.’ Politically speaking, the situation of Kashmir outweighed the Naga case in the preferred list of government actions. In that context, constitutional provisions of the two states were even not close, although aligned with some degree of autonomy. Hence in the wake of ‘Kashmir episode,’ Nagaland Governor R.N Ravi categorically stated confidence on the present state of Nagaland safe. However with the state’s existing provisions, the Centre enjoys residuary powers over State powers through its Union agent (Governor) when taken by situations threatening national integrity. It was only that the Naga situation had not been able to convince the Central leadership as Kashmir had done it from all quarters. Elements of dismaying India’s gain in the Naga situation can prompt similar action connecting the fate of Kashmir. It is just a spark away.

Taking political stands, the future rulings at the Centre on Kashmir’s revocation will prove India’s long concept of a Unitary State. The Indian government with its declared commitment for democratic functioning hardly squares for a sincere approach of democracy. Unjustified rulings have by far brought a mockery to democracy. Indeed, the hype about democracy in the country obscures the imposition of what can be called a ‘structured democracy’ if not ‘twisted democracy’ that denies rightful participation to certain sections of society. This approach of the state machinery to make laws that appears unfriendly to the people, had created confrontations from the people as a necessary movement against the state. The nature of state in India deserves serious re-scrutiny, while it widens doubt for a mutual delivery on the Naga talks.

Author teaches Political Science in the University of Delhi.

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

--- C.S. Lewis

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXII No.1 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2019

A 75 year long journey

THE Shillong Times started its journey 75 years ago, this very day. Its founder editor, SB Chaudhuri was a visionary who wanted this state with a majority tribal population to be known to the rest of the country and the world outside. The paper was later handed down to Mr PN Chaudhuri whose son Manas Chaudhuri succeeded him as editor and managed the paper for over three decades. This is part of the history of The Shillong Times. The newspaper was envisioned to capture the voices of the tribes – the Khasi and Jaintia community, who had then not integrated with the Indian Union but were chieftainships running their village confederacies. At that point in time to have the foresight of serving a public purpose of informing, educating and entertaining, first as a weekly and then as a daily requires exceptional courage. Many in Shillong have grown up with this newspaper which is today a unique and integral part of the city’s identity and post independence heritage. The Shillong Times has arrived at this juncture not without considerable struggles. And readers know what those struggles are. Indeed our esteemed and loyal readers including those who disagree vehemently with some of our views are what keep us going. It is said that facts are sacred and opinions free. Readers have their opinions about the government and these are adequately reflected in the op-ed page. News is based on facts as gathered by our reporters at a particular juncture. Deadlines can sometimes prevent us from presenting those facts accurately since stories are centred around humans and situations can take sudden twists and turns.

This newspaper has cemented its place by meeting the need for change, with the ability to adapt to change. I am sure the founder- editor and his successor could not have imagined some of the news events that have been reported along the way, let alone the societal and technological advances that have changed the face of this newspaper. The way we receive and view our news and information today could not have been imagined 75 years ago. The sight of someone using their computer, cell-phone or i-pod to catch up on what is happening is as common as reading a newspaper was in the 1940s. At The Shillong Times we are trying to walk with the times and be more digitally active.. To everyone who holds a copy of The Shillong Times every day for years together, hearty congratulations and thank you for being part of this proud history of delivering news and views to Shillong... to this region and to the country as a whole.

TO THE EDITOR

Erratic monsoons

Editor,

The UN’s Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that efforts to limit global warming while feeding a booming population could be wrecked without swift and sweeping changes to how we use the land we live off. IPCC’s report offered a sobering take on the hope that reforestation and biofuel schemes alone can offset mankind’s damage to the environment.

Land is intimately linked to climate. With its forests, plants and soil it sucks up and stores around one-third of all man-made emissions. Over-exploitation of the resources produces huge amounts of planet-warming CO2, methane and nitrous oxide. Retention of fresh water in the inner recess of the land is possible only through the protection of trees and plants.

Monsoon over the Indian peninsula is almost erratic. Normally, first week of June every year, monsoon used to hit south India but now the monsoon does not come precisely, and even if it comes in time, it does not carry desired amount of rain water. But at the same time, late coming of the monsoon is totally different from the expected lines. It assumes

very fierce nature and it rains very heavily and furiously.

This time the monsoon wreaked havoc in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, etc. Hundreds of people lost their lives in the incessant rains. And in the North-East especially in Assam and Bihar, where hundreds were dead and thousands were left homeless let alone their cattle, standing crops and other belongings, the monsoon fury was let loose.

All these climatic changes occur due to El Nino factor. Everyone is responsible for the climatic changes. Intense exploitation of resources, man’s unsatisfying greed for amassing wealth and not caring for the environment are all the root causes for the natural disasters that befall on us like phenomenal cloudburst, temperature going up unbearably, and floods.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandan,
Via email

Climate Change is on us

Editor,

The unprecedented rains in parts of North Karnataka has affected the

The radical step taken by Government of India has had predictable response in the country. A good many Indians are rejoicing that Kashmir, finally, after seven decades, got fully integrated into India. However, India being a democratic country, a number of people are resenting the repeal of Article 370 that lent Kashmir a special status. There are also people, mainly commentators, complaining about the manner in which it was done and the passage o the J&K Reorganisation Bill, while they endorse the action. Reactions to this historic development cuts across communities and regions.

Importantly, two more reactions, which are not hard to anticipate, should draw our attention and preparedness. First, the reactions from the people in the Valley, and the second the international community, at least, those in the know of the Kashmir issue, and have some stake in it. Because of the extremely sensitive and volatile situation in Kashmir, the Government has taken massive ‘controversial’ preventive steps to scotch and suppress the reactions in the valley.

But, the point to note is that the Government needs to be wary of international repercussion of any action it takes to maintain law and order. In the past, the GoI, could partly pass the buck to the J&K State government, which was often accused of soliciting support of the separatists. But, now the buck stops at GoI. It can no longer shift any charge to anyone else.

However, I am concerned here about the international community. How would they react? For New Delhi, it is an internal matter, although Jawaharlal Nehru took it to the United Nations.

Understandably, much water has flown down the rivers of Jammu & Kashmir, since it was taken up by the UN. And with the Shimla Agreement and Lahore Declaration, the UN Resolutions became infructuous. Now, India is making claims on Pakistan occupied Kashmir as an organic part of Kashmir

life and property of thousands of people. The rivers from neighbouring Maharashtra have caused much havoc in the rain affected regions owing to overflowing water in the dams. Even Maharashtra and Goa regions are not spared from the flood fury affecting many people’s settlements and livelihoods.

It is high time now for the Center to speed up its relief work in rain affected areas of North Karnataka and Maharashtra. Adequate warnings issued by weather advisory should have been seen as a precautionary measure. The efforts put in by NDRF, SDRF in tandem with the Indian Army is highly appreciated.

Further relief materials and support to the affected areas should increase manifold and a full fledged support should be sought from necessary agencies involved in rescue work. Key learning’s from the previous flood fury in Kerala should have been adopted by the Center to mitigate such a crisis arising yet again this year. Necessary relief in the form of materials and funds should now be mobilized quickly on priority basis to distribute to the rain affected people. Center should be on a high alert and rescue people on priority basis by arranging for necessary

Scrapping of Article 370

Containing global fall-out

By Dr D.K. Giri

that was illegitimately taken by Pakistan by an act of aggression. It is another matter, that Nehru’s folly or idealism gave ‘PoK’ to Pakistan on a platter. At any rate, India’s expressed intention to pull it back from Pakistani occupation will trigger international reactions, diplomatic or otherwise.

Insofar as Pakistan is concerned vis-a-vis Kashmir, it has been internationalising Kashmir in every multilateral forum it participated. It has been the leitmotif of their foreign policy, the main source of their international economic aid and so on. So the loss of that source and succour has unnerved them. Pakistan will not stop at anything to rake up Kashmir issue as long as they can.

Expectedly, Pakistan has reacted. Its action of severing all ties with India is not only panick- driven, but reflects a deeper problem. So be it. I think an integration of part Kashmir to India is complete, so should be the separation with Pakistan. This may spur fresh thinking about India and South Asia on their part.

Further, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, has said, they will exercise all options to deal with Kashmir. The Pakistani Army chief has said, they would meet their obligation to Kashmiris and even go to war with India. These reactions bordering on frustration and exasperation are not new. How should New Delhi react?

It is no secret that Pakistan has launched a proxy war, and at times, actual, against India on Kashmir in addition to the two full-scale wars in the past. So New Delhi has to be ever prepared for a military conflict with Pakistan, limited or total. The threat of aggression from Pakistan would never disappear until they are completely subdued by India through trade blockade, and military supremacy etc.

There are people in India who advocate friendship and negotiation with Pakistan. I was one

support through various rescue teams from the Army and Navy.

Yours etc.,
Varun Dambal
Bangalore - 72

J&K: Darkness at noon

Editor,

On 8th August 2019 the PMO’s official twitter handle tweeted stating that PM Modi will address the nation at 8 PM in the evening. At first I was a little frightened thinking what if he says Demonetization 2.0 will take place from mid night. Luckily he didn’t. In fact he addressed the whole nation in regards to the recent changes that took place in Jammu & Kashmir. The PM began his speech by congratulating the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on scrapping of special status to J&K and the state’s bifurcation. The speech was about 40 minutes long and every word that Modi spoke seemed reliable and promising. But at the same time it is worth noticing that for the last three days J&K is suffering from a total shut down of mobile internet services, broadband and even landline connections. Adding to this even television services were stopped by the central

among those, driven by the philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family), Pakistanis are our family, some members decided to live separately, and good neighbourliness. Even Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said, you can change your friends, not your neighbours. But, all those organising principles and philosophy did not work with Pakistan. It would not be friendly and honest with India until it gets Kashmir.

Now our new resolve seems to be, and rightly so, we will not deal with Pakistan until it puts ‘PoK’ on the table for negotiation, and eventual integration with India. So, one can assess the impossibility of normalisation of relations with Pakistan. We can expect a complete break up of relations until this issue is resolved once and for all. In the meantime, New Delhi could stick to its stand that cross-border terrorism must stop before any dialogue could begin.

What about the United Nations? There is a suggestion by experts that New Delhi should withdraw the application made by Nehru to the UN as it did not have the Cabinet endorsement and secondly in light of bilateral method adopted by New Delhi and Islamabad. If Pakistan wishes to persist with the UN, New Delhi should lobby with the P5 of UNSC to disregard it.

Predictably, some individual members of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation have protested New Delhi’s move in Kashmir. But countries such as the UAE have supported it. In their recent meetings, OIC as a body did not take a position on Kashmir.

Strangely, China has raised objection to making Ladakh a Union Territory by GoI. The Ministry of External Affairs has snubbed Beijing and said: “We do not interfere in your internal affairs, you do not in ours”. As I have maintained China would like to put India down in one way or the other as it fears it may be overtaken by the latter. It is also jealous of the Indian political system that enjoys greater credibility than its own authoritarian system. New

government. So this means that when the Prime Minister was addressing the whole nation to share his thoughts about Jammu and Kashmir and the Kashmiris, the people of Kashmir were totally blacked out and had no clue about the PM’s speech. The whole nation knew what PM Modi felt about Jammu and Kashmir but the people of that very region neither had any information nor idea about this at all. There’s a lot of irony hidden in this, a lot of questions that arise inside the minds of a lot of Indians but all we can do right now is just pray for the people of Kashmir, for their well being and for peace in the valley.

Your’s etc.,
Nitesh Deb
Via email

Parliament to go paperless soon

Editor,

The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha monsoon sessions have concluded recently. The Hon’ble Speakers of both the Houses have termed the current session as most productive since 1952. It is highly appreciable that the Speakers took note of over 36 bills passed including the crucial Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill, J&K Reorganization Bill, Central

Delhi has to be wary of Chinese duplicity and expansionism.

The other power that stood by India on Kashmir is Russia, which has declined as a super power but remains a major world power to reckon with. New Delhi should retain the good- will of Russia, which can still be a friend despite its growing closeness with China.

US President Donald Trump is inconsistent and unpredictable. He despairs the American engagement in Afghanistan. Some commentators suggest that Afghanistan could prove to be another Vietnam for America. Not really, as here the government is with America and both are fighting a fundamentalist force. However, Trump is desperate to pull out of Afghanistan in partial fulfilment of his poll promise to disengage from the war-torn country. In order to do so, he may have dangled the Kashmir carrot to Imran Khan in lieu of his support for America against the Taliban.

However, Prime Minister Modi seems to have pre-empted any mediation initiative by America. The US State Department has treated the Indian action in Kashmir as its internal matter without any mention of Pakistan. This should dispel doubts about America’s response, that it would either remain neutral or support India.

The European powers, France and now Britain should support India, although the European Union as a supranational body should be managed by the Indian Mission in Brussels. Pro-active communication by Indian Missions should prevent formation of wrong perception about India’s intentions. At any rate, New Delhi could be quite sensitive to the opinion of the international community, not ignore it. Knowing Modi’s penchant for international engagement and his interest in international arena, one could be sure that he would not sully India’s image abroad! --- INFA

(The writer Prof. International Politics, JMI)

GST bill, Right to Information Bill, UAPA Bill etc. Both the Houses witnessed smooth business proceedings including extension of monsoon session by seven days, extended business hours to pass crucial bills and much lesser uproar in the House leading to the most productive session.

The decision taken by Hon’ble Speaker to go paperless from the next session (Winter Session) in both Houses is commendable as it will improve the productivity of the House. The move may help to emulate the currently followed paperless system in other parliamentary bodies like the European Union, United Nations General Assembly etc.

Further, it would be a great initiative if the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs promotes the activities of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha through extensive outreach programs across various social media channels and PIB News Website. The move will result in effective communication, promote outreach and foster a better and productive business environment in both the Houses.

Yours etc.,
Varun Dambal
Bangalore - 72

Emerging Afghan situation played a role in decision on J&K

India now more prepared to deal with extremists

By Sagarneel Sinha

The move of the BJP led NDA government to scrap the special status of Jammu & Kashmir by modifying Article 370, according to me, is a historic decision. The reason is — it integrates Jammu & Kashmir for the first time with the State of India completely. Earlier, the state, which will be now divided into two Union territories — Jammu & Kashmir with a legislature and Ladakh without a legislature, had its own flag and its own constitution — meaning that there was no direct application of laws passed by the Indian parliament until and unless approved by the Legislature of Jammu & Kashmir. Although, Jammu & Kashmir’s constitution clearly mentioned that it was an integral part of India — but the truth is Article 370 did come in the way.

It was this framework which actually made Jammu & Kashmir a separate state from India, although being its part, and helping Pakistan aided separatists based in the valley to further their secessionist agenda to gain independence from India. The separate Constitution has always helped the separatists and Pakistan to reiterate their propaganda that Jammu & Kashmir is actually not an “integral part of India”. Further, the refugees of West Pakistan have not been conferred the rights of citizenship despite living for decades in the state because of now void Article 35 A, which stems itself from Article 370.

There are arguments that there is no proper debate on this issue, particularly with the local Kashmiris who are locked in their homes by security forces. Obviously, one can’t deny the fact that it would have been better had the centre first tried to win the hearts of all Kashmiris — then there would have been no need of employment of heavy security forces. But we can’t forget the fact that the talks of removing of Article 370, although not removed technically but the BJP government had made it toothless, has always been an agenda of the saffron party finding place in its party manifesto. So, BJP did what it had promised before the elections. It was its duty to implement the promise, particularly after its stunning victory, which is supported by the majority of the electorate — also evident from support of non-NDA parties like BSP, AAP, YSR Congress, TRS and BJD.

Another important fact that is being ignored is the fast changing scenario of political situations of Afghanistan where there is a strong chance of Taliban, which has good relations with Pakistan, coming back to power, has played a major role for the hurried decision of the centre regarding Kashmir. The recent change of mind of the US president Donald Trump towards Pakistan that was seen in Imran Khan’s visit signalled that Pakistan is still important for the United States, which is actually trying to negotiate a respectful deal of its defeat with the Taliban in Afghanistan — where it needs the help of Pakistan to deal with them. Actually, the clock of Afghanistan is moving back to the time of 1989, when the then Soviet Union, already facing internal challenges, was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan — after incurring heavy losses fighting against extremist forces aided by the United States and Pakistan. Importantly, it was also the same period when the extremist Islamism rose in the valley to fight against the State of India.

One shouldn’t forget the false and deceitful statement of Trump that India’s prime minister Narendra Modi had asked him to mediate

between India and Pakistan in Kashmir; which was actually aimed to satisfy Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan. It was this statement which made the government of India to hurry its decision to take control of Kashmir by killing the very purpose of Article 370 — which prevents the centre to take individual decisions regarding Jammu & Kashmir. Undoubtedly, the criticism that the centre should have first won the hearts of Kashmiris has some valid points but given the situation of Afghanistan it seems that Modi government was left only with this option. So, if analysed with the security angle, this act is justified. Plus, there should be no doubt that Pakistan would have tried its best to destroy the discussions of modifying Article 370 in the valley by activating its agents — separatists and the terrorists. Also, Pakistan’s renewed interest in aiding infiltration along the LOC after remaining cold for the last two months justifies the act of the central government.

On the other hand, we can’t ignore the certainty that the Article 370 was not part of the Instrument of Accession signed between King of Jammu and Kashmir Hari Singh and government of India on 26th October, 1947. It was introduced later in 1949 keeping with the spirit of IOA. But not to forget that the Article 370 was drafted in Part XXI of Indian Constitution — which is titled as Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions. So, it is clear that Article 370 was a temporary article contradicting to what Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah’s National Conference and Mehbooba Mufti’s PDP say.

The founder of National Conference and the then prime minister of Jammu & Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah — father and grandfather of Farooq and Omar respectively — himself was unsettled with the provisions of Article 370 being temporary giving powers to President of India to modify it. It was this view that Sheikh Abdullah, who earlier advocated union with India in 1947, wanted independence from India — leading the then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru to dismiss the government of NC in 1953. Importantly, over the years the central government, mostly under the Congress party, has used the Article 370 to amend a number of provisions of the constitution of Jammu & Kashmir through Presidential orders — even after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir.

That’s why terming the passage of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Bill 2019, as “murder of democracy” is not accurate. The significant facts are that this bill not only integrates Jammu & Kashmir in true sense but also delivers justice to the people dwelling in Ladakh. This can also bring investments to the region which has seen almost no major investments for the last decades. Plus, the refugees of West Pakistan living for decades will now be able to get the status of permanent citizenship. Not to forget that, through this bill, central government has also checkmated Pakistan at a very crucial time over the issue of Kashmir — as given the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, it was easy for our neighbour to claim that “J&K was not an integral part of India”. So, this historic decision is actually aimed for India’s interests — including the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. (IPA Service)

“Science without religion is lame,
religion without science is blind.”

--- Albert Einstein

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXII No.3SHILLONG, MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2019

Return of Sonia

DUST has settled in the Congress party for now. Sonia Gandhi has returned as head of the party and as its interim president, which was the only logical way forward in a scenario where her son Rahul Gandhi and daughter Priyanka Gandhi have opted out of the race. The rank and file of the party will be greatly relieved as a tried, tested and successful leader has taken over the reins of the party yet again. All talk about finding a new president for the party after Rahul’s exit has come to naught; and understandably so. There was no one outside the family who could claim a nationwide support base. The aura of a Sachin Pilot or Jyotiraditya Scindia or Mukul Wasnik was specific to their states and did not transcend boundaries. Dalit leaders whose names were floated around were not acceptable to the elitists who always dominated the Congress. This meant the leadership of one or the other leader of the “first family” was a fait accompli.

This is understandable also for the reason that the Congress of today was the creation of Indira Gandhi after she was suspended from the Indian National Congress in 1969. The family led it always—except for a few years in the 1990s, when Sitaram Kesri was given the charge. Now, the leadership cannot be handed over to someone outside the family on a platter. If at all this was done, this could have lacked conviction, also as long as the members of the “first family” were there to sniff around. They have tasted blood, and would not cut and run now. Sonia Gandhi has her pluses and minuses. She gave able leadership to the Congress for 19 years in what was a highly laudable achievement. This, even granted that she led the party to ultimate defeat in 2014. Congressmen across the spectrum felt comfortable; and they have welcomed her return with a sigh of relief and with open arms. At the same time, the scenario in India has changed majorly. Old legacies will have only limited impact. The rival side is displaying a killer instinct. Sonia Gandhi’s image cannot be divorced from the scams that brought down the UPA and uplifted the BJP and its allies to power in 2014. She has her health problems. Age is not to her advantage anymore. Reason why there are those who think Sonia Gandhi is now a shadow of her former self. Yet, she is the best bet for the party, for now at least.

TO THE EDITOR

Government of India!

Editor,
Should the possession of near-absolute or even absolute powers be the real test of strength, no government on this planet could match the Union Government of India.
Yours etc.,
Morning Star Sumer,
Shillong – 2

Congratulatory messages

Editor,
Allow me to congratulate you and entire staff of *The Shillong Times* on its Platinum Jubilee. I am sure *The Shillong Times* will continue to garner more laurels by its balanced reporting and editing. I am the Editor of *The Writer’s Academy* based in Agra. I have had the honour of several of my stories being published in your *Features Supplement* quite a few years ago.
All the very best once again.
Yours etc.,
Anand Khurana
Agra - 1

I
Editor,
It has been more than 30 years that I have been reading this paper and I am glad to mention here that over these years I have observed how wonderfully this paper has tried to improve its content. It has put its best efforts to send out as much information as possible to the population

of Shillong. Moreover, the language chosen is decently simple and thus even children have access to it.
Also, the variety of columns included covers most aspects of the world like politics, sports, entertainment, as well as local and regional news. Most importantly the editor gives just enough information with minimum reading which makes the paper even more readable.
With all the progress I am glad that *The Shillong Times* is celebrating its platinum jubilee. I also give my best wishes that it achieves even higher milestones in the coming years.
Yours etc.,
Purushottam Das Chokhani
Via email

III
Editor,
Long ago my father (Late) Krishna Singh Rawat used to receive complimentary copies of the then FORTNIGHTLY *Shillong Times* and the whole family used to relish the local reports and editorials in the FIRST English newspaper in Shillong.
Years later, when we received the FIRST EDITION of the DAILY NEWSPAPER of *The Shillong Times*, it was like the first rays of the morning sun after a long cloudy spell of ignorance and a dark closed world, a communication gap, no sharing of information and ALWAYS BEHIND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY BY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.
The DAILY EDITION of

Prospects of large scale manufacturing industry in Meghalaya

By HH Mohrmen

Speakers or writers use allegories when they try to give some perspective on the age of the Universe. They would try to put it in a time frame to help people understand how old it is. This one I picked up is from a fortnightly published from UK by Rev Dr Maria Curtis, *The Inquirer*, Issue 7962/4 May 2019. Trying to give the gathering some idea how old the Universe is, Dr Curtis invited the audience to join her on a walk. She said we’ll cover 13.8 (billion years) kilometres in two days, as we walk from Big Bang which is estimated to have happened about 13.8 billion years ago, when our universe began, to the present. Every two steps represent a million years. The longest part of the journey is lifeless chaos, until mid-morning on the second day, a mere 5 billion years ago, when our solar system began to form and we humans appeared in the last few centimetres of the journey (Rev Dr Maria Curtis, *The Inquirer*, 7962/4 May 2019). Humans, by the way, appeared in the scene less than 500,000 years ago.
Coming to the history of our human ancestors, the first Homo Sapiens appeared about 300,000 years ago and fossils of the first modern human was found outside of Africa, 180,000 years ago. Geneticists calculated that the first Out of African migration which ultimately helped to populate India occurred around 70, 000 years ago. (Tony Joseph, *Early Indians, the Story of Our Ancestors* and where we came from P-xi). Humans definitely are versatile but they are not the only animals who adapted to the environment they live in and have evolved.
It is also true that humans are not the only animals that use tools to survive. We know that other animals like crows, beavers, chimpanzees and others also use tools to manipulate their environment for their own benefit. These animals have been using tools for millions of years and it was found that the tools used by Homo sapiens are not different from the tools used by our closest evolutionary cousins, Homo erectus and Homo

neanderthalensis. (Tony Joseph, *Early Indians, the Story of Our Ancestors* and where we came from P-2). But how come humans became masters and lords over the animal and plant kingdoms?
It is believed that human dominance increases after man was able to make and control fire which also helped human in making tools, out of woods, stones and later of iron, bronze and steel. Man’s achievement is not only in making tools and using them as weapons, but his major achievements is also in his ability to herd animals and start practicing agriculture, which placed him in a much better position than other animals.
Even human history was fine till then, but changes which occurred later, happened so fast and this led to the destruction of the environment as we see today. But before that people went about doing their chores and farmers carried on their farming activities and blacksmiths supplied them with the tools they need for their different activities. Man also came up with idea of making weapons to protect himself against the enemy and battles became wars. This was how people lived till about two hundred years ago, when radical changes would happen. The change that happened two hundred years ago is that man could increase his tool- making capacity, which also brought a drastic change in the way people live. 200 years ago a group of people in England developed a means of mass production which helped kick- start the industrial revolution and that was the Big Bang that we are seeing now. All that is good and bad in the world today is because of the small band of people who started the industrial revolution.
The world changed and continues to change but these changes steered clear of the people who live in hills in Meghalaya in particular and the North East India in general. People in this region remain untouched by these

changes till the advent of the British. The Khasi and the Pnar had some interaction with the plains people before the British arrived but that did not have much effect on them as they mostly lived their own way of life away on the hills. Perhaps the Pnars had much closer interaction with the people in the plains when their rulers captured Jaintiapur and annexed it to the territory of the Sutnga kingdom in the early 1500s. They not only captured Jaintiapur but also shifted the capital of the Kingdom to Jaintiapur where the royal family lived for the most of part of the year, and maybe till before India attained independence.
Apart from trading amongst them, they also traded with the plains and there are plenty of folk stories about these markets. The major activity of the Pnars is agriculture and animal rearing. Surprisingly this continues to be the main activity of a large section of the population till date. For these activities they needed tools and the only thing that the Pnar continue to do till today is to make iron tools for their daily use. However, people engaged in blacksmithy are also gradually decreasing, in the Jaintia hills. There are very few places which continue to make farming tools which are unique to the Pnar, like the different types of spade (Wakhu-Tuber, wakhu khian), the different machetes (wait), saws (kharat), sickle (rachi), axe etc.
Of course carpenters in the area also gradually evolved with time and graduated from making huts to making Assam-type houses and now concrete buildings. But the other things that people manufacture are the Larnai pots. Hence it is obvious that nothing has changed in the hills in the last few centuries. People may have dressed well, are better educated, have access to different media platforms and live different kinds of lifestyles particularly in the urban centres, but they had manufactured nothing other than what they had done traditionally. But even these

activities are on the decline.
Some may say that people are now manufacturing cement, but the capital that has gone into building these plants all came from outside. Except for a cement plant which is partly owned by the former minister of the government of Meghalaya, the remaining plants in Jaintia hills are either owned by non-locals or they are major shareholders. The other pertinent question is whether cement manufacturing units helped provide employment to the locals? Locals were only employed as office clerks and many do menial jobs. The reason given by the management of the many plants is because locals don’t have industrial culture. This is the common refrain of the management of these plants. The different cement plants are not concerned about the youths of this area and they don’t see it as their duty to skill them and inculcate the industrial culture in them.
The state is now going gung-ho in promoting entrepreneurship in the state but how can the government expect this to happen when as alleged, people don’t even have the industrial culture to begin with. It is therefore very ambitious to expect that people will make this giant leap from the culture of blacksmithy which merely produces agriculture tools to manufacturing industries. The other question that the government needs to ask itself before promoting manufacturing industries in the state, is whether the state has the capacity to carry these giant plants? Has any independent study being done to understand the environmental and health implications that cement plants have on the people in places like Lumshong and its adjacent villages where these plants are located?
Therefore large scale manufacturing is a big conundrum in the state like Meghalaya and the government needs to be extra careful with regards to large scale industries in its effort to promote entrepreneurship in the state.
who could not believe his own eyes! It was an achievement of the *Shillong Times* no doubt!
Many interesting programmes were arranged to commemorate Golden Jubilee Celebration. A souvenir, called ‘*The Shillong Times* 50 years’ was published with many valuable write-ups from the veteran writers of old Shillong.
The Shillong Times, daily is like my morning tea. I can’t imagine my day without having a look at ‘*The Shillong Times*’. My hawk, Lal Bahadur, a very punctual and sincere man reaches the paper to me early morning every day to quench my thirst for the daily. I am a subscriber of two more daily journals; but ‘*The Shillong Times*,’ is a top priority for me.
I am personally indebted to *The Shillong Times* for publishing my write-ups on different topics in different times since 1979, when it was the only English Journal from Shillong. I started writing for the ‘Letters to the Editor’ column, and was encouraged to proceed further.
I wish *The Shillong Times*, a very successful Platinum Jubilee, and pray to God for its long-long victorious journey. My sincerest congratulations to the Managing Director, Editor and staff of *The Shillong Times* for their very successful effort and undaunted spirit to carry on this great service for humanity.
Yours etc.,
Uma Purkayastha
Shillong – 4

Kashmir Unhinged

The road ahead

By Poonam I Kaushish

The air in J&K is thick with a sense of jamaais vu. By abrogating Article 370 and bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir State into two Union Territories, Ladakh and J&K, Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Shah rearranged the State geographically leaving in its wake an uproar of appreciation from across the country and silence and dread in the Valley under unprecedented blanket of security.
Undeniably, in the short-term, the security environment in the Valley will not result in dramatic transformation. There is a possibility that violence might erupt in the coming months as restrictions are gradually removed. The deployment of a large number of forces is indication the Centre is not taking any chances.
In fact, there has been a pattern of cyclical violence after every period of radicalization or what Kashmiris perceive as unpalatable. Recall, terrorist Burhan Wani’s killing in 2016 which sparked widespread stone-pelting in the Valley. Protests could recur as supporters of Article 370 conjure up frenzy of Kashmirayat being compromised and try to radicalize the youth.
Alongside, Pakistan has upped its ante of fomenting trouble by scaling up jihad to intensify its proxy war in the Valley, stopped bilateral trade, recall of envoy, notwithstanding US, China and Russia refusing to meddle. Its military establishment has made plain “it is prepared and shall go to any extent to fulfil their obligations to the Kashmiris” and warned of Pulwama-like attacks.
Modi has announced various measures to amalgamate Kashmiris into the mainstream. Extended reservation in jobs in State Government posts to socially and educationally backward classes and in educational institutions etc would help eradicate the discrepancies suffered by them, along-with allowing people the right to vote or contest in nagar palika, panchayat and Assembly elections.
Besides, plug Kashmir deeper into the Indian economy and create more broad-based stakeholders in the Valley who will benefit from greater economic interactions with the rest of India. Urgently, put in place developmental projects. Towards that end an investment summit is scheduled October.
With the ban on outsiders living, working and buying property lifting, Kashmir could usher greater business investment like IT to relocate to the region, promote world class tourist facilities and build new infrastructure for modern industries. Bollywood, Telugu and Tamil film industries could return to the region thereby ushering a new era.
Also the Government needs to explaining the benefits of abrogation of Article 370 and deal sensitively with protesters. Of course, a lot depends on intensified movement of people for business and investment from across India once normalacy returns.
However, this hinges on the Government’s ability to restore peace in the Valley. Second, given that the social and economic indicators of J&K are actually much better than say UP, Bihar and other States, it will require sophisticated interventions to leapfrog development if and when the situation settles down.
It remains to be seen if the people will be appeased by the promises of development as growth is not the biggest grievance of Kashmiris. It is the unacceptable heavy-handed tactics of the Indian security forces wherein it could be difficult to win the people over.
More than more of the same, money, men and muscle what Kashmir needs is an emotional package, a parcel that will allow Kashmiri agitators to give vent to their grief and frustration, their anger and even their hatred. A wrap up which will treat them with respect, restore their dignity and try and heal the accumulated humiliations.

Healing, by itself, will not be a solution, but it will be a beginning. The need of the hour is for India to connect with Kashmiris.
Towards that end all Parties who have large student wings which should send delegations to visit Kashmir and spend time with Gen Next listening to them. Despite provocation by Pakistan and its agents to ensure the emotional connect does not take place. Certainly, there will be bad eggs, but one hopes Kashmiris will not spurn a genuine hand of friendship or treat it with violence.
For the medium term the Government needs to put in place an educational package, not only formal but educating people of Kashmir’s reality. An example: Azaad Kashmir or Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, Pakistan has sold the idea that Azaad Kashmir is really azaad. But this is a lie.
The Hurriyat Conference now bereft of Pakistan’s tacit support and funds has been rendered toothless. But its leaders will have to be kept on a short leash so that they do not incite locals, mobilize stone pelters and anti-national elements at will and create mischief as was happening earlier.
Clearly, New Delhi needs to deal with the unfolding situation sympathetically. The Centre needs to set up a Delimitation Commission to rationalize Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and Panchayat seats by adopting a fair/uniform criterion in delimitation of constituencies in the State proportionate to the electorate so that inequities and injustice could be plugged out and laying a platform for a stronger and cohesive J&K.
Think, Kashmir accounts for 15.8% of the area and 54.9% population, Jammu for 25.9% area and 42.9% population while Ladakh has 2.2% population but 58.3% area. However, when the State Constituent Assembly was constituted Sheikh Abdullah arbitrarily carved out 43 seats for Kashmir, 30 for Jammu region and two for Ladakh. Presently, in the defunct State Assembly 46 seats were allocated to Kashmir, 37 to Jammu and 4 to Ladakh.
Underscoring, the stark anomalies in the size of constituencies for the Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha. The average number of voters and area per seat in the Kashmir region is far less than that in Jammu and Ladakh. Thus, the delimitation process will increase the number of constituencies in Jammu which will now have a greater political say and play in J&K politics.
Time for Modi-Shah to arrive at a Modus Vivendi with locals by gathering lost threads from the baggage of chequered history and keeping ones ears to the ground. What would be the stake and role of J&K and Ladakh in the immediate? The answer lies in the womb of future. The need of the hour is imagination, innovation and impetus.
One way out as the Prime Minister asserted is for J&K to regain its Statehood once the situation there normalizes giving people the opportunity to elect a Chief Minister and MLAs in a fair and transparent manner.
Remember, Kashmir is not a place where destiny seems to shadow events like a madman with a razor in his hand. Nor a toy to be frittered, twisted, discarded or dumped. It is a national issue, which transcends political planks, ideology, philosophy and thesis. Modi has to leave no ‘stone’ turned to further its national interests and make Kashmiris’ truly feel they belong to India. The Kashmiris’ too need to rise to the occasion.
In his radio address Modi promised to abide by his slogan Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas and deliver jannat in Kashmir’s paradise, he needs to take the leap of faith and connect with Kashmiris. It remains to be seen if he can get the cherry blossom to truly bloom again and make the Kashmir dream a reality. It is a long dreary road. ----- INFA

“Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.”
--- Mahatma Gandhi

The Shillong Times
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Congress suffers attrition
ONE after another Congress MLAs and MPs from Assam are deserting the Grand Old Party. Recently, Assam Rajya Sabha member and chief whip of the Congress in the House, Bhubaneswar Kalita resigned the day Article 370 was abrogated because he was in sync with the legislation. He felt that the Congress party was not able to read the mood of the nation which was all for scrapping of the above Article which would finally establish Kashmir as an integral part of India. He joined the BJP on August 9 at the Party Headquarters in Delhi. Following in the footsteps of Kalita is the former the Congress minister and prominent Barak valley leader Gautam Roy, who joined the BJP on Sunday, along with former Rajya Sabha member Santiuse Kujur. Another Congress leader, Hiranya Bhuyan, president of Assam Pradesh Youth Congress and the party candidate from Tezpur in the 2016 assembly election, also joined BJP along with Roy and Kujur. Earlier the former Congress MLA from Tinsukia Rajendra Prasad Singh who is a three time member also joined the BJP.

Rajya Sabha member from Assam, Sanjay Singh too had joined the BJP much earlier. Stories are now doing the rounds that former Assam Speaker Bharat Narah and his wife Rani Narah, former MP too would leave the Congress and jump into the BJP bandwagon. After the resignation of Rahul Gandhi as AICC President, the Congress has been in a no-win situation. Priyanka Gandhi's name was floated around but failed to evoke the right responses. There are many young leaders in the Congress Party but their seniors feel they don't have a pan-Indian appeal. A Party that does not have the courage to go for an election to elect a leader is a party that lacks confidence. Sonia Gandhi taking over the leadership yet again is uninspiring to many. Even Jyotiraditya Scindia an articulate young leader expressed that he agreed with the abrogation of 370 because that was almost a national consensus and political parties cannot sail against the tide. Stories have also been doing the rounds that some from Meghalaya too would be abandoning the sinking ship sooner than later. Perhaps they are weighing their options because those who decide to join another Party individually would have to resign their MLA seats and contest elections once again. That's a bit dicey for those who are unsure of being re-elected. But it is a fact that the Congress in Meghalaya is fast losing steam.

TO THE EDITOR

Violation of midday- meal scheme

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily, I would like to draw the attention of the concerned authorities about illegal collection of money by the Secretary, Ramkrishna Upper Primary School, Umsohsun, Shillong from the parents of the students while distributing rice and lentil (both uncooked) to the students under mid-day meal scheme. On August 9, 2019 the school management distributed rice and lentils to the students and collected Rs. 50 from each student as transportation cost without issuing any receipt/ acknowledgement. This is in gross violation of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. As per the guidelines, Central assistance is provided for management, monitoring, evaluation, transport

(subsidy) and cooking to implement the scheme. It has been revealed on enquiry by the parents that the amount was collected on the direction of Secretary of the School Managing Committee. When transport subsidy is being provided by the Central Government, under what authority is the Secretary collecting money for transportation? Such action on the part of the Secretary is a blatant violation of Midday Meals Rules 2015 and needs urgent intervention by State Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee (SSMC) for Mid-Day Meal Scheme which is mandated to supervise implementation of the scheme at State level as per Rule 6 of Midday Meals Rules 2015. We would therefore, urge the authorities particularly the SSMC to immediately look into the issue and take appropriate steps against the errant persons. Yours etc., Abbas Khan Shillong -2

Article 370 and the bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir:
The devil truly lies in the details
By Keith Nongsteng

On August 6, 2019, the Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi took an extremely bold decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution of India vide a notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice in the name of the President of India. A day earlier, the President of India issued The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 which effectively supersedes the erstwhile Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954. This momentous occasion can be considered as the NDA Government's "Tryst with Destiny". Indeed, the BJP claims to have delivered on one of its biggest election promises which it has so properly highlighted in its 2019 election manifesto. Going a notch further which has come as a delightful shock to many, even within the party ranks, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, 2019 was introduced and subsequently passed in Parliament. The Bill has received the assent of the President of India and is now an Act of Parliament. The Act bifurcates the state into two Union Territories - Jammu and Kashmir being one single entity and Ladakh being the other. The purpose of this article is not to dwell on the political, military or socio-economic aspects of these recent developments, but rather it is an attempt to try and establish certain legal facts whether the Government of India's actions followed proper constitutional procedures and whether said actions can stand the test of judicial scrutiny. The views in this article should not be inferred in any way to be above the wisdom of the venerable Supreme Court of India. Historical antecedents of Article 370 To truly understand the entire issue surrounding Article 370 and how it came to be incorporated into the Constitution of India, we must first turn our attention to history. History, as they say, is the library of all derived knowledge. On October 26, 1947, the ruler of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession under the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 whereby his kingdom agreed to accede to the Dominion of India. Defense, Foreign Affairs and Communications were ceded to the Government of India. It would be interesting to note that whereas other princely states signed Merger Agreements, Jammu and Kashmir did not. The state's

relationship with India is of a very special nature. Thus, the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was convened in 1951 by proclamation of the Yuvraj of Kashmir, who retained his full residuary sovereignty as per the terms of the Instrument of Accession. The Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was thus completely within its rights to draft and adopt a constitution and to decide for itself the role that the Government of India will play in Jammu and Kashmir in future. It must be noted here that the J&K Constituent Assembly consequently adopted a resolution stating that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and thus, question of secession or independence does not arise under any circumstance. Article 370 of the Constitution of India can be considered as the provision that cements India's relationship with Jammu and Kashmir. Under Article 370 (1), the powers of the Parliament of India to freely make laws for the state are limited to only those matters specially mentioned in the Instrument of Accession. In such specified matters, the Parliament of India only needs to "consult" the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. Further, in any other matter not specifically mentioned in the Instrument of Accession, the Parliament of India requires the "concurrence" of the J&K State Government. Under Clause (3), the President of India is within his constitutional rights to abrogate Article 370 if, and only if, he has received the recommendation of the J&K Constituent Assembly to do so. Furthermore, to safeguard the territorial integrity of the state, the 1954 Presidential Order on Jammu and Kashmir stated that, "no Bill providing for increasing or diminishing the area of the State of Jammu and Kashmir or altering the name or boundary of that State shall be introduced in Parliament without the consent of the Legislature of that State". After having revisited the historical facts, let us now consider the case on a point by point basis. It would be utterly futile to draw a conclusion on an issue based upon the hype created by the political parties and the media at large. As mentioned earlier, we will attempt to determine the constitutionality (or the

lack of it) in the recent amendments to the Constitution of India. The issue of alterations to the Constitution of India with respect to the state of Jammu and Kashmir pertains to two broad issues: Article 370, and the bifurcation of the entire state. Let us deal with them under each sub heading Article 370: A legal-constitutional reading Though this Article is widely considered to be a "temporary" provision and was largely projected as such by erstwhile governments, but the matter is not so simple. In 2015, the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir ruled that Article 370 has assumed a place of permanence in the Constitution of India. In 2017, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in the SARFAESI Case had ruled that Article 370 is not a temporary provision. As per Article 370 itself, the only way the article can be deleted or modified in any form is through the recommendation of the J&K Constituent Assembly. However, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 1957. The Government of India has amended Article 367 (Interpretation Clause) of the Constitution of India to add a proviso which states that a reference to the J&K Constituent Assembly shall be taken to mean a reference to the J&K Legislative Assembly. Now here lies the problem. One constitutional provision cannot be made to run counter to another constitutional provision. This is against the tenets of basic constitutional law. Now, in Section 147 (c) of the J&K Constitution, the Legislative Assembly of the State is not authorized to make any law which pertains to the provisions of the Constitution of India as applicable, in relation to the State. Ideally, it would have been lawful for the President of India to seek advice from the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India under Article 143 as to the question of what constitutes a "Constituent Assembly" in the present times. Even though the advisory power of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India is not binding in this case, yet it would carry a powerful legal backing for the Government of India. Furthermore, there has been no Legislative Assembly in Jammu and Kashmir since last year. The recommendation required under Article 370 (3) was given by the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir unilaterally. How can the Governor of a state under President's Rule under Article 356 take such

drastic decisions without the advice of an elected state government? Where is the Legislative Assembly in this case? The Governor of Jammu and Kashmir is a nominee of the Central Government, and his unilateral decision is logically construed as an order from New Delhi. There is a question of lack of procedural law that needs to be examined here. In fact, it is a genuine case of conflict of interests. Hence the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019, and the Notification of Ministry of Law and Justice No. G.S.R. 562(E) cannot stand the test of judicial scrutiny as they have no legal standing to derive their existence whatsoever. They are both half-cooked laws. Bifurcation of J&K illegal? It is an undeniable fact that under Article 3 of the Constitution of India, the Parliament has the complete power to alter the names, boundaries and areas of any state in India. The President of India need only obtain the views of the concerned state, which he may or may not accept. Jammu and Kashmir is the exception. Article 3 of the Constitution of India was extended to the state via Presidential Order 1954 with the additional proviso that no alteration to the territory of the state can be made by Parliament without the consent of the J&K Legislature. In this case again, the Government of India has committed a fraud against the Constitution. Where is the J&K Legislature to grant consent? The Governor is not entitled to speak for the people of Jammu and Kashmir as he is not even an elected representative! It is a sham that needs to be challenged in Court. The constitutionality of the Reorganisation Act mitigates the idea of co-operative federalism. True, India is not a pure federalism but it is not a pure unitary nation either. The legal implications of the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state are many, and that is a subject that must be dealt with in a separate article. As we are aware, a fresh batch of petitions has been filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India challenging the Government of India's decisions. These are times to watch out for - to observe the interpretation of constitutional law and the meaning of jurisprudence altogether. The Court will have a very great role to play. (The author is a student of law and is based in Shillong)

its attention from Kashmir towards its own province of Balochistan and the areas of Baltistan and Gilgit. If they are still sluggish and not showing sincere concern for the area and the people, as above, then it may prove to be perilous. One fine morning they might find to their surprise that those regions are no more part of Pakistan. Indifference and lack of concern has a limit and thus there are chances that the people concerned may raise their voices louder and come out of the clutches of cruelty and unresponsiveness exhibited by the national leaders of Pakistan towards them and that too for decades. The advice here for the Pakistanis is that they stop worrying about Kashmir and go and save their own nation which is suffering from instability. Yours etc., Bibhash Dhar, Via email

A defiant Pakistan

Editor, As expected, Pakistan is again poking its ugly nose unnecessarily in the internal affairs of India. They have not learnt any lesson so far even after suffering so many defeats in the hands of India. In fact, instead of Kashmir which is an integral part of the Indian Union it is high time for Pakistan that as a substitute of flaunting on Kashmir and drawing unwarranted attention of the world it should better divert

Will an altered J&K usher in prosperity?
By Dhurjati Mukherjee

Kashmir's dilemma is like Shakespeare's famous line 'To be or not to be, that is the question?' Unlike rest of the country, which has by and large welcomed Modi government's decision to abrogate Article 370 and bifurcate the State into two Union territories, the mood in the Valley is uncertain, given the unprecedented lockdown. It is anybody's guess how soon normalcy will return and whether time will ensure the end-result-amalgamation of Kashmiris into the mainstream, as New Delhi has envisioned. The situation on the ground so far suggests it shall be a long overhaul. For instance, the first test at hand wasn't successful. A week ago, Modi had assured the people they wouldn't face any trouble while celebrating Eid on Monday last, but it wasn't so. Leave aside any festivity, prayers were held in smaller neighbourhood mosques, but were not allowed at major mosques in Srinagar. Too early, many would argue, and add that time is a healer, mindsets would change. One is inclined to mention here that misgivings over Article 370 are not new. Many political analysts had attempted to justify the notion of differentiated citizenship as an alternative to what they regarded a majoritarianism. On the other hand, the arguments in favour of retaining the article were few as Articles 370 and 35A hardly qualify as keystones in a modern democracy. In fact, one can easily question whether these laws are equipped to build a just and inclusive society? The opposition by the Kashmir leaders and Muslims it must be understood is because now with abrogation of the special status, migrants from other parts of the country will unleash demographic and ethnic change and dilute the religious identity of Muslim majority in the Kashmir valley. The fact is that neither Hindus of Jammu nor Buddhists of Leh, despite being State subjects of J&K have made any attempt to settle in the Valley in the last few decades. On the other hand, Kashmiri pandits, and Muslims have also moved in large numbers and settled in Hindu-dominated Jammu ad cities like Kolkata, Jaipur, Lucknow, Patna etc. As is well known, the State had for years been affected by terrorist violence which, in turn, led to declining tourist arrivals, film shootings shifted to foreign or other locations and economy in doldrums. As there were hardly any employment opportunities in the State, a large section of the Kashmiri youth - even educated ones -took to insurgency. It has indeed not been surprising that there has been an anti-Indian stance amongst most Muslims residing in the Valley. Undeniably, Article 370 has been an impediment in restricting private investment into the State. Though a study showed that from 2000-2016 the State received 10 per cent of all Central funds, despite having just one per cent of the population, private industries did not develop as people from outside were denied permission to buy land and settle in the Valley. With the abrogation of the Article, the present restrictions would go, which in turn, would help develop industry, allow doctors, engineers and consultants from other States to work in J&K. It may be mentioned in this connection that, according to reports, there is an acute scarcity of doctors, specialists in speciality hospitals and medical

colleges in the State. Importantly, industry leaders have welcomed the development as this would attract investments in J&K. The Adani group, the Mahindra group and many chambers of commerce predicted that there was scope for large-scale investments as Kashmir will now be an indistinguishable and inseparable part of our national community. Obviously, as soon as the political situation improves, which is bound to happen in a few months, the whole scenario would change for the better. It would be worthwhile to watch whether a section of political leaders, mostly belonging to the Congress, who are opposing the move, would eventually have to eat their words. Remember, some prominent leaders of the party, including Dr. Karan Singh, belonging to the erstwhile royal family of J&K, has openly supported the move saying that "gender discrimination in Article 35A needed to be addressed as also the long-awaited enfranchisement of West Pakistan refugees and reservation for Scheduled Tribes". And there is hope that 'things are bound to change with a pro-active Home Minister who is going to come down with a heavy hand against any misadventure of the Pakistan army from across the LOC in Kashmir'. Indeed, the screws have already been tightened on pro-Pakistan terrorists, who had a free run in the State all these years due to patronage from the governments run by the Valley-based parties. And while it's understandable for Pakistan to oppose the present development in J&K and for China in Ladakh, the justification advanced by our national leaders is overriding and is convincing. It is a well-known fact that hundreds of jawans and even citizens have laid down their lives due to terrorist moves. No more, is the message and that Pakistan bringing down diplomatic ties with India or even closing trade ties will hardly have any effect on our country. In fact, the revocation of the special status for the State was very much needed for its own development and also for integrating it into the mainstream of the country. If now there can be all-round economic development and other religious communities settle down in Kashmir, tourist activity would increase and the whole demographic scenario is bound to change. If, as expected, terrorist activity gradually reduces over the years, there is bound to be economic growth in the Valley and earning levels of the people would go up steadily. It cannot be denied that in the guise of autonomy, it had deprived its people of women's rights, of political reservation of dalits and tribal communities and infrastructure upgradation. Now that the discriminatory law has been revoked, one can hopefully expect people from all communities to visit, live and work in Kashmir. As our former Foreign Secretary, Nirupama Rao, recently wrote that the challenge in Kashmir is to overcome threats to security and building trust and conviction for "a brighter future of development, good governance, respect for fundamental rights" etc. Thinking optimistically, one may conclude that the process of integration would alter the scenario in Kashmir for better days to reign in.--- INFNA

“A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word 'darkness' on the walls of his cell.”

--- C.S. Lewis

The Shillong Times

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Divided by Article 370

AT no time has the country been so divided over a piece of legislation as it is today. For the first time, even the media (electronic) reported what it observed from the sky (aerial view) in different parts of Kashmir. A locked-up population observed Eid with trepidation even as uniformed personnel occupied the streets and lanes to "keep the peace." This is unprecedented for a democracy. While the foreign media has been reporting of violence in Kashmir its Indian counterparts reported no such thing. So much so, the Indian media is being accused by its detractors of supporting the Government's action of abrogating Article 370 and taking a 'nationalistic' stance. For that section of regional media with no bandwidth to report from the ground the only sources are agencies. To rely on the so-called national electronic media at this juncture is fraught since this section too takes positions that appear to be ideologically inclined. So how do consumers make an informed opinion? Today, there apparently is a huge section of the polity that seem to have supported the Government action vis-a-vis Jammu and Kashmir, their contention being that no part of the country should be privileged over others. Moreover, Kashmir has witnessed a long history of violence fomented by agent provocateurs from across the border. India has been made to bleed for decades with no end in sight. Reason? Jammu & Kashmir's special status and its ambivalent position as a territory that is part of India, yet not wholly so!

The BJP made no bones about abrogating Article 370 should it return to power. Post the 2019 elections, the Party returned with a larger majority. Voters seemed to have given it the mandate to complete its unfinished task of passing pending Bills such as the Triple Talaq Bill and revocation of Article 370 amongst others. The controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) is awaiting passage. Meanwhile, the Congress Party too has suffered attrition on account of Article 370 even as some of its old guards and younger leaders have taken position adversarial to that of the Party. On Tuesday Congress leader P Chidambaram brought in the religious factor and said Article 370 would never had been scrapped if Jammu and Kashmir was a Hindu majority state. Such statements at a fragile point in the country's history are unbecoming. Surely when it comes to the integrity of the country such partisan views can be set aside. But this is India and its disparate nature. Now even the Supreme Court has refused to accord urgent hearing on Article 370 vis-a-vis J&K.

TO THE EDITOR

Swish DTO office swish!

Editor,

Gone are the days when the office of the District Transport Officer here in East Khasi Hills was subjected to public ridicule and accusations for various reasons. Now this has changed drastically. The credit goes to the officers who man the office and the staff who take up the task of working to ease the plight of common people. There is a perceptible change and now it also has a help desk and information centre which had been highlighted earlier by few columnists and readers. We look forward to total digitisation and e-payment services for all forms of taxes and permits that people require to apply. It is hoped that when we talk of e-

governance it also implies more action, less words.

Yours etc...

Dominic S. Wankhar, Via email

Modi or anything but Modi

Editor,

We Indians are moving towards this binary of labeling of citizens swiftly and unknowingly by adopting the American psyche of Democrat and Republican supporters. How many people are there who can support and criticize the government with equal energy? Unfortunately we all fall prey to this labeling and internal attachment to a side, thanks to the

What is Education?

At each junction of socio-economic and technological change, at various intervals of history, in different countries, kingdoms and empires of different socio-cultural make-up, scholars, philosophers, rulers' debate and discuss issues and theories of the methods of education and its role for the individual and society. We are still grappling with ideas, methods and philosophy of education even today. With the, development, spread and easy access of information and knowledge we are in a better position now to postulate a well balanced and unified, flexible formal education. But we still need to ask the basic key questions: What is Education? What is its purpose in the present/future changing socio-economic, technological, environmental and well-knitted global scenario? What are the means and ends of education? What kind of future citizens do we want our children to be? Will they be subservient or subjugated to a certain power? Will they be autonomous- thinking well-balanced individuals with a free will? What kind of society do we want to have and wish to see? These are some among the myriads of questions we need to ask ourselves, especially those at the helm of policy-making and administration.

Time to reconfigure Education

Dissatisfied with the manner in which the discipline of History is steering in its academic exercise, E H. Carr, a historian, raised a question beginning with the key word 'What?' in the 1960s he questioned how history should be written in his seminal book, "What is History?" This re-examination by Carr had jolted historians on their role in researching, explaining and interpreting 'facts' of the past. This heartfelt endeavour by Carr, has brought history and historians to questions its academic discourse, research, its methods and approaches on a fresh pedestal. This has strengthened the discipline of history, its relevance, moral authority and its historiography (the study of the writing of history and written history).

At this juncture, we need an E H Carr for Education or a fresh perspective to relook at our education system. After reading, hearing and viewing the pattern of the growth (organic, political, or administratively determined growth) of schools into pattern, deficit, adhoc, government, SSA, the occurrences of errors in school books, misinterpretation of facts, the strikes, procession and hartals of teachers, whose salaries were delayed or denied; their rights, service rules etc. we are forced to question ourselves if there is such a 'system' in our education? Does our education system (?) have a system? In ancient or medieval societies (Gurukul, Confucious, Athenians etc) or modern industrialised countries or societies, teachers and students are

well respected and honoured, for they sow and mould a nation and society in their classrooms. In terms of work load and responsibilities, school teachers deserve the highest respect, honour and generous incentives. **Where are we on Education?** We are all here stuck in the same position asking ourselves the role and objective(s) of education especially in our State where there are multiple views and opinions on education. There is the government (technocrat) views; the parents' views, the view of scholars, education activists et al. These views sometime converge but often collide. But the prevailing common-sense view of education is about getting degrees, good grades and landing up a good job, preferably in Meghalaya. My parents and I are part of that common-sense view. With respect to the school I went to which only followed contemporary procedures and wisdom, and the presence of few beloved teachers and friends, many of us, spend many years of uninteresting and uninspiring schooling. This may be due to the myopia and failure of our policy makers to bring out the best in us, by providing spaces of autonomous, independent innovative learning. Fortunately for some life and circumstances took us to better paths, locations and positions in social and family life. How many experiments, non-pragmatic proclamations, seminars, workshops, and visits to innovative institutions do we need to seek the right approaches to education? Sad to say that education in our State has taken the shape and form of an organism in an isolated pond. There is no input or output; we are in moribund backwaters (in the state of dying). And this has suffocated many of our own children's futures and their unique and varied talents.

Education and the younger generation: If we take into account the average life expectancy of an individual in country, 20-25% of a person's life is spent in rigorous schooling and formal education. The most interesting, vibrant and crucial years of an individual is spent in a sort of house arrest. If schools are run like factories, where the educational process is, eat and regurgitate, produce and throw, rote memory is important, we are already at fault. We are in this situation because our economy and society at large is designed in such a way that marks, grades, intelligence quotient not emotional quotient is rated high and accepted as grounds to successfully participate in the world of work or to be an effective member of society. The current obsession with high marks and grades has ostracised a large section of students who are perceived as least

environment created. It's strange that once this bias creeps in, a human being irrespective of his knowledge, status, power, position, aligns his ideology , to the one he can attach himself with. Once this is done, the next stage occurs naturally i.e. cementing the attachment. Then comes the stage where one will go to any extent to blame or defend the object in question. Now, where did I observe this? On every debate on television, social media comments, news presentation, it's right there everywhere in everybody's mind. Those not interested get aligned due to their kins' allegiance. This is there at every level. Political representation is one level. I'll take up the case of Modi to explain it. Supporters will go to any

intelligent. But, actually these students are capable of doing and learning many things, provided they have the right, atmosphere, incentives, and enabling spaces of innovative learning. The question is where do we start and revamp or overhaul the system? Of one thing we are sure; we need our students to be active not passive learners. A classroom environment which is participatory and democratic in nature is imperative but we all need the resources, spaces and to do away with the obsession of finishing the syllabus. After all, learning takes time and space.

Those in the teaching profession know and feel very well the psyche of our youth and children. As teachers we are in a blessed, responsible and precarious position to do something better for the younger generation. Those teaching at the level of higher education, get to know the potential of students entering the college phase. At the same time we also discover the reality which is to strengthen primary, upper primary and secondary levels of education. Educational Psychology tells us the paramount importance of these lower levels of education (pre-primary, primary, upper primary, secondary). There is also a universal agreement and well proven researches on the positive outcomes if these levels are taken care. Hence the urgency to provide more resources and care to these levels of education and catch them young or leave them old and inefficient! If the lower levels of education fail the higher levels too fail.

The problems of our youth today can be traced to education and upbringing, whether it is unemployment, intoxication, drugs, alcoholism, lack of directions etc. The youth have reached a point of frustration. We have made them emotionally deficient and insecure, and they just want to escape the drudged realities, spoiled by politics, political flamboyance and sycophantic governance. Aristotle says that a youth who has received a good upbringing will enjoy acting virtuously, become temperate in attitude, emotions and desire. The Finnish education system, which is one of the best education systems in the world further re-establishes the Aristotelian point. This System is Learner-centric, not Teacher, State or Corporate-centric. In the current scenario of rampant destruction of environment, careless attitudes, wasteful/ conspicuous consumerism, value based education is also vital for the healthy upliftment of the individual, society and polity.

Quasi-Philosophical Note: In life we have to learn, relearn and unlearn that education is also not only about policy making and then leaving it aside. Education cannot be detached from all spheres of public and private life. The

relativity. The fact is true freedom comes from freedom of the mind where one overcomes the internal biases, moves beyond the binary of 'right and wrong,' weighs the pros and cons equally with a free mind and assesses situations both objectively and subjectively. This can be brought about only by sheer self observation of the existing reality, self questioning and walking on both sides of the binary of labeling. I gave the Modi example because that's the trend today. There are those who love him and others who have a visceral hatred for the man. Now this conditioning of our brain needs a serious relook and analysis. Governments will come and go but will we ever move beyond the limitations of self identification and labeling?

Education policy and plan has to be state relevant, learner centric, flexible, universally competent and socially productive and meaningful. From a holistic perspective, Education is not confined only to the role and responsibilities of teachers, students and parents. We cannot detach this unit from other societal, governmental functions and responsibilities. Education or the development of human resources is the raw material for a progressive and humane sustainable society. We have to meditate and relook at the objective and purpose of education - the prime objective being the individual(s) including the differently-abled. Education is not about grouping categories, but education for equal variegated abilities, capacities and potentials. Bertrand Russell, in his book "On Education", emphasised the need for balanced education. He also insists on the humanistic elements such as arts, music, literature, history, architecture because these are essential to power and enlarge the 'imagination'. If we stress only on the utilitarian (useful, practical) aspects of education, human progress would become boring (mechanical and trivial). Russell also did discount the importance of Science, as he himself was also a prolific philosopher of Mathematics. Albert Einstein too said that imagination is more important than knowledge. This assertion is not about bringing or cultivating a generation of day dreamers but individuals who can balance between the humane and the mechanical aspect. Elon Musk the prolific inventor and innovator also stresses the importance of imagination. Even brain and mind studies reiterate the balance training of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. We can also say that imagination is the source of lateral thinking (thinking out of the box). Former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, in his book "Ignited Minds", says "Dreams transform into thoughts and thoughts into actions." Hence we need to provide our children the space to dream and think and provide the enabling spaces for their dreams and thoughts to transform into actions. Do we dare to give this to our children, and enhance our budget for education?

At this juncture of intellectual and educational crisis we need a fortune teller to temporarily ease our negative vision and not to run away from responsibilities. Peter Parker/Spider Man (the emancipator and protector of the weak, neglected and exploited), spun these words "with great power comes great responsibility". To the present dispensation, this power also comes with opportunities to bring about change in our education system. And to all of us who are part of the system - Lets Redefine Education.

(The author is the Assistant Professor, Dept. of Geography, St Mary's College, Shillong.)

The Tyranny of Cars

By Janet Moore Hujon

To those of us who have lived long enough, Shillong-today invariably takes us back to Shillong-yesterday simply because the apparent contrast is so great. By reminding ourselves that once, and *within living memory, there was another way to be*, we derive some comfort until maddening frustration swiftly resumes total control.

Anyone looking at Shillong now cannot be blamed for believing that the word environment does not figure in anyone's vocabulary. What is going on? The city is being choked to death by the high volume of cars on the roads and no one seems to care. Is it because air pollution is virtually invisible that we do not pay any attention to it? So will the people of Shillong continue to remain passive partners in this marriage of so-called-convenience to the car? If that is the plan then think again for it is a union that is not going to end happily ever after.

Air pollution causes 'head-to-toe' harm and the already well-known heart and lung damage is only "the tip of the iceberg". So warns the following article: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2019/may/17/air-pollution-may-be-damaging-every-organ-and-cell-in-the-body-finds-global-review>

Pollutants from the air pass through the lungs to enter every organ of our bodies damaging not only our lungs but our hearts and brains, causing cancers, fertility problems, miscarriages and so on and so on...the list is frightening.

No wonder George Monbiot says it as it is: 'Cars Are Killing Us' (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/07/cars-killing-us-driving-environment-phase-out>)

Monbiot may write with specific regard to Britain's cities but the lethal consequence of pollution is not just a British problem, it is a global one. Sadly, it does not look as if any radical change in Shillong is likely to happen soon. The chaos on our just-about-usable city roads will only be made worse because neither the administration, nor the government nor the public will own it. Before any sensible solution is to be found we first have to accept that we all contribute to and are complicit in the problem. Nothing is done because it is always someone else's fault.

Requesting land owners to part with land in order to facilitate road-widening schemes is misleading because it encourages people to believe that with more room on the roads the snarls of traffic will magically untangle and we will all drive to our destinations with ease and speed. Of course that does not happen. What will or has happened is that existing cars will be joined by new ones because we tell ourselves that the road is now wide and welcoming. Meanwhile any land surrendered by homeowners turns into a parking space. Not only is the road narrow once again, but also the use of a public space to park a privately owned vehicle is totally inconsiderate. Convenience for one is gross inconvenience for others. And does anyone reflect upon the potential greening effect of front gardens? No. That is mere pie-in-the-sky for unfazed by emissions, we continue to accommodate the four (or more)-wheeled god securely enthroned in our lives.

It is because the car supports a *lifestyle* we have chosen for ourselves that we see it as an indispensable part of our lives and not a threat. But given the health implications of air pollution, it is absolutely urgent to pause and reflect upon our use of cars. Can we not limit the use of cars to the essential minimum? Please also take note that passengers in the 'safety' of their cars imbibe more poison because trapped pollutants build up rather than dissipate. Frequently these passengers happen to be our children patiently waiting to get to school. If someone

was holding a gun to your head and you were asked the above question, I am convinced you would readily say yes. But real or not that gun is pointing at us and the finger on the trigger will continue to move unless we change course.

For now what we consider as our right to use cars has become the can we continue to kick down the road. In the end however we are only deceiving ourselves, worsening traffic mayhem and most of all endangering our own health.

Has no one heard of the joys and health benefits of that activity called walking? We walked from Kench's Trace to school and college in Laitumkhrah, and it was only when I had to attend post-graduate classes in Mayurbhanj that I took the bus and that too only part of the way. But all that seems feeble when I recall that my great-uncle walked from Mawlai to Khwan where he taught at the Union Christian College, and my grandfather (bi)cycled to Gauhati to sit his law exams, holding on to the back of buses to speed him home on the way back. The can-do attitude was alive, walking and cycling! We are a robust people but our car-dependent existences will deprive us of that natural asset.

Encouraging our children to walk and/or take the bus is still an option – it is healthy and would also dramatically reduce emissions compromising our health. But for this to happen the government and/or educational institutions have to *seriously* invest in reliably run and regular public transport. The humble bus has to come back into its own and be seen as a lifeline and not an occasional plan put into practice so that policy-makers are seen to be doing something before they throw up their hands in despair. A determination to solve should replace a defeatist attitude, and any argument that cars savetime should be immediately binned given that traffic jams regularly bring cars to a standstill.

In addition to bus services, banning cars from certain parts of the city would also dramatically lower levels of pollution. People need to reclaim the streets. The free-for-all scramble in Police Bazaar, which is everybody's nightmare, has got to stop and the long-suffering public rewarded for years of tolerance.

The pedestrianisation of our commercial centre(s) has got to be seen as a sensible healthy solution. Imposing heavy parking charges is not enough as it is not likely to deter the affluent. Moreover the ability to pay the charge does not mean pollution magically disappears. So jettison the idea that the car is central to our lives and learn to regard it as an aid and not a constant companion to be called upon just because it is there.

While arguing against the over-use of the car, I am well aware that the livelihoods of many depend on local or tourist taxis and the latter are at the heart of the revenue-earning tourism industry. This is why it is so important that the departments of transport and tourism talk to each other in order to frame policies that will protect both the environment and our livelihoods. Abusing the former will eventually rob us of the latter. No self-respecting tourist will pay to visit a ruined paradise.

The natural world is our *collective* responsibility so stop waiting for someone else to lead the way. If our children are going to inherit the earth into which we were born, then now is the time to take all the necessary steps to safeguard that birthright.

Interestingly enough when Khasis venture outdoors to reinvigorate both mind and body they refer to that exercise as going out to '*bam lyer*' - literally to *eat the air*. Now is that not food for thought.

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.

Yours etc.,
Gaurav Deb,
Via email

“In heaven, all the interesting people are missing.”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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Hong Kong, Kashmir

HONG KONG is restive yet again, giving some anxious moments to China -- to which its ownership was transferred back from coloniser Britain in 1997. For megacity Hong Kong's 7.5 million inhabitants used to the freedom and civil rights they enjoyed under the British for a century and half, these are progressively days of restrictions. Protests had often erupted into the streets, which China managed to subdue with a mix of tact and cane-charging. This time, protests erupted over the local administration's order to send blacklisted people in exile to the mainland. Notably, the order was swiftly withdrawn, but the protesters are in no mood to relent or stop their offensive. They insist that China respect the limited autonomy granted to the money-rich Asian business hub under the re-unification agreement two decades ago and stop the red nation's designs to impose more controls on their lives. They deserve all our sympathy.

Curiously, China is accused of scuttling the "one nation, two systems" arrangement; and this at a time when it was called upon by Pakistan to challenge India at global fora for New Delhi's efforts to change a similar system in Kashmir. That these two scenarios arose around the same time is a reason why China can be trusted to adopt a neutral stand vis-a-vis Pakistan's Kashmir plea to it. It looks like a similar sentiment was evident in the discussions visiting foreign secretary S Jaishankar had with his counterpart in China. China now says the protests in Hong Kong have shades of "terrorism". It is giving such a patently unjustified or wrong twist to the tale with the obvious aim of invoking harsh repressive laws under the anti-terrorism legislation, which it used liberally against the Islamic fundamentalists in its western provinces close to the "isthans." Its hope is to suppress the democratic means of street protests, through use of brute state power. The Chinese governments had handled previous protests in Hong Kong with tact, persuasion and limited use of power. President Xi Jinping is well-advised to avoid harsh steps. Peaceful protests like in Tiananmen Square had been brutally repressed by China in the past and earned international condemnation. It could happen again. India, on the other hand is facing militancy and terrorism of the worst kind in Kashmir. At the minimum, this is time China reviews its strategy of helping anti-India terror outfits operating from Pakistan by way of influencing decisions at UN and other world bodies as it did in the past.

TO THE EDITOR

Correction

Editor,

With reference to my article " What is Education? (ST Aug 14, 2019) I regret to state that due to typographical error on my part, the sentence 'Russell also did discount the importance of science, as he himself was also a prolific philosopher of mathematics' should actually be read as, 'Russell also 'did not' discount the importance of science, as he himself was also a prolific philosopher of mathematics.' This error is regretted.

Russell advocated a balanced education, not the abandonment of either the sciences, arts, and humanities.

Yours etc.,
UD Tmar,
Viaemail

Social media a present danger

Editor,

"Bleed with a thousand cuts" the policy of Pakistan has moved to a dangerous dimension now. It started with crippling India's economy and destabilizing Kashmir since the late 1970s till date. Then they funded Naxalites in central India, extremists in

North East India, militants across the country. Now Pakistan has magnified itself and its efforts and beginning to pay dividends. The execution grounds are the smart-phones and laptops of Indians. Social media is their ground now and they're gaining strength with every passing hour. Yes, they have started penetrating inside the minds of Indians, the only way they can destroy India. They're not foolish to initiate physical conflict with their economy in dire straits. The policy is simple; use every means possible to destroy the sensitive Indianness and what better tool than media. The media itself is confused on the authenticity of reports coming in from Kashmir, leaving Indians confused totally. Pulwama was an instance when Pakistan took advantage of Indians' expression of doubts to hide their horrendous act. Kulbhushan is another instance when at the International Court of Justice they quoted Indian media channels to advocate their stance. And this week it's Kashmir. Pakistan has deployed all resources

The Union government has shown its exemplary courage, conviction, and ability for taking vital decisions by issuing the presidential order for revoking Article 370 of the Indian Constitution under Part XXI entitled "Temporary and Transitional Provisions" - an order claimed to be a step towards firm integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country. Though it is no secret agenda of the BJP but a promise openly made in its election manifestoes, fulfillment of the promise so soon after its re-election has taken many by surprise and even shock.

Along with this, Article 35A of the Indian Constitution which conferred on the State of J&K the right of defining permanent residents of the State and granting special rights and privileges to them and imposing restrictions on other persons with regard to employment under the State, acquisition of immovable property and settlement in the State, scholarships and other forms of State aid has also been deleted.

The National Conference - the party that has high stakes in J&K government - has taken the matter to the Supreme Court. It is a legal-political question.

J&K's accession to India was effected by the Instrument of Accession signed on 26th October 1947 by the Maharaja of Kashmir. Under this, the authority of the Dominion of India in all functions vested with them by the Government of India Act 1935 as in force on 15th August 1947 was extended to the State of J&K.

Following this, Article 370 of the Constitution, which came into force on 17th November 1952 totally exempted J&K State from the provisions of the Indian Constitution governing other States and accorded it a different status. The legislative power of the Indian Parliament was restricted to matters in the Union and Concurrent lists which were in conformity with matters specified in the Instrument of Accession governing the accession of the State to the Dominion

Abrogation of Article 370

After all temporary provision

By Dr S. Saraswathi

of India. It had only three subjects - defence, foreign affairs, and communications. For extending legislative and other powers of the Union government, concurrence of the J&K State was required. Initially, J&K accepted only Article 1 and 370 of the Indian Constitution.

Series of Presidential Orders have been issued that have contributed to closer integration of Kashmir with India. Over 90 subjects out of the total 97 in the Union list in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution are now applicable in J&K. Several Acts passed by Parliament have been adopted but some crucial laws and policies are not extended to this State.

Among these, mention must be made of the RTI and RTE and reservation for SC, ST, OBC, and EWC in the State. Several Central government schemes are also not extended to J&K. The presence of Article 370 had been more a stumbling block in the way of progressive legislations and policies than an enabling provision to protect the special needs and interests of the State.

What was meant as temporary and transitory provisions necessary in unstable political situation after Partition and integration of Princely States with India became an arrangement over which vested interests flourished blocking welfare and development of the State and its full integration with the rest of the country legally and administratively.

Abrogation of Article 370 became necessary from this angle to bring the State on par with other States of India.

Sardar Patel once remarked that he was not satisfied with the efficacy of this Article adding that the future would depend on the strength of the Indian nation and the nation without confidence in its strength did not deserve to live as a nation.

The course of proceedings in the

Constituent Assembly in writing Article 370 has immense historical significance, but cannot help us in living our lives or building our nation today. The circumstances that necessitated insertion of this Article in the Indian Constitution are no longer present in the same form and degree. These are useful in understanding the then situation and the probable effects of a special Constitutional position. We are living in a different world and facing different situations. Reference to the debates leading to the insertion of this Article cannot also be the sole basis of our decision today in dealing with the resulting situation under Article 370.

Hence, the controversy over the authorship and supporters and opponents of Article 370 ever since its formulation is fruitless except for deepening the divide between political parties today. Similarly, the different views expressed by political leaders of different parties at various situations are also context restricted and need not be quoted to deal with the present.

Thus, former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's remark about J&K autonomy as "something short of azadi and within the framework of Indian Constitution", that "sky is the limit of autonomy", or Vajpayee's readiness at one stage for discussion on autonomy, or the promises of some parties for "autonomy" in election manifestoes need not be brought in to handle current situation.

The Constitution of the State of J&K made by the Constituent Assembly of the State in 1956 recognises the State's position as "an integral part of India" - a provision that cannot be amended. However, it allowed a separate flag and internal autonomy to J&K - factors good enough to boost special emotional attachment of Kashmiris to their State. Jammu and Kashmir is added in Schedule 1 of the Indian Constitution which lists the States comprised in the

Indian union.

Under this Constitution, the executive and legislative powers of the Indian Union listed in the Indian Constitution did not extend to J&K as for other States. Emergency could be declared only in times of war or external aggression, and financial emergency was ruled out.

Significantly, the entire parts of Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution were not applicable in the State of J&K. Reservation Policy for SC, ST, OBC, and EWC was not in force in the State.

Obviously, such special provisions cannot remain a permanent or even semi-permanent feature in one part within a nation without attempts to bring the State in the mainstream. No serious attempts have been made so far for de facto integration while separateness is emphasised in building vote banks. The stumbling block is obviously political calculations and not legal impediments or social relations.

The Legislative Assembly of J&K adopted the famous Autonomy Resolution on 26th June 2000 to remove the temporary character of Article 370 and to make it a permanent feature. It restricted the power of the Government of India to defence, foreign affairs, and communication, and disallowed resort to the Supreme Court from Kashmir on any legal matter. The post of Chief Minister of the State was renamed as Prime Minister.

This resolution of the National Conference government in Kashmir was unanimously rejected by the Cabinet of the NDA Government that was then in power.

Article 370 is after all a temporary provision and has to be removed at some point as a constitutional obligation as in all other time-bound decisions. Its revocation must generate feelings of unity and integration in the country and not divisions.---INFA

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

Political Delicacies

By Rahil Nora Chopra

AHMED PATEL MAY BE SONIA'S POLITICAL SECRETARY AGAIN

With Sonia Gandhi back in the saddle, will AICC treasurer Ahmed Patel return as her political secretary? For most of Sonia's two-decade stint as the Congress president, Patel was the party's master strategist operating from behind the scenes. Now Sonia is back as Congress president, partymen believe Patel could be back in form. Meanwhile, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has filed his nomination for the upcoming Rajya Sabha by-elections from Rajasthan. Leader of opposition in the state Assembly, Gulab Chand Kataria, stated that the BJP will not field a candidate. The by-election was necessitated by the death of Rajya Sabha MP and BJP's Rajasthan unit president Madan Lal Saini in June, which left one seat from the state vacant.

BJP GEARS UP FOR 2020 DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

BJP has started preparation for the upcoming Delhi assembly election and has appointed Union Minister Prakash Javadekar as the in-charge of Delhi assembly election, along with two Ministers - Hardeep Singh Puri and Nityanand Rai. Prakash Javadekar was the in-charge in Rajasthan during the Lok Sabha election and handled the organisational affairs and it was very well depicted from the results. And now the party believes that he is a relative outsider to Delhi politics and so he will deal well with the Delhi BJP unit. Hardeep Singh Puri is a natural choice for Delhi because he is a Sikh and also a Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, who can tackle opponents on the issues of sealing, master plan and Metro issues. Regularisation of unauthorised colonies will be the major plank in Delhi Assembly elections and the BJP would want to show its achievement because of the work done by Hardeep Singh Puri on this issue. Nityanand Rai, a state minister for Home Affairs, will also use his influence over Purvanchali voters because his network in Bihar, he could be instrumental to influence the migrant voters in Delhi. Purvanchali dominate 20 assembly constituency of Delhi especially Karawal Nagar, Badli, Burari, Seemapuri, Gokalpuri, Vikaspuri, Dwarka, Uttam Nagar, Sangam Vihar, Deoli and Badapur.

SAMAJWADI PARTY UNDER AKHILESH WITNESSES EXODUS TO BJP

After the Lok Sabha election, Samajwadi Party has been losing its grip on UP politics day by day. BJP has given a jolt to SP in the 2014 Lok Sabha election and again in the Assembly election of 2017. SP has lost badly even as the party fought the 2017 election in alliance of Congress. Even Mulayam Singh Yadav was against the SP-Congress alliance at that time, but Akhilesh's insistence ensured the alliance with Congress went ahead. In 2019 Lok Sabha election, SP had an alliance with BSP because both had won the three by-elections in UP just before the general election. However, uncle Shivalp Yadav helped the BJP and SP won only 5 seats in 2019 LS polls. On the other hand, the BSP won 10 seats in the Lok Sabha polls, although the party has no seats in 2014. Yet, despite the relative success in 2019, the BSP has blamed Akhilesh Yadav for the loss and Mayawati's party has broken the alliance with SP in UP. In the Lok Sabha election, whereas the SP could not even save Firozabad, Badaun and Kannauj- their family seats - now the BJP has started luring away SP MLCs and Rajya Sabha members to their fold. In beginning, many MLCs left SP and joined the BJP and BJP Chief Minister and other ministers filled these vacant seats. After that those who resigned from SP have been again made MLCs by the BJP. In a fresh move, Neeraj Shekhar, son of former

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, has resigned from Rajya Sabha and the primary membership of Samajwadi Party to join the BJP.

Subsequently, Surendra Singh Nagar of SP, a Rajya Sabha member, has joined BJP. Akhilesh Yadav has failed to convince the UP Governor Ram Naik for the nomination of Sanjay Seth as MLC and after that Akhilesh Yadav tried hard to convince his party leaders to send Sanjay Seth to Rajya Sabha. Yet now, Sanjay Seth has left the party and Rajya Sabha to join the BJP.

MAMATA SOFTENS IMAGE TO WIN 2021 ASSEMBLY POLLS

After the loss of 18 Lok Sabha seats to BJP, Mamata Banerjee has taken the advice of Prashant Kishor and is now trying to change her image. Before the Lok Sabha election, her image was of a fighter and strong woman. But now she is trying to change her image into a soft-spoken and humble woman. With the advice of Prashant Kishor, she has instructed her leaders and workers to change their behaviour and not comment unnecessarily on every issue. She has asked her leaders and cadres to neither provoke the West Bengal Opposition leaders and their party workers, nor to interrupt or disturb the opposition rallies and programmes. She also advised the party workers to make contact with every citizen in her state to brief them of benefits of the work done by her government in West Bengal. Mamata Banerjee is evidently concerned about the upcoming municipal corporation and assembly elections in 2021. She wants to develop a corporate structure in West Bengal for the development and employment for the weaker sections of the state before the election. She has already started a network which has joined all the TMC district offices to the party headquarter so that she can stay in touch with every party worker in the state.

CAN SONIA ARREST THE GROWING SCHISM IN RAJASTHAN CONGRESS?

After the Karnataka episode where HD Kumaraswamy lost his government, rumours and pressure is building in Rajasthan as Congress government is running with the support of independent and BSP MLAs. There are 13 independent and 6 BSP MLAs in the Rajasthan Assembly. Most of the independent MLAs are former Congressmen and they are now pressuring Ashok Gehlot to include them in the State Cabinet. Although Ashok Gehlot has developed a rapport with them and taken decisions in the transfer cases after discussing it with the independent MLAs, the issue is becoming a cause of annoyance among the Congress MLAs. According to Congress MLAs, the Chief Minister is allotting the development works with the advice of independent MLAs and consequently he is not listening to his own party MLAs. Meanwhile, the BSP MLAs are ready to change their party if they are made ministers in Gehlot government. Senior Congress MLAs who were Ministers in previous governments have now started pressuring Ashok Gehlot to include them into the Cabinet or give them some honourable public post in the State. At present, there are two camps- one is Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's group, and second, Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot's camp. However, according to senior Congress leaders, now that Sonia Gandhi has taken over the presidency of the party, the scenario in Rajasthan would soon be clear, and Ashok Gehlot would likely come out as a strong Chief Minister of Rajasthan. (IPA)

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

“ No better way is there to learn to love Nature than to understand Art. It dignifies every flower of the field. And, the boy who sees the thing of beauty which a bird on the wing becomes when transferred to wood or canvas will probably not throw the customary stone.”
--- Oscar Wilde

The Shillong Times

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PM’s address promises much

A significant aspect of Prime Minister Modi's address to the nation on Independence Day was the Centre's decision to create a Chief of Defence Staff post. It later transpired that work in this direction has already been started by the government with the setting up of a high-level panel that will give advice on the modalities thereof. As such, there is no clarity at this point on aspects like whether this post will be above all the three service chiefs or on par. This will be keenly watched.

India avoided having a chief of armed forces staff all along. This was a deliberate policy also in the context of situations in which military seized power through coup in neighbouring Pakistan repeatedly, and in Bangladesh as well. Army generals held over-riding powers in Pakistan and called all the shots for many years. General Ershad's time in Bangladesh also is noteworthy. The system of democracy was subverted and the will of the military imposed on people. In India, with the chiefs of Army, Air force and Navy having been placed on an equal status all along, one could not order about the other. The political leadership called all the shots from above. For sure, the government will fashion this new post in a way that no threat would arise in future to India's vaunted democratic system of governance.

The PM's speech also reiterated the promise of pumping in Rs 10 lakh crore into infrastructure development sector in the five-year period of the present government. This would inject a lot of money into the market, which will have a salutary effect on the economy. This is an oft-resorted-to step to boost the economy. Americans miraculously overcame the Great Depression of the 1930s through hefty funding for highways and other infra projects; which turned out to be the starting point for the prosperity of the US. The Vajpayee government put in a similar effort, concentrating on highway build-up, pouring money into the countryside to boost the economy.

The prime minister has rightly sought to give stress to the tourism sector. Putting money into such sectors will be a money-spinning exercise too. Tourism infra is pretty weak now. The PM's advice to each citizen who can afford travel to visit 10 destinations within the country is appreciable. This could give the first major boost to domestic tourism at a time when wealthy Indians are more inclined to travel abroad and spend their money there. India's old charms are fading.

To the Editor

Paul’s war against plastics

Editor,
Nothing has defiled mother earth but our life-styles. Our excessive greed has long rendered its lungs sluggish and its heart weak. With each passing year, she is getting more feverish and paler. She often sneezes, coughs up and convulses. Therefore, I consider ones' efforts to "decontaminate" her akin to an act of worshipping the Almighty. I am very much with the former Minister - Paul Lyngdoh. He has taken a bold step by officially declaring Bara Bazar (Iewduh) a no-plastic zone. We should all support Bah Paul. It should be an inspiration to others. Imagine, how good it would be if the present government too takes a cue from this and extends this legislation to the whole state?

I am sure this will make the Center happy too. Is Mawlynnong not the cleanest village in Asia which is in our state? We have never fallen behind to brag about it. But let's do it with logic. Merely taking hollow pride in it is not help-

ful. Let's practice that which we take pride in and preach about.

In this effort to rid nature of plastics, I strongly feel that empty water bottles which contribute to defacing nature and our rivers and streams should also be banned altogether. They take up the empty space to clog each pore of the environment. Still worse are other plastic items which are finally going to hurt the ecology. We also should take notice of the serious environmental hazards caused by the number of rock-hard plastic items and toxic fumes.

The increasing industrialization, urbanization and production and utilization of motor vehicles has worsened everything. Alas, this notion of consumerism, which is basically driven by our greed and short-lived comfort and luxuries, has almost blinded our eyes of wisdom. The most powerful people have rendered this planet powerless to nourish and keep us healthy. The President of the most powerful country -- Donald Trump willfully withdrew from "Climate

Change mitigation" based on Paris Agreement, 2016. Can the USA stop contributing greenhouse emission into the sky which is common to all states around the globe? Yes, with this ego and greed to save some pennies, the powerful leaders are only aggravating ecological sickness of Mother Earth. Come on, wake up before we will have to wake up to a series of unprecedented natural catastrophes and abnormally fatal epidemic. We can breathe, eat and live well, only if we can take care of our Mother Earth. Kicking out the luxuries is the best way out.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gewali,
Shillong-2

Umroi Airport

Editor,
Apropos the report Technical Panel to study Umroi Airport obstacles (ST Aug 7, 2019) makes one to be hopeful of a final solution looking seemingly near after huge sums have been incurred not once, not twice but three times in slicing the

three clusters in the vicinity of the airport. It is the hope of the prospective fliers that with the latest survey equipments assisted by G.P.S. of 10 cm accuracy, this airport, after the removal of the said obstacles be finally feasible for Turbo Jet and Air bus to land. One very important question remains to be answered by the Hon'ble Transport Minister, Meghalaya. The question is, "What is the 3C category airport all about?" The prospective air passengers would be obliged if the question is answered so as to enlighten them. In case of difficulty, it is better advised to consult Google.

Yours etc.,
M.Khyriem,
Shillong- 14

Schools misusing public roads

Editor,
Shillong is in a daily mess before and after school hours. I cannot point out all the junctions which badly affects others but being a regular pedestrian myself

from Dhanketi towards Don Bosco point, I get frustrated, irritated whenever I have to must walk past the Loreto Convent main school gate. The sole reason is because the footpath gets overcrowded when the concerned parents occupy every inch of the public footpath whilst fetching their children. Even the narrow roads are not spared either. It gets overcrowded there beginning from 10:30 am and gets worse of all after school hours of the seniors. Every day I find parents being made to stand for hours outside the school premises waiting to fetch their children. This is the arrenegment of the school authority and it causes so much discomfort for us who have to pass through this lane. I even heard from a concerned parent of that school that it gets even worst during a rainfall with umbrellas poking at each another, honking of cars at the parents while trying to get through the busy roads. There is total chaos. My suggestion to the school authority is why don't they just allow the parents get inside their huge school premises

and collect their children from inside. If the security of a child is a matter of concern then safety for pedestrians is also an issue here. It is the sole responsibility of the school management to make necessary arrangements for the comfort of the parents as well. There have been many instances where parents while standing there were either being mildly run over by a tyre or being whistled through by a car/two wheeler. My humble request to the Principal of Loreto Convent as a pedestrian and for the matter, on behalf of the parents is to please look into this matter with utmost concern and treat your child's parents with due respect as well by providing them shelter inside the school campus like it used to be in the past. .

Yours etc.,
A concerned citizen.

USA’s unfair stance

Editor,
In a curious and far reaching consequence for India, President

Kashmir feels its identity is under threat

By Brij Bhardwaj

Betrayal small or big is betrayal which is exactly what a large section of Kashmiris are feeling today. They are feeling betrayed because they wanted to be a part of India and work within the limits of the Indian Constitution. For this they suffered as they defied the call for boycott given by the pro-Pakistan elements during the polls for the State Assembly and Lok Sabha. The participation in these elections were shown to the world as a proof that Kashmiri people were a part of India by choice.

It was also maintained that state has a Constitution of its own and article 370 of the Indian Constitution protected the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. During the last half a century many elections have been held some witnessed irregularities while few were free and fair held under the supervision of the Election Commission of India. The members of the pro-Indian political parties in many cases had to suffer social boycott and in some cases the members got injured and many were killed.

The scenario over the years was that any political leader who tried to talk to Indian leaders or tried to find a solution of Kashmir problem within the Indian Constitution was killed. They included Mr A.G Lone whose son was a minister in Jammu and Kashmir in the BJP quota as well as the father of Present Molvi Farooq. There were many more who became victims of militants in Kashmir. The fight against militancy was not only fought by police and para military forces but by members of political parties like National Conference and PDP and others.

Let us not forget Kashmiris during the invasion by raiders in 1948, infiltration attempt in 1965, war in 1971 and Kargil war in eighties, by and large stood with India. In these attempts in some cases supporters of Pakistan had reached the outskirts of Srinagar and could have cut off Airport the only link of Kashmir with India at that time. By ignoring these sacrifices India has damaged its own case on Kashmir.

How can we forget the role played by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who turned down the overtures made by founder of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah and two nation theory on basis of religion projected by Jinah

and joined hands with first Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and secular India. He never went back on his promise and commitment. Even during emergency in seventies he maintained his independence and declared that he could never accept that leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan could be anti-national.

Not only those serving in police and civil service served the cause of India but also many in political life. During this period links between Kashmir and India were strengthened. Article 370 was diluted. Agreed that there were trouble makers who were supported by Pakistan. But many more were coming into mainstream. Getting educated in best institutions in the country. At present all of them feel threatened because they are cut off from their families.

Even those who topped in civil service examination are becoming threatened today and may join ranks of agitators if not militants. It is strange that we have always maintained that number of militants is in hundreds and same number is being killed every year. The question to be asked is why they can not be controlled as we have a large force present in Kashmir.

The answer is simple. The sentiment against India is much stronger irrespective of the number of militants. The solution of Kashmir problem is by holding a dialogue and not by force. The experience of last few decades is during the period when good governance was provided to Kashmir it remained peaceful and also not a issue to be highlighted in international forums. This included the rule by Mr. G.M Sadiq, Mr Sheikh Abdullah and Mr Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

So the solution is good governance and it can not be provided by Center directly. Kashmiries are proud of their identity and they want to preserve the same and something closer to self-rule. This is the urgent need. Sooner Center realises it better it will be. Pakistan threat can be met easily but we can damage our own cause.

(Brij Bhardwaj is a veteran journalist and commentator)

Donald Trump said that India and China are no longer 'developing nations' and were taking advantage of the tag from the WTO and asserted that he will not let it happen anymore. It may be recalled that earlier in July, Trump asked the WTO to define how it designates developing country status, a move apparently aimed at singling out countries like China, India and Turkey which are getting lenient treatment under the global trade rules. To further prevent enjoying the advantage of being a developing country, Trump had empowered the US Trade Representative to start taking punitive actions if any advanced economies are inappropriately taking advantage of the WTO loopholes.

In a clear statement, Trump said, "India and China -the two economic giants from Asia-are no longer developing nations and as such they cannot enjoy the benefit from WTO." He further said, "India and China have been taking advantage for years thereby putting the US to disadvantage."

Now this issue has to be left to the world bodies which have to take a deci-

sion whether India is still a developing country or developed country. Only after taking a final decision, India may be disallowed the advantage of being a developing country. Regarding China, there is no a second thought needed to ascertain that it is a developed nation and curiously enough, this country is still enjoying the benefits of a developing country status.

China is well equipped and is poised to overtake even the US on the technological front. China's economy is robust and their largest and top banking systems are even a model to America to take the cue from. Surely, China does not have the propriety to still cling on to the advantage tag of being a developing country.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
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.

Reviving medieval history in Gujarat

The historic site of Champaner almost went into oblivion due to years of neglect but foreign aid helped to restore it



(Clockwise from top left) Lakulisa temple, one of the oldest in Champaner; seven arches, a major attraction; Medhi Talao

By Jason Chiang

Excerpts from an interview:

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the city of Champaner in Gujarat was a critical post along the trade route linking the state with the Malwa region in western India. Medieval Champaner grew and developed at the base of the towering Pavagadh Hill, an 800-meter-high peak upon which a fortress was built in the 10th century. It remains a Hindu pilgrimage site to this day. But, over the hundreds of years since its construction, this historic site got lost beneath a dense forest cover.

In 2003, the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) provided money for the revival of the Medhi Talao Ensemble at Champaner-Pavagadh. This grant enabled the Heritage Trust in Vadodara, which works on conserving the city’s heritage, to begin salvaging Champaner-Pavagadh through preservation and conservation initiatives.

Champaner-Pavagadh was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004. **Sandhya Gajjar**, a member of Heritage Trust’s managing committee, talks about this preservation initiative.

How did you get involved in the preservation of Champaner-Pavagadh?

I was part of the volunteer core team instituted by the Heritage Trust with a focused target of getting the UNESCO World Heritage Site status for Champaner-Pavagadh. The site had major issues — quarrying being one of them — which were a real threat to the standing architectural heritage along the Pavagadh Hill as well as on the Champaner plain.

What would you say is the most fascinating feature of the Champaner-Pavagadh site and why?

What I find most fascinating is its dual location — the Pavagadh Hill and the Champaner plain at its foot. At the main entry, the ruins of the fortified Champaner, capital of medieval Gujarat, are separated from the way up the Pavagadh hill by just a strip of road. Most of the 114 heritage monuments, listed by Heritage Trust, are in this area; spread over 6 sq km of the Core Zone of the site. Some of these are among the most amazing examples of stone carving and



agadh was to initially get it on the World Monuments Fund’s watchlist of 100 Most Endangered Heritage Sites in 2000. Our next step was to apply for the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation grant. Since we were aiming to get our dossier ready for the UNESCO World Heritage Site meeting for 2004, we were going full steam ahead documenting every aspect of Champaner-Pavagadh. Some of this work revealed the extraordinary water conservation systems that the Hindu and Jain rulers of Pavagadh had put in place over the many centuries of their rule.

What activities were undertaken the Cultural Preservation grant?

Medhi Talao was a large manmade pond at such a strategic point that it gathered almost all the rainwater flowing down that part of the hill, for use by people during the hot summer months. The talao (pond) had stone steps all around it, which made it easy to access and use for local people and pilgrims. There was also a square structure jutting out, like a tower, on the edge of the pond.

The grant was used for the revitalisation of the Medhi Talao complex. The ruined structure around the talao was documented and several of the ruined pieces that had fallen into it were fished out, cleaned and placed in what was “reconstructed” as the talao environs in the time of the Sultans or Rajput rulers at Pavagadh Hill.

Winning the AFCP grant created a qualitative boost for the till-then-largely-ignored site. It created a buzz in the state media and a sense of pride among the locals, who had been living in the shadow of the heritage monument for generations. *(TWF- SPAN)*

By Janai Kharkongor

Today was a day I had been waiting for all my life. It was during my summer holidays. My father was taking me to caving with a well-known caver, Brian Daly. We were going to Krem Lymput which is a large limestone cave, about six and a half km long. In the morning, my dad and I went to Mr Brian’s house. We met him and talked to him for some time. Then his nephew came and we got into his car and started our journey. We stopped for breakfast and tea in a jadoh stall in Pynursla and then continued on our way to Nongri village.

After about an hour, we reached the cave. We met Bashisha langrai, a senior geologist and paleontologist in the Geological Survey of India, Shillong. She is a seasoned caver and was on an exploration to collect samples. Mr Brian gave us cave suits and head lamps. I was very excited about what we were going to do. We walked for about one kilometer in a humid forest until some cool breeze started blowing in our face. It was the entrance of the cave. We switched on our head lamps and entered the pitch-dark cave. As soon as we entered, we saw curtains of stalactites and stalagmites. They were beautiful. There was water inside the cave. In the monsoon, this cave will be flooded. We walked around and we found fossils.

This place was rich in invertebrate sea fossils. They were everywhere — on the ceiling,

on the floors and on the walls. It was truly an amazing sight. Ms Bashisha identified most of these to be nummulites and some discoeyclina, which are coin-shaped and sized. They are small, shelled sea creatures from the Eocene Period, 56 to 34 million years ago. She had a pick hammer, so we managed to get a few samples.

We walked through the passages for some time until I saw a seam that was about 6 feet long and a foot thick at my head height that was littered with fossil shells. Ms Bashisha identified this to be a coquina which she explained to be a sedimentary rock that is composed of the shells of molluscs. We took a few samples of those but they were fragile and broke easily in my hand. It was an interesting day. I enjoyed it and I had finally fulfilled my dream of finding my own fossils.

I was always fascinated by fossils and pre-historic life. The next weekend we went to a place for a family picnic near Mawlyngbna. When we reached, we had to walk through a forest. There was a river that had to be crossed. I walked through it but my dad jumped on the rocks to cross the river. Then we walked for about 15 minutes. We looked at the rocky ground and saw these little shell-like structures that were embedded in the rock. I immediately recognized them to be sea urchins. There were tens of them studded in the rock surfaces. Sea urchins are water animals so this place was evidently an ocean at one time which has now been thrust

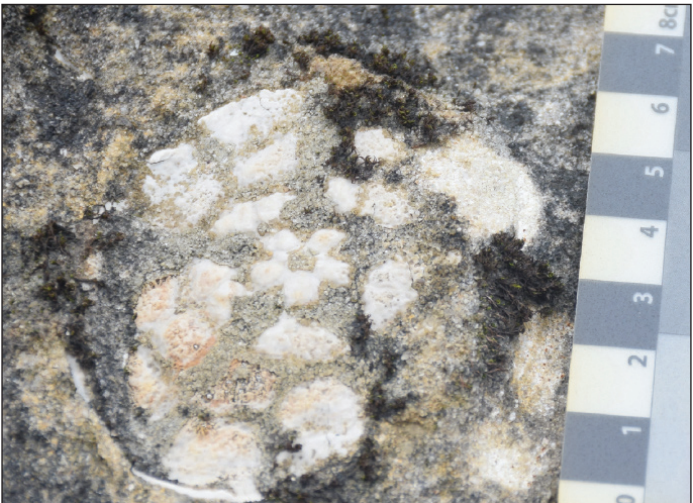


(Clockwise from top left) A gastropod (snail) fossil; a sea urchin, the centre of the star is the anus; underside of the sea urchin. The mouth is at the centre. (Photos by the author)

to the surface by upward movement of the earth’s plates.

Sea urchins are spiny, globular animals that live on the sea-

bed, inhabiting all oceans. They are widely distributed across all the oceans and inhabit the sea bed. They date back to 450 mil-



lion years ago. Urchins typically range in size from 3 to 10 cm and have a rigid, usually spherical body with a five pointed star de-

sign. Because of this design, they often get confused for starfish.

After studying them and taking a few pictures, I wanted to

take a few samples. But these were in solid rock and I needed tools to take them out. I decided to come back the next day with my dad. And this time we would take a hammer and chisel.

I woke up early in the morning the next day and packed my bag. I took the hammer and chisel to help me take a few sample fossils. The drive was about two and a half hours from the city. When we reached the place, I took out my tools and proceeded to take a few samples. I studied them some more time and then decided to go back to the car.

We spent half a day at the place. While walking back, I saw something that everybody thought was “just a rock”, but it was actually a fossilised tree trunk! I couldn’t believe my eyes. I had seen petrified wood before in museums, but I had never seen one this big. And I found it! On the way back to the car, I saw some more rocks that had oysters and small snail fossils. These rocks are being used to make the road. When I reached home, I was very disturbed with the fact that nobody cared about these treasures. These little things can tell us so much about our past and I would like to save them. And I hope you will join me.

(The author is a student of Class VIII at Saandeepani Academy for Excellence, Bengaluru)

Life is uncertain but uncertainty is freedom

Sadhguru, Isha Foundation



Sadhguru: Nothing in the outside world is certain, that's a fact. It's uncertain and that's what makes it challenging. Uncertainty means things are changing; in other words there is no limbo. If you are walking fast, every step is new terrain. This new terrain is what you are calling "uncertainty" right now.

For those seeking opportunity, uncertainty is the best time. Those who have a vision will make it a possibility; those who don't, will look at it as a problem. But, because you are in a constant state of compulsive reaction in your mind, you are seeking certainty.

Certainty is a state of limbo. If there is certainty there is status quo, isn't it? Status quo in a business, political or social situation means nothing changes; nothing evolves. By seeking certainty, ultimately, you are pitching for stagnation. If things are stagnant, you will get bored. If things are happening rapidly, then you don't have the balance to handle it. So, the problem is not with uncertainty; the problem is your interiority has become uncertain. If we have to fix the whole world for you to be peaceful, that's never going to happen. What we have to do instead is fix your interiority. What do we mean by that? It means, if your interiority is not compulsive, you will handle every situation to the best of your ability. Maybe you can't handle it like someone else, but you will handle it to the best of your ability, that's about it. You won't suffer every situation you come across simply because you are in a compulsive state of reaction.

Interiority is a dimension by itself. It cannot be crafted according to external situations – "there is certainty in life right now, so I will have one kind of interiority." "Now there is uncertainty, so I will have another kind of interiority." "When people around me are sweet, I'll have one kind of interiority. When people are nasty, I will have an-

other kind of interiority." It doesn't work that way. It is not something you determine; it is something that is. So, how to keep it? Well, there is no way to keep it. If it is conscious, it won't be compulsive.

You came here without any investment. And you will leave without any capital in your hand. Whatever happens in-between, you are anyway on the profit side, because all that you have is the experience of life. The important thing is how you experience it. So, if your interiority is in a non-compulsive, conscious state, then you determine your experience. With situations, you determine only part of them, the world determines a part of them. But how you experience life is one hundred percent in your hands.

If you think your work is important, the first thing you should do is work upon yourself, so that internally you are a stable being, no matter what the situation is externally. When you are running a large business or enterprise, it's not just about you. Often, there are another thousand people involved with you. So how you handle a situation not only impacts your life, but another thousand lives. I can teach you a way with which you can create a stable and blissful chemistry within yourself, your ability to deal with all the variety of ups and downs in life can be greatly, greatly enhanced. How? With yoga.

Yoga gives you this possibility that if you simply sit here, there is a little space between you and your body, there is a little space between you and your mind, and there is a little space between you and the world. Once you create this space within you, once you know what is you and what isn't, that is the end of suffering. When there is no fear of suffering, you will be able to look at everything with utmost clarity and address every issue to the best of your intelligence and capability. Situations will never overwhelm you.

(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)

‘Most female entrepreneurs don’t get support from spouses’

Non-fiction writer and entrepreneur Rashmi Bansal was the guest at An Author's Afternoon presented by Shree Cement Ltd and organised by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation in association with Taj Bengal Kolkata this month. As Bansal launched her new book Shine Bright, the author shared stories of several successful people who found mention in the book. Souvik Ghosh brings excerpts:

How different is your new book Shine Bright?

It's little different from the previous books. After writing nine books about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs, I finally thought that not everyone can start his own company. Also it is not desirable that everyone will start his own company. It is a not a fashion to start. Some people have the temperament, interest, desire or passion to start their own company but not all. So what about the rest? So this book is about those people, who are already working at a company, may be government, who can contribute to be a leader and make a difference. It is a book about the change-maker. So that was a slightly different take.

Tell us about the first story that revolves around businessman Pawan Goenka, a man from Kolkata.

Yes the very first story in the book is about Pawan Goenka, who is from Kolkata. Originally he grew at a smaller place in Madhya Pradesh for a short period of time in his life. But he went to IIT Kanpur in 1970s. Coming from a business family, he took a decision to do engineering which was also quite unusual. He was very successful in the US. But in 1992, suddenly the desire to come back to India was there in his heart. Goenka had said he took all decisions in life through logical brain but took this one decision to come to India from the

heart. He met a few companies after returning to India. He had joined Mahindra and Mahindra Limited in 1993 and shared his vision to develop capability to manufacture own products and make a brand in India. It was a drastic change for him from the very high type laboratories of General Motors to a two-storey building in Nasik with 50 people working on some very low-end of the technology. But within eight years, they were able to launch Scorpio, which was the first passenger car from Mahindra. So the point is to enable this success, Anand Mahindra had to bring in a person like Dr Goenka's capabilities who could also work like an entrepreneur because he had to do things with very limited resources.

Now throw a bit of light on the contrasting story of Chitra who runs a school in Delhi.

Chitra Gupta is a school principal. She started her career as a teacher in a Delhi government school. So we can't think of her as an entrepreneur. But when I came across what she had done, I felt she must also be included in the book because why should the leadership be only for corporate sector. But we need leaders in every sphere of society. Witnessing a lot of flaws in the school system, Chitra felt something better must happen. She used to make a difference being a teacher and then she had got an opportunity to become a principal of a girls' school. Though several teachers had rejected the offer to become principal of the school as it was at a congested area in Old Delhi, Chitra took it up as a challenge. The students were from very backward families and the school results were also very poor. But Chitra sparked a motivation

in the students as well as the teachers in the school. Though Chitra was there for seven years, the school's pass percentage went up to 100 per cent and the girls also had started to apply for colleges and that too under Delhi University. In one instance, she had introduced



Yoga in the school and also sent the students to inter-school competitions. Though the parents had objected, she took all responsibilities to take care of the students' safe return from the competitions. The students had a great moment when some of them managed to win some prizes.

In all these successful stories, life partners had a big role. What do you have to say about that?

Of course one needs a lot of understanding from his or her spouse. Actually I had asked Dr. Goenka this question. He told me that he has never been in his child's school. Everything was handled by his wife who did it very willingly and happily. But

I wonder what would happen if there is a role-reversal. In Chitra Gupta's case, her husband was very supportive but I have never found out by interviewing other female leaders that they used to get this level of support from their husbands. I have heard in the US about a husband leaving his job to look after the house but never heard of something of that sort in India. I don't think the trend is yet present in India but don't know about the next generation. But it is not possible for a family to have two people totally committed to their job.

Tell us about Amitabh Kant, the CEO of NITI Aayog, who did a lot of transformation in the government being an IAS officer.

When I was looking for someone who had made a different as an IAS officer, it was fascinating to go through Amitabh Kant's story. Right from the initial stages of his career, Kant wanted to make a difference. Being an outsider to Kerala, he had to learn Malayalam. It was never his first choice to go to Kerala which is far from Delhi. He was able to make several differences during his career. Long ago in 1990s, when Calicut city wanted to have an international airport as several people were going from India to Gulf countries, lot of people had petitioned to the government. But the government had said they had no money to make the airport but people can raise the money to do it. So Kant kind of came up with the idea of User Development Fee (UDF) and took a loan from state corporations and later started levying charges on passengers to pay back the amount. Now Kerala is the only state to have four in-

ternational airports. So even in government jobs, one needs to be creative to get the job done. A bit of innovation or proper mindset or desire is required to do the job. Kant's desire and intention are usually not seen in others.

Tell us about the Dharavi slum area which you have termed as 'incubator' in your book 'Poor Little Rich Slum'. You have done a bit of work there.

Yes that book was inspired by the film Slumdog Millionaire. There are several aspects of Dharavi. There is a spirit of enterprise there because the World Bank has estimated that over 650 billion dollars worth goods and services are produced in this small area. Every house in the slum is producing something or the other. So collectively people in Dharavi are contributing to the city and the country. Also they have a certain level of dignity as they feel they can have a better life standard. So I think Dharavi can be a role model for other slums in the area of entrepreneurship because that gives a lot of hope and confidence.

What would be your suggestion to all entrepreneurs in tackling personal, mental, health problems which they go through at one point where they have to defend their startup with society and also have to be a part of the society?

Basically one has to be tougher to tackle those situations. I think entrepreneurs are much tougher than others. An entrepreneur will have to be so tough that things don't affect them much. People will say but those things should not affect much. It sounds difficult. I would advise some kind of meditation or some practice which makes one tough. But it depends from person to person. Also it is needed to surround oneself with people who are like-minded. (IBNS)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, AUGUST 18, 2019

Uranus is parallel to Sun on your solar return chart ensuring an exceptional year ahead. You will be developing lot of contacts. And will also come in touch with high and the mighty. They will prove to be very beneficial in times to come. Government related work will also get cleared. Tax disputes with authorities too will be amiably resolved. You will also settle some long pending family dispute tactfully to the satisfaction of all. Your worth will increase. And you will remain a much sought after person in professional and personal circle. Your views will be valued and your suggestions would be implemented at workplace. Equations with your bosses will remain perfect. And even your mate and family members will remain loyal to you. Your income will increase. And you will have plans for going for a short trip with family.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)



Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)



Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



ness 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 and feeling towards religion is enhanced. 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 expend energy without results.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This period brings success, responsibility and maturity. Loyalty and sensitivity in your relationships are more important to you. You are especially fond of domestic life and look to the home and family. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental or nostalgic now. You may particularly value the aesthetics in and around your home during this period. If things are chaotic on the home front, you will do whatever you can to create a peaceful and stable atmosphere. You might explore various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain this week.

This phase is good for money, family, status and happiness. More loving relationships with your children may also figure now. Your magnetism skyrockets. Yet, you are not aggressive in your approach to love. Instead, you attract more if you allow yourself to be pursued. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored. At this time, you instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Any love affair begun now will be characterized by good cheer, having fun, and a fair share of emotions.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

Public relations work, promotion and other such endeavors are highlighted. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for travel, or brand new subjects to broaden your mind. Diplomacy, correctness in manner, finesse, and charm will be a big plus in aiding financial gains, especially in areas requiring public contact. You feel attracted to intelligent people with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas during the week. You know how to relate to others and you do it in a natural and warm manner. Your mind is especially inquisitive, when learning or establishing communications. You use information and data, add the weight of knowledge and experience and utilize it judiciously.

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. Spending time with someone special is a focus. Smoothing out your close personal relationships and creating stronger bonds is what makes you happy now. 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 receive pleasure from anything that expands your horizons, both physically and mentally. 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)

Conflicts with a partner over values or personal possessions are likely to occur. There may be the need to revisit old, pending issues regarding personal finances. Take this time to re-budget instead of making premature purchases. Hold off on decision-making regarding money; instead, take the time to re-think your sources of income and how you spend your cash during this period. Put off finalizing anything important for the time being. In fact, some money-making ideas or ventures may be put on hold due to circumstances beyond your control.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

It's a generous, pleasantly emotional and creative time. You will enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities. This is a good time to promote harmony and good will on the job. You have good team spirit right now, and you are more tactful and obliging with your co-workers. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. You have an increased interest in your own possessions. You are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort, status and luxury.

Help shape country's future

By Ranjan K Baruah

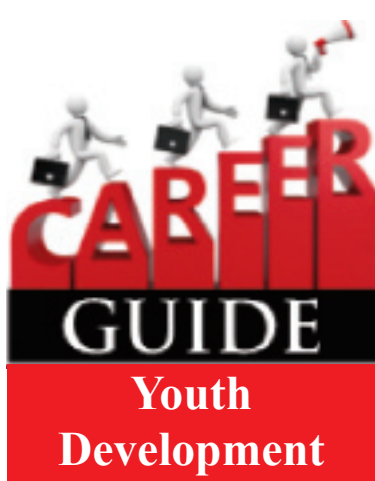
Do you take pleasure in working with young adults? Are you passionate about helping young people to develop good character and life skills that will help them succeed in life? Then you may consider a career in youth development. Well, let us understand scopes and opportunities related to youth development in India and abroad.

There are currently 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world. This is the largest youth population ever. However, more than half of all children and adolescents aged 6-14 lack basic reading and maths skills despite the fact that the majority of them are attending school.

India is one of the youngest nations in the world and is expected to have a very favourable demographic profile in the near future. This is a great opportunity as well as a challenge for all of us. Transforming education is possible when young people take up their responsibility and they are not deprived of their rights. Apart from government, youth-led organisations or organisations working for youth development may contribute positively to achieving targets of sustainable development goals.

Professionals working in youth development do activities like research, create, teach, lead and support programmes aimed at improving the lives of young adults, provide a safe and positive environment in which classes or activities are held, teach classes and facilitate workshops, lead different activities, facilitate support groups, organize field trips and exposure programmes, etc.

Job titles commonly held by youth development professionals are youth development specialist, youth development programme coordinator, youth development professional, youth development counsellor, programme manager, programme coordinator. One may study courses like Master of Social Work or Development Studies. There are courses like youth development in India and abroad. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development offers courses like M.A. Social Work (Youth and Community Development). Experienced persons may take up short term courses offered by specialised agencies on youth



employability skills to excel in the field of youth development. Though some one may work without very formal degree but it is advantages to have degrees and academic qualification as the challenges of employability has increased.

Update:

Scholarships for Girls: DRDO has launched "DRDO Scholarship Scheme for Girls through Aeronautics Research and Development Board (AR&DB). DRDO HQ. AR&DB has been mandated to nurture quality aeronautics human power in the country since inception in 1971. This scholarship scheme would attract such women power from various institutes through a transparent process with an objective to tap the talent of bright students across the country. RAC invites online scholarship applications from the Girls / Women students studying in first year of Under Graduate (BE/B. TECH: full time four year degree) and Post Graduate (M.TECH/ME: two year full time degree course) under "DRDO Scholarship Scheme for Girls in Aerospace Engg / Aeronautical Engg / Space Engg / Rocketry / Avionics / Aircraft Engg" through RAC website <https://rac.gov.in>. Last date is September 10.

(The author is a career mentor, skill trainer, motivational speaker and can be reached at 8473943734 or bkranjana@gmail.com for any career related queries)

“*My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.*”

--- Abraham Lincoln

The Shillong Times

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Women as vote banks

COME October, women in national capital can travel by public transport buses for free. This is thanks to the ruling Aam Aadmi Party and its chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. He had floated the idea a while ago, and has now made the formal announcement. This is for the first time in the world that an entire lot based on their gender has been accorded such a privilege. To this extent, Kejriwal and his party stands every chance of getting into the Guinness Book of Records. At the same time, legal challenges to the decision will only have to be anticipated on grounds of gender discrimination. If this happens then Kejriwal can hope to smile his way through a vote bank, of women, which he went out of his way to woo. Gender equality is a sacred concept which the civilized world is trying to ensure after generations and generations of suffering by women at the hands of men who sought to dominate them. Education empowered women in the West first, and in India to a limited extent in recent decades. Today women are excelling in education and other fields and they are conquering as yet unexplored fields of jobs and public service as never before. A 33 per cent reservation for women in elected posts is a concept that has been implemented in some states but not at the national level. This is the logical minimum they could get as they comprise 50 per cent of the population.

Doing justice to a disadvantaged section is one thing but turning them into vote banks or having other ulterior motives is another thing. If entire India followed the example being set by the leader of a small province like Delhi, the financial implications would be such that it could ultimately play havoc with the public transport system. Free travel would also mean a tendency to undertake more and even needless travel, meaning added rush and jam-packing of buses. Arvind Kejriwal had raised much hope when he as a Magsaysay award winning social activist joined the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption movement in 2011. He left it soon to form his own political party and eventually won power. The Lok Sabha polls this time saw his party winning just one seat. Hence, the new tricks in the trade to win the coming assembly elections and continue in power by hook or by crook.

TO THE EDITOR

Poor response to medical emergency

Editor,

On Aug 13 last there was an emergency involving a patient who had come to Economic Medical Hall for consultation with the attending doctor. The patient suddenly started vomiting blood and the condition deteriorated. The attending doctor advised immediate hospitalisation. We tried to call 108 of EMRI but no one responded.

Similarly emergency number of Police (100) and that of the Sadar Police Station (2224400) were also not responding. The reply from the other end was that the number 2224400 was not in service. However we contacted the DSP, D.K. Prasad and he in turn contacted 108(EMRI) and informed us accordingly. By the time the EMRI ambulance arrived over 30 minutes had passed and the patient was already shifted to a hospital in a taxi. This incident is shocking as there was no response from 100 (Police emergency) or 108 (EMRI). Further the ambulance was parked quite far and hence it takes a lot of time to reach the place of reporting due to road congestion.

I therefore request that the EMRI ambulance be kept in

strategic points like the Police Station etc., from where it will be easier for them to attend to any emergency call. The authorities are also requested to see that there are proper attendants to receive the calls as people will only call them in case of an emergency.

Yours etc.,
SL Shingania,
Viaemail

Abuse of social media

Editor,

Though social media has positive points and enables speedy communication, there have also been numerous cases of misuse of this medium for spreading fake or defamatory news.

On August 15 last a woman lecturer of a private university in Tura, and her male friend have been vilified just for being seen together. Adults have the right to choose their partners. To assault the lady and defame her publicly through social media is a criminal act. Besides the identity of the lecturer is now widely known.

The group of men who ill-treated the lecturer and her male-friend were later identified to be members of

some NGO but their group name is still unknown. They manhandled the lecturer and posted a photo of her and her male friend on Facebook groups along with nasty captions on the photo. The post went viral within a minute carrying hundreds of indecent comments and it became an echo chamber of holier than thou types. This has brought shame to the lecturer, her family and to the University. We students are angry and wonder why the name of the University was mentioned and why the identity of the lady lecturer was not kept confidential. Opening fake accounts and giving sordid comments has brought shame to the family and University as a whole merely because social media was available for hate comments and prejudiced opinions. Defaming someone's personal lifestyle and uploading that on social media is harming us as a society.

The elderly woman (lecturer) was beaten up mercilessly. This is a criminal offence and an inhuman act. She was a respectable woman in society and educates youth for their future. How did these vigilantes even dare to hit a woman? We strongly condemn their assault on the lecturer and

uploading photos with nasty comments. Are those 20-30 men cowards to beat up one single woman? Aren't they aware that there are special provisions of the law for protection of women? What have they gained by manhandling a woman and publicly humiliating her?

The trouble today is that half educated people want to become leaders of society. These are not real NGOs. In fact the culprits must be arrested at the earliest and strong action must be taken against them. They should be booked under different sections of the law for their wrong doings.

We the students of the University strongly condemn such inhuman acts and demand strong action against the culprits for manhandling our beloved lecturer and defaming her. We repeat that such vilification campaigns should not be allowed on social networking sites and those opening fake accounts merely to defame others with disgraceful photos or comments must be booked under the IT Act. Let us wisely use what we have in our hands for the betterment of the society and a better future.

Yours etc.,
Concerned students
Name withheld on request.

Wanted a nuclear-free world

Editor,

The statement of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh that though India is firmly committed to its ‘no first use’ doctrine on nuclear weapons, what happens in the future ‘will depend on the circumstances,’ is frightening. India is a nuclear power and the country is able to include nuclear warheads in our defence whenever it wants to; but a possible nuclear war is unimaginable considering its power to exterminate large number of humans. We have seen and experienced the consequences of nuclear explosion in Nagasaki and Hiroshima in Japan and we now shudder to think of another nuclear holocaust. But those who have not experienced the aftermath and impact of nuclear explosion do not dread the nuclear holocaust like the child who does not get burnt does not dread the fire.

So, it is easier to speak of nuclear war but the

devastation and its subsequent suffering on humanity is unimaginable. We have to bear in mind that in a nuclear war, there will be no winners or losers but only widespread devastation. War is short term madness and through war nothing is gained but something great is lost.

Interestingly, most of the countries in the world have amassed lethal weapons to destroy the world many times over and the same countries are in a mad rush to possess more and more deadly weapons. So, the ardent wish to possess more weapons comes out of our jingoism which is destructive. We don't want a third world war or a nuclear war. Therefore, every country has to take a ‘no to war’ pledge and the leading countries in the world must take initiatives to destroy nuclear weapons in the world. “Let's strive for a world sans nuclear weapons,” should be our motto in 2020.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
Viaemail

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of *The Shillong Times*

Diversity of Khasi language is its strength

By HH Mohrmen

program. It was the first time even for this writer to hear young people speak the different dialects.

A panel discussion was held immediately after the program was inaugurated by Ms Sweetymon Rynjah, which was moderated by AK Nongkynrih. One of the issues that came out prominently in the discussion was the threat that writing the different dialects could pose to the common Khasi Sohra language. When the idea to come out with alphabets to write Pnar dialect was introduced, there were those who were apprehensive even to the extent of calling them ‘ki nongpynpait jaitbynriew’ (people who divided the tribe). There were concerns that if we encourage people to write in their own dialects then it would affect or weaken the literary language or the ‘ka ktien thoh ktien pule’ which is the Sohra dialect and which was given primacy by the Welsh missionaries.

Khasi Sohra is an official language which is like a river and the other ‘shnat ktien or ktien thain’ (dialects)are like streams or tributaries which feed the main river. In the case of the Khasi language if the dialects die, the language will also die. Nobody can take away the status of Sohra Khasi as the official writing and reading language, because even in places where they speak a different dialect, Khasi is the common language that serves as a medium of communication even between those who speak different dialects. By virtue of it being used in churches and other important meetings, Khasi Sohra has acquired a status of the link language of the Jaidbynriew.

There are different reasons in which writing the different dialects could strengthen instead of weakening the common Khasi language. English language is as rich as it is now because it borrowed words from other languages. In the same way the different dialects will strengthen the language by incorporating words from the different dialects which cannot be found in Sohra dialect. Imagine how

Khasi will be further be enriched if we take the grand Hynñiewtrep language as the base of the Khasi language. Take for example the word ‘chilly’ which in the different dialects is called Sohmynten, Sohmyntnew, Samurit. Similarly if we take the different dialects into consideration, we have four different names for the egg, namely ka pylleng, ka thmat, ka lalun, ka hunsyi. It was also pointed out that the language is so rich that we have different names for rice depending on the stages that it is. ‘U kba’ is rice that is unhusked; ‘u khaw’ is when the husk is removed and ‘ka ja’ when rice is cooked.

There are words which are not found in Sohra language but are there in other dialects. For example there is no word in Khasi which we can translate ‘boomerang’ to, but it is available in Pnar and it is ‘lapakhot’. The word for elephant in Khasi is Hati which is a borrowed name, but in the Lyngngam dialect, they call the elephant ‘u ľawbah’ and it is also said that the word ijahar’ we use now for FIR originated from Lyngngam dialect. But ijahar is also a Hindi word meaning FIR.

The need to put the different dialects in writing is also related to the Niamtre, Niam Tynrai rituals, prayers or chantings use by traditional religion. These are in local dialects and can only be chanted by that respective dialect. This point was made by Heibormi Sungoh a teacher, a writer and a traditional musician all rolled in one. He said that traditional religious prayers and chants like in the ‘ľutang Poikha, chat lane, psiah ľung, choh syiar’ and others cannot be translated to any other language and even if we try, most of it will be lost in translation. Sungoh has published two books in Pnar Shangpung in which he documented all the chants, the rituals connected with different rites and passages performed by the followers of Niamtre in the Shangpung eleka.

Incorporating words from the ‘ktien thain’ to Khasi Sohra is not new, in fact it was done by none other than u Soso Tham the greatest poet of the

Jaidbynriew. This story was told to me by late Donelton Passah, retired under secretary of the then composite state of Assam and later Secretary of the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, Jowai. He also wrote the foreword in the book ‘U Sier Lapalang.’ Soso Tham included words from the shnat ktien in his translation of ‘Sah beit ľa u prek hep/ ai na sata dar.’ The English version of the poem is ‘hit the nail child, hit it on the head,’ so if Soso Tham would have given it a Khasi Sohra translation then it will go something like this: ‘sah beit ľa u prek hep ai na khlieh daiń/jraiń,’ which sounds very violent. But fortunately Soso Tham was a teacher at Shangpung and knew that in Pnar dialect the head of the nail is call ‘sata,’ so when he translated the poem, he use Pnar word ‘sata.’

They say language is dynamic, hence while we gain new words we also lose some. For example there are many old words which are not in use anymore. ‘Rympei or tpei ding’ is rarely used now in the urban areas, similarly ‘tyngier’ ‘ka jingslieu ding’ and in Pnar ‘ľujnang’ which we used as hook to lock our doors are some of the terms that are not in use anymore. This is one of the major threats that puts language in danger of extinction. However, another major threat is external.

There is an invasion of new words from modern world for example computer, tablets, Apps, Mobile, AI, Robot etc. So what is the solution to this problem? If we continue using the English terms, then in no time we will not speak our language anymore and will be overwhelmed by these new terms. We already have examples of how we deal with such situations in the past. We adapt it to the Khasi way of speaking. For instance the Khasi word for kettle is ‘ketli,’ driver ‘u draibar’, clutch ‘u klosk,’ gear ‘u kiari,’ police ‘u pulit’ and for computer I suggested ‘korputar.’

The point is even if there is a variation, it is the same language under the Austro Asiatic language group. And for the Khasi language to grow the two- pronged approach is to incorporate words from the different dialects and to translate and adopt those into new Khasi- English terms.

Importance of community health providers for new India

By Partha Pratim Mazumder

Are community healthcare providers needed, but unwanted? The controversy over the provision to provide limited licence to practice allopathic medicine, in the National Medical Commission (NMC) bill, unleashed an outcry of “quackery” from the medical professionals. It is essential that we consider who these healthcare providers are, and what role they can play in strengthening our health services. A look at global experience and the chequered history of mid-level health care providers in India will help.

An ideal health workforce is multilayered and multi-skilled, with complementary roles delivering competent, comprehensive, continuous and compassionate care. Doctors and nurses are most identifiable, but a variety of allied health professionals and community health workers are also integral. Among doctors, there are basic and specialist doctors. Among nurses, there are basic nurses, midwives and advanced nurses. A wide array of allied health professionals exist, from radiographers and optometrists, to lab technicians to physiotherapists and so on. Two other categories have been added across different countries, to meet growing but unmet healthcare needs. These are the community health workers (CHWs) and the mid-level healthcare providers.

Several developing countries have deployed CHWs, under different names but with the same intent — providing basic health services at home or close to home. CHWs also act as community mobilisers and trusted links to the organised health services. Ethiopia employed “health extension workers” to provide better antenatal care and reduce maternal mortality. Rwanda has recorded the sharpest fall in maternal mortality in the past 25 years, by deploying CHWs to link communities to nurse-run primary healthcare facilities. Swasthya Sebikas and Swasthya Kormis have strengthened primary healthcare in Bangladesh. Thailand has CHWs designated as village health volunteers and village health communicators. Brazil’s family health teams, too, have CHWs as an important component. India started deploying CHWs initially as mitanins in Chhattisgarh, and later built a nationwide army of accredited social health activists (ASHAs) as part of the National Rural Health Mission.

Mid-level health workers are a category of care providers who are more skilled and qualified than CHWs. This is a concept that emerged when even high income countries recognised that some of the functions that a doctor is traditionally expected to perform can be delivered by skilled persons with a lower level of training. Categories such as nurse practitioners, nurse anaesthetists and physician assistants grew in the United States. These drew on the experience of the Civil War and the Second World War when a shortage of doctors led nurses and paramedics to step in and perform. Formal training programmes, accreditation and role definition followed. Presently, nurse practitioners are a well-defined category in the US, New Zealand and Australia. Apart from shortages of doctors in some regions, the rising costs of healthcare also catalysed the emergence of mid-level healthcare providers.

The Indian experience of creating these categories has been fraught with hesitation and hurdles. Even the National Health Policy (NHP) of 2017 recognises this need, but progress has been slow and contentious. Chhattisgarh initiated a three-year graduate training programme (Diploma in Modern and Holistic Medicine) for creating a cadre of rural medical assistants. They were shown to be as capable as doctors in delivering some of the primary care services. Despite several name changes, the conflict between medical professionals and the

aspirations of the new graduates resulted in an identity crisis that finally led to closure of the programme. Assam is the only state where such a course is presently run (Diploma in Medicine and Rural Health Course). On the other hand, the category of Physician Assistants (PAs) has taken root in some southern states and West Bengal, through a 4-year graduate course run by universities. They mostly perform duties under the supervision of doctors in hospitals but have the potential for delivering preventive and promotive services in primary care settings. Seven years ago, the Union health ministry initiated a proposal to train and employ mid-level healthcare providers through a three-year programme modelled on the Chhattisgarh course, to meet the needs of primary care. The Medical Council of India (MCI) developed a curriculum which was a compressed MBBS programme (“MBBS Bonzai”) more suited to hospitals than to primary care. The MCI, however, balked at regulating this course because it violated its mandate to deal only with medical education.

So, the health secretary of the time, PK Pradhan came up with an unorthodox solution. The course was labelled as B Sc(Public Health), and the National Board of Examinations (NBE) was asked to deliver it through its affiliated hospitals and colleges. The NBE, which was hitherto mandated to deliver only postgraduate medical education, accordingly modified its articles of association to include undergraduate and postgraduate courses in public health. A group of experts, which included VK Paul (presently a member, NITI Aayog) prepared the curriculum for the course. However, the proposal lost steam after Pradhan’s tenure ended.

The proposal resurfaced after NHP 2017 called for a BSc in community health and “bridge courses” for developing mid-level healthcare providers. The proposal to provided bridge courses to AYUSH practitioners of the Indian systems of medicine seems to have retreated in the face of fierce opposition from the Indian Medical Association (IMA). However, the inclusion of community health providers (CHPs) in Section 32 of the recently passed National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill has reignited the debates on the qualifications, competencies and functions of these mid-level providers.

The concerns about this provision in the NMC arise because it was an abrupt insertion into the original bill that went before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health in early 2019. The courses prescribed, the institutions which will deliver them, the competencies that will be promoted and the nature of functions they are expected to perform are not clear at this stage. Only the role of the NMC in issuing a limited license is described, with ambiguity on when, where and how much medical supervision is required or autonomy is permitted. The blurred lines between NMC (which regulates undergraduate and postgraduate medical education through medical colleges) and this new cadre are agitating the organised medical profession.

India needs mid-level healthcare providers in several forms — nurse practitioners, physician assistants and community health providers — to fill the vast gaps of access and quality in our health services. They are especially required for primary care. Perhaps it is best to diffuse the controversy over CHPs by bringing them under the purview of the Allied Health Professionals Bill which is due to go before Parliament. The CHPs may not fit well into the NMC but surely they can be accommodated as allied health professionals. That may bring accord between the government and the medical profession.

“The first lesson of economics is scarcity: there is never enough of anything to fully satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics.”

--- Thomas Sowell

The Shillong Times

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Defence Minister talks tough

WITTINGLY or unwittingly, Union defence minister Rajnath Singh is raising the temperature vis-a-vis India-Pakistan relations - and straining it further. The first statement he made a few days ago was that India might not necessarily stand by its "no-first-use" pledge vis-a-vis use of nuclear weapons against neighbours. The policy, he said, could change as per emerging situations. Both India and Pakistan have adopted a similar policy when they entered the nuclear club, which was in part a reassurance to the world that a critical scenario would be avoided.

Notably, Pakistani generals have often warned India that if a militarily difficult situation arose, they would unilaterally use nukes against India irrespective of whether India dikes it first or not. Admittedly, Rajnath Singh was giving it back to Pakistan in the same coin. At the same time, considering the clout that India enjoys at the international level, the minister should rather have avoided speaking in the same vein as the Pakistani generals did in the past. Pakistan has a perpetual fear India would attack it. The threat from the generals was more of a kind of chest-beating. At the same time, fact is also that India has put Pakistan on notice through the defence minister's statement.

Rajnath Singh raised the temperature further when he said later that if Pakistan wanted to engage India in a dialogue on Kashmir, it could be not about this side of Kashmir, but about Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Even when Pakistan played all the games in Kashmir Valley through use of terrorist outfits for the past many years, India was largely silent on PoK, other than making just a few references about human rights violations there. With the defence minister reasserting India's right over PoK, and declaring that talks on Kashmir Valley was a closed chapter, the Pakistani civil and military establishments are bound to be fretting and fuming. Add to this Pakistan's failure to draw the UN into the Kashmir issue - which was only to be expected in view of the global opinion heavily weighing against terrorism.

To have a neighbour in desperation is not a happy thought. The Modi government's bold actions in Kashmir vis-a-vis abrogation of Article 370 etc won huge support in the country, and first indications are that there is less chance of an upheaval. This is time to make a success out of what was done there, rather than indulging in big talk or other provocations to further tense up the neighbour. An over-kill is in bad taste.

Kashmir’s “Grow More Food” Moment: Is It Becoming a Second Assam?

By Jyotirmoy Prodhani

Kashmiris are almost a foregone conclusion, though one would be genuinely relieved if proven utterly wrong.

What is most likely to happen now in Kashmir, in fact, had happened in colonial Assam in the late 19th century till the years preceding India's independence - unprecedented state engineered influx to Assam, the most devastating colonial experience of the state unlike anywhere in India. Assam during those days was an orientalised territory; exoticised and oriented as a land of lazy, indolent, worthless people; a territory of hostile geography, a place of ferocious wild animals, infested with venomous insects and disease, torturous terrains of thick dark jungles and at the same time vast, vacant, endless stretch of uncultivated fertile land and of course the seductive presence of countless luscious women.

This orientalisation was so effective and complete that it had provided the unquestionable legitimacy to colonise the land. Kashmir too, perhaps, is likely to get orientalised with similar essentialist rhetoric for settler colonisation. In fact, the major image of Kashmir that has occupied the popular imagination of Bharat at present, instead of being the 'Paradise on Earth', is that of a wretchedly undeveloped, poor, backward, corrupt fiefdom of a couple of 'families' and the people of the land as largely 'anti-nationals', 'pro Pakistanis', 'Islamists', 'racist' and 'xenophobic' - a veritable 'area of darkness'.

It is interesting that one East Bengal cleric and the Indian Muslim League leader, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, who was the most active protagonist to have Assam annexed to East Pakistan after the 1940 Lahore resolution of the League for a separate Muslim homeland, considered the 'virgin land' of Assam like the "luscious young woman beckoning the men from the neighbourhood which the landless Bengalis could not resist". (Saiful Islam, 2017, p 108) Almost similar prospect has obsessed the popular imagination of 'Bharat' - "vacant lands and fair girls of Kashmir". The English colonial officials and leaders like Bhasani were belligerent in their arguments favouring large scale land grabbing in Assam by the East Bengal immigrants to make the land of Assam 'productive' and bring more 'development'. According to them "to bring development and turn the jungles into crop producing land, the poor landless, hardworking, skilled, industrious and land hungry immigrants from the overpopulated East Bengal must be settled in the vacant lands of Assam". It would not be a surprise if the pro development section of 'Bharat' speaks the same language arguing for the rampant occupation of the vacant lands of Kashmir by the 'poor', 'landless', 'hardworking', 'industrious' people from the overpopulated states of the rest of India like UP and Bihar.

In 1872 the Commissioner Agent, Col. Hopkinson wrote to the Secretary of Bengal to "implant surplus Bengalis in the vacant lands of Assam". Assam Commissioner Sir Henry Cotton was explicit about his colonial agenda when he wrote, "the millions of acres of uncultivable lands now lying waste represent millions of rupees which might be dug out of the soil, but are now allowed to lie useless like the talent wrapped in a napkin". This is a seductive discourse for any ruling regime to justify colonising land of the colonised. There would soon be many like Bhasani and the British colonialists to put forth similar logic in the context of Kashmir replacing the relevant nouns. In fact, to such an argument the entire Bharat would jump with unbridled enthusiasm to 'save Kashmir' from 'poverty' and bring 'development' leading to endless inflow of people towards the valley.

The Union Government is most likely to come up with a special programme for fresh settlements like the most notorious "Grow More Food" scheme of 1940 and the equally sinister Assam Land Settlement Act of 1942 (ALS) which coincided with the Lahore Resolution for Pakistan. The notorious "Grow More Food" was devised by the Assam Prime Minister Sir Syed Saadulla and his Revenue Minister, Manowar Ali, also known as the 'famous duo' of that time, under which few lakhs of acres of land were thrown open for settler colonisation. (Heads of provincial governments in colonial India were called Prime Ministers) Under the ALS ACT, 1942, every landless Muslim immigrant family from East Bengal were entitled to get 30 bighas of land in Assam but no indigenous people was entitled to get even an inch of the government land under the same Act. Through this Act, barring a few, almost all the reserved and grazing fields were thrown open for grabbing by the immigrants. One would not be surprised if the vast grazing lands of Kashmir are also being encircled for similar colonisation. In 1920 a provision was adopted, the Line System, to give some protection to the land of the indigenous population but there was huge opposition by Bhasani and the Muslim League. In 1942 66 lakh 900 and 33 acres of land were allotted to the East Bengal immigrants under "Grow More Food" programme. Soon many districts became immigrant majority districts in Assam. Assam experienced what later became the fate of Tibet- the indigenous becoming homeless in their own land. In 1945 over Sir Saadulla wrote enthusiastically to Liaquat Ali Khan that "in four districts of lower Assam the Muslim population quadrupled." (see Sanjoy Hazarika, Strangers of the Mist p58) One never knows, a similar letter of joy might also be written from Kashmir on the possible demographic overhaul in the land.

Will the same fate begin to haunt Kashmir that would turn the natives of Kashmir into unwanted 'xenophobic' nuisance as the settler colonisers used to consider the indigenous inhabitants of Assam to be? In that case it would not only change the geography of Kashmir but also the culture and language of the land. The way the eco system was destroyed as mere jungles during the "Grow More Food" campaign in Assam, Kashmir might also soon resemble the arid stretches of the over populated states of India in the name of "Develop Kashmir More" programme, or something similar. If such disappearance of Kashmir occurs that might well be the 'Mission Accomplished' for 'Bharat' but a great loss for 'India'. We have lost Assam, let us preserve Kashmir.

(The author teaches at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Email rajaprodhani@gmail.com)

ment made by BCCI CAC to retain Ravi Shastri as the head coach is overwhelming for Team India. The team is now at a crucial stage post world cup loss and needs Ravi Shastri's leadership to evolve stronger in the upcoming games until November 2021.

The incumbent's selection was much expected as there were very few contenders for the top post of Head Coach. Ravi Shastri over the years has now developed a deep understanding with the team and knows the nuances of cricket and the team through SWOT analysis. He is now best suited to lift the morale of the men in blue to the next level and help ensure that the team benefits from his leadership positively.

As it is learnt that Shastri had demonstrated a clear road map for the future to team India during the interview process with BCCI/CAC, his elevation as the Head Coach for the third time will help India retain top notch talent and win games successfully. The Indian team should now make the best opportunity of Shastri's availability through his renewal for yet another term and look ahead to retain titles especially on foreign soil.

Yours etc.,
Varun Dambal
Bangalore - 72

Kashmir imbroglio

Editor,

There is a lesson here to be learnt from this event. The tyranny of religion, language and ethnicity/racial identity would end harmony among communities and usher in political instability in any State in the World Order. It is, therefore, prudent for each one of us to ponder deeply upon the rising intolerance bred by the fanatics of religion, language and culture countrywide.

Yours etc.,
Morning Star Sumer,
Shillong – 2

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.

Abrogation of Article 370 & 35A

A warning signal for our political class

By Dr Lakhon Kma

Past weeks have been really big in Indian history. Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A which gives special status to Jammu & Kashmir; and its bifurcation was orchestrated as a mark of serious deviation from 'status quo' under the current dispensation in the Centre. The response from Pakistan was on expected lines. It has bled India for the last 73 years of our existence as an independent country through its proxy wars by infiltrating militants and encouraging militancy. The pretext of lack of development, rampant corruption and militancy for the abrogation of the Articles 370 and 35A by the Govt. of India were convincing enough, though not in its entirety. Obviously, the move was a befitting reply to anti-India forces within and outside the country. It is refreshing to see leaders and parties who do not believe in status quo for good. Hopefully, Kashmiris will get their share of development as promised and will eventually accept it as a fait accompli.

There is no denying the fact that disturbances created by elements originating from across the border have caused alienation of Kashmiris from the rest of India. However, the problem was compounded and fanned by the Kashmiri leadership's apathy towards its public. In spite of huge funds that have gone to the coffers of subsequent governments in Jammu & Kashmir, there are serious concerns of under-developments owing to widespread corruption over the decades. Hence a perfect alibi for intervention from the centre.

It is to be noted that under the federal structure of our country as enshrined in our Constitution, States are created to bring all-round development of its people in a targeted manner. But the million dollar question is whether our political class has done justice to their people after Statehood? This can also be exemplified from any small state in the North-east. Let me dwell on the State of Meghalaya. Article 371 gives special status to mainly the North-Eastern States including Meghalaya. After almost 50 years of Statehood, time has come to engage in serious introspection about the state of affairs in Meghalaya vis-à-vis development in relation to the money spent from the State coffers, including funds that have come from the Centre over the years. We are far behind in all development indices compared to several other States. Going by the latest available report, we are #26 in Human Development Index, a composite index of life expectancy, education and per capita income indicators. In spite of tall claims by our leaders, we know where we stand as far as development of the State is concerned. Yet, successive governments have found it difficult to bring in systematic development through judicious use of the limited resources.

Funds will always be a constraint for a small state like Meghalaya. However, the constraint can be minimized by fiscal discipline. Unfortunately, the lack of it has always been a problem in our State. Take the example of wastage of public money in political appointments. It has become a hallmark of Meghalaya defeating the purpose of the 91st Constitutional Amendment that regulates the size of the Ministry in the Lok Sabha and State Legislature in order to minimize wastage of public money. Political appointees with the rank of Cabinet Ministers or Minister of State nullifies the purpose of the amendment. In spite of pub-

lic outcry from time to time and court rulings against it in other States, political appointments continue to happen, thereby draining our resources. Successive governments here tend to show immunity to this constitutional amendment which was well-intended to prevent wastage of public money.

After statehood, have the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), which have been empowered under the Sixth Schedule to protect the interest of local people, culture & tradition and natural resources, been faithful enough in carrying out its duties as mandated in the Constitution? Have the ADCs been able to conserve our natural resources or has the Sixth Schedule been used as an immunity in allowing its destruction in the guise of birthrights. If we look around our land, water bodies and hills, it certainly raises a lot of questions on the role played by ADCs over the years. Many a times, I am dumbfounded by the mere claim of ADCs or the State Govt in protecting the rights of people or taking care of them effectively. Statehood was never meant to benefit a handful of people only. Rather, it was meant to fulfil the aspirations of everyone, particularly those marginalized sections of the society who are in real need of the government's help to uplift their lives in our villages, small towns and the city. To start with, I think the State government should release a white paper on the number of landless people in the State starting with the locals. Without land holdings, alienation of locals will be natural and disturbing as we can see in the current times. Does Govt. have any record of how many houses have been provided to poor and marginalized sections who cannot afford to purchase or build a house? Equally important is the provision of basic amenities in our villages and small towns where landlessness may not be the main issue. Similarly, the issue of non-availability of jobs to educated youths whose number is swelling by the day, environmental degradation, lack of medical, engineering or and para-medical institutes, underdeveloped infrastructural facilities across the State, etc. speak volumes of the sorry state of affairs. Have the ADCs/State government lived up to the expectations of the people or those who dreamt of a developed and prosperous State?

Enough fodder of discontentment among the masses, particularly the educated youths, are piling up as we approach 50 years of Statehood, largely stemming from unfulfilled promises, lack of sustainable economic opportunities and failure of delivery systems. The political class has to cut across party-lines and work for all-round development in every nook and corner of the State as a mark of respect to those leaders who believed that we could develop better as a separate state than being part of Assam. Our leaders have to realize that mere lip service will not be enough to sustain as a State as we have seen over the years. 'Status quo' will not remain for eternity. They should shun their apathy towards the public and get their act together before someone intervenes in the name of lack of development and rampant corruption which will be hard to resist or disagree with. In the current scenario, anything is possible.

(The author teaches in NEHU)

To the Editor

Unethical behaviour of Hospital

Editor,

This refers to the unethical behaviour of the authorities of Nazareth Hospital, Laitumkhrach. I had gone to the hospital for a few tests after which I was given a prescription to get some medicines. The medicines were not available at the hospital's pharmacy hence I had to get the required medicines from outside. I was told to get the prescription signed or stamped by the doctor otherwise I would not get the medicines. Now, when I went back to the authorities to get the signature, they refused to sign it. The thing is that they want their patients to buy medicines "only from their pharmacy." That is why they would not sign the prescription. Such a profit-making motive by a hospital is disgraceful. Hospitals exist to help patients but here, Nazareth is concerned only with minting money. What if the concerned patient is in a life and death situation? Who will take responsibility in such a case?

I request the concerned authorities to take immediate action to restore 'hospital ethics'. The Supreme Court has itself declared that a patient has the right to acquire medication from any pharmacy and he or she cannot be stopped from doing so by the hospital. This issue demands quick and strong action so that patients do not suffer because of this imposition.

Yours etc.,
Sushant Agarwal,
Via email

"Why does the ISIS carry out such heinous and most reprehensible act? Why are innocent people targeted?"

The massive blast, which happened late Saturday, came as Washington and the Taliban finalise a deal to reduce US military presence in Afghanistan and hopefully, build a roadmap to a ceasefire.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are the two main countries which provide a safe haven to these outfits. The main reasons for people jumping on the band wagon of terrorist organisations are because of poverty and ignorance due to lack of good education. Economic backwardness is also another problem why people often turn to destructive theories of terrorist organisations.

Governments in these countries must implement economic reforms with the help of the United Nations. Also, other countries must help these countries in every possible way to make progress. Afghanistan is made up of rugged mountainous terrain with deep valleys and majestic mountains. First of all, the government must take up measures to turn these places to either tourist destinations by providing basic infrastructural facilities or construct nuclear power plants with the support of foreign countries. The government can sell surplus power to other countries and thus earn foreign exchange.

Further, the government must promote and allow more people to live in villages by providing them all the basic facilities and also begin more industries in rural areas so that people are duty-bound to earn an honest living. This will enable them to weave their own dreams without allowing themselves to fall into the trap of destructive theories. If the government starts something constructive in a determined way, the country can be converted into a paradise on earth where peace and prosperity will rule.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanani,
Via email

Ravi Shastri is back

Editor,

The recent announce-

Afghanistan blast

Editor,

One read with shock the report of a massive bomb explosion on Saturday in west Kabul, in which at least 63 people were killed and more than 182 injured. An ISIS suicide bomber made his way into a packed Afghan wedding hall and detonated the bomb on his body ending the joy and celebration of the occasion and giving the shock of a lifetime for all the remaining especially the newly-weds. The question still reverberates in the minds of people,

“I cannot believe in a God who wants to be praised all the time.”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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National Mineral Policy 2019

THE repeated refrain by politicians of Meghalaya, the latest by PN Syiem, Chairman KHADC, that he is not impressed by the lifting of the ban on coal imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) is fraught with serious consequences. What these politicians want is a pre-NGT ban scenario where mine owners lapped up all the profits without any social or environmental responsibility. They were not governed by any regulations. The hundreds of abandoned mines have not been closed or re-afforested. They are left open even today and have resulted in the flooding of active mines. The Sixth Schedule is being used to red flag the loss of tribal rights over their land. What is not pointed out or discussed is whether the "tribals" of Meghalaya actually have any rights over their land today or whether those rights vest with a miniscule tribal elite.

The Supreme Court has categorically stated, after hearing the valued arguments of the Amicus Curiae, Colin Gonsalves, that mining in Meghalaya will have to be carried out according to the National Mining Policy 2019 (NMP). The essential features of this Act is (a) that a resource inventory of all minerals will be maintained in accordance with a globally accepted public reporting standard for ensuring reliability of reporting (b) that a miner shall leave the mining area in an ecological shape which is as good as it was before the commencement of mining or better with least impact on flora and fauna of the area. (c) Inter-generational Equity which recognises that natural resources, including minerals, are a shared inheritance where the state is the trustee on behalf of the people to ensure that future generations receive the benefit of inheritance. Hence State Governments are must ensure that the full value of the extracted minerals is received by the State. However, for assessment of inter generational equity in respect of each mineral, a disaggregated approach shall be adopted considering aspects like reserves/ resources and potential for reuse through recycling, which are relevant and suitable in the Indian context.

The Act stresses on sustainable mining practices where mining operations shall not ordinarily be taken up in identified ecologically fragile and biologically rich areas. The Government shall identify such areas that are critically fragile in terms of ecology and declare as 'in-violate areas' or 'no-go areas' out of bounds for mining. Where small deposits are not susceptible to viable mining, a cluster approach will be adopted by granting the deposits together as a single lease within a geographically defined boundary. In grant of mineral concessions for small deposits in Scheduled Areas, endeavour will be made to accommodate Scheduled Tribes while extending enabling environment to carry-out mining operations in a systematic and efficient manner. The problem with politicians here or elsewhere is that they have a myopic view of governance and don't care if the environment is completely destroyed so long as the coal money comes in to feed their electoral needs. This destructive mindset has to be defeated.

TO THE EDITOR

Nepotism in allocating medical seats

Editor,

It deeply pains me to inform the readers of your daily about the shocking and shameless disparity inflicted upon meritorious students of the state who have cleared their medical entrance tests. I am aghast at the manner in which aspiring medical students have been allotted their seats. In the list declared by the Health Department, Govt of Meghalaya, students with top ranks have been allotted colleges which completely disregard their hard work and efforts. It is the dream of every medical aspirant to study in a college that is well established and one which excels in medical studies. For reasons completely unknown to us, the student at the bottom of the list, namely Jeremy Marbaniang ranked 23rd on the merit list has been allotted the best college i.e., Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi. Fideta A Massar ranked 15th was

allotted VMMC & SH, New Delhi, and Raphylla W B Syiem ranked 21st was allotted VMMC & SH, New Delhi . This complete disregard for merit reeks of nepotism. Will the Health Department care to answer as to why people at the bottom of the list are being given top ranking colleges, while those who truly deserve good colleges have to be content with sub-standard institutes? What influence is at play here? Is it political or a mere money game, where the highest payer is awarded the better college? This haphazard allotment of colleges must be investigated, because it is more than evident that no process has been followed for the same, and merit has been thrown down the drain. The Health Department, Government and all authorities concerned must come out and explain to us how this bogus list was formulated, or be ready to face legal consequences.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Why this ambiguity from MPSC?

Editor,

After a wait of over a year or so, the Meghalaya Public Service Commission (MPSC) has informed the concerned candidates via notice that the Meghalaya Civil Services (Mains) Examination will be held in the month of January 2020. However, it is surprising and very clumsy of the MPSC to have not declared the dates for the examination in question. Why can't they provide candidates with the stability and surety that they deserve? How can the MPSC notify an exam of the stature of MCS Mains without even setting the dates in advance? This is no lottery game. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) always notifies the examination dates well in advance for the Civil Services Mains Exam. Why can't our MPSC follow suit and emulate this good procedure? Is there a hidden

agenda that we do not know of? The state government keeps on complaining that we do not have enough MCS bureaucrats to deal with the large amount of pending work at the block and district levels, but who is to blame for this if not the government itself? Through this letter, we urge the Chairman and Members of MPSC to take some pro-active steps and to declare the dates for the Mains Exam. At least do something to save the image of this autonomous institution from ridicule.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Church for whom?

Editor,

Apropos the front page caption, "Hek meets Puri for church land", (ST Aug 20, 2019) I am amusingly critical of such issues resurfacing after the model code of conduct had come in prior to the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections. It had vanished from the esteemed paper for quite a long time to give me a sense of great relief that our pastors after careful analysis might have shelved the idea of purchasing land in Delhi. I am a bit wary of coming in here but my conviction does not allow me to remain silent. I am a nominal Presbyterian, not from Shillong Synod West but I just wish to throw in some facts. It is not the question of the health of the Shillong Synod west exchequer that really bothers me, but whether a church in Delhi is really necessary. Rather I would call upon the Synod to please look at our Robert's Hospital which really needs a total upheaval. By the grace of God the Hospital is slowly recovering and getting back to its past glory. About the Shillong Synod West from where huge sums have disappeared I wish to say that the alms (Sunday collection) are collected from all the faithful. Hence if any decision on financial matters are pending then a general consensus of all the faithful

has to be taken, for every donor has his /her own purpose in donating money to the church.

There are only five to six Presbyterian regular Sunday morning church goers in the Free Church in Delhi where the faithful of all denominations assemble and for many years it has grown from strength to strength. If a Presbyterian Church is built, the non-Presbyterians would find it very difficult to join in, despite the best attempts of the faithful to resolve trivial differences. So to book the A320 Airbus for five passengers is, according to my little understanding, illogical and one which we may later regret. A big thank you, though, to Mr Hek.

Yours etc.,
M. Khyriem,
Shillong- 14.

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of *The Shillong Times*

Monsoon Mahyem

Warned yet unprepared

By Poonam I Kaushish

Centre has taken recourse to short-cuts and quick-fix remedies which have compounded the mess. Primarily, because our policies are based on poor land management and myopic flood-control strategies. In fact, a cursory glance at the Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Disaster Management shows that over 67.4 per cent area of the country is vulnerable to natural disasters like floods, cyclonic winds and storms. Yet the Government's response is ke pharak painda hai.

Moreover, the authorities wake up to problems only when it stares them in the face. Questionably, why is India so underprepared? Why are long-term responses not developed to what is an annual expected problem? Do we know the ABC of disaster

towards works not approved. In Bihar of 24 projects 10 were delayed by 10-75 months. Besides, as the river topography constantly changed, uncompleted projects became redundant and it was found that project objectives were not met due to inadequate planning.

More striking is that majority of dams lack Emergency Action Plans and developers did not account for prevention of backflow of a river, "non-establishment of embankment near the sluice gate of rivers" like bank protection along Bhagirathi river in West Bengal and errors in the benefit-cost ratio.

Think. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was set-up amidst much fanfare with an ambitious three-layer (national, State and district) plan to decentralise disaster management right up to

In fact, a cursory glance at the Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Disaster Management shows that over 67.4 per cent area of the country is vulnerable to natural disasters like floods, cyclonic winds and storms.

management? Why do politicians feel that mere sanctioning of hundreds of crores will solve the problem?

Little do they realize that funds doled out instead of helping people are used by most State Governments for everything other than disaster management. Unfortunately, many civic officials spend years lining their pockets instead of taking care of civic facilities. Scandalously, roads are dug up to ostensibly lay pipes in the rain!

Thereby, exposing the country's poor disaster control. Bluntly, neither the Central Disaster Management Authority nor the State Disaster Boards implemented any project properly. Shockingly, according to a 2017 CAG report of 517 works approved between 2007-16, only 57% were completed as release of funds was delayed or there were delays in submitting project proposals and shortfall of sanctioned funds.

In addition, in some cases funds were diverted towards works that were not approved. For example, in Assam, Himachal and Tamil Nadu alone, Rs.36.50 crores was diverted

district levels and guidelines and policies were drawn to that effect. On paper: Good. On ground: Dud.

The CAG report 2015 submitted the NDMA had neither information nor control over the progress of disaster management work in State or could it successfully implement various projects it had initiated for disaster preparedness and mitigation. What's more, the authority has been functioning without its core advisory committee of experts that advises it on different aspects of disaster management for the past three years.

Asserted a senior NDMA official, "The NDMA was bound to fail, as we were always a top-heavy organisation with many having no expertise in the realm of disaster. Worse, it is not performing several functions prescribed in the Disaster Management Act, 2005. No long-term responses have been developed, as it is assumed that by sanctions monies their job is done." Who will be held accountable? Whose head will roll?

Woefully, there are no emergency operations centres or trained personnel to search and rescue people. Shockingly, this is not due to lack of money, since 2010

Kashmir needs fresh approach to isolate separatists

Continuance of lockdown in J&K helping extremists

By Sagarneel Sinha

Now that the special status of Jammu and Kashmir is gone, the major challenge ahead of New Delhi is to win the hearts of local Kashmiris and bring peace in the valley torn by violent conflicts for decades. That's not an easy task. A large section of Kashmiris have been under the influence of separatists - agents of Pakistan - who see India as "an oppressor to their culture and identity". Although we shouldn't forget the fact that India itself is a land of diversity - a combination of many religions, ethnic communities, languages and cultures. But, New Delhi also has its own history of blunders for its inability to prevent the Pakistan supported separatists' propaganda - which gave immense strength to terrorism in the valley leading to the exodus of the minority Hindu Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir.

There is no doubt about the success achieved by the security forces in the valley, particularly in recent years, in eradicating the terrorists - and this process of neutralizing the terrorists should continue with no breaks in between. But, one shouldn't forget the fact, despite a spree of deaths of terrorists, a section of youths in the valley are becoming terrorists for the cause of jihad against the State of India. Also, there is a large

of emperor Kanishka belonging to the Kushan dynasty.

So, New Delhi should start the process of reaching out to the Kashmiris through Sufism - which may eventually bridge the gap between New Delhi and the people of the valley, who still belief that "their own culture faces an imminent threat from India's government". Through Sufism, New Delhi will not only blunt the extremist ideology in the valley but will also redress the "fear of cultural threat" of Kashmiris from India. Also, it should take strict action against those dens that propagate separatism in the valley.

Presently, there is a complete political vacuum in the valley and New Delhi should also use this golden chance to fill it up - by creating new political leaders who understand the Kashmiri culture and also should be nationalists. However, they shouldn't be just puppets of New Delhi - the blunder that Washington did in Iraq after dethroning its dictator Saddam Hussein. Kashmir needs new mainstream leaders who should focus on overall development of the valley and at the same time should also be trained to prevent the youth from coming under the influence of Pakistan aided

New Delhi should work in two fronts - using military action and propagating a moderate ideology to replace the roots of the violent ideology of Wahhabism - which is well stretched across the grounds of the valley. Kashmir has been the important centre for Hinduism, particularly Shaivism - continuance of the holy Amarnath Yatra bears the testimony of it. Also, it has been the bed of Sufism, the moderate Islamic ideology.

section of youths who, although don't join terrorism, but still continue to support the cause of these jihadis - this is evident from the gatherings in funerals of the terrorists.

Actually, the main culprit in the valley is the extremist Islamic ideology called Wahabism - which is accused by many for spreading terrorism globally. It is this ideology which is in a continuous process giving birth to terrorists. Truth is in Kashmir whenever a terrorist is killed, it only ignites another youth to pick up a gun against India. The seed of terrorism has to be wiped out along with neutralizing the terrorists - if peace in Kashmir has to be achieved. New Delhi shouldn't be only busy to kill the terrorists as it has been doing for years - it also should now focus to draw strategies to prevent the youths of the valley from joining terrorism. New Delhi shouldn't be repeating the mistakes that Washington did in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

New Delhi should work in two fronts - using military action and propagating a moderate ideology to replace the roots of the violent ideology of Wahhabism - which is well stretched across the grounds of the valley. Kashmir has been the important centre for Hinduism, particularly Shaivism - continuance of the holy Amarnath Yatra bears the testimony of it. Also, it has been the bed of Sufism, the moderate Islamic ideology. Not to forget that once Buddhism also thrived in the valley. It is said that a separate 4th Buddhist Council was held by the Sarvastivad Buddhists in Kashmir under the patronage

separatism.

However, for that to happen, first of all, New Delhi has to ease the lockdown in the valley which is creating problems for the patients - who are in need of emergency services. Obviously, this would also create new problems, particularly resuming the services of internet, for New Delhi. But, New Delhi has to one day resume the internet services. So, it would be better for the government to slowly resume the internet services and before this, it should create a social media cell for Kashmir which would continuously monitor the social media by deleting the separatist social posts and also propagate India's views strongly through the social media in the valley.

This is the age of the internet and just by closing it is not going to serve the problem for longtime - if not for a short time. Instead, the government should use the internet to blunt Pakistan's separatist idea - which also heavily relies on social media for its survival.

In this way, New Delhi will be able to deal with Islamabad in its own game. Also, the complete shutdown in the valley will only alienate the people in the valley - which may only make the situation more difficult for New Delhi to win the hearts of the Kashmiris. So, New Delhi should instead look for a solid strategy to counter Pakistan aided separatist agenda, which is already well grounded in the valley, in the social media and should also start slowly to end its clampdown in the valley. (IPA Service)

“It is the duty of the Defence Ministry and the forces to keep India safe.”

--- Nirmala Sitharaman

The Shillong Times

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Defence deficit

WORD from Air chief Marshal BS Dhanoa is that the Indian Air Force has begun a process of large-scale induction of indigenously developed weapons. This should be good news for the reason that huge funds are being spent by India on weaponization programmes for long years, and the money almost exclusively went to the global arms market. The Make In India initiative of the Modi government in its first term did not gain steam in a big way or move in the desired manner. The initiative is worth taking forward, based on the foundations laid thereon, to better and smarter levels.

The two UPA periods spread into 10 years were a period of indecision and complacency in the matter of defence preparedness. This was also a period when China tried to lie low and act as a soft power despite the steady rise in its economic clout. Pakistan was preparing for the fight ahead, after the Kargil hit. The regional calm was taken for granted, only to rue later. Pakistan modernised its army's weapons systems with hi-tech guns and started showing its firepower along the LoC in recent years while Indian soldiers on this side of the border faced them with antiquated weapons. The result was more of casualties on this side. The Modi government too did not march ahead in the matter of defence acquisitions in appreciable ways.

India, next to Saudi Arabia, is today the world's second largest arms importer - also to make up for the lost time. China, the sixth largest, has touched a high level and is well-endowed already with most-modern military ware. Having taken giant steps forward, China raised its indigenous defence production in major ways and is now the world's fifth largest defence exporter. For strategic reasons, India and several nations in the Western bloc do not buy sophisticated arms from China.

Defence purchases from global arms markets have huge commission component, and such money goes into the pockets of those in government and the respective military brass. This is also seen as a reason why successive Indian governments were not developing weapons technology, and depended largely on Russia as also others for imports. Submarines and the like bought by India from Russia were often found to be defective in the long run. It is important that India, like China, progressively reduces its military purchases and depended more on Indian-made weapons. For this, India needs to spend more on Research and Development. What, in sum, is required is a long-term visionary approach, keeping in mind the worsening security situation in the region.

To the Editor

Long haul for college teachers

Editor,
Apropos the letter, "Nepotism in College appointment" (ST Aug 7, 2019) there has been an eerie silence prevailing after volleys upon volleys were hurled by writers who chose to withhold their names for obvious reasons. The silence can only be interpreted as "guilt." For our candidates equipped with UGC requirements, I understand that the shock was too great to even give a rejoinder, hence I am deeply indebted to the person whose name was withheld for not letting down himself/herself without the argumentative second paragraph. "When UGC rules are that points should be given to candidates with experience, M.Phil., degrees, Ph.D. Degrees, papers presented at conferences and publications, why not some colleges in Shillong give marks to work experience?" It was in 1974 when NEHU, with the efforts of Professor G.G. Swell, was finally established. As far as the college lecturers post is was concerned, there had been loopholes in UGC rules and norms, which were later plugged thanks to the wisdom and far sightedness of the Commission. Before this could happen, there were amusing cases when a lecturer desiring to add the prefix Dr. (not allopathic) did their thesis on topics not at all related to the subject taught. The result was a great number of absentees during that teacher's class (as attendance percentage was not yet in place). Another aspirant, after probationary period cleverly found a reliever who was never screened at all by experts and students bore the brunt.

After four years when the doctorate is earned the person taught hi-fi levels in which, for example, Newton's laws of motion were substituted by new concepts of Black Hole which become blacker and blacker by the day. Thus students saw not only The Great Bear but Milky Ways and others too. Thank God, everything is at present completely overhauled. Getting to teach in Colleges right now requires that the applicant has not only a Ph.D., but paper publications, conference attended and if lucky some teaching experience, for which the employer (Principal) would gladly recommend if the feedback of students is encouraging. That the rejected candidates are from eminent universities is a double advantage, as one could easily have gone through the CBSE texts from IX to XII compiled by professors of IIT's and Universities. This is the reason why CBSE schools have produced scientists, doctors and engineers; the cream of society in India.

For the person with "name withheld" you have eternity at your disposal, this being your first interview. For our well qualified losers, it has been a shock for you that in spite of your additional efforts you could not make it. It also is a loss to the student fraternity. But the game is not won until the final whistle. Recall Robert Bruce. Nine times the spider attempting to pound on the moth fell down its web. On the tenth time the spider could find not only one moth but another nine. Thus the balance was restored. I have taught in a college for

The importance of party leadership position must have been realised by every citizen watching the process of finding the next Congress President after the resignation of Rahul Gandhi. This 150 year-old party has of course got a written Constitution, rules and procedure governing organization and functioning of the party. It has also got conventions, traditions, and practices in accordance with and in spite of the written law.

The situation is in many respects similar in many political parties. The internal matters of the Congress are naturally more widely discussed and criticised than of other parties because of people's high expectations from the national party that is oldest by age and which has ruled the country for the longest period after independence.

Rahul Gandhi resigned as Congress President on this July 3, and his mother and previous President, Sonia Gandhi was appointed as Interim President on 10 August. The intervening period was spent in persuading the outgoing President to change his decision and also in finding a suitable successor to the post. Top Congress leaders met on 9 August with the State unit chiefs, leaders of state legislature parties, and general secretaries when the outgoing president told them, according to some press reports, that a new party chief would be appointed in a few days after wider consultations.

A senior leader is reported to have said that the CWC should immediately appoint an interim president and then hold election for the post. In his words, "a leader elected by workers will be empowered and have more credibility". At the same time, some names were floated for appointment.

The AICC is the central decision-making body of the Congress which is composed of elected members of State-level Pradesh Congress Committees, which have members elected or nominated from district and panchayat-level party units. Members of the AICC and Pradesh Congress Committees elect the party

far too long to blindfold me with what goes around. There was a case when technical person taught pure science.

Finally let me tell you that we, a group of about 22 had to approach the High Court to get our 50% G.P.F. and we won the case after more than a year. The wise officer is yet to realize that there is arears too in G.P.F. Thus when the chair proves too big, we had to incur a loss of Rs 3 lakhs (not a small amount for pensionless retirees) for legal expenditure and some for transport. So friends, prepare for the worst on climate change, water, plastic menace and the dreaded CAB which is at our doorstep. Be steady; do not panic and keep your head cool.

Yours etc.,
W. Passah, Ex H.O.D, Electronics Deptt, St Edmund's College.

Pakistan told to moderate rhetoric

Editor,
Indian government's effort to rein in Pakistan from voicing its unpleasant remarks against India has started seeing results. In a stern message seen as a snub, US President Donald Trump told Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan via phone conversation to 'moderate' his rhetoric against India and 'avoid escalation of the situation' in the wake of rising tensions between the two countries on the Kashmir issue.

Ever since the Indo-Pak partition, Pakistan has always been a thorn in the flesh of India since the boundary issues have become the bone of contention, which are yet to be re-

Party Presidentship Election by selection
By Dr S. Saraswathi

president and members of the CWC, according to party Constitution.

It is reported that there is no unanimity within the Congress to leave the selection of next Party President in the hands of 53 members of the CWC comprising 24 members, 19 permanent invitees, and 10 special invitees. There was even a suggestion to disband the CWC and invite over 10,000 PCC delegates to join the process of election of the party President. Informal consultations with the State units do not satisfy them as equivalent to direct election.

Evidently, there were internal differences over the method of selection of the chief - most probably between election as per the party constitution and appointment by power holders after informal consultations - a controversy between selection by election or election by selection!

As per CWC's decision, Sonia Gandhi will presently hold the post of president till the AICC elections are held to select a full-time president.

Congress Party's long stay as the ruling party seems to have led to a type of government-party relationship not found in other parties that have not tasted fully governmental power. The relationship has reshaped the role of party leadership and various functionaries.

2004 election provided Congress-led coalition with a mandate to govern after a gap of eight years, and also afforded the party an opportunity and a reason to revitalise and renew the role of the Congress Party in determining the government-party relationship. The mandate to govern achieved by the Congress as leader of the coalition of parties was not just a return to power of the old guards, but a significant stage in strengthening its role in the government. The focus of the insiders as well as outsiders was on the party as much as on the government during 2004-14. It was reversal

of the party position in the 1950s and 1960s when the government was supreme and the party less visible.

Noteworthy in this political change is the formal bifurcation of leadership in government and leadership of the party breaking the practice set by Indira Gandhi in 1978 to unite the two leadership positions in the same hands. Rajiv Gandhi and P.V.Narasimha Rao also held dual posts.

This development was partly due to the decline of Congress President Sonia Gandhi to be the Prime Minister in 2004 despite being instrumental in the victory of the party against a very popular BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee and preference to head a pre-poll and post-poll alliance of multiple parties.

Significantly, the bifurcation resulted in the elevation of the Party President as the most important person, in fact more than the Prime Minister from the party who had to manage a complex coalition amidst pressures from party members, alliance partners, party coordination committees, the National Advisory Council, and commitment to the National Common Minimum Programme and also face parliamentary opposition.

No wonder, Party President acquired enormous power and influence and became the focus of everyone from top to bottom in the party and in the government. The post of the President thus became worth aspiring for especially when out of power when there is no governmental power in the hands of the Congress to compete.

Experience of many regional parties confirms that successful leaders are those who capture the party leadership from the elevation of Karunanidhi in 1969 to Jayalalitha in 1987 and Akhilesh Yadav in 2012.

For registration of political parties, the Election Commission requires certain documents like the organisational structure and powers and functions of the organs of the party, method of appointment of various

office-bearers of the party, the process of their election, etc. There is no express requirement regarding internal democratic regulations of parties which suits the actual functioning of parties.

In the BJP, party president should be a party member for at least 15 years. He/she is nominally elected by an electoral college composed of members drawn from party's national and State councils. In practice, however, a consensus choice of senior party members has worked well. Presidentship is a three-year term and cannot extend to more than two consecutive terms. The president does not normally hold a post in the government and Amit Shah's current two posts is said to be a temporary arrangement in view of some State elections due in a few months. There has not been so far any case of pre-fixing the President.

With no constitutional restriction on the length of the term, the Congress was able to run its show with the same president for 19 years from 1998 to 2017. The tenure of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi lasted six years each. Long tenure of the same person in any organisation is reason enough to weaken the democratic thinking of the organisation leading to some kind of lethargy in conducting party elections. Whether this will forever suit new and younger elements coming with fresh ideas and enthusiasm or even veterans to resign to the fate of playing second fiddle to top leadership remains to be seen particularly when the party is going through adverse fortune.

In a national party like the Indian National Congress, leadership election cannot be deemed an internal party matter that does not concern ordinary citizens. In the final election or selection of the leader lies the future of the party.---

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

sional staff who were courteous and helpful. On reaching the airport, I was astonished to see many passengers flying that day. I thought since operations by Indigo Airlines had just started, perhaps only a couple of passengers would turn up but I was astonished to see many co-passengers taking that flight. I also had the opportunity of interacting with one of the staff of Indigo who informed me that the flight had always been full since it started its operations and I was really happy to hear this.

The aviation sector has started booming in this city of ours. We started our departure at 5:05 PM that day and reached Kolkata within one and a half hours. It was on an ATR 72 aircraft and the flight as it is, was totally full. I stayed in Kolkata for some days and returned via the same flight and yes it was completely full. In Kolkata I met friends in Kolkata who are frequent fliers to Shillong. This flight has brought a smile on their faces since Indigo has started operating this route. I'm sincerely looking forward to more flights and more connectivity from our airport and yes thanks to the UDAN scheme of the Central government that we have seen the light of day in the aviation sector in Shillong. We thank Indigo too for taking this bold step of connecting Shillong with the aviation map of the country.

Hats off to Indigo Airlines!

Yours etc.,
Chanmiki Ezra Laloo
Shillong

Kiss of Death for India's Automobile Industry

By TN Ashok

India's multi billion automobile industry dominated by the American, Japanese, German, and other European and indigenous car makers and heavy vehicles is virtually facing the " Kiss of Death" following the worst ever sales in first quarter of FY 2019-20 in in the last near 20 years.

More than thousands of dealers including over 3,000 in Maharashtra are facing the heat as sales are dropping due to consumer resistance, pile up of inventories, no price cuts by auto makers, and big jump in registration fees proposed by the central government led by the BJP led NDA. Only the upcoming festival season like Ganapathy festival and Diwali can do some damage control for the automakers if they decide to drop prices and get rid of the inventory pileup and reopen factories that have temporarily closed down.

India's passenger vehicle industry suffered its worst sales performance in nearly 19 years in July as a slowing economy, higher ownership costs and floods in some states deterred buyers. Sales fell 31% to 200,790 vehicles last month from 290,931 units a year earlier, showed data released on Tuesday by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (Siam). It was the worst sales performance since a 35% decline in December 2000, reports circulated by the association to the media widely indicate.

For the ninth straight drop in monthly passenger vehicle sales, it has fallen in 12 of the 13 months since July 2018, underscoring the sharp slowdown in demand in the world's fourth-largest automobile market. Passenger car sales plunged 36% to 122,956 units, while utility vehicles dropped a 15% drop to 67,070 units. Vans suffered a 46% decline to 10,804 units. Siam, the representative body of the industry, normally releases only figures of wholesales, or factory dispatches of automobiles, and not retail sales.

Sales of utility vehicles slid despite introduction of new models by Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd's XUV300, Hyundai Motor India Ltd's Venue and MG Motor India Ltd's Hector models. The new models have seen robust demand despite a weakness in the overall market, a consolation in the depressing scenario.

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd shrank wholesales of its Vitara Brezza compact sport utility vehicle following weak demand, competition and its recently announced plans to phase out diesel vehicles from next April.

Hyundai and Mahindra and Mahindra reported 10% and 15% decline in sales, respectively in July.

Severe floods in key states such as Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka before the onset of Onam and Ganesh Chaturthi are also weakening the demand for the automobile industry.

In the commercial vehicles segment , the economic slowdown has virtually collided with an increase in large vehicles such as trucks and lorries freight carrying capacity. This has led to a sharp fall in sales as fleet owners could carry more freight on their existing trucks. Lower demand from agriculture and other sectors also contributed to the weak market as fleet owners witnessed a drop in rentals.

Sales of medium and heavy commercial vehicles fell 37% in July to 17,722 units, while light commercial vehicles posted a 19% decline to 39,144 units. Total sales of commercial vehicles fell 26% to 56,866 units, industry reports say.

Both urban and rural markets have shown a very sluggish demand even as third-party insurance premium continued to adversely impact sales of motorcycles and

scooters. In the two-wheeler segment, total dispatches fell by 17% in July to 1.51 million units. Sales of motorcycles dropped 19% to 933,996 units, while scooter sales fell 12% to 526,504 units, reports say.

The crisis in the automobile industry is quite severe because leading automakers have announced shutdowns of their factories to adjust inventory threatening jobs and layoffs of workers in the industry. Tata Motors Ltd, India's largest commercial vehicle maker, closed its Jamshedpur and Pune plants for up to 12 days. Ashok Leyland Ltd, the third-largest commercial vehicle maker by volume, closed its Pantnagar facility for nine days last month due to weak demand.

Maruti cut production for the sixth straight month in July to control dealership stocks of piled up inventories. "There is no point pushing stocks in the dealerships when there is no demand in the market. We will take a call regarding production after taking a look at the market situation. We have an inventory of a little over a month with our dealers since retail sales are under pressure," R.S. Kalsi, senior executive director (sales and marketing) at Maruti Suzuki, reportedly told analysts in a concall.

Car and two-wheeler makers generally tend to start adding to dealer inventory from August in anticipation of higher sales during the festival season, which starts with Onam in August and ends with Diwali in November.

Vishnu Mathur, director general of Siam, said the decline can be arrested only if the automobile industry receives a financial package from the government. The flood situation in states such as Maharashtra will further impact consumer sentiment, he is quoted by the media as saying.

"Thankfully, this time the festive season will arrive a bit late. So, if some help comes from the government, then we can expect demand to pick up during the festive season," Mathur said.

What happened in Q1 2019?

Says Manzi: The first quarter began the year with a sluggish start to new vehicle sales because of several weather-related events, the federal government shutdown and increasing competition in the used vehicle market. Transaction prices on both cars and light trucks continued to rise. According to the latest NADA Average Dealership Financial Profile Series from January 2019, the average new vehicle transaction price was \$36,410, up 3.3 per cent compared to this time last year. Transaction prices on used vehicles sold by franchised dealers have also risen.

The reason for quoting Manzi in this article is to get a better understanding of the global auto market of which India is also a part, as one of the fastest growing hubs for the small car market in the world. India is one of the biggest exporters of small cars to the world particularly, Eastern Europe, South Africa and South America.Lets see if the government puts on hold the enhancement of registration fees for light commercial vehicles as also heavy vehicles. If the transport ministry comes up with any incentive scheme to reopen shutdown factories, take back laid off workers and promote consumer awareness to go out and buy and bale out the industry.(feedback @ ashoktnex @ gmail.com) [IFS]

“Atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning...”

--- C.S. Lewis

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXII No.13 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 2019

Chidambaram in Jail

HIGH-profile Congress politician and former Union Minister P Chidambaram is behind bars in what is prominently a corruption case, also involving a controversial media entity. While it is natural for the Congress party to come to his defence, cautiously of course, and paint the CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) action as an act of "persecution", cited facts of the case point to entirely different directions. The present saga for Chidambaram comes on top of several other case investigations in the past few years against the former minister and his family members. Chidambaram's wife was among those who were referred to in the Kolkata-centred Saradha chit fund scam in which several TMC political bigwigs too were prominently involved. Son Karti Chidambaram is being investigated in more than one case, the shadow of which leapt up to father Chidambaram himself, besides the INX Media case.

Now, CBI and ED sleuths say they have come up with evidence to claim that Karti purchased a tennis club in Spain and cottages in the UK as also assets in key cities in India with bribe-money linked to his father. While as minister, Chidambaram famously kept key players in the media close to him to make sure his questionable activities would not come out in to the open. The loss of power for the Congress also meant Chidambaram and his family were increasingly in media focus as investigations progressed. To say that Chidambaram is being targeted now because he as Home Minister in the UPA he had given the nod for arrest of present home minister Amit Shah is to simplify the matter. The first five years of the Modi government did not see much of action against corruption, and rather investigations went on and on, other than effecting some arrests as in the VIP chopper scam. Chidambaram's present saga should be a signal to the large army of corrupt politicians as also wayward bureaucrats that nemesis could catch up with them sooner or later. Chidambaram is still a very influential individual. Chances are that he would get some relief when the Supreme Court takes up his anticipatory bail plea. Even then, with all his connections, he ended up in jail - which generally targeted only those from the ordinary and disadvantaged sections of the society. Hope is that the Modi government and its investigative arms would show the same seriousness in pursuing all other corruption cases involving high-profile politicians and bureaucrats irrespective of their links.

TO THE EDITOR

Abrogation of 370 & land alienation

Editor,

I wholeheartedly welcome the abrogation of articles 370 and 35A in J&K. J&K has bled India for too long and no governments installed in this state seemed to work to bring lasting peace and security in this trouble-torn state. The Government of India has spent yearly more than a quarter of its budget to bring peace and security in J&K during the last 50 years. This is a huge amount of money indeed and this cannot be continued for long. At any rate there is no guarantee that the Government of India will not spend huge amounts for peace and security post abrogation of the articles. I only hope that with the new arrangements J&K will at long last have peace and normalcy and that speedy development will take place. Moreover, I

also hope that terrorist infiltration from Pakistan into J&K will be lessened with the effective patrolling by Indian security forces along the line of actual control. But I foresee that with the removal of safeguards under the above articles there might be large scale land and cultural alienation due to influx into J&K by people from other parts of India especially from Bengal, Bihar, U.P, Haryana, Punjab etc. This will lead to problems due to inter-marriages and other social and cultural problems, besides political and economic factors.

Yours etc,
Philip Marwein,
Via-email.

Chidambaram's arrest

Editor,

In a high voltage melodrama that played out on Wednesday evening, the

The unprecedented rainfall on Friday has shown up our poorly enforced civic laws. The drains vomited out all the undigested plastics which then flooded the roads. The horribly decrepit or non-existent drainage system and storm drains that are clogged with plastics and other solid wastes were all exposed. If the Urban Affairs Department does not wake up now then we will be in far worse consequences where low lying areas such as Pynthor and Polo and the houses along the entire length of the Wah Umkhrah will be submerged in floods. It's nature's payback time to all those that have encroached on the River. They got away by approaching the Courts which upheld their plea because their lawyers said they would have been displaced and homeless (?). As if the Dhar brothers and the other moneyed class that have built swanky commercial complexes on the Umkhrah are among the homeless! What a travesty of justice! That said this is also the time to address the critical issue of civic management – a subject that has been neglected for decades. It is imperative now for the citizenry including different civil society groups to work in tandem with Government. No single group can do it alone; but together we can. The Government has no alternative but to ban all plastic carry bags and plastic bottles. There's no time to wait for alternatives. Let people find those alternatives!

The Shillong Times is making humble efforts to team up with different schools, colleges, universities and well-intentioned groups and individuals, and more importantly the State Government (District Administration East Khasi Hills, Shillong Municipal Board, PWD, Police Department) and the KHADC, to clean up the two main rivers – The Umkhrah and Umshyrpi which flow through this city and also their tributaries. Two phases of the clean-up have been completed at the Umkaliar which flows to the Umkhrah, where mountains of garbage were removed from the River.

For a while now several groups of young people with deep concern for the environment have been cleaning up public spaces such as Golf Links and other tourist spots but without the cooperation of Government agencies such as the Shillong Municipal Board and the District

Living between Hope and Despair: Co-operation is critical

By Patricia Mukhim

Administration and without the active participation of the Dorbar Shnong, such cleaning drives are futile. The Dorbar Shnong is a key stakeholder because it can ban single use plastics and water bottles in the respective shnong and enforce strict regulations against littering. The Dorbars can also urge residents to become vigilant against litterers and to clean up their localities once a week.

The Wah Umkhrah originates at an altitude of 1600 m above sea level from a spring in the Shillong Peak range near Demthring. At the point of origin the river supplies water to residents of Nongthymmai area. But human habitations along the source of the river have affected the quality of the river. Unregulated stone and sand quarrying have impacted the flow and quality of the water. Private land owners are now tapping ground water near the source of the river at Demthring and this water is sold via tankers to city dwellers. This has reduced the flow of water into the river particularly during the dry season. From Demthring, the river flows as a stream through the foothills of Nongthymmai and Rynjah. Near Lapalang bridge, the river is joined by the Phud Raimut and the Phud Mawshbuit flowing from the eastern part of the catchment which is primarily under the Military Cantonment at Happy Valley and its surrounding villages. Thus, while flowing through densely populated urban areas, the river is joined by streams carrying runoffs from the nearby urban areas. After Umpling bridge, the River flows through a steep gorge which ultimately ends at the Kshaid Umkaliar (Spread Eagle Falls), near the office of the Garrison Engineer, MES, Shillong. At the foot of the falls, another stream, Wah Kdait flowing from the rural outskirts of Shillong, joins the river. From this point onwards, i.e. from Umkaliar, the river flows through a plain area. (https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5332/8/08_chapter%203.pdf).

The Dorbar Shnong through which the tributaries flow into the Wah Umkhrah comprise Nongthymmai, Nongrah, Lapalang, Umpling, Nongmysong and Demseiniong on the upper reaches and Riatsamthiah, Wahingdoh, Jaiaw, Mawlai along the lower reaches. Similarly the Wah Umshyrpi flows through Lumparing, Laban, Rilbong etc., before it reaches the Umiam. Its tributaries include the Wah Dienglieng, Dhankheti, Malki and Umjasai stream. Considering that both the Wah Umkhrah and Umshyrpi are joined by several tributaries flowing through various localities under different Dorbar Shnong it is now incumbent upon these Dorbars to take on the responsibility of devising mechanisms to trap solid waste in their localities so that such waste does not land up at Umkhrah or Umshyrpi and finally at Umiam.

Government must now pass strict regulations prohibiting washing of vehicles by the side of these rivers since all the grease flows into the Wah Umkhrah and Umshyrpi. Also it is incumbent upon the Government to penalise all residents that discharge their septic tanks into the two Rivers. This is a criminal offence and should be treated as such. But cooperation from all stakeholders and mainly the Government and KHADC is imperative.

Local communities and local experience is a powerful tool and motivator but strong state support and resources are crucial to bolstering community efforts as they may be lacking in capacity to act on their own. A combined effort from communities, bigger organisations and the State and Central Governments in cleaning up the rivers and drains is now an imperative. All institutions including banks, defence services and business establishments must pool in their resources. This is what Shillong City must strive at.

Cooperation promotes a sense of bonhomie, inclusiveness and equity. This is the best way to bring about social harmony and a dedicated sense of purpose towards a common objective. In fact this is what creates social capital. Cooperation empowers local communities to be involved in governance and decision-making and in seeking accountability from those that hold power and control resources. Local participation encourages self-reliance and enables people to break free of control by political processes and from being

exploited through unequal power relationships with the state or local MLAs/ MDCs. This, in fact, is the first step towards building the capacities of local communities to hold accountable the institutions and initiatives that affect their lives.

The society and community are a web of networks. When we meet over common projects a bond is created and we begin to think of the larger good. It is my experience that there are many well-intentioned people in the city of Shillong. What they need is a platform to speak from and to act. Very often these common social platforms are absent because most groups are organized around specific ethnic loyalties. A city is not made of one community but is a conglomerate of communities. Within that community every individual wants to play his/her part, no matter how small that part is. It is therefore important to create that platform which will bring out the best in people.

In Shillong we don't have platforms for societal conversations where we can share our common concerns and each other's pain. This is the first step towards creating societal bonding which in turn can become the catalyst for civic action. Sometimes we rue the fact that people in this city lack the spirit of voluntarism; that they don't come forward to give of their time and energy. Perhaps it's time to work backwards. Most educational institutions lay too much stress on the curriculum and don't encourage voluntarism for fear that students will miss out on their classes. This is a wrong premise. Students that are involved in community work at a young age tend to be better achievers in later life. They learn many more social skills that come handy in their adult lives. One hopes that the educational institutions of this city rethink their priorities.

The State Government and its agencies need to use this social capital in achieving the long term goal of River Rejuvenation and Swacch Bharat. The KHADC too must pool in its resources.

And to all those bleeding hearts that express their concern about the dirt and filth of Shillong through long-winded articles, the time to write is over. Now it's time for ACTION. Join the Operation Clean-Up!

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
Via email

Railways to ban single use plastics

Editor,

The recent move by the Railways and Parliament Complex to ban plastics is welcome. The move aimed at promoting plastic free office environment at government departments now comes rather late in the day. Further it is overwhelming that Railways will enforce single use plastic ban rule effective October 2 this year.

The Government agencies should now focus on relying on bio-degradable materials and paper based products to be used in lieu of single use plastics. Efforts should be made to create necessary awareness to depend less on plastic based products to the end customers. The Government should now issue a mandate to all its agencies, apart from Railways and Parliament House, to give up use of plastics within its premises. Sectors which witness robust consumer interaction like food and beverages, tourism, healthcare, hospitality, travel, consumer durables etc. should immediately enforce ban on single use of plastic.

Awareness related to avoiding single use plastics is highly necessary amongst citizens through enforcement of bans and Government should make this a priority area to be implemented in order to protect the environment.

Yours etc.,
Varun Dambal
Bangalore - 72

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.

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Rahil Chopra

WILL HOODA LEAVE CONGRESS? SUSPENSE GALORE!

The suspense in Haryana Congress after the fight between former Chief Minister and Jat leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda and state Congress chief and Dalit leader Ashok Tanwar has peaked, but it hopefully ends on Sunday at Hooda's Parivartan Maha Rally on home turf Rohtak. It is rumoured that Hooda met Congress President Sonia Gandhi in Delhi on August 17, but according to a close aide of Hooda, the former CM denied the meeting. Now Hooda is going to decide whether he will launch a new party or join the NCP. According to Hooda supporters, the former Chief Minister should float a new political outfit and leave the Congress, but Hooda said that he wouldtalk about this in the rally. According to Sant Kumar - a former MLA who has left the Congress after fighting with Ashok Tanwar and staunch supporter of Hooda - said that Hooda and his ilk can join the NCP and there is very little chance that they will continue in the Congress. Another former MLA, Jai Tirath Dahiya who quit as an MLA few days ago after fighting with Ashok Tanwar, blamed Ghulam Nabi Azad who is the in-charge of Haryana for ignoring Hooda and his supporters, causing all the cadres affiliated with Hooda pressuring the former CM to launch a new political outfit. Although there are many posters in the rally showcasing Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Ghulam Nabi Azad prominently, the buzz is that if Bhupender Singh Hooda leaves the

resulting in the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee saying: "The Income Tax Department has issued notices to many committees who organise Durga pujos, asking them to pay taxes. We are proud of all our national festivals." TMC blamed that BJP wants to control all the committees by threatening them on the issue of monetary expenses. According to Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim, this is clearly a threatening strategy to take over the Puja committees. However, BJP leader Rahul Sinha has claimed that TMC is giving money to these Puja committees from the money TMC leaders have collected from the chit fund scam. On the other hand, TMC general secretary Partha Chatterjee has claimed that the money for Puja committees has been collected from the common people and small businessmen, and this is not a personal puja for which income tax department has sent notices to the Durga Puja Committees. Meanwhile, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) "unequivocally stated that the said reports are factually incorrect and are strongly denied"."It is a fact that no notice was issued to the Durga Puja Committee Forum by the I-T department during this year," it said.

P R I Y A N K A CONVINCES RAHUL TO LET SONIA BE CONGRESS PRESIDENT

After Rahul Gandhi has refused to backtrack on his resignation, the old guards

After Rahul Gandhi has refused to backtrack on his resignation, the old guards have manoeuvred the process of selecting the interim Congress President. The old guard led by Ahmed Patel and Ghulam Nabi Azad has aired the message that there is no alternative to the Nehru-Gandhi family, since otherwise the party will split.

party, then Birender Singh and Rao Inderjit Singh may return to the Congress.

CONGRESS, BJP TO SEE CLASH OF RALLIES IN POLL-BOUND HARYANA

18 August, Sunday, was a day of high-voltage political action in Haryana as Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar organized a 2,100-kilometre road journey (rath yatra) and former Chief Minister Bhupender Singh Hooda held a mega rally. Khattar named his journey as "Ashirwad Yatra" while Hooda named his rally as "Parivartan Maha Rally". According to state BJP President Subhash Barala, Chief Minister Khattar's road show will be carried out in five phases and each phase would consist of three days. Khattar's yatra commenced from Kalka and will conclude in Rohtak on September 8. The chief Minister had started his yatra from Kalka mandi after paying obeisance at Kali Mandir in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other union ministers. PM Narendra Modi is expected to address the Rohtak rally on September 8. Haryana goes to polls in October this year where BJP aims to increase his tally. Similarly, Congress leader Hooda also wants to gain the ground, which he has lost in state and nationally under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi. It is now to see whether the Hooda (Jats) will go with Congress or would lend support indirectly to BJP.

BJP-TMC NOW FIGHT OVER CONTROL OF DURGA PUJA COMMITTEES

Now the fight between TMC and BJP has shifted towards the assorted Durga Puja committees in West Bengal. Most of the Durga Puja committees are run by TMC members. The Income Tax department has given notices to these committees to file their accounts to the department immediately,

have manoeuvred the process of selecting the interim Congress President. The old guard led by Ahmed Patel and Ghulam Nabi Azad has aired the message that there is no alternative to the Nehru-Gandhi family, since otherwise the party will split. Despite Rahul Gandhi's categorical assertion that no family member would replace him as the party president, Priyanka Gandhi has persuaded him for the sake of the Congress party to not contradict the party's decision to pick his mother Sonia Gandhi as the interim Congress president. The names earlier floated - those of Mukul Wasnik and Mallikarjun Kharge - were not proposed by any member. Though Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot's names were reportedly suggested by state leaders orally and in CWC, all the members have supported the name of Sonia Gandhi.

NO MENTION OF PAKISTAN IN MODI'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH

At the President's August 15 'At Home', an annual protocol event, it seems PM Narendra Modi was in a rather jovial mood. Asked by a veteran woman journalist why he did not mention Pakistan even once in his I-Day speech, he laughed out loud: "Aap log haina uske liye!" In the debate over the PM's talk on the population and the announcement of the new post of Chief of Defence Staff, what was mostly ignored was his overture to Afghanistan on its 100th year of independence, earned much before India. The other was the way he isolated Pakistan in the neighbourhood, by telling all others - Sri Lanka and Bangladesh included - where their problem of terrorism emanates from, without naming Islamabad's terror factory by name though. (IPA)

“*The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.*”

--- C.S. Lewis

The Shillong Times

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Positive judicial intervention

IT gives hope that the Meghalaya High Court has entertained a public interest litigation (PIL) vis-à-vis the cleanliness of Shillong city. The High Court should come down heavily on polluters and civic institutions that have failed to carry out their stated mandate of civic management. The oldest landfill at Marten has now outlived its utility and is bursting at the seams. The time has come to decentralize the idea of the landfill. Let every locality brainstorm and find ways and means of handling its own garbage. This might bring in a greater sense of responsibility and will also make the residents of every locality reduce the amount of garbage generated. In fact a time has come to charge every resident according to the weight of the garbage. The idea that anything that is waste can be "thrown away" or discarded without a thought as to where the trash lands up is a very disturbing phenomenon of developed and developing nations. The torrential rains on Thursday have exposed just the lack of capacity of our drains to carry the rain water to its destination. Clogged drains have resulted in water-logging in large parts of Shillong City.

The High Court has taken up the issue of health and hygiene. These are crucial issues and the Court needs to know that there are huge rivulets in this city which are today used for "throwing" garbage into and have become drains where even dead animals are dumped. Another point for the benefit of the High Court is the unregulated manner in which rivers and streams are used to wash vehicles where the oil and other toxic discharge are allowed to flow into the streams. It must be reminded that the two main rivers - Umkhrah and Umshyrpi that flow through the city were once sources of drinking water for the people of Shillong. Today the situation is so far gone that the rivers have become the dumping ground for household garbage. Some unscrupulous households release the effluents from their latrines directly into the rivers. Despite Government notifications banning this criminal act, residents continue to violate the strictures. It is here that the role of the Court becomes important. Penal action by the judiciary should bring in the needed compliance. Otherwise, all regulations are violated with impunity. The city of Shillong is bursting at the seams with no visible and viable civic management plan. It's time the High Court comes down heavily on the concerned authorities.

TO THE EDITOR

Stray dogs beaten up

Editor,
For the past two weeks the residents of Bishnupur have been rudely awakened every morning by the agonised cries of street dogs being mercilessly bludgeoned to death. What are the animal protection agencies doing? Why can't they get these dogs neutered and put them in shelter homes? Why can't they do something to protect these poor creatures who are being massacred in a horrendous way by human beings who claim to be human but are worse than monsters? Are the animal protection groups only interested in getting donations which are never to be used?

These poor creatures are homeless so they sleep on the streets. We only bother about costly breeds because they are status symbols. They show how rich we are but we have no feelings for these poor creatures who have to die at our hands because they do not have a home. They trust us and for that they have to pay with their lives.

Yous etc.,
Reena Singh,
Viaemail

Human greed leads to disasters

Editor,
The monsoon fury in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and several regions on the Western coast caused severe and terrible flash floods, horrifying landslides and severe torrent making life of the people miserable. The disaster claimed so many lives and thousands were evacuated and thousands sheltered in relief camps. Kudos to the Central forces, army personnel, fire-fighting force, police, local people and the fishermen for once again, they became the real saviours of the common man. Though the government authorities of these states rose to the occasion questions do rise on lack of foresightedness and failure to implement long time strategies.

Haven't lessons been learnt from last year's devastating deluge? Questions now arise on what did the lawmakers and the government do? One long year was sufficient time to take necessary measures and precautions to at least lessen or avert the disasters caused by monsoon fury. But it seems nothing was done except

In the early days, visitors named Shillong the 'Scotland of the East'. The beauty of the hills, its cleanliness and the favourable climate is similar to that of Scotland. Hence this moniker! Shillong is also known as the educational hub of the Northeast and this is illustrated by the number of students coming from different states of Northeast India for higher studies. Having travelled to most states of the Northeast and talking to different people I find that they speak highly of Shillong for its achievements in different fields such as education and cleanliness. The city is peaceful and conducive for students to study and excel in their academic careers. In fact, a student from outside the state said, 'Three years I was in Shillong, not even once did I experience a curfew or a bandh except for a few days when there was a problem at the Harijan Colony. Above all, it is a peaceful city.'

It is indeed agonising to see the present situation of Shillong when compared to those glorious days of the past. We have heard narratives about the wonderful days and the beauty of Shillong from many people particularly from those outside the state and from foreigners who visited Shillong in the past. But what do we see now in the city of Shillong? Drug suppliers and drug addicts are increasing, traffic jams which delay our travel; the rivers of the city are dirty, roads, drains and footpaths are full of plastics and garbage. Above all, crimes are increasing due to the proliferation of drug addicts in the city. Several cases of killing and robbery due to the effect of drugs have been reported. Hence, where is the glory of Shillong? The climate was pleasant in the past but it is now getting very humid. It is high time to take up afforestation measures and to stop deforestation in areas outside the city. It is also shocking to see the low literacy rate of Meghalaya compared to other states in Northeast. The irony is that students from all the states rush to Shillong for higher education the people of

By Aiborlang Nongsiej

Meghalaya are not making use of the educational opportunities. Speaking with few individuals from a village which is a little distance away from the city was very disappointing. People have stopped going to school and there was not even a single educated person in the whole village. The village is still in poverty and backwardness in many fields due to lack of education.

The city of Shillong is becoming dirtier by the day. I remember those past few days when heavy rains caused flooding and damaged many areas in the city. Rivers around Shillong carry with them plastics and garbage. Unfortunately plastics are stuck in many places when the water level is down. Let us not blame anyone about the dirty city instead let us blame ourselves for not respecting mother earth. A few days ago I was travelling in a local taxi with a student from one of the famous schools in Shillong. The student was consuming junk food and later threw the plastic container out of the car. I asked him why he did that. Surprisingly the student looked at me angrily and asked me, "Who are you to teach me?" This is a simple example of why our city is becoming dirtier. Personally I feel that our schools and teachers are not taking sufficient steps to train the students to keep the environment clean. I had visited a number of schools in the city and found that though the school campus is clean, outside the school gate things are completely different. A number of educational institutions have big sign boards that say 'Plastic Free Zone or Tobacco Free Zone' but do we really impose these rules on our students? Thus, I agree with the saying 'I was born intelligent but education ruined me'. In my opinion, real education is respecting mother earth and keeping it clean.

Personally I appreciate the initiative taken by

authorities have given NOC to purchase land in their jurisdiction. People are quick to see the advantage of having a piece of land in Shillong while the local government and the people are not aware of the evil of land alienation. The question is how many Meghalayans purchase land in other North-eastern states and how difficult is it to get an NOC? The glory of Shillong will be lost if we don't take care of our heritage.

It is interesting that we the Khasis are fighting for recognition of the Khasi language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, but many Khasi youth in Shillong today converse to each other in English not in Khasi. Of course, I am not saying that we should speak in Khasi when non-Khasis are part of the group. But in my experience I found that we feel proud to speak to each other in English rather than in Khasi even if both are Khasis. In this case we should learn from the Mizo people who are very proud to speak in their own language to each other. Yet their literacy rate is one of the highest in India. Therefore, it is high time to develop our language in Education as well as in conversation if we want it to be recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, as the Khasi Authors' Society (KAS) have been demanding in the past few days. Hence let us become another Soso Tham if we want our language to be accepted in the Eighth Schedule.

Lastly, let us remember that Shillong is one of the most blessed places in the Northeast and the city is in need of our cooperation for making it better and cleaner. I appreciate the East Khasi Hills Police too for taking the initiative to keep the city clean by imposing a law and fine against littering on the road sides. I also believe it is a good step to keep the city clean by using proper places for the call of nature. Finally I urge all readers to take this issue seriously for better and cleaner Shillong or else its glory will be lost forever.

Round The States

By Insaif

Dalit Protests Delhi Govt reaches out
This election season, Delhi comes to the aide of Dalits. Arvind Kejriwal's AAP government has reached out to the Centre demanding it allot land as it proposes to build a "magnificent" Ravidas temple at the same site it was demolished. After 24 hours of the dalits taking to the streets against the demolition of the temple by the DDA on August 10 following Supreme Court's orders, the Delhi Legislative Assembly stepped in on Thursday last, passing a resolution to construct the temple. In fact, the AAP government lost no opportunity to hit out at the Centre for badly mishandling the issue "by not supporting their (Dalits) cause in the court of law which finally led to its unjustified and unfortunate demolition." It also made note of the protest, which was massive, brought traffic in several parts to a standstill and at Tughlakabad turned violent leaving several people, including policemen injured and many cars vandalised. But there could be more trouble as the police arrested Bhim Army chief Chandrashekar Azad and 95 others, and sent them to 14-day judicial custody. While a close watch is being kept, BSP chief and Dalits messiah Mayawati has asked her vote-bank for restraint and that rule of law must prevail, leaving many surprised. It is to be seen whether Centre obliges Kejriwal with the land. After all Assembly polls are on the cards and the pros and cons need to be carefully considered.

Normalcy Far Cry in Kashmir
Into the third week of the unprecedented lockdown, Kashmir shows no signs of limping back to normalcy. At least on both the fronts of schools reopening in phased manner and government offices being functional, the administration has had little success. Not only are many schools still locked up, but even those who are open and teachers present, classrooms were empty as parents fear for their kids' safety. Their reasoning with mobile services still down, there is no way for them to connect with their children. The attendance at government offices has been rather thin but would it really matter as "no one visits the offices!" Reports are suggesting that there seems to be an undercurrent in the Valley that the people have chosen to negate the administration efforts to restore normalcy and embarrass New Delhi in the international fora. This would be an explanation why shopkeepers continue to keep shutters down in areas where restrictions have been lifted. At the same time, Opposition parties, including Congress, TMC, CPM, and DMK, are trying to up the ante on the Centre to release political leaders under detention by holding a protest meeting in Delhi on Thursday last. Clearly, the Modi-Shah team has to do more for while it may think time is a healer, ground reality may prove them wrong.

Rebellion in Haryana Cong?
It's election season again and Haryana is hitting headlines. Congress' two-time former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda has made matters worse for the 'grand old party', in doldrums after 2019 polls. At a recent "Parivartan (change) rally" in Rohtak, not only did he declare himself chief ministerial candidate with or without the Congress, announce his own manifesto but claimed the party "had lost its way and isn't the same old Congress!" Signs of rebellion alright, as he has 'freed himself of all restrictions' and supported scrapping of Article 370, for he "wouldn't compromise on patriotism." Be that as it may, is the Congressman making grounds for parting ways and put him back as State party chief by removing Ashok Tanwar? As of now, over 60 former MPs and MLAs were at this rally and he has 12 of 15 sitting MLAs support. Will 10 Janpath

heed as October is not far? The bigger question of course is whether it will make any difference of stakes to the party!

Bihar & Its Madrasas
Bihar seeks to have a feather in its cap, be the first in minority care. The JD(U)-BJP government has decided to repair and rebuild madarsas, about 2,549 recognised, in a phased manner. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar wants these now to have new facilities such as hostel, libraries and science labs. Earlier, the works were undertaken by the madrasa committees with help of government grants, but now a panel of the State Madrasa Board will do the needful. It has been sanctioned Rs 25 crore for phase 1 in districts of Aurangabad, Nalanda and Darbhanga, wherein repairs and rebuilding will be done for 25 madrasas. The Minority Welfare department has invited proposals. Remember, in his first term Nitish was running schemes for minorities such as scholarships to students, vocational training programmes, and provide interest-free loan to students. Hope it's seen as a helping hand to partner BJP and importantly Modi in fulfilling its commitment of "sabka saath, sabka vikas aur sabka vishwas"

Andhra Gets Hard Knock
Andhra Pradesh government will do well to mark the idiom 'Err on the side of caution'. Its young Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, in a tearing hurry to expose corruption during his predecessor Chandrababu Naidu's regime, is already getting caught on the wrong foot. On Thursday last, he got a rude shock when the AP High Court struck down the order terminating Rs 3,216 crore hydro-power irrigation project of Polavaram on Godavari river to Navayuga Engineering Co. Ltd to execute. The pre-closure order issued by related Corporation was suspended, order for reverse tendering cancelled, as the company argued having already spent Rs 398 crores, no delay and project will be completed by November 2021. The government's argument of having right to go for fresh tenders as it will cut project's cost and enable more bidders, didn't hold water with the court, having Naidu have the last laugh as he said: the CM had taken it up as "a prestige issue to prove there was a lot of corruption in the project works." Jagan needs to be cautious as New Delhi too is concerned over cancellation of contracts as it will send wrong message to investors. Indeed, it's better to be safe than sorry.

'Boo' To Supreme Court
'We don't give a damn', sadly seems the message to Supreme Court of India! Senior students in two educational institutions in UP and Odisha 'violated' its guidelines of 2007 for prevention and prohibition of ragging. On Monday last, 200 1st year students at UP University of Medical Sciences (UPUMS) in Saifai allegedly were forced to shave their heads, parade on the campus and on their knees offer salutes to their seniors. In Odisha, seniors were seen 'slapping juniors while asking them to run down the stairs, tearing off shirts, some being thrashed, some forced to mimic sex scenes while others made to dance in undergarments' at State-run Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology in Sambalpur district. Saifai SDM has ordered a probe and so has the Odisha Skill Development & Technical Education asked the Registrar to do the same. However, what should be equally shocking is that authorities in both these institutions sprang into action only after photos and video of the incidents went viral on social media! Remember, the Court had asked State Governments to amend their anti-ragging law to include provisions that place penal consequences on institutional heads. Will they too be made answerable?---INFA

Making most of world market crisis

By Ethan Brown, Skyler Rossi, Xinyu Wei & Suryodoy Mandal

Soybeans from last season are still stockpiled on Robert Alpers’ farm in Prairie Home, Missouri, even as he gets ready to plant another crop.

Across the world in Kolkata, India, wholesale soybean trader Sushanta Mohanty is watching production steadily go up.

Both are experiencing the ripples of an ongoing trade dispute between China and the US that has hurt American farmers but created opportunities for aspiring suppliers abroad who see this uncertainty as a way to enter the international market.

China has imposed a 25 per cent import tariff on US soybeans after the US launched an investigation into Chinese trade policies and imposed its own tariffs on Chinese imports. This has made it too expensive for many American farmers to sell to China, which previously was a big customer.

These tensions have pushed down the price of American soybeans worldwide because China is unwilling to pay these tariffs and US soybean output has risen.

The US and China are in the process of negotiating a resolution to these disputes. But it’s unclear when the dispute will end, as a week of trade talks sputtered out and led President Donald Trump to place 25 per cent tariffs on \$325 billion worth of US goods.

Bhagirath Choudhary, founder and director of South Asia Biotechnology Centre, believes India has the potential to step into the soybean market, which could give the industry a substantial economic boost there.

“India is a small player, but it has tremendous opportunity, especially in the field of agriculture,” Choudhary said. “This trade war has produced low-hanging fruits for India.”

The fallout from the US-China trade war shows the interconnectedness of commerce — how the actions of two economic superpowers can shape financial fortunes across the world.

US farmers search for alternatives

More than a third of China’s soybean imports came from the US in 2017. But in November 2018, China responded to US tariffs by halting its purchasing completely.

China has since imported small portions of US soy in good faith as trade negotiations continue — most recently a March 28 purchase of 1.5 million tonnes. Still, US soybean purchases by China are down 37 per cent compared to 2018, according to data from the United States Department of Agriculture.

The drop in demand for US soybeans has forced Alpers and other farmers to stockpile more of their product than usual. He believes the market is creeping toward an inflection point in which farmers will be forced to unload their product.

“We can’t hold our beans realistically into two years,” Alpers said. “We will have to have room for this crop, so we’ll have to market our beans eventually before the fall harvest.”

So far, the dispute has resulted in lower prices and higher supplies for US farmers but Alpers sees a silver lining: While they wait for an agreement with China, farmers are enticing densely-populated countries like Malaysia to purchase US soybeans. They’re trying to create new

The ongoing China-US trade dispute has created opportunities for countries like India



markets.

“We’re entrepreneurs in this country and we’re not sitting back,” Alpers said. “The companies that buy our beans, they’re not just sitting there telling their buyers: Go home, eat pie and ice cream. They’re telling them to go out there and find other markets. So, we’ve developed some smaller markets.”

“It’s a great time for everybody to kind of dip their feet into our soybeans and see what they are and what the quality is.”

Some Midwestern farmers have also found a solution in shifting more of this season’s acreage to corn. Patrick Westhoff, director of the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, said this could minimise potential losses on soybean production.

“The conventional wisdom appears to be we’ll have a couple million acres more of corn planted in 2019 than last year and maybe four or five million acres less soybeans being planted with some adjustments in other crops too,” Westhoff said.

This fix, however, has been complicated by flooding throughout Nebraska, Iowa and northwest Missouri. The persistent floods have pushed back planting schedules for farmers. And because corn needs to be planted earlier than soybeans, Alpers said many farmers may be forced to return to soybeans.

With the American market in flux, experts predict that India has the potential to become a bigger player in the international soybean market.

If India makes major investments in soybeans, the country could increase its production quite a bit, Westhoff said.

India’s total soybean output for the February 2019 harvesting season rose 27 per cent

compared to the 2018 season, according to the Soybean Processors’ Association of India.

But India’s surplus of beans would have to be much larger than it is today, Choudhary said. He said a surplus of a few million tons wouldn’t draw China’s attention enough for India to become a big player in the international trade of soybeans.

“India must really step up,” Choudhary said.

Indian farmers tend to grow for domestic consumption, Mohanty said. More than eight in 10 farmers are small in India, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

“There is a huge market for soybean in India and we are catering to the local demand,” Mohanty said.

India’s government “has instructed its departments and industry bodies to work out strategies to ramp up production in sectors where India has a clear advantage” in order to increase exports to China, according to Bloomberg. Choudhary said the government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hopes to double all agricultural produce by 2022.

India is making gains already. The country’s overall exports to China increased 36.9 per cent between April and November

2018, according to official Indian figures.

Westhoff worries that the effects of climate change looming over India’s population of 1.3 billion may affect farmers’ ability to gain a strong traction in the market.

“India is probably one of the countries where the realities of climate change are going to be felt more quickly than they are in many other places the world,” Westhoff said. “So that may affect their ability to expand production as well in the longer term.”

Future murky as trade negotiations near

The US and China met for trade negotiations in Washington DC in May, and officials initially hoped for a signing ceremony in late May or early June, according to the Wall Street Journal. However, the countries were unable to reach an agreement to end the year-long dispute.

As discussions continue, countries around the world will be watching the market. US farmers hope they will regain their foothold. Indian farmers hope to expand theirs.

And farmers in both countries have plenty of competition. Russia and Argentina, which are both headed toward record sea-

sons, are among the countries starting to enter the soybean market that didn’t have a strong footing before.

China represents half of the world’s soybean imports, and the USDA predicts China will import 125 million metric tons per year by 2028. Westhoff said the sheer size of the country’s soybean requirements means one supplier can’t satisfy all of China’s import needs.

The pace of the trade dispute’s resolution will determine the market’s future layout, and continued struggles to reach an agreement could be detrimental to US agricultural interests, Westhoff said.

“There will be new competitors to emerge as well if these frictions continue,” Westhoff said. “If, on the other hand, we get this resolved really quickly, we may go back to something like these sorts of ‘chairs of rural trade’ that we had prior to the disputes.”

While discussions toward a US-China trade agreement continue forward, the short-term market’s landscape remains clouded. On March 20, Trump said he would not immediately remove tariffs on China in order to force compliance with an agreement.

This statement fell flat with US soy farmers like Alpers, who isn’t sure how continued tariffs would help restart trade relations between the countries.

“We need trade,” Alpers said. “We have to have trade for the farmers to flourish. It negates everything that was accomplished if they keep the tariffs on.”

Choudhary said that India’s government wants to become a leading exporter to China — but it won’t be easy.

“India must have a very long-term vision and there must be a 5-year, 10-year or 20-year trade agreement between the governments,” Choudhary said.

Amid all this uncertainty, US farmers aren’t expecting relations to normalize quickly. The need to rebuild trust with China means that even with an agreement, the window to profit from international trade remains open.

“We’ve been at it a long time to get where we were,” Alpers said. “(China is) not going to jump in, we don’t think, with both feet. We’re going to have to build that market back again.”

(IBNS)

(This story is part of a series of special reports on India and the US)

Images: Pixabay



Russia and Argentina, which are both headed toward record seasons, are among the countries starting to enter the soybean market that didn’t have a strong footing before

Meet the like species

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi



Are all beings the same? Yes, the human, the hammerhead worm, oyster, chicken and the shark — all of us have the same emotions, fears, lusts and intelligence. Yet the human eats some, kills some for sport, uses some to wear as accessories, destroys some as pests. The human is the ultimate cannibal eating his own kind, humans in another form.

Here are some random bits of research that show you the similarities between humans and every other species:

■ Many people need coffee as a stimulant to wake up. It also improves memory. A study by Wright, Baker, Palmer et al, published in Science “Caffeine in Floral Nectar”, reveals that bees similarly like caffeine to get a buzz.

The honeybee collects nectar from flowers and this helps pollinate them. Certain flowers, such as citrus and coffee, includes low doses of caffeine in their nectar to attract honeybees and keep them returning. The researchers found that bees found caffeine rewarding and they remembered the smell of caffeine up to three days later.

These clever flowers have evolved caffeine-laced nectar in order to “hook” the bees and ensure their reproductive success. Caffeine serves a dual purpose in the flower by warding off herbivores/plant pests as well.

■ It was considered that sparrows are monogamous but a study published in The American Naturalist followed 200

males and 194 females as they formed 313 unique monogamous pairs and hatched 863 broods on Lundy. Some sparrow ‘divorces’ occurred but most changes of life partner were due to death.

However, some females cheated on their mates and were promiscuous by habit. This was usually with males that were fitter than their own mates. But researchers said cheating came with a cost — the cheating female’s partner will provide less food for their nest of young. If the males know that

A study followed 200 males & 194 females. Some sparrow ‘divorces’ occurred but most changes of life partner were due to death. However, some promiscuous females cheated on their mates

not all the chicks in their nest are likely to be theirs they make a decision to provide less.

Males monitor the times the females spend away from the nest and are usually able to tell if their partner is unfaithful.

■ Are teenage humans the only ones that seek out mild altering drugs in

groups? In the wildlife documentary, Dolphins: Spy in the Pod, by John Downer, young dolphins are seen carefully manipulating a certain kind of puffer fish which, if provoked, releases a nerve toxin as a defensive chemical. They passed it between them for up to 30 minutes at a time chewing gently on it. In small enough dose, this toxin can have trance-inducing qualities and the dolphins know it. They handle it in a way that shows that it’s not the first time they’re doing it and they appear to have worked out a way to make the fish release just the right amount. The marine mammals then enter what seems to be a trance-like state, hanging around with their noses at the surface as if fascinated by their own reflection.

■ Research done by Northampton University indicates that cows have “best friends”. For the study, cows were penned for 30-minute intervals twice, once with a partner, a “best friend,” and once with a cow that they did not know. The heart rates of the cows were measured when paired with their best friend, they were significantly lower and they experienced less stress overall. The notion that cows have best friends indicates that all cows have personalities and a desire, not unlike our own, to develop deep connections with others.

■ Are human beings the only ones that gamble? Pigeons gamble just like humans. Research done in the University of Kentucky, published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society, found that pigeons given the choice, to peck a light that would give them three food pellets each time, universally preferred a light that would give them a payout of 10 pellets 20



percent of the time. This means they got less 2 pellets on an average instead of three.

Hungry pigeons were trained to peck lights for food. They learned that if they pecked a light on the right, they would see one of two colours, like yellow or blue. Ten seconds later, the pigeon would certainly get three food pellets. If the pigeon pecked the other light on the left, the light would flash either red or green. If red, the pigeons would get 10 pellets 10 seconds later. If green, the pigeons would get nothing. That light was the equivalent of taking a gamble 82 per cent of the birds acted like seasoned gamblers, picking the risky light with the 10-or-nothing outcome. On the right the pigeon gets 50 per cent more food yet the bird chooses the left almost always! The same phenomenon could

explain why human gamblers ignore their losses and focus on their rarer and hopefully larger wins, working against their own best interests.

There are several parallels between animal and human gambling. For example, pigeons that live in enriched environments make less risky choices, which matches human studies finding that people who are satisfied with their lives also tend to gamble less than those who are dissatisfied.

■ Each year, during the winter, thousands of giant Australian cuttlefish gather on the southern coast of the continent to mate. The competition between males for the females is intense. On average, four males fight over each female, but the ratio can be as high as 11:1. Each large male that wins the challenges guards his mate

closely. But do the little guys give up? They disguise themselves as females, according to research done by marine biologists at Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, taking on a mottled colouring, hiding some arms and altering the shape of the visible ones. They sneak in under the rock where the female lives, impregnate her and then leave.

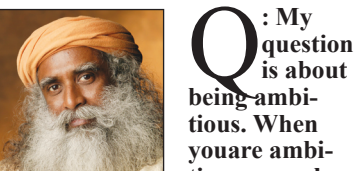
The team also found that the mimics could change their appearance as fast as 10 times in 15 minutes. The mimicry is sophisticated and the pace at which they are able to change is incredible. Reminds me of men who pretended to be eunuchs in order to access royal harems.

(To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org)

The cost of ambition

Every drop is pure in Zurich

Sadhguru. Isha Foundation



particular direction, and you take some steps at the expense of others...

Sadhguru: You were saying, “At the expense of someone.” Everything is at the expense of someone. The house in which you live may be very comfortable for you. Butto build a building like that, I donot know how many worms, insects and other creatures have suffered immensely. We have committed genocides. If we are conscious of this, we will do things only to the extentnecessary – nothing more, nothing less.

Choose from humanity
Who is to decide how much is necessary? You decide, but from your humanity, not from your vanity. If you decide from your humanity, you will make a decision. Is it the right thing? We donot know. The ants, the bees and the birds, most of the creatures on the planet will not agree with us. But as they have to live, we also have to live.

But we must understand, as we have to live, they also have to live. If we forget this, that is when we go berserk and do things which ultimately destroy us, not them. Scientific studies say that if all the insects on the planet disappearto-day, in just a few years’ time, all life on the planet will be wiped out. And if all the microbial crea-tures disappear, you will die right now because more than half of you is bacteria. There is more bacteria in you than yourself.

If you understand this, you know the bacteria, the insects, the animals, the trees and the plants should stay healthy. Otherwise we will not exist. Do it either out of your humanity or at least out of your intelligence. But if you do not have an overflowing sense of humanity or the intelligence to see far enough, you become a disaster.

Ambition is your own mission
How do you live with something which is always at someone else’s

cost? Once in a way, if we cross pathways and it is at someone’s cost– all right, we have to live with it. But every moment of our life, whatever we do, if it is at someone else’s cost, then we will have to change our activity.

Ambition is essentially a mis-sion, but it is about you. It is good to have a mission, but let it not be about you. If your mission is about everything around you, you will see, anyway you will get the wind-fall. There is no question about it.

No one in the world is devoid of humanity. For one person, human-ity means himself. He is bothered about humanity, but only one human being. For another person, his idea of humanity is him and his family. Another man’s sense of humanity is him and his com-munity. Another man’s humanity is him and his nation. Another man’s sense of humanity is all of humanity. Another man’s sense of humanity includes all life around us which supports this life. So everybody has humanity. It is only a question of scale.

Scaling Up
This is why I am telling you, let us do things in the largest scale possible. Your thought, your emo-tion, your humanity must happen at the highest scale, because only then your activity will not be at someone else’s cost. If you are ambitious, why don’t you do it in a big way? Make your love very big. Why should you just love that girl in the neighborhood? Love the entire neighborhood, what is the problem? There is no price to it. And not just your neighborhood, look out into the ocean and fall in love with the ocean. There is no price to it, and it is not at any-body’s cost. All those things which are not at anybody’s cost, you must scale them up to the fullest size. Material things are always at some-body else’s cost. Let us keep that only to the extentnecessary. How much is necessary, I will leave it to you. How much is necessary, let it be your decision. But just be sane enough to see that these decisions are happening out of your human-ity, not out of fancy vanity.

(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, vi-sionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhush-an in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)

By Sujoy Dhar

Safe, pleasant-tasting drinking water flows from the city’s wa-ter taps and some 1,200 public fountains, boasts Zurich Tour-ism. Once you are in Zurich and start exploring the city and its old town with cobblestone streets, you know what they mean.

So as you explore this gateway to the Swiss Alps and once the home of geni-uses like Albert Einstein or James Joyce, you will catch a glimpse of people actu-ally leaning before a decorative fountain and drinking water on the streets.

In Zurich you can simply do away with purchased mineral water bottles.

Zurich Tourism boasts, “Those who get thirsty while exploring Zurich do not need to look for a supermarket. A drinking bottle is enough — such as the top-quality, reusable, and ultra-light Sigg bottle that can be bought at the Tourist Information. Simply unscrew, fill up and enjoy the cool, fresh drink-ing water.”

Anyone interested in finding out more about Zurich’s innumerable fountains can book the city tour, “Water in Zur-ich”.

Zurich in the heart of Europe is the gateway to Swiss Alps. Today it is a city of creative urban life, clean water and green open spaces. The city on the River Limmat pulsates all year round.

Zurich is built around Lake Zurich while River Limmat flows by Old Town buildings and new urban quarters.

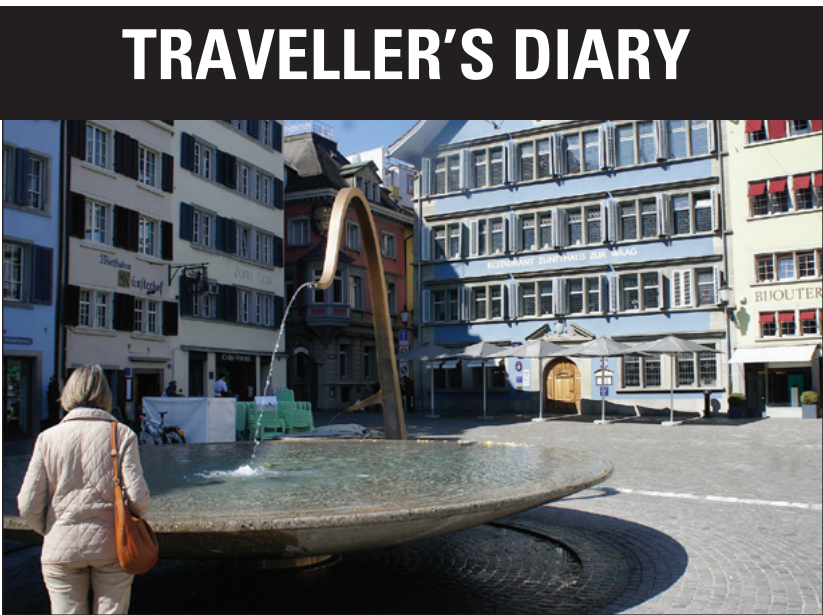
River Limmat perhaps has the clean-est water in any world city. According to Swiss authorities, ERZ (Zurich Disposal and Recycling Services) cleanses between 150,000 and 500,000 cubic meters of sewage water and the same is released back into the Limmat River as clean water.

Cobblestone streets

Any tourist would like to explore the most atmospheric part of a new town or city they are visiting. In Zurich, it is the Old Town with cobblestone streets lined by the beautiful 19th-century buildings and lanes. The Old Town offers fascinat-ing insights into the city’s history.

In Zurich, do not miss that two-hour walk in the Old Town to discover the city’s past in its hidden alleyways, fountains and squares.

The medieval background of Zurich’s Old Town will charm you as you dis-cover it as a melting pot of cultures and history with a famous shopping district



(Top) A public fountain in Zurich; and the Limmat river

thrown in for good measure.

Marvel at the medieval houses, the narrow lanes and town halls from the Renaissance period.

Some of Zurich’s big attractions are here. The double towers of the Gross-münster (Great Minster), which is a Romanesque-style Protestant church in Zürich, are here.

According to legend, as quoted by Swiss Tourism, Roman emperor Char-lemagne had built the towers at the location where the graves of the city saints Felix and Regula were discovered. Further sights worth seeing include the Peterskirche (Peter’s Church), which has Europe’s largest clockface, and the Fraumünster (Minster of Our Lady), which is known for its stained glass windows by Giacometti and Chagall.

One must also walk uphill to spend time at The Lindenhof (courtyard of the lime) with a public square and its hill-top offering sweeping view of Zurich.

The panoramic view from the top includes Grossmünster Church, City Hall, the Limmat river, the university and the Swiss Federal Institute of Tech-nology. Albert Einstein was a student in the University of Zurich and he later became a professor at ETH Zurich and University of Zurich. You can see the top of the university across the river, from this vantage point of Zurich.

Lindenhof was also the scene of many historical events. In the 4th century a Roman fort stood on Lindenhof — and in the 9th century the grandson of Char-lemagne built a regal palace as place of residence on the very same site. This

area continued to be a place for gather-ings for Zurich’s inhabitants right up to the beginning of the modern era.

Lindenhof is now also a meeting point for passionate chess players.

“This is the perfect place to switch off, with the view of the Old Town, the Limmat, and the mountains in the distance,” says Marco Uhlig, a Zurich nightlife expert, manager of the popular gay club Heaven and co-organizer of the Zurich Pride Festival.

After the walking tour of Old Town in the morning, it is usually time for lunch. Hiltl, the world’s oldest vegetar-ian restaurant (since 1898) in the heart of Zurich, near the Bahnhofstrasse of-fers something for everyone, freshly prepared food and beverages in a re-laxed ambience.

Since 1898, this restaurant — which was named after its founder Ambrosius Hiltl — everyday concocts a variety of meat-free dishes from all over the world.

It is at Bahnhofstrasse, the shopping mile of Zurich, where you find the high-est concentration of luxury brands of the world. Bahnhofstrasse is considered one of the world’s most expensive shop-ping avenues and so if you are on a tight budget, you can just window shop.

From fashion and art objects to Zur-ich specialties, you find everything here as this boulevard connecting Lake Zu-rich with the Main Railway Station on a length of 1.4 km (0.87 miles) attract both local residents and visitors.

Lake Zurich cruise to Rapperswil

And yes, do not miss the boat cruise on Lake Zurich. The relaxed ride on Lake Zurich is an unmissable part of Zurich tour. There are several round trips.

The Lake Zurich Navigation Compa-ny offers several tours on Lake Zurich. There are short tours to Thalwil and Erlenbach (1.5 hours) and longer tours all the way to Richterswil (2.5 hours) and long tours to Rapperswil (4 hours round trip).

A round trip to Rapperswil is highly recommended. It’s a awesome jour-ney looking at the towns from the wa-ter while relaxing with beverages and food.

Rapperswil-Jona, town of roses locat-ed on the upper end of Lake Zurich, has a Mediterranean holiday atmosphere.

A car-free medieval town, Rapper-swil has a castle with a Polish museum. Wrap up your Zurich day with this pic-turesque town. (IBNS)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, AUGUST 25, 2019

Moon sextile Mercury on your solar return chart thus promising to be a very excellent time period ahead. You will be having the energy and passion to get the things right. You will be man with the Midas touch. Anything you touch will turn gold. You will be making immense progress in your business/ profession. There will be good profits/income. New opportunities would knock your door and you will grab with both hands. You can be given big responsibility in your job. You will also plan to invest in movable and immovable assets. And also buy residential/commercial property. You may also receive some property in gift from relatives. Your partner will be a source of strength and happiness for you. You will be able to find some time for relaxation with family amidst hectic work schedule. And could undertake short trips with family.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)



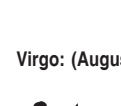
Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)



Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



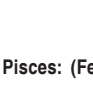
Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



often encouraging and supportive of others. Certainly, you are more accepting and understanding of your friends and loved ones. Being content in love will figure and will attract positive circumstances into your life. It is likely to be a rather lighthearted time, when opportunities are greater than usual.

There will be a wave good-luck in love and romance. You spend great time in long conversations, phone calls, short trips and enjoy the feeling of togetherness. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental about work commitments. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. Financial success is stronger than earlier. You may explore new technology and improve office infrastructure as this brings more efficiency and creativity on your work in an unconventional way. Positive new relationships are formed.

You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status. There are greater monetary gains too. You probably should be aware of a tendency to create your own financial stress due to extravagant spending habits. Your main focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends, and exploration. You are enthusiastic and ready for adventure. This is a time to do what you can to build trust in your family life and a strong foundation within yourself. You might spend a lot of time in short frequent trips, communicating and visiting religious places.

You might play attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain. You are more friendly, optimistic, and big-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Financial benefits may come your way. You may find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work, especially in communications, goes well. Love matters, finances, and social relationships are especially pleasing and satisfying. You are generally more cooperative, although occasional willfulness could be a downfall, if you succumb to it. New friendships, or new spins on established connections, are in your forecast.

You enjoy decisions in your favour when it comes to legal affairs, education, and travel. Financial benefits may come your way. You may find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work, especially in communications, goes well. Love matters, finances, and social relationships are especially pleasing and satisfying. You are generally more cooperative, although occasional willfulness could be a downfall, if you succumb to it. New friendships, or new spins on established connections, are in your forecast.

Your efforts would be rewarded and praised by people in authority as you resolve issues related to finances and bud-gets. You are bound to enjoy increased social opportunities as well as a boost in your personal popularity and magnetism. Others look on you favorably. You are more friendly, optimistic, and big-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Security in love is likely to figure and to attract positive circumstances into your life.

The planetary combination boosts your professional pros-pects as you communicate cleverly and interact in a more positive way with people. You express true feelings, ideas and plans without being afraid of the consequences and try to please your loved one. You enjoy every moment, whatever it brings and follow your truth and intuition to feel more inte-grated with your loved one. Married people should take care of family members as the health of a family member may suffer. You tend to get mentally stressed and anxious causing health problems, detach yourself from problems and view them from a different perspective. Meditation and daily prayers would help to overcome the recently generated problems.

By Dr BP Sahu

A social worker works towards the interests of the community and ensures that its most susceptible citizens receive protection and care. Can any job be more fulfilling than this one?

The Social Work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and empower-ment and liberation of people. If you are willing to be a partner, negotiator, supporter, communicator, reframer, confronter and reflector and if you feel a great deal of compassion to-wards social issues, then this can be an excellent career option for you.

Social work is not just about doing good deeds and helping the under-privileged. Over a period of time, it has evolved into a profession. Cor-rectly it is not a ‘conventional’ career. But with issues of disability, drug misuse, poverty, mental ill health, problems associated with ageing etc. rising constantly, social work has be-come vital.

Social work deals with the economi-cal, social and emotional problems arising out of different aspects of to-day’s complex lifestyle. It focuses on spreading public awareness on the is-sues of concern. Social work diversifies into the streams like psychiatric social work, community organisation, clinical social work, school social work, medical social work, industrial social work, criminology and correc-tional social work, research work with social orientation.

Increasing instances of child and women abuse, drug consumption, HIV positive cases, mental depression, disability, poverty, old age problems have created the need of nonprofit, so-cial services and NGO jobs.

What it takes

Interest in the psychological and emotional side of people’s behaviour, sensitivity, patience and persistence are a few of the characteristics that you must possess to be in this field. You need to have idealism to make a difference to the lives of individuals, the courage to make a positive deci-sion to do a job that contributes to the society, the need to feel proud of your contribution and stimulating role and most importantly personal fulfillment. You need to treat everyone as equal and you cannot be biased or prejudiced towards a section of the society.



Specialisations

Clinical social work: Social workers who venture into this field can work in psychological and mental health care.

School social work: This job in-volves providing emotional help and problem-solving to prevent family and school breakdown. Counselling the children, home visits, family as-sessments, making referrals to locality teams etc are all a part of this job. Dis-cussing and educating on issues like drug and alcohol abuse, sex-related problems and diseases are also the job of a school social worker.

Psychiatric social work: Psychiat-ric social workers work with disturbed children and teenagers with behavioral problems.

Criminology and correctional so-cial work: Social work in remand homes and prisons to prevent crimes and anti-social behaviour is also car-ried out by social workers. They work as preventive officer, assistant jailor or probation officer.

Medical social work: Social work-ers who venture into this area help pa-tients and their families in coping with stress and other personal and economic problems. Any hindrances that restrain recovery are dealt with by medical social workers. Also, they help health professionals in treating the patients by providing information concerning the social, emotional and economic status of the patients.

Community organisation: One has to work towards solutions to problems of specific communities. They deal with problems like lack of housing, unemployment, local services etc.

Research: Social workers carry out social research to determine solutions to problems like poverty and home-lessness.

Industrial social work: Social workers help in ensuring labour wel-fare in industries and commercial units.

Social workers also help people with mental health problems, mar-riage issues, substance abuse and dealing with diseases like HIV/Aids.

Growing awareness concerning so-cial problems like rural conditions, illiteracy, poor health services and substance abuse, jobs in social work have been increasing. Both govern-ment and non-governmental organi-sations (NGOs) have a lot to offer if you are willing to work hard and under any given condition. Interna-tional organisations too are socially aware and hence a number of oppor-tunities are available in international social work. One can earn a starting salary of Rs 10,000 per month in pri-vate sector.

You can undertake a two-year course (MSW-MA) at the post-graduate lev-el after completing your graduation. The MSW course of North Eastern Hill University is specially designed to develop your analytical ability and understanding. If you really have the passion and look forward to an en-riching and satisfying career in social work, you are welcome to apply for the MSW course.

(The author is Head of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, NEHU-Shillong)

“Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?”
--- Douglas Adams

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LXII No.16 SHILLONG, MONDAY, AUGUST 26, 2019

Exit of a Veteran

PRAISE normally follows when a leader dies. But, the profusion of praise after the demise of Arun Jaitley was well-deserved. A veteran leader, Jaitley had qualities of both head and heart – with an exemplary parliamentary performance matched by his strengths as a lawyer, complemented by his personal relations cutting across party barriers. His demise is a loss to the nation, to the ruling BJP and to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in particular. Jaitley had a long innings in politics, having started with the Jayaprakash Narayan movement in the 1970s while as a law student with Delhi University, going to jail to protest the Emergency, and eventually casting his lot with the Jan Sangh, the Janata Party and later the BJP. He was minister in the Vajpayee ministry and returned to government in a stronger position in the first Modi dispensation. All along, he conducted himself with great dignity, a class that was special to him, and avoided indulging in the pastime of pulling others’ legs.

Jaitley believed in cooperation, not in confrontation, as was exemplified in his close relations with and support to PM Modi at a time when several other senior leaders had reservations about supporting the Gujarat strongman. Jaitley’s parliamentary interventions displayed his grasp of Constitutional law and finer elements of democratic governance. His term as finance minister was also marked by demonetization with its ill effects on the economy, but perceptions are that the push for it came from PM Modi’s inner circle and that Jaitley fell in line, never blaming anyone else for what went wrong. It requires character of a high order to resist temptations to shift blame on others. Jaitley quietly worked to set things back in order. He remained as a source of great strength to PM Modi from day one. In Modi’s second term, Jaitley’s absence will be strongly felt. Jaitley had both class and composure. He handled difficult subjects in parliament with relative ease and often blunted the edge of Opposition offensives against the government with a great display of logic in his arguments. Little wonder, then, that he was a highly successful lawyer at the Supreme Court. While the general public has reservations about the Sangh Parivar as a whole including BJP leaders for their perceived communal slants, Jaitley steered clear of such obsessions. He built bridges with BJP’s political rivals. His performance in Rajya Sabha during the UPA period showed his strengths in consensus-building. He leaves behind a great legacy but also a vacuum that will be difficult to fill.

Mainstream versus periphery

By H H Mohrmen

cross-border terrorists who infiltrate from the neighbouring country to create trouble in the region. The argument to abrogate the Article is also on the grounds that it was not meant to be permanent and since there is also a demand from the people of Ladakh to give the region a separate entity the move was timely and appropriate.

Abrogation of article 370 is also in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election manifesto for the 2019 general election which means that they have the mandate of the people after the alliance had won 303

has towards the state then, can we say that the fear of the locals of being overwhelmed by the outsider is not real and cannot be justified? This brings us to the point that this write up wishes to put on the table and that is identity and land ownership that the other states in the periphery of the country have which is the issue in the entire conundrum.

The other states in the periphery of the country particularly those in the North East of India are mandated by the Constitution to restrict land ownership in their respective states only to the

The arguments of those who support the government largely rest on the fact that the Jammu and Kashmir problem has not only been the bone of contention between the two nuclear power countries but it has bled India dry.

seats in the Lok Sabha. There is a huge support for the strong decision taken by the Government, not only from among the alliance partners but even people who had not supported the Government in the last election also lent their support to the NDA Government at least on this one issue. And surprisingly, even some Congress leaders extended their support to the abrogation of 370 and 35(A).

Corporations which supported the Government move announced that they are ready to invest in the region in spite of the economy going downhill. But the question is whether the region ready? Or is the investment going to be in the interest of the locals and with the consent of the people? There are also people who openly stated that ‘they can now buy land in the region.’ What this tells us is that these people have been eyeing the place and waiting for the opportunity to capture land in the area. If this is the kind of mindset that the majority population in the country

locals. The father of the Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar had debated at length on this issue and realised the need to protect the culture, and identity of the tribal people and had therefore come up with a framework within the Constitution to protect their rights. Similarly, the princely states in the north eastern region joined the Indian nation on special grounds and on the basis of the Instrument of Accession. It was based on the principles that people have unique culture and land ownership system that needed to be protected, that the Instrument of Accession was signed and a special Schedule in the Constitution was incorporated to protect their rights.

These unique cultures are many, and if we take land as an example, for the tribal, land is not something that one sells and buy at one’s wishes and convenience. Land is not just space but integral part of their life. It is something that one inherits from one’s ancestors and in many case family heirlooms (ba ioh pateng). The hills and the vales are the dwelling places of the gods

(ki ryngkaw ki basa) and the spirits of ancestors (ki syngia ki saret) are hovering over the winds. People have special connection with their land and culture. That is why people are reluctant to leave the place because away from their land and culture, they are like fish out of water. They live in with nature and nature lives in them and only people who understand how profound the connection that people have with their land and their culture is, will be able to appreciate the bond that they have with the community and nature.

Perhaps like the tribals, the Kashmiri too have this special bond with the land and that is why they want to protect it, because people who come only for business and just for the sake of the beauty of the land will not have this special bond with the land and culture. People from outside the culture do not have and will not be able to appreciate this special relationship. Hence the locals are within their rights to have this apprehension. Now this argument is supported by the fact that immediately after the union territory was created, the Ladakhis voiced their demands for recognising the people in the region as Schedule Tribes and demanded that they also be provided mechanisms for land protection as enjoyed by the states in North East.

There is this fear of being overwhelmed by the majority population almost everywhere in the region in the periphery of the country. Now if the majority in the country try to impose its own will and agenda on the minorities then does this not amount to assimilation? The crux of the problem in this entire imbroglio, whether it be in Kashmir, Ladakh or in the other states in the periphery of the country is the question of identity and land rights. The Constituent Assembly recognised this and hence provided solutions within the framework of the constitution to address this issue, but only time will tell what the outcome will be when these constitutional remedies are being removed one after the other.

Chidambaram has to show respect for Judicial process As a senior lawyer himself, PC cannot avoid the law

By K Raveendran

It is dangerous to claim that whenever a court decision is against you, it is a threat to democracy and whenever it suits you, it is democracy at work. This is what former Home and Finance minister P Chidambaram has done.

Having exercised all his judicial options successfully to dodge the investigation agencies all this while, he cannot suddenly claim that he has no faith in the judiciary. The ruckus created over his arrest, performed in a most dramatic manner that one is used to seeing in Bollywood movies, following the decision by the Delhi high court to quash his anticipatory bails in the INX media case, amounts to declaring that he has lost his confidence in the judicial process. As a senior lawyer himself, and very much a part of the judicial process, that is least expected of him.

If he has faith in the judiciary, which he obviously has had until the circumstances forced him to take a contrary stand, he should have cooperated with

physical abuse, as it happens with ordinary mortals in police custody. In fact, he has been assured of decent behaviour by the investigators, with the court even allowing his family access to him for a specific time period every day during his custody.

Chidambaram claims that in the INX Media case, he has not been accused of any offence nor anyone else including any member of his family and that there is no charge-sheet filed by either ED or CBI before a competent court. He should be all the more happy that he has a strong case and this should have given him more confidence to face the law, rather than run away from it. This is particularly so when he claims that he respects the law and hopes that the investigating agencies would also do the same.

The Congress party brought little credit to itself by raising the bogey of democracy in defending Chidambaram and opposing his arrest. The party

Chidambaram claims that in the INX Media case, he has not been accused of any offence nor anyone else including any member of his family and that there is no charge-sheet filed by either ED or CBI before a competent court. He should be all the more happy that he has a strong case and this should have given him more confidence to face the law, rather than run away from it. This is particularly so when he claims that he respects the law and hopes that the investigating agencies would also do the same.

the investigators as ultimately it will be the courts that decide whether he is guilty or not. Instead, he behaved like an ordinary criminal giving the slip to the police. He had been missing since Tuesday evening until he surfaced at the AICC headquarters to address a press conference there, flanked by members of his legal team.

"I believe that the foundation of a democracy is liberty, most precious article of the constitution is Article 21 that guarantees life and liberty. If I'm asked to choose between life and liberty, I will choose liberty," Chidambaram said at the press conference, which was also attended by other Congress leaders.

The longing for such liberty is not exclusive to Chidambaram. Liberty is valued by every individual and if this is cited as an excuse to run away from the law, it strikes at the very concept of the rule of law.

As finance minister involved in the alleged out of the way sanctions, as testified by an accused, there is certainly a needle of suspicion pointing towards Chidambaram. It is in his own interest, and that of his family and party, therefore, that he comes clean on the allegations. If he has had no role in it, he is resourceful enough to establish his innocence before the due process of law and he should not be unduly worried.

Of course, there would be no escape from confinement, which he should have accepted gracefully if he had been convinced about his conscience. After all, there is no ground for him to fear that he would be subjected to

described the arrest as ‘broad daylight murder of democracy and the rule of law’ by the Modi government, at the same time expressing full faith in the ‘fairness and impartiality of the judiciary’ but at the same time questioning the Supreme Court decision not to oblige the former finance minister by agreeing to hear him out urgently so as to deny CBI the right to apprehend him.

If Chidambaram and the Congress party really believed that it was merely personal vendetta, they should have maintained it that way right from the moment the CBI initiated the case, but by using the judicial process to challenge the action, they were expressing their willingness to subject themselves to the decision of the courts. Once they do that, they have no other option but to respect judicial decisions.

And when trouble comes, it comes like an avalanche. Just as the Delhi high court quashed Chidambaram’s anticipatory bail, Madras high court on Wednesday turned down son Karti Chidambaram’s plea seeking an interim stay on an income tax case before the special court for MPs and MLAs. The case related to the alleged non-disclosure of Rs 1.35 crore received by Karti Chidambaram and his wife in cash for sale of lands in Muthukadu of Tamil Nadu. Karti Chidambaram approached the Madras high court, stating that he was not an MP during the time the alleged crime happened, but the court refused to entertain his plea. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Kudos Fr. Paul Coelho!

Editor,
Recently we have come to know that one of the schools in South West Khasi Hills District, viz., St Xavier’s H.S. School at Umoid run by the Catholic Jesuit Congregation received public attention when the school management introduced the Khasi traditional dress of jainsem for the girl students as a school uniform instead of normal uniforms worn by pupils of good number of academic institutes. This novelty of approach initiated by the school principal Fr. P. Coelho ought to receive widespread public approbation, especially from the Hynniewtrep Community and, importantly, such innovative makeover could be a wake-up clarion call and a game changer across the board since we have observed that most schools, even in Mission run- schools, in Shillong prescribe the ubiquitous salwar kameez as a uniform. The salwar kameez is distinctly a popular Punjabi suit and a traditional dress of women in Punjab region, of North eastern India and eastern Pakistan. Such salwar kameez uniform was virtually alien to our indigenous schools years ago.
Just as the seismic sea waves of nationalism have

recently swept India post the Balakot episode which was unerringly responsible for the BJP’s massive triumph in the last parliamentary polls, it is also but a natural corollary that the induction of jainsem uniform can be a veritable wake-up call of Hynniewtrep nationalism, courtesy a non elitist school at Umoid! Furthermore, it is more than bewildering that it obliges a Priest in question, evidently a non-Khasi at that, to boldly outline such refreshingly novel idea of upholding our indigenous entity while most of us are blissfully slumbering over this critical social issue.

Yours etc.,
Jerome K. Diengdoh,
Shillong-2

Absurd demand

Editor,
It is absurd that a civil society pressure group like HYC should be demanding up to 80 percent job reservation in the private sector. This group seems blind to certain realities. They are unable to get actual data on the percentage of private investments in Meghalaya and who these investors are and why they should be obliged to consider

extending the reservation policy in private entities when competition and skills are an important driving factor of the state economy. Instead they should compile the data of the number of skilled local entrepreneurs and add them to the existing employment sector or identify the skilled ones and encourage them towards self employment rather than depending on someone to give them employment. To ask for reservation from the government in the private sector seems over the top since the government has no control over private investors. I would suggest that local entrepreneurship be encouraged and we have so many shining examples from our own tribal society.

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

Amazon forest fires

Editor,
It is shocking to read reports about the raging fire that started engulfing the Amazon rainforest in the South American continent. The Amazon is often referred as the ‘lungs of the planet’ and it is one of the richest areas of biodiversity on the planet and covers 2.12 million

square miles. Also, it is often touted as one of the planet’s biggest oxygen suppliers as well as a key mechanism to absorb carbon dioxide and thereby slow the effects of climate change. The world’s forests suck up 2.4 billion tons of carbon annually, with the Amazon alone absorbing about a quarter of that.

It is equally disturbing to learn that the blazes are not accidental or natural though in dry years fires can be common. It is alleged that during the run-up to the recent election, a far-right populist, Jair Bolsonaro who later became the President of Brazil promised to weaken the Amazon’s environmental protections, which have been effective at reducing deforestation for two decades, and open up the rainforest to economic development. So, farmers emboldened by Jair Bolsonaro, have been setting on illegal blazes to clear forest for cattle and crops.

The bug of greed concomitant with this modern era, to milk the earth dry has bitten Jair Bolsonaro too. Such attitude is short-sighted and detrimental to the environment. Bolsonaro’s cynical attitude vis-a-vis the environment makes it

impossible to find a remedy. The Amazon rainforest does, in some sense, belong to Brazilians, and the indigenous people who live there. But as a store of carbon, it is fundamental to the survival of every person. If destroyed or degraded, the Amazon, as a system, is simply beyond humanity’s ability to get back. It will take millions of years to replenish the system though not the lost eco system. So, it is easier for us to destroy the eco system but its restoration is never possible. All the countries must unite to fight the Amazon blazes and prevail upon Brazil government to urgently take remedial measures to protect the Amazonia.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanana,
Viaemail

A gentleman politician

Editor,
In Arun Jaitley’s demise the nation has lost one of its finest leaders-a real gentleman politician. Indeed the nation has lost a real academic-politician who intertwined political ideology with academic knowledge. A politician known for his Intellectuality, integrity, dedication and commitment Jaitley was a task master, an expert known

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 are building a culture where honest expectations are communicated and peer accountability is the norm, then the group will address poor performance and attitudes.”

--- Henry Cloud

The Shillong Times

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UDP in a quandary

THE United Democratic Party (UDP) recently lost a tall leader in the person of Dr Donkupar Roy. He was the Speaker of the present legislature. Since political parties rarely encourage second rung leaders, the UDP now finds itself in a difficult situation of having to elect a leader with a stature that is equal to that of Dr Roy as Party President and also to project another MLA from the UDP for the post of Speaker. The UDP now has 6 MLAs with one Independent MLA having joined as Associate member who therefore cannot hold office in the Organisation. While the UDP has finalized the candidature of Dr Roy's son from Shella Constituency, perhaps with the intent of winning sympathy votes, the Party still has to contest and win the elections, which could go either way. Dr Donkupar Roy has always won by a slim margin of between 300-400 votes. In the last election he scored over Leston Wanswett of the Peoples' Democratic Front (PDF) by just 270 votes. Going by past experiences, although the PDF is part of the MDA coalition, it is unlikely that they will not put up a candidate from Shella Constituency, considering that the margin of loss the last time around was very slim. The Congress too will put up a fight. So the UDP has to put up a spirited contest to regain this seat.

Dr Roy first won the Shella seat in 1988 and has never lost it since. It will be interesting to see if his son pulls the same amount of weight. What is more crucial for the UDP now is to have a leader that can lead the Party to victory. That there are many applicants for the post of Party President in the UDP is both good and bad. In a democracy it is good to have several contenders for every post including that of Party President. Let people choose the best, most capable leader who can lead the party to victory. This is something that the Congress Party at the national level has never dared to do. Besides, a new leader might be able to provide a new vision for the 21st century when many young people are keen to join politics. The downside is that the incumbent leader should be a person who is not averse to serving the Party in right earnest. Leadership is no cakewalk. Leaders whether in politics or society have to walk the talk and should be willing to serve rather than be served. The UDP therefore has an opportunity to spruce up the Party and give it a new direction.

To the Editor

Smart City Project

Editor,
First of all, I congratulate the entire staff of The Shillong Times on its Platinum Jubilee. Apropos the report in your daily on the 'Smart City Project' and Govt's intent to come up with infrastructural development projects such as Shopping Malls, Parking Lots, etc., at Barik Junction (ST Aug 12, 2019), which presently also houses the PWD Office, I wish to make known my views on the matter through your esteemed daily.

First, why not the Govt. of Meghalaya show its seriousness by inviting a panel of expert engineers, urban planners, and architects from leading agencies to study the feasibility of constructing a 'fly-over' and to utilise the space at Barik Junction for decongesting traffic rather than announcing its intent for a commercial project through media at the same site, which I believe will only add to an already congested city.

In place of such a proposal which Govt is keen to promote in the guise of the 'Smart City Project', I believe, a 'fly-over' at the proposed site will be of great help to ease the traffic congestion at Barik Point Junction and adjoining areas. Barik Junction today acts as an intermediary point that connects many arterial roads, links roads connecting localities and even the main premises that house many offices of the Govt. of Meghalaya, and numerous

other institutes, schools, college and even residence and localities that are linked and inter-linked through Barik Point Junction. Hence the fly-over is an imperative. Moreover, the steep rise in vehicular traffic at the same junction has made daily commute a pain and eyesore. Lack of space to widen the main arterial roads and link roads has only worsened the situation. Let's not forget that Barik Point Junction witnesses a traffic nightmare on a daily basis.

Therefore, I am of the view that proposing a 'fly-over' as part of the 'Smart City Project' at Barik Point Junction will greatly benefit Shillongites. If given a serious thought, such a proposal would come in handy and act as a great relief to the daily commuters, apart from providing a lifeline for long-term measures to help decongest traffic within the city's main area. This also has its up-side in fulfilling a long-cherished dream of Shillongites to have their very own 'fly-over' right at the heart of the city. Rather than focusing on the commercial aspect of Shopping Malls, I am of the view that a 'fly-over' is a do-able, practical and a welfare measure with long-term benefits, especially considering the fact that available space within the city area is already sparse.

It is therefore imperative that the Govt. should show

its seriousness and intent to come up with a visionary planning methodology for urban development, rather than proposing something that is only of commercial value and less of welfare. In fact a shopping mall will only cut the lifeline out of Shillong city area. Of course, nothing should stop short if the Govt shows the will, intent, and seriousness on the matter, given the resources at its disposal. A proposal as such would only help contribute towards making Shillong city a liveable place that we can take pride in.

Yours etc.,
Pynshai Shynret,
Shillong-4

CBSE for Class XI faces a big BUT

Editor,
Listening to a low decibel rumour that cannot be hushed up any longer, I visited a friend whose grandchild studies Class XI Science, to find that in the 2019-2020 session the CBSE text is being followed. Sadly, Class IX students could not enjoy the same as too many precious months from May to September have passed by. It was in the last week of June when I, wishing to help my grandchild's friend of one village school, looked through the MBOSE Class IX text to discover fanciful write ups, laughable experiments and grave conceptual errors.

Thus two precious months with a few holidays are wasted. We now land in a tangle of uncertainty as to the correct future of our children. Classes IX and X would continue with erroneous texts, Class XI would enjoy Part I and Part II, but with the same teachers who had failed miserably to detect errors and Class XII this year with old stuff, worse than IX and X and XI. So during exams the correct questions would somehow be set. Our students relying on MBOSE texts would give correct answers as per the book which are actually wrong answers universally. Worse the examiner with MBOSE text would grant full marks.

As far as Class XII text by V.K. Mehta and Rohit Mehta are concerned, their coverage right from Electrostatics to Alternating currents, to Dual nature of light, Atoms and Nuclei is very scanty. For Electronics and Electro-magnetic radiation there are 98% errors and some theoretical explanations on antennas and demodulation are wrong and laughable. Sadly students would commit and vomit the same in the examination halls. Where are our teachers with post graduate degrees in Physics? As far as Class IX and X teachers are concerned I can very well understand their problems as in CBSE schools the

teachers for Class IX and X are all post graduates. For the parents of students without Science background, I can give some easy ideas. MBOSE Class IX text is a single text of size 24 cm × 17 cm of 545 pages. CBSE Class XI text has two parts with a total of 411 pages but the size of Part I and II is 28 cm × 21 cm, with down to earth explanations, clear diagrams and 8 to 9 solved problems for each topic covered with blue colour.

A more difficult problem cleverly done by examiners usually comes in JEE and NEET exams. The beauty is that in no single year ever has the identical problem of selecting the cream of Science students for Engineering and for Medicine happened according to merit. Last week this had created a huge controversy on account of nepotism.

There is a misunderstanding on the relations between Physics and Mathematics. Let us take the Class IX fundamental concept of momentum. Mathematicians would say mass × velocity. In Physics it is much more and it depends on the wisdom of a teacher to give the example of Oliver Hardy colliding with Stan Laurel, the skinny fellow. Albert Einstein mathematically showed E=mc². He had to throw his equation to Oppenheimer, Neih Bohr (for critical mass), Fermi Szilard, Eugene Wigner-et-al to de-

velop the atom bomb, fearing Hitler's success across Europe. In this connection credit has to be given to Adolf Hitler who little dreamt of a weapon of mass destruction though one needs a heart of stone not to criticize him on his attempt to liquidate the Jews. Every year we are losing the cream of Science students to Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Biotech, etc. Unless we create some incentives for teaching Science, I am afraid we will suffer even more. My colleagues in college who are still teaching can read the signs. My last question to the Education Minister on, "Who approved the books?" was never answered, for, seemingly he does not understand democracy where parents of students have every moral right and responsibility to question. Let us hope better sense prevails. The next question to the Education Department is whether they have gone through each and every page of the Physics text books before sealing the deal with the publishers. This has devastated our children's zeal to achieve in life which is a basic right according to the Constitution.

Yours etc.,
W. Passah,
Ex HOD Electronics Deptt,
St Edmund's College

When Church accountability culture needs cleansing

By Kit Shangpliang

secular can be administered by and on its own' and 'That only Sunday is the Lord's Day while other days are not'.

In the absence of awareness of a need to have a robust accountability system that warrants periodic scrutiny, the chances for errors were plenty. The generation gap between the new and the old in leadership services (not leadership positions and ranks) made swift and accurate communication almost impossible. In a world where speed and accuracy is one form of strength, such mechanisms are bound to crash.

Besides, there have been public opinions voicing out against the culture of keeping local Church money in relatively huge amounts as fixed deposits. The argument is simple, for Church to grow it needs to remain true to its functions as a non-profit service & spiritual entity, hence, fiscal investments indicate misplaced priorities like extravagant infrastructure, size and so on.

The Culture of respecting the elderly needs more Clarity

Respecting the elderly is a non-negotiable principle that both Christian and Traditional Culture of the place uphold. However, there is need to define the term because in the name of respect, culture tends to overburden the senior members with responsibilities beyond their capacity and age. In clarity seeking, such understanding does not go well with the virtue of respecting our elders.

While the writer totally subscribes to the Asian culture of valuing the aged, greater wisdom should prevail for the sake of protecting the elderly and to encourage the growth of a culture where people who can deliver are given responsibility, age no bar. Across the board, even in non-faith institutions, the juniors in the fray do not enjoy space to provide leadership in their known field - because of the belief that mistakenly gives a misplaced value to age and seniority at the expense of gifts, talents, competence (the aged get priority on the assumption of experience) and specialised ability.

Popular idea of Church v/s Church of the Bible

The deciphering above

brings us to the basic question of what is Church? Please note the definitive lines between the local Church organisation, the para-church organisation and the universal church. While each of these has a specific role to play, this article examines issues only concerning the first one.

Scripturally, the Church is a gathering of the followers of Jesus Christ meant to fellowship with one another for its own edification and that of its members. The Church is His representative here on earth existing for its own development. By Biblical principles, the Church, therefore, is not a building, not a temple, not a club, not a trust, not a foundation, not a monument, not a platform and so on.

The Integrated Solution:

With embezzlement issues at hand, the local church system needs introspection and courage to act and act timely. On one hand, there is an option of Corporate Solution (Using the word Corporate not in a capitalistic sense) through strengthening of its financial, administrative and audit systems. On the other hand, there is an option of Spiritual Solution through supplication.

Corporate Solutions, assume the meaning of convergence of the three services, namely, Admin., Finance and Audit and these three are essential and co-dependent on each other. One might have already thought of periodic engagement with the Chartered Accountant, given the fiscal culture of India. The Church members might have also already spelled out spiritual solutions based on prayers and intercessions. That said, it sounds correct, yet the problem in the local Churches today, is that we have a range of opinions, not based on scripture - but largely based on human understanding because that is how we were brought up.

We have the corporate solution minds that strategise the many tiers of protection systems and we have the pseudo-spiritualists whose opinions are in fact emotionally driven. While those two co-exist, what the local church needs, is a working combination - an Integrated Solution that brings the corporate and the spiritual into one. It needs an over-arching Master Plan based on scripture. The local Church needs both

Economic slowdown

Can FM help stimulate it?

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

In a bid to counter the recessionary trend, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last week announced a few measures, including scrapping surcharge on foreign portfolio investors and domestic market players and steps to improve the flow of loans and overall cash in the system. This is expected to boost market sentiment as FPIs had withdrawn close to \$3.4 billion since July. She further announced that banks have agreed to lower interest rates on the benefits of RBI's rate reduction besides linking interest on home, auto and retail loans to the Central bank's key policy rate. And to support the ailing non-banking finance companies a fresh Rs 30,000 crore refinance window for housing finance companies was also announced. All this appears no doubt quite encouraging but it will be difficult to counter the reduced consumption expenditure in most fronts, not just in rural but also in urban areas. The latest devastating floods in States such as Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka is bound to divert chunks of funds from development projects to flood relief and rehabilitation. Also the purchasing power of the rural segment of the population will be greatly reduced not just due to such calamities but also farm distress and lack of jobs. And apart from the ongoing distress in the agricultural sector, which is ongoing for long, there is the real estate sector, where reports say that the country's top 30 cities had around 1.30 unsold housing units as of March 2019 which may have increased by this time. This sector had been ailing for quite some time and the present situation is not at all conducive. More so as the real estate and construction industry will bear an impact not just on steel and cement sectors but also on fittings, paints etc. As per a statement by Niranjan Hiranandani, President, National Real Estate Development Council (NARDECO), around 3 lakh jobs have been lost in the real estate sector. A survey by consultancy firm, Knight Frank, FICCI and NARDECO, factors such as NBFC crisis, developer defaults and bankruptcies have slackened the sentiment in this sector as also the ongoing liquidity crunch.

Then there is the auto sector which has been greatly affected with huge job losses, resulting in sales tumble to a 19-year low since July. Many companies like Mahindra & Mahindra, Toyota, Hyundai etc. have retrenched temporary workers and stopped production for a few days in August. The same is the story with tyre and tube manufacturers, parts manufacturers and dealers. The industry's plight was recently highlighted by the Automobile Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) and the Society of Indian Automobile Manufactures (SIAM). Not just these organisations but experts confirmed the recessionary phase being experienced in this sector. There are widespread reports of stagnation in the economy. While farm distress and jobless growth has been continuing for quite some time, sectors such as real estate, construction and auto industry have too been hard hit. There were expectations that the Budget would boost up the economy but its policies haven't helped the process of industrial growth. Moreover, foreign portfolio investors have sold their holdings in massive quantities, affecting sentiments in the capital market.

Investment, both of public and private sector, is lacking as per Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), implementation of projects worth Rs 13 trillion has been stalled with the private sector lagging behind. While the stalling rate of pri-

vate sector projects was around 30 per cent, power sector suffered the most.

Terming the present slowdown 'worrisome', former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, said recently that new set of reforms are needed to motivate the private sector to invest. He referred to the power sector and the non-banking financial sectors which needed to be tackled immediately. However, Rajan was clear that a stimulus package, which the industry has been pressing the government to implement, isn't going to be "useful in the longer term, specially given the very tight fiscal situation that we have".

The perception that all this has happened due to GDP growth recording 5.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2018-19 is erroneous. One may be reminded of the observation of former Chief Economic Adviser Dr. Arvind Subramanian, of the country overestimating its growth rate by 2.5 per cent between 2011-12 and 2016-17. It may also be mentioned that he derived several implications from the findings of his paper which are: one, that growth needed to be restored to high levels; two, that the quality and integrity of data in India needs to be improved, something echoed by several other economists and three, that 'India must restore the reputational damage suffered to data generation in India across the board.' He also called for the creation of a taskforce to revisit the entire methodology and implementation of GDP estimation. There has been high growth rate during the previous years but it hasn't helped in tackling farm distress or job creation. A large body of economists believe that high growth rate has been and is beneficial to the upper class and middle income sections. The poor and EWS do not benefit much from high growth and this has been demonstrated not just in academic research but also in practical field. Surprisingly, there appears very little concern of the government and also its think tank, the NitiAayog. Only recently, Sitharaman had assured that corporate tax rate would be cut to 25 per cent for companies with a turnover of Rs 400 crore, reiterating the promise she made in her Budget speech though no date for its implementation has been set. Thus, as it appears today, no revival action has been taken.

The first thing that needs to be done now is for the public sector to invest in infrastructure sector and also try to get at least some private companies to do the same. Infrastructure development in rural and semi-urban areas should be the focus of attention as has recently been suggested by eminent economist Prof. Amiya Bagchi. He also added that adequate investment had not been made in education and health sectors and these areas need to be looked into. Though the fiscal position is tight, a section of economists feel that in such core sectors, where large sections of people are likely to be benefitted, such expenditure, even if it raises fiscal deficit, is justified.

While there is no doubt, that the situation is quite bad, measures need to be taken to control it. In the short term, there should be no reduction in development expenditure, specially related to the rural sector, but curbs imposed on bureaucrats and ministers, specially their travel expenses, both in the country and abroad. No stimulus need be given to the private sector and the big defaulters should be penalized and brought to book.

“All I have seen teaches me to trust the
Creator for all I have not seen.”
--- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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KHADC leads the way

THE Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) led by Executive Member (Trade), Paul Lyngdoh has taken the plastic menace seriously enough to ban its use completely in Shillong's oldest market- Iewduh, by September 1 next. It is noteworthy that the Syiem of Myllem under whose jurisdiction Iewduh falls has also endorsed this move of the KHADC. This consensus needs to be built even with the State Government and extended to other markets and localities as well, particularly the main shopping centre at Khyndailad (Police Bazar). It is not as if plastic carry bags have not been banned in the past but the whole attempt was nullified by clauses put forward by traders dealing with plastics. So they defined the micron thickness of the plastic carry bags and Government complied. The whole exercise was futile. It is hoped that after October 2, the date announced by Prime Minister, Modi on August 15 as the date for banning all single use plastics, the administrators of all districts of Meghalaya will not be caught in the web of the "micron." If they still do, then they are disregarding the efforts of civil societies of different shades to clean up public spaces and rivers where the bulk of the plastics are embedded. Our rivers and streams can no longer take this burden. The flooding around Motphran and elsewhere on August 22, should serve as a warning to all that the unprecedented is happening. Floods were unknown in the past because water drained out easily. Now the drains and streamlets are clogged with plastics and other solid waste.

Another problem with every notification is the implementation part. Indians are congenital law breakers. Unless there are strict penalties on defaulters, no ban will work. Look at the ban on smoking in public places! It hardly works. People continue to smoke in public vehicles at the cost of the health of fellow passengers. They throw garbage right at the point where there is a notice board prohibiting littering. Hence the KHADC has done well in appointing teams to monitor that the ban is effectively implemented. But apart from such official monitoring, it is also incumbent upon citizens to change their mindsets and their reliance on plastic carry bags. In fact, citizens should themselves monitor that the ban is implemented in letter and spirit. This is imperative for every good initiative to succeed. The people of Meghalaya must think beyond their comfort zones and walk the extra mile because the younger generation has a right to a clean environment.

LOOKING BACK

June 22, 1989

A Last-Hour Exercise

The Chief Election Commissioner is reported to have given an assurance to the Union Minister of State for Home Mr Santosh Mohan Dev that the Election Commission would appoint Central observers to supervise the preparation of electoral rolls in Assam. Mr Dev met Mr Shashtri to apprise him of the apprehensions of the religious and linguistic minorities in Assam that there would be large-scale deletion of eligible voters from the electoral rolls.

The Commission should not have awaited intervention by the Union Minister, since it was only expected that it would be more watchful about the Assam electoral chief's manipulation in this respect Assam electoral rolls having been a disputed subject all these years and formed the core of the Assam accord. The `watch dogs' which the Commission may have in view now, we are afraid, would be able to do little despite best intentions since the

Commission's Assam agents have been working on a precise plan to negate which there is not enough time available before the final rolls are ready.

It goes to the credit of the President of the United Minorities Front's Silchar unit, Mr Dilip Kumar Deb to have unmasked design of the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam to defranchise a large number of minority population in the state. It is in itself a preposterous idea that the Electoral Registration officers have been asked to prepare two lists for each constituency. The first shall contain the names of persons enumerated as having linkage with the 1960 voters list for four schedules or categories of persons. The first schedule will carry the names of persons enrolled in the 1985 list but whose names could not be found in the 1966 rolls. The second will contain names of those whose case for inclusion in the 1985 rolls were rejected.

The idea of India’s Unity, the Kashmir Imbroglio & North East India

With the lapse of the British paramouncy on August 15, 1947, British India was divided into India and Pakistan on communal lines. The then Sylhet District of Surma Valley was truncated from Assam Province and was amalgamated with Pakistan. Similarly East Bengal became Pakistan and West Bengal became India. Also, Eastern Punjab came to India and West Punjab went to Pakistan.

The India Independence Act 1947 passed by the British "House of Commons," gave the option to 562 princely States in India to either join India or Pakistan. Although the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir, Hari Singh signed the Standstill Agreement with Pakistan he did not accede territorially to Pakistan. So also the Khasi States though signed a Standstill Agreement with India did not accede to it. Only Jammu & Kashmir and the Khasi States in the Indian Subcontinent never signed an Instrument of Merger with India.

However, the Pakistani tribals invaded the kingdom of Jammu & Kashmir from the North on October 22, 1947, and within three days they were on the outskirts of Baramullah. They were on a winning spree. Maharaja Hari Singh was frustrated and had no option but to ask help from India. The Government of India expressed its inability to help unless J&K first acceded into India. Hence willy-nilly Maharaja Hari Singh signed an Instrument of Accession with India on October 26, 1947. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhai Patel air-dashed Indian troops from Delhi to Srinagar on October 27, 1947. By December 31, 1947 the valiant Indian troops drove the invaders out of the Kashmir Valley and Srinagar was saved.

Mahatma Gandhi was still alive then, but nothing was known about his reaction. However, the then Governor General of India Lord Mountbatten asked Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to report it immediately to the UN Security Council for mediation, which he obliged. The United Nations intervened and a line of control or L.O.C. was demarcated. India got approximately two thirds of Kashmir and the remaining one third, including Aksai Chin now controlled by China went to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

In North East India, there were three princely states: the Khasi State, Tripura State and Manipur State. At the very moment when the Maharaja of Tripura expired his minor son was appointed as Regent. He was in favour of joining India. Later, the Raja of Manipur signed an Instrument of Accession including an Instrument of Merger with India. He was honoured with a privy purse of three lakh rupees per annum excluding taxation, until it was abolished in 1971. Other princes in the country also enjoyed privy purses according to the size of their kingdom, for joining India.

All the 25 Khasi states were asked to appear before Sir Akbar Hydari Governor of Assam at the Government House (now Raj Bhavan) on December 15, 1947 for signing the Instrument of Accession (IoA) with India. However, only 19 of the 25 chieftains agreed to sign the IoA. The remaining 6 states abstained from signing. Vallabhai Patel air-dashed from New Delhi to Guwahati on January 1, 1948. Next day he met the people of Shillong. A public meeting was held at the lawns of the Lady Hydari Park, Shillong. He appealed to the people on the utility of joining the Indian Union. He said, "Yours is a land for gods to live in. Its air, its natural scenery, its pure atmosphere, its sweet water, would attract even gods if your hearts were pure".

The Nongstoin State one of the 25 Khasi states convened a Dorbar Hima or General Council on the January 13, 1948. The General Council proclaimed Nongstoin State to be sovereign state as per the directives of the Indian Independence Act 1947. Later, Mr. Wickliffe Syiem, Syiem Khynnah or Deputy Chieftain of Nongstoin State left for New York "Lake Success" UN Security Council to report on the matter. He was the first tribal from North East India to get a Bachelor of Engineering Degree from Baroda (Vadodara) affiliated to Bombay University in 1937.

During the Drafting of the Constitution at the Constituent Assembly of India, the Khasi States Constitution Making Dorbar was holding a General Conference at

By Spiton Kharakor

Dinam Hall, Jaiaw, Shillong on July 20 and 21, 1949. The Conference was presided over by Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh. Rev JJM. Nichols-Roy vehemently argued at the Conference for a Sixth Schedule to be incorporated in the Constitution if the Khasi states were to remain within Assam. However, the Syiem of Hima Jirang, Sirendro Wahlang opposed this view and wanted to be outside Assam and seek for a First Schedule Status for Khasi States with a new set up. The Chairman Dr Homiwell Lyngdoh put the agenda to vote. The Syiem of Hima Jirang got 46 votes. Rev JJM Nichols-Roy got only 40 votes and his motion for the Sixth Schedule was lost before the House.

Rev JJM Nichols-Roy, however, being the Member of the Constituent Assembly from Assam Province disregarded the above ruling and projected again his ambition in the September 1949 session of the Constituent Assembly for a Sixth Schedule in Assam. Unfortunately, a representative of the Khasi States, Manipur State and Tripura State at the Constituent Assembly was Mr GS Guha. He did not defend the resolution of the Khasi State Constitution Making Dorbar. He kept silent and remained a mere spectator at the debate of the Constituent Assembly then.

Thereafter, in late October and early November 1949, a delegation from the Khasi States Constitution Making Dorbar went to New Delhi. The delegation included the President of the Federation of Khasi States and Syiem of Khyrim State, Olim Sing, Miss Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh an ex-cabinet minister of Assam Province and Omil Harris Rease Shullai a member of Khasi States Constitution Making Dorbar from Mawkhar-Jaiaw Constituency. They met Dr. B.R Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly and lodged their dissatisfaction.

Thereafter, Syed Muhammad Sa'adullah a Member of the Drafting Committee spoke at the Constituent Assembly on the November 21, 1949 and said, "Sir, the Khasi Hills have been relegated to the Sixth Schedule for which Rev JJM. Nichols-Roy is very much thankful, but there is a Constitutional anomaly. Although the

Constituent Assembly is not to find a remedy for that, yet I must sound a note of warning that this small District of the Khasi Hills embraces 25 native states most of which had treaty rights with the suzerain power in Delhi. They were asked to join the Indian Dominion in 1947. Instrument of Accession accompanied by an Agreement were executed by these chieftains and they were accepted by the Central Government. But even though this area is included in the Sixth Schedule, up till now no settlement has been arrived at between the Constituent Assembly of the Federation of the Khasi States and Assam Government or the Government of India.

It is unfortunate that the Khasi States till 1949 were princely states but were relegated to a mere district of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills under Assam Province since January 26, 1950 without any proclamation from the Khasi Constitution Making Dorbar in 1949. So it is no surprise when after the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir State was demoted into a Union Territory. We have now seen the tyranny of the majority and to be a minority is a crime which is prevailing now. It is evident that there is no plurality in our country now.

Earlier, the whole of North East India including Assam were not under the domain of the great Mughal Empire. When David Scott came to Assam in 1824 he found that the Burmese King ruled Assam and not the Ahom ruler. Through the Treaty of Yandaboo 1826 signed in Burma (Myanmar) between the English Trading Company and Burmese King it was agreed that the latter should be abdicated for good from Assam Brahmaputra Valley in favour of the English Trading East India Company.

So when the British left India in 1947 everyone in the North East India wanted to exert their autonomy. Mr. Angami Zapu Phizo a Naga Nationalist along with four or five leaders came to Shillong to meet the tribal leaders in 1955. Nothing was known about the meeting at Shillong. Thereafter the Naga Hills was in turmoil since 1956.

There was breakdown of law and order in Naga Hills and the underground elements raised their head. Mr. Phizo slipped out from the country and escaped to England and got asylum there. There were also rumblings in Tibet, and Dalai Lama came to India in 1959 to seek asylum. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru allowed him to stay at Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh.

Laldenga raised an armed rebellion against the country on the February 28, 1966. He declared an independent Lushai Hills (now Mizoram), a district of Assam then. Laldenga thereafter left the country. Later, a fact finding delegation from Assam Assembly headed by Hoover Hynniewta, Ex. M.P. and MLA from Shillong Constituency went to visit Lushai Hills. They returned with used bullets and other explosives and displayed them before the House of the Assam Legislative Assembly, showing thereby the atrocities committed by the Indian Air Force which strafed the Lushai Hills in 1966.

At present, the whole of Assam and the Assamese people are on the boil. They are waiting for the final report of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to be published on the August 31, 2019. What will happen in the future is uncertain. Will the 40 lakh infiltrators with doubtful Indian identity be allowed to live in Assam? Will the NRC face a gridlock? Where will the infiltrators be sent? Will all the states in India accept them? Will amnesty be given to them? If so then the whole exercise of the NRC would become infructuous.

The whole of North East India is against the proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB). If the Government of India approves it because they are in majority in both Houses of Parliament then the fate of the indigenous people of North East India would be at stake. The biggest challenge for the indigenous population in North East India is to protect its identity, culture, land and economy.

It was reported that at least 4000 people have been detained since August 5th 2019 in Kashmir over the fears of unrest since New Delhi divested the region of its autonomy. They were held and arrested and held under the Public Safety Act (PSA) a law that allows authorities to imprison someone for up to two years without charge or trial. Most of them were flown out of Kashmir because prisons have run out

of capacity.

The Supreme Court of the country as well the High Courts on several occasions have specifically laid down that Article 370 of the Constitution is not a temporary provision. In Kumari Vijaya Lakshmi Jha vs. Union of India (2017), Delhi High Court rejected a petition claiming that Article 370 was temporary. In 2018, the Supreme Court stated that Article 370 is not a temporary provision. Similarly the Supreme Court in SBI vs Zaffar Ullah Nehru (2016) held that Jammu and Kashmir has a special status and that Article 370 is not temporary.

The ruling party at the Centre cannot carry on with its chest thumping on the abrogation of Article 370. Whereas, the much needed discussions on poverty, unemployment, hate crimes, cow lynching, uniform civil code in marriage, no child policy per family for checking the abnormal rise in over population are left untouched. Why not "Wage War" on these issues? Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once said "However good the Constitution may be it is sure to turn out bad, because those who are called upon to work it happen to be a bad lot".

There have been four days in the Republic of India on which the "The idea of India Unity" has been shaken since the January 26, 1950. Firstly, the Indian Air Force bombarded Lushai Hills of Assam for the first time on March 1, 1966 and following days, in retaliation for their uprising against the country on February 28, 1966. The news was blacked out. Nobody knew it elsewhere in the country except the people of Lushai Hills who bore the brunt thereafter. Secondly, it was on June 25, 1975 when Emergency was declared for the whole country and many of our Fundamental Rights were suspended. Thirdly, it was on December 6, 1992, when the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was destroyed in totality by the religious revivalists. Fourthly, we have August 5, 2019 when the Constitution of India was subverted in spirit if not in letter before one billion people of India.

It seems that federalism in our country is now shoved aside and the rights of the eight million Kashmiri people have been stamped on. All the deeds and misdeeds of our rulers have been passing into the pages of history. Quo Vadis, the idea of India; of unity in diversity.

TO THE EDITOR

Traffic trial run misfires

Editor,
A trial run was started w.e.f. 27.05.2019 for the traffic arrangement from Dhankheti point proceeding to Lachumiere area to decongest the traffic during school hours and "No-Entry" was implemented from 7:30 -9:00 am & 2:00 - 4:00 pm. Instead, the vehicles have to follow the extreme left side of the road proceeding towards Malki Point.

However, this has spectacularly failed, for on one side you have an overcrowded Dhankheti-Malki-Barik road and on the other side an empty Dhankheti-Lachumiere road. The Dhankheti-Dombosco road has also got immensely crowded up, since a lot of traffic take that route and thereafter proceed via Jacob's Ladder to St. Anthony's College and beyond.

Evacuation of traffic

should be the primary concern during traffic jams, and no logic can be found for making the Dhankheti-Lachumiere road a "One-Way road", and creating a chaotic situation all across the area. This restriction should be immediately rescinded, and the earlier arrangement of this road being a two-way road should be restored.

Yours etc.,
Lambok Dkhar,
Viaemail

Water conservation by students

Editor,
Kudos to the Central Board of Secondary Education for directing the schools affiliated to it to teach children to conserve water in their daily lives. The Board has directed that all its affiliated schools ensure that every student saves one litre of water every day at home and at school. To make schools

and students proactively participate in the " Jal Shakti Abhiyaan", the CBSE has also directed schools to make eco clubs pro-active and also strengthen the existing ones. The CBSE chairperson has said that while eco clubs would continue to promote environment and climate literacy and motivate learners to become champions for environmental sustainability, the thrust of this year's co-curricular activities from primary to senior secondary section will be on water conservation and CBSE schools will necessarily follow the agenda. According to the campaign it will be ensured that every child from class 5 to 12 shall save one litre of water every day at home and in school. The main aim is to set a target for all CBSE schools to become water efficient in three years. Simple practices at home and at school on saving water can definitely make the students aware of

the necessity of saving the elixir of life. They have to be told about the severe water scarcity that the world witnessed recently in mega metros like Cape Town and our own Chennai. Many other cities in India too faced severe water scarcity this year.

As children are the future keepers of the environment and the custodians of tomorrow's world they have to be trained in a meticulous way to protect water bodies, conserve water and use it without wasting it. Definitely the CBSE's initiative will make the students understand the problem and give them an opportunity to practice it in their daily lives for a better future.

Yours etc.,
M Pradyu,
Kannur -1

Height of superstition

Editor,
BJP MP Pragya Singh

Thakur (Bhopal MP) has kicked up a controversy saying that the Opposition is using 'marakshati' (killing power) to harm BJP leaders. She further said that this evil power was behind the recent deaths of former Union ministers Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj. It may be recalled that Sushma Swaraj died on August 6 and Arun Jaitley on August 24. She made this highly objectionable statement while addressing a condolence meeting at the state BJP office to pay tributes to Jaitley and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babulal Gaur who died on August 20.

Sadhvi Pragya's statement is extremely objectionable as this statement exposes her attitude. Equally intriguing is her perspective and point of views. She said, "While I was contesting elections, a Maharajji told me that bad times are upon us and Opposition is up to something using some 'marakshakti' against the BJP. Now when I see our top leaders leaving us one by

one, I am forced to think, wasn't Maharajji right?" This shows how superstitious and irrational she is. Her illogical statement can only help foster superstitious beliefs in the minds of the people of this country. Further, it can cause hatred and animosity making people further divided and narrow-minded.

An ideal leader should always lead the people from darkness to light. Here, Sadhvi is doing vice versa. Is the Opposition able to annihilate the BJP leaders by performing black magic on them? Everyone has to ponder over this unfounded and naïve statement. The central leadership of the BJP must take it seriously and take measures to correct such leaders in the Party.

Yours etc.,
TK Nandanam,
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.

“ *Fitness starts at home. What you eat is what you will look, just as what you sow is what you reap. Eat good food: eat fruits, vegetables, healthy grains, and don't go for sweet and trite food.* ”
--- Rakul Preet Singh

The Shillong Times

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Windfall from RBI

WITH the RBI announcing the release of huge funds to the Union Government, the Modi dispensation can heave a sigh of relief. This comes at a time when the economy is facing odds, the high growth rates have come down, a liquidity crisis has gripped the nation, and the overall outlook seemed grim. The statement by Niti Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar that the government is faced with a serious cash crunch has added to the nation's worries. For now, however, the RBI decision to provide the government with a Rs 1.75 lakh crore bonanza should change the scenario for the better, at least for the short term. It will now be incumbent on the government to work hard, act in concert, and effect changes in policies and performances in ways as to ensure things do not go out of hand.

The RBI decision is based on the recommendations of a panel it had set up to consider the matter. However, it looks like the government was expecting as much. The fund that the RBI now granted to the government is seen to be exactly the same as the gap left behind by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget presentation in the last parliament session – the gap between revenue and expenditure. The shortfall has now been made up. At the same time, the Centre resorting to such help-taking from RBI, or the LIC from which it took huge funds in recent times in a similar fashion, means the economy is ailing overall. Finance minister says the economy is going slow, but faring better than those of China and even the US. This, by itself, should be small comfort. It is well-known that the Demonetization and GST rollout had adverse effects on the economy.

On the positive side, the government has some relief that a big sum has come into its hands. This might help it to retain the fiscal deficit level at 3.3 per cent, as against the 3.4 per cent in the last fiscal. Money supply in market, out of what the government now laid its hands on, should rev up the infra spend and the like, which should help in pumping in as much money to the markets. A safe assumption is that this should help the economy to an extent and create more job opportunities. Also, the infusion of Rs 70,000 crore to the public sector banks, as announced by the finance minister last week to face the liquidity crisis, should help.

Fit India movement - Why fitness matters

By SumarbinUmdor

Today is National Sports Day and on this occasion our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is launching a Fit India Movement to raise awareness and encourage everyone, young and old, to incorporate physical activity and exercise in their daily routine which would go a long way in improving the health and well-being of all citizens. As a fitness enthusiast I couldn't agree more with our Prime Minister and congratulate him on putting the spotlight on the importance of fitness for modern India. The authors of a scientific paper, 'Effects of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) worldwide' published 2012 in The Lancet point to strong evidence that physical inactivity increases the risk of many adverse health conditions, including coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancers and other chronic diseases. It also concluded that about 9% of premature death is a result of physical inactivity.

India's burden of NCDs is escalating as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, depression and other NCDs are estimated to account for about 60% of all deaths in the country much more than those caused by communicable diseases, injuries and other conditions. In the past chronic diseases were associated with older populations, however because of lifestyle shifts they are now becoming more prominent in younger adults leaving them burdened with health care concerns for the rest of their lives. In India the onset of NCDs is a decade earlier (45 years and above) than in developed nations which has implications on economic growth and productivity. A report by the World Economic Forum estimates that India stands to lose about 3.5 trillion dollars between 2012 to 2030 due to NCDs and mental health conditions.

NCDs are often a direct result of lifestyle and environmental factors and some of the modifiable behaviour such as harmful consumption of alcohol, tobacco use and unhealthy diet combined with sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical activity all contribute to the risk of chronic diseases. Physical inactivity is heavily correlated with the development of many diseases

particularly cardio vascular diseases (CVD). This relationship is supported by many epidemiologic studies starting with the ground breaking work by Morris in 1954 who found that, the more active bus conductors were less likely to suffer from CVD than the inactive drivers. According to WHO estimates over 30% of cancer cases are preventable by incorporating a lifestyle that includes physical activity and regular exercise. Other studies have reported increased physical activity and exercise as being associated with decreased risk for breast cancer, colon cancer, and prostate cancer. Similarly, there is large body of evidence showing the benefits of exercise in the primary and secondary prevention of diabetes, hypertension, depression, osteoporosis and dementia. The benefits of exercise goes beyond health benefits as regular physical activity also helps to maintain an individual's high functional capacity for much of his/her life avoiding deficient survival which is a state where someone is alive but not really living because low functional capacity.

While much attention is given to prevention of NCDs by way of treatment strategies not much focus has been put on the prevention aspect in terms increasing physical activity as part of battle against chronic diseases. Today physical activity and exercise is widely recognized as a means for the primary prevention (or delaying the onset) of chronic diseases as well as in patients' treatment and rehabilitation, so much so that the expression, 'Exercise Is Medicine,' is gaining wide credence as being as effective as drugs in preventing death from chronic diseases afflicting mankind. In fact the benefits of exercise go beyond medicine as it is free and has little or no side effects. So then what constitutes physical activity and exercise?

Caspersen and others (1985) have defined physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that require energy expenditure, and that exercise is a subset of physical activity. Exercise involves physical ac-

tivity performed during leisure time with the primary purpose of improving or maintaining physical fitness, physical performance, or health. Brisk walking, jumping rope, dancing, playing tennis or soccer, lifting weights, climbing on playground equipment at recess, and doing yoga are some examples of health-enhancing exercises.

The World Health Organization global recommendations on physical activity for adult individual without any specific medical condition state that (i) adults aged 18-64 should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorousintensity activity. (ii) Aerobic activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes duration. (iii) For additional health benefits, adults should increase their moderate intensity aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes per week, or engage in 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorousintensity activity.(iv) Muscle strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.

Most individuals that follow some recreational physical activity tend to focus mostly on aerobic exercises such as walking, jogging, running, cycling, swimming, etc., exercises that contributes to cardio-respiratory fitness. There is not much awareness about the importance of strength training or resistance training, stretching and balance exercises particularly among older adults. As we age our body experience a number of physiological and functional declines such as loss of muscle mass and strength that contribute to increased disability, frailty, and falls.

A study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine (2003) reports that strength training exercises when done regularly build muscle strength and muscle mass and preserve bone density, independence, and vitality with age which helps to combat weakness

and frailty and their debilitating consequences. In addition, strength training also has the ability to reduce the risk of osteoporosis and the signs and symptoms of numerous chronic diseases such as heart disease, arthritis, and Type- 2 diabetes, while also improving sleep and reducing depression.

It is therefore vital that an exercise plan should outline how often (frequency), how long (time), and how hard (intensity) and what kinds of exercises (type) are necessary and selected according to the individual current status of one's health level and fitness goal. The exercise frequency, intensity, time, and type also known as FITT principle, should be key components of any fitness routine. For example, any exercise plan should incorporate both aerobic and strength training routine in the frequency and intensity as laid down in most physical activity guidelines.

A recent study titled, 'Physical activity and inactivity patterns in India - results from the ICMR-INDIAB study' (2014) reported that nearly half of the population in the country are inactive and further that leisure-time or recreational physical activity levels are extremely low in India with more than 90% of individuals in both urban and rural areas reported doing no recreational physical activity. The report also highlights that even among those who reported recreational physical activity, the time spent in moderate to vigorous intensity activity was overall less than 20 mins/day, much lower than the recommended target.As physical activity levels in the occupational domain decline, individuals will have to obtain much of their physical activity requirements through recreational physical activity. This therefore underscores the importance of the Fitness India Movement being launched today and calls for individuals and institutions to join hands in creating increased awareness regarding the dangers of physical inactivity and encouraging everyone to actively engage in recreational physical activity for their physical and psychological well-being.

(The writer is a fitness enthusiast and can be contacted at sumdor@rediffmail.com)

Stop water mismanagement to save lives

Ministry of Jal Shaki must find solutions

By Gyan Pathak

India needs to manage water for 17 per cent population of the world but has only 4 per cent of world's freshwater resources. Though annual utilizable water is 690 BCM from surface water sources and 447 BCM from groundwater, water supply is so mismanaged that about two lakh people die every year due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene. The burden of unsafe water on individual is 40 times higher than in China, and 12 times higher than even Sri Lanka. With huge amount of waste water generated annually, mismanagement of waste water contaminating both surface and ground water, lack of liquid waste management, the poor sanitation conditions and habits contributed a significant portion of population suffering from water-borne diseases.

All these have been revealed in the Composite Water Management Index of India released recently by Niti Aayog in association with the newly created Ministry of Jalshakti and the Ministry of Rural development. In spite of possessing surface water, the country is highly dependent on groundwater resources for day to day survival. India is therefore facing the challenge to fulfil its demand through the existing but depleting resources.

The increased scarcity of water is affecting the broad spectrum of economic, social and developmental activities of the nation. It not only affects GDP directly in the form of loss of productivity of agriculture, industrial and service sector but also decreases the ability of the nation. The impact of water scarcity is already being severely felt in some regions, and if states and UTs fail to control the situation, it is only going to deteriorate.

Over the years, expanding agriculture, growing industrialization, increasing population and rising standards of living have increased our water demands at same static supply. Efforts have been made to collect water by building dams and reservoirs and creating ground water structures such as wells, but mismanagement of the resources and lower user efficiency has resulted in a wa-

ter stress situation in the country.

Currently, nearly 820 million people in 12 major river basins of India are facing high to extreme water stress situation. Out of these, 495 million alone belong to Ganga river basin which generates nearly 40 per cent of the country's GDP. The scarcity of water resources also has many cascading effects including desertification, risk to biodiversity, industry, energy sector and risk of exceeding the carrying capacity of urban hubs.

The overall performance of the states in water management remains well-below of what is required to adequately tackle India's water challenge. The index has placed 16 states out of 27 stated in low performing category. It is a serious problem because these states account for 48 per cent of population, 40 per cent of agricultural produce, and 35 per cent of economic output of India. Large economic contributor states have low-water management scores which can hamper India's economic progress. Food security of the country is also at risk on account of poor performance of the agricultural producer states.

Achieving food security for India, with its rising population, is going to be a significant challenge, and water scarcity will make the goal tougher to attain. India will host more than 1.5 billion people by 2030, and serving the food needs of its entire population will be a daunting task. Water shortages in the country are going to make this task harder. Wheat and rice, India's two major staple crops for Indians, are already being affected by water-related issues. About 74% of the area under wheat cultivation and 65% of the area under rice cultivation faces significant levels of water scarcity. These trends are expected to only get worse if immediate measures are not taken. Estimates suggest that the water demand-supply gap in agriculture could be as high as 570 BCM by 2030. (IPA Service)

To the Editor

The Politics of Marten

Editor,
The Shillong Times Platinum Jubilee celebrations triggered off a long awaited and much needed public participation in cleaning up Shillong. It began of course, as it should, with an attempt to clean up the Wah Umkhrah. The fundamental and basic strategy of cleaning up Shillong will depend entirely on viable plans on how we clean up our two rivers, the Umkhrah and the Umshyrpi and how we manage our waste. The issues are interlinked and co dependent on each other.

The basic issue is how do we deal and manage the waste that Shillong produces? This waste management problem is compounded by the nightmarish presence of single use plastic. Plastic refuses to decompose or degenerate; burning it is hazardous to health, organic matter in plastic bags or containers turn rancid and rot, emanating foul and fetid smells; stinking garbage then piles up defiling the environment and the atmosphere around. This is what is happening to the land fill in Marten. Marten is overflowing; it's a blot to the beauty of Shillong and a shame of our inability to manage our urban affairs for as a society we still have to come up with a solution to the problem.

Marten falls in the 6th Schedule area, outside Municipality. The management of

such areas is hotly claimed by the KHADC so much so that during PN Syiem's tenure as CEM , even MUDA structural bye laws, ensuring uniformity of security of buildings throughout , were disputed with much furore and hot air. The supporters and champions of complete KHADC suzerainty sans responsibility over 6th Schedule Areas were many and the Synjuk Ki Rangbah Shnong were forefront supporters. Now Marten is falling apart; not only municipal localities but 6th Schedule localities beyond Municipality are piling their rubbish and garbage into this land fill. Question is where is the KHADC and its champions when it comes to management of waste of and in 6th Schedule areas? If Marten is managed and maintained by the Shillong Municipality, then why should KHADC 6th Schedule localities enjoy this benefit? Why one standard for MUDA and double standards for Marten? It is only now under the tutelage of Bah Paul Lyngdoh, EM i/c Trade that plastic has been banned in Lewduh. It's thus encouraging to see the KHADC putting its best foot forward to ease the welfare of the common man and Shillong city. It is sincerely hoped that this new found public service orientation will extend to solu-

tions for poor Marten too.

The point here is we have such self seeking, shortsighted and blinkered politicians, who cannot work together that public interest is often sacrificed at the altar of their petty political expediency.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah,
Via email

No-plastic campaign

Editor,

The recent clarion call by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi during the G7 meet in France to do away with plastics is a welcome step to save our planet from environmental inundation. The use of plastics has reached such an alarming situation that not only drains and rivers but the oceans and mountains are also facing the brunt of plastic globally. The Prime Minister has taken a vow that from 2nd October*2019, the birthday of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, a no-plastic campaign will be launched throughout the country. To really curb the menace of plastic it has to be undertaken on a war footing and should be stopped from the manufacturing source to distribution and use by the public. Every state should enact stringent laws to stop the use of plastic. If we really want our country to be plastic free the campaign

should be like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan which has become a great success.

A lot will depend on the State Governments in the Country as to how they are going to implement this campaign for the betterment of not only our country but the entire planet as well.

Yours etc.,
SL Singhania,
Via email

Irresponsible issuance of certificates by BDOs

Editor,

For admission to various courses in NEHU, there is a provision to give weightage for domiciles of Meghalaya belonging to educationally backward areas on the basis of literacy rates of the C & RD Blocks. If a candidate belongs to a Block with literacy rate that is more than 5 percentage points below the national level literacy rate, 7 points will be added to the score of that candidate and if the literacy rate of a Block is up to 5 percentage points below the national level, 5 points will be added. It goes without saying that if the literacy rate of a Block is above the national average, no weightage will be given. The certificate in this regard should be issued by the Block Development

Officer (BDO). The census data is freely available online and estimates can be obtained at various levels – national, state, district, Block and town or village level and hence anyone can calculate and verify the claims given in the certificate.

Year after year the BDOs of many Blocks have been giving false literacy rate certificates, thereby giving false hopes to the candidates. Some BDOs give certificates that read like this “... the literacy rate of the Block has not exceeded 50 percent...”, when in fact the literacy rate of that particular Block is well above the national average. Candidates with such certificates are shocked when the additional weightage of 7 or 5 is not given to them. They come to the concerned departments to question the authorities, sometimes with members of NGOs. This unnecessary hassle could have been avoided if the certificates were genuine in the first place. It is a matter of great concern that officers holding responsible positions give false certificates. This speaks volumes of the irresponsibility and lack of accountability in governance at the grassroots level.

Yours etc.,
Dr. V. Pala

Department of Economics
NEHU, Shillong

India: Wanted more federalism

Editor,

The decentralization of powers in an authority , be it in a family or in a state/ nation is somewhat similar and follows a natural process.

Recollecting a conversation I had with a child psychologist many years ago, he explained that in a family, when a child is born, full authority and control is with the parents to take care and support the child, but as the child grows older, gradual freedom is given to the child to question and explore. When the child begins to mature he/ she is guided to make decisions and gradually encouraged to stand on their own feet and to take care of their own life and future and to become an asset to their family and society. But the family bond through the years still binds them through thick and thin.

In normal circumstances, if parental control in a family is absolute that does not allow the children to mature and stand on their own feet. Children either become rebellious or totally dependent on their parents through their lives. They become a liability not only to their families but also to society.

To put it simply, this

scenario can also be applied in a nation's centre- state relations because here too it deals with human beings. A newly independent nation needs a strong central government but gradually states must be given more powers and encouraged to stand on their own feet and survive and ultimately to contribute towards the Nations' growth and prosperity.

An overpowering central government can produce states that will either be perpetually dependent on the Central Govt for their very survival thereby becoming liabilities, slowing down the country's overall growth or they can become rebellious states that can lead to the gradual disintegration of the country and there are many such examples in the history of the world, past and present.

The primary role of the family and the state is to ensure that the individual gets optimum facilities with the minimum of interference to mature into a self dependent individual who will be an asset not only to his family but to society and the country as a whole.

The need of the hour for India to become a strong and a great nation is for the Centre and the States to work out a consensus for gradual and more decentralization of powers to the states. This process should also take into consideration and honour the treaties and agreements

entered into by some of the states with the Central Govt especially the smaller populated north eastern states for the protection of their identity, their land and their resources. But these special protections should not stop the North-Eastern states from striving to stand on their own feet and also to contribute towards the progress and development of India.

The vision of the Maitshaphrang Ideology is to see that one day the Khasi community shall strive that in terms of quality, we will do away with reservation and we will compete with the rest of the world on an equal footing, because we have the qualities and the capabilities to do it and higher scholarships will be based on merit only. The Khasis that have reached a certain level of income should proudly announce that they will pay Income Tax.

But in terms of quantity, being smaller populated communities surrounded by much larger populated communities, we need absolute political reservation.

Yours etc.,
Michael N. Syiem,
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.

“*He died not for men, but for each man. If each man had been the only man made, He would have done no less.*”

--- C.S. Lewis

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXII No.20 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 30, 2019

Fist-fights in the air

WHILE it could be argued, or admitted, that Pakistan had taken a hit vis-à-vis the Modi government’s historic steps in Jammu and Kashmir, this is time for reconciliation on both sides. For India, here was a step forward in the matter of national integration; and for Pakistan, a step backward in its decades-long attempt to get this part of Kashmir to its side. Weeks later, Pakistan is still in a mood to flex its muscles and browbeat its rival. Pakistan’s move at the UN, with ally China, did not help. Its attempt to draw in the US to browbeat India too failed. The world community stood by India’s steps in Kashmir; and this was only to be expected in view of the strong will by world leaders against the scourge of terror, which has its epicenter in and around Pakistan. Prime Minister Imran Khan understands as much.

Test-firing a surface-to-surface Ghaznavi missile in itself meant little to India, but such acts could strengthen feelings that Pakistan is preparing for a war with India. At the minimum, this could be an attempt to raise global concerns that the two nuclear-armed rivals could set the clock back in terms of the global campaign for nuclear deterrence. Pakistan, followed by India, already raised the bar and made it clear that the long-held “no first use” nuclear policy is not the last word. At the same time, this is no time for a war for Pakistan, caught as it is in a serious economic crisis – Imran Khan himself failing even to pay electricity bills and facing the prospect of being a “powerless” PM. The army brass in Rawalpindi is conspicuous by their silence for now; yet there’s no guarantee that they would not take things too far. They were in the forefront of the pro-Kashmiri, anti-India crusades staged through proxy agencies like JeM and LeT, which drew their strength from the military’s notorious ISI. A threat from a Pakistani minister is that his nation would resort, again, to closure of its airspace to Indian flights – which would require flights to India from the western sector taking a detour, costing them more in terms of fuel expenses and time. BJP leader Subramanian Swamy’s prescription is to effect a similar closure to ships heading for the Karachi port via the Arabian Sea. All these and worse scenarios are possible, but who suffers in the end is the big question.

LOOKING BACK

June 22, 1989

“Tripura food situation comfortable”

The food situation in Tripura is "comfortable" with stocks for six weeks, according to Minister of State for Food Mr Motilal Saha. He told newsmen here that the stock of wheat, sugar and salt was comfortable. Supply of kerosene was, however, farless than the monthly quota of 2660 kilo litres. He refuted the Opposition claim that there were starvation deaths in the state

and maintained that food stuff was being supplied in the rural areas through the fair price shops. He, however, admitted that the stock of rice had dwindled following introduction of the double ration system in some areas under the Autonomous District Council (ADC) for the tribals and the additional monthly supply of 5000 tonnes for the Bangladeshi refugees.

Home Department:The MDA Govt’s Achilles heel

By Patricia Mukhim

The Conrad Sangma led Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) Government has been called a government of greenhorns with many of the elected being first time MLAs and ministers. Despite that, the first timers have been responsive and tried to give their best. That must be appreciated. Till date we have not heard of anyone of them being involved in any kind of scam, barring one Department. Indeed what’s happening in the Home Department should bother Chief Minister Conrad Sangma because it worries a lot of people who know the goings-on. In fact, the Home Department could become Conrad’s Achilles heel if he does not take stock of things and set matters right.

The recent change of trade from Armed Branch (AB) to Unarmed Branch (UB) has come under flak from the incumbents. The Home Department’s clarification carries little weight because the entire process is unprecedented. Senior police officials are appalled by this introduction of an entirely new change of trade from AB to UB constables because AB constables have to go through an entirely different recruitment process. Their physical tests of endurance and selection procedures are completely different from that adopted for the UBs. It is alleged that the AB constables who wish to convert to UBs can do so at a price with Rs one lakh being the minimum bid. It appears that this conversion racket is a package deal. The package includes not just conversion from AB to UB but also postings to Ri-Bhoi, or West/East Jaintia Hills districts so that the highest bidder can recover the amount paid for conversion within no time. The modus operandi for all this should be unearthed by the Meghalaya High Court which should, in all fairness, treat this article as a PIL.

The higher-ups in the Home Department are in the know of this. After we have had DGPs like Mr Ramchandran serving the state, those following him have fallen short of expectations. Mr Ramchandran had streamlined and digitized the recruitment process and results, thereby leaving no scope for political interference in recruitment. It is sad that the Home Department has now fallen from grace. What is happening today is a sinister ploy that has already demoralized several police officials who

unfortunately don’t speak up for fear that they will be penalized. Only those who toe the line are receiving favours from the powers that be. By the time the present DGP Mr Chandra Nath an superannuates and leaves the state, Meghalaya Police which had once won laurels for tackling militancy in Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills with grit and determination, with some having given their precious lives in the process, will become a force that is corrupt to the core and without the resilience required to fight crime.

Meghalaya Police (MLP) had gone through tough times in the recent past and earned accolades of not only of the common people, but also of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for their outstanding ability to neutralize the GNLA and other dreaded militant organizations operating from Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills. After relentless efforts and enormous sacrifice by many police officers and brave men, peace has now dawned on Meghalaya. This should be the time to take stock and strengthen the morale of the MLP to safeguard this hard earned peace through dedicated training, strengthening basic policing, and speedy investigation of heinous crimes such as rape, murder etc and work on improving the conviction rates as a whole.

But the present establishment does not have a pro-active action plan to improve the quality of investigation in major cases, to secure conviction of the guilty. Conviction is the best deterrent to crime. There is such a thing as ‘peace time policing’ where the system can afford to provide the best training to its cadres so that they are prepared for the worst case scenarios. Basic policing also includes traffic management, strengthening investigation, special training in investigation of cyber crimes amongst others. The last named – cyber crime has risen exponentially in Meghalaya. So far not a single FIR filed on cyber crime has been resolved. Isn’t it time we asked hard questions to the DGP and of course his political boss the Home Minister? Already the UB constables are up in arms against the conversion of AB to UB. Are we looking at creating

a mutiny here? Will this not create bad blood within the Meghalaya Police?

For a while now senior officials have complained that transfers and postings are effected by flouting the Supreme Court guidelines given in Prakash Singh versus Union of India case. And to think that Mr Prakash Singh, an officer we all respect went to Court to bring justice and transparency in the policing system which his younger colleagues are today compromising. The Supreme Court had categorically directed that regular postings and transfers should be done after giving two years tenure in Law and Order posts. In Meghalaya, postings are given to highest bidders for the most sought after districts of Ri Bhoi, East and West Jaintia Hills – the coal belts and the trail where the coal trucks take on their way out of Meghalaya. Those who can pay huge sums are posted to these districts starting from the SP to the lowest ranking constable.

Out of forty two police stations in Meghalaya, half have no basic facilities such as clean toilets, separate resting places for women police, a decent sitting area for the public, and food for those in police lock-ups. In fact, food is brought from the nearby hotels on payment from the pockets of the local police. Now why would the police shell out money from their pockets? So there is a quid pro quo. The local hoteliers are allowed to run their illegal businesses such as selling liquor and allowing commercial sex etc. Is it not the responsibility of the DGP to address these basic requirements at the Police Stations? How many police stations has he visited since he took over?

The Station House Officers (SHOs) lament that vehicles are not available at police stations for them to arrive at a crime scene at the earliest. Response time is critical to policing but how can they do so without vehicles? Most of the new vehicles are allocated by the AIG Mr langrai, who it is believed has the blessings of the DGP. Senior police officers have two to three vehicles at their residence to be at the beck and call of their family members. This is common in Meghalaya where some time ago the son of a top cop was seen driving a police vehicle without any qualms.

A good leader thinks not of himself or his political boss but of his men and officers and tries to improve policing through innovative methods. The Meghalaya

Police today is hugely unfit. The cops lack training in crowd control and the use of latest technical gadgets in policing, weapons training, human rights, gender and contemporary subjects such as cyber crimes. Those who are in the know speak of an allegedly, well-oiled money-collection system. This is in fact a new low for Meghalaya Police!

A look at the crime data published in National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) related to Meghalaya gives a dismal picture and speaks volumes about the prevailing sad state of affairs in the department. The Meghalaya police website for crime data has only been updated to March 2018 as if no other crime was committed thereafter. In the first three months of 2018, 766 IPC cases were registered of which 23 were murder cases; 30 rape cases; 34 kidnapping cases; 6 attempted rape cases; 286 cases of theft and 15 cases of outraging the modesty of women. Can the DGP enlighten us on the status of the above-mentioned heinous crimes? What is the conviction rate in the above cases? The conviction rate in Meghalaya is less than 6%. How incompetent is that? Is this why we have a police force in Meghalaya? Is this the professional contribution of the DGP and his team here? Who are you accountable to? Surely not to your political bosses but to the people of Meghalaya!

A word about the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Meghalaya Police which has remained defunct or dysfunctional for a while now! While the Prime Minister is cracking down on white collar crimes and even the former Home and Finance Minister has not been spared how come Meghalaya is such a laggard? Are you telling us that this is a state of saints where corruption in government does not happen? The Prime Minister has to be kept informed of this huge policing default in Meghalaya. The ACB needs an overhaul and Chief Minister Conrad Sangma owes it to the public of Meghalaya to shake up the system and allow a more competent person to take over the Home Department. This is imperative if he desires to return to power after five years.

(The views expressed here are personal. The writer is former member, National Security Advisory Board)

Yours etc.,
Dr. Anindita D. Sangma
West Garo Hills

Umiew River a septic tank

Editor,
The page three caption in your paper, “Government bans fishing in Mawphlang dam, Umiew river” (ST Aug 27, 2019) made interesting reading. For many months I have told my people who fish in Umiew River not to do so. The river has become

very dirty to the extent that the fish from it may not be edible at all. When KNV (Mawphlang) was asked to improve upon the sewage system, I had another agenda in mind. The Umiew originates at Pmlakrai opposite which stands the huge housing complex of DGAR Assam Rifles. The septic tank may be perfectly fine but as you know we use toilet papers where as the residents use water. This water along with soil goes to the drain nearby and finally into the river. So the ban on fishing is a welcome move as these fishes live on the suspended particles of Umiew river.

Yours etc.,
M. Khyriem,
Shillong- 14.

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

Congress leadership must listen to dissenting voices
Party must take stand on Modi through frank discussions

By Sagarneel Sinha

There have been reports of division within the Congress party about its Lok Sabha election campaign led by Rahul Gandhi with the slogan “Chowkidar chor hain” — an indirect attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for being a “thief”. Later, Rahul himself too in his resignation letter after the results had confirmed by mentioning that at times he found himself alone — pointing to the disunity among the party. However, all these disunity remained mostly behind the curtains till senior party leader Jairam Ramesh’s cautious public comment not to demonise Modi everytime — as it will not benefit the party. He said that schemes like Ujjwala were successful — and to confront Modi, it is better to recognise his works that connect him with the common people.

Although, many Congress leaders are criticising Ramesh for publicly making statements, which they thought unnecessary, but he too has found some takers from within his own party — party’s Rajya Sabha member Abhishek Manu Singhvi, also a lawyer, and party’s Lok Sabha MP Sashi Tharoor, who somehow manages to stay in news headlines either through his statements, often prone to controversies, or through his magisterial English command causing spikes in google searches. This time too by supporting Jairam, Tharoor has invited the criticisms — not from opposition — but from his own party leaders, particularly from leaders of

disastrous defeat in the elections?

It seems so. After all, Congress is still in the hands of the Nehru-Gandhi family with Sonia Gandhi as its interim president. This points that Rahul was more unhappy with his own party colleagues who were unsatisfied with his election strategy — particularly the “Chowkidar chor hain” campaign against Prime Minister Modi. This might have prompted Rahul to step down as a plan to win back the faith of his own party leaders, especially the old guard of the party. Re-election of Sonia Gandhi also directs to this perspective as she is known to have more cordial relations with the old guard of the party than her son.

But it seems that despite Sonia back in the helm, she has been unable to combine all the voices of the party into one. That’s the reason that there are different tunes from old guard leaders like Jairam Ramesh, who somehow has tried his best to indicate his opposition about the political strategies of the party — or particularly Rahul Gandhi’s style of working. The things that are coming out from the Congress are well pointing out that the party is completely disunited. Already the party faced embarrassments from within on the issue of Modi government’s decision to strip the clauses of the Article 370 — which accorded special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Young leaders like Jyotiraditya

One reason might be that Jairam Ramesh, who is currently not a member of Congress Working Committee, the party's topmost executive body, is trying to send signals to the party about his intention for a significant role in the party. Same goes with Singhvi and Tharoor who too are not part of the party's topmost executive body.

Kerala, the state he represents in parliament.

However, the significant point is — what prompted senior leaders like Jairam Ramesh to give such statements from public forums which goes against the party line instead of communicating the views within the party? Jairam could have conveyed his thoughts that contradict the official partyline to Sonia or Rahul or Priyanka Gandhi. After all, Gandhi family, which commands the party, is not beyond his reach.

One reason might be that Jairam Ramesh, who is currently not a member of Congress Working Committee, the party’s topmost executive body, is trying to send signals to the party about his intention for a significant role in the party. Same goes with Singhvi and Tharoor who too are not part of the party’s topmost executive body. So, it may be a tactic for propagating their own ambitions — that they want to pursue within the party in the future.

Another reason, a very salient one, would be that there might be no takers of Jairam’s opinion within the party. This is something that sounds disturbing — if this is true. That senior Congress leaders like Jairam are not heard within the party forum — ultimately prompting him to speak his inner conscience from public forum. Here in this case, Rahul’s statement that he often found himself alone in the election campaign assumes much significance. Also, it brings back the issue of Rahul’s resignation. Was Rahul’s stepping down from the party president more related to Congress’ own internal divisions than its

Scindia, Milind Deora, Deepender Hooda — all known in the party as Rahul’s young brigade — too supported the move prompting anger from opposition leader of Rajya Sabha and senior party leader Gulam Navi Azad from Jammu and Kashmir.

Also, the salient fact is neither any member from the Gandhi family nor the Congress party officially has denounced these leaders for deviating away from the party line. Means that party is also following the wait and watch theory. Same goes with the leaders who too are trying to exert their influence on the party’s policies — or possibly trying to save their own political careers. Notably, what these leaders are saying generally echo the majority sentiments of the country.

Whatever the truth is, one thing clear is that these developments point to the fact that nothing is well within the grand old party where both the old and the young guards are trying to make their points — that too by resorting to public forums — despite being aware of the fact that it will bring humiliation to the party, which is already beleaguered after facing two consecutive defeats at the hands of BJP. Congress shouldn’t forget that BJP, despite winning a big mandate, is currently on a welcoming spree for whoever knocks at the doors of the party’s headquarters and wants to hold the “lotus” in their hands! So, it will be better for the Congress high command to consider the voices of its own leaders — before it is too late. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Govt crippling the educated unemployed

Editor,
This pertains to the eligibility criteria for the recent official advertisement notification for the Junior Rural Development Officers in the Community and Rural Development Department, Government of Meghalaya. Students study relevant subject streams and become doctors, engineers, agriculturists, horticulturists, etc. But where do the students who pass out of the Department of RDAP (Rural Development and Agricultural Production) NEHU, Tura fit in? This Central University Department was established over 15 years ago and every year 20 students get their post graduation degree. We

have knowledge in four fields basically i.e., Rural Development, Agronomy, Horticulture and Animal Science in addition to basic statistics and computer applications and also specialization in one of the four subjects. We were given real rural life knowledge practically. I still remember that though I have specialized in rural development but since agronomy was one of my subjects, our batch had literally got in muddy peg, bare foot for cultivation of paddy under the hot scorching sun. This is just one example of how we did practical studies. We are officially stamped as “JACK OF ALL TRADES BUT MASTERS OF NONE”. Statistics 2011 says that Meghalaya has approximately 80% rural population. Hence students after graduation

opt for studies specializing in rural development because they see great scope in that field without being aware of the dark reality. Every time we try to fit in departments that have at least one subject related to RDAP, normally our applications are rejected or rejected after an interview. It makes sense because they prefer candidates related purely to their required stream. Till date not one (M.Sc. RDAP) has been placed in the relevant field. Some had to fit in other fields not at all relevant to RDAP and are surviving on the basis of their graduation degree. Majority of M.Sc. RDAP pass out are working on contractual basis in some projects with no job security. On the one hand we have the Dept. of RDAP, NEHU where students who pass out are left with no proper field to

fit in and on the other hand we have the State Government that gives little hope of our fitting in after over a decade of studies and is crippling us with the “age bar.” I passed my M.Sc. RDAP in 2010 and since then I have been trying to get into my related field of job but in vain. In the mean time I completed my Ph.D. in RDAP in 2016 and am still unemployed till date.

Today I might be the lone voice but I believe that I am voicing the feelings of the majority of silent, frustrated RDAP Masters degree holders/ PhDs. Post-Graduation is a higher degree! When Government is coming up with so many policies to uplift rural people and people with disabilities then why is it crippling the educated unemployed who have specialized in rural development with the

“ Basically, one of the hardest things about being an actor is getting your first break. I'm a product of nepotism. The doors were open to me. I'd done several movies before I decided what I wanted to do. ”

--- Jeff Bridges

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.21 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 2019

Nepotism in recruitments

EVERY now and again there are complaints from those appearing for various recruitment tests/job interviews about the unjust methods adopted by agencies of the state and central government departments. In a world where employment is shrinking while the number of people graduating out of colleges and universities is growing exponentially every year the ratio between jobs available and number of applicants is highly skewed. Even when the qualifications for available posts are well defined, there are applicants that are over-qualified. In a state where the private sector is far from developed and where no serious brainstorm has happened to craft out a roadmap for enterprise development in the last four decades, it is but natural that there will be a fight to the finish for any vacancies in the government and public sector units. Heartburns and anxieties are likely to spill over into the streets sooner than later. This is not a healthy development.

For those in the Government today it is a case of, “Uneasy is the head that wears the crown.” They have been elected to govern the state, which includes in the main, an imperative to create job opportunities for the large number of educated but unskilled graduates. For a long time elected representatives have served their own interests and entered politics to make a business out of the profession. Some run brisk private businesses and have created jobs for their kith and kin only. This practice will no longer be tolerated by the aspiring young generation that is watching with a critical eye at the manner in which politicians are manipulating the system for their self-ish interests. Quite a number of youth today are well qualified for the job markets outside the state and have moved out to realise their aspirations. Others are not so fortunate and have had to be content with applying for jobs closer home. All they are asking for is a transparent recruitment process where they are judged on merit alone. It is disheartening for them to see a flawed or manipulated recruitment process where backdoor appointments are effected and where people with political clout are recruited even though they have not made the cut.

There is much talk about entrepreneurship development but that takes a skilling process that is rigorous and robust and a financial system that responds to their needs and is ready not just to fund their enterprise but to hand-hold them and provide continuous support in financial management practices. The banking sector does not have that capacity. There must be other agencies that fill the gaps. It is incumbent on the state government to find the ways and means to set this process in motion.

The final list of NRC is being released today, 31st August, which would decide the fate of 40 lakh people, excluded earlier in the final draft released last year. However, there are many nagging concerns about the process headed by the State NRC coordinator Prateek Hajela under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

Earlier both the State and Central dispensations had appealed to the apex court for re-verification of the 20% of the sample in the border districts and 10% in other areas, but these were rejected. The Assam government, unsatisfied with the current process, revealed the National Register of Citizens figures border-wise this month, to prove their point that it's not free from flaws -- the NRC inclusion percentage is higher in the bordering districts, which have higher Muslim population, than other districts, where the indigenous people of the State inhabit. This shows how the NRC and State government are not on the same page, and pinpoints to a new crisis that may emerge after the publication of the final list.

Already there are speculations that the exclusion number may range from 10 lakh to 20 lakh out of the total 40 lakh excluded last time -- this year additional 1 lakh were excluded too. There are many issues that need to be sorted out to properly and peacefully execute this process but the politicisation of the process seems to be a hurdle. State BJP government's revelation of NRC data border-wise is also one of the steps to politicise the process, as the low inclusion in Muslim areas doesn't fit with the narrative of the saffron party.

On the other hand, the allegations by a section of intellectuals of the country and foreign media that the NRC is carried out by “the Modi government to punish the 40 lakh citizens, mostly Muslims” is highly provocative and worse, is not based on facts. What these intellectuals and the foreign media choose to ignore, the reasons they know better, is that a significant number of Bengali Hindus are expected to be in the exclusion list. Not

Petition for a flyover

Editor,
I write to support the views of Pynshai Shynret expressed in the letter published in your esteemed daily (ST Aug 27, 2019) regarding utilisation of the space in the Barik Junction for construction of flyovers under the ‘Smart City Project’. Constructing Shopping Malls in the Barik compound is definitely a ‘No’ ‘No.’ In fact, I am in favour of preserving the original timber residential building and in removing the eye-sores around it. There would still be enough space for widening the roads as well as constructing flyovers.

Recently it was reported that there was a proposal for creating a Traffic Engineering Cell/Wing in the Public Works Department. This is a welcome development. Let PWD lead the effort to reduce traffic congestion, with the support of the Police, Transport and the Urban Affairs Departments. Definitely, ‘Efficient Transportation’ must be an integral part of the ‘Smart City Project’ and construction of flyovers is perhaps the only solution for reduction in traffic congestion at road junctions in and around the City. Drawing on the long experience and the brainstorming which has been going on over the past few years, it should be feasi-

ble to draw up a holistic plan with structural and non-structural measures for easing life in the City.

But time is running out as the transportation capacity of the existing road system is fast reaching its maximum. Therefore, ‘Smart’ action is necessary. Yours etc, S Ahmed, Via email

Illegal recruitment methods

Editor,
Through your esteemed I wish to highlight the anomalies and illegal practices of the District Social Welfare Department, South Garo Hills, Baghmara, for the information of all concerned and for taking necessary action by the higher authorities of the State Government of Meghalaya. An advertisement was published sometime in the month of June-July in The Shillong Times inviting application for nine different posts under District Social Welfare Department, South Garo Hills, Baghmara. Out of these posts there were two vacancies for the post of Para Medical personnel 24x7 with Rs 15,000 as monthly remuneration. Accordingly, some interested candidates applied for the

posts. According to the General Information at SL. No 7, of the Advertisement it was mentioned that, “For the shortlisted candidates from SL.No 1-7, the time and venue for Skill Test and Interview will be intimated later. But there was no such intimation before the time scheduled for the Skill Test which was conducted on August 28, 2019. A notice in this regard was displayed on the notice board only a day ahead of the scheduled date i.e on August 27, 2019. The notice also did not have any date of issue. As a result, many applicants and aspiring candidates could not turn up for the Skill Test that was conducted on that day. One lady applicant on getting the information from her friend over phone, rushed to the venue to appear in the Skill Test. She was the lone candidate for the post of Para Medical Personnel. However, even after the time had lapsed, one male applicant too, arrived after getting information about the ongoing Skill Test being conducted at the venue. Since he arrived after the scheduled time he should have been barred from taking the Skill Test, yet, he was allowed to do so. The time schedule for the Skill Test was fixed from 9:30 am onwards.

Following the Skill Test, results were out and the list

NRC Final List
Demonising,
no solution
By Sagarneel Sinha

only this, even a section of natives of the State too may find their names in it. Actually, there are many complexities within this process and it is simply not an anti-Muslim exercise as they are propagating.

First of all, let the facts be clear. NRC is a list of Indian citizens of Assam and was first prepared in 1951 based on that year's census. The current updation of NRC is based on the principles of the Assam Accord signed in 1985 between the then government of India led by

world would like to become a minority in its own land and in this case it applies to the Assamese and indigenous tribal communities.

The main reason for NRC is not wrong but the unresolved issues related to it are the main concerns. The people who will not find their names on the list, although will not become foreigners immediately, but will have to have to approach the Foreigners' Tribunal Court, which will decide whether the person is a foreigner. The question is what will the government do with

“ Already there are speculations that the exclusion number may range from 10 lakh to 20 lakh out of the total 40 lakh excluded last time -- this year additional 1 lakh were excluded too. There are many issues that need to be sorted out to properly and peacefully execute this process but the politicisation of the process seems to be a hurdle. ”

Rajiv Gandhi and the All Assam Students Union. The purpose of updation is to ensure the rights of the indigenous Assamese and tribal communities of the State, following the influx of both the Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims from East Pakistan, which later became Bangladesh -- infiltration still continued even after its creation.

So, saying that the very process of NRC is wrong is not right. Assam has been facing the burden of immigration, which threatens its demography. According to 2011 census figures Assamese speaking population dropped to 48.38% from 57.81% in 1991. On the other hand, Bengali speaking population rose to 28.91% from 21.67% in 1991. Also, Bodo (an ethnic tribe of Assam) population declined to 4.53% from 4.86% in 2001. It is an obvious reason that no community in this

these citizens after they are declared foreigners? As per the new rules of the Assam government, declared foreigners who have completed over three years in detention centres can be released based on certain conditions. Plus, deportation of these foreigners to Bangladesh too is almost not possible, as the neighbouring country, already reeling with lakhs of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, has maintained that this is an internal process of India. Certainly, there is no clear policy of the government on this issue.

Another important point is that out of the excluded 40 lakh, four lakh people haven't applied for inclusion in the NRC list. Most probable reason might be they don't have the required documents to proof the legacy data for entry in the NRC list. Legacy data is the collective list of the NRC data of 1951 and electoral rolls up to midnight of 24th

ism and illegalities. Someone has to file an RTI in this regard to know the details and an inquiry must be initiated to unearth the truth behind all these malpractices and illegalities.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Unfair recruitment at NEIAH

Editor,
This pertains to the eligibility criteria for the recent official advertisement of various vacant posts at North Eastern Institute of Ayurvedic and Homeopathy (NEIAH) Shillong where the so called Skill Test has been called for the short listed candidates on 30.08.2019. As per its advertisement no. ADVT.No.NEIAH/ADVT/01/2015 all posts should be directly recruited after conducting written tests for all candidates which shall be based on merit.It may be recalled that this recruitment written test had lapsed once (July 2016) only to be reconducted again for reasons best known to the authorities. After a gap of almost a year, call letters have been despatched to a select few without publishing marks secured on merit basis. Surprisingly,the list of

March, 1971. So, in that case, many of these may be the original inhabitants of the State.

Although, the State government has said it would provide assistance, concerns still remain. Reports suggest many people are suffering from mental problems since their exclusion from last year's NRC list and are not sure whether their names would be make it to list this time. Also, there are allegations from some sections that the legacy codes are corrupted for entering the names in the NRC list.

Actually, it would be better to find a way to solve this NRC imbroglio. Presently, there is no clear policy to deal with foreigners. Obviously, the State can't punish the citizens. The citizens declared foreigners can be granted licenses for work permit. Also, the government should consider legislation, where buying and selling of land is reserved only for the locals, which will reduce their fear.

It is also true that Bengali Hindus from East Pakistan migrated to Assam facing persecution in their homelands i.e. they are refugees. Their concerns also need to be heard. The Centre can devise a formula to systematically shift a section of refugees and immigrants to other parts of the country, as it is unfair to load Assam with the burden of immigration.

In conclusion, the political dispensation must take all on board. Obviously, demonising NRC as totally a wrong idea and also politicising it for mere vote bank offers no solution to the process. One shouldn't forget that it was the promise, made by subsequent Assam Gana Parishad and Congress governments to the natives of Assam, which once witnessed violence due to separatism, of protecting their identity in the State. This must be fulfilled, despite the time lag, as there is nagging danger of separatism being kicked off once again in the State based on Assamese identity. The challenge for the government is to chalk out a proper plan to deal with the people, who aren't going to be enlisted. Let Assam not burn again.---INFA

selected candidates was not posted in the website until some candidates lodged their complaints. This led to suspicions of manipulation.Moreover,when the skill test was conducted for the post of Radiographer it was done at NEIGRIHMS where almost all experts and candidates are from that very Institute. Where is the transparency in this recruitment? Secondly,to add to the woes of aspiring candidates, the NEIAH authorities did not have any external and independent experts from reputed hospitals outside the state.The manner in which the Skills-test was conducted was a sham and done in a disorderly manner when patients interrupted the candidates in between since no prior arrangement was made for the same. It is totally unfair and the Skills test lacked credibilby as it appears that it was done just to cover up the back-door appointments.

If such a Test is conducted at any private institute, deserving candidates may have a chance to prove themselves according to their merit. If they justify that no Radiology equipments are available at NEIAH then they could have chosen better options for the same where free and fair tests are conducted. There was no verification of documents of

RBI's transfer of funds unlikely to clear financial mess
Falling growth rate can only be moderately reversed
By Gyan Pathak

RBI's transfer of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government of India is not likely to clear financial mess of the country that has been created by the Modi-led NDA since 2014. The extent of the economic and financial crisis is far worse than the gift of the RBI which is 1.25 per cent of the GDP in 2018-19.

Even if we consider that the government will somehow be able to achieve 7 per cent of GDP, as predicted by Economic Survey, the shortfall in the budgeted 12 per cent GDP would be 5 per cent which would be equivalent to Rs 7.04 lakh crore. This huge shortfall in the budget calculations would substantially bring down total earning of the government. Since, Rs 90,000 crore from RBI is already accounted in the budget; the extra money available to the government will be only Rs 86,000 crore in addition to the budgeted amount.

It's a pittance even in comparison to the country's direct and indirect tax collections for FY18-19 which fell short by Rs 1.7 trillion, which was 7.5 percent below the revised estimate for the period. The direct tax collected till mid-August is 4.69 percent, against the annual target of 17.3 percent. It should be noted that GDP growth rate for the year was 6.8 per cent which is likely to fall to 6.2 per cent in the current financial year. In the last quarter, GDP growth rate fell to 5.7 percent. Across the board, the economic slowdown will affect tax collection, which is already projected to be unreasonably high in the budget.

All these are indicative of the limitation of the government which is not in a position to save the people of the country from the financial mess it has created in the last five years during which growth rate has come down to six years low, private investment 14 years low, unemployment 45 years high, worst financial crisis in the last 70 years, industrial production growth slipping to as low as 2 per cent, GVA growth rate in Agriculture and allied activities fell to 2.92 per cent, and so on. The list is long and most of the items present a distressing picture.

the candidates as directed by the Director, NEIAH in the call letters.

NGOs and other central and state agencies should keep a watchful eye, so that the aspirations of our educated unemployed youths are not shattered. Otherwise, the vision of our Prime Minister to transform India into “Saab ka saath,Saab ka Vikaas” will become a distant dream .

Yours etc;
Bilcarson Rymbai
Shillong-1

Making Shillong a No - plastic Zone

Editor,
It is a welcome sign to see that many groups and even individuals in Shillong are taking small steps to ensure that Shillong is kept clean as far as possible. Kudos to The Shillong Times for taking some steps in this direction during its Platinum Jubilee celebration this year. But we see that cleanliness is witnessed only in some small pockets which is not sufficient to ensure overall cleanliness of the city. We are still witnessing heaps of garbage being strewn around the city especially in the Iewduh, Iew Mawlong and their periphery, Harijan colony, Anjalee Cinema area, Jeep stand, the Luckier Road, Ri Bhoi Bus and Sumo stand, Jhalupara

Even the lenient review of the grim situation indicates that the Indian economy can recover only a little from the present level of 5.7 per cent. If the GDP projections are not further revised downward, the Indian economy may recover somewhere between 0.3 per cent and 0.5 per cent, making our growth rate somewhere between 6 and 6.2 per cent, much less than the Economic Survey's forecast of 7 per cent. An international organization has forecast a little improvement of only 0.3 per cent that too by March 2020.

Only a few days ago government think tank NITI Aayog had described the current stress in the financial sector as “unprecedented in the last 70 years”, saying nobody is trusting anyone else in the sector. It made a case for extraordinary steps to deal with the crisis that has resulted in an economic slowdown.

It may be mentioned that the sharp economic slowdown started with demonetization of November 2016, which virtually crippled the economy. It was one of the many quixotic moves of the Modi government. Money supply was restricted. MSME's were worst sufferers. Crores of jobs were lost. Next came implementation of GST without proper technological and administrative system in place. Even after two years of its implementation, it remains imperfect. Entrepreneurs' money was held up with the government resulting shortage of money with the exporter and domestic companies. The new hurdles created by the new system of GST are yet to be solved.

It's a strange behaviour of the government to decide anything they want and then trying to implement them. They tend to forget that everything has repercussions beyond their control. Even in the budget for 2019-20, the government came out with several wild provisions which boomeranged. It compelled the government to roll back several of the tax measures in less than two months. (IPA Service)

market, all along the G.S Road, Police Bazar, Laitumkhrah Market (Jew Shillong), the Polo Market and its periphery and the Rynjah market. One witnesses that the heaps of garbage consist of plastic containers like plastic bags, plastic bottles, readymade food packets and a host of other, mostly non-biodegradable articles. What a sight to behold! What is important to keep Shillong clean is to get rid of the garbage and manage it scientifically. A clarion call to this effect was called many years ago but till today nothing has happened in this direction. We keep hearing that the government will set up a garbage plant to convert garbage into manure and fuel but nothing has happened as yet. We appeal to the Government to speed up the project as soon as possible to benefit one and all. At the same time we appeal to every citizen of this city engaged in every activity not to wait for the Government to do everything but to lend a helping hand to free Shillong from the heaps of garbage and filth and especially to free Shillong from plastics. Kudos to KHADC for initiating some steps at Iewduh. Plastic is indeed a terrible menace!.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via-email.