

“Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.”
— Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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Oli’s India visit

AFTER prolonged misunderstanding between India and Nepal on the border over the Madhesi issue, the visit of Nepal’s Maoist Prime Minister, K.P Oli was most welcome to repair Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s damaged neighbourly relations. Oli has claimed that the visit has improved relations between the two countries. He added that as a result of fruitful discussions, all differences have been swept away and the focus now will be on the seven point deal to promote economic growth. Oli also took the opportunity to appeal to agitating Madhesi political parties to join the new government of Nepal. The Constitution of Nepal has been amended to suit all divergent interests in the country and it is now in force. The thrust should be on India’s cooperation in Nepal’s development which should be conducive to Kathmandu’s policy of maintaining equidistance with India and China.

The Madhesis represented by the protesting United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) are still intransigent and have set up a seven member secretariat to chalk out new strategies for the party. The UDMF has called Oli’s visit to India a ‘complete failure’ as he had gone to Delhi without an agenda. The UDMF’s demands have not yet been met and it has threatened to resume the border blockade. The border agitation has already caused the death of 50 people. The government of Nepal had alleged that the blockade had been hatched by the Indian government. India has vehemently denied the allegation but it cannot be denied that its supported Madhesis who are mostly of Indian origin. Oli’s visit should go a long way in repairing India- Nepal relations.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

No camouflage, please

Mr. Shah Hussain Imam, Minister (Press), Bangladesh High Commission, New Delhi as in a rejoinder repudiated an earlier Press report alleging persecution of minorities in his country. Describing this as baseless, he asserts in his brief statement that on the contrary, people professing different faiths are living in harmony and peace in Bangladesh. It must be a special kind of peace and harmony which drives out thousands of Buddhist tribals from that country’s Chittagong Hill Tracts, rendering over half a lakh of the refugees shelter camps. More recently, the leading Opposition leader of Bangladesh itself, Sheikh Hasina Wazed told a press conference in Dhaka early last month that minority families in southern Bangladesh were living in a state of panic after police arrested over 100 leading Hindu citizens on anti state charges. Many had crossed the border, she said, but somewhere prevented from doing so to meet the much worse ordeal of detention without trial, which also Sheikh Hasina has strongly resisted.

The latest to join the fray is no other than the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi of being very closely bound in friendship and camaraderie with the Head of this neighboring country. This ties has remained unscathed despite failure after successive meetings between the two countries to cut the ice on the issue of Chakma influx and India’s having to bear the consequent economic burden of feeding an unwanted population. What is remarkable in Mr. Gandhi’s latest statement at a press conference in Silchar last week is that he considers the problem of feeding these extra mouths as a smaller worry. The bigger worry for him, and he is very correct in his comparative assessment, is the reason why the refugees come religious intolerance. This is a legacy from erstwhile East Pakistan which

India thought had been successfully busted with Bangladesh emerging independent of Pakistan with India’s aid. It did not take long for the disillusionment Islam was declared the official religion of Bangladesh, making it a theocratic state neighbouring secular Republic of India. All the rest had inevitably to flow from this one crucial declaration.

We concede that exodus from Bangladesh into the India’s northeastern states has lately abated to an extent, thanks to the extra vigil along these sectors of the long Indo-Bangladesh border due to the consistent political pressure brought to bear upon the question by the leading among these states, Assam. Correspondingly, however, these appears to have been a comparative increase of the influx now through the equally vulnerable border along West Bengal, and which is attracting the attention of the rest of the country. Mr. Gandhi is probably correct also in his assessment that the refugee problem numerically had not reached alarming proportions yet, but he has been forthright in stating it is high time Bangladesh did something definite about it. India has need to keep close track of every development in Bangladesh having a bearing on the disturbing population movement from that country to ours. If Mr. Imam’s Press statement is any guide, Dhaka is not in a mood to acknowledge the reality of the situation, but is all set to act according to its own plan which works out his reality. The smokescreen has worked long enough even without such brief Press statements from the Bangladesh High Commission. No longer may it be so and hence the need felt for such statements so rare all these years of Bangladesh’s sovereign existence.

The agony of grassroots empowerment

By Toki Blah

Governance in the ultimate analysis is the ability of the political system (modern or traditional) to usher in a general feeling of wellbeing and sense of security in society. Does it apply to grassroots governance? In days gone by, our village communities were isolated pockets of human habitation located on hill tops far from each other. The Dorbar, composed of elected male elders of the kur (clan), emerged as the most viable platform for good governance. In an oral based knowledge system, experience served as qualification and age the best criteria for leadership. Hence the adage that only men with moustache were qualified as dorbar members. Issues of governance before Traditional durbars were limited to a few subjects only such as maintenance of social order, agricultural practices and security of the village. Today in the 21st century, requirements in governance have changed drastically ranging from creation and maintenance of infrastructure to management of the environment. Durbars are no longer isolated, self sustaining, hill-top entities. Today they are linked by modern communication to the rest of the world, collaborate with equal or more powerful partners; they demand and receive funding to sustain their activities and knowledgeable persons run their day to day affairs. Of concern is the fact that Meghalaya’s traditional institutions (TIs) appear hesitant, reluctant and positively scared of the development responsibilities they are now expected to shoulder.

Grassroots governance concepts of the 21st century demand empowered institutions yet run and managed by ordinary people. The belief that people themselves know what is best for them is now universally accepted. The whole world is moving towards a bottom up, demand driven village administration. The 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution is India’s step towards this direction. The approach strategy is to provide people with development institutions of their own and to capacitate them on the management of such institutions. The village and its community institutions (both modern and traditional) demand and require capacity building. In Meghalaya’s case the village dorbar and its institutions. In Meghalaya the onus of developing and empowering village administration was entrusted, through the 6th Schedule and by the 73rd Amendment, in the Autonomous District Councils

(ADCs). For sixty long years ADCs have intentionally ignored and neglected this constitutional responsibility. The focus of the ADCs and their elected MDCs instead focused on two issues of self interest. The first is to use the district Council as a springboard to the state Assembly. The second is to exploit all natural non-renewable resources by whatever means available. To cover up their incompetence at empowering the traditional institutions under their charge, the ADCs projected the illusion that their mandate was to simply protect tradition and culture. Tradition and Culture were in turn projected as something sacred and inviolable; something rigid and inflexible; something that should never be improved upon. This excuse forestalled any action at TI empowerment and durbars were for 60 long years left to their own devices. They were simply left to rot as history found them! Lots of people might not like this statement but sadly it happens to be the bitter truth!

Today there is this current hullabaloo over the High Court order on the need for legislation on the legal status of the Dorbar and its elected office bearers. It produced total chaos. There is no clarity as to what is really needed; what needs to be done and why. The Durbars have formed themselves into a long-winded tongue twisting apex body which then needlessly plunged itself into the internal squabbles and power struggles of the Congress party. The need to do so has never been satisfactorily explained but the real issues confronting the Dorbar system were totally lost sight of. The focus instead has been on toppling the Govt; over MUDA jurisdiction; the ability of the Rangbah Shnong to issue NOCs and exemption for Govt servants from rules and regulations of the Govt they work for. The real issue of turning our TIs into grassroots decision making platforms for sustainable development of the future; of transforming them into viable and relevant institutions of the people, by the people and for the people, has once again been swept under the carpet.

There is a second truth that the people of Meghalaya have to accept and that is our reluctance and inability to differentiate

ate between governance (ka synshar ka khadar) and tradition (ka riti ka duster). Many believe they are one and the same. In fact they are poles apart and to club them as one is the actual cause for all the confusion prevailing. Parochial politics and narrow minded politicians are mainly to blame. Within the context of this writup, governance (ka synshar ka khadar) needs to keep up with the times so as to bring in equitable development for our people. We need to bring in a development paradigm where the people themselves take charge of their own wellbeing. This can only happen if our dorbar system is properly empowered to facilitate people, ie the electorate, to start thinking and planning for itself. It’s what politicians fear the most as it is a direct threat to the politics of patronage where money plays such a pivotal role during elections. Not surprising to note the rising hysteria of desperation from decrepit politicians whenever they hear talk of participative governance. They will oppose it tooth and nail.

The third truth that we need to accept is in relation to the authority that has been most responsive in empowering our traditional grassroots Institutions. It’s not the District Councils let me tell you. Fact is they have not done it. Fact is they have not done anything. Fact is they have utterly failed in their constitutional mandate to uplift Traditional Institutions. The empowerment of our durbars; the attempts to make our grassroots institutions relevant to the needs of the common man in both Municipal and 6th Schedule areas, has come instead from the state Government and its district administration. That is the bitter truth that many have failed to recognise! Both rural and urban development are vivid examples of Govt encouragement to involve our traditional institutions in the task of nation building. Durbars have been walking side by side with the administration in delivering both social and economic services to the people. Socio-economic schemes be it through DRDA, NEREGA, PMRY, fishery development, ration card distribution, MLA scheme implementation or the empowerment of women has always been the administration working hand in hand with the decision of the people. Roads, bridges, school buildings, PHCs and hospitals or community halls has always

Throwing pearls to the swines

By Barnes Mawrie

Meghalaya is one of the few states which is not self reliant. We are strong neither in agricultural nor in industrial sectors. The State is dependent for all its food supplies on other states like Andhra Pradesh, Punjab etc. Even the fish and the eggs we consume daily come all the way from Andhra. It is a pity that we subsist on endorsement by the Central Government. Today with the BJP at the centre and the Congress in the State, there is financial crunch which keeps the State Government at bay. As of today, Meghalaya is a penniless state and consequently development projects are kept suspended. The step-motherly attitude of the Central Government and the politics of vendetta are causing painful ripples in the state. The government is feeling the pinch of such a hostile policy and so too the public. We may blame the Central Government for all these maladies, but we should not lose sight of what our State leaders have failed to do for the past four decades since our statehood in 1972. Forty four years is a long enough period for any state to develop. Yet in Meghalaya we seem to be backtracking in our journey of progress. It is a fact that we are agriculturally and industrially weak because we lack the necessary infrastructure and human resources for all these.

Meghalaya has been gifted with incomparable natural beauty which no other state perhaps can match. It is enough to travel from Shillong to Sohra or to Nongstoin for one to witness the exquisite scenic beauty of our state. We have beautiful green mountains, crystal clear rivers and streams, legendary waterfalls, captivating mountain caves with awe-inspiring rock formations, wide variety of flora and fauna. God has been good to us in giving our state such a wealth of natural resource. Unfortunately, all these God-given gifts are wasted down the drain because we have leaders who lack a sense of vision and mission. It is exactly as they say “throwing pearls to the swine” who do not know the value of pearls and so they trample them under foot. God will be disappointed with us because we have not used the gifts he has given us responsibly as we should. We seem to be living the irony of “beggars with golden begging bowls.”

Meghalaya’s scenic beauty is a gold mine we are sitting on but which we have not exploited fully. Here is an incredible touristic opportunity that we have failed to utilize. Our state does not need agricultural or industrial enterprises for it can survive, nay thrive on tourism alone. In other parts of the world or India, people spend fortune to create artificial tourist spots but here in our state everything is naturally given. It is a pity that our government has never given enough importance to tourism. This is evident

dent from the lack of infrastructure which would promote tourism like good roads, good transport and communication connectivity, adequate number of tourist facilities (hotels, restaurants, eateries, recreation parks etc).

Recently, I had been with my friends to Nongkhnun. What impressed me was the unique scenic beauty of that place. However, what depressed me was the horrifying journey from Nongstoin to that location. The road is full of potholes and dust and it takes more than an hour to cover a distance of about 20 km. It was a back-breaking journey we had. Which tourist would venture to such a place beautiful though it may be? On reaching the place we discovered that no tourist facilities are found anywhere except for one or two small shops selling chips, fruit juice and *kwai*. We were just remarking how the whole of West Khasi Hills could survive on tourism if our leaders had the vision to develop such places into standard tourist spots. Nongkhnun alone could become a tourist hotspot and it could generate thousands of jobs for the people of the place and boost their economy. I have witnessed people in these places eking out their living from a miserable practice of burning charcoal. In fact, trees are being demolished because of this kind of occupation and charcoal industry is in fact the curse of West Khasi Hills. At the same time, forbidding people from such means of livelihood without offering them an alternative is quite inhuman. It is here that the government should have thought of developing tourism on a war-footing. If states like Goa or even Sikkim in our own region, are able to capitalize on tourism prospects in their own land, how unfortunate that Meghalaya is not capable of doing this.

It is my opinion that our leaders should turn their attention to tourism more than to other enterprises. Recently, the *International Terra Madre Festival* and the *South Asian Games* were a big boon to tourism. However, the state could have gained more from such international events had touristic infrastructure been in place already. Everyone knows that Shillong did not even have adequate hotels to accommodate the foreign visitors and sports persons. The so called “wettest place on earth” (Sohra) which has been a well known tourist spot for many decades, is without much development even today. Tourist facilities are so limited that it does not leave a positive impression on visitors and local residents remain as poor as ever due to lack of economic opportunities. The question we keep asking is “when will Meghalaya become a tourist-economy state?” I can state with confidence that with tourism our state can become self sufficient, self dependent and our people will prosper beyond expectation.

Day or Republic Day etc., with gay abandon and without an iota of fear as in the past years, thereby ending the good days with pop concerts at vantage locations like Khyndai Lad organized by our famous local artists for good measure. Hence, our local dailies, English and Vernacular, have blanked out news regarding bandh calls announced by assorted factions of militant groups etc; I thought that henceforth I shall never come across the term: “Bandh” as far as Meghalaya is concerned.

However, on January 24th last, I noticed in one of the national dailies, a news report which read thus: ‘NE rebels give R- Day boycott call’, thereby informing an inquisitive reader like me about the United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW), which, inter alia conspicuously includes our HNLC and GNLA, jointly announcing a boycott of RD celebrations and a bandh in the entire North East. In such a be-

TO THE EDITOR

What ails AIR Shillong?

Editor,

Many times in the past, especially during 2015, avid listeners of AIR Shillong radio programmes broadcast through the 864 kilohertz channel, informed me that on some Sundays the regular transmission/programme format was violated without even a word of apology. At first it was presumed that this was due to the vagaries of individual radio receivers or technical faults. However, on February 28, 2016, a concerned listener rang me up at 0620 hours to say that the deviation from the regular format of the radio programme is more than meets the eye. Right from 0600 hrs on that day when the Shillong station of AIR began its programme, there was no announcement to identify itself as done every day till now. Instead, without even the usual Vande Mataram, the programme schedule was announced in Hindi without identification of either the radio station or the title of the programmes scheduled for that morning. After the announcement of the programme schedule in Hindi for the day (?) instrumental music was played without introducing the programme.

I also switched on my radio to listen to the programme. This went on and on until 0750 hrs when the routine Khasi news was supposed to be read, but, instead, there was announcement in Hindi followed by something else in Hindi and again by instrumental music without live announcement until 0850 hrs when there was a semblance of returning to the usual morning schedule. This was followed by news in Hindi at 0800 hrs and the news in English at 0815 hrs. But, after the news in English there was no North-east news; instead, an unscheduled programme was heard which at about 0850 hrs was abruptly followed by music at the tail end of the usual Sunday programme of songs of praise in Khasi. The lady announcer who took over at this stage did not express apology for the arbitrary change of programme.

The unscheduled programme on this 864 Khz channel from 0600 to 0750 hrs and from 0830 to 0850 hrs needs to be explained by the AIR authorities. Since this kind of unscheduled broadcast by cancelling the

scheduled ones without warning or apology had happened before during 2015 without having been detected and explained, it is assumed that there is indiscipline at the studio, at these times. One gets the impression that there is a lackadaisical attitude on the part of the programme officer and that the supervisory authorities had failed to exercise their authority over their employees. It also points to the lack of monitoring of the broadcasts by the superior officers appointed to supervise the services offered to listeners. It seems unlikely that there are any monitoring stations in the country to prevent frequency and power deviation by any broadcasting service (s). On some days the broadcast from Calcutta MW transmission is so powerful as to drown out the low power transmission from AIR Shillong so that it appears as if the Calcutta station is also transmitting at the frequency of 864 Khz. This sort of thing ought to be properly explained. It is suggested that contact numbers may be publicized to enable listeners to report poor reception and other interference like suspected frequency deviation either by the Shillong transmitter or from other stations

broadcasting on frequencies adjacent to the Shillong 864 Khz station.

I hope the AIR authorities could consider these suggestions and publicise their views and proposed action to inform the public. After all this is a public broadcasting station!

Yours etc.,
Morning Star Sumer,
Shillong - 2

Ban on the fourth estate

Editor,

For the past few month all type and textures of media in Meghalaya have been barred from reporting any bandh related news called by the agitational groups of different hues in the wake of the directive issued by the Meghalaya High Court. For such radical proceedings, our Hon’ble High Court ought to earn kudos since the latter perhaps believes that the culture of bandhs has become a hindrance to freedom of movement in pursuit of one’s livelihood. The law abiding folks must have heaved a sigh of immense relief given that henceforth they can go about their normal chores or fully participate on in Independence

Yours etc.,
Jerome Diongдох
Shillong- 2

“We are indeed much more than what we eat, but what we eat can nevertheless help us to be much more than what we are.”
—Adelle Davis

The Shillong Times

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Budget 2016: What’s in it for Meghalaya?

A budget is a much awaited exercise especially for tax payers. They weigh the benefits of a budget against tax cuts and the raising of income tax ceilings. This applies to those employed in the formal sector. But for the large section of Indians though the budget would have meaning if it did not trigger inflation. Those in the agriculture and allied sectors and this comprises a huge section of rural India would want a budget that would take care of crop and animal insurance. Climate change creates uncertainty of production. Rains are now unseasonal and crop destruction though floods or droughts are inevitable. This Government appears to have taken these concerns on board through a slew of measures. Farmers' incomes are projected to double by 2022 by bringing about 28.5 lakh hectares under irrigation under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana. Also 89 irrigation projects, requiring Rs. 86,500 crore in the next five years would be fast tracked and 23 of these projects would be completed before 31st March, 2017. The Budget also looks at a dedicated Long Term Irrigation Fund to be created in NABARD with initial corpus of Rs. 20,000 crore. The total outlay on irrigation including market borrowings is R. 12,157 crore.

Also a major programme for Sustainable Ground Water management is proposed for multilateral funding at a cost of Rs. 6,000 crore. A total of 5 lakh farm ponds and dug wells in rain-fed areas and 10 lakh compost pits for production of organic manure will be taken up. The Soil Health Cards would also be given to 14 crore farm holdings by March, 2017. Also in the list of interventions is creating 2,000 model retail outlets of fertilizer companies with soil and seed testing facilities in the next three years. Perhaps the Unified Agricultural Marketing E Platform to be opened in April this year and the Rs 9 lakh crore to be given as agricultural credit would be of immense help to our farmers provided the state is able to tap in to these incentives. This Budget indeed has a rural thrust where Rs 2.87 lakh crore will be given as Grant in Aid to Gram Panchayats and Municipalities as per the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission. This is a great leap forward and translates to Rs. 81 lakh per gram panchayat and over Rs. 21 crore per municipality.

But this is where Meghalaya will lose out. Without elected municipalities or a democratically elected village governance body, the Centre is unlikely to channelize funds to the state. The District Councils are certainly not a substitute for a grassroots governance body. Hence the State Government should now push for creation of these duly elected, accountable and transparent governing institutions. This is the need of the hour!

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

P.H.E. Racket

The Meghalaya Assembly witnessed some unprecedented scenes during the opening week of its resumed budget session. The Opposition Members, armed with some tell-tale evidences on the multi-crore racket in the Public Health Engineering Department's Jowai Division, launched a virulent attack against the Department, more particularly its Ministers. They have, almost as a matter of routine exercise, been demanding the dismissal of the two Ministers. While it is too early for anybody to make a conclusive remark that the two Ministers had any motive other than "helping some friends", it will be naive on the part of the Government to explain the matter in a simplistic manner. Not only because the amount is huge, but also because it is for the first time that a racket of such a magnitude has been brought to

Need to reconstruct the Khasi community

The term 'community' is one of the most elusive and vague in sociological discourse, and is by now largely without specific meaning. Primarily, it refers to a collection of people in a geographical area, possessing a particular social structure, a sense of belonging or community spirit, and is self contained. But in recent times the term has also been used to indicate a sense of identity or belonging that may or may not be tied to geographical location. In this sense, a community is formed when people have a reasonably clear idea of who has something in common with them and who is not. The term 'community' therefore may also refer to mental constructs formed by imagined boundaries between groups, through occupational or religious affiliations.

In common understanding, the organic grouping of human beings in a definite geographical territory without reference to any particular ethnicity or socio-cultural structure is called 'society'. When a human society is viewed in terms of its particular ethnic grouping or unique cultural aspect then it may be called a 'community', which as Patricia Mukhim said is also envisaged to be having shared beliefs, shared goals and a shared idea of how to achieve these goals (ST. February 26th, 2016).

The Khasi society, in general, comprises all the people who call themselves the children of 'ki Hynniew Trep' (seven huts) inhabiting the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. But the functional social grouping of the Khasis which can be called a 'community' was the 'Raid' which was translated as 'a political commune'. In the western part of the Khasi Hills, it was 'Ka Shnong' which was translated as 'village' ruled by hereditary headmen called lyngdoh-shnong. These independent political communes had existed long before the formation of any present hima, and the emergence of modern day dorbar shnong.

The 'Raid' was formed when a group of clans inhabiting a particular territory united to form a political community, and the male heads of founding clans assumed various political roles, such as, lyngdoh, basan, sangot, daloi, pator, maji, shutia, sohblei etc., and they were collectively known as 'ki longsan'. The political role of the clan was called 'ka jait'. There was no equality among the clans as 'ki jait',

By Fabian Lyngdoh

though there was perfectly equality among them as 'ki kur'. Political affairs and territorial authority in a Raid were the prerogatives of these founding clans who called themselves 'ki binong-bishon'. The dorbar of 'ki longsan' was the supreme territorial authority over the land. The 'Raid' was an organic community with a life of its own manifested through the processes of its socio-political system and community religion. That is why the concept of land was called 'Ka Ri-Raid' and the concept of political territory was called 'Ka Ri - Ka Raid'.

Within the Raid, the kurs were equal and independent entities, and functioned as sub-systems within the larger system. Each clan was a basic member of society, a primary political unit, an independent economy, and a religious institution with independent religious cult. Since the clans were exogamous, their survival depended on marital relationships among themselves. For this reason the Khasi society is also understood in terms of 'ka longkur-ka longkha' (a web of social relationships established by inter-marriages between the clans). The socio-political formation of the Khasi society depended on the inter-relationships of the clans. All socio-political functions and concepts of socio-political and religious virtues in the Raid or the Shnong could be made operationalised only through the clans; and the conscience of the Khasi society was imbedded in the structure and inter-relationships of the clans.

The traditional system described above is no more in existence in the present Khasi society. Traditional community life and the conscience of the society had long been lost as pointed out by Michael Makri (ST. February 27th, 2016). Patricia Mukhim has rightly said that there is no equivalent of the term 'community' in the Khasi language. Even the term 'ka imlang-sahlang' is a modern formulation. In the present Khasi society there isn't any community with a shared vision. But we stick on to the idea that the society today still exists on angelic virtues of 'ka tipbriew tipblei' (knowing man and knowing God), 'ka hok ka sot' (divinely sanctioned socio-

religious code), 'ka tipkur ka tipkha' (living as abiding members of the clan and good members of society), 'kamai ia ka hok' (earning righteousness and truth), 'ka burom ka akor' (to hold on to propriety and honour), etc. We claim that we still have the prevailing well established social custom based on the principles of egalitarianism, participative action, and spirit of solidarity, with enlightened code of moral conduct and ethics embedded in all sorts of angelic virtues. We claim that our indigenous judicial system is being run on the principle of 'ka bishar-blei' (judgment by divine intervention) while our dorbar shnong, dorbar raid and dorbar hima are today actually functioning as raw imitations of the modern judicial system.

The recent Judgment of the Meghalaya High Court on the 13th January 2016 in the case WA No. 2 of 2015, has stated that a firm belief in the ultimate judgment of God which a member of Khasi society is expected to practice and imbibes in day to day life would never permit a customary elected representative of the tribe to indulge in misconduct and practice intolerance. The Judgment pointed out that it is unimaginable that the Khasi, a tribe which practised novel, unconventional and liberal ideology could allow its tool of governance at the lowest rung to betray and hold its rich cultural heritage to ransom by preventing his own kinsmen from practicing his lawful avocation while denying their right in the native village only on the ground of inter-religious marriages. Indeed, the High Court Judgment declared that a person who does not practice the way of life the Khasi culture ordains cannot legitimately claim to be a Khasi. But the High Court Judgment also rightly concluded that all the philanthropic and humanitarian objectives, being the cardinal principles of Khasi culture, which used to be practiced religiously by their ancestors, have now remained only in the pages of their history.

The Meghalaya High Court has given the right judgment according to the Khasi concept of 'ka nia ka jutang' (argument of truth according to a covenant). According to Khasi thought, the words spoken or declarations made con-

stitute 'ka jutang' (covenant). We are apt to set up covenants in terms of spiritual ideals or angelic virtues by which we promise to perform or maintain. Hence, we shall be judged in accordance with our conformity or deviation from these angelic virtues. But if we set up covenants according to common provisions of law, then we shall also be judged according to the law, and we shall not be condemned even if we fail to perform or maintain angelic virtues.

The Khasis in the past were able to perform or maintain all the virtues claimed, because the clan was then, a socio-political and religious institution binding on all its members, and functioned as a primary informal as well as formal mechanism of social control and the existence of the Raid or Shnong as a socio-political commune with a community religion binding on all clans for the maintenance of the social order. But the Khasi society is today broken up into various occupational and religious communities cutting across clans, Shnongs, Raids or Himas. Even the Khasis who claim to profess the indigenous faith had bypassed the clan and set up a new faith pre-scribing the individuals' direct relationship with God according to the need of the times. The virtues established by the ancestors cannot be put into operation without the agency of the traditional kur system and the basic political commune. But the kur today is no more a primary member of society, no more an independent economy, no more a basic political unit and no more a religious institution. Hence, the virtues and wisdom of the ancestors now exist only in the pages of history, and have become either redundant or insufficient to run an efficient system of community administration on the principle of egalitarianism, justice, righteousness, honour, dignity and solidarity.

The ancestors were wise to devise social norms according to the needs of their times, and if they can resurrect today they would certainly, in their wisdom, seek God's permission to redesign social norms and redirect tradition to adapt to the changing circumstances. But since they can no more return, let us on their behalf and for the interest of future generations, redesign social norms and devise new mechanisms to operationalise the wisdom of the ancestors and reconstruct the 'community' and restore its conscience.

Democracy, Nationalism and Nazism

Walter Fernandes

The recent events in Hyderabad and Jawaharlal Nehru universities and the actions of some "nationalists", took me back to the 1940s and 1950s and question the nationalism I grew up with. I was eight years old at independence but even at that age I was exposed to the thinking of the freedom movement, because my father was one of its small time members. He would tell us about the country that the freedom fighters aspired for. He practised in the handloom establishment which he owned. His task was to cyclostyle the Kannada news bulletin of the movement. He could do it in his office without getting caught because the noise of the handlooms drowned the noise of the cyclostyling machine. More importantly, there were thirty handloom workers in his enterprise, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. But none of them betrayed him, so he never went to jail because the workers viewed India's freedom as their joint enterprise. Their longing for free India united their group divided by religion and caste. We were exposed to that nationalism at independence and lived it in our neighbourhood of Christians and Hindus of different castes. That represented a country with religious, cultural, linguistic and other diversities in which all communities are equal.

When I see the fundamentalists of today proclaiming their version of nationalism, I wonder whether the pluralism for which our forefathers fought has disappeared. My first encounter with the predecessors of today's Desh Bakhts was on 31st January 1948 when some of them went round distributing sweets to celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's assassination the previous day. Like those who celebrate Godse today, they too did not want the diversity that Gandhi and the freedom fighters stood for. One has, therefore, to ask whether the Hindu Rashtra that the rightist forces would like to build will allow diversity. Or is it to be exclusive like Hitler's Germany? I was just six when the world war ended so I did not know much about Hitler but I studied about him at school. And I ask myself whether I am imagining what look like parallels between his Nazism and what the rightist forces propagate in my country today. Is their nationalist exclusive and the opposite of the inclusive nationalism amid unity in diversity that independent India stood for? Hitler's exclusive Nazism was founded on a Germany that belonged only to the Aryan race which he defined as blonde and tall though he himself was short and somewhat on the darker side. Those who did not belong to his pure race, for example Jews and gypsies, and others like trade unionists and Communists who disagreed with him, were jailed or sent to the gas chambers. The difference with the "nationalists" of today's India is that they are ready to tolerate Muslims, Christians, dalits, tribals and women in their Bharat, as long as they accept to be subordinate second class citizens under the "owners" of the country.

The events of the last few days and weeks make me wonder whether there is a second similarity. Hitler and his propagandist Himmler created an army of hooligans to attack their opponents. They would first create myths showing their opponents in a bad light as anti-national and then attack them. One sees it happening in our country too. Those who shout slogans or write what the "nationalists" do not like are called traitors. Some of them like Pansare and Kalburgi have been eliminated, a few others like Prof. Kancha Illaiah, Dr Sandeep Pandey and Dr Sai Baha have been ostracised

after accusing them of being Naxalites or anti-national. Many others, for example the teachers and students of JNU and journalists who were covering their case, have been beaten up by lawyers and law makers. The freedom fighters stood for a different type of nationalism. The instructions of Gandhi to his followers were to exhibit their nationalism in the service of the poor. That is what I witnessed in my childhood in persons like our neighbour homeopathic doctor Shastri (cricketer Ravi Shastri's grandfather). He was the ward Congress president but he gave up politics and spent his life serving the poor particularly children in whose medicines he specialised.

The spirit of nationalism was thus shared in service, not imposed through violence and today's "nationalists" seem to think that they should do. The police look the other way when they beat up their opponents even in a court of law as it happened in the premises of Patiala House. It is difficult to believe that the police can behave the way they did without instructions from those who control their department. The "nationalists" first created a myth that anti-national slogans were raised by the students of JNU and then beat up the "traitors". The police arrested some students for sedition despite a Supreme Court judgement that slogans do not constitute sedition and that only a call for violence does. That call has come from the "nationalists" some of whom have gone on record that they are ready to repeat their violent acts and even shoot some traitors. All that the police have done is to issue arrest warrants against some lawyers. They have not been arrested though they are highly visible and are staging demonstrations. They arrested an MLA, gave him tea and snacks and let him off after fifteen minutes. But some of those whom the "nationalists" accuse of being traitors are in jail or are under threat of being arrested because they made statements that the self-styled protectors of Bharat dislike.

Thirdly the Nazis came to power by using the democratic system. Once in power they used the army of hooligans to destroy its institutions. One sees a similar process in India today. Dissent that is a basic feature of a democracy is considered sedition. People are beaten up inside the court premises thus preventing the judiciary from doing their duty. Their position of power is used to take control of the educational and research institutions because all thinking has to support their concept of nationalism. Universities that encourage students and teachers to think for themselves become subversive. A democratic principle is that dissent has to be tolerated even when it goes beyond what moderate elements may consider unacceptable as long as it does not preach or encourage violence. But today's "nationalists" invent sedition in all forms of dissent of questioning of established positions. Violence takes the place of debate and lawlessness overtakes law abiding citizens.

These developments should challenge people who love the country to come together and reflect on the type of India they want. India has the option of behaving as a civilised nation that encourages debate, dissent and creative thinking or join the banana republics in which creative thinking is sedition.

Dr Walter Fernandes, former founder-director of North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati is at present Senior Fellow in the same institution.

TO THE EDITOR

Divisive terminologies

Editor,
HH Mohrmen's article, The Real Nongshohnoh (ST 29 Feb, 2016) enlightening as it is, has a tinge of misleading elements in it. His classification of Khasis and Pnars is in fact an erroneous understanding of a single ethnic race of people. Khasi is a common and an inclusive ethnic term used to refer to all sub-groups constituting one race, the "Khasis". The sub-groups are Nongphlang (those who inhabit the Shillong Plateau), the Maram, the War, the Lyngngam, the Nongtra, the Nongtung etc. In fact the term Khyngriam is only a derogatory term used in the past which is no longer acceptable today just as we used the term Mikir for the Karbis in the past. In recent years there has been a dangerous emphasis on the ethnic differences between those who live in

Khasi Hills and those who live in Jaintia Hills. There are many Pnars (even the educated ones) who are trying to break up the ethnic unity through an indigeneity of these ethnic terms. There is yet another dangerous development today where we see the Pnars trying to evolve their own literary language (dialect) and attempting to do away with Khasi language. These are divisive enterprises which in the long run will fragment our small tribe. We need to learn from the history of other great nations. The German tribes before the arrival of Martin Luther were divided by languages. They spoke different dialects and were even at war with each other. But with Luther's Bible written in one German language, soon the whole of Germany accepted this as the national language and that was how the German tribes were unified. So also with the Italians before the arrival of Dante

Allegghieri! Dante brought a greater unification of the Italian people through a standard Florentine Italian given by him which was accepted by other regions. Let us not forget that we too had many dialects in the past. Fortunately, the Welsh missionaries and Thomas Jones in particular gave us the Sohra dialect which was made a literary language and gradually became a universal language for the Khasis. This is a great blessing because it has really unified our people for the past many decades. It pays to remember the patriotic song of Kerious Wahlang who sang "Khyngriam (Nongphlang), u Pnar, u Bhoi, u War/U dei u paid 'Khasi' baiair." I hope our Khasi writers will be more careful in using such terminologies so as not to foster a divisive ideology in the minds of ordinary people.

Yours etc.,
Barnes Mawrie sdb,
Viaemail

Aadhar card and Meghalaya

Editor,
The Govt of India is planning to give the Aadhar Bill statutory backing. All the government benefits/subsidies will be routed through Aadhar platform. But in Meghalaya, there is resistance from a section of pressure groups to implement the Aadhar scheme for whatever reasons and the State Government has weakly succumbed to the pressure. Are the genuine Indian citizens residing in Meghalaya not entitled to the Aadhar card? I want to know from the authorities when are plan to implement this scheme. Or a PIL in this regard may be appropriate.

Yours etc.,
D Deb,
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.

“My mother loved children -- she would have given anything if I had been one.”
--- Groucho Marx

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 201 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2016

Where freedom ends

CERTAIN platitudes need to be restated now that the Indian political scene has become murky. Liberty should not be synonymous with licence. Hate speech does not signify freedom of speech. The BJP which is now almost an appendage of the RSS has suddenly turned to cultural and ethnic cleansing. Minister of State for HRD, Ram Shankar Katheriya attended a VHP meeting held to condole the murder of a VHP activist in Agra. A number of VHP speakers called Muslims demons and wanted them cornered. Katheriya said that his official position did not stand in the way of hitting the street in support. His exoneration later that he did not name any community satisfied the BJP. It was no doubt sheer eye-wash.

The VHP speakers threatened to turn Agra into a Muzaffarabad where anti-Muslim riots had erupted in 2014. The present stand is no doubt a declaration of murderer's intent. The BJP cannot explain away the attendance of one of it's Ministers at a meeting of the VHP, a-fringe organisation of the Sangh Parivar. Praveen Togadia and Ashok Singhal have spewed enough communal hatred to call for the banning of the party. Emboldened by the tacit support of the BJP, the VHP plans to inflame communal passions in the last part of UP on the eve of the assembly elections. The BJP high command must prevent its UP leaders from falling in line with VHP Hindutva extremists. The defeat in Bihar should chasten it, needless to say that such anti-Muslim abuse is not good for healthy economic growth in a major state like UP.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

Shahid resigned in humiliation

Former Indian Skipper Mohammed Shahid has said that one of the main reasons for his retirement from International Hockey was the "humiliation he had to go through at Seoul Olympics." "May biggest disappointment was that I was taken to Seoul, and used for only 15 to 20 minutes in some matches, what more biggest insult would be there for a person who has been playing for the country for ten years," Shahid said in an interview to be published in the forthcoming issue of "Sportsworld".

Shahid said "what is worse is that as soon as I came back from Seoul chief Coach Ganesh gave a statement, that I, along with others had asked him not to be considered for the team again. I have done no such thing. There is no written statement nothing on tape."

He said "if the hockey authorities want to tell me that they never come again. I have made it clear, I will play hockey but I am never going to play for India again."

Shahid asserted that if he had been allowed, he could have played all the matches for full duration. At Bangalore, he had to run a round 2.5 km and I used to run with all the boys and the Ganesh himself kept telling me that 'your are completely fit'. There was a test, which I cleared, no one can say that Shahid ran behind the boys, there was no question of my being unfit.

Then if you were fit it seems strange that you were not played Shahid added.

He said his game was still superior to that of many of the players in the national side. I can still play good hockey for next three years for the Indian team, I only left because they did a very bad thing to me, I am a respectable man, I have not gone to anybody with the request that I be allowed play," till today, whenever Ganesh kept me out of the field I have not on a single occasion gone to him and asked why are you

not allowing me to play," Shahid said.

"I was not going to ask Ganesh to let me play, Ganesh is my coach, and I respect him as my elder, but I am sorry, he has not played more hockey than I have," the former skipper said.

Australia cruises to victory over W. Indies

Australia cruised to a seven-wicket victory over the West Indies today, on the final day of the Fourth Cricket test at the Sydney cricket ground.

The Australians, who now trail 1-3 in the first five-test series, dismissed the West Indies for 251 early in the first session and then set about compile the paltry victory target.

Australian Captain Allan Border hit the winning runs to clinch Australia's first test victory since it best Sri Lanka in Perth.

Border was left on 16 and his partner Dean Jones on 24 while the wickets in the 82 for three scoreline fell to Malcolm Marshall, Curtly Amborese and V Richards. Border was name man of the after his superb bowling efforts of 7.46 in the West Indies first innings and the 4-50 in their second.

He also hit 75 runs in Australian first innings. Border improved his record as captain to seven wins, 13 defeats and 17 draws. He is the only Australian captain to have taken 11 wickets in a test match.

Meanwhile, the Australian selectors recalled pace bowler Michael Whitney for the fifth and final test starting in Adelaide on Friday.

Whitney takes over from West Australian paceman Terry Alderman, who injured a hamstring during the fourth test.

Union Budget 2016-17 and the North East

By Bhagirathi Panda

It is no secret that the finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley had to present his budget in an economic environment characterized by more of gloom and less of advantage. The important manifestations of gloom are: the weak global economy with a slowdown of demand , stagnating domestic infrastructure(except high-way constructions), high debt burdens of the corporates, high NPAs(Non Performing assets) of the banks, increased rural and agrarian distress, requirements of jobs far exceeding its creation and two consecutive poor monsoons. The two silver lines are the falling oil price and the comfortable foreign exchange reserves at USA \$351 billion. In such a situation, making a budget and using it as cardinal instrument of economic and social development for a country like India was daunting. The budget has been presented. Now it is time for postmortem. Let me start this postmortem with my usual caveat that budget is neither the only economic policy paper nor the last word in economic policy making. There are many more policy papers, words and actions of economic policy that happen and I am sure would happen this time too, that walk off the realm of budget. Further, the recent implementation of the 14th finance commission recommendation that has raised the share of states in the divisible pool of central taxes from 32% to 42%, has to some extent squeezed the revenue and resource intervention base of the central government. In such a situation, budget is essentially a benchmarking exercise that defines the fundamental contours of economic policy of the Government of the day.

What is then, the thrust area of the budget? Without doubt, it is, economic growth through fiscal consolidation, demand enhancement, infrastructure big-push and institutional reforms. Embedded in it is the implicit assumption and explicit expectation of job creation. All these are to be realized now by a combination of 'increased state presence in the rural economy' and 'predominant access to market forces in the urban economy' and thereby giving a partial pass to the 'get it all through market forces approach' that was the affirmed stipulation in the last budget. This is a very welcome and pragmatic step that acknowledges the complexities and

nuances of development in Indian economy and society. Focus rural, start it with rural, consolidate it in rural and unleash it from rural is the reverberating principle of development of this budget. Therefore it is no surprise that the total allocation to rural development alone stands at a staggering amount of Rs. 87765 crore. The primacy of increased physical infrastructure provision through creation of augmented capacities in irrigation and road construction has been acknowledged. In a country where only 54% of its net cultivated area goes without some form of irrigation, the emphasis on irrigation was long overdue. Allocation of Rs. 38500 crore on MGNREGA and fine-tuning it to converge with irrigation, soil conservation, agriculture, horticulture and road construction etc. to create the required rural assets, dispels all the tentativeness that this Government had on MGNREGA earlier. This will give the implementing agencies at all levels a clear signal of the intent of seriousness with MGNREGA. PMGSY which was little forgotten, is again back with vigour to help in this exercise of infrastructure and job creation. Allocation of Rs. 80 lakhs as Grant-in-Aid to each GP under panchayatraj arrangement, rationalization of crop insurance scheme, introduction of animal wellness and health card, consolidation of soil health card provision etc. are all meant to revive the rural economy in terms of its productivity and job creation. There too have been increased allocations to the ministries and departments in the social sector i.e education, health and social justice and empowerment. However, one should recall that these were the ministries and departments that had witnessed substantial cuts in their budget allocations last year. When you compare the allocations on a low earlier base, you may feel an increase. But looked historically in real terms the increase is meager. Social sector deserved more.

The other thrust of the budget is growth and development through institutional reforms. Prints of Institutional reforms are visible in many a segments of the budget. Bringing Adhar on a legal platform, modernization of land records, providing a legal framework for dispute resolution and renegotiation in PPP projects and public utility contracts, freeing transportation sector from permit raj,

putting agricultural marketing on e-Platform, providing regulatory architecture to ten public and ten private sector higher educational institutions to emerge as world class teaching and research institutes, digital repository for school, college degrees and mark sheets, opening up financial data management centre, introduction of DBT on pilot basis for fertilizer subsidy, launching of Ek Bharat Srestha Bharat to link states and districts in an annual programme etc. are some of the important proposals that are meant to provide the required institutional platform to facilitate the realization of various budget objectives. No doubt, these are all well meaning institutional reform measures. However, nothing has been specified about the grand institution of "Cooperative Federalism" that was the hallmark of last year's budget. In practice, we do not see the emergence and formalization of such an institution. The sooner it is given a shape the better.

The next issue is where from the money will come? The FM has stuck to his fiscal consolidation promise of maintaining fiscal deficit at 3.5% of the GDP. In the absence of the corporate growth, he heavily depends on indirect taxes. Here he has targeted the rich and the neo-middle class. In the absence of any visible benefits to the neo middle class, this class may hold back its income by not going for a spending spree. This makes the expected indirect tax realizations uncertain. The Government has to live with this uncertainty.

Finally let us come to the North East. Unlike the yester years, there have been no many specific north east centric big announcements in the budget except creating a special fund of Rs.412 crore for promotion of organic farming. This may be because; the Government has thought it prudent to change the grammar of budget. An amount of Rs. of Rs.33,097 crore across all ministries has been allocated for development of North-eastern Region. DONER gets an amount of Rs. 2430.01 crore and NEC get Rs. 795 crore for undertaking developmental schemes in the region. Rs.300 crore has been allotted for the North-east Road Sector Development Scheme for meeting the expenditure of the project management unit of ADB-assisted

North-east Road Project. An amount of Rs.223 crore has been earmarked for livelihood, skill and capacity building of the rural population to be funded by the World Bank. In addition, theoretically, in the north east, the youth and the rural can gain a lot from many of the budgetary provisions. The youth can get benefits from the 500 crore start up India scheme announced for SC/ST/Women entrepreneurs. This along with a host of other proposed schemes such as MSME hub to provide professional support to SC/ST entrepreneurs, stand up India, entrepreneurship education and training through massive open online courses, increased allocation under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana etc. can provide the youth with opportunities to get skilled and start micro enterprises. Similarly, the rural and agrarian economy of the north east can substantially benefit from the huge allocations under rural and infrastructure development programmes enlisted earlier in this write up. The region as a whole also stand to benefit from the huge allocations of Rs. 97000 crore for investment in the road projects providing the much needed intra and inter regional connectivity. But the big question is, does the region on the ground, has the required institutional and governance support to take advantage of these schemes and programmes? Unless the region effectively emerges as single economic entity, much of the proposed benefits on the infrastructure and investment front cannot be availed and internalised. This requires providing the much needed institution of "cooperative federalism". Either NEC or DONER should be immediately prepared to take up this responsibility. Further, the region needs to reduce its high transaction costs in provisions of infrastructure development and other investments. High transaction costs arise because in many places there are no definite property rights, contract enforcement mechanisms, legal arrangements and disputes resolution mechanisms. High rent seeking culture at multiple levels also aggravate the situation. All these also limit the absorptive capacity of monetary resources of the region. Therefore, this region with the support of the centre should immediately make efforts to undertake serious institutional reforms in its economy and society so as to take full advantage of the budgetary provisions of the budget 2016-17.

(The author is a Professor in the department of Economics, NEHU)

TO THE EDITOR

Union budget 2016-17 & NER

Editor,

It is quite common for people of the north east to ask what benefits are there for the region whenever the union budget is presented. In this column we try to answer this question by highlighting the main provision of the Union budget 2016-17 for the region.

The budget has finally settled the vexed question of sharing pattern on central sponsored schemes between the Centre and the north eastern states. Existing funding pattern for core of the core schemes which include MGNREGA, National Social Assistance Programme and Umbrella schemes for development of ST, SC, Backward Castes and Minorities have been retained.

Funding pattern for core

schemes which include Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Swatch Bharat Abhijan, National Health Mission, ICDS, Mid-day Meal Schemes and others will be at the ratio of 90:10 between the Centre and north eastern states. A good news for insurgency hit states of the region is the revival of funding under Modernization of Police Forces under core scheme which had been delinked from central funding in the last budget.

Another category of CSSs has been introduced in this year's budget called optional schemes where fund sharing pattern will be at 80:20 between the Centre and the north eastern states. Border Area Development Programme which is common programme for many of the states in the region has been included here.

In terms of allocation, an amount of Rs. 33097 crore has been budgeted to be spent in 2016-17 by 55 different Union ministries and

departments in the region. This is about 12 percent more than the amount being spent by Union ministries and departments in 2015-16 as per revised estimates. Allocation by Ministry of Road transport to the region at Rs. 5000 crore for 2016-17 is the highest which is 20 percent more than previous year expenditure. Most surprising is the zero allotment made to the region by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship which had allotted 150 crore in last year's budget.

The plan allotment by Ministry for Development of Northeast Region stands at Rs. 2400 crore which is a marginal increase of Rs. 66 crore over the allotment in 2015-16. Of this, Rs. 1245 crore is earmarked as grants-in-aid towards supporting different schemes of state governments. Rs. 150 crore each has been allotted for NE roads Project and NE Livelihood project which are externally aided projects part funded by Asian Development Bank

and World Bank respectively.

Other highlights of the budget are the allotment of special packages of Rs. 100 crore to Bodo Territorial Council, Karbi Anglong Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Territorial Council. Other projects that are specifically mentioned are the Pokyong airport in Sikkim for which Rs. 29 has been allotted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Rs. 75.00 crore to North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited for supporting microfinance programme and small scale sectors. Ministry of Tourism has also allotted money for development of the integrated development of tourist circuit in which North East circuit is included, while Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has allotted money to National Institute of Sports Coaching and Sports University in the North East in this year's budget.

Yours etc.,
Sumarbin Umdor,
Via email

Budget euphoria cannot shield challenges

A timely reminder from IMF on risks ahead

By S. Sethuraman

Close on the heels of a politically-loaded budget of the Modi Government in 2016, India gets reminded by IMF of key macro-economic challenges which may hinder growth – high household inflation expectations, still large fiscal deficits, and potential risks from weak corporate and bank balance sheets.

Though IMF economists concluded the customary Article IV consultations with India on February 12, and would have been left in no doubt about firm policy directions and confidence with which India is determined to overcome obstacles, domestic and the global headwinds, the Fund statement reflects some abiding concerns.

Not that IMF has failed to applaud the Modi Government's positive policy actions and supply side management to hold inflation, driven down by low oil prices and appropriate monetary stance, but there is no mistaking that collapse of global oil prices underpinned improvements in current account and fiscal positions and boosted economic activity in the country.

While reflecting a degree of optimism overall on India, currently the fastest growing large economy, IMF economists have retained projections of growth at 7.3 per cent in 2015/16 and 7.5 per cent in fiscal 2017, (at market prices), supported by stronger domestic demand. The Budget for 2016/17, however assumes 11 per cent growth at market prices on the basis of which all revenue and expenditure estimates are set.

How the Indian economy grows in the coming year, given the bleak outlook for the global economy itself and the financial markets remaining volatile with disruptive impact, would depend on how well Government manages to overcome the key challenges at home as well as risks down the road.

The Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley has acknowledged that growth in the coming year would have to come mainly from domestic demand but that fiscal policy space is limited for stimulating the economy. Left unsaid, monetary policy has to chime in to celebrate the budget.

There can be some comfort in IMF's reference to revival of sentiment and recent pick up in industrial activity which enables an "incipient upturn" in private investment to help broaden the recovery. While Mr Jaitley has again provided for some public investment for the coming year, IMF sees such infrastructure investment and government initiatives to tackle supply-side bottlenecks and repairing corporate and public bank balance sheets should also help crowd-in private investment.

Acclaiming the Budget, which has his handiwork, Prime Minister Modi has directed his Ministers to go out and sell the path-breaking exercise. For his part, Mr Jayant Sinha, Minister of State for Finance, keeping up his narrative contends that everything having been done on the fiscal side, the "more extensive" monetary space should come into play, that is a rate cut.

For its part, IMF notes RBI has achieved its target to bring inflation below 6 percent by January 2016 while consumer price inflation dynamics, underpinned by supply-side factors, should help achieve the goal of around 5 percent for March 2017 and monetary conditions at present remain consistent with achieving this target. No call for easing or hardening.

Low oil prices should help contain the current account deficit at around 1.5 percent of GDP in fiscal 2017 and the current year's budget deficit target of 3.9 percent of GDP (equivalent to about 4.25 percent of GDP in IMF terms) will likely be achieved. While unexpected global developments cannot be factored in at present, IMF does not consider slower growth in China would have any serious impact for India beyond modest

adverse spillovers, because of weak trade linkages.

But what may restrain growth are domestic risks, such as continued weaknesses in corporate financial positions and public bank asset quality, as well as setbacks in the reform process and these could weigh on growth, accelerate inflation and undermine sentiment, IMF assessment said.

IMF Directors, however, have commended India's appropriate policy actions that—along with favorable terms of trade—have underpinned India's improved economic performance and reduced external vulnerabilities. These included recent measures aimed at increasing public infrastructure spending, rationalizing subsidies, creating more flexible labor and product markets, and enhancing financial inclusion.

With improved macro-economic management, India experienced large FDI inflows in 2015 and reserves stood at 350 billion dollars at December-end. The government had taken policy measures to help reduce fuel and fertilizer subsidies, continue with fiscal consolidation, bolster the financial system, and strengthen the business climate, all of which have helped enhance confidence in the economy.

India's challenge is to sustain its growth momentum when private investment is showing few signs of revival. An increase in public infrastructure investment and government initiatives to unclog stalled investment projects, IMF notes, are helping bolster investor sentiment which should have a positive impact on private investment. And, with global slowdown, India will have to continue to rely mainly on domestic demand as a key source of growth.

IMF considers GST a high priority and it would, together with reform of energy sector and labour markets, boost growth potential. Increasing capital buffers in public banks, which is manageable even in a severe stress scenario, and implementing governance reforms in public sector banks along with the new bankruptcy law, are of key importance to ensure the durability of the Indian growth recovery," Mr. Paul Cashin, head of IMF Team on India has said.

On inflation, IMF report notes that household inflation expectations remain high, and breaking away from this pattern would likely require a prolonged period of low inflation. In the near-term, inflation risks stem from an unfavorable monsoon and expected wage increases of government employees as a result of a once-a-decade wage adjustment. The government's strong fiscal consolidation efforts over the past several years signify its commitment to place India's public finances on a solid footing.

Deregulation of diesel prices and levies on petroleum products provided a cushion against upward swings in oil prices. Apart from better targeting and further efficiency reforms, authorities need to pare back untargeted food subsidies, including by rationalizing the list of eligible beneficiaries and reforming the inefficient Food Corporation of India.

Notwithstanding steady progress in recent years, raising India's growth rate and ensuring sufficient jobs will require deeper structural reforms - addressing long-standing supply bottlenecks, labor and product market reforms, and further improving the business climate. "To remain in the economic 'sweet spot', India must ensure forward momentum of its program of economic reforms," Mr. Cashin said. (IPA Service)

“Human beings are the only creatures that allow their children to come back home.”
--- Bill Cosby

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 202 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2016

Media post the JNU fracas

THE events in the JNU campus on February 9, last have exposed how deeply partisan the media in this country has become. While some television channels stooped to showing doctored tapes to make the allegations of anti-nationalism against a section of the JNU students stick and literally forced viewers to pass judgment on the culpability of the students based on these tapes, there is another section that is clearly on the side of the JNU students and fraternity whose political leanings are towards left liberalism. Television news reportage has been pushed to the backburner while views from so-called experts are considered to be of importance for the audience to make an informed judgment on issues. Clearly the media have reached a very critical juncture in this journey of democracy. As the fourth pillar the media is supposed to bat for those without voice and therefore without power. But the voices that are amplified today are those of the educated elite of this country and those who have command of the English language and are Delhi or Mumbai based. So there is no media with a truly national reach, yet you hear the word ‘national media’ evening after evening being espoused by television anchors.

Now that the JNU student union leader, Kanhaiyalal has been granted conditional bail without the court having seen the report on the doctored tapes as yet, it remains to be seen what action the court will take against those media houses that have relied on those tapes and thereby created a lynch-mob mentality. The media cannot junk ethics and media laws. These laws are guidelines that restrain the media from being licentious and getting away with deviant behaviour. Ironically while the print media is kept under some kind of control by the Press Council of India the electronic media is still a free agent unfettered by any regulations as yet. This is a troubling phenomenon in a country as diverse and disparate as India. The long held belief that media would regulate itself is passé. If Indian democracy is to survive its arduous journey the media must be free and independent is a myth. There is need for a media ombudsman now than ever before!

LOOKING BACK
Feb 1, 1989

Cong(I) CWC reviews poll performance

The Congress(I) Working Committee today reviewed for four house the party's performances in the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Nagaland and Mizoram and the Zilla Parishad elections in Utter Pradesh. Briefing newsmen, Congress(I) General Secretary Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad said the meeting, presided over by Congress President Rajiv Gandhi, heard the reports from the observers in these states. Mr Azad said the Working Committee did not discuss the crisis in Bihar. The observers who reported on Tamil Nadu were Dr Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Mr Ajit Kumar Panja, Mr Janardhana Poojary and Mr Jadish Tytler, all Union Ministers. The CWC also heard Mr S S Ahluwalia, MP and Mr A P Mallu, AICC(I) Joint Secretary on Nagaland and Mizoram, Mr Azad said. He said the general impression on Tamil Nadu given by the observers was that since the party had contested all the seats after 20 years the elections had helped the party to organize itself in all parts of the state. Earlier partymen used to be active in a limited number of seats contested by it remaining idle elsewhere Mr Azad said. Mr Azad said during the last 20 years a new generation had come up in those areas where the Congress was not active, they were not turned to Congress activities. Mr Azad said the Congress had taken a deliberate decision to go alone inspite of the fact that the present ruling

party, DMK had a much more trained cadre. He said the elections in the two North Eastern States revealed that the people and rejected regional parties. Mr Azad also said the next session of the AICC would be held during March or April six months after last November's session. **Janki quits politics** Mrs Janaki Ramachandran, leader of one faction of the All India Anna DMK (AIADMK), tonight announced her decision to quit politics following her party's debacle in the January 21 elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly. Mrs Ramachandran, who was Chief Minister for 22 days following the death of her husband, the late chief minister Mr M G Ramachandran in December 1987, announced her decision in a statement here tonight. **Press freedom will not be curtailed: PM** Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi said today that the government does not want to deprive the press of its freedom in any way. The challenge that the small and medium newspapers have its to be forthright, truthful and unoppressed, Mr Gandhi said after presenting the second Sri Kant Verma national integration award to Blitz editor Mr R K Karanjla. The award has been instituted by the All India Small and Medium Newspapers Federation.

Are we sending kids to school or reformatories?

A letter to the editor by a very concerned parent published in these columns and agonising about the homework burden of her kids, is only the tip of the iceberg. Those who have taken up the teaching profession seem unwilling to change and adapt to the challenges of teaching kids of this day and age. I have a neighbour whose six-year old son studies in Class I in a premier school. He is a bubbly kid and can't sit still. He loves talking because his parents encourage him to converse at home. They believe it is mentally and psychologically healthy for a child to express himself/herself than to remain sullen. But that poor kid is punished at school and made to stand on the table for being his vivacious self. My heart breaks as I listen to several such stories. I wonder if the school is now a reformatory to change a vibrant, talkative, bright-eyed, naturally friendly kid into a petrified little underdog who is punished for being himself. What have we turned our schools into, I wonder? And what about the Principal? Isn't he or she responsible for correcting such deviant behaviour in teachers? Are the kids at fault or the teacher? Or are teachers so hard to come by that anyone is employed even if that person has no aptitude for dealing with children?

It is my experience that it is far more difficult to teach kids than to teach adolescents. Kids are curious and full of questions. They can be mischievous and land on their heads. It can happen that the teacher might lose patience just as the parents sometimes do when their kids ask them never-ending questions. But if a person is called to be a teacher that person will never tire of answering her students. He/She has ways of engaging a hyper-active or a 'gifted' child. While doing B.Ed one is taught how to deal with quick as well as slow learners. A quick learner must be given more responsibility or perhaps even help a slow learning classmate. A quick learner or a gifted child cannot be punished for being so. Yet that's what most teachers do unthinkingly. The child is labelled a trouble maker. I have a friend who is still teaching but she con-

By Patricia Mukhim

tinues to learn the art of teaching by reading a range of books especially those relating to counselling. She feels that some teachers are well past the age of adaptation. They are unable to accept non-conforming behaviour in kids and adolescents. They still believe in the Gurukul concept where teachers are worshipped, never questioned and whatever they say is Gospel. No, this is a questioning generation and we are happy that students today engage their teachers even if it means incurring their wrath. Students can Google and learn a lot from the internet than most teachers who are not tech-savvy do. So the teaching method has to change. Information is freely available. It is the personal counselling, mentoring and life skills that children actually need so they can deal with the world outside the classroom. But if the classroom is stifled by don'ts then where does the child go when troubled by circumstances? Mentors are imperative if our children are not to become depressive and suicidal. Most kids today come home tired not so much from the mental work but because of the sheer boredom of having to copy verbatim from the blackboard or from their text books what the teacher orders them to do. There is almost no space for creative thinking or articulation. All creativity is throttled by the teacher who wants a bunch of conforming kids that won't create trouble or challenge her. I use the word 'her' intentionally because in most schools the kindergarten and primary sections are mostly handled by lady teachers. Last year I attended the annual concert of Loreto Convent, Junior School. What I saw was magical. It was a spontaneous burst of energy from little kids as old as five or six years to ten and eleven years. That extraordinary performance could not have been put up by kids who are scoffed at and rebuked by their teachers day in and day out for being themselves. These were confident, sprightly kids. In fact they enjoyed performing for the

audience. You could see it in their expressions. They were alive and they made eye contact and smiled at their parents without any self-consciousness. This could not have been a put-on act for a day. It means they are given a lot of boost by their teachers. This is what school should be all about. Its time parents stopped competing with their children's marks and give their children some breathing space. Childhood is the age to flower and bloom into adolescence which is a difficult period for the child and parents and for the educators too since there is so much that is not understood about adolescent behaviour. I recall my own childhood and the concerts put up by the school. We were always so shy and self conscious and could hardly come out of our shells. That's because we grew up in a very regimented atmosphere both in school and at home. We were tutored to enter the classroom marching single file, with finger on the lips. It was as if talking was a mortal sin. It was nothing short of military discipline and I have never stopped wondering how I and my classmates were able to speak in public after being literally brought up not to have a point of view on anything except that of the teacher's. In that sense today's schools have a livelier atmosphere but they are still a mismatch for our brought-up-in-technology kids. Look at the nimbleness of the fingers of a four or five year old as she handles the Ipad and switches on a movie while sitting on a flight. That's the parents' way of keeping them quiet with seat belts on, on a two-hour flight from Delhi to Guwahati. That kid and all our kids would grow up to be computer wizards. Sadly, teachers are way behind their students in this fine art. Yet teachers are irritated when kids know more than them. The world is changing and very quickly so. Intelligent people adapt and adaptation means unlearning so much of what was learnt and believed to be the only way to do things. But do teachers really unlearn what they themselves have learnt at school? Don't many of them model their teachings

on that of their own teachers? Well, its not going to work. The school as a learning environment has changed. Cramming is outdated. Homework setting itself should be carefully thought out. The child cannot flourish in a mental prison. We don't want our kids to not be able to think for themselves and think on their feet! Many of us agonise about the fact that the scholars in our universities shy away from sharing their views publicly. In fact, even on social media, one gets to read the views of so few from the community of scholars from NEHU or universities in the North East. Why this diffidence? It is because of the fear of criticism and engaging with others who perhaps have differing viewpoints and ideologies. Many scholars only share the views of their peers or faculty or other writers while not having a view of their own. We cannot have bright students in adulthood if we have suppressed their free-thinking capacities from early childhood. This needs to be understood. But without any regulatory authority on education, schools function at their own whims. Some do give refresher courses to their teachers but since the teaching tenure itself is of a permanent nature many don't change because they will lose nothing by refusing to change. Evaluation of teachers by students and parents is therefore imperative. A word to the parents! Why is there so much paranoia when it comes to confronting teachers who display deviant behaviour? Why the reservation of approaching the principal to discuss the delinquency of a particular teacher? True, the parent will be called cranky and told to remove her child from the school. That's the standard tactic employed by schools especially the elite ones and I know they know who I am talking about. But that's because parents are not united in their fight against authoritarianism. Parents should try and get the best out of the school. There is need for a strong Parents' Organisation in this state which will critique the functioning of schools, otherwise, our students will turn into herds with one-dimensional thinking who will be misfits throughout their lives. Yours etc., Jennifer Dkhar, 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.

POLITICAL DELICACIES
By Nora Chopra

VARUN GANDHI IS FAVOURITE OF BJP CADRES AS UTTAR PRADESH CM CANDIDATE The BJP finds itself in a quandary regarding its strategy for the most important and populous state of Uttar Pradesh. . Two recent reports given to the BJP president Amit Shah by the party's organising secretary of the state Sunil Bansal have taken the following views. Party workers from over 50 districts of the state have expressed their preference for their candidate but they want to know whether the BJP would project a CM face if at all. The other report was from the RSS workers of the state down the district level pracharaks. In both these reports Varun Gandhi has been reported to be overwhelming favourite of the cadres as the CM face with almost 70 per cent of the votes going to him. Rajnath Singh being a poor second with just under 20 per cent. Smritilrani who has been aggressively posturing for a larger role in the state could only secure 1 per cent. Amit Shah asked Bansal whether the findings of the reports were indeed accurate as it had to be passed on to the PM. Given the perceived distance between the BJP president and the young Gandhi, it would be interesting to note how the BJP strategy changes in the state post these findings. **ASHWANI KUMAR BLAMED FOR NOT PROPERLY TACKLING NATIONAL HERALD CASE** The former law minister Ashwani Kumar may be lobbying hard for a renomination to Rajya Sabha but the question being asked within the Congress whether he would or should actually be gifted a second term of the upper house. Fingers are being pointed at Ashwani Kumar who was the law minister when SubramaniumSwamy filed the National Herald case. What did he do then? That was the same time when the then prime minister Manmohan Singh's coal scam also came up for hearing but the Mannohan case was stayed and he was saved from the embarrassment of appearing in the court. But the Congress president was not given any relief. She and her son continue to run to the courts. **PILLAI'S ALLEGATIONS A G A I N S T CHIDAMBARAM ARE CAST IN SUSPICION** IshratJahan did not have any terror links and that she and her aides were killed in a fake encounter, say the sources in CBI. The claims made by the then home secretary G K Pillai is that IshratJahan was not killed in a fake encounter and that she had LET links. He has even raised questions on the credibility of the CBI. This allegation has been disputed by the former CBI director Ranjit Sinha who was then the chief investigative officer. Sources in the CBI claim that the brief given to the CBI by the court was to investigate who were involved in the fake encounter. And it was a fake encounter beyond doubts because the law of the land says you cannot kill even when the person is a terrorist. The CBI sources claim that IshratJahan and her aides did not have any terror links. Sinha's supporters say that even Kasab was tried. But G K Pillai, the home secretary under the then home minister P Chidambaram has alleged that there was political intervention and the then home minister PC had changed the first original IshratJahan case affidavit which described IshratJahan and her slain aides as LET operatives. Pillai has alleged that PC had personally made controversial changes in the affidavit and dropped Ishrat

and her aides links with LeT. As for Pillai he says that he got the revised affidavit after the HM had made the changes. The revised affidavit said that the IB inputs did not provide any conclusive proof that those killed had terror links. But Chidambaram says that he was the home secretary and it was his equal responsibility what stopped him then to make this revelation. And the Congress leaders are asking why did Pillai take seven years to reveal these facts. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that NarendraModi and Amit shah got him a job in prime minister's friend and favourite industrialist GautamAdani'sAdani Port and Special Economic Zone Ltd (SEZ). He is now director in the Adanicompany. **UTTARKHAND BJP WORKING FOR FALL OF CONGRESS MINISTRY IN THE STATE** Even when the assembly elections are still a year away, the exodus in the Congress is likely to begin. Five sitting MLAs including two ministers and one ex MLA are planning to join the BJP. These MLAs are in touch with the BJP minister Choudhury Virender Singh. The BJP is using Choudhury Virender Singh to work on to split the Congress party in Uttarakhand. Once these MLAs quit the Congress, the Rawat government will lose its majority which has 37 MLAs in a house of 70. These Congress MLAs are upset with Harish Rawat for promoting his family and the interests of his confidantes only .His daughter is the general secretary in the All India Mahila Congress. His son is general secretary in the PCC and even his son's father in la made the general secretary and Rawat's brother in law is now member of a committee. The BJP is using Choudhry Virender Singh to create a split in the Government. **JAITLEY, PAWAR HOLD TALKS ON BCCI AFFAIRS** A meeting took place between ArunJaitley, JyotiradityaScindhia and SharadPawar last week at Jaitley's residence. The agenda of the meeting was the series of tweets of SubramaniumSwamy talking about how his next mission is to unearth corruption in BCCI. Pawar casually mentioned to Jaitley since Swamy was his party colleague and it would be right if he talks to him to avoid future embarrassment to all concerned. Jaitley is supposed to have jokingly added that with colleagues like Swamy there was no need of opposition. Talking to him would make matters worse. Scindhia who was listening to the conversation between Pawar and Jaitleyquipped that since he had lost the election to BCCI VP post, he would be less of a target now. He however added jokingly,' this is one election that I am happy to lose.' **BJP SOUNDED OMAR ABDULLAH FOR COALITION WITHOUT SUCCESS** The BJP had recently used a prominent industrialist to reach out to Omar Abdullah last week to stitch together a possible alliance in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP had offered the chief ministership of J&K to Omar with a cabinet berth to his father in the centre. However when Omar held meetings with senior party colleagues, they warned him strongly against the alliance stating that the anti BJP feeling in valley was so rampant that even touching the BJP would be akin to political suicide. Meanwhile after Ram Madhav met Mehbooba they have finally decided to go. (IPA)

“So, let us not be blind to our differences - but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved.”
—John F. Kennedy

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Development in Assam

THE run-up to the assembly poll in Assam has taken a sudden turn. Until recently, it was thought that the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) under Prafulla Mahanta, the party standing for sub-nationalism, would go it alone. In fact, earlier, Congress Chief Minister and party leader Tarun Gogoi had even talked of a maha understanding with the AGP. Union Minister of S tate BJP chief Sarbanananda Sonowal has said that the alliance has been formed 'to ensure a crushing defeat on the Congress.' The AGP has been with the NDA government at the Centre in the past and it had forged an alliance with the BJP four times since the 2001 assembly elections. True, the Congress and the AGP had been in dour battle all along. It is the sudden success of the BJP in the last parliamentary elections which must have led to this volte face in the AGP's strategy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi fighting for the BJP in Assam targeting Tarun Gogoi had finally caused a breakthrough. The BJP already has the Bodo People's Front (BPF) with it as well as the support of the Rabba and Tiwa community leaders. At the other end, the Congress has teamed up with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), a Muslim organisation. The BJP which is a national party can now speak of securty to the greater indigeneous Assamese community. With an important Congress leader of the past, Himanta Biswa Sarma joining the BJP, the Opposition has gathered a greater following.

Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's response sounds quite feeble. He says that the alliance will only strengthen the hands of the Congress. He scoffed at the BJP's earlier boast that it will win 84 seats on its own. The reaction is only to be expected. It can now be said that the poll contest has hotted up and a decisive conclusion is on the cards.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

18 killed in orgy of violence in Punjab

An indefinite curfew was clamped on the walled city of Amritsar today after an orgy of terrorist violence claimed eighteen lives in Punjab. One terrorist was also killed in an encounter with security forces near Haipur village in Jalandhar district this morning. All but four of the killings took place in Amritsar district where a dozen terrorists raided a house in Jagdev Kalan village and shot dead all twelve members a family. The villagers came to know of the killings only this morning. Indefinite curfew was clamped on the entire walled city of Amritsar and Durgiana Mandir area this afternoon in view of tension, official sources said.The sources said a funeral procession turned violent and stoned a police party accompanying it. The procession was in connection with the funeral of vie people who were shot down by terrorists yesterday near Dubarji on the Amritsar Taran-Taran road in Amritsar district. Police opened fire injuring two people. Terrorists shot dead two people at Kaonka Kalana village in Ludhiana district last night, police said. Police said two terrorists forced their way into one Veer Singh's house and escaped.Later, the terrorists gunned down a panchayat member Pal Singh in his house and escaped. One person was gunned down by four terrorists outside his home at village Balpur last night, a report from Batala said. Police identified the victim as Mr Apar Singh (35). Police said the terrorists called him out of his house and shot him dead. In another incident in Amritsar six terror-

ists shot dead a Communist Party of India (CPI) activist. Tilak Raj and injured his party colleague in village Khadur Sahib, police said. Police recovered two bodies in Naurangabad village this morning, police believed that the two were killed by terrorist. One terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces near Haripur village this morning, a report for Jalandhar said. Police claimed to have recovered one 12-bore gun alongwith 12 cartridges from the person of the slain terrorist. V.P. Singh asks P.M to own Bofors scandal Former Defence Minister V P Singh today urged Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi to own the responsibility in the Bofors scandal. Addressing a public meeting here this evening Mr Singh said it was a pity that the Prime Minister had to make a statement in Parliament to clarity that neither he nor any of his family members had taken commission in the deal. Justifying his action to hire Fairfax, Mr Singh said if foreign Government's help could be sought to arrest General. Vaidya's killer, there was nothing wrong in "my taking foreign assistance to book economic offenders." Mr Singh said the fact that the Prime Minister had announced an inquiry into the amassing of wealth by Ajabh Bacchan in Switzerland showed that there was a case against him.

Is Beijing shifting from Deng Xiaoping's maxim of hiding and biding strategy?

Dr. Munmun Majumdar

Since 1990, China has been adhering to Deng Xiaoping's maxim of keeping a low profile while still getting things done. Does Xi Jinping's speech in October 2013 at the foreign affairs conference of the Chinese Communist Party, articulating the striving for achievement amount to signaling a shift and jettisoning of Deng's strategy? Is this then, a pointer to the start of a wholesale Chinese reversal of strategy? The story of China's rise is long, consequential and global. The maritime disputes in either the South China Sea or in East Asia hardly give the entire account of China's international trajectory. Since the global financial crisis in 2007-2008 there has been a notable assertive and nationalist foreign policy shift in Chinese Foreign policy. This is most dramatically demonstrated in the high profile diplomacy to promote its agenda and maritime disputes with its neighbors defending its "core" interest. However, the characterization of such a shift remains unclear. Even the assertive label is being contested. China under Xi Jinping has gone a step further from the concept of national community introduced by Zheng Bijian, at the Boao Forum for Asia. He was the architect of the peaceful rise strategy designed to leverage access to Chinese economic benefits in order to cultivate pro-China groupings of countries. Presently, it proposes to build various destiny communities and create zones of friendly countries dependent on China for its economic largesse to explicitly design a turn wherein intertwined interests would be the required impetus towards establishing security and political communities. Xi Jinping has also emphasized the importance of prioritizing the economic interests of countries that support Chinese core interests, even if it comes at a relative cost economically. Past economic goals solely prioritized making money with little consideration to strategic factors but Chinese leaders presently are beginning to dwell on how they can use the immense economic benefit of doing business to gain political influence. While China's new diplomacy is globally oriented notable with its international initiative that it undertook together with India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa-the creation in July 2014 of the \$100 billion BRICS, at the same time is also decisive to return to Asia. The Silk Road program involving Central Asian, South Asian and Southeast Asian countries indeed showcases China's emerging diplomatic ambitions. It was around the same time when President Xi and Premier Li Keqiang personally chaired the first and only multi-agency meeting on China's regional diplomacy with all Communist Party Standing Committee members present that Xi-Li leadership had rolled out the Silk Route Strategy. This strategy entails building a Euro-Asian Silk Road economic belt to the west and a Maritime Silk Road to Southeast and South Asia. Written into the Decisions of the Third Plenum of the 18th Chinese Communist Party Congress, the Silk Road strategy is based on open networks in euro-Asia and maritime Asia looped together through Chinese-financed infrastructure and transportation projects, as well as trade and financial ties. The Silk Road program is designed to infuse regional economic expansion with greater strategic purpose. Promoted together with policy concepts such as "Asian security" and the "Asia pacific dream which Xi expounded on at the 2014 APEC meeting in Beijing, the concept refers to economic prosperity and a tightening of Asian relations. The Silk Road clearly reflects China's ambitions and also explains the obvious progress of the central governments efforts to develop China's western regions while giving Chinese cooperation with Southeast Asia a renewed purpose and momentum. The new turn in China's plan also featured speedy Chinese military modernization with a focus on combat readiness along its periphery regions. The announcement

of the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in East China Sea, the increase in military expenditure by double digits, the creation of the National security Commission chaired by Xi himself clearly show that Xi Jinping is much more than willing compared to his predecessor Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, to wield coercive power, military and economic, in regional diplomacy. Again the deliberate strategic decision central to Beijing's overarching anti access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy demonstrates that it is seeking to create a domestic and international environment that will limit US ability to intervene effectively in a given conflict. All of these have had fallout on countries in the region with its obvious dynamics. Regional actors are anxious about Beijing's long-term intention. Not just that. Beijing's behavior is also pushing several countries of the regions towards external balancing, such as improving ties with the US and other major players in the region. In terms of external balancing US and Vietnam established a comprehensive partnership, Philippines and US signed an enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. Simultaneously, the countries are seeking to internally strengthen and modernize their militaries and expanding their ties with one another as well. For example India and Japan have upgraded bilateral defence ties and have pledged to enhance cooperation, especially in the realm of maritime security, again India provides arms and professional military training, particularly of junior officers, to Vietnam and Hanoi has granted India berthing rights at its Nha Trang port. Japan, Australia and ASEAN countries increasingly seek after India with its look east policy now recast in November 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its Act east policy that suggests a commitment to take part in the evolving Asian security order. It is unlikely that China will shift away from relying on coercion and manipulating risk to achieve its territorial objectives more so

since they correspond well with China's strategy of active defence. Active defense is the operational component of Jiang Zemin's National Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period, which serves as the highest level of strategic guidance for all PLA military operations during war and preparation for war during peacetime. The cold war experience had solidified the Western narrative stemming from World War I that inadvertent escalation causes major war and therefore crisis management is the key to maintaining peace. The Chinese leaders do not share this mindset. Instead they believe leaders deliberately control the escalation process and therefore wars happen because leaders decide at a given point that the best option is to fight. The focus on de-escalation through crisis management is therefore unlikely to produce any change in China's behavior. Additionally, while the crisis management approach may have been a realistic cold war operational planning, it may not work when one considers the less violent and prolonged engagements that characterize Chinese coercive diplomacy when evaluating risk and rewards in the 1962 Sino-India War. If anything it will only provoke greater provocation. Likewise, the Chinese policy of embarking on taking calculated risks and testing the resolve of the opponent is common. India saw this when Chinese troops entered Indian Territory before the visit of the Chinese premier. It took three weeks for the explosive situation to resolve and saw the signing of a border defence co-operation agreement during Indian Prime Minister's visit to Beijing. What remains to be seen is whether the agreement would actually prevent Chinese incursions that have been a routine feature in the past or whether it would use the same strategy of creeping assertiveness and push to the point when the adversary becomes dangerously annoyed and then subside easing of tension so as to not break the relationship and wait until another opportunity presents itself. Till then the big question is where is Xi Jiping going? (The writer teaches at the Dept. of Political Science, Northeastern Hill University, Shillong)

A poor Bharatiya farmer's budget in a neo-liberal India?

Trishanu Bipul Borah

While the Nation, along with Arnab, has been busy wanting to know about the state of affairs in the national capital of Delhi and its universities, the finance minister presented the Annual Budget. Given the polarized nature of the country of late, where every issue is being fought over along partisan lines on streets, newsroom debates and even on social media, the budget warrants a little more attention from the common man who might have otherwise found himself at his wit's end trying to decipher the reason behind the loss of of his nation's intellectual and argumentative tradition and thus could not pay enough heed to the message that is sought to be passed through the budget. The BJP led NDA government swept to power riding on a strong "Modi wave", riding on promises of delivery of good times. They were helped in this by the anti-incurrency factor of a falling UPA which failed to set its house in order, derailed by scams and abuses of power. After being in power for 21 months, the government of the day has often been taken to task by critics who accuse the government of over communication and little delivery in return, as the promises of Acche Din seem to be far away with each passing day. Indian Economy, still counted among the few bright spots in a slowing World Economy, has not been doing much better than the government and of late has been subject to quite a few bumps. A fall in global commodity prices has seen exports fall for fourteen consecutive months, bank NPAs are at a peak, corporate balance sheets beyond repair resulting in many a stalled project. The recent turmoil in China's market has only added to the sorrow of the economy, with wide scale currency devaluations at times percolating into currency wars which don't help the case of Indian exports at all. This has also lead to the flight of capital from Asian markets with global investor sentiments at a low. All this also comes at the end of two back to back droughts in the country, where starving and dying millions are being held ransom to the vagaries of nature in Central and Northern India, mainly due to the past failure of government intervention and innovation and the inefficiencies in resource mobilization. Given how Bharat is still a country with a majority of its population dependant on agriculture and its allied activities, no matter how much India Inc wants to portray another image of a growing India with a surge in finance capital, service and manufacturing capacity, the government had the ball in its park on providing relief to its farmers and thus expunge its image of being a "suit boot ka Sarkar". The pre budget speeches of the Prime Minister delivered in the drought belt of UP and MP promised to double farmer incomes by 2022. This promise was reiterated by his Finance Minister in his Budget Speech, where the words "agriculture" and "farmer" found 20 and 32 mentions respectively, a highest in the past decade. This meant much, coming from a minister whose favourite words in the past budget had been "growth" and "investment", the very nature of such "growth" being antithetical to the prospects of farmers in trouble. Agriculture also found its way as the first of the nine-point agenda of the FM, the nine pillars along which he seeks to "Transform India". The government claims to have nearly doubled the allocation for agricultural sector, from Rs.22,958 crore in 2015-16 (revised estimate) to

Rs.44,485 crore in 2016-17 (budget estimate). In reality, the increase in allocation is a mere 27%, much below that needed for a systematic change in cropping patterns via MSPs, renewed interest in irrigation, crop investments, creating a national e-market for agri-produce, promoting production of pulses; the catch being that the government has tabled the interest subvention provided as agriculture allowance, which was previously tabled under the finance ministry's budget. A provision of Rs. 12,517 crore was made to strengthen Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana in order to bring 2.89 million hectares under irrigation and to create a dedicated long-term irrigation fund under Nabard. Emphasizing on the need for optimal utilization of water resources, new irrigation infrastructure and balanced use of fertilizers for sustaining soil health, the government also seeks to fix subsidy leakages by extending Direct Benefits Transfer using technology enabled JAM(Jan Dhan Adhaar Mobile) trinity. While the budget has commendable emphasis on the creation of agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation, value-chain, marketing and connectivity, it is more subtle on resource efficiency and management. On this front, the government has prepared a major programme for sustainable groundwater management, with an estimated expenditure of Rs.6,000 crore, proposed to be financed by multilateral funding. With a provision of Rs.412 crore, the government seeks to promote organic farming in rain-fed areas. The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana aims to bring half a million acres under organic farming over three years. To promote organic produce in domestic and export markets, the government has launched the Organic Value Chain Development scheme in North-eastern India, a major win for people of the region. The government has also pledged to develop half a million farm ponds and dug wells in rain-fed areas for water conservation and one million compost pits by "making productive use of the allocations under MGNREGA", while taunting the UPA by terming the MGNERA as a grand failure from time to time. Critics have already seen links between the budgetary intentions and the upcoming elections in the poll bound states of Assam, WB, UP, Punjab. While budgetary promises are not isolated from political intent and while there is no doubt all these states have major agrarian communities who stand to gain from this budget, much needs to be done to facilitate agriculture and farm sector. More budgetary allocations can only be start, the onus needs to be on sustainable use of resources, intensive use of water via drip and sprinkler irrigation, creating the framework for a low premium and inclusive crop insurance, shoring up of rural roads and infrastructure thus enabling farmers to get their produce linked to the nation e-market that is being created, incentivizing change in crop patterns towards pulses from cereals in order to meet growing demand and cut down food inflation and making development green and sustainable, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the "Green Revolution". (The writer is at BITS Pilani)

TO THE EDITOR

A progressive budget!

Editor,

I thank Prof. Bhagirathi Panda & Prof. Sumarbin Umdor for their articulate analysis of the budget laying it thread- bare before the readers. No one can deny that the need of the day is to be pro- agrarian to address farmer distress, increase agricultural produce, bring down food prices and curb urban migration. Mr. Jaitley has not disappointed and has in fact dispelled the myth that the Modi Govt. was pro-corporate. They have even tweaked MNREGA which many believed was responsible for drawing the farm labour away, by attempting to move it back towards the agricultural sector by incorporating within its ambit a scheme for digging compost pits and water ponds. A large emphasis is being laid on neem- coated urea to curb and contain massive leakage of thousands of crores in fertilizer subsidy and to make it possible to identify the gov-

supplied green colour urea in the black market. At the same time fertilizer subsidy reforms have been initiated by way of transfer of subsidy direct to the farmer's account through DBT. Critics have argued on how it is not possible to double the farmer incomes in 5 years. The answer is quite simple - If 54% of cultivated land in India is without irrigation and the Modi Govt. has undertaken an ambitious irrigation program, won't that in itself result in multiple cropping possibilities? Besides the launch of the soil health card will help the farmers save huge wasteful expenditure on fertilizers by ascertaining the exact type of nutrient needed by his soil & crop. In school we read about how the cultivation of pulses which contain nitrogen fixing bacteria is good for the soil. Rs.500 crore has been set aside to encourage pulses and move away from cereals like rice & wheat of which we have abundant stocks. One has also to realize that the sedentary lifestyles of over 10 crore countrymen no longer require the intake of starch

and energy rich rice & wheat rather protein rich pulses and vitamin rich fruits & vegetables are the need of the day to rid us of diet linked ailments like hi BP, diabetes etc. The 100% rural electrification by May 2018 target of Mr Piyush Goyal will also be of immense help. On Prof. Umdor's perception about the lack of outlay for skills for NER I would say that in today's scenario there are any number of centrally sponsored placement linked quality & free training programs under the aegis of the labour & IT departments of each state with free training within the state and free lodging and training with institutes outside the state. So it is incumbent upon our youth to take full advantage of these schemes across sectors with seats a plenty. To the state governments which are always crying foul over central funding, I'd say - stop misleading the people. Use the extra 10% that you've got by way of central pool of divisible taxes, give the utilization certificates of the 40% first instalment of DONER schemes and at least make

an attempt to get the balance 60% rather than wasting tax payers money on chopper joy rides and demolishing heritage Assam type buildings and spending hundreds of crores on RCC monstrosities. Utilise the money judiciously in paying salaries of teachers, ASHA midwives and scores of other casual workers of your very own government. To the Miners, quarry owners, loggers and the industrialist who argued on DDK Shillong post budget panel discussion about the demerits of doubling the coal cess and removal of the NEIPPP, and thereby the huge transport and other subsidies, I'd say give our forests and rivers a chance to rejuvenate else it is the human race which will wither and die and not mother nature. You's etc., Gagann Jain Vice President, Meghalaya BJP

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.

Why are people losing interest in pure classical music, Amjad Ali Khan questions during an interview with Kishori Sud

Fusion versus pure music

Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan, who has enthralled audiences all across the globe with his mellifluous music, is concerned that people are today more interested in fusion than pure classical music.

"Today people are more interested to see collaborations. Why are people more interested in fusion, what is the reason and why is it happening? It is a very big question and it bothers me," Amjad Ali Khan said in an interview.

"Why are people losing interest in pure classical music? It is not only a problem in India but also of the whole world right now as they want to see more collaborations," added the veteran artiste, who has performed around the world.

Talking about fusion, he revealed that his sons - who just last month performed in Delhi with Grammy nominated violinist Elmira Darvarova -- often decline to play such collaborative shows.

"Even my sons are invited for fusion shows but they respectfully decline saying that they would perform only if people would want to listen to the sarod," said the father, who has impressed music aficionados for years altogether with innovation of complex ragas.

The 70-year-old musician, who has performed internationally for over four decades, doesn't want to blame the audience if they are not able to connect with the instrument.

"If my sarod doesn't affect the audience, then it is a minus point, an issue in me and not in the audience. The classes and masses classification has got nothing to do with the art. It is very easy to say that audience is bad, but I would say that you don't know your art then," asserted the Padma Vibhushan awardee.

He also lamented that despite adapting "so much from the British", India hasn't been able to "produce a symphony orchestra like theirs on both national and international levels".

"Now there is however a little awareness and small orchestra groups are coming up in Chennai and Mumbai, but the sad part is that they all get musicians from outside," Amjad Ali added. (IANS)



By Veturi Srivatsa

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, from time to time, sends across messages to national selectors, his own teammates and to fans through a prying media.

Ever since he quit Test cricket, the one question he is frequently confronted is when will he be quitting the other two formats. After the World Cup, he was asked again about his retirement plans. His answer was a crisp one liner:

"I am 33, I'm still running and I am still fit, next year (at the World T20) will be the right time to decide if I should play World Cup 2019."

For good measure, like all sportspersons, he says he plays for the enjoyment of the game and the day he decides to go, "I will pack my bags and happily go away".

After Mustafizur Rahman damaged Dhoni's and India team's reputation with back-to-back fivers, the question of his retirement cropped up again and this time he turned melodramatic, stating that by removing him the team was expected to do well and if he was the reason for the down slide of Indian cricket he would step down.

"I was never really in line to become a captain. It was a job or responsibility for me. I have taken that responsibility. If they want to take it away, I am happy to give it away."

Then came the ODI series in Australia and India lost 1-4 despite scoring 300-plus scores in four of the five matches and 295 in the other, but the T20 sweep gave him a new life and the team suddenly looked world-beaters. Their potential to win the T20 World Cup can be seen from the way Dhoni moulded a team with some outstanding

For Dhoni, age no factor



fielders.

So, the upcoming World T20 is more important to him than, perhaps, the team. If decided to quit Test cricket midway through a series in Australia, as he had hinted a year ago about giving up one of the three punishing formats. After seeing Virat Kohli's imaginative and aggressive captaincy in Tests down under, people did not see beyond the World Cup.

The World Cup revived India win, he might say he would like to take one match at a time, one series after another for the next three years!

Dhoni is not one to miss out on a trick. He quickly Dhoni's fortunes. His team remained unbeaten till they lost to Australia in the semi-finals. They bowled out all their seven opponents till their exit game to set a record.

There was another hiccup when India lost the ODI series in Bangladesh for the first time last year and soon after South Africa got the better of Dhoni's side here at home. There was another round of Dhoni bashing. The selectors, however, backed him and made sure there were no other media plants about him being replaced by announcing that he would remain captain till the T20 World Cup.

He has a knack of speaking his mind out and his messages are taken seriously, too, by one and all. He is accused of getting rid of seniors, barring Sachin Tendulkar, from the team -- first as One-Day captain and then from the Test squad. Sourav Ganguly and V.V.S. Laxman felt aggrieved at the way the message was sent across.

The much-maligned Greg Chappell noticed a spark in Dhoni and marked him down as a future captain one year



‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, March 6, 2016

Sun square Saturn on your solar return chart signifies that you will get mixed results. Professionals may feel the heat of recent developments in the market. Introspection can help you recharge your inner dreams and help to better realize your self-worth. It's a good time to hone your skills. Renew and revive your contacts and make the most of the synergy and cooperation available to you. Income will be stable but you need to check your extravagant tendencies. Though reserved by nature, you open up during this phase and your interactions make for meeting someone interesting and an affair is not ruled out.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You will take action, plan ahead and seize opportunities. You would eagerly throw yourself into learning and gathering information. A travel, publishing, creative, or educational opportunity falls into your lap. Personal relationships are in focus. A tussle between time spent with loved one or children, and time spent with friends or group activities, is likely to pull you in different directions. A career or reputation matter also needs attention. You would be able to find a way to strike a balance between self-gratification and the obligations of daily life.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

This is an excellent phase for budget-making, asking for a raise, and discovering new ways to boost your income. You would organize your personal finances. It's an excellent time to present your ideas, state your case and get up to date with your emails, phone calls and communication. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus help you to achieve what you set out to do in domestic and professional life during the coming phase.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This planetary configuration is an excellent combination for negotiations, marriage, and business partnerships. Expansion, confidence, and hopefulness are keywords at this time. People are bound to recognize your leadership skills and talents. It is a friendly time, when it is easy to enjoy life and the company of other people. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. You have to get yourself organized, work to build your resources and keep busy. A loved one is paying a lot of attention to you, and it feels fabulous.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

The position of stars indicates that you are feeling good about yourself and confident about your future. You're more likely to enjoy your increased exposure and recognition on a professional level. Increased responsibilities continue to be an issue in your life, but you feel more in control. You are thinking more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion and warmth. You possess strong artistic sensitivity, and you are able to express your feelings openly and candidly this week. You may visit relatives and family friends. Meditation and inner focus lift you to higher levels of consciousness.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

This is an outstanding period for work, money and career. This is a time for growth and development. Finances, taxes, and intimacy are main themes. You are inspired and could even inspire others with your words. The desire for action and adventure may impel you to travel or to undertake a challenging enterprise. You want your objectives to reflect what you're really about, and you are likely to rid yourself of unsatisfying goals. A sudden job opportunity or money and property matters could be part of the financial gains. Your physical activities tend to be more intense, passionate and focused.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

As the planetary configuration brings unusualness and curiosity in your relationships you feel they are more important to you now. It's an excellent time for travel, hobbies, higher education, communications, and learning. You are instinctively starting a new phase in your life. It's time to give your life a makeover, a time of new beginnings and fresh energy. Disputes over shared resources, joint finances, or anything which you hold in common with another are more likely and you are prone to impulsiveness and recklessness regarding such matters. It would be much better for you to go solo right now rather than attempt a cooperative endeavor. Your health and vitality are quite good, and you need physical outlets for your energies now.

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)



How to relearn the art of eating

(Contd from P-VI) Sundry. 'I have food without oil, without sugar, without salt, without white flour...'

So, from the many, many diets out there, which one is yours? There is the Beverly Hills diet, the Mediterranean diet, the South Beach diet and the Shangri La diet -- no visa required, just sit at home and watch every morsel. Take your pick from the nutrisystem diet, volumetrics diet,

weight watcher's diet, micro diet, macrobiotic diet, master cleanse diet, detox diet. Or, you might like the Atkins or the GM ones, for the corporate ring to their names. A vegan diet, a vegetarian diet, a grapefruit diet, an only-fruit diet, a cabbage soup diet, a liquid diet, a raw food diet and a red meat diet are all self-descriptive. The Jenny Craig diet, the French Women Who Don't Get Fat diet and the Skinny Bitch Diet are ladies only. The three-hour diet and the alternate day fasting diet need you to own a clock and calendar while the Glycemic Index diet, Blood Type diet and the Hormone diet get kind of personal. Most diets recommend drinking buckets of water a day. You can begin the day with warm water mixed with lime juice and honey, or sip barley water through the day. Water boiled with cumin seeds is another favourite, along with coconut water and kokum juice. They're either anti-cholesterol or anti-bloat and anti-acidity. Say 'no' to soda.

When accosted by food, we are told to sniff, nibble, rearrange, but no eating, no eating. Those nutty about nutrition are seen snacking on nuts, seeds and dry fruits. They wax eloquent about flax seeds. Diet pills and laxatives, advertised freely on TV and the internet, are another magical elixir for those seeking weight loss, and any damage of vital organ is overlooked for the sheer shrinkage in bodily terms. Bariatric operation and metabolic surgery

are also available to the truly desperate. And, if you want to have your junk food and eat it too, there's always bulimia. More women cheat on their diets than on their partners -- though the moral castigation for both is roughly the same. Like the legendary skinny Minnie Frenchwomen, cigarettes are one way to go, and wine another. Salad without salad dressing is recommended. The path to paradise is paved with lettuce leaves. Diet humour is thin on the ground, because the first thing one loses when one can't eat everything one wants to is one's ha-ha. Dieters are slim and trim and since they are mainly in the gym, grim. Their life, dedicated as it is to counting every calorie, is not just without treats, it is also without fun. Establishing moral superiority over fatsoes takes a lot out of them. And though a sedentary life can kill, everyone knows someone who died while exercising.

For the rest of us, a treadmill or an exercise bike is a decorative piece at home, to be looked at and feel delicious shame. A gym membership is a guilt trip: each month, as we pay the fee without once going there, we feel we have done our bit.

We know all the diets there are, and we have the dumbbells, if not the biceps. We may not walk the walk, but we can talk the talk. We are a fructose-free, gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free generation, happy in our no-carb, decaf world. The Independence War we are now fighting is from carbohydrates. And we are frankly racist when it comes to sugar, rice and bread -- wanting only brown, not white. Though there are murmurs of black rice turning brown rice passé soon. We do burn a lot of calories with all the envy and jealousy we feel looking at the lean lot. About the naturally thin, don't even ask -- we'd starve them, if they weren't doing it themselves. INAV



Painting the walls Bohemian

(Contd from P-VI) graffiti painted on the Wall by artists across the world along river Spree in Kreuzberg area is a creative protest against fascism and dictatorship.

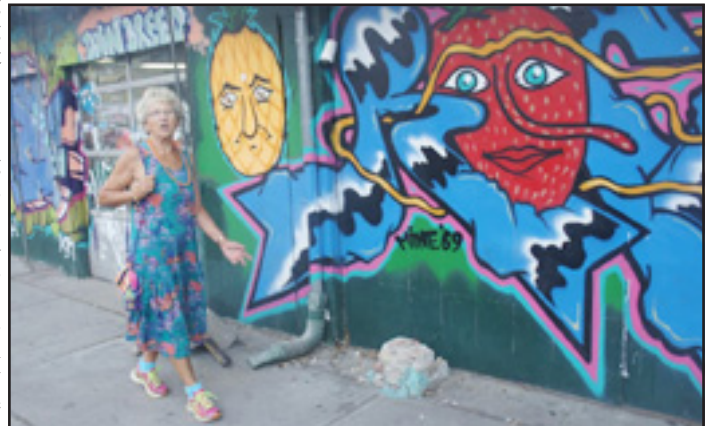
The East Side Gallery, which is a 1.3 km long remnant of the Wall, is now an international memorial for freedom and contains about 105 works painted on 1990.

One of the famous graffiti depicts 'Fraternal Kiss/ Kiss of death' by Dmitri Vrubel with the words "My God, Help Me to Survive This Deadly Love" recreated from an iconic photograph capturing the famed embrace snapped by Regis

Bossu in East Berlin on October 7, 1979. It shows Russian premier Leonid Brezhnev and East Germany's head Erich Honecker kissing to celebrate the anniversary of its founding as a Communist nation.

Some of the writings on the wall are food for thought, indeed. If one says "Love Stories Suck", another says "One Day We Will Be in Charge."

Indian painter Narendra Kumar Jain's 'The Seven Stages of Enlightenment' features in the gallery too showing off an essential quintessence for colourful depiction in India. (TWF)



I must take issue with the term 'a mere child,' for it has been my invariable experience that the company of a mere child is infinitely preferable to that of a mere adult.

--- Fran Lebowitz

The Shillong Times

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A last bow to a political icon

THE sudden demise of PA Sangma, Meghalaya’s veteran politician and MP of Tura Lok Sabha constituency for nine terms has created a void that is difficult to fill. Sangma had attended parliament a day before he breathed his last. In a sense he passed away peacefully and without much fuss. Here was a man who put Meghalaya firmly on the map of this country. He was known for his ready wit; he could think on his feet and was never short of a sharp, incisive response when answering questions in Parliament or the State Assembly. In the State Assembly where he served briefly between 1988-1990 and 2008-2012, Sangma was a role model for younger legislators in the manner he took on the opposition and also in replying to tough questions as chief minister. Humour was his weapon and there was never any rancour in the House. These days there is hardly a light moment in the Assembly. MLAs maintain a serious demeanour and have completely dismissed moments of light hearted banter. PA Sangma was the last of those who understood that the August House is not a courtroom where laughter is banned. As Lok Sabha Speaker, PA Sangma left an indelible imprint in the minds of Indians across the country. His is the most familiar face from the North East. But Sangma was also well known and admired in South East Asia where he made goodwill visits during his ministerial tenure in the central government. As Chief Minister of Meghalaya in 1988-1990, Sangma addressed the pernicious problem of land compensation which he called ‘ridiculous.’

The money paid for land compensation far exceeded the cost of the road making projects in Meghalaya. A land mafia ensured that any government proposal for road construction was brought to their knowledge and they would then buy land at throwaway prices but would sell the same to the Government at exorbitant rates. Sangma brought an end to this nexus between politicians-bureaucrats and the land mafia and brought in a regulation where any village that wanted a road would have to donate land. This earned the ire of political rivals and even his own colleagues who quickly got together to unseat him. His was the first government to come up with a white paper on several key social sectors such as education, health etc. Earlier Meghalaya was run without a policy since its creation. It is unfortunate that these policy documents have remained in cold storage. If PA Sangma had lasted as chief minister for a full five year tenure in 1988 we would have had a Mining Policy that was robust and viable. Perhaps the contour of Meghalaya would have also been much different. Alas! The road to Meghalaya politics is treacherous and full of pitfalls. It left Sangma a bitter man who could not fulfill his cherished mission to take Meghalaya to a different and more progressive trajectory.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

COUNTY CRICKET

Vintage Fast Bowling

By Richard Hadlee

Richard Hadlee rushed Nottinghamshire towards the Country championship title with vintage bursts of fast bowling that forced rivals Northamptonshire to follow on at Trent Bridge yesterday.

Hadlee, with a great chance of repeating the double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets of achieved in 1984, took six for 60 as Northants were dismissed for 223 in 70 overs, 220 behind.

He wrecked the innings with a burst of four for 17 in 5.3 overs, grabbing the prized scalps of Geoff Cook, Wayne Larkins, Bob Bailey and Allan Lamb. And as Northants partially recovered through Richard Williams who eventually hit a fine 104 Hadlee swept back by accounting for David Ripley and Nick Cook in three deliveries. It was Hadlee’s third six wickets strike in a match this month and he now has 69 wickets and 893 runs.

As Northants slipped in their title quest, Leicestershire put themselves firmly in the

frame by defeating Derbyshire in two days by an innings and 25 runs.

Seamer Jon Agnew did most of the damage, finishing with match figures of 11 for 121 as Derbyshire were bundled out for 239 in their second innings. Agnew claimed four for 80 in the second innings and Derbyshire’s only consolation was another gritty innings are by Iain Andoyson, whose unbeaten 87 took 2 6 minutes and contained six and six fours.

Alan Lilley scored the second first class century of his career-nine years after his first - to help Essex into a 104 runs lead against Middlesex at Chelmsford. It took him four and three Quarter hours and he hit only fight fours but his 102 helped Essex total 270.

Summaries : At Derby : Derbyshire 71 and 239. Leicestershire 335 Leicestershire won by an innings and 25 runs.

Jaitbynriew is a garden of flowers

I rarely respond to a feedback on any of my articles but this is another of those few exceptions because the letter has almost accused me of trying to divide the jaitbynriew. And in that case I think I have the right to defend myself and put my points across for my intelligent readers to decide for themselves if that is indeed the case. Nowhere in the article did I ever say that Pnar/Synteng, War Jaintia and Khasi/khynriam are not one community, in fact I always maintained that we are one and the same because we have so much in common. Some of the characteristics that we share are lineage (where we all take our lineage from our mother) and share the same cardinal principles ‘Tip-bru tipblai,’ ‘Tip-kur tip-kha’ and ‘Kamai iei hok.’

Some Pnar clans also ‘tiñ kur’ with those in Khasi like for example ‘ki san syngkong’ with the Thangkhiw clan, ‘ki ?awchibidi/?awchibijai with the Diengdoh clan, ‘ki ìong Challam’ with Mukhim and many others but some Pnar clans even ‘tiñ kur’ with Karbi clans as well such as the Dkhar clan with Timung and many others. And now there are intermarriages between the two. My close relatives are married to Khasis and I don’t see any threat to the Jaitbynriew, because our oneness is based on sound principles. We are bound by roots which are deeply entrenched in the common culture that we share.

The bonds of the Jaitbynriew are strong and deep-rooted and its strength lies also in the branches and flowers that it produces. But we cannot also deny that even if we are one, each group is unique in its own way. The Pnars have their own unique history, we speak a different dialect/version of the language or whatever you call it and we also celebrate different festivals. Even if we share the same creation story or the story of the origin of the tribe yet there are variations (please note I use the word variation) between the two versions.

By H H Mohrmen

The Pnars talk of climbing down from heaven on a ‘tangnoop-tangjri’ (D. Lamar’s Insight into Behdienkhlam) whereas in the Khasi version it was the Diengiei which bridges heaven and earth for the h y n n i e w t r e p hynniewskum to climb up and down. The Pnar story is much more detailed yet all the elements of the stories are the same, so what I am trying to say is that even if we are one, yet different groups tells different versions of our story.

To begin with we cannot deny the fact that Jaintia has its own history and no matter how much we try to, no one can rewrite the history of the place and its people. Speaking about diversity, there is huge diversity even among the Pnars and the Wars of Jaintia hills (which share the common creation stories and culture), the Pnars and the War Jaintia speak a different dialect or version of the language where many could not understand each other. Most of the War Jaintia can understand Pnar and Khasi, yet very few Pnar can understand War Jaintia dialect. We are not going to speak about food habits especially the wild vegetables that people eat because this is influenced by the topography of the area and each region has its own taste, but we can talk about the festivals they celebrate.

Even among the Pnars, the major festivals that the few raid like Jowai, Tuber, ?along, Mukhla, Chyrmang and few others celebrate is ‘ka Behdienkhlam’ and any major festival celebrated by the people in the eleka Shangpung, Raliang will remain incomplete if ‘pastieh’ is not performed. Among the War Jaintia only Nongtalang celebrates ‘Rongkhli’ but all other raids like the Padu, Nongbareh, eleka Darang celebrate ‘Rong kusi.’ Some of the raid in War Jaintia like the Nongtalang, the Nongbareh, the Padu use to have a unique chanting call ‘choh-ñia’ whenever death occurs in the family and also when the bones are deposited in the clan’s repository while

the other groups do not practice this tradition. And another dying art of the Wars Jaintia that has to do with jhum cultivation is ‘ka Longhai.’ This was once a popular tradition of the people in Nongtalang and Syndai.

The writer expressed concern because people in these different sub-groups have started writing their language and my question is how can we say that merely writing one’s dialect or version can be a threat to the Jaitbynriew? Can we for a moment stop people from speaking their own dialect or version of the language? As a person who speaks all the three dialects or version of our language i.e., Pnar, War Jaintia and Khasi I find that each version is unique and is important to the region where people speak the language. For example we find no corresponding word in Khasi for Pnar term like ‘ryngkhi’ ‘ka um-pachu’ and ‘ka Lapakhot’ and the word ‘Tympang’ in both Pnar and War Jaintia has its own meaning which is difficult to translate. And in matters of culture we can only describe certain aspects of the tradition by using the particular language spoken in the area because once we start translating it, we will not be able to do justice and translate the tradition in letter and spirit and much of it (like they say) is lost in translation.

The Khasi alphabets that we use now are also inadequate if we are to write both the Pnar and War Jaintia dialect. Writing Pnar we need additional alphabets like ‘c’ or ‘chi’ and ‘æ’ and to write War Jaintia dialect we need alphabets which have phonetic sounds ranging between ‘t’ and ‘j’ for words like ‘tjiang’ (paternal uncle) or ‘tji’ (rice/food/or ja). We also need another alphabet which is a cross between ‘s’ and ‘f’ for words like ‘fsoh’ (fruit). These are just a few examples which prove beyond doubt that the dialect or the version of the language we speak is unique to its own re-

gion. These are the few variations that exist in the Jaitbynriew and which we cannot change. I don’t see this as a threat. In fact there is a saying that variety adds spice to life, so let us cherish our differences.

In my opinion the Jaitbynriew is like a garden where hundreds of flowers of every shape, size and colour can bloom together. In the Jaitbynriew every group should be able to speak and write their dialect freely. Like birds in the sky, every group should be free to sing their songs and celebrate life the way they want to. In the Jaitbynriew the groups are free to celebrate their festivals and pray and worship God/god as they are given to understand in their own dialect. Let the Khasis, the Pnar, the War, the Bhoi, the Lyngngam, the Maram freely sing their songs, speak and write their language with pride and let us proudly celebrate our festivals.

Ours is the Jaitbynriew that not only celebrates diversity but also encourages and supports each other to grow and develop in their own special way. We have proved to the world that we can live together amidst the differences that we have. We are also the living example of ‘unity in diversity’ and this is the Jaitbynriew I belong to and I am proud to be a member of. Ours is also a progressive Jaitbynriew not restricted by some archaic traditions that are redundant but is open to change which is good for the society and change which can also lead the Jaidbynriew towards progress and development.

The alternative to this model of Jaitbynriew is one of a united monolithic feature with one culture, a Jaitbynriew which only speaks one language (Khasi Sohra may be), celebrates one festival and suppresses all the diversities in our sub-cultures. It does not tolerate differences but tries to assimilate the different groups into one. In my opinion this is a dangerous model because suppression always breeds discontent. It also discourages dissenting voices and it is a breeding ground for conflict. Is this a viable alternative?

PA Sangma - A life well lived

By Albert Thyriang

A rude shock came at 11.10 am in the form of a Whatsapp message, ‘Purno Agitok Sangma no more’. Facebook posts and the internet confirmed the sudden demise. The man born in a remote village of Chapathi, West Garo Hills, a Chief Minister of the state, a Union Minister, a Lok Sabha Speaker, a record nine time MP from Tura Constituency, a presidential contestant, a party founder had breathed his last quietly in his bed. A pall of gloom descended upon his home town, Tura as the sad reality reached peoples’ hearts. The 68 year old proud son of the soil has left them on March 04, 2016. It was apt he passed away in the national capital where he accomplished greatness.

Condolence messages poured in thick and fast. President Mukherjee said, “Sangma was a veteran Parliamentarian and able administrator who served the nation in different spheres. In the passing away of Shri Sangma, the nation has lost an eminent public figure and multi-faceted personality.” Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Shri PA Sangma was a self-made leader whose contribution towards the development of the Northeast is monumental. Shri PA Sangma's tenure as Lok Sabha Speaker is unforgettable. His down to earth personality and affable nature endeared him to many."

Former Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh said that the nation has lost one of the tallest leaders from northeast. Similarly Sonia Gandhi, putting aside bitterness, while appreciating his contributions to the country rightly noted that he was a tall leader. Rahul Gandhi mourned saying his demise is a loss to the nation.

Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr Mukul Sangma, while paying tribute to his mentor turned rival in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly broke down. Recalling the veteran leader’s regular visits to parents who were his teachers, the Chief Minister thanked the deceased for making the Garo tribe known to the nation and the world. Saluting the former Chief Minister and Lok Sabha Speaker as an ‘incomparable’ he said that “No leader from this part of the country has achieved extraordinary innings in political and public life.” Sharad Pawar with whom joined hands against the Congress and co-founded the NCP, wrote in his micro-blogging site, "PA Sangma (was a) vibrant, dedicated parliamentarian & effective speaker. My close companion! Champion of northeast issues."

I was in class VIII in a city school when the 41 year old PA Sangma was sworn in as Chief Minister in 1988. Stories of his humble beginning were told and retold. Poverty coupled with the loss his father at 11 forced him to graze the household cattle in the remote village close to the Bangladesh border instead of being at school. Missionary fathers came to his rescue and sponsored his studies. The sixth of seven siblings went on to do BA from St Anthony’s College, Shillong and MA in international politics from Dibrugarh University while being a teacher in Don Bosco School, Dibrugarh. Simultaneously he obtained an LLB degree via an evening college. Inspiring stories indeed as sheer hard work and determination enabled a cattle tender to become the Chief Minister of the state. In December 1989 I was lucky to see him personally in our village. Responding to the memorandum presented to him, I vividly remember he told the crowd he was moved by the area’s backwardness and would personally look into the demands. He couldn’t do anything as on 25th March the next year his government was toppled. The man from little known North East was to make a mark in the national capital. He occupied various positions as a nine time member of the Lok Sabha. First under Indira Gandhi and then under Rajiv Gandhi he was MoS for Industries, Commerce, Coal and Labour for over 12 years. He served with distinction. His capability

was rewarded when in 1995 he was made a cabinet minister for I&B by Narasimha Rao. He was not just another minister. He was a performing minister. He took and implemented concrete steps to improve his ministries.

1996 was his biggest accomplishment. The intelligent, articulate and affable 49 year old Sangma was elected Lok Sabha Speaker by the Vajpayee (BJP) government making him the first unanimously elected speaker, the first from the Opposition to be a Speaker, the first from the Scheduled Tribe and Christian community to be Lok Sabha Speaker to add to being first tribal Cabinet Central Minister. As a Speaker, he formed a committee on Ethics and Standards in Public Life. The credit for the formation of a Standing Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women and a Joint Parliamentary Committee to study the Constitution (81st Amendment) Bill, 1996 that required 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies goes to him. As Lok Sabha Speaker he marshalled the house smoothly even during stormy debates. One can still remember his typical Hindi while dealing with varied members of different political parties while being jovial and witty.

PA Sangma reached the peak of his career. 1999 probably saw him reverse his political journey. Ignoring his long association with the Congress he, along with Sharad Pawar and Tariq Anwar revolted against ‘for-eigner’ Sonia Gandhi. The expelled trio co-founded the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). He left the NCP in 2004 when the party joined the Congress government at the Centre and took refuge in Trinamool Congress. He rejoined the NCP later but when Sharad Pawar backed Pranab Mukherjee in the 2012 presidential election he parted ways again. Backed by the BJP, BJD and AIADMK and marked by controversy for invoking the tribal and Christian identity, he unsuccessful contested against Mukherjee. He then launched the ‘tribal-centric’ party, National People’s Party(NPP) in January 2013 and decided to align with the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

His refusal to patch up with the Congress was perhaps, a blunder. He could have achieved much more in the Congress or as an ally with the grand old party. He would have been union minister in the UPA Government or even the Indian president. Sadly outside the Congress he was an ordinary MLA and MP. His calculative leaning towards the BJP did not pay off. Voters did not appreciate his constant switching of parties and his alliance with the communal and anti-minority BJP. His party was nearly wiped out in 2013 Legislative Assembly Election winning just two seats. Concerns were also raised as to whether the steward was hampering the political careers of his children. Though he came back last year when he played a key role in his party winning the GHADC elections to form the Executive Committee in local government, yet the NPP may henceforth have a limited scope in the state and national political scenario.

On January 14 last, in his indomitable style, on the occasion of the inauguration of a youth convention in Tura he asked youth to move from reservation to competition, from acquiring degrees to acquiring skills, from subsidy culture to loan culture, from seeking government jobs to self-employment. Well said! Now we mourn his death. His demise has left a huge vacuum in Garo Hills. My sincere condolences to the family members! Thousands will converge at his home and funeral venue to pay respects and bid farewell to their beloved leader who was their voice for over four decades. I will join them to learn and share more about this towering, inspiring and multifaceted personality.

TO THE EDITOR

Truth has many facets

Editor,

In sincere response to Jennieffer Dkhar’s letter “Niam Khasi Niamtre stands on solid foundation” (ST March 4th, 2016), I wish to inform her that I had been writing articles regularly in the Shillong Times about Khasi thought, tradition and culture since the year 2011, and not since the members of Seng Khasi/Seiñ Raj began demanding for minority status. I have not been appointed by any Church authority to speak on behalf of Christianity, but I simply do not subscribe to the view that the kith and kin who had adopted Christianity had abandoned the Khasi culture and are no more observing ‘ka tipbriew ka tipblei’, ‘ka tipkur ka tipkha’ and ‘ka kamai ia ka hok’, or that they had stopped believing in U Blei Trai Kynrad or Tre Kirod.

I am a Khasi and I have the right to express opinions about the thought and traditions of my ancestors and my tribe. I believe that anyone and not only members of the Seng Khasi/Seiñ Raj have the knowledge and authority to interpret the Khasi

thought. It is my personal interest to study and write on Khasi philosophy, tradition and culture, not because I am harbouring any grudge against anybody or any group. I hold no vindictive perception nor have I interfered with the religious belief of others, but I am concerned with the thought of my ancestors. Indeed, I sincerely appreciate the efforts made by the Seng Khasi and Seiñ Raj to preserve Khasi tradition and culture; their efforts in the field of education, and their efforts to redesign religious ceremonies according to present circumstances and marching along with the time. My articles were to encourage them to go ahead with the responsibility of providing spiritual and moral guidance to ‘ki kur ki kha’ (fellow tribesmen) who have not adopted any new religion; and I had appealed that for the peace and unity of the tribe, whatever religion we may belong to, we should uphold the Khasi tradition of truthfulness, tolerance and accommodation (ST, January 29th, 2016). I was also strongly of the view that the members of the Seng Khasi deserve protection from likely deprivation on grounds of religious or cultural practices,

and that if they had ever been discriminated against in the past just because they cannot identify themselves as a religion, then that should be redressed (ST January 16, 2015). I had also said that if there is sufficient ground in the provisions of the Indian Constitution, the believers and upholders of the Niam Khasi-Niamtre have every right to claim minority status in Meghalaya.

In sincere support for their movement I had even unauthorisedly advised that since the believers of indigenous faith can no more be identified according to the clans, they need a new formal institution by which they can be legally identified for determining the minority status (ST, January 21st, 2016). I had written in one of my articles that words have their effective meanings somewhere between the speaker and the hearer (ST, February 11th, 2016). Therefore I was aware that the readers would not understand my words in the same way as I had intended, and they would not possess meanings only in the way a particular reader interprets them to be. Jennieffer Dkhar said that she failed to understand my view point. That is perfectly normal.

The wise even said that an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is a normal behaviour. I am well aware that hundreds of readers would not agree with me, and some would even be very angry with me. However, I am also aware that there would be hundreds of other readers who would agree and appreciate the views I express. So I present my views according to my knowledge and understanding of the facts, not according to what readers would feel and react to them. I am aware that no amount of my explanation or logic would convince Jennieffer Dkhar to agree to my views. But it also implies that no amount of her explanation and logic would convince me to agree to her views. We have our own freedom of thought, faith and belief, and so she has every right to criticize my views. Probably I would have utilized all my reason and logic against myself if I had been in her place. So I wish her well in her endeavours.

Yours etc.,
Fabian Lyngdoh,
Via email

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

“There is a syndrome in sports called paralysis by analysis.”
---Arthur Ashe

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 206 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016

International Women’s Day
MARCH 8, observed as International Women’s Day is a day for reflection and not just perfunctory observances. The United Nations designates certain days to be observed globally because it wants to create awareness on those critical issues. Women have suffered the afflictions of a deeply embedded patriarchal system which has invaded our mind spaces so completely that even women themselves unwittingly act out as agents of patriarchy. In India the conditioning of both the male and female consciousness in patriarchy is so complete that unlearning those and learning new concepts of gender equity and sensitivity will take a very long time. It is easy to discuss gender concerns in academic spaces where peers and colleagues are likely to share similar views but patriarchy and its infringing, and illiberal facets are acted out within the domestic walls and even within so-called enlightened, educated families. The domestic sphere is often the most difficult one to contend with since there are several actors within that sphere whose mindsets need to be converted. Besides behavioral change is a slow process. Very often, the very people who lecture most eloquently on gender equity outside are the worst offenders inside the family. This has a bearing on the younger generation who act out what they see within their homes. In fact, even the way we bring up our children is still very gendered. Girls are warned not to stay out late because it is unsafe for them. But unsafe from whom and for how long do women have to restrict their mobility simple because the male libido is out of control?

Every year IWD is observed by way of lectures in seminar halls and academic institutions. A better way is to take the message outside to the real world where women are still treated like commodities. In the villages of this state women continue to be the bearers of children conceived out of lust because they do not yet enjoy reproductive rights. They are not yet empowered to refuse to conceive each time they have sexual intercourse. Use of family planning methods are still taboo in our villages and with shrinking resources, poverty can only be on the upswing. These backwaters are where awareness programmes are most needed and college and university students and faculty ought to be touring the villages from time to time to help create awareness among women about their sexual and reproductive rights. Short of that IWD is just a rigmarole!

LOOKING BACK
Feb 1, 1989

President Rule in Bihar likely

The Centre may clamp the President Rule in Bihar and keep the Assembly in suspended animation in view of the constitutional crisis following the dissident legislators in the ruling Congress (I) and the party high command's emissaries sticking so their respective stands on the question of immediate removal of Chief Minister Mr Bhawat Jha Azad, party sources indicated here tonight.

Sources said that after the party high command exhausted all its weapons ranging from assurance to concede their demands after the current legislative session to threats of disciplinary actions against the rebel leaders - the only opinion left to it was to suspend the house and save the "minority" government from collapse on the floor of the house. A hint to this effect was given by Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi today when he said the high command would not grant the dissidents any more concessions, sources said.

Union Steel Minister Mr M L Fotedar, who air dashed to the Delhi this morning in the face of open defiance, was given clean instructions to contain the revolt. Mr Fotedar a member of the high powered central team currently competing in the state capital returned here in the evening and started discussions with the state leaders.

Mr Fotedar, Union Home Minister Mr Buta Singh and

AICC (I) General Secretary Mr Oscar Fernandes had late this evening summoned the Chief Minister and some of its ministerial colleagues for consultations. But what transpired in the meeting was not disclosed to the press but attempts to call dissident leaders and members of the dissidents' subcommittee headed by deposed Speaker Mr Shiv Chandra Jha did not reportedly work out.

Gomango releases stamp on Do Bosco
Union Minister of State for Communications, Mr Giridhar Gomango has said that the Centre had formulated a policy to honour all 'great personalities' of the country by releasing commemorative postal stamps on them. Presenting an album of the stamps on Don Bosco in Shillong on Tuesday, Mr Gomango said the founder of the world wide "Salesian Order" Don Bosco was the "Father and Friend of the Youth" who had dedicated his entire life for the uplift of poor and deprived children. Mr Gomango recalled the release of a stamp on U Tirot Singh last year. The Chief Minister Mr P A Sangma, while describing the release of the stamp earlier on Tuesday by the Prime Minister in New Delhi .

Patriarchy Se Azadi

By Sukalpa Bhattacharjee

The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)

As the air around resounds with the *Azadi* Anthem, one feels like adding one's own slogan on behalf of a population which constitutes more than 'half the sky' and for whom every new day is a new way of realizing (through suffering) what it means to live under patriarchy. The concept of patriarchy has been used within the women's movement to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression. The concept of patriarchy which has been developed within feminist writings is not a single or simple concept but has a whole variety of different meanings. Patriarchy has invited different types of response in different societies depending on the socio-cultural milieu in which women as a marginalized group live. But patriarchy as a hydra-headed monster has many *avatars* and forms and it manifests both in visible and invisible ways.

Women in general and educated and urban women (whether 'home-makers' or working) in particular, experience patriarchy in subtle and invisible forms. The discrimination and disparity expressed through fixed and assigned gender roles in sharing household responsibilities and raising children presumes women's capabilities to be limited only to the domestic sphere. Even women do not realize that when their husbands refer to them as 'home minister' in public, they are not being appreciative but sexist. To say she is best suited for the domestic space is to legitimize her exclusion from public sphere and her absence in professional spaces. Studies have proven that human beings are basically androgynous and there is no reason as to why women cannot be paternal and men cannot be maternal. So gender roles in a patriarchal set up fix women as stereotypes-maternal (mother), caring

(wife), emotional (partner) (emotion as opposed to reason), tolerant (widow) etc. Scholars working on gender roles should not echo patriarchal definitions of gender roles but the patriarchal politics behind assignment of gender roles. This caution is even more relevant when we encounter uncritical myths about women's secure role and dignified position in matriarchy or matrilineal societies.

Patriarchy, like Capitalism operates through 'agents' which/whom they choose from among the victims themselves without their own knowledge. Capitalism chooses the 'native' subaltern to work against forces that strive to bring about the economic and social transformations of the backward class. Patriarchy also is not about men alone as agents of exploitation but women who internalize patriarchal lust for power and the desire for the subordination of the weak. So the relation between patriarchy and capitalism is one of "partnership." The predominant reaction of the victims of patriarchy has been the desire to revolt and transform feelings of rebellion into a political practice and theory. Rebellion against patriarchy links the question of women's liberation to other forms of liberation movements underlying oppression on the basis of race, caste, ethnicity and class. Therefore Prof. Gopal Guru argues in his article "Dalit Women Talk Differently" (1995) that dalits can dream of liberation from caste system only when dalit women are freed from two forms of patriarchy- brahminical patriarchy on the one hand and dalit patriarchy on the other.

But how do we recognize or locate patriarchy in our homes and in our daily lives? For those of us who know the academic definition of patriarchy and can by heart them from cover to cover, can we say with

sincerity whether it has transformed our lives into a more dignified existence in comparison to those who have no knowledge of these definitions? Do institutions of marriage and family have the slightest space for reformation of oppressive laws and strictures that had been in force since the time of *Manusmriti*? How do we account for educated societies still indulging in dowry practices under camouflage-ing phrases? How do women, who have seen their fathers struggle to gather the amount of dowry and jewellery (so that their daughters would be accepted in their in-law's house) pretend to live a picture-perfect family life? How would it possible to live and 'give' ones own self uncon-ditionally to a man who has been a tacit ally to this crime and who lives in self denial by speaking of progressive issues in public? Is the institution of marriage and family then based on drab rituals and caricatures of love making without any love or dignity for the (gendered) other?

Women who live in the oppressive structures of marriage and families through everyday battles still exhibit some resistance to patriarchy- they have dared to 'attack the crocodile and yet live in the river' in contrast to the proverbial strategy "If you live in the river you should make friends with the crocodile". The liberation of the rural subaltern women of the sub-continent from patriarchy is of course much more difficult and is an ongoing socio-political project of political activists and committed social groups. But the problem is mainly with two categories of women who fuel patriarchy—firstly the ones who live in denial of the oppressive networks of patriarchy and secondly those who have become partners and collaborators to patriarchs and patriarchy. These are two types of gendered victims – one the average middle class literate women and the others who have managed their way to the

centres of power or Parliament. The average women around carry marital symbols on their bodies, keep fast for their spouse without the slightest knowledge about its authenticity.

Did religion prescribe such practices or did patriarchy codify them as the "laws of Manu" to control women's will and her body? When we live in denial of these we become like sacrificial goats who are loaded with all kind of symbols and rituals just before our own sacrifice in front of the gods. Doesn't it occur to any of these women who live under veil or vermilion (and the rituals that these symbols invite) as to why the reverse is not practised? Have we ever heard of a man keeping fast for his wife's longevity?

But, the more dangerous trend is exhibited by the second category mentioned above to occupy seats of power and who use their oratory skills, passionate trembling voice and theatrical bodily articulations to justify religious fundamentalism and regressive ideologies that have historically oppressed women. These are gendered agents of patriarchy who speak against rights of other marginalized groups and the rights of students. French feminists in the seventies had stated "listen to a woman speak at a public gathering...she throws her trembling body forward...it's with her body that she vitally supports the "logic" of her speech".(Hélène Cixous:1975).The logic that this feminist writer talks about is the logic against patriarchy which a woman had to establish in public. Ironically, what we are seeing in the Parliament now is the theatre of reverse logic of legitimizing political patriarchy through oratory and trembling voices, by gendered agents of patriarchy.

This Women's day let us say together "Patriarchy *Se Azadi*"

(The writer teaches English at NEHU)
The writer teaches English at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong (sukalpa_b@yahoo.com)

Whither Nationalism

By Ananya Guha

What did it really mean to our freedom fighters who fought for it in the vicissitudes of the time spanning the freedom movement? When they thought of freedom did they think only of a country in the making, or was not the country already 'made ' in terms of diversity, ethnic and religious, in terms of minorities, tribes and caste, in terms of a conglomerate of regions? And when the Constitution was drafted and then honed and put before Parliament was there not freedom of speech and the right to education manifesting in various forms? Today all the talk of Nationalism has mounted tension, because only one way of Nationalism is thrust on a Nation which is diverse in terms of religion, culture and history. In fact the great Historian D.D.Kosambi (today he will dubbed as a leftist Historian) in his book on Ancient Indian History analysed India's diversity not only in racial and ethnic terms, but also in terms of geography and climatic conditions. He averred that in this vast ' sub continent ' we even have extreme climates- from extreme heat, salubrity to extreme cold.

A Historian was making a point or two about Geography to discover a Nation which could be so different and pluralistic yet be so one and complete. And in doing so he used the historiography of other Historians such as A.L. Basham to trace the ancient and medieval lineage of the country, whether they were under Hindu or Muslim patriarchs. Amartya Sen used this rationale of an argumentative Indian who could run skin deep to see the complexity of the country intuitively foreseen by Asoka, Akbar and even Tagore. True an independent movement came much later, and the British were seen as the enemy, true still that in the medieval history there were internecine feuds but men like Akbar could foresee a country right from the North to the South. The presence of such rulers was to establish Delhi as some kind of capital, even as the British cleverly veered to Calcutta.

Now Nationalism is the patronage of a few which means the government, cannot support an ideology which speaks for the economically weak, the poor or the oppressed, cannot think of minority rights or their alienation; whether they be Christians, Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, Santhals and Tribals in general. To invoke names of people like Nehru is anathema if not subversive, and institutions of national importance and heritage with traditions of free-thinking are dens of iniquity. Internationally known thinkers like Romilla Thapar and Amartya Sen are not only poooh- pooohed but outrageously insulted. These are worrying times, and times of impoverished thinking, even reading.

So how has an individual to prove, let us use that word, that he or she is a Nationalist.

Let us look back at the early twentieth century when the seeds of a patriotic fervour and the then Nationalism(as sharply contrasted with the present one) was born. Tagore visited Japan and delivered lectures not on Nationalism, but on Internationalism! Did this mean that he was a less patriot than his peers? Did this also mean that Tagore was moving away from the Nationalist tendencies of the times, and washing his hands off it? An emphatic No. Tagore was

saying, that it is humanism which pervades a world, even so in India, and that humanism was direly in need in a country with its diverse customs, practices, and races or communities. Gandhi set to put this into practice by mingling with the common folk and calling hitherto untouchables Harijans. However upper caste thinking is still prevalent today as recent evidences show.

By propounding his views on Internationalism Tagore was also looking at other models such Japan, not only in terms of economic prosperity but as a heritage of nations. Similarly in looking towards Western advancement, Tagore was looking to it's philosophy, literature and thought. Tagore went a step ahead, when in his Hibbert lectures delivered in Oxford University (he was the first Indian to be invited for the same) he articulated his vision of the Religion Of Man, which in effect is a common humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or religion, and this he transmitted in one of his poems in The Gitajanjali, the poem is prescribed in schools across many boards in the country. Similarly Tagore's lectures on Internationalism should be a must for students of Humanities and the Social Sciences in the country.

But today Nationalism means symbols only, and these symbols must be brandished in public places and offices. And if we do not do it, are we less nationalistic? If we promote the cause of Malika Sarabhai, Dr Binayak Sen, or from Sharmila are we toeing the line of sedition? Freedom means, freedom from fear where we can think, write and assert with a kind of independence, that does not mean of course supporting nefarious designs of another country, but probing into what is happening, why it is happening, the disgruntlement of students and Dalits, and why a whole body of literature is emerging out of them, including North East India. One should read the Manipuri poet Thangjam Iboipishak's trenchant poem " I Don't Want To Be Killed By An Indian Bullet", deeply ironical, but certainly not anti - nationalist or virulent, and moved by pathos, to understand the inner psychosis of a community bedeviled by violence and caught in the trap of militancy and militarism. Will our leaders understand such a predicament?

Instead of castigating firebrand student leaders with an ideology of nation and nationhood, try and understand them, and see where the pitfalls are ! Dissension is settled when one meets the opponent half way, when you might radically disagree but can be empathetic. But by constantly reviling and ridiculing some higher bodies of learning, known for their academic excellence in teaching and learning in the portals of Higher Education the authorities are alienating young minds and the intelligentsia. For the first time in the history of the country teachers and students have come together not in political bonhomie, but in deep empathy with one another.

(The views expressed in the article are purely personal).

ernor's House at Shillong Peak the road is very narrow especially at the turning. One vehicle practically has to go off the road and land on the drain when another vehicle approaches from the opposite side.

My suggestion is Govt should construct its own approach road to Shillong Peak View Point. Before reaching the Air Force Gate, the hills on the left hand side belongs to the Government. This can be used to construct a road which will reach directly to the View Point without touching the Air Force area at all. Govt should initiate construction of that road immediately for the

Yours etc.,
BK Khongsar,
Viaemail

Swacch Bharat; By all, For all!

Editor,

'Swacch Bharat ka irada kar liya humne, desh se ab ye vaada kar liya humne'; these are the famous lines of the theme song of the Swacch Bharat or Clean India Campaign. The literal translation of these lines would be: 'We have decided on a Clean India, we have now made this promise to our country!' This is, indeed, a very strong and striking line. It would have been more meaningful if only we stood by these lines and actually did our part. It would, of course, be very wrong on my part to say that this campaign has not progressed at all. In fact, narrowing down to our city, I am quite proud to see a much cleaner Shillong in only a span of a few months. However, what we need to realize is that cleaning up is just not enough. What we actually need to do is 'Clean, Keep Clean and Be Clean!'

There have been cleaning drives carried out, awareness programmes organised, shows broadcasted and though there 'have' been people doing their bit to keep our country and planet clean, there are also others who sit back and do nothing, to be more precise, talk against people who actually work for this cause! Yes, I 'do have' proof. How often do we use the Dankhetti overbridge, which is 'supposed' to be a landmark in Shillong? I don't use it often, maybe I use it at least

once in 2 months and every time I've walked across the bridge, I'm ashamed to say that there would be just one thing going on in my mind- how quickly I would get off it!(Of course, there would be just two ways of this actually happening i.e. either by running across it as fast as Flash or by jumping off it!) And obviously, my life is too precious to go with the second option! Yes, I could also go with the option of not using it at all but tell that to my Mom and she would just go on explaining that its too risky to be crossing on such a busy road. Let's be honest and admit the truth- it is filthy and we have made it that way!

The point is that people talk a lot now-a-days. Many people are like hollow vessels that make a lot of noise but are in fact...hollow. What we should be doing is first, cleaning up our minds and hearts and accepting the fact that we are all humans who occupy equal space on this earth and realize that it is "everyone's" duty to clean up our country. Then, we can go about nagging about cleaning up our environment! I know that the respected reader may be thinking why all of a sudden, out of the blue, have I sent an article on such a subject, without any important event having taken place recently regarding this topic. But, according to me, its time we don't only wait for occasions to take initiative, to take action or even to get out and pick up a food wrapper outside our houses because its now

time we ask ourselves how much we have actually contributed to cleaning up our country. Not that I have contributed so much as to now advise everyone what to do but I'll go ahead and reveal my age now since I know that after reading this many readers must have already started talking castigating this writer who thinks she knows everything, right? I'm a 14 year old school student who's trying to figure out why is it that all her elders tell her to grow up and do something for the environment while they themselves do....nothing!!! Well, I can't go about and start cleaning up the streets for everyone to follow but what I do want is to see a better, cleaner and safer environment through the efforts of not only the next generation but also those same people who just...talk! So, let us join hands, work together and make our voices heard, let us work together to change the world!

Yours etc.,
Athira Saji,
Shillong-14

MCCL - Govt's white elephant

Editor,

The MCCL which is a premier industrial undertaking of the government is in dire straits. The unit which was giving good dividends in its initial years has become a sick unit and the time is not far when it will become a dead and abandoned unit. The cement factories which have come up in recent years are running with high profits and are growing day by day.

Now we have not just one or two but quite a number of cement producing units which are minting money and making huge profits. It is high time that the MCCL has a change of guard and expertise. An IAS officer may be a good administrator as far as government functioning is concerned but an industrial unit needs an industrialist who is in the perfect know of the functioning and administration of a cement producing industry. The government should immediately hand MCCL over to a private party who will be able to run the factory with remarkable efficiency and better dividends and save this unit from complete annihilation.

Yours etc.,
SL Singhania,
Shillong-1

Some touristy points!

Editor,

I would like to bring to the notice of the Minister in-charge Tourism and Director Tourism that the Air Force Authority have now stopped tourists from visiting the Shillong Peak View Point. This was a reaction to the security breach in the Pathankot air base. By doing this the tourist inflow to Shillong is affected.

Next is the road maintained by PWD from the turning 5th Mile turn-off to the road that goes to Shillong Peak. This is a single lane road and very difficult for two vehicles to cross each other. Since the Shillong point View is the most popular point for the tourists, so the Tourism Department should initiate to make the road a double lane one since at the point of the old Gov-

“Great ability develops and reveals itself increasingly with every new assignment.”
—Baltasar Gracian

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 207 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2016

Gender equity in politics

MARCH 8 observed as International Women's Day has come and gone. Is India getting closer to the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament? It has not yet made it to the Lok Sabha even after long discussion on the subject for a number of years. The BJP government has a massive majority in the Lok Sabha and is in a position to push it through whenever it wants to. Speaking at the National Conference of Women Legislators, both President Pranab Mukherjee and Vice President Hamid Ansari said that the bill should be brought up yet again. All parties are agreed on the passage of the bill and yet it is being stalled. Male political privilege has been supported by leaders like Mulayam Singh Yadav. Not that there has been no progress. The number of female legislators is 12% today vis-à-vis 5% in 1952. There are two women cabinet ministers at the Centre and two state Chief Ministers. The number of women fighting elections has gone up significantly. Of course, women's emancipation and empowerment are not necessarily proved by reservation of seats in legislatures. That may be the reason that women in politics have not been all that militant about getting the bill passed.

The insistence on 33% reservation for women may be unrealistic. What is more important is that political parties should recruit more women members. Besides, political parties and governments should focus more on enabling women to lead better lives while ensuring that girls do not drop out and women enjoy greater health service. Above all, the constant threat of violence against women should be eliminated. It can best be done by promoting gender equity.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

Students assault college principal

In an unprecedented incident in Meghalaya, some youngmen claiming to be KSU activists took on a college principal physically in a bid to compel him to close his college down.

The victim of the students' outrage., Mr. S. K. Austin John, Principal Union Christian College of Barapani said in a statement issued on Wednesday that 01 August 3 a group of students unleashed a heap of blows and kicks for what they said his refusal to give in to their demand for keeping the college closed.

Mr. John said the incident took place when the entire staff and *he students were engaged in an extracurricular activity. Some nine or ten students came in a car and used "abusive language" and before leaving threatened to come back again.

The statement said that some members of tin KSU had met him on July 31 urging him to suspend classes Mr. John refused point blank saying that this was a residential college and therefore as long as the students were willing to come to classes he would not close down the college

MI John said the students threatened that if "antisocial elements" took advantage of the situation the KSU would not be responsible.

Meanwhile, he has reported the matter to the police and baa furnished the car number to help tracing down the culprits.

INSHILLONG

In the? State Capita! On Wednesday educational restitution! Remained paralyzed for the third day in a TOW. Supporters of the KSU stopped students and teachers from entering the institutions. There were reports of students entering into class rooms and even dormitories to physically check whether classes wire held or not. At least one school was stoned and glass panes broken.

It was complained that police did not take any action. Police officials, however, de-

nied the allegation.

Official sources said that the Got had taken "serious" view of the incidents and issued instructions to deal with the culprits with a firm hand.

Centre opposed to amend immigration act

Union Home Minister Mr Buta Singh has said the Centre was opposed to any amendment to the Immigrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983, according to Mr. K. Bhattachtrjee, MLA.

Mr. Bhattacharjee who was a member of the delegation which called on Mr. Singh at New Delhi recently, told newsmen hare today that when asked about any move for the amendment of the act to shift the onus of proof on the person against whom proceedings on charges of "illegal entry" Into the state had been drawn up, Mr. Singh categorically denied this.

When demanded for a GBI investigation into recent' political Billings" in the state, the Union Minister also denied that the Assam Government had ever referred to the Centre any such incident (UNI)

CallForRevoltInCong(I)

Former Congress (I) General Secretary Mr. Ram Dhan today called for a revolt in the party.

In a statement denouncing the party leadership, he said Bogus congress membership and its bogus leadership as well as bogus implementation of policies culminating in the Bofors scandal have brought the nation to the brink of disaster.

Mr. Ram Dhan, who is one of the few dissident Congress MPs seen regularly in the company of former Defense Minister Mr. V. P. Singh and others expelled from the party, quoted Swami Vivekananda to say "To all those in the congress and outside : awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached. "

Is the Demand for Pay Revision by State Govt Employees Justified?

By Sumarbin Umdor

The recommendation of the 7th Central Pay Commission (CPC) for 23.5 percent hike in salaries of central government employees effective from January 2016 has led to a domino effect with employees of state governments demanding similar pay revision. Many poll bound states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Punjab have already announced setting up of their own pay commission while others like Kerala is in the process of implementing recently announced pay revision.

State governments follow their own schedule in revision of salaries of their employees. While Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan adopt the recommendations of central pay commission, others like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Haryana and West Bengal constitute their own pay commission. While most states implement pay revision at every 10 year intervals, state government employees of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh are luckier as their salaries are revised every 5 years.

In case of Meghalaya the first pay commission was constituted in 1978, second in 1986 and third one in 1998. The Fourth pay commission was set up in 2007 and its recommendations implemented in October of 2009 with retrospective effect from January 1, 2007. The Fourth pay commission had recommended a minimum salary starting at Rs. 6500 and a maximum salary of Rs. 353300 with 22 levels of pay scales along with allowances such as house rent, hill compensation, medical and for winter months.

The implementation of the recommendations of the 7th CPC will lead to a substantial gap between salary of central and state government employees of Meghalaya. A cursory comparison of salaries of central government em-

ployees based on recommendation of the 7th CPC with that of state government employees of Meghalaya without considering allowances shows the pay gap at different levels. In January of 2016 the entry level salary of state government employees at present pay scale will be around Rs. 13400 (at likely revised dearness allowance of 106 percent on January 2016), which is Rs. 4600 less than the entry level salary of Rs. 18000 (for central government employees as proposed by the 7th CPC).

Continuing with the above comparison, a teacher in a state government school will be getting at least Rs.6500 less than a teacher of a central school, while an assistant engineer employed with the state public works department will be drawing about Rs. 10000 less than an employee in a similar post in the central government services. This gap between central state and government salaries would further widen if allowances are also taken into consideration, as state government allowances have always been substantially lower than those paid to central government employees.

This justifies the call for revision of pay and allowances of state government employees to maintain parity with their central government counterparts. However, the demand for pay revision has to be considered against the state government paying capacity particularly in today's scenario when it is facing the twin fiscal challenges of contraction in revenue generation coupled with drastic curtailment of central grants. Revision of pay by the state government in line with recommendations of 7th CPC will burn a big hole on the exchequer and place severe strain on its already tenuous financial

situation.

In 2013-14 the total amount spent by the state government on salary and pension including salary component of grants in aid was about Rs. 2900 crore, which is a little over 52 percent of total revenue on that year. If the trend continues then salary and pension bill in 2015-16 is set to increase to at least Rs. 3500 crore at present emolument structure. For a resource poor state like Meghalaya, this amount is more than double the revenue that the state expects to mobilise internally in 2015-16 or near about the amount the state has budgeted as its enhanced share of central taxes in this fiscal year.

The preempting of such a large chunk of financial resources of the state for meeting salaries and pensions liabilities is at the cost of capital expenditure which goes towards building of infrastructure assets like roads, bridges, power generation and distribution, irrigation networks, transport, sewerage, water supply, education, health, sports facilities, etc. Other casualties of the ballooning salary bill are allocation towards repair and maintenance, capacity building and training and outreach programme. Slashing of the above expenditures has a long term detrimental effect in expansion of state's productive capacity and effectiveness in service delivery.

However, this is not to argue that the state government employees should not get a pay hike. After all, the demand for salary revision is coming after almost a decade since the last revision and the argument for parity with central government employees a valid reason. The issue here is the need for the government to balance the limited budgetary resources to meet the employees' expectation without compromising on investment in social sectors and infrastructure. In fact if the state government can mobilise the fi-

nancial resources, then the pay hike will be a much needed booster for the sluggish state economy which is weigh down by the adverse impact of the bandh on coal mining.

Another important point that needs to be raised here is that the focus of successive pay commissions, both centre or states, has been largely on emolument structure, service conditions and facilities for the employees with scant attention being given to the issue of performance and efficiency of government employees. In Meghalaya ordinary citizens depend on state government departments to deliver basic needs and services in field of education, health, water electricity and livelihood support. Therefore much is expected from government employers who are the main providers of such services, particularly in the rural areas.

However, the sad reality is that the functioning of most state government offices is plagued by chronic absenteeism and the lack of work ethics. The 'mai-baap sarkar' culture continues to pervade among majority of government employees with citizens being at the receiving end. Thus, any future state pay commission must address this issue and come up with clear actionable recommendations to transform the government departments into modern, professional and citizen-friendly entities that are dedicated to the service of the people. Further, the state government must have the stomach to implement the measures rigorously for the interest of the people of the state. For the above to happen, it would be judicious for the present government to constitute the state pay commission this year itself so that it can consider the demand of the employees in a much calmer environment without the pressure of a looming general election which is due in 2018.

(The writer teaches Economics in NEHU)

TO THE EDITOR

Give women their due!

Editor,

This has reference to your editorial "International Women's Day" (ST March 8, 2016). Every year we celebrate International Women's Day" but crime against women seem to be increasing at an alarming rate. Crime is endemic to the human condition, but a crime specifically directed at one sex is most despicable and unfortunately, the one that is punished least. It is found that media exposure and all the legislations have had little impact. Legislation introduced by the government is often merely tokenism. One would find that the problem before the majority of women in our country is not equality but survival. The patri-

meshwar has rudely and gradually been brought down to earth. The scenario for women seems grim indeed and this will continue so long as the basic social and economic structures remain unchanged and the implementing and law and order agencies show indifference. The thinking of society has to change and parents must value their daughters on a par with their sons and should give them the same advantages and means of independence. I would

like to point out that while laws alone cannot put an end to evils that are endemic in the social structure, the government can at least make some attempt to take it's own enactments seriously.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad - 15

Purno's sunny smile

Editor,

The Mother said, "Happiness is as contagious as gloom- and nothing can be more useful than to pass on to people the contagion of a true and deep happiness". The front page photograph of Purno A. Sangma (ST, March 7, 2016) bears the testimony of it. His innocent, sweet and sunny smile has a signature of a true and deep happiness. We need to remember this 24x7 and practice the art of broadcasting happiness through such divine smile.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Women's status still pathetic!

Editor,

Since India is a land of

rhetoric, there is no dearth of "patriots" who zealously proclaim that Indians are the only people who refer to their country as 'Mata'; thereby trying to assert that the fairer sex gets relentlessly honoured and respected as mothers in India! But the reality is otherwise. Female foeticide as well as infanticide, molestation, rape, 'honour' killings, murder for dowry and witch-hunting continue to plague the female population of this society. And also there exist many silent killers in the form of wife-beating, marital rape, deprivation of proper nutrition and education and imposition of number of restrictions within the family in the name of "tradition" and "religion". Barring few individuals, innumerable women are in no position to protest or retaliate. And the greatest shock and tragedy lies in the fact as many as 53 percent of educated Indian girls between the ages of 15 and 19 feel that husbands are "justified" in beating up their wives/according to the UNICEF's "Global Report card on adolescents 2012!"

While it remains the urgent duty of the male to do away with their chauvinistic mindset, women should also try to enlighten their souls and minds. Drinking and partying at bars and nightclubs, sporting "bold" attire and acting in sexually explicit films are

not harbingers of "modernity", "progress" or "women rights". Only when women learn to respect themselves, demand equal rights in the family and society as entitled to men-folk and refuse to get exploited by the society as a mere "commodity" or objects of lust; can it be expected that women would at last find their rightful place under the Indian sky.

The "nationalist" Indians should remember that the Scandinavian countries, Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK and Western Europe do not "worship" their respective nations as a female deity; yet the women of those societies tread the path of life with heads held high. It is high time India accords its women population their entitled honour, right, respect and dignity. Else, we would be left with no other option but merely to play to the gallery by invoking the hyperbole of 'Bharat Mata' and showering rhetoric on the occasion of "International Women's Day"!

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee,
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.

Need to re-evaluate Christianity

By Margeret Lyngdoh

This write-up is a response to Fabian Lyngdoh's article where he blatantly points out, and I quote, "I would like to point out that the traditional religion of the Khasis as established by the ancestors is no more in existence, and today all the Khasis have adopted various new religious faiths to keep spiritual relation with God and fellow human beings." Let me first address the basic premise of the author i.e. an assumption of an earlier pure, traditional belief system of the community collective known as Khasi. At any given point of time, belief, tradition and cultural practice are in a state of flux. Therefore, the Khasi "religion" as it existed and continues to exist is ever evolving - and that includes Christianity. But a statement like the one made by Fabian Lyngdoh, undermines the right of the practitioners of the Khasi Religion to practice their faith with dignity.

In order to respond to the massive influence of Christianity, it is rightly pointed out by the author, that Khasis professing the Khasi belief system, have adopted "Christian" practices - going to the Seng on Sundays, the singing of devotional songs and the practice of prayer before meals. A community will ape or imitate the practices of the dominant group, only if it feels "othered" and then it becomes necessary to "fit in". It may then be inferred that Khasis belonging to the Original Religion are discriminated against either overtly, or through other subtle means. I am speaking from nine years of field work experience researching Khasi traditions in the Khasi Hills.

Let me take a closer look at some of the points that Fabian has raised. He contends that the writings of the Khasi intellectuals of the 19th and 20th century need not be looked at as "gospel truth" - as if, "truth" is a prerogative only of the Bible. Further, what the Khasi intellectuals were desperately trying to do in the 20th century was to write down on paper, a wisdom that until the introduction of the tyranny of the script, was experienced and felt by each and every member of the Khasi communities. Until today, the Khasis are a primarily an oral tradition culture and the Khasi encounter with Christianity has led to an upheaval which is felt in the level of every life and the various nuances of social reality. Writers in the 19th and 20th Century wrote about the Khasi religion, frantically trying to figure out a way to clarify and even valorize the tenets of a tradition transmitted hitherto only through the oral medium. .

Fabian Lyngdoh points out, rather condescendingly, the various strategies that practitioners of the indigenous religion perform in imitation of Christian tradition. This seems to me so shallow that only someone who is ignorant of what actually supports Christianity in the Khasi Hills can actually make these claims. Fabian is only able to take the position he takes because he does not have an insight that it is Khasi culture and Khasi belief which supports and sustains Khasi Christianity. Let me qualify my claim.

In the introduction to the Anthropology of Christianity, Fennella Cannell states that Christianity as a religion is not an arbitrary construct, but a complex one. It differs according to the context to which it adapts itself (2006: 22). There are certain inherent traits that remain in Christianity wher-

ever it moves, which Cannell states as, "Incarnation [by which God became human flesh in Christ] and the Resurrection [by which, following Christ's redemptive death on the Cross, all Christians are promised physical resurrection at the Last Judgment]" (Cannell 2006: 23). Within the dominant anthropological view of Christianity, at the heart of the religion is transcendence. This approach suggests that Christianity is a religion of "radical discontinuity". Christianity, rather than being a uniform entity, is has multiple dimensions. Modernity as a transformational category is also a part of the topics that the anthropology of Christianity seeks to address. The relevance of these theoretical categories of the anthropology of Christianities is felt keenly among the Khasi sub-communities simply because the strategies that this approach incorporates within itself are also the ideas of discontinuity. This is represented as a transformation from the Khasi indigenous worldview to the new Christianities in which a different way of associating with the spiritual and physical realities are focused on, from the traditional one.

I may again allude to the complex relationship that Khasi Christianities have with the traditional cultures they encounter. On the one hand Christianity demonises the indigenous beliefs in order to validate Christian values, but by doing this, it also unwittingly maintains and preserves the indigenous ontology. Referring once more to the ideas of Fanella Cannell in which she emphasizes the conditions under which it becomes impossible to ignore the circumstances brought about by the missionary influence of Christianity, the "colonial agency" and the "compulsory imposition of modernity" becomes part of the interpretation of the cultural phenomenon among the Khasis. Furthermore, the subtle nuances of change within the Khasi Christian theology itself enables the interpretation of the Khasi folklore in discursive ways, which in turn allows for the multiplicity of meaning.

I would like to end this rebuttal to the article by Fabian Lyngdoh, not by condemning or valorizing any religious faith. Instead I ask for a re-evaluation of the Christianity we have embraced and look at how much it has had to adapt, in order to become relevant to the Khasi community. By doing so perhaps we may realize with compassion the salient features of a tradition we now seek to obliterate. Think about the radical assimilative stances taken by the Catholic Church, or the complete discontinuity with Khasi traditions advocated by the Presbyterian Church. Think about how Khasi people find ways and means to negotiate belief between these two approaches. Fabian Lyngdoh should think about your use of the term "invented traditions" because all traditions are invented. Please be thorough in your research when you write, because as you very well know, even though you write from a Christian standpoint, yours have power.

(The writer is from Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu)

“How many charming talents have been spoiled by the instilled desire to do 'important' work! Some people are born to lift heavy weights. Some are born to juggle with golden balls.”
---Max Beerbohm

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Redefining nationalism

IN recent times the debate over what constitutes nationalism and what sort of actions can be construed as being seditious have been occupying much media space. There is a proclivity by the ruling dispensation at Delhi, through its students’ wing to narrowly define nationalism and equate it with patriotism. Nationalism is an adopted term coming as it does from the idea of the nation which is again a western concept. In a nation it is assumed that citizens have equal rights and responsibilities and that there exist no discrimination by the state. Is that true of India? This is a country that is still battling caste discrimination after 68 years. Inequality whether that be of caste or gender is written into our DNA. Dalits, tribals and other backward classes remain the underdogs. The state has reserved seats for these categories in employment and education but when they do not get access even to basic education, their ability to get admission into institutions of higher learning is well nigh impossible.

However, more than the debate on nationalism and sedition what is more worrying is the idea of using soldiers to juxtapose them with groups that demand freedom of speech and expression as if to say that freedom of speech invariably implies being anti-state and therefore disrespectful to soldiers who die at our borders or in fighting armed militants in Kashmir and the North East. The military in India is administered by a civilian government. We are neither a theocratic state nor a military dictatorship but the recent posturing by some right wing elements; their voluble and despicable threats to those who ostensibly militate against their ideology is condemnable. However, there is also a tendency by the left liberal ideologues to push the debate to levels that cannot be readily grasped by millions in this country. In this tug of war between Right and Left the media has forgotten much of its responsibilities to the larger population of this country whose voices are muted. The media it appears has turned elitist by default. In the confusion that has ensued no one has tried to redefine nationalism in a manner that the ordinary citizen can relate to. This is imperative if we are not to have a civil war in this country.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

Market corner

Chicken tandoori, chili chicken and all those mouth-watering chicken dishes have virtually become a rarity on the tables of the common men after the price of live or dressed chicken scored beyond proportion during the last six months. Prices range from Rs. 30 for a small country chicken which is barely enough for dinner for two, to about Rs. 110 for the bigger roosters. Dressed broiler chicken of course, is available for about Rs. 44 per kg but then some people do not seem to find it as tasty as country chicken and they would rather go for mutton which commands the same price.

Pork fetches a price of Rs. 40 per kg. A way to get your proteins without blowing a hole in your pocket is to by beef which, at Rs. 24 a kg is on the cheaper side and if you happen to have a poor eyesight, and are desperately in need of Vitamin A liver might be just the right thing , goat’s liver costs about Rs. 60 a kg and cow’s liver Rs. 40 a kg.

Eggs have also become dearer with the farm eggs costing Re 1 a piece for the hens and Rs. 1.50 apiece for the ducks. Eggs laid by the country hens, though smaller in size, taste better and cost Rs. 16 per dozen. Fish another rich source of protein, is going un usually cheap at present, thanks to

the voluntary abstinence following outbreak of USD, while the smaller variety of Rohs, the all-time favourite, cost Rs. 24 kg, the bigger ones which are cut and sold cost Rs. 30 a kg or more depending upon the size of the fish ‘Katla’ is available for Rs. 20 a kg and the cut pieces of the bigger variety of ‘Chital comes for Rs. 60 a kg. If you buy a whole ‘Chital, the price will be about Rs. 40 a kg. ‘Boal’ fetches a price of Rs.16 per kg. Many varieties of carp are available at present silver carp cost Rs. 14-15 a kg for the smaller variety and Rs. 20 for the bigger while the Japanese carp from the Umiam Lake commands a price of Rs. 16 per kg and the American Carp Rs. 22 a kg. ‘Kangla’ costs Rs. 25 and ‘aar’ or ‘Ghagot’ sell at Rs. 35 per kg.

The ‘Mirlgel’ costs Rs. 20 a kg and mini shrimps Rs. 16 a kg. Assorted varieties of small fish which taste best when fired cost Rs. 14 per kg. ‘Padba’ a class by itself, strangely is a rare sight this writer. Occasionally when it shows up the price is around Rs. 50 a kg.

For those with exotic and oriental tastes, dry fish extremely rich in proteins come for Rs. 40 to 60 a kg depending on the variety. The favourite ‘sidal’ apparently a victim of USD is of course, not available now.

It’s ‘azadi’ for Kanhaiya Kumar. After 23 days in captivity he was back in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) to a rousing welcome late through the night of 3rd March. His ordeal began on February 13 when Delhi Police arrested and most shockingly charged him with sedition for anti-India slogans on February 9 when students of JNU commemorated the anniversary of the hanging of Afzal Guru calling it a ‘judicial killing’. The RSS and BJP affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) took offence to the allegedly “anti-nationals” slogans like “We will fight until India’s destruction.” “Tum kitne Afzal maarooge, har ghar se Afzal niklega!”, ‘India murdabad’, ‘Pakistan zindabad’, etc. Eye witnesses, however, testified that before the start of the meeting, ABVP activists threateningly and intimidatingly raised provocative slogans like ‘Ye Kashmir Hamara hai, saara ka saara hai’ to which some in the crowd responded with, “Hum kya chaahthe? Azaadi!”. The over enthusiastic ABVP who claim sole ownership of nationalism and patriotism lodged a police complaint.

Fair and square, the main culprit is the central government. The police acted on instructions of ministers who danced to the tune of the intolerant and anti-left ABVP. Home Minister Rajnath Singh had warned the previous day, “If anyone raises anti-India slogans and tries to raise question on the nation’s unity and integrity, they will not be spared.” Not to be left behind, HRD minister, Smriti Irani, combatively shouted we “can never tolerate any insult to Mother India”. No one agrees with the anti-India slogans but do not the authorities know that 124 A of the Indian Penal Code is applied only in cases of ‘incitement’ to ‘violence’, and threat to ‘public disorder’?

Commemorating Afzal Guru’s hanging anniversary is no sedition. Afzal Guru was of course a convicted terrorist for the parliament attack in 2001. After the confirmation by the Supreme Court of the earlier judgments and rejection of the mercy petition by the President of India he was hanged secretly in Delhi’s

Defend freedom of expression

By Albert Thyrniang

Tihar Jail on 9 February 2013. However, warning voices were heard loud and clear. The then Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah warned of long-term implications. His rival party, the PDP termed the killing of the alleged Pakistan trained terrorist a ‘travesty of justice’. Booker Prize winner and rights activist, Arundhati Roy saw Guru’s capital punishment as ‘a stain on India’s democracy’. The former UNO Under Secretary of State, Shashi Tharoor called his hanging “wrong”. The fearless Markandey Katju, former Delhi High Court chief justice, Justice AP Shah severely criticized it. Shah saw Afzal Guru and Yakub Memon’s execution as politically motivated. So court judgments and convictions can also be criticized. Even the term ‘judicial killing’ can also be used. It is not anti-national. For Kashmiris have protested endless number of times with worse anti-India slogans? Why has no one has arrested them? Why single out JNU students?

The worst was to happen in Patiala House Court. At Mr. Kanhaiya’s hearing chaos was created by law breaking lawyers who, along with BJP supporters assaulted Kanhaiya, journalists and other JNU students. An MP of the BJP, Om Prakash Sharma severely thrashed the student leader. The police looked the other way. Later both the lawyers and MP justified their disgraceful action on camera. Ironically the assaulters have gone unpunished while the alleged slogan shouters are charged with the most stringent law. No wonder the accused students have got unparalleled support throughout the country. The mainstream media (with exception of a handful) have defended the right of speech and expression. The messages and posts of ‘We stand with JNU’ dominated social media space. Intellectuals, writers, experts on law, national and international liberty rights organisation, universities across the globe have stood with JNU.

To put JNU students behind bars doctored videos were submitted to the po-

lice as flinching evidence. A BJP spokesman was enthusiastically seen showing fake chips for TV channels to condemn Kanhaiya and his friends. Television channels played and replayed the videos to tell the world how anti-national the arrested students were. Anchors outdid each other donning the role of investigators, judge, jury and executioners to denouncing the accused. An aide of the HRD minister is known to be an active sharer of the manipulated videos. Now, presenting fabricated evidence is a crime. Will the police take action? Will they investigate to trace who doctored the videos? Will FIRs be filed? Will the culprit go behind bars?

Kanhaiya and company were supposed to have used the word Azadi in their slogans. According to an online dictionary Azadi is an Iranian word, meaning freedom and liberty. The word is also used in other languages, such as Luri, Pashto, Kurdish, Baluchi, Hindi, Urdu and Kashmiri. TV clips (not the doctored version) show Kanhaiya used the word azadi but to clearly mean freedom from oppressions, corruption, injustice, hunger, discrimination, casteism and in Kanhaiya’s words himself, ‘from the Sanghs’. What is wrong with that? Who is not free to demand freedom from these social diseases? Do not the citizens of this country have the right to claim for freedom from the above maladies?

Another word that was supposedly used was barbaadi. The Hindi term means "destruction". Evidences point out that Kanhaiya and organisers of the event did not use this word in their speeches. Even if they did there was nothing wrong. India should be ‘destroyed’. The oppressive India, the unjust India, the corrupt India, the hungry India, the ignorant India, the ignorant India, the intolerant India, the India of discrimination, the India of casteism should be destroyed. Should this demand be banned? Should not oppression, injustice, hunger, ignorance, intolerance, discrimination, casteism and more importantly, fanaticism, fundamentalism and communalism in the country be destroyed? What is seditious here? Should the govern-

ment prohibit its citizens to speak out against these viruses? Even if the government does, even if arrests and intimidation take place we should stand up strong and bold, for this country does not belong to the BJP and its associated political wings. No one wants evils in the country to continue. The right wing outfits might wish to see status quo being perpetuated.

The other anti-India slogans, disgusted and appalling though they might are not necessarily seditious. Even if they are, those who shouted slogans were non-JNU, Kashmiri students. Reports say they are roaming free in Delhi. Why have police not arrested them? It is again reported that the BJP and the PDP made a pact not to arrest or harass any Kashmiri so as not to jeopardize the possibility of forming a coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir. What nationalism is the BJP preaching? The prospect of power keeps the government from arresting anti-nationals.

The reason for targeting the wrong persons was to crack down on dissent. There is a plan to scuffle opposing ideologies and thoughts. While the view that the witch hunt against the dissident JNU students is second emergency is off the mark, there is no denying the sight of a fascist, totalitarian and majoritarian tendency. Intolerance is written all over the government’s and self-proclaimed nationalists’ walls. The limbs of the country are affected with a disease. They must be cured fast to save the whole body.

In the JNU row we see groups and individuals wear nationalism and patriotism on their sleeves. They think they only are nationalists. Everyone opposing their ideology is branded as anti-national. It is amusing that that those who compromised with nationalism by making a pact with the British not to fight against them; those who refused to hoist the National Flag in their headquarters for over fifty years, those who rejected the tricolour, those who celebrated Gandhi’s assassination by distributing sweets; those who were indicted in riots and violence against minorities should claim rights over nationalism and patriotism. These fringe elements must be fought and defeated

Meghalaya needs centrifugal development

By Barnes Mawrie

When we travel on the Shillong-Guwahati, Shillong-Nongstoin or Shillong-Jowai roads, what comes afresh to our minds is the old saying “all roads lead to Rome”. The peak time both in the morning and evening, is a traffic chaos on all these roads and a nightmare for commuters. It gives the impression to any first time visitor that 80% of Meghalaya’s population is in Shillong. It is a fact that Shillong is the hub of all trade and business, of educational and administrative activities. Naturally, all people from other parts of Khasi-Jaintia Hills and from elsewhere flock to the city for different purposes. With time the situation is getting worse with the increase in vehicle population. The most stressed persons in the city are the traffic policemen who seem to have run short of creative thinking in order to manage the draconian traffic. If I were a traffic policeman in Shillong, I would get insane in no time. However, we fail to see that all this insurmountable problem is self imposed. It is the accumulation of decades of inefficiency and lack of planning by our governments. All our political leaders without exception, suffer from short-sightedness and poor vision. If they had vision at all, they would not have allowed our beloved city to come to such a pathetic state. Our leaders fail to realize that the ailment of our city is not from within but from without. It is the growing pressure of population that is eating away into the health and integrity of the city. Our leaders do not realize that this problem needs to be tackled at the source. No amount of cosmetic remedy will solve the issue. The constant change of routes which confuse the commuters, is the only consolation of the traffic department.

The real problem is the absence of development in the rural areas especially in the borders. Why do rural people rush to Shillong for anything and everything? It is precisely because they have nothing absolutely in their own towns and villages. If they have to find jobs, to find better education, to make better business or even to get official work done, they would have to come to Shillong.

This is why I say that “Meghalaya needs a centrifugal development”. So far development has been concentrated only in Shillong (as far as Khasi-Jaintia Hills is concerned). All the best educational institutions, all good hospitals, all shopping malls, all recreational facilities, all business opportunities and all important government departments are situated in Shillong. When we go a few kilometers away from the city, we realize how backward our State is. The creation of four new districts in 2012, has proven to be a mere political gimmick of the Congress government.

When we visit these new district headquarters be it Mawkyrwat, Khliehriat, Resubelpara (with the exception of Ampati), we realize that the infrastructures are less than insufficient. How can a district be created without the necessary infrastructure in place? These district headquarters should have been well developed so as to prevent rural population running to the state capital for any purpose whatsoever. It is evident that the government is not serious about rural development. Most of our MLAs of rural constituencies are residing in their cozy homes in Shillong. I wish that such MLAs reside

in their proper constituencies in the presence of their people. Perhaps that would motivate them to work with more commitment for their people.

When we come to the border areas, the situation is even more appalling. Our people who live in border areas are at the mercy of aggressors from bordering states. There are many dangers as a result of poor development in border areas. One danger is that Meghalayans who live in such miserable conditions are tempted to build rapport with the bordering states and gradually they will lose allegiance to their own state. In fact, there are many Khasis living in border areas of Assam who have registered their plots of land with Assam which consequently leads to loss of land for the state. Why they do this is because they find it more convenient to go across to Assam than to travel the back-breaking roads spending hours and hours to reach Shillong. This would not happen if our border roads are good and connectivity is well maintained. Another danger which is real and happening due to lack of rural development, is the massive migration of rural population to the city causing depopulation of these areas and consequently the influx of Bangladeshis and Nepalis etc. It is enough to look at the border areas from Khanapara to Byrnihat. The whole area is populated by Bangladeshi immigrants and you hardly see Khasis. This demographic phenomenon is gradually extending up to Nongpoh. This same demographic phenomenon is happening in other border areas, be it Shella region, Rambrai region etc. If this issue is not immediately addressed by the government, our state is going to shrink further and further (as of now we have already lost claim over much land).

What our leaders need to do today is to diversify development. It is time to turn our attention to the rural areas and save the plight of our poor people there. The government needs to create incentives to retain the rural population in their proper areas. This can be done only by shifting the focus of development to these abandoned areas. It is only then that our rural people will be motivated to remain in their areas. There is need to bring about a full-fledged development of all district headquarters so as to prevent rural population flocking to Shillong.

It is a pity that “New Shillong” is nothing much new but just an extension of old Shillong. Usually when we speak of “new townships” we perceive a “planned structure” like we see in New Kolkata or New Mumbai. Such planned projects really serve the purpose of easing the congestion in old cities. New Shillong instead is a misnomer - a kind of joke played on the psyche of the common man. At most we can say that it is a “pie in the sky” or a wishful thinking. It could have been the most practical way of easing urban population and traffic congestion. But that is not happening at all for we hardly see any sign of planned approach from the part of MUDA. It is time for our government to wake up and start acting in earnest before the situation gets out of control.

TO THE EDITOR

Women's Day

Editor,

Women are an important pillar of a family and society. Yet today, the most heated topics being discussed by feminists and women activists is “Gender equality and women’s empowerment.” Some are of the view that women are inferior to men. I don’t subscribe to such a view. I also believe we have a good number of laws to protect and safeguard women. Even the Constitution of India under Article 14 ensures that women are not discriminated against and should have the same status and position as men. This is not all, the Constitution permits the legislature to reserve seats and make laws in favour of women at different levels. So if so many laws are pro-women where is the question of gender inequality? Gender inequality lies in the mindset of each and every person who thinks that women should not be at par with men. It is the mindset and attitudes of the people of this country which creates gender inequality.

Today, every newspaper reports cases of violence against women daily. Like I said before, the criminal laws of our country are pro-women but the fact is that we have only laws but lack implementation. Many cases relating to violence against women are registered in all corners of the country but how does our judicial system deal with such cases? The rate of conviction is very low in crimes against women. Again the question is why is there violence against women? Is it because there are no laws to protect them? No, not at all. We have a number of laws which gives rights and protections to women

Of course I admit that there is a lot of gender equality but why does this persist? Who creates the idea that women should not be at par with men? It is all of us and our mindset and it starts from our homes. When we debate about gender equality, one should think from his logical sense that all men and women are equal right from the grassroots level and therefore equal opportunities are given to all. To me, that is the best way to remove gender equality.

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but many people are not afraid of laws. Here too, the problem is not the absence of laws but the mindset of the people and society. It is very unfortunate that while we are living in the 21st century the mindset of some of our fellow Indians towards women is still biased and medieval. This is evident from the fact that even after the criminal law was amended recently to give harsher punishment for sexual offences against women, yet cases of sexual assaults have only increased.

The only way for everyone to live a civilized life is to correct our own mindset and to teach men that they should not treat a woman with respect and dignity not do anything against her consent. Recently, another important discussion is women’s political empowerment and reservation f seats in the Parliament and state legislatures. But do we really think that women will be empowered by giving them reservation? I personally feel that reservation for women cannot empower women. Even today, there are many women both in the Parliament and State Assemblies but why do they not feel empowered? I be-

lieve that women will be better empowered if they are better educated. Education can strengthen gender equality and enable women to access their rights. What is the point of reserving seats for women when the majority are not educated and don’t even know their rights. Education is the best way to bring about overall development of women. The mindset of women should also change and become progressive. Women should assert their leadership qualities. They need better academic and education infrastructure both in rural and urban areas. Once again I reiterate that women are the pillars of a good and modernized society. Happy Women’s Day

Yours etc.,
Kynjaimon Amse
Student, Dept. of Law
North Eastern Hill
University

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

“The first thing is to love your sport. Never do it to please someone else. It has to be yours.”

---Peggy Fleming

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 209 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2016

How to go global

THE Global Investors Summit (GIS) convened by the Haryana government brought forth some sane advice from industrialist Anand Mahindra. A stable law and order situation is a sine qua non for attracting investment. Haryana was hardly suitable to host the summit as it was troubled by the Jat agitation. Mahindra's advice applies to the whole of India. The Haryana administration had evidently gone to sixes. The Police and civil administration proved ineffective as mobocracy prevailed. The Jats account for nearly 30% of the state's population. Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had earlier made some undesirable comments on the Muslim community and had taken an orthodox line on beef eating by Muslims. Bu he had taken little interest in toning up the administration.

The authorities seemed unwilling to negotiate with the agitating Jats. All this has been confirmed by the state human rights commission chairperson, Justice Vijender Jain (Retired). The agitation harmed the Jats as well. Returns from land diminished and employment opportunities for them shrank. But violence cannot be the answer to social and economic disparity. Rural distress can be alleviated only by shifting surplus agricultural labour to industry. That means pumping of a considerable amount of investment. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley stated the obvious when he said that investment did not come to states disturbed by lawlessness. It had happened in the past in West Bengal, especially with Maoists on the rampage. Haryana has been thriving because it is close to Delhi and because Gurgaon is a showpiece with US money pouring in. But if a state wishes to go global, its infrastructure must be protected from social and political chaos.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1 , 1989

PM may address NECCC (I) meet in Shilling

The general body of the North Eastern Congress(I) Coordination Committee will meet in Shillong on February 28 to finalise, among other things the strategy for the next parliamentary elections. This decision was taken at a truncated meeting of the Steering Committee of the NECCC(I) here on January 31 according to its General Secretary Mr B B Dutta.

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi is expected to address the meeting. The five-member Steering Committee was expected to analyse the recent election results in the region at its meeting in Shillong. All the Congress(I) Chief Ministers of the region were expected to attend. However, Mizoram Chief Minister Mr Lalthanhawla and his counterparts in Tripura, Manipur, and Nagaland could not come. The NECCC(I) chairman Mr Hokise Sema, and ex-chief Minister Capt. Williamson Sangma were present.

The meeting, which was also attended by Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr Purno Sangma, was described by Mr Dutta as “fruitful”. The party's poll strategy would only be given shape at the forthcoming meeting, he said.

One person hanged, 4 killed n Punjab

One person was hanged to death by terrorists in Ferozepur District last night while four people including an extremist and an intruder, were killed during the past 24 hours in Punjab.

Terrorists kidnapped Janak Raj from his house at Khanpur village in Ferozepur District last night and hanged him to death in a field on the outskirts of the village.

This is the fourth case of hanging in the state and the second in Ferozepur District.

Of human strength, frailties and achievements

By Patricia Mukhim

Meghalaya lost two veteran politicians in the first week of March. Ms Miriam D Shira passed away on March 2 and PA Sangma on March 4. The two were political rivals and had many a public slanging match during election seasons. I mention Ms Shira because I was once part of the Congress campaign trail. During such election meetings PA Sangma would tear apart the regional parties' hyperbolic attacks on the Congress party and their exaggerated claims that they alone can help conserve the culture and tradition of the tribals, while the Congress was a national party with an agenda to mainstream them. Miriam Shira remained a staunch regional party member as long as she was in active politics.

During the election season, Sangma used to be the star campaigner. He had the gift of the gab and villagers, starved of drama and action, would hang on to his every word. His greatest asset was his ready wit and ability to use humour to bring himself to the level of the commons. Unlike most politicians today who are somber and grave and take so long so form a sentence while speaking, Sangma was quick-witted and never boring. If he was under stress you could never make out. Purno Sangma had the uncanny ability to cancel out everything that a rival candidate would have said to the constituents. His ripostes were forceful and logical. Besides, he was so well accepted in Garo Hills in those times that there was no question of ever doubting his words.

Elections campaigns then as now also tend to veer towards the personal. And in those bad old days campaigns were followed by meals and spirits for those attracted to the bottle. People not only listened with rapt attention when Sangma spoke but they would clap and applaud. Never short on political skills, Sangma would send his people to listen to his rival's election campaign

and get the gist of what was said. He would then rebut point by point, especially what his arch-rivals had spoken. Everything that the earlier candidate had said, every claim asserted, every promise made would be erased if not deleted out of the mental slate of the voters. Such was the strategy adopted by this veteran politician.

I recall accompanying him and other leaders from Meghalaya to meet Rajiv Gandhi at Guwahati airport. That was 1991 the year Rajiv was killed. The former Prime Minister had come to Assam to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls but could not make it to Meghalaya because of his tight schedule. He wanted to convey his blessings to the two candidates - PA Sangma and PG Marbaniang and had prepared a text that he wanted circulated to the voters of Meghalaya. It was a hot and humid day and Sangma had had a beer to beat the heat. So instead of seating himself close to Rajiv he sat some distance away. Rajiv beckoned to him to come closer and asked why he was keeping distance. Sangma did not want Rajiv to get the whiff of the spirit he had downed but Rajiv was very perceptive. That was the lighter side of Sangma's character. In fact I don't know if other than his Doon friends, Rajiv was as close to any other Congressman as he was to PA Sangma who accompanied him to several locations for electioneering.

Indeed, Sangma had a special place in Rajiv's heart and that is why people still wonder why he abandoned Sonia Gandhi. If anyone else had done it, it might not have been a surprise, but PA Sangma? Yet that is how history would record Sangma's parting of ways with the Congress Party- a Party that groomed him and gave him pride of place; a party that recognized his minority status and gave him the space to prove himself in several ministries. Un-

doubtedly Sangma had both the political acumen to run his ministries and the administrative insights to drive those ministries in the direction he wanted to. Hence he was respected by the bureaucracy! His exploits in the Speaker's Chair were legendary!

There were many in the Congress who wanted to oust out Sonia Gandhi because of their selfish ambitions. They hatched the plot and roped in Sangma because he was the easiest one to convince, ostensibly about the need to remove a person of foreign origin from leading the Congress party. Sangma was no match for the wily politicians of the mainland. He was transparent and would speak his mind. Others were not so naïve and knew that if the plot to remove Sonia failed they would be in the doghouse. So Sangma led the charge and it fell flat since many of those who said they would rally round him quietly backed out. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) was born and the rest is history. I never really understood why Sangma became so bitter against the Nehru-Gandhi family.

When Agatha Sangma's term in the Lok Sabha ended in 2014, I asked Conrad Sangma why he did not contest the MP elections instead of his father. After all, India needed a tectonic shift in policy planning and innovation because its youth population today is a mammoth 65% (below 35 years of age). Conrad replied that the region needed a leader with maturity and experience who could effectively engage with the BJP-led NDA Government. He was not wrong. The video clip of PA Sangma's speech in Parliament (which is now widely circulated) rebuking the Modi Government for its targeted attacks on minorities and Christian churches is an example of what good, incisive and meaningful intervention in the Lok Sabha is all about. Sangma pointed out that many of the present crop of ministers are products of Christian institutions. He mentioned LK Advani

and Power Minister, Piyush Goyal in particular, stating that Goyal is an alumnus of Don Bosco Matunga, (Mumbai). Sangma questioned the Ghar Wapasi programme of the RSS. He said Christian missionaries don't convert people by putting a gun on their heads. Quoting Mother Teresa Sangma said, "Christian institutions do not convert. They only make people better human beings. A Hindu becomes a better Hindu; so too a Muslim." This speech was delivered in typical Sangma style even while his colleagues listened with rapt attention. I cannot recall any other MP from the North East barring PD Rai of Sikkim who can deliver a flawless speech and hold the attention of fidgety, distracted parliamentarians.

Yet Sangma had his share of missed opportunities. The intent to contest the Presidential polls was rather impulsive and not well considered. There is such a thing as timing in politics and a planned execution of any project. This one certainly wasn't. But Sangma did create a furore and he did make a political point. A point that the minorities of this country can no longer be shouted down or alienated; that the tribals are quite capable of leading the country if given a fair chance; a point that tribals can no longer be treated as second class citizens; that they can and should compete on a level playing field. This point is now being made in the JNU campus; it is a point that is reverberating from Hyderabad University to every corner of India. Perhaps, someday soon we will have a tribal from the North East as Prime Minister or President. That would be the day when PA Sangma would smile from his final abode. For now he must be having a verbal duel with Miriam Shira in that resting place 'beyond the sunset' as DD Lapang rightly observed.

So will Conrad Sangma now consider stepping into his father's shoes? I think he should and he must... he has what it takes lead Meghalaya and the North East and to prove to this country that tribals have come into their own.

Americans. Yes westernization is not a bad thing provided one works hard and is innovative and progressive but shuns the bad habits of the Americans. Therefore, I wish to point out here that we should not cling to the tradition that hinders development and create mental block for ourselves and others. We should throw tradition to the dustbins if they do not serve the purpose of development. Let us strive to uplift our society in all aspects of life so we can be at par with the rest of the world.

Yours etc.,
Banshan Pynrgre,
Shillong -2

Nehru's Shillong visit

Editor,
I used to go to Pine Mount School about 60 years ago. I remember representing the school when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited and singing the National Anthem to him. Quite an achievement for an English girl! I am almost sure it happened at the Football stadium, and am interested to confirm this. I have made contacts with the school and am thrilled to say that the uniform is the same, and the school hasn't outwardly changed. I am 76 at the moment, and these old memories are haunting me. I have spent most of my life in Africa.

Yours etc.,
Ann Humphreys
Via email

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

KANHAIYA KUMAR WOOED BY ALL THIRD FRONT PARTIES

Kanhaiya Kumar, his supporters insist, has made a mark on the nation. Even the comrades have/ been forced to take note of the student leader and his speeches. Sitaram Yechury has been heard telling one and all that Kumar would be campaigning for the Left parties. Kumar, however, is playing it safe. He seems to be cautious when it comes to making a political debut or campaigning. He has stated that he would obey what the student's council in the Jawaharlal Nehru University has to say on the matter. The stakes are high around Kumar. Even members of the third front are claiming credit for his bail. Nitish Kumar and Arvind Kejriwal have said that they played a role in getting a legal luminary to represent Kanhaiya Kumar. The Congress, which has been accused of ceding ground to Kanhaiya, has, however, kept mum. Is that because it has spotted the rise of yet another fledgling coalition that is against both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party

BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA SIDELINED IN CONGRESS BY RAHUL GANDHI

The former chief minister of Haryana Bhupinder Singh Hooda is all set to float his own regional party in the state. Hooda, the then jat chief minister of the Congress had managed to survive as CM despite large scale resentment against him within the Congress and hundreds of complaints from Congress workers because of his proximity to the Congress high command. But now it seems that he is no more currying a favourite of Rahul and Sonia Gandhi. Hooda is said to be upset with Rahul Gandhi for not only ignoring the cause of the jats but even for continuing with Ashok Tanwar, the dalit PCC chief in the state. But the recent provocation over the souring relationship with Rahul is after Tanwar issued a show cause notice to Hooda's man Friday and political adviser Virender Singh after non-bailable warrants were issued against him accusing him of organising the jat protest. The schism between Hooda and Rahul has grown when Rahul did not join him in his dharna for peace in Haryana on Jantar Mantar. This is not the only reason for Hooda's disillusionment. His supporters claim that Hooda has been upset with Rahul ever since Randeep Singh Surjewala, also a jat was made the head of the communication department. Initially Surjewala did not appear to be a threat to Hooda but as his importance and his proximity to Rahul Gandhi grew, he was seen as a potential threat to Hooda. Bhupinder's desire to make his son Depender Singh Hooda, the future chief minister of Haryana has diminished. It has become clear to him that if the Congress returns to power whenever elections are held in the state and a jat is chosen to become the CM, Randeep Surjewala will be the CM and not Depender. It is evident from the fact that Rahul has started maintaining a distance from Depender who used to be closer to him earlier.

SMRITI IRANI ANOYS UTTAR PRADESH BJP LEADERS

A section in the BJP is gunning for Smriti Irani because of her decision to take on Mayawati before the crucial polls in Uttar Pradesh. During the debate in the Upper House, Irani had pronounced that if the leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party remained unhappy with her response, she was ready to present Mayawati with her head. When the debate ended, Mayawati insisted that she was not satisfied

with Irani's defence. Everyone is now watching what Irani does next. But many of her colleagues, who are now resigned to a poor showing in UP, say that Irani's antics have left them with no other option but to put their hands on their heads.

RAHUL GANDHI DISCUSSES UP ELECTION STRATEGY WITH PRASHANT KISHORE

Rahul Gandhi on March 9 introduced his newly appointed political strategist Prasant Kishore to the Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders. At the meeting that was held in the Congress war room at The Gurdwara Rakabganj Road, Prashant Kishore was only a silent spectator at the meeting but he had already submitted a report to Rahul in the presence of Priyanka Gandhi. Rahul had given him 20 names of the top leaders of UP to conduct a survey about their popularity among the masses as well as their acceptability among the Congress workers. At the meeting, Prashant is supposed to have emphasised on the fact that Congress would need strong caste leaders as the PCC chief and the AICC general secretary .It also needs to project a strong leader someone like Priyanka Gandhi as the chief minister of the state. Because it is only Priyanka who can fight Mayawati and the BJP. Among the names he is supposed to have given to Rahul to consider is of Sanjay Singh a Thakur , Jitin Prasad Pramod Tiwari, Rita Joshi Bahuguna, all brahmins as also Fazle Masood and Zafar Abbas Naqvi, he is supposed to have suggested Rahul that the immediate need was to have a combination of an upper caste and a Muslim. If the high command appoints a upper caste like Sanjay Singh or Jitin Prasad then he should have a Muslim as the general secretary.

CONGRESS UPEAT ABOUT ASSAM ELECTION PROSPECTS AFTER MODI MEETING

After Narendra Modi's Assam visit to both Dibrugarh in Upper Assam and Lakhimpur .Congress party is suddenly finding itself upheat. The reason is the PM's personal attack on Tarun Gogoi, the chief minister and the overt projection of Sarbananda Sonawal in comparison. In their new survey, the Congress has two reasons for shift in political demographics. One, a large number of polarisation of Ahom vote which constitute 26 % of the 40 seats of upper Assam. Tarun Gogoi is seen as the only legitimate symbol of Ahom leadership.

Whereas Sarbananda Sonowal comes from a very miniscule tribal community which has always been seen to be at loggerheads with the Ahom community. The polarisation of the Ahom votes is said to reap rich dividends for the Congress in Upper Assam.. With the aggressive Hindu positioning the Congress had found itself completely bereft of the Muslim vote which numbers approximately 37 % of the state's population. The Congress has suddenly found a massive support among the Assamese Muslims which numbers about 65% of the total Muslim population. The tea garden labourers vote which is third in number after the Muslim and the Ahom community had also revolted in Prime Minister Modi's meeting in Upper Assam due to non realisation of the two key poll promises to the community. One was three hundred rupees daily wages and the second was free health benefits for labourers. . (IPA)

“For man, maximum excitement is the confrontation of death and the skillful defiance of it by watching others fed to it as he survives transfixed with rapture.”
---Ernest Becker

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 210 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2016

Taliban Intransigence
HOPE of a peaceful accord with the Taliban predators in Afghanistan has dashed to the ground. Direct talks between Kabul and the Taliban have been put on ice since the death of the movement's founder and long-time leader Mullah Mahommed Omar about two years ago. The present leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor had laid down some preconditions for Taliban participation in talks. So far there had been indications that a moderate wing in the rebel body was not totally against holding out the olive branch. A quadrilateral coordination group consisting of representatives of four countries had stated that talks between Kabul and the Taliban would begin this month. But the Taliban, called the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, has categorically negated such a possibility. It says that a residual US military presence is still on Afghan soil and US air strikes are still continuing. The Taliban would not go to a conference table unless the US presence is totally eliminated.

The US is in a catch-22 situation. The Taliban are taking advantage of it. With the Presidential election looming over Washington, President Barack Obama would not like to press for US military intervention in Afghanistan. The US voters do not like it. At the same time, he cannot leave Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in the lurch. Ghani may want peace in the country but knows his army with its limited financial resources cannot take on the Taliban. Obama just noting Ghani's role in advancing the reconciliation process with the Taliban in the circumstances is not likely to enthuse Kabul.

LOOKING BACK
Feb 1, 1989

Compromise formula ends Bihar CLP(I) crisis

The fortnight long crisis in the Bihar Congress(I) Legislature party over the leadership issue was today settled following a compromise formula pending a final decision by high command soon. Under the compromise formula evolved between the dissidents and Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi's emissaries the boycott of the current session the state legislature by the dissidents was withdrawn today and the house would adjourn tomorrow after adopting the motion of thanks on the Governor's address. The remaining business and the election of a new speaker in place of Mr Shiv Chandra Jha would be deferred for the time being. Union Home Minister Mr Buta Singh who was leading high-powered central team to resolve the crisis in the CLP(I) over the dissidents' demand for removal of Chief Minister Mr Bhagwat Jha Azad told newsmen here before emplaning for Delhi that the high command was seized of the problem and would take a political decision. The house would be adjourned apparently to allow time to the party high command to take a final decision on the CLP(I) leadership issue and also election of the Speaker. Both Mr Buta Singh and dissidents spokesman and former Speaker Mr Shiv Chandra Jha remained non-committal on the issue of change of CLP(I) leadership. The issue was now before the high command, they said. Mr Buta Singh, however, said this was a family problem and would be resolved as such. He expressed his satisfaction that the entire party was united in extending loyalty to the leadership and support to the party. A four-member committee comprising Union Labour Minister Mr Bideswari, former Chief Minister Mr

Jagannath Mishra, PCC (I) Chief Mr Tariq Anwar and minister of state for human Resource development LP Sahi has been formed to aid and advise the high command in arriving at decisions on the remaining issue. Before attending the state legislature the dissidents held a meeting at Mr Jha's residence where the formula cleared by the emissaries, was approved. The meeting was also attended by members of Union Ministry from Bihar Mr Bideswari Dubey, Mr L P Sahi, Mrs Krishna Sahi, former Chief Ministers Mr Jagannath Mishra and Abdul Ghafoor, Pradesh Congress(I) chief Mr Tariq Anwar and AICC(I) joint secretary Mr Sarfaraj Ahmed. These leaders along with Mr Buta Singh, Mr Fotedar and Mr Oscar Fernandes were also present in the visitors gallery of the state assembly when dissidents started entering house. **Special revision of electoral rolls commence** A 'special revision' of electoral roll all over the country except Assam commenced today for the next parliamentary elections. According to Election Commission sources here, the Chief Electoral officers have been asked to complete revision of the electoral rolls so that draft rolls can be published by April 1 and the final rolls by May 16. All those who will be 18 years of age on April 1 1989, will be included in the supplementary rolls for inclusion in the final rolls. Under the Constitution on 62nd Amendment Bill, 1988, passed by Parliament in the winter session the 18 year olds are to be included in the electoral rolls.

On 21.10.1959, a patrol party of CRPF was ambushed by the Chinese troops at Hot Springs in Ladakh in which 10 CRPF jawans were killed. It was a manifestly unequal combat in which the CRPF personnel were heavily outnumbered by the Chinese troops. Since then, 21st Oct is observed as the Police Commemoration Day throughout the country in which the police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel pay their respectful homage to the police and CAPF personnel who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty during the preceding year. From Oct 1959 upto Aug 2015, as many as 32,991 police and CAPF personnel sacrificed their lives while discharging their duties. This includes 108 officers and men of the Meghalaya police who laid down their lives in the line of duty from Dec 1987 up to 1st Oct, 2015. The Meghalaya police personnel have been fighting the scourge of militancy valiantly and with courage over the last many years without getting demoralised by heavy casualty rate among its ranks. The fact that one of its officers was posthumously awarded the prestigious Kirti Chakra and as many as 41 of its officers and men have been awarded Gallantry Medals since 1989 would bear ample and eloquent testimony to the conspicuous courage and bravery of the highest order displayed by the officers and men of the Meghalaya police while fighting militancy. As we are all aware, the members of our Indian Army who sacrifice their lives while discharging their duties are given the honour of being called martyrs and deservedly so. But regrettably, no such honour is bestowed upon the police and CAPF personnel who sacrifice their lives while on duty which is highly unfair to them for the following reasons:- Police and CAPF personnel have over the years been rendering yeoman's service to the nation by valiantly combating terrorism, insurgency and left-wing extremism. CAPF personnel have also been guarding all our international borders except the LoC(border with PoK in J&K) and LAC(border with China) often working in extremely hostile and inhospitable terrain. The police also have to contend with crimes and criminals including dreaded and violent criminals and have to investigate cases and bring the culprits to justice besides having to maintain peace and order in the society. They have to discharge their highly exacting duties under extremely difficult working and living conditions, working for about 18 hours a day without respite. They have to work even on holidays. They are not compensated for working long hours and don't get adequately compensated for working on holidays. The nature of duties often entails serious risk to their lives. The same is true of CAPF personnel who face constant risk while discharging their duties. The extent of risk to which the police and CAPF personnel are exposed is evident from the fact that in the last 55 years, 32991 police and CAPF personnel have died on duty. It goes without saying, therefore that the police and CAPF personnel have been rendering monumental service to society and, indeed, to the nation at large and have been contributing in no small measure towards holding the country together at huge risk to their personal safety against heavy odds. The nation salutes the brave members of the Army who sacrifice their lives while fighting the enemies of the nation. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to them for their supreme sacrifice. But when the police and CAPF personnel are killed in the line of duty particularly when seen in the context of extremely exacting responsibilities which they have to shoulder as has been elucidated above, there is no reason why they should be denied the honour of being called martyrs. Also, for the same reason, there does not seem to be any reason why their next of kin should not be extended financial compensation on par with that applicable to the Army. In this regard, a PIL was filed in the Delhi High Court in July 2015 by advocates Abhishek Choudhary and advocate Harsh Ahuja seeking direction to the Union Govt to give the police and CAPF personnel who sacrifice their lives while discharging their duties status of martyr as in case of the Army as well as direction to extend financial compensation to their next of kin on par with the Army. The petitioners, inter alia, contended that even after 31,895 police and CAPF

Treat all security forces equally

By Prem Singh, IPS

personnel had sacrificed their lives (till Sep 2014), the honour of being called martyr still eludes them. In response to the same, the Union Govt is learnt to have informed the court that a proposal to grant status of martyr to the police or CAPF personnel who sacrifice their lives while discharging their duties " is under active consideration of the Govt". Unfortunately it is now learnt that the Union Govt informed the court that it has no such scheme. The Govt is also learnt to have called the PIL filed by the petitioners misconceived and unfounded in view of the affidavit filed by the Ministry of Defence in the court to the effect that there is no order granting the members of the Army who sacrifice their lives in the line of duty the status of martyr. Now, the amount of ex gratia relief extended to the next of kin of the members of the Army and the CAPF personnel in discharge of their duties is the same (Rs 15 Lakhs). But in case of police personnel this varies from state to state and is far too inadequate in most of states. This is highly unfair to the next of kin of police personnel who are killed in action against insurgents, terrorists, and extremists. It is therefore imperative to bring the same on par with the Army and the CAPF. In fact there are instances in which when the CAPF and police personnel get killed in joint operations against militants, terrorists and extremists. While the next of kin of the slain CAPF personnel is paid ex gratia of Rs 15 lakhs, the next of kin of police personnel who is killed in the same joint operation is paid a ridiculously small amount of money. By no stretch of imagination can this be justified. Given the meagre financial resources at the disposal of most of the states, it is impossible for them to pay ex gratia amounts to the police personnel who sacrifice their lives on par with the Army/ CAPF, after enhancing the same to Rs 15 lakhs in case of police personnel also, the entire ex gratia relief paid should be subsequently reimbursed by the Union Govt under the Security Related Expenditure and the time line for reimbursement of expenditure so incurred should be clearly stipulated. Quite often, insurgents/ terrorists/left wing extremists (LWEs) indulge in acts of unspeakable and horrendous violence including cold

blooded murder of civilians, police and CAPF personnel, destruction of public as well as Govt property, sabotage, abduction for ransom and resort to sophisticated weapons and improvised explosive devices to achieve their nefarious and despicable designs, all of which run counter to the national interest. One can aver without fear of contradiction that the police and CAPF personnel who make supreme sacrifice while combating insurgency/terrorism, LWEs etc. die martyrs in serving the nation. It thus stands to reason that they should be given the status of martyrs. Insofar as granting the status of martyr to police/ CAPF personnel who sacrifice their lives in discharge of duties is concerned, as mentioned earlier, the members of the Army who are killed while discharging their duties are treated as martyrs even though no order to this effect has been issued by the Ministry of Defence. Along the same lines, Intelligence Bureau - the nodal organisation for compiling and circulating list of the police and CAPF personnel who sacrifice their lives every year can issue a direction to the DGs of CAPFs and DGPs of all states to treat CAPF and police personnel killed on duty as martyrs without the Ministry of Home Affairs having to issue formal orders to this effect. Lastly, it would not suffice to remember the supreme sacrifice made by the police and CAPF personnel by merely holding commemoration parade on 21st Oct each year by observing the usual rituals. If the nation has to truly remember the supreme sacrifice of police and CAPF personnel, then, apart from giving them status of martyr and extending ex gratia relief to their next of kin on par with the Army/CAPF, it is also imperative to observe the Police Commemoration Day in a more befitting and dignified manner. At the national level, the function should be attended, among others, by the PM, Union Home Minister, Cabinet Secretary and Union Home Secretary. At the state level, it should be attended, by the Chief Minister, Home Minister, Chief Secretary and Secretary in charge of the Home Department. (The writer is former DGP and DG Prisons, Meghalaya, G 501, Amrapali Sapphire, Sector 45, NOIDA, UP 201303

who is primarily considered for His role as 'U Nongbuh Nongthaw' (He who creates). However, the Khasi religion itself is not community based, but rather clan-based (Niam Kur) or even better, it is household based (Niam ling). The rites and rituals performed and the style of invocation may differ from one household to another. For example, in the Nongsteng clan, invocations are made to Ka Li Dohkha, the lawbei (ancestral mother) in times of death or birth. Presently, some Khasis do not sacrifice roosters on the day of cremation. Rather, invocations are made with things as simple as rice and water. Religion of the Khasis has undergone tremendous change over the hundreds of years of its existence. It is a dynamic religion according to me. Previously, Khasis collected the bones of their deceased to deposit them in the Mawbah (clan ossuary). In modern times, barring a few households, the practice has stopped. Does this mean they follow a different denomination within the Khasi faith? No! The Khasi religion is not only a religion per se,

Lokayukta Controversy
Karnataka gets entangled

By Insaaf

Karnataka is the latest State to get enmeshed in controversy over appointment of the Lokayukta. While Chief Minister Siddaramiah has recommended the name of Justice S R Nayak to the Governor for the coveted post, the latter has sought clarifications. This after Vajubhai R Vala got a petition from Janaadhikara Sangharsha Parishad alleging that Justice Nayak as Karnataka Law Commission Chairman flouted rules and secured a housing plot in the Judicial Layout of the city. This apart, Opposition BJP's members in the consultative committee had opposed his candidature and had pitched for former Chief Justice of Karnataka HC and retired Supreme Court judge Vikramjit Sen for the post. Further, questions have also been raised whether Nayak can be appointed Lokayukta despite having been Chairman, Karnataka State Human Rights Commission. According to the Act, a person once appointed as Chairman, cannot be considered for any further employment by the Centre or the State. How soon will the State get its Lokayukta is the question doing the rounds. Not too long a wait as was with Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat for its Lokayukta. **Delhi's Embedded Extravaganza** Money talks! That's the message spoilt Delhi seems to be sending out following the National Green Tribunal's go-ahead to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Art of Living's 3-day World Culture Festival on the floodplains of Yamuna. The Tribunal makes note of the environmental violations but doesn't ban the event and instead slaps a hefty fine of Rs five crore on AOL as 'interim compensation.' It expresses helplessness and let's go, on grounds of "fait accompli" as the issue came to its door too late. The NGT has also fined the DDA Rs 5 lakh and Delhi Pollution Control Committee Rs 1 Lakh for lapses while granting licences. Is this fair given that floodplains have been tampered with and ramps, roads, compaction of earth, pontoon bridges and other semi-permanent or temporary structures constructed without requisite permission? The issue obviously raised a stink. Delhi HC said the event is an ecological "disaster," Rajya Sabha members lambasted Defence Ministry for using the Army for construction of Platoon bridges for a private event, President Mukherjee pulled out of the valedictory function, Delhi police and CPWD were worried over the safety of the stage structure etc. But the mega show goes on. Heard the song "paisa do, tamasha dekho"? **Andhra Capital Land Scam** The alleged land scam revolving around Andhra's dream capital Amaravati is getting murkier. Opposition leader Jagan Mohan Reddy is demanding a CBI inquiry over 'land deals' by members of Chandrababu Naidu's Cabinet. He has accused that many TDP leaders, ministers and MLAs have purchased land in the capital area, based on insider information and this is a breach of the oath of secrecy sworn by the CM and Ministers. Add to this that they would all make a killing while reselling the land needed for the world-class capital. However, Naidu rubbishes the accusations saying purchasing land doesn't arise as farmers have pooled about 34,000 acres and another 20,000 acres of State-owned land is available to build the capital. He assures the Assembly that ministers found guilty will be dismissed. However, Insaaf in Hyderabad learnt that powers-that-be were acquiring land and work on the capital was very tardy, putting a question mark whether Naidu would meet deadlines.

Rajasthan Education Row Rajasthan has a penchant for basic and quality education. However, its 'well-meaning' intent ends up in a controversy. One, the State's matriculation criteria for contesting Panchayat polls made the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha see red and Modi at the Centre pink with embarrassment. The Congress got the House to pass an amendment to President Mukherjee's address, expressing regret that his speech didn't commit support to rights of all citizens to contest panchayat polls! Second, a recent Bill passed by the Assembly to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act has irked the HRD Ministry. Recall, the RTE Act prohibits all schools from failing and expelling a student up to Class VIII. However, Rajasthan has added a proviso: "provided that if a child has not achieved class appropriate learning level in a class, he may be held back in that class." This is a no-go with the HRD Ministry as the amendment goes against the Act's 'spirit'. Plus a State cannot change a Central law. Will the Bill get the President's nod, is the big question. Other States, who too think that automatically promoting a child would lead to a sharp decline in the quality of students at the elementary level, will be keeping a close watch on the fate of Rajasthan's Bill. **Centre Bats For States** The States should be happy. The Centre's not just talking about federalism but seeking to act on it. In its plea to the Supreme Court to reconsider its earlier order of May last, allowing only photos of Chief Justice of India, the PM and President in Government advertisements, the Centre argued that the judgement was against the federal structure as a Chief Minister was as important in a State as the PM and a CM could not be restrained from telling people about the work done by the State government. This apart, Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi also batted for Modi's ministers saying their photos also be allowed. The logic being: "Publishing picture of only the PM would lead to personality cult which was against the very spirit of its judgment meant to curb the cult image of politicians....Ministers have become nameless and faceless... each one is as important and must be allowed to inform the people about the his service as otherwise he would be thrown out in the next election..." Recall, seven States West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh had petitioned against the apex court's order. Its verdict is eagerly awaited. **Bihar Is Not In Order** The Bihar government should be embarrassed. Yet again its leaders have given the Opposition handle to question its tall claims on law and order. This after Minority Welfare Minister Abdul Ghafoor and RJD's Raghunathpur MLA Harishankar Yadav's paid a "courtesy call" on former RJD MP and convicted criminal Mohammed Shahabuddin in Siwan jail. The video footage went viral. The timing was bad, as the government has been under attack for the past one month in its inability to arrest Nawada MLA Rajballabh Yadav in connection with the alleged rape of a Nalandia girl. Fortunately, for Chief Minister Nitish Kumar the Biharsharif court on Thursday last. —INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Toll collection on NH 40

Editor,

The Jorabat-Umiam Expressway or the Shillong-Guwahati road is at the verge of completion. Of late it's a pleasure driving to and from Guwahati, unlike the hassles one faced a few years back, not that there are no hassles now, as is evident during the monsoons with heavy landslides virtually closing the highway. However, things have improved considerably. As the saying goes, 'nothing comes for free' so also the Shillong-Guwahati road, where toll collection has begun of late. I have no problem in paying the toll as it is needed to for various reasons including the maintenance of the expressway. But one fails to understand as to what was the hurry in starting the Toll Plaza, when there are many stretches in between the toll road which are not yet completed. For instance, the Umsning by-pass will take not less than a year to complete, hence we are paying toll for a road which

has not been fully completed. The other point is the toll being collected from private vehicles which is exorbitant at Rs.55 for a one way trip and 85 for a return journey if taken on the same day. I have been to many other states where Toll roads exist, but the rates have been reasonable. The authorities need to look into this matter and ask themselves whose purpose they are serving by taking such a toll for a journey of around 60 kms. Is the aim of such Toll collection to make profit at the expense of the helpless public?

Yours etc.,
Dhiraj Borkotoky
Motinagar, Shillong.

Philosophy of Ka Niam Khasi

Editor,

The Niam Khasi is unique in that it can be considered 'religions within a religion'. The reason being, the underlying philosophical standpoint that no Khasi will disagree which is that, there is a Creator God, called 'U Blei',

who is primarily considered for His role as 'U Nongbuh Nongthaw' (He who creates). However, the Khasi religion itself is not community based, but rather clan-based (Niam Kur) or even better, it is household based (Niam ling). The rites and rituals performed and the style of invocation may differ from one household to another. For example, in the Nongsteng clan, invocations are made to Ka Li Dohkha, the lawbei (ancestral mother) in times of death or birth. Presently, some Khasis do not sacrifice roosters on the day of cremation. Rather, invocations are made with things as simple as rice and water. Religion of the Khasis has undergone tremendous change over the hundreds of years of its existence. It is a dynamic religion according to me. Previously, Khasis collected the bones of their deceased to deposit them in the Mawbah (clan ossuary). In modern times, barring a few households, the practice has stopped. Does this mean they follow a different denomination within the Khasi faith? No! The Khasi religion is not only a religion per se,

but it is a way of life. It is socially and politically linked with the Khasi way of life. Point to be noted, before the establishment of Ka Seng Khasi (of which I have the highest respect and appreciation for), the Khasi religion was mainly household-centred. The hearth of the home was the Duwan Dupat (Altar) where invocations were made to Ka Lei Longkur Lei Longjait (an extension of U Blei concerned with the household). My view therefore, is that the Khasi indigenous faith is an umbrella of many rites and rituals which are different from one part of the Khasi Hills to another, but in essence and in practice, we are wholly and spiritually one. Let no force try to speak otherwise. I stand by the Khasi brethren who are fighting to obtain minority status for the Niam Khasi faith.

Yours etc.,
Keith Nongsteng
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.

For women only

Imagine yourself heading home after a long day at work. You are a woman with a hectic career that takes up much of your time. The taxi that you hail is air-conditioned and spacious and comes with a female driver who is trained in martial arts. As you sink back into

By Shweta Patwardhan

on the ditty 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus', could be a fruitful one, that is if women buy the con-

sume them for a ride," he says. "India is so ready for a product like this."

Priced at Rs.2,000 per bottle, the vodka is aimed at socially-upward women, who can shell out the moolah. But would women want to do that? Does it really make sense to drink special vodka for women, when you could drink the male equivalent for much lesser? "Maybe, maybe not," says actress Lekha Washington.

"But I am quite frustrated with the assumption that women like all things pink. I am much more of a black and blue girl. But sometimes, it's quite nice to have some girl space to get in touch with one's femininity, such as a radio channel, with a sensitive and bitchy side," she says, as she tunes her car radio to 104.8 Meow FM.

Meow's catchline is 'Thodi meethi, thodi catty', something that would appeal to a listeners like Lekha for sure. The station has shows that tackle issues ranging from parenting to relationships to even slightly personal issues such as sex and virginity during their late-night shows.

The callers are all women, but the station figures show that as much as 42 per cent men tune into the show. Anil Srivatsa, COO, Radio Today, feels that the men might just be getting sensitised to



women's issues by listening in.

But some women may feel that the effort to tap this

you ever seen man-centric services? It just widens the gap between a man and a woman. It's all depends on the marketing strategy rather than a demand."

Therein lies the tricky question. Are such services creating division where there need be none? Are we taking the whole 'blue is for boys, and pink is for women' belief a bit too far.

Anand Halve, brand consultant, Chlorophyll Brand Communications, sure seems to think so.

"The question we need to answer is this: Does the



"We do play Bollywood, but our retro time is the most popular. We have made sure we play stuff that women can

market is futile. "I don't even believe in Women's Day," says model Jasmine Dawda. "I don't think you need a radio station or vodka to

product (Contd on P-VII)



relax to," says Anil.

show that you matter. Have

product (Contd on P-VII)

My worst day ever was not as bad..

Airport Counter Staff: "Anything to check in, sir?" Me: "Yes, these three." Staff: "I'm sorry, you'll have to take them on board with you." Me: [sighing]: "Okay, fine. Come on, kids."

I used to think red-eye flights with children were the worst way to pass a night, but then someone showed me a recent news report about a burglar who had the worst night ever. He broke into a building but could not open the safe. So he took it home, but still failed to pick the lock. Panicking, he drove to the riverside and threw it in-but the river was frozen solid, and the safe just sat on top of it. Police in Denmark, where this happened, laughed and admitted that they felt sorry for the thief. Poor guy.

Then an email arrived from reader Kavinda Babile who told me of a person in Asia who had a Very Bad No Good Terrible Day. Some guy organised a ritual protest in Sri Lanka in which coconuts would be smashed to express displeasure against heavy-handed law enforcement officers. But the protest was interrupted by angry farmers who said the coconuts being used had been stolen from them. And then members of the crowd complained that their wallets had been stolen by other members of the crowd. Then organisers realized that the normal response, to ask police for help, would be ridiculous. Clear lesson here: If you are going to organise a gathering of folk who don't like law enforcement, don't. It's as likely to work as a Rock Concert For Meditation or an Animal Rights Barbecue.

These reports reminded me of the time I asked a Satanist why his famous religion had so few members. He said their official policy was to be evil which was not conducive to making friends or partnering with charities. In the end, all they ever did was file complaints against Christmas decorations every year.

But we can't refer to frozen rivers without mentioning US amateur fisherman Harry Jenkins of Minnesota, who had a

legendary Very Bad Day. He parked his truck on a frozen lake and then threw a stick of dynamite to blow open a fishing hole in the ice. His dog thought he was playing fetch and ran over to bring the dynamite stick back. Harry ran for his life. The dynamite vaporized the dog. The explosion cracked the ice and the truck fell into the water. His insurance company couldn't give him any money because staff were laughing too much.

But of course you can end up having a bad day just because of something small.

I felt SO OLD when one of my children told everyone that I was "born in the 1900s". Her shocked friends looked at me as if I was Neanderthal man. It didn't help that I had just had two wisdom teeth removed and could only drool and grunt.

If you're having a really bad day, cheer yourself up by giving someone else a bad night. Instead of spraying mosquito repellent on yourself, spray it on the mozzie, so all the other mozzies avoid him and he'll develop self-esteem issues. It's an inhuman thing to do, but re-

member, I am Neanderthal man. (The writer is an Asian-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi



Khadi, the 'Made in India' fabric, has generated interest in the West, but there are problems that the sector needs to address if it

Noting that today's youth will not wear khadi for its symbolism or under any emotional pressure, Amin said the fabric needs to be seen as "much more than 'heritage' and a 'fashion statement'. It should reach beyond 'bhandars' and fashion shows".

is to widen its appeal, says the head honcho of Moral Fibre Fabrics, which has supplied khadi to Hollywood. "With encouragement to

Khadi needs marketing, tech push

By Nivedita



Shailini Sheth Amin, Founder and CEO, Moral Fibre Fabrics.

the khadi movement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, khadi is generating

a lot of interest. This is the time to go deeper and evaluate the sector and its impact

from all angles," Shailini Sheth Amin, the creative mind behind the

Ahmedabad-based company, told IANS in an email interview.

"Right now we have some focus on this most valued but dying legacy of khadi," he said.

Noting that today's youth will not wear khadi for its symbolism or under any emotional pressure, Amin said the fabric needs to be seen as "much more than 'heritage' and a 'fashion statement'. It should reach beyond 'bhandars' and fashion shows".

Moral Fibre Fabrics is a web-based social enterprise set up in 2008, and works locally with a few khadi co-operatives around Ahmedabad, creating work opportunities in production, processing, dyeing, printing and tailoring.

With the business-to-business wholesale marketplace model, the brand has an international buyer base in Britain, the US, Australia and some European countries.

The company's fabric has also been used in Hollywood films like "Pan", and it regularly supplies Oscar-winning costume designer Jacqueline Durran, who has designed costumes for mov-



ies like "Pride and Prejudice", "Atonement" and "Anna Karenina".

When Amin set up her brand, her aim was to rein-

vent khadi as a socially and environmentally sustainable fabric while maintaining high quality standards. But the journey has not been (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have published articles related to different subjects of social sciences or related to humanities. Like many other subjects, one important subject of social science is economics. Economics is the social science that describes the factors that determine the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Economics is the study of how individuals and societies choose to employ scarce resources. It deals with, what goods and services will be produced, how they will be produced, and how they will be distributed among the members of society. Economics has the distinction of being the only social science discipline for which a Noble Prize - Noble Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences - has been instituted.

Economics focuses on the behavior and interactions of economic agents and how economies work. Consistent with this focus, primary textbooks often distinguish between microeconomics and macroeconomics. Microeconomics examines the behavior of basic elements in the economy, including individual agents and markets, their interactions, and the outcomes of interactions. Macroeconomics analyzes the entire economy and issues affecting it, including unemployment of resources, inflation, economic growth, and the public policies that address these issues.

The study of economics helps formulate an understanding of the effects of financial actions and reactions, by individuals and institutions. A person who studies this subject is called Economists. Economists study and analyze the relationship between supply and demand of goods and services and how they are produced,

Career option in economics

distributed and consumed. They provide information to management that affects decisions on marketing and pricing of products, economic forecasts, and the effect of government policies on business. Economists also help in solving problems like unfair wages, rapid population growth, people's migration to cities, high crime incidence, and loss of human resources due to overseas migration.

Economics is taught in schools, colleges and in universities. Initially it is related to social studies. A student may take this subject from senior secondary level. In colleges it be studied and later masters can be continued in universities or higher educational institutions. Some of the courses related to the subjects are Bachelor of Arts in Economics : Bachelor of Science in Economics, Bachelor of Arts in Business Economics, Bachelor of Arts in Applied Economics, Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Economics, Master of Arts in Financial Economics, Master of Arts in Economics, Master of Arts in Econometrics, Master of Arts in Business Economics, Master of Arts in Applied Economics, Master of Science in Economics, MBA in Business Economics, Master of Philosophy in Economics, Ph. D in Economics.

IES: The Indian Economic Service (IES) is an organized Group 'A' Central Service. The IES was constituted in 1961 with the objective of institutionalising a core professional capacity within the

Government to undertake economic analysis and render advice for designing and formulating development policies, strengthening delivery systems, and monitoring and evaluating the public programmes. With the initiation of large-scale economic reforms in 1991 and the proliferation of the regulatory role of the government, such analysis and advice within the domain of the service has increased manifold. Aspirants may opt for IES and exam is being conducted by UPSC.

There are different job opportunities for those who studies economics. The scope of job opportunities for economists has expanded in different sectors like education, business, NGOs and government organizations due to economic liberalization and globalization. Organizations dealing with data collection and interpretations, management consultancy firms and planning commissions recruit economists at lucrative pay scales. Some of the job opportunities include teachers in schools and colleges or universities, economists, economic advisor, econometrician, finance economist, economic analysts, etc. Many work in media houses as journalist or related to research. Some work in print media and others work in electronic media as most of the media houses have special programme related to business and markets. **(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at 98640 55558 or bkranjan@gmail.com for any career related queries)**

By Veturi Srivatsa

How can there be a favourite to win a lottery! That's Twenty20 and you can put your money on anyone. On the day India beat Bangladesh to win the Asia Cup in Mirpur, the Australians chased down South Africa's 205-run target in Johannesburg.

Both the matches were tantalisingly close except that Mahendra Singh Dhoni made it look easy with a flourishing finish whereas the Australians got there with sensible hitting and running between the wickets in the last over.

Pundits and former cricketers have ticked all boxes to give India the best chance of winning the World T-20 the qualifiers, from which two teams will join the eight Test-playing nations in the tournament proper, got under way on Tuesday.

Before the last 50-over World Cup Down Under there was speculation whether the One-Day format can survive in the face of the mushrooming growth of Twenty20 leagues around the world. Some even thought the Tests were also in danger.

Eventually, the consensus was that there is space for all three formats provided they are played and sold properly. The players are striving hard to keep Test cricket going with entertaining batting, exciting fast bowling and imaginative spin. If any format is in danger, it is the 50-overs and that the administrators have made sure it remained relevant by keeping the Twenty20 internationals to a bare minimum.

The players still swear by Tests, and yet they have realised that the shortest format has become the stepping stone even to attain Test fame. Even those who are

Dhoni knows a thing or two about winning

not counted for shorter formats are unhappy for missing out the excitement. Their grouse is that they are unfairly getting branded as Test cricketers. Likewise, the players seen as good for bang-bang and four or ten over spells are sore that they are not getting a Test call-up. Only a few are accepted in all the formats.

The conformists have grudgingly accepted that T20 has come to stay even if it is a crude contraption corrupting a gentlemen's game. They have taken it as part of the game because there are batsmen who score with pure cricketing strokes and bowlers who still stick to the basics to impress the purists, who otherwise fear that cricket bats resemble baseball bats and golf clubs, hitting the ball a long distance.

Twenty20 is exciting when played with normal boundaries on big outfielders as both the batsmen and fielders are made to run and chase at a frenetic speed. These traits have made the other formats as thrilling.

Funny things are happening in shorter formats. Flat pitches in Australia saw India and Australia scoring 600 runs in a 50-over match and seaming pitches in Bangladesh made chasing 130-140 totals too tight to chase in Twenty20 Asia Cup. In South Africa, 200 plus looked not too difficult to attain.

In India, you can get different pitches for World T20, considering the weather conditions, but



by and large they can't be vastly different as the summer has already showing its effect. The easiest way to predict a winner is that whoever does well on dry tracks will carry the day.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) tournament is being played a couple of months before the time the Indian Premier League (IPL) is played normally and every major team has players who know these conditions as they have been part of the popular league for quite some years.

So, it all boils down to the best balanced side and that appears to be

India after their recent performances in Australia and Bangladesh. A settled team alone doesn't guarantee championship victory. All that a team needs is one big knock with others chipping in usefully.

These big knocks can come from the top-order batsmen with most of them capable of slogging huge sixes. The ability to hit big is going to be the determining factor.

When it comes to bowling, it is no longer containment alone. The captains have to be innovative to make the best use of the four overs a bowler has.

Finally, outcricket. Saving a run is as good as

scoring two and the Indians have young legs, which can provide cover for the senior citizens in the side.

There is no gainsaying that the Indians get the top billing because they are playing at home. Is that all to it? No, the Indians look good, seeing the depth in both batting and bowling. And they are well drilled for the big occasion.

Don't forget Dhoni. He knows a thing or two about winning, having won World T20 once and the 50-over World Cup.

(The writer is a senior journalist and the views expressed are personal. He can be reached at sveturi@gmail.com)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, March 13, 2016

Moon trine Jupiter on your solar return chart signifies a phase of positive developments. Professionals will have the satisfaction of a job well done as they exhibit their learning and knowledge. Partnerships or new associations in business are highlighted. Things are in your favour and your dynamism will impress others as your opinions and ideas are well received. If you are in love, you will get a chance to express your feelings to your beloved. If unattached, a new relationship can start off rather suddenly and this person will fascinate you as heady romance takes over. Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



be thankful for your blessings. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs realizing that this too shall pass. Brisk walk and timely eating would be helpful.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Love, romance and excitement in personal relations are foretold. Personal relations and business partnerships are likely to get closer and on the other hand limited relationships are likely to fall apart. You are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine ideas and good management. Your contribution stands out. Personal relations are packed with emotions and feelings. You are loving and caring in personal relationships and family situations. You might also spend a lot of time in physical activities like sports and games.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

The planetary configuration brings mastery in your field of activities. Some associations can be competitive in business as you shine and work well in your field of activity. You impress people with your talent and charisma and invite fresh opportunities. You may also build your image in keeping with your work with novel communications, presentations and styles, and grooming. People at work could swing from one mood to another. Personal relations are difficult and sensitive at times as both partners seek freedom, independence and space. Listen to your intuition and guard against over indulgence in food, drink or work. It is time to reject old habits and patterns.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

Professional situations and matters come to the fore and there would no element of illusion about these matters. This is the time for professional stability and good financial returns too as you impress people with your talent and charisma. You would be able to face truths, deal with emotional choices or difficult situations. Physical energy and good health enable you balance a busy schedule and work commitments. Give yourself a fitness routine and healthy diet program. It is time to heal old friendships with tender, love, care and move into new relationships with love and sensitivity.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

The planetary configuration enables you to restructure and reorganize activities at work and analyze the situations at home. Your daily routine and business dealings need to be restructured for better gains and productivity. You tend to be a perfectionist while completing business projects and campaigns. Your heart tends to over react emotionally in personal relationships, look at things from a balanced and positive perspective. Your perceptions are sometimes clouded by your emotions and you create hazy images of people and situations that present you from seeing reality or the truth. It is here that your analytical powers take over and help in seeing through the haze.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

As mixed results come you would maintain balance, strength at your place of work but go through a rather emotional time in personal relationships. Restructuring business schedules and dealings would be productive and favorable. You impress people with your skills and invite fresh opportunities. Personal relations are difficult and sensitive at times there are a number of emotions to be dealt with here. Rather than control others, take time to transform and heal yourself. You would initiate a current of forceful energy to achieve success in an important venture. Yoga and meditation are recommended.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

There is cooperation and harmony professionally as you organize and marshal your emotions and thoughts. A professional collaboration comes together when you given up all the hopes of it. Creative and professional plans are set to actualize and it is best to work towards them persistently. Your business plans have a quality of perfection and completion. You attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and successfully interact with seniors. This is a good time to build on your skills, and to attend to your health and well being. You have to pay attention to your image and process your emotions and avoid conflicts.

Khadi needs marketing, tech push



(Contd from P-VI) easy.

"I could see that there was a need to upgrade and reinvent khadi as the most environmentally-sustainable fabric and expand its varied uses. I realised that the lack of marketing orientation and technological obsolescence are the major obstacles for khadi to play a larger role in the Indian textile arena," she said.

"When I started, almost no one believed in what we did. In fact, most of the people I came across in the field... themselves did not believe in the hand-crafted fabric. No one was interested in taking it forward.

"Khadi fabric was considered to be badly made, badly sold and cheap-looking. This fabric had, and still has, big identity issues and it was considered an attire of corrupt politicians," said Amin.

Of late, several fashion designers have been doing their bit to popularise the fabric -- famously used by Mahatma Gandhi as a symbol of protest against the British Raj -- in creative ways.

When she started out, Amin found that her brand had more international than domestic buyers -- some 85 per cent of sales came from abroad.

The milestone moment for the brand, she said, came when they supplied fabric to Hollywood projects.

"Our fabrics were seen by a sourcing agent for a film in a London shop and she got in touch with us. She was very pleased when she heard about the social and environmental sustainability credentials of these fabrics."

Amin feels proud that the "rustic fabric made by spinners and weavers from small villages in Gujarat is now recognised the world over".

(The writer can be contacted at Nivedita.s@ians.in)

For women only

(Contd from P-VI) delivery cater to fundamentally different requirements for a man and a woman? Or is it just attempting to create a difference where you really shouldn't,

he says. "Why do we need a different radio channel? Will a woman react to something like inflation differently from a man? And the vodka -- when you add the tonic or any aerated drink to it, it is going to taste like any other vodka. So what's so special? A service that would be really necessary is a service that will empower women, much like a taxi service."

What Halve has in mind is a taxi service like For-She Travels and Logistic Pvt Ltd, which also offers women security guards. For-She cabs will pick you up from anywhere and everywhere, and with a woman driver for company, you needn't worry what time of the day it is. Revathi Roy, managing director, has a unique approach: She is aiming to empower women at all levels.

"How are we doing that? It's simple. We empower the

upper class lady by providing her with safety and independence at any time of the day. And we empower the lower class woman by giving them jobs that bring them



dignity and respect," she says, and it reflects in her academy, where women mill around in the blue and pink uniforms, looking confident and sure of themselves.

Though right now Ravathi faces restraint in pricing, as the cabs do not have a permit to function as metre taxis, she is sure that thing will change soon. "Until then, we will just do the best we can," she smiles calmly.

Whether they are successful or not depends on how many women embrace the idea of separate services that pamper their every need. But as the great Ovid had once said, "Whether they give or refuse, it delights women just the same to have been asked." INAV

“Justice requires that to lawfully constituted Authority there be given that respect and obedience which is its due; that the laws which are made shall be in wise conformity with the common good; and that, as a matter of conscience all men shall render obedience to these laws.”

—Pope Pius XI

The Shillong Times

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US – UK rift

PRESIDENT Barack Obama has reportedly launched an unprecedented verbal attack on British Prime Minister David Cameron. Barack Obama has accused Cameron and his European allies of inactivity in Libya after the 2011 ouster of Col. Moammer Gaddafi who had been a dictator in that country for decades. Britain and other European nations had joined the US in military action to prevent a massacre of civilians. Obama said that he had expected the UK to be more proactive in helping Libya during its reconstruction, especially because of its proximity to Europe. Meanwhile Libya has sunk into utter chaos and has turned into a safe haven for Islamic State extremists. Admittedly, the UK has for long adopted an insular foreign policy. Cameron has effected a cut in the defence budget and is chary of global involvement, because of the weakening British economy. The UK was also reluctant to engage in air strikes on Syria when the US and Russia pummelled it. It is however always ready to extend its cooperation in the form of providing bases for the airstrikes by the US and France.

Opinion in the UK is also divided on whether the country should be sitting on the fence in global hostilities. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby has been very vociferous on the issue and has made an appeal for opening the door wider in the UK to refugees from Syria and Iraq. Britain lags behind Germany in this respect. Why Obama has suddenly gone gunning for an old ally like David Cameron seems to be related to the coming Presidential elections in the US. He probably wishes to match Donald Trump’s anti- Islamic Jihad.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

Concern over growing drug addiction in Shillong

There has been a general concern over the growing drug addiction among school and college students of Shillong. It has been noticed over the months that the addiction has been taking an appalling turn.

Last week, some teachers from the St. Joseph's High School Jaiaw had reported to the DPI, Mrs M.R. Mawlong, about the menace of drug addiction in their school. Mrs Mawlong said that it was found that girls of Classes V and VI were habituated to taking scented tobacco with some substance suspected to be heroin.

Mrs Mawlong has asked the Civil Surgeon to visit the school on June 30 to clinically examine the girls.

Meanwhile, police raided a govt high-up's house at Mawprem and seizd from his son's possession 20 ampules of morphine. The boy, who is in his teens, is a student of St Edmund's College. Police said that some more places will be raided in search of morphine-addicted youths.

Another startling catch of the week was the seizure of 500 kgs of Hemp (ganja) from a village near Sohiong. Police also busted a gang engaged in

Protecting Hoolock Gibbons to Conserve Forests

Khloo Narpuh or Narpuh forest which is also known in the local parlance as ‘ki khloo wa ‘ong’ is one of the last patches of low-elevation evergreen forest still surviving in Meghalaya. But their future today hangs in precarious balance of intense development pressures on one hand and of sustainable conservation on the other. Right now the scale seems to be tilting rapidly towards development demands, particularly mining.

However, conserving Khloo Narpuh is critical not only because they provide critical cultural and ecological services but also because they are home to a number of threatened and endangered species. The globally endangered Hoolock Gibbon which is locally known as Hulu or Huleng (in Khasi) is one among them. Interestingly, it is this endangered animal - Hulu which can come to the rescue of Khloo Narpuh. It is but a plain equation, that by pledging to conserve the Hulu we also pledge to conserve the Khloo Narpuh, for a simple reason that if there is no khloo; there will be no Hulu. And by pledging to conserve the Hulu, and the khloo, we also conserve all other rare and common flora and fauna of the khloo Narpuh. The idea is to protect the Hulu, so that we can save the khloo, therefore the suggestion is to make Hulu the mascot of forest conservation in Narpuh if not in the entire state of Meghalaya.

We are well aware that trying to get the community to protect wildlife and conserving the forest is a challenging task and we also know that to achieve the twin goals of protecting the Hoolock Gibbon we need the support of the community. We were optimistic and decided to go ahead and organize an Appraisal and Action development meeting at Khliehriat and Sonapyrdi on February 24-25, 2016. We thought we were moving ahead in the right direction. The plan is also to project ‘Hulu/Huleng’ (Hoolock Gibbons) which is in the list of endangered animals as a mascot for

By H H Mohrmen

conservation of community forests in Meghalaya.

To begin our journey we were glad to have with us Society for Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE), Basin Development Unit East Jaintia Hills District Khliehriat, the Forest Department of Meghalaya and of course the support of the District Administration East Jaintia hills District. Through Dr Rajkamal Goswami, wild life scientist, and environmental activist the program was also supported by ATree and National Geographic Society. The workshop was attended by almost all the target groups except the representatives of the eleka Narpuh. Dr Goswami who for more than five years now had done an extensive study in the Narpuh forest, is also the main person behind the program. Goswami observed that in the entire Narpuh forest, Hulu occurs only in the community reserve of Sonapyrdi village. Goswami has estimated that there are only about two dozen Hulus in the wild of Sonapyrdi community reserve and considers that it is an endangered animal. Hence we have a lot to do to protect the gibbons.

Sonapyrdi is critical to the success of the entire project of trying to protect the last of the Hulus we have in Jaintia hills, hence as part of the program community mobilization and engagement is imperative. On the second day a trip was organized to visit the village and during our interaction with the elders of the community we were extremely happy to hear the Headman of Sonapyrdi, S D Lamare announcing that the community welcomes the idea of conserving the forest to protect the Hulu. He had during the meeting also requested the villagers to protect the animal by reporting to the headman if they know of any poacher. He was in favour of the project because it was also proposed that the major component in the conservation effort is to also to encourage Eco-tourism in the area.

The Hulus are noisy animals; they always make their presence felt for two reasons. It could either be a mating call or a call to mark their territory. In the workshop, P. Nongbri the Chief Wildlife Conservator reminisced his experience of hearing Hulu's call in the many forests in different parts of the East Khasi hills and West Khasi hills, but when he visited the area now, the call of the Hulu has fallen silent. S D Lamare also added that for many years they have not heard the Hulu's call anymore, but it was only recently that they could hear the them call again in the forest adjacent to Sonapyrdi.

Khloo Narpuh is rich in floral and faunal diversity; it is one of the few biodiversity hotspot of Meghalaya if not in the region. In his study Dr Goswami so far has been able to record the presence of 25 mammals, 160 birds and 410 butterfly specie from different habitats of Sanctuary. The different species include Capped Langur, Crestless porcupine, Red-headed trogon, Longtailed broadbill, Calotes sp., Trimeresurus sp., Kurixalus sp., Rhacophorus sp., Barilius sp., and Hoolock Gibbon. In his opinion future surveys may lead to the addition of more species to the list and urged people to conserve this pristine beauty.

In the workshop S. Lato the District Forest Officer Wildlife division clarified the misconception that people had on the proposal of declaring Narpuh forest as eco sensitive area. She had also proposed getting the Sonapyrdi community forest under the state government Community Reserve project to be able to protect the Hulu.

The Hulu has cultural significance in the Pnar context because they are canopy dwellers which rarely touch the ground. People believe that if it touches the ground it will die. It is believed that it is a taboo for the Hulu to even put its foot on the ground. The Pnar also have an adage with is related to the Hulu. They call a person with immense pride, ‘kam u hulu ym hoi de u toh

kyndaw,’ meaning that a proud person is like Hulu who feels that his feet should not touch the ground. In other words that he walks on air.

Protecting the Hulu and conserving the forest are the two twin objectives but the goals cannot be met without the community participation. The suggestion arrived at meeting with the community was to encourage ecotourism in the area which will in turn create employment avenues for the educated youth of the area. The project can be taken up by the Forest department, the Tourism department and the Basin Development Unit, Khliehriat in convergence mode. Another possible livelihood activity which can help the conservation effort is promoting apiculture. The huge Narpuh forest is already a big factor which can contribute to the effort. Bee-keeping can be taken up by BDU Khliehriat in convergence mode with the District Commerce and Industries Centre which is a nodal agency for apiculture development in the state.

It is heartening to know that the villagers in the South Garo hills district of the state have pledged their support to declare the Balpakram-Nokrek-Siju wild-life complex as a world heritage site. The workshop which was held from the 23 to the 25 of February in Tura suggested the possibility of proposing the 300 square km area of elephant reserve as the UNESCO World heritage site. Till now Kaziranga and Manas National parks are only two World heritage sites in the entire northeast region and if Balpakram-Nokrek-Siju makes it to the list, it will be the first spot in Meghalaya to be listed as world heritage site. The silver lining in the entire effort is the fact that not only the Government of Meghalaya supported the noble idea, but the council of Nokmas in the area also extended their support to the project.

Hopefully the proposal to conserve Narpuh forest will also find support from all quarters and the goal of protecting the Hulu to conserve the forest will be achieved sooner than later.

“Protect the Hulu, Save the Khloo”

Hysteria Trumps democracy

By M J Akbar

Barack Obama was in a thoughtful mood during the joint press conference with Canada's Prime Minister Justine Trudeau on Thursday, his sharp mind clearly above the limited demands of conventional political engagement. Obama could not become a Philosopher-President during two turbulent terms in the White House, but as he enters the last lap he is clearly slipping into space that has been left vacant for a long while in American politics. Elected leaders anywhere have always—the odd exception apart—been intelligent. But few have been intellectual. Obama is soon going to become America's youngest elder statesman.

There was evidence of this at this press conference. One journalist asked about US-Canada relations in case the obstreperous Donald Trump was elected. One wit has already advertised that Canada would be an excellent resettlement residence for Americans in such an eventuality. But as the Republican primaries roll closer towards a convention, and the Trump momentum continues, what began as a slightly off-colour joke is acquiring the proportions of a nightmare for many Americans.

Obama intervened to ruminate: how and why was the unthinkable entering into the realm of the possible? The

Obama did not use the word “hated”, but he came close to suggesting this. He did not mention race, but there was an implied hint that he had been treated like a “usurper”. The Republicans found it impossible to accept the fact that he had been elected.

reason, he said, was because ever since he had been elected, the Republican Party had created a culture of relentless negativity to everything he said or did. Nothing was treated on merit. Everything he did was wrong. Previous Presidents had faced criticism, no one had suffered such alienation. Obama did not use the word “hated”, but he came close to suggesting this. He did not mention race, but there was an implied hint that he had been treated like a “usurper”. The Republicans found it impossible to accept the fact that he had been elected. They used lies as a weapon, not least being the canard about his birth certificate. Trump was a leader of this hysterical reaction, suggesting that Obama was twice an outsider: as a “non-American” and a “Muslim”. It is not an accident that Trump's candidature is structured around the “threat” to America from outsiders, either Mexicans seeking jobs or Muslims seeking war.

Most Americans rejected this psychotic, delusional and dangerous narrative, which is why Obama got re-elected. But clearly a majority of Republicans did, which is why they have turned Trump into an idol despite his bizarre views and immature bravado. The Republican establishment is rubbing its eyes in disbelief, but Trump is also their creation. The politics of hysteria is a standard

these problems, which need to be tackled at the grass root level are left unattended and the situation is getting from bad to worse. The longer the delay in recognizing the Dorbar Shnong, the more we stand to lose.

The need of the hour is for the State Govt. and the KHADC to bury their

TO THE EDITOR

State Library well stocked

Editor,

The State Central Library was constructed by the erstwhile government of Assam in the early 1950s. After the attainment of statehood in 1972, the Assam government handed over the library to its Meghalaya counterpart on 19 January 1974, dividing the assets of the library between the two states. Whenever there is a conversation between people about the State Central Library, they would all share a common preconceived notion through having heard from others, that the State Central Library houses very antiquated and outdated books, dusty obscure late 19th century fiction, non-fiction and poetry books whose covers and pages have been ripped off or stolen by readers of old.

As a regular client I would like to spread a positive message and dispel the negative perceptions. In recent years, the library has made concerted efforts to improve its collection. I would like to enlighten bibliophiles and avid readers of all ages that it has many beautiful novels in its innumerable tall shelves. There are contemporary classics like the 'Collected Stories' of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 'The Museum of Innocence' of Orhan Pamuk, 'Interpreter of Maladies' of Jhumpa Lahiri, 'In

Custody' of Anita Desai etc. There are the best novels of novelists like J.M Coetzee, Amy Tan, Haruki Murakami, Toni Morrison, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, V.S Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Khuswant Singh etc. And poets like Octavio Paz, Soso Tham, Kahlil Gibran, Ghalib, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Tagore etc. The library also has a good Northeast Literature(which now has emerged as a genre) collection, where one could find books of Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, Temsula Ao, Anjum Hasan, Jahnabi Baruah, Janice Pariat etc. I recall having a brief chat with the head librarian there. She expressed her deep concern over the fact that she sees not many visitors in the library. She told me that it is because of the few members that the library has been able to improve its collection. This was through her urging them to give suggestions of the books they most wanted by writing a letter to her.

Literature not only delights us with its style and beauty, but it also helps us introspect and become careful, sensible beings. The reason we think that life is always problematic and complex is because we do not choose to read. If we take efforts to learn from the many philosophies, writers and poets, we will come have a more enlightened view of life, and not dwell

too much in the space of negativity.

In this age of Kindle, ebook readers, Flipkart and Amazon, a library still has a certain charm that could beguile us. There is something about book lending, the smell of old pages and old polished antique furniture in the State Central Library that makes one think that everything is falling in place for him/her; an atmospheric time perfect to just read and read. Hence I would humbly encourage the people of this city to make a visit to the library. There are cultural programmes, festivals, concerts in the Auditorium, and then there is the entrance to the library where one is greeted by the bust of the great bard of the Khasi Hills Soso Tham.

Yours etc.,
Willie Gordon Suting,
Shillong-1

VAB: The long wait

Editor,

News report indicates that the KHADC VAB has run into rough weather with The Ministry of Home Affairs Govt. of India, returning back the VAB with as many as twelve queries seeking clarification from the State Government. I am certain that the State Law Department, after examining them, will come up with appropriate answers. But once again, it's another long wait for the Dorbars and the Rangbah Shnong to get

their recognition and empowerment. The Synjuk Ki Nonsynshar Shnong Ka Bri U Hynniewtrep is spearheading the movement for the recognition and empowerment of the “Dorbar Shnongs”. This demand is just and fair, for the Dorbar Shnongs are the only grass root Institutions which have unselfishly served the people of the Khasi Hills since time immemorial. The Synjuk deserves to be praised for taking up this cause.

But after attaining Statehood, Meghalaya has undergone a sea change. The Dorbar Shnongs too need redefining to adapt to these changes so they can confront the challenges we face as a modern society. Rigidly clinging on to the way of life of the past and refusing to accept reforms will be detrimental to our very own society. During this transitional phase of the Dorbar Shong, different section of people will have different viewpoints. Healthy debate and discussion to resolve these differences are the best way to usher in new and modern ideas. But to be at loggerheads and always flexing muscles at each other, will not bring about solutions to the myriad problems which the State is currently facing.

Forest cover is getting depleted, rivers polluted, the city is choking in its own filth, illegal immigration, these are visible signs of a chaotic administration and in the absence of a strong and an accountable grass root institution many of

billionaire Vijay Mallya's sinking Kingfisher Airlines afloat in a move that amounts to throwing good money after bad. The income tax department also softened its stand and unfroze the airline's bank accounts as part of bailout package for the loss-making carrier.” Congress fed Mallya with a platinum spoon. Action against him began only when the present government came to power. Mallya left in a hurry because he knew that he would not be able to “manage” the system anymore, that the banks had been instructed to close in upon him. The story is not over. The law has long hands, when those hands are protected by government, as Mallya will discover if he does not appear in court on the next due date.

The worry, as Obama pointed out, is not whether America will abandon both its values and common sense; but whether the Republican Party can recover from self-inflicted wounds. A democracy needs a relevant Opposition as much as a credible Government. Only fools, as the saying goes, rush in where angels fear to tread; and one strength of democracy is that it permits fools to become candidates. But electorates are not so lenient. Parties which suffer fools gladly, pay a heavy price in credibility.

hatchet and work towards bringing in a Bill, which is acceptable to all, conferring recognition to the Dorbars and empowering the Rangbah Shnong. Hoping that the wait will not be too long.

Yours etc.,
PD Nongrum,
Shillong-2

“Never let a win get to your head,
or a loss to your heart.”

--- Chuck D

The Shillong Times

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GHADC affairs

THE appointment of a Congress party member as a nominee to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) , when the National Peoples' Party (NPP) which already has a majority in the House had appointed Conrad Sangma as their nominated member, is a travesty of good political practice. The Congress has 14 members in a House of 30 while the National Peoples' Party (NPP) has 15. In that sense the NPP has a majority and is therefore well within its rights to appoint a member of their choice. The NPP had nominated Conrad Sangma who is eminently qualified to lead the present Executive Council. But the GHADC which had been used as a political ploy by the Congress Party (repeated adjournments of election on untenable pretexts) is again turned into a political tool to literally get even. With the appointment of Congress nominee Selma D Shira, the House now faces a stalemate with the NPP and Congress each having 15 members. The process of horse trading would now begin in right earnest in the absence of an Anti-Defection law in the Autonomous District Councils. Both parties will try to buy MDCs in order to form the Executive Council (EC).

The earlier EC which was voted out had turned the Council into a den of corruption. Attempts to investigate the scams were sabotaged in various ways by the Congress-led, State Government. It is learnt that several appointments of clerical and other staff have been made to the GHADC after the candidates paid hefty sums of money for the posts. Some of them had even sold off their land to pay bribes to the GHADC councilors. Now that they have been going without salaries for several months the employees are spilling the beans. A new EC might have unearthed the scams and tracked them to their source. Hence the Congress Party and State Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma is in a tearing hurry to ensure that this does not happen. If the district councils are only about corruption and power games, do we need them at all?

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

Joint sector ventures

A joint-sector vanaspati plant project with a capacity to manufacture 135 tonnes per day is to be set up in Manipur shortly. Manipur government has agreed to be a partner in this Rs. 12 crore project, but the more agreeable fact is that a successful private enterprise group the OWM group of companies concentrating so far in north India has offered to extend its activities to the north-east which so far has not been able to attract much attention of industrialists despite its available and prospective resources. Manipur is fortunate, therefore, that it is going to be among the first of the such joint sector enterprises if the trend catches up in the near future.

Assam government's offer of the proposed new Assam Refinery under the Assam Accord to be set up as joint venture with the State government participating in it is hanging fire for quite some time now. Officials of the petroleum and natural gas Ministry of the Government of India and representatives of the Assam government are reported to have discussed this issue threadbare recently but with no agreement reached. The respective views of the Ministry and the State government are now to be incorporated in a detailed note which goes to the Union Cabinet for final disposal. Admittedly there is a political content in this issue and this is probably what is delaying a settlement of the issue which constitutes one of the subsidiary economic clauses of the Assam accord.

The Union Cabinet had earlier decided that the Refineries should be set up in the central public sector. This did not find favour with

Assam government, who felt that a joint sector project would allow it a larger say in the management of the refinery, which thus would be more in accord with the public mood which got reflected in the Accord incorporating the refinery clause. It is further argued that there would be scope of enthusiastic public subscription to the joint-sector refinery which could count on the support of the other existing petroleum units in the north-east both financial and otherwise. Employment of indigenous people in the oil and gas establishments in this region is a live issue in Assam's politics and the AGP government obviously wants to safeguard this vital interest through a joint sector venture in which it will have an effective voice in this matter.

Another economic clause in Assam accord - the revival of the ill-fated Ashok Paper Mills - is yet to be satisfactorily handled. The matter has now been pending before the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR), the propriety of which has since been questioned by the workers' union concerned. The project had from its inception the seed of unworkability embedded in it. It was owned by two State governments, Assam and Bihar, which itself was a queer proposition and, what is more, the units of the project are to be located in both - another experiment hardly having any precedent in the joint sector philosophy. It would be really an arduous task to get this Accord clause adequately redeemed or Ashok Paper Mills getting back on the rails for once in its long and limping career.

Inclusion and exclusion: The case of Niam Khasi Niamtre

By Abner Pariat

one of them turned to the other and said "Ithuh phi mo, ki jaka bym pat long Kristan" (you can recognize, places which are non-Christian, by the way they look). My friend looked at me, smirked and shook his head. He did this because we had actually talked about something along those lines much before that moment. Much of our respective works involve travelling to and visiting villages in Khasi, Jaintia Hills. Therefore, it quickly dawned on us that development patterns (roads, electricity, sanitation) within these parts of the state seemed more inclined towards one particular demographic than others (namely Khasi Christians). We are currently pursuing means to validate this supposition. This is not in any way a mission to 'politicize' "inclusion/exclusion," it is for the sake of knowledge.

There are many reasons why the 'indigenous faith' followers might be sidelined. The major and most obvious one is because they are fewer in number than the Christians. A political representative such as an MLA would sadly be more inclined to help realize the aspirations and ambitions of the majority. Even if she/he belonged to the minority group, ultimately the majority would have to be satisfied if she/he were interested in being re-elected for the next term. To change this would be far and away an extremely arduous but necessary task. However, even if a more "representative" representation were achieved, the systemic discrimination would be harder still to overcome. How would one begin to confront the privileges accumulated over decades that have been enjoyed by the Christians? How would one begin to unwind the 'power' cliques and political "spaces" that

have become their prerogative? Would a form of reservation really do anything to uplift the plight of the 'indigenous faith' followers? Would it be constructive in the long run, or would it tear our community asunder?

The conclusion I surmise is that this is essentially a critique on the very idea of "reservation" itself. I am not against the idea, I think it is absolutely essential for a more just and egalitarian society. However, even as we 'rejoice' in the status of being a Scheduled Tribe (ST) we must acknowledge the bitter reality that most of the benefits and advantages of being ST are enjoyed by the middle and upper classes. I doubt that the poorer sections of our society, and especially those in the villages, can claim to have gained much from an ST/SC certificate. This is the danger too with the current plea by the Sein Raij and co. I am sure they would have thought hard upon this as well. If the minority benefits all go to a Niam Tynrai businessman's family in Shillong and not villagers like those in Lyngiong-Tyrsad then it would have failed in its objective, in my opinion.

I think that the way forward is to reach out to one another, calling out progressive Christians and non-Christians alike to come together and attempt to alleviate the suffering of others. Orthodox, on all sides, is the enemy. In this regard, we have to grow bonds stronger than the religious ones. Pressure and lobbying groups that can bring people together rather than pull them apart should be encouraged. For this to happen, we need dialogue. It might be painful, embarrassing even but it must be initiated. We do not need "outsider" organizations to come and perform charity puja. In our need for political allies and powerful friends we seem to forget that we have more in

common with each other (Christian and non-Christian) than Right wing nut-jobs who seek to further widen the schism. This is as true for the Hindutva brigade as it is for the Evangelical Fundamentalists. The tragedy could be that these characters might actually come together to vilify and demonize Muslims (the "dreaded" Bangladeshis). O what a big joke that would be! That cannot be allowed to transpire without resistance.

Frankly speaking, the Niam Tre/Tynrai already have a trump card. On the cultural front, they have won and politics and culture are intertwined. Unless they approach the matter with open-mindedness and self-criticism, Christian Khasis can never truly be "Khasi" again. There are many who would raise objections to this statement and they have interesting points to make regarding definitions of identity, language, customs etc. My point, however, is that from within a conservative or orthodox Christianity (which is most of our Christianity!) we cannot ever (through fear or censure) really know what it is like to be "Khasi." I realize that many might have problems with my investing so much authority with the Niam Tre et al. After all, are they not also modern? Have they, also, not been changed by the times? How could they survive if they were static all this while? The Niam Tre et al have undoubtedly altered as well but in terms of cultural luggage (the folktales, the beliefs, the songs, dances) they are probably our best custodians. They could be actively teaching the Christians a few things about our common past and maybe with that our collective futures would be clearer, brighter. There would be no need for "defense" or preservation then. They can be the initiators of real 'growth', but it must be inclusive.

The Politics of Self Expression: Some Critical Thoughts

By Namrata Pathak

How would we define freedom of expression without getting trapped in the inconsistencies inherent in the term itself? What is it all about? All of us are aware of the fact that the constitutional right to express ourselves is shackled by various restrictive agendas. What happens if we place our right of expression in the chasm between consumerism and the culture-ideology offset? In the spectrum of consumerism, what role does public speech play?

Following Sklair, we can contend that the things that we possess add a meaning to our life. The criterion to be fully alive, as maintained by Sklair, is to consume. Sklair has deftly intersected the need to be fully alive with the act of consumption. Apart from it, the urge to commodify is at the heart of all cultural systems. However, the mode of converting cultural contents into a political message is quite complex. This axis of transformation is also envisaged in our day to day life when a valuable cultural artefact turns into kitsch at a shopping arcade; this is seen in the spaces of most international airports. But, is this act of transformation shadowed by diverse orientations of the reciprocity, sociability, and spontaneity of exchange? Moreover, we cannot forego the nuances associated with the "objectification of persons" and "personification of things" in a commodity market. According to Ertman and Williams, it will be an ignorant move to overlook how cultural things move in phases---the movement can be normative or deviant, reversible or terminal etc. But in such a situation, is there any room for the "individual"? The liquidation of the individual gives birth to a situation where real signa- ture is manipulated for reasons of marketability. As such, speech matters most than the individual who has spoken it, partly because the speech can be tailor-made to suit the demands of the market.

The icons, symbols and practices of culture, in the domain of the present risk-acceptant capitalism and market economy, transform themselves into "opportunities." Market demands, en route the network of information technologies, entrepreneurship and other economic ventures, make cultural values and objects lean on profits. These are the profits that they make the most among the category of transnational business class. However, as the new political realities wash over us in a country like India, the mode of expressing oneself also helps people deal with the magical word called "survival." It teaches people to "survive" at least in a domain that is at the receiving

end of public glare, thus confining the situation to the dynamics of "who is seeing whom from what angle?" Intention and perspective are the mantra of the onlooker, and the same rule applies to the speaker.

Speech, at times, acts as merchandise. Dialogues, interaction, and mediation in public forum are evenly "distributed" by electronic media. They cater to all the classes, from elites to the middle class to the poor. Speech is an instrumental prop in the buyer-user spectrum, used as a tool to consolidate economies of expansion. This tool wields power through a vital supply of mass-produced reaction. There is no doubt about the fact that it is a political action that provides resources for consumption. The diverse self expression can be used as a weapon to establish the self and the other binary. It needs to be noted that an appetite for the product determines the prime motor behind its popularity, and speech is no exception. We need to be aware of the consumption of speech as it is designated both as a practice and a system, an identity and a social construct. Thus, self expression can never be isolated from an array of material contradictions, power struggles, and willful action. In this context, Arjun Appadurai opines, "...focusing on the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is politics, construed broadly...commodities, like persons, have social lives". Hence, speech is intricately connected to politics.

Through speech we can establish a cultural morality. But the profound mystifying force is the exclusion of some people from the realization of political goals. This act can perversely keep some people away from the restorative belief of creating a new social system. We need to study it in the context of expectations of poor countries, their inadequate social welfare programmes and infrastructure, inept governments etc. Ironically, states crippled by violence, exploitation, epidemics, drugs etc. need new scales of execution. Of course we need non-governmental organizations, foreign aids, and healing and caring programmes to combat the dreadful diseases of the society. Against this backdrop, how can self expression be a potent tool for socio-economic forces of liberalism? Perhaps we need to reflect on it.

(The author is Assistant Professor, English at NEHU Tura campus)

killed by villagers in Dimapur, ST March 2, 2016) is extremely sad and morbid. The incident clearly highlights the sorry state of wildlife conservation and conservation awareness in the state of Nagaland. The scenario is not better in other states of the nation either. Although the numbers of wildlife sanctuaries have been going up across the nation, the forest cover has been undergoing depletion in majority of the states and union territories. The human-animal conflicts across the nation have been building up steadily with very few long term sustainable measures adopted to avoid such incidents and protect the vulnerable wildlife. Rapid encroachments into the forested areas together with

severe anthropogenic pressure such as poaching, illegal bush meat, trophy and pet trades are fragmenting forests and wildlife habitats exposing wildlife directly to communities living closely or adjacent to forested areas. Unless stringent measures are adopted nationwide more such sad incidents like the recent one in Nagaland are expected.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J 4B3

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

us!. Time and again it has been mentioned by many learned individuals that at the end of the day, 'the will of the state shall prevail'. I agree. However, if the state government's policy is to make sure every single matter is according to its will, where does that leave the District Councils? Isn't consensus the need of the hour? I believe the state government must honour the decisions of the district councils and must not override the latter's decisions. Rather the state government should grant more cohesion and backing to it. What is acceptable must be accepted but what is unacceptable should be rejected. Only then will a strong democratic base be built.

Yours etc.,
Keith Nongsteng,
Viaemail.

Football field or parade ground?

Editor,
Being a sportsman and an avid lover of football, J.N. Stadium, Polo, is not an unfamiliar place. I, along with a group of friends (all veterans) are regular visitors to the ground, and we, as a team play there every other day. On the morning of 9th March, I was shocked to see an army contingent practicing their drill parade on the artificial turf. For anyone who has witnessed an army parade, it is evident that their practise regime is strict and painstakingly long. What concerns me here is that the aftermath of their drill practice will result in the

field getting damaged. The playing characteristics of the field will be severely impaired and due to the continual stomping during their march past will result in areas of the field being unlevelled. This hampers the quality of the field as the ball will roll unevenly and cause it to bounce from place to place. The players will feel uncomfortable running on an uneven surface and will be frustrated by the inability to control an unpredictable ball.

Furthermore, J.N. Stadium being the maiden venue in the city capable of hosting major football events, it is the responsibility of the authorities to make sure that the field is not used for any other purposes than playing and practicing football. Polo is home to many fields and the army can use any one of them if they feel that all of the fields within their various regiments are insufficient for the purpose of drill practice. Who gave them the permission to practice on the grounds, I do not know. But as a footballer, it pains me to see the ground being used for something that can damage the field. I request the concerned authorities to kindly look into the matter and make sure that this does not happen again. Come on Shillong, let's football!

Yours etc.,
B.Laltanpuia
Shillong-1

Killing of a tiger

Editor,
The report featuring the death of an endangered tigress in Nagaland (Tigress

“Safeguard the health both of body and soul.”

—Cleobulus

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 214SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016

Deficit budget but perks for MLAs

THE Chief Minister has presented a 1090 crore deficit budget. We are unsure how the deficit will be made up except that the prices of some essential commodities have been hiked. That the price of petrol which was brought down successively by the central government will now be hiked is not going to endear Mukul Sangma and his government to the public. Contrary to what many believe, petrol is not a commodity consumed only by the middle and upper middle class but by transport operators who will now milk the common man who is dependent on public transport. Besides, today having a car is not a luxury but an imperative hence the government seems to have targeted the wrong income groups here. Liquor and cigarettes have usually been soft targets but this time the latter has been exempted. So the budget is soft on smokers.

On allocations, the State Budget seems to have taken a cue from the recently passed central government budget which is focusing on the agrarian sector and the rural economy. Community and Rural Development is allocated Rs 811.95 crore. This is the highest allocation by far and it is a step in the right direction considering the plight of rural Meghalaya. But the lacuna lies in project implementation which is tardy and lacks accountability. Large parts of rural Meghalaya are still unreached and do not have the basic amenities, leave alone schools and health centres. Families are unusually large with some women giving birth to as many as twelve to sixteen children. Family planning has not made any impact on our rural mindscape. The burgeoning rural population cancels out all attempts at providing resources. The population will always outdo the resources available. Surveys have repeatedly shown that women in the child bearing age in Meghalaya suffer severe malnutrition and/or anemia. Children born to such mothers are also malnourished, thereby leading to cognitive defects. We are therefore seeing a large chunk of our children population who will grow up without the ability to learn and reason like others of their age. This frightening scenario somehow does not seem to figure in the agenda of our elected representatives.

The announcement that the MLA scheme would now be hiked to Rs 2 crore per MLA is a no brainer. This scheme is a self serving scheme meant to help the MLA, not the public. Much of this money is spent before the elections. It should have been abolished instead of being enhanced. But whoever said the political class serves a public cause?

LOOKING BACK

Feb 1, 1989

96 cars enter Himalayan Car Rally

Ninety-six cars left the ramps of the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium this morning to begin a five day battle for supremacy over some of the most difficult terrains in the world in a rally known to be one of the toughest.

The 3,000 Km eighth Himalayan Car Rally, to be completed in sour legs, was flagged off by the Lt Governor of Delhi H.L. Kapoor the Australian rally champ Davib Officer, driving the Mitsubishi team's Mitsubishi Starion was the first to zoom off and was followed by one of the legends of this rally, Jayant Shah of Kenya.

Shah, the winner four times from 1982 to 1985 drove off in a Nissan 200 that was actually meant for another of the Nissan team's entry, Ashok Patel. There had been a delay in the arrival of Shah's car and since Patel's was nicely tuned he would be using it to try notch his fifth victory.

Ross Dunkerton and Steve McKimmie were the third to leave in another Mitsubishi Starion. Dunketbn the winner of the luck strike rally in Malaysia had come in third last year in the Himalayan rally. Ashok Patel whose participation had been doubtful however was

able to drive off as Shah's car arrived yesterday.

Bounties for Indian Cricketers

India's captain Kapil Dev has so far earned Rs. 33,000 by way of incentive from Bush on the schemes announced by them till the end of the India-Zimbabwe match at Ahmedabad yesterday.

He is followed by Manoj Prabhakar with Rs. 20,500,. Azharuddin Rs. 20,000, Sidhu Rs.19,500, Gavaskar and Maninder have been awarded Rs. 17,000 each.

Other who have won prizes are Dilip Vengsarkar Rs. 15,000, Kiran More Rs. 12,500 Ravi Shastri Rs. 10,000, K. Srikanth Rs.8,500, Chetan Sharma and Shivaramkrishnan Rs. 2,000 each and Roger Binny Rs. 1,000.

Mr. J. R. Mulcandani the marketing director of the company has announced that at the end of the Reliance Cup, the total amount earned by the player will be donated by the company to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund while the players have announced that they will donate amounts collected by them to different charities.

‘The Imperfect Catholic Church’

By Mickey M.Marweñ

This article is not about politics, society or the economy. It is a commentary on the history of the Catholic Church. In the beginning there was only one Christian Church under the leadership of the Pope, the successor of St. Peter the Apostle. It flourished and spread all over the world. The term 'Catholic' was first used in a letter by an early Christian martyr, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch. While on his way to martyrdom in Rome in 110 A.D he wrote, 'Where Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church'. The word 'Catholic' means universal. From then on the Christian Church was called the Catholic Church because of it universality.

Before proceeding with this article I wish to clarify that I was born and raised a devout Catholic and I love my Church. The 2013 Peoples' Magazine, Person of the Year, Pope Francis said "I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its security." Pope Francis's words are not judgmental or satirical. He said it only to let people understand that the Roman Catholic Church has made many mistakes and continues to err even now; that it has it's own weaknesses and imperfections because it is an institution comprising of human beings, and logically speaking, no man is perfect. But in spite of all the imperfections the true goal of the church is to spread the Gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ. And the contributions which the church has made for betterment of the society in the field of Education, Sports, Health, Tourism, Media, Art, Culture, Music, Farming, Philosophy and Theology etc is phenomenal.

There are many religious congregations founded by the Catholic Church which have done commendable work in setting up schools, dispensaries and lending a hand to the poor in villages where the Government does not reach. Coming from Nongstoin, West Khasi Hills, I have seen villages being transformed after the coming of the Diocese under the brilliant leadership of Bishop Victor Lyngdoh. Also let's not forget Mother Teresa who gave her life for our country.

The famous movie 'Spotlight' which bagged the best picture and best original screen play at the 88th Oscar Academy Awards is genuinely one of the best movies ever. Spotlight - written by Tom McCarthy and Josh Singer is an American crime drama movie based on actual events in which an investigative team of journalists of The Boston Globe Newspaper investigated cases of widespread child abuse in the Archdiocese of Boston by a Roman Catholic Priest, John Geoghan. He was imprisoned and murdered therein by his fellow inmates. The movie also shows the cover up attempts by higher-ups in the church for fear of losing public trust. No doubt the movie has a message. Producer Michael Sugar in his acceptance speech at the Oscars said, "The film gave a voice to survivors and the Oscar amplifies that voice which we hope will become a choir that will resonate all the way to Vatican." The film has indeed resonated with the whole world and specifically with Catholics. Even the Vatican did not condemn the movie.

The Catholic Church is one of the biggest churches in the world and priests take the vow of celibacy. This vow should be strictly adhered to and priests should not fool around with boys or girls. I am not being sarcastic but every institutions comprises of human beings who suffer from imperfections. It cannot be denied that there are priests with unsavoury characters in the church, but it is important to understand that the Church does not support such things and the present Pope is himself against those priests and the Bishops who protect them. They would be asked to resign if found supporting such evil after which the law would take its course.

The Vatican itself did not condemn the movie. However, if you have watched the movie with a weak faith you might perhaps be discouraged and hesitate to go to church henceforth. But as priests and bishops preach in their sermons, 'Christians do not worship priests for they are pastors and not God.' So we should not be discouraged by the acts of some mischievous church leaders and scumbags who take God's name for granted.

On the positive side the movie should be seen as a wake-up call not only for the Catholic Church but for all people or organisations who commit crimes in the name of God. One should understand that if members of the Catholic Church are deviant it is inappropriate to blame the whole Church. For instance, just because some Hindu priests were accused of molesting children in temples it does not mean the Hindu religion and its teaching is faulty. Similarly, the Al-Qaeda, Taliban and now ISIS has caused havoc in the world and killed thousands of innocent people in the name of Allah but that does not imply that the Islam and its teachings promote such cruel crimes.

Going back to history, the Catholic Church in previous centuries was criticized for its theological and ecclesiological principles. The Protestant Reformation (16th century in Europe) started by Martin Luther, a German priest and one of the wisest theologians of the Catholic Church happened due to abuses by the church clergy in addition to theological disputes. Political disputes compounded the theological divide between Protestants and Catholics and to this day the debate begun at the Reformation is evident from the number of Christian denominations that have taken birth. Some contemporary criticisms of the Catholic Church relate to philosophy and culture e.g Christianity versus Humanism.

From time to time the Church has tried to correct itself, beginning with financial accountability of the Vatican, the life style of priests, bishops and cardinals etc. At present the church is reviving itself and is trying to focus once again on reaching out to the poor, especially under the solemn and prudent leadership of Pope Francis. Things have really changed since the former cardinal and archbishop of Buenos Aires became Pope.

From the first unscripted shocker of, "Who am I to judge?" while responding to queries about homo-sexuality, to washing the feet of prisoners and Muslim women and giving up expensive facilities. Many conservative Catholics argue that the media sees what it wants from the new pontiff. Yet the media are not deceived in thinking that Pope Francis is different from his predecessors

TO THE EDITOR

Healthy criticism better than praise!

Editor,

I would like to offer my reactions to the letter "Lest We Forget" by Melamshwa Allya (ST Feb 23, 2016). I agree with the author when he says that brave and selfless policemen must be applauded for good work by the community at large. Honest policemen rendering yeoman service, whether it be a beat policeman on his daily rounds, or a traffic constable sweating it out at a traffic signal, or a senior officer formulating rational but humane policies - all deserve encouragement and greater recognition by the community. However, while doing so, it is equally important to note that honest policemen rendering yeoman service is a rarity these days. No doubt there exists a handful that fit the bill but they are a dying breed, soon to be replaced by politically-savvy recruits. The modern policeman on our streets is a complex animal, with a keen sense of self-preservation above all else. This is truer of the officer ranks than the lower ranks, as they are frequently called upon to satisfy the whims and fancies of their political masters. Quite often these policemen are required to circumvent the law to remain in the good books of the all-powerful politicians. An excellent example in recent memory is the fiasco surrounding the Chief Minister's 'accident' wherein the cops became a laughingstock owing to their gung-ho attitude and misplaced sense of duty. The policemen, notably the SP Traffic-in-charge, first slapped attempted murder charges against the hapless Sumo driver (a shamelessly groveling attempt to placate the Chief Minister, no doubt) and later withdrew the charges when faced with condemnation from all sections of society.

That a minor accident (albeit involving the always-in-a-tearing-hurry CM) can provoke 9/11 like reactions from our local policemen is ironic but hardly surprising. Just out of curiosity, can the traffic cops tell us at what speed the Chief Minister's car was moving when it dashed into the Sumo? VIP culture is firmly rooted in the minds of our policemen whose sense of duty only stretches as far as protecting the rich political and bureaucratic classes and now the High Court judges. The common man only figures in the whole equation by 'accident', pun intended. I could go on and on, ticking off my list of astronomical blunders, crimes and cover-ups by local policemen including staged encounters, cold-blooded murders, gross corruption (remember the traffic signal lights which never worked but which have now been uprooted and wiped from public memory?), extortion at check gates, turning a blind eye to ethnic violence, headline-hunting moral policing, etc, etc. Therefore, let's not go overboard in our praise just yet, especially when serious questions are still being asked every single day (but remain studiously ignored by their PR machinery) of our police force. As things stand, Meghalaya Police is in danger of being renamed as 'VIP Police' - this is how they are viewed by ordinary folks. Policemen have been operating with impunity and without real accountability in our State for far too long.

Yours etc.,
Barbara Lyngdoh
Sec-19, Noida,
U.P.

Red beacons on private vehicles

Editor,

It is disgusting that despite the Supreme Court order prohibiting the use of red beacons on private vehicles the situation here in Meghalaya has not changed. Even though the use of sirens and flashers are restricted to certain category of persons and emergency vehicles, the state

When India Post fails to deliver

By Asif Amin Tibet Baqual

India Post, as its website claims, is the world's largest postal network touching the lives of every citizen in the country. And in its endeavor to provide numerous services including mail parcel, money transfer, banking, insurance and retail services, it promises to offer its customers value for money while exhorting its employees to serve with utmost integrity, honesty, transparency and professionalism.

Impressive words curated to plaster a façade of corporate colloquialism over a dilapidated structure of colonial conservatism. It's hard to assess how far the rot has spread across the system but it definitely has its roots deeply entrenched in the archaic statutes of the Indian Constitution, which eats into its core values of being responsive and reliable besides discharging its responsibilities towards the society exhibiting deep trust, mutual respect by creating a culture of service before self.

This highfalutin frippery falls flat on its face when it comes to providing even basic services to its hapless customers without bungling up. Honesty and integrity take a walk in the park when important letters, official documents sent through registered post or under certificate of posting either get lost in the weeds or finally find their way after the cows come home.

Transparency and professionalism goes down the drain when the parcels are either completely siphoned off or their valuable contents replaced with old newspapers, cardboard or just plain rocks. And all this happens right under the very crooked nose of the postal department officials. Instead of hanging their heads in shame, they hide behind the ugly mask of Section 6 of the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, which states and I quote "The government shall not incur any liability by reason of the loss, mis-delivery or delay of, or damage to, any postal article in course of transmission by post, except in so far as such liability may in express terms be undertaken by the Centre as herein after provided; and no officer of the Post Office shall incur any liability by reason of any such loss, mis-delivery, delay or damage, unless he has caused the same fraudulently or by his willful act or default."

A faint ray of hope appears here for the gullible customer to hack his way into this dense jungle of obscure officialese, jargon, circumlocution, and it dies out soon as it becomes apparent to his utter disbelief and chagrin that the wretched man has already lost his soul to the devil with no hope for deliverance.

The customer needs to prove the loss, mis-delivery, delay or damage to his/her parcel has been caused fraudulently and/or by the willful act of an officer of India Post. And, mind you, this is more difficult than proving that the Aliens exist as the Postal Department refuses to share the findings of their shoddy departmental investigations, which may put their erring officers in the dock. With no concrete proof against it the Postal Department escapes here again. Enquiries are nothing but just a mere eye wash, a very well-concocted crafty plan to conveniently wash their hands off any accountability.

It's not that the powers that be have not been invoked to ameliorate the economic as well as the psychological damages caused thereof but the final fate of the appeal lies at the altar of the high scepters like the National Consumer Rights Redressal Commission, India's top consumer court.

India Post should stop peddling its premium products like Speed Post, Business Post, Express Parcel, Media Post, Greetings Post, Logistics Post and other financial and retail services, which fall under commercial postal services, and stick to plain postcard and simple mail. If it aspires to play with the big boys out there then it needs to come out and play by standard rules and not hide behind the archaic Indian Post Office Act of 1898.

It will be nothing short of a miracle if the lazy 'Babus' warming up the seats in Sanchar Bhawan get it through their thick skulls that this ancient enactment was constituted to protect the interests of the imperialist British government, and is in total contradiction to India Post's core values of providing reliable services and being responsible towards its customers' needs.

What horse sense is it to bring an 118 year old dinosaur of an enactment to life just to protect the unscrupulous elements who bring a bad name to the postal department. We are living in 2016 and there is no room for such anachronistic and obnoxious provisions to exist. In today's times of fierce competition and better service providers in the market, India Post is putting itself on the road to perdition by failing to deliver even the most basic of services. A message in a bottle thrown into the sea has got better chances of reaching its destination on time than a speed post article sent through India Post. Hope this message gets delivered in no uncertain terms this time. One can only hope.

ing reality in the state and it looks like development and prosperity have long ago bypassed us. The eye-catching display of wealth and prosperity in the city of Shillong (by this I mean the mushrooming hi-fi private buildings, shopping malls, expensive residences of government officials, growth of automobiles etc), hide a miserable picture of the actual reality. The suburbs of Shillong and the rural areas present a completely contrasting picture. The VIP roads in the city are being blacktopped every year while there are villages who could never dream of a blacktopped road, nay, not even a motorable road.

The Meghalaya Government is definitely against rural development. I have learnt from reliable sources that many projects for rural development, some from the government departments and other of the NGOs which are to be sent to the Central Government are pending in the government office while projects from other states have long ago reached the central government offices and they are now receiving government funds. Our leaders who pledge to be working for development of the poor,

are sitting over these projects. Perhaps they are still contemplating ways and means to get something out of these projects before they send them to New Delhi. Unfortunately, it is already too late for the financial year is closing. This is how development is being stalled from year to year due to a lack of political will and the inactivity of those at the helm of affairs. This is the sorry state we have come to and I wonder what our representatives are doing in the assembly. Are they voicing these concerns of the poor people or are they conspiring with the corrupt leaders? I think Meghalaya deserves a better government than the one we have now. Our people are too pacific and too patient. There are hardly any dissenting voices against the many irregularities and unjust practices like unreasonable price hikes, frequent power cuts, corruption etc. Perhaps this is our weakness which has been exploited fully by our politicians and bureaucrats. God save our beautiful State!

Yours etc.,
Barnes Mawrie sdb,
Vuia email

“*In a civilized and cultivated country, wild animals only continue to exist at all when preserved by sportsmen.*”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 216 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2016

Tax terrorism

THE NDA Government is saying that there will be no tax terrorism. It will not resort to fresh retrospective tax. but the old burden remains. The latest notices against Cairn Energy for Rs. 29,000 crore sent this week and the one against Vodafone for Rs.14,000crore sent in February show that the spectre of tax terrorism has not been buried. In his budget speech ArunJaitley said that pending cases would be settled soon. He proposed a one time scheme of dispute resolution for all past cases. That should improve the investment climate in the country and help implementation of the retrospective amendment. According to Jaitley's proposal, companies can settle their cases by paying only tax arrears and get a waiver of both interest and penalty provided they withdrew from all arbitration with the Government. The two companies so far hit are Cairn Energy and Vodafone.

In the case of Cairn, Rs.10,200crore is the tax liability. Interest and penaltyamountttRs. 18,800 crore. The problem with Cairn and Vodafone is that the proposed scheme has not yet taken effect. Do global investors still see India as an ideal investment destination? The certainty of the tax regime assured by the NDA Government is a plus factor. But the notices served on Cairn and Vodafone are discouraging besides the slump across the globe.

LOOKING BACK

Feb 3 , 1989

Highest French award for Satyajit Ray

French President Mr. Francois Mitterrand today decorated movie maestro Mr Satyajit Ray with "Legion D' honor" in recognition of his creative culture of humanity. A cross medallion, the highest civilian French honour was presented at a glittering open air function, attended by elites and renowned personalities of the city. Mr Ray is the third film maker in the world to have earned the highest honour. Two other recipients are Orson Weelles of Britain and Akira Kurosowa of Japan. The French President described Mr Ray as the great master of celluloid and said he was a successful successor or Rabindranath Tagore and a "fascinating artist in our time.

Mr Ray's films, Mr Mitterrand said were the symbol of black and white projecting the humanity for which "sometimes you have been criticized but you never deviated from projecting the truth." Like Tagore Mr Ray was very much known to the French as "typical representative of universal creativity," he added. For the first time the ward was presented by the French President to a recipient in his own country Mr Mitterrand said his country felt proud in honouring a personality who created a real scenario of the mankind and become a "realist".

Emotionally moved Mr Ray expressed his debt to French in cinema and described Mr Jean Remoir as his principal mentor. Mr Ray said he was happy and proud to restive the honour at a time when festival of French would be held in our country on the completion of two hundred years of great French Revolution.

Over 50 pc cast votes in Garo Hills

About 50 to 60% turnout was reported from the 29 constituencies of Garo Hills Autonomous District Council election which was held on Thursday. Official sources said here that the polling was peaceful and there was no report of any untoward incidents.

The fate of the 116 candidates in the fray will be known on Saturday when

the counting will be taken up simultaneously in Tura, Williamnagar and Baghmara. Senior officials believe that the last result will be available on the same evening. Congress(I) sources expressed happiness over the polling trends. A spokesman of the party when contacted said that "we are sure of getting absolute majority."

The Opposition Hill People Union which is the major rival of the Congress(I), did not have any feed back from Tura. A party MLA said "we are still awaiting full details.

Cong (I) dissidence in Rajasthan

Dissident Congress-I leaders today urged Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi to intervene and save the Congress party. About 50 MLAs, five MPs at a meeting criticized Chief Minister Mr Shiv Charan Mathur add PCC I Chief Mr Ashok Gehlot. Briefing newsmen after the meeting former Chief Minister Mr Heeralal Devopura said an action committee had been formed at the meeting to launch a campaign against the Chief Minister and the PCC(I) chief. The participants also planned to meet the Prime Minister in Delhi.

CPI(M) to have closer ties with National Front

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has decided to have closer relations with the National Front. Several members of the politbuo of the party including West Bengal Chief Minister Mr Jyoti Basu, state's Left Front chairman Mr Saroj Mukherjee and veteran trade union leader Mr B T Ranadive, who attended the politbuo meeting here were in favour of better relations with the Front.

The meeting ended today after reviewing the latest political developments in the country. The leaders also favoured electoral adjustments with the Front and giving its support to the Front if the latter formed the Government at the centre without joining it, according to informed sources.

Traditional Marriage Ceremony in the 21st Century: The Case of Pohchnong in Changpung

By Laldawnpuii Sailo

After 45 long years of neglect, the people of the Pohchnong locality in Changpung village in West Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya, stirred their spirits to awaken their long neglected traditional marriage system in an attempt to revive their culture and to infusing in the upcoming generation the importance of traditional family values as propounded by the ancestors. The reorganization of the marriage system in the 'pure' manner, i.e. traditional style, is indeed a rare occurrence at a time when most people adopt the 'Western' form of marriage ceremonies and have almost given up even the symbols of tradition associated with marriage. This event has also attracted people from the neighbouring villages who arrived to eagerly witness and experience this sacred observance.

A lot of questions arose in my mind when I heard that such an event was going to be held (I had arrived in Changpung along with my friends and teachers to conduct a field survey for our master's dissertation). I became curious to know more about the ceremony and the main purpose behind it - the reawakening of the traditional system. Through helpful conversations and interactions with the local people, I was able to collect some information. In the process I came to learn more about it and I am very grateful for that.

Pohchnong is the name of one of the localities of Changpung village. Changpung, which is a large village has eight headmen in total and consists of more than 500 households. The village is divided into different localities based on the religions the people follow, i.e. Christians and their traditional counterpart, Niam Tre. Pohchnong is the locality in which the followers of the traditional religion are dominant and are found to stay together. The Niam Tre religion which is the traditional religion of the Jaintias is strongly organized in this area.

The traditional marriage ceremony stretched for a period of ten days. Thus, the marriage took place from 17th of December and lasted till 27th December 2015. It was very lengthy ceremony. One of

the advantages that the local people mentioned about this type of marriage is its complicated process of divorce. When the couple are married in the traditional manner, they cannot get a divorce at will. They would need to go back to the place of the ceremony, seek the will of nature and do so in the presence of witnesses. On looking back it is perhaps this peculiar and tough process of divorce which is the reason for the comparatively low divorce rates among the people of Pohchnong. This should be the antidote to the brittle nature of Khasi marriages and it would be preferable for the future generations to revert to the traditional form of marriage to reduce the divorce rate. Also it would be much better for the people to follow their traditional marriage systems than to borrow from other cultures when they have a better way. In my opinion this system is more meaningful for the Jaintia people not only to revive their culture and create awareness about it for the future generations but also because they can reclaim a part of their past history.

The main reason, as already discussed, is that it will help in bringing down the divorce rate. In today's world we regularly see the ruins that broken families bring about. Children growing up in such a family suffer from adverse effects on mental health which also affect their future. Furthermore, it creates a cycle of brokenness and affects the society as a whole. Societies are after all made up of individual families and problems in the latter are inevitably transferred to the former. By discouraging easy divorce the traditional form of marriage could help in saving families from breaking too easily, which is the norm now-a-days. Therefore, the traditional marriage system, although lengthy and complex is much more preferable. Difficulty in getting divorce does have disadvantages but in a society which is becoming highly individualised, engagement of the community (possible through the traditional process) has greater benefits.

However, and more importantly, it is a good practice to keep up and pre-

serve traditional culture which can stand as a challenge and example for the other tribes of North-East India to emulate. It is a challenge because many of them have also neglected many of their traditional cultural practises and Pohchnong can be an example to emulate. All of us are well aware of the overbearing influences of western cultures on our lifestyles. It is frightening to imagine the prospect of the complete eradication of our traditional value systems within a few decades if we do not create barriers against those cultural assaults. Of course it is very difficult to preserve our traditional culture in this age of globalisation and cultural assimilation but nevertheless we can still retain and retrieve whatever we can. I hope this type of marriage system becomes more popular among the Jaintia people, which in turn will encourage and enthuse them to revive the other old, good practices as well.

On the other hand, this event also made me think about the rapid changes that have overtaken our value systems and lifestyles due to the advent of the European culture before and after Independence. When we trace back our history we find that our country, especially the north-eastern states, had largely remained untouched by the processes of modernization. After the British came in the 19th century, they introduced modern education system and provided other important facilities that improved our lifestyles and enabled us to progress along with the rest of the world. But it is also true that colonization has damaged our beautiful culture and our worldviews as well. Introduction of western education is one of the best things that the British did for the Indian citizens. But along with it, we were also exposed to European culture which led us to imbibe it in our lives. In the process we started ignoring our own culture. We have developed a mindset where jeans and t-shirts are much better than jainsem or dhoti. If you have a choice, where would you go for lunch, KFC or jadoh? This mindset is not just the product of the present modernization process but had in fact started with the arrival of the British.

I am not suggesting that eating KFC or wearing jeans

or t-shirt is a bad thing but only using them as examples of the changes that have taken place in our value systems and mindset brought about largely by western culture. In this 21st century, the mindset of our teenagers is influenced largely by American values disseminated through the power of media. Like it happened previously with the European influence, the copying of American lifestyles by teenagers today who look down upon their own culture is not surprising. In contrast to all this, I am reminded of the story of a man who had lived in Indonesia for several years. He said that most of the people in Indonesia follow Islam and they love their traditions and customs. Even though the missionaries preached to them, they were unwilling to convert because they feared that the new forms of religions might shatter their long preserved culture and tradition.

When I heard this story, it challenged me and got me thinking that cherishing one's own culture and tradition by giving it the deserved admiration is the best way to expose ourselves to the world. Even though the tax rates are one of the highest in the world, Britain still follows the monarchy system because the people cherish the traditional system and are willing to pay higher taxes to continue with it. If others could, why can't we cherish our tradition and fight to preserve and revive the old systems? One may follow any religion, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or Niam Tre but is it justified if it makes us abandon our tradition and culture. This is the question I have been constantly asking myself.

Apart from reorganizing their traditional marriage system, the people of Pohchnong also strictly manage their sacred groves where the ritual ceremonies are held periodically. All these activities clearly expose the rigidity and boldness of their mind to preserve their own culture. The other north-eastern tribes should look at Pohchnong's efforts and take possible steps to acknowledge the worth and importance of their own culture and tradition.

(The author is a fourth semester student in the department of Geography, North-Eastern Hill University)

Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J 4B3

Improve rural roads

Editor,

It is encouraging that the Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma has spelt out the need to have better and long lasting roads rather than outsourcing to local contractors who believe in getting free government funds and constructing half-baked roads not worth treading upon. Ideas and opinions are good if translated to reality but the question is whether the cost of having imported technology is only to improve our city roads or highways. None have spoken about the methods of improving many interior roads the life-line for development. Moreover, we feel that if local contractors are given to partner with technologists then quality control and monitoring must not be compromised, lest bringing such technology becomes a waste. It would be prudent that the PWD Minister himself visits the interior parts of the state and see what technology is best put to use for constructing quality roads in the villages.

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

Pnar - a language in danger

By Dr. Omarlin Kyndiah

Mother tongue is regarded not only relevant but also important in today's world. Today, people all over the world are expressing great love for their respective mother tongues. A century earlier, some sections of the people might not have realized the relevance and importance of their mother tongue. Some have even switched over to the language of the dominant group. For instance, English had been the dominant language in Wales. Most of the Welsh people particularly in South Wales, had even adopted English as their mother tongue. But, today, there is a resurgence of Welsh nationalism; and the preservation and promotion of their Celtic language is one of their important political agenda.

It is pertinent to mention here of the Welsh experience because when the Welsh missionaries came to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, they realised the relevance and importance of imparting their religious teachings in the mother tongue of the local people by reducing their spoken language into a written language in Roman script. Earlier the Baptist missionaries from Serampore too had made an attempt to put the Khasi language into a written form, in Bengali script. This is how the Khasi language developed during the last 170 years. Before that time, there were different Khasi dialects which were not reduced into a written form. From among these dialects, the Sohra dialect was preferred by the missionaries to adopt as a Standard Khasi language. According the H.Roberts in his "A Grammar of Khasi Language" (1891), the dialects of Charrapoonjee (Sohra) is taken as the standard, because it is the purest, as universally acknowledged by the natives, besides being more amenable to systematical arrangement than the patios of the smaller villages. The Standard Khasi Language has reached a stage where it should be recognized by the Sahitya Akademi and included in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

In North East India, there are many tribal dialects which have been reduced to written language in Roman script by the missionaries working in the hills. Not only the tribal dialect, the missionaries had also contributed in the growth and development of non-tribal languages, for example, the Assamese language. In North East India, preservation of the cultural and linguistic identity of any given ethnic group had gained momentum because of the emergence of forces that promote 'cultural assimilation'. Sadly, in Our North East Indian context we have not been able to achieve even what has been guaranteed by the Constitution of India so far as the issue of mother tongue is concerned. Article 29 guarantees protection of interest of minorities having a distinct language with a right to conserve the same has still to be fully implemented. In addition, Article 350A provides for adequate facilities for instructions in mother tongue at the primary stage of education to the children belonging to linguistic minority. But this provision also remains only the declared intention of the Indian State so far as many local languages are yet to be introduced at the primary stage of education. One such classic case is of the Pnar language of the Jaintias. It is because of this, the Jaintias have exerted themselves in translating their spoken language into a written language which led to the formation of Association of Jaintia writers called Ka Sein I Ktien Wei Thoh Jaintia in 1975.

Historically, Pnar has been by far the most important language. Pnar is mostly described as a dialect or variety of Khasi (Grierson, 1904 & Bareh, 1977 etc). However, Karl Heinz Grussner (2004) in his article, Khasi: a minority language of NE India; from an unwritten to a written language" acknowledged that Pnar may be a language in its own right. Lexico-statistic studies shows that Pnar has the highest intersection with the lexicon of the other Khasian branch of Austro-Asiatic language (War, Standard Khasi and Lyngngam). In addition to lexico-statistic

defference, Pnar, War, S. Khasi and Lyngngam (PKWL) also show difference in their phonetics, grammatical morphology and typology. Linguist Anne Daladier argued that these differences are an indication that PWKL were probably spoken in different locations of the Assam corridor before they grouped in Meghalaya. Another young Linguist Hiram Ring in his paper on "A phonetic description and phenomic analysis of Jowai-Pnar" mentioned that and I quote, "Pnar and Khasi do share a significant portion of their culture and certain lexical items, but Pnar is distinct linguistically and there is reported low mutual intelligibility between the languages".

Several research works by both National and International Linguists on Pnar language have been published in both National and International Journals. Few researchers are worth mentioning. These are K.S.Nagaraja, Hamlet Bareh, C.Bareh, Narayan Kumar Choudhury, Mankullar Gashnga, Paul Sidwell, Simon Green Hill and Anne Daladier and Hiram Ring. Sadly, very little research on Pnar language has since been carried out in our very own North Eastern Hill University (NEHU). While acknowledging the contributions of all these researchers on Pnar language, much more scope is left with our own researchers for the development of the Pnar language.

Though orthography for Pnar is in some use in few literatures, but there is a lack of standardisation. Spoken languages have dialects from varying geographical areas and social groups. In Jaintia Hills District there exists fourteen dialect areas. These are Nartiang, Nongjingi, Nongbah, Mynso, Shilliang Myntang, Shanggung, Raliang, Jowai, Rymbai, Sutnga, Nongkhlieh, Lakadong, Narpuh and Saipung (Daladier 2011). Standardisation is a tool of language promotion and strengthening cultural integrity. The UNESCO's Atlas of the World Languages in Danger had listed Khasi as susceptible, but Pnar are more likely to be in danger, since it is not standardised and use as language instruction in education.

At this point it is relevant to mention here that Ka Sein I Ktien Wei Thoh Jaintia under the leadership of former Vice Chancellor of North Eastern Hill University, Professor B.Pakem in 1975 adopted the Jaintia alphabets in Roman Script. However, his untimely death left the work incomplete. This year, we are celebrating the 41st year of adoption of Jaintia alphabets. Unfortunately, very few are aware of this historical background of the Jaintia alphabets. At this moment, therefore, the question arises what should we do about the perpetuation of our script? Who should carry forward the unfinished task of its completion? Is it not a duty on our part to raise the status of our spoken language into that of a written language? Therefore, time has come now that the Jaintia scholars and intellectuals come forward to raise the standard of our spoken language into a written language. This will help to preserve and promote our rich cultural heritage and also increase the literacy rate of Jaintia Hills. Mr. Humphrey Hadem, the then Community Development Minister, Government of Meghalaya while addressing the Annual Session of Ka Sein I Ktien Wei Thoh Jaintia at Jowai pleaded for having a separate written language for Pnar in order to preserve their rich cultural heritage, customs and their identity (Shillong Times April 24, 1982).

In conclusion, I am reminded of the words by Raven I. Mc David Jr, an American linguist who is specialised in dialectology: "the dominant culture will not really be able to accept the aspiring minorities until it realises that all dialects are legitimate forms of the language, arising through normal interactions of human beings in social contexts".

“When they call the roll in the Senate, the Senators do not know whether to answer 'Present' or 'Not guilty.'”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

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Kerala poll

THE BJP is betting big on the Kerala Assembly elections. Heavyweights of the State Party unit are in the fray. In the past senior leaders stayed away in the fray. In the past senior leaders stayed away in the previous assembly polls. The BJP is a challenger to the Congress –led UDF and the CPH-led LDF. The BJP has never won an assembly or Parliamentary seat. It has been one of the two fronts which came out successful. The BJP’s bid in the assembly poll is a results of its performance in the 2014 general election. It bagged 11% votes, riding the NarendraModivave. its bright showing in the Thiruvananthpuram Parliamentary constituency has given it a new impetus. All eyes are on O. Rajagopal.

In the local bodies elections, it beat the Congress to be second to the Left in Thiruvananthpuram Municipal Corporation. The Party has also joined up with the newly formed Bharat Dharma Jana Sena, representing the Ezhava community. The BJDS, a coalition of various caste bodies is against both the alliances – the UDF and the LDF. The BJP- BDJS front stands for Hindu interests. The UDF and the LDF are accused of pampering religious minorities, quite large in Kerala. The fate of the BJP in Kerala hangs in the balance. Assembly elections in the state differ from parliamentary elections. The BJP’s vote share remained 5% in the last three assembly elections. Will it go up significantly this time?

LOOKING BACK

Feb 3 , 1989

Field Testing Stations at Gauhati and Agartala

The Central had decided to set up two Field Testing Stations with general engineering Testing Laboratories at Gauhati and Agartala.

This information was given by the Secretary of the Department of Industrial Development, Mr S K Bhatnagar in his letter addressed recently to the Secretary of the North Eastern Council. Mr S K Bhatnagar also hoped that the Government of Assam and Tripura would encourage the entrepreneurs to avail of the facilities now being set up in these two places.

Earlier the Secretary of the North Eastern Council, Mr P H Trivedi in his letter to the Government of India mentioned how the entrepreneurs in the Small Scale Sector of the North Eastern Region have been experiencing considerable difficulties in obtaining the I.S.I. Certificates in respect of their products before they could be marketed. While mentioning the delay caused due to the locations of the I.S.I. (Indian Standard Institute) Office at Calcutta, Mr Trivedi strongly pleaded for setting up of a Branch Office of the I.S.I. (Indian Standard Institute) in the North Eastern Region to avoid irritants which act as disincentive to the local entrepreneurs of this region. The setting up of such facilities would promote industrial development in the North Eastern Region, Mr Trivedi added.

Youth parliament in Shillong

The Meghalaya unit of the Bharat Scouts & Guides organized a youth parliament at State Central Library hall on May 13. The Department of Law and Parliamentary Affairs of the Govt of Meghalaya sponsored the programme.

Meghalaya Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr G Mylliemngap stressed the importance of exposing the

State Planning Board: Is it Still Relevant?

With the closure of the Planning Commission at the national level and a new form of entity being created by the name NITI Aayog for the purpose of transforming India, a complete shift in planning mechanism is expected to take place. Our eyes are now on the State Planning Board too but much more than that, the usefulness, importance and role of SPB in connection relevant to Government’s action in development planning is indeed questionable. Ever since the creation of the Board as a think tank for government decisions and policies are whimsical in nature. In other words, the significance of a planning body has dwindled away and eroded over the years and there are numerous of reasons that led to this situation.

The first and foremost question we should ask as an analysis to the whole issue is this, is it binding for the government to accept and consider each and every advice and suggestions put forward by the Planning Board? Or how many recommendations, strategic planning that have been taken up by the Board have been implemented by the government sincerely? In the present situation the answer is ‘No’ because the Chief Minister and his cabinet alone are self sufficient for all the affairs of a small state like ours. Otherwise if they are not self sufficient, then they are not effective and competent to run the entire state. Unlike the erstwhile Planning Commission and the present NITI Aayog where the Prime Minister himself is the Chairperson of the institution and had it been that the Chief Minister of the state himself heads the Planning Board, then it will reflect some seriousness of the government with regards to planning and development.

It was only at the time of inception of the state of Meghalaya in 1972 that the Chief Minister himself was the head of the Planning Board. Subsequently the practice has deviated and continues till this day. This

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

shows that the good intention and purpose of having a Planning Board has been diluted for the purpose of achieving political reconciliation at the cost of the state exchequer. The great wastage in a small state like ours is enormous because it involves appointing a veteran politician without any work to head the Planning Board. Such political elders are being patronized by the government thereby turning the Board into a mini government within itself where the primary business is to take care of the few permanent staffs and several co-chairmen who themselves do not know what to do and where to converge. In fact we should be ashamed of ourselves for having a designation without a meaningful job and area of influence to exercise. On the other hand, the headmen and other traditional heads are better off because they have a job to do despite tremendous disruptions and criticism.

Are we really making an effort to transform our state, our cities and towns, villages etc. or are we helping politician to remunerate themselves and live off the public exchequer. This is a serious issue. We need people now in the political sphere who can raise the matter and to streamline the planning strategy in the right direction so that no one should play games with the development of the state and the people. However, the ball is entirely on the CMs court. If he is serious about it, then the CM himself is the right person to take full responsibility and lead the Board by selecting the right people to the Board. They should include visionary, strategists, experts from various fields, etc. But as it appears today the Planning Board is not different from a District Council which is an alternative for the failed MLA candidates. The State Planning Board too has become a shelter for the ‘failed to be’ CM candidate.

In the last few years we have witnessed differ-

ent projects and programmes initiated and implemented by the government and some of them have even wound up. None of these programmes and projects have any direct or indirect relation with the State Planning Board, and for so many years the State Planning Board existed without any proper function with sporadic meetings here and there. Then what is the point and meaning of having this organization? As an observer and writer I only express what I see without any prejudice and bias. The point I am trying to make here is that Planning is essential and indispensable, and the government can outsource planning if it feels it is not competent enough to do the job; this is quite fair. But here the government is not outsourcing anything but is paying for the expense of doing nothing. Perhaps the members may have claimed TA/DA as well and a situation of this sort is known as counterfeit planning.

Mukul Sangma was optimistic when he said that he is not interested in contesting the Tura Lok Sabha bye election against the sympathy wave of Late PA Sangma. But that should not be the case. As a true representative of the people the CM can become MP, Union Minister even Prime Minister and this is the expectation and wish of the people who support and repose faith on the leader. So why can’t he be the boss of the Planning Board? These are issues that every learned person of Meghalaya should ask. So why is it that not a single MLA dares to point out this flaw and question the role of the State Planning Board?

What is wrong with the Planning Commission? Does it need to be dismantled? Yes it does and to dismantle an institution of this nature requires a certain level of intellectual and visionary capacity? As of today if this institution is dismantled, the power and position wielded by the experts and intellectuals who have been feeding off the Board and taken shelter in it will see the end

Mother India Debate Maharashtra bats for Bharat

By Insaaf

Maharashtra Assembly is seeing a Mother India churn. Wherein all the patriotic secularists and perceived communalists have gotten together to play policemen to whosoever doesn’t wear his love for motherland on his sleeve. Surprisingly, notwithstanding Congress Vice President Rahul Ganshi accusing the Hindutva brigade of “destroying relationships” in the name of the flag, his party joined the chorus, the BJP, Shiv Sena and the NCP, in hounding out the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) MLA, Waris Pathan for rest of the Budget session for refusing to chant ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ during the debate on the Governor’s address. Worse, the Speaker suspended Pathan on the ground that of ‘collective feeling’ of all MLAs. Rule or no rule, didn’t matter. How could it when the stake of mother India was involved.

Clearly, Pathan was following in his leader MP Asaduddin Owaisi’s footsteps, who unabashedly took pride in his speech in Hyderabad that he would never chant ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ even if a “knife is put to my throat.” His fallacious plea: it was not in the Constitution! Obviously, Owaisi’s MIM has eyes on the minority vote banks for the forthcoming elections in five States, never mind if his outbursts paint the minority community as anti-national. Predictably, cutting across Party lines Rajya MPs exercised their lung power denouncing their Lok Sabha counterpart’s anti-India assertion. Moreover, cocking a snook at its community leaders, thousands of Muslims in a show of love for the country got together at a dargah in Mumbai where for the first time the national flag was hoisted, national anthem sung and slogans of bharat mata ki jai rent the air, while celebrating the 603 Urs of Peer Maqdoom Shah Baba. Indeed, testing times for patriotism.

West Bengal Stung

The West Bengal sting operation of ruling Trinamool leaders, being exposed taking bribes in lieu of favours, is a classic case of different strokes for different folks. Like all politicians caught with their hands in the till, Mamata Banerjee and her team have dubbed it a ‘political conspiracy’ to tarnish the party’s image prior to the Assembly elections, where they claim that the “Left, Congress and BJP are destined to lose.” Undeniably, the party supremo suffers from severe amnesia, having taken up cudgels against former NDA Defence Minister Late George Fernandes in the coffin scam case, where she resigned as Union Railway Minister to showcase her pristine honesty. She also seems to forget that Parliament had expelled 11 members facing charges of bribe some years ago in the famous cash-for-vote scam. Moreover, she chooses to ignore that five of her MPs shown receiving wads of notes have now to declare their innocence before the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee. Will they come clean and add another blow to Parliament’s prestige and dignity or will they be stung?

Rajasthan Un’ Beef’ Row

Now it’s a Rajasthan university raising a stink. Not the now famous sedition controversy of JNU but over an equally flogged issue--consumption of ‘beef.’ Four Kashmiri students were beaten up by a right-wing mob for allegedly consuming beef in the hostel room in a private University, which is nevertheless vegetarian --

prevents eating of non-vegetarian food in the campus. The mob gathered outside the campus in Chittorgarh district, threw stones, blocked the Ajmer-Udaipur highway and some even set fire to a meat shop. The four students were arrested ‘for disturbing peace’ but later released on bail as they consumed mutton and not beef. However, no action has been taken against those who indulged in violence. A classic case of misdirected fury, where the culprit goes scot free and the innocent gets cooked.

Telangana To Fulfil Promises?

Miniscule nascent State Telangana is out to outdo Prime Minister Modi in the agriculture and irrigation sector. Making rural economy the centre piece of its 2016-17 Budget, the State has outlayed an unprecedented Rs 1.3 lakh crores towards irrigation and drinking water through its ‘Mission Bhagiratha’ as also double bedroom housing amongst many of the core components that have been proposed for its people this financial year. Alongside, substantial allocation has also been made for power, health, education, welfare and social security. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is very clear that the ordinary folk, who struggled with him for the formation of the State as well as ensured majority rule, must be paid back. Thus the Government would spend Rs 75,000 corer on irrigation for the next three years starting this year. Insaaf in Warangal recently learnt that under the mission every single home in the entire State would get piped drinking water through taps! Further, the administration realised that the earlier scheme of a one room hut was no claim to providing decent housing. So everyone would get two-bedroom homes. Hopes have been raised. Will targets be met?

UP’s SP Sugandh

In politics nothing matters more than sweet scent of success. The latest subscriber to this is Akhilesh Yadav, CEO of ulta pulta Pradesh. With Assembly elections slated for next year, the ruling SP is leaving no stone unturned to emerge victorious again. To ensure that his vote bank remains loyal the regional party has launched a range of perfumes—Samajwadi sugandh--to spread its fragrance across UP. The four fragrances encapsulating its four-year rule encompasses progress, equality and efficiency. It remains to be seen whether the sugandh will come out smelling of roses or whether BSP’s bhenji will stink out her arch rival? Not to be left behind, the saffron Sangh has upped the ante of Modi’s pet hobby horse ‘Digital India’ by stating the gateway to grabbing the party ticket was their presence on social media, read facebook and twitter. The bar is set at a minimum of 25000 likes/followers. Naturally, the MLA hopefuls are busy opening their accounts and those who are not net savvy are hiring family and friends to ensure their likability. Even as many cribbed about this measure being applied to gauge a leader’s popularity they have no option but to fall in President Amit Shah’s line. The ball is now in Mayawati’s court. What flavour will she curry?—INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Of prison recruitment tests

Editor,

I am one of the many job aspirants of this State and literally I have given up hope on getting a Government job. In this gloomy search for job, a ray of hope appeared in the form of the Police Department coming up with numerous job opportunities. In the last two years or so, my personal experience is that the only department with FAIR recruitment process is the Police Department. I had closely followed the recently concluded recruitment to posts in the Prisons and I must say kudos to the Department. They uploaded the marks immediately after every event and that too on a daily basis. I compared each and every mark that was uploaded and found that it did tally with the one that was declared. Coming to the appointment of the son of DG Prisons as the Assistant Jailor, it amazes me as to there is a hue and cry when he was selected after having fulfilled all the criteria’s laid down by the Prison Department for the that post. Most importantly he cleared all the levels of tests. Although the DG Prison has clarified that his son was disqualified, the question is why should he be disqualified? Is it because he is the son of the DG? If that is the case then I’m glad that my dad is not the Chief Minister otherwise I will be jobless in this life. “How can a person holding the position of Chairman of the Central Recruitment Board clear the name of his son?” was the quote. Well the answer is, “He qualified.” It’s as simple as that and personally I’m not against it although I also had applied for the same post and did not qualify. The only right thing to have been done is for the DG Prisons to recuse himself from being on the Interview Board

Yours etc.,
Risalin Rymbai
Shillong-2

Parking tickets!

Editor,

We common people would always expect a parking picket when we park our vehicles anywhere in and around Shillong. It is not only expected but a ticket is to be handed to anyone to pays for parking of vehicle as per the law. However when I recently went to buy some groceries in Don Bosco Laitumkhrah, to be more precise one shop near Elegance beauty parlour, a few vehicles were parked there so I did the same. When I left, one chap asked for parking fees. My first reaction was to ask for the ticket. His reply was he noted it down in the register. I would like to know who authorizes such illegal collection of parking fees?

Yours etc.,
Robert W,
Via email

Shillong Golf Course

Editor,

Please refer to the remarks as appeared in the Shillong Times of March 14, 2016 ‘Golf Course bears the brunt of weekend picnickers’ onslaught’. Here are a few facts for the readers to appreciate. Foremost is that unlike other golf courses the Shillong Course is accessible 24 hours to the public causing problems of drunkenness, littering and such activities like cricket and football which damage the greens and fairways. The sprawling grounds, interspersed by clumps of vegetation which serve as the safe haven for anti social elements is the ideal escape venue for the legitimacy of the various localities. Be it also known that the malis in disregard of their normal duties have to pick up the litter which is heavy during weekends.

At about this time last year, the present elected Board of Directors of the Shillong Club Ltd were greeted ominously by arsonists setting fire to about 60 lakh worth of valuable golf machinery meant for the upkeep of the greens and fairways besides the attack on the mid-way rest house which suffered considerable damage. There is a reference to legislator A.L. Hek who has not played golf for the last 1 ½ years. He has therefore missed 32 tournaments including a major IIM Tournament. He has to act not as a leader of a faction but to lead the community of golfers as President of the Shillong Golfers Association which has not met for more than a decade. It will be a sad day for the public if and when an inner wall is built restricting entry as would abate all manner of non-golfing activities. Lastly it is a happy thought that the younger group of golfers are taking the initiative to popularise the game through new ventures with the support of the present management

Yours etc.,
J.B. Marbaniang,
Administrator
On behalf of the Board of Directors

In the relentless move to steamroll old houses a piece of history might get lost forever as a recently released book on Kolkata’s old houses highlight even as a citizens’ movement to stop the trend gets momentum in the city, reports Ranjita Biswas

A visit to Kolkata from Down Under while accompanying her businessman husband proved to be fortuitous both for Joanne Taylor and grand old houses in north Kolkata. An architectural historian, author and photographer from Sydney, Taylor was fascinated by the “strange, hybrid houses of north Kolkata”, more often than not lying neglected or ignored as the world went by. Scholars in colonial history cite Kolkata (Calcutta) as having some of the finest built environ in the world from that era. After all, it was here that the British Indian empire found a foothold beginning with the rather low profile landing of Job Charnock, an official with the East India Company, on the banks of the Hooghly a little over three centuries ago;



Joanne Taylor

later, Kolkata served as the empire’s capital till it shifted to Delhi in 1911. North Kolkata, focus of Taylor’s book, is today seen as ‘old and dilapidated’ compared to the new kid in town - south Kolkata, but it was the hub of cultural and social activities in colonial times, and ironically, also where political discourses took place on how to throw out the colonialists. Taylor was in Kolkata recently for the launch of her book The Great Houses of Calcutta , co-authored with

the old zemindar palaces and rich businessmen’s houses. I tried to find out more and read up, but sadly I couldn’t find much archival material.” That led to her own journey of discovery, not “very easy though” and resulted in her first book, the award winning The Forgotten Palaces of Calcutta (Niyogi, 2006). The challenge was also to connect with the families who have been living there from the time of their ancestors, “...as an outsider, probing, entering their private space,” but she was surprised by the

Amazing grace

Jon Lang, born and brought up in Kolkata, who now teaches architecture in Australia. Recalls the author, “With architectural history as my forte, as I explored the old neighbourhoods of Kolkata, I was amazed by the beauty, and quirkiness, of some of

warmth and hospitality they extended. It can be noted that in both the books, Taylor spells the city as Calcutta because it is about a time when the new spelling ‘Kolkata’ (likewise for many other Indian cities), was yet to come by. Influential people in the colonial era, traders and businessmen, besides the zemindars built houses, and today, besides a few, “...are largely forlorn reminders of a way of life, aspirations and aesthetic values,” as Taylor observes. Some of the best representative buildings that come to mind in this part of Kolkata is the Marble Palace of the Mullick family, the Sovabazar palace, the Jorasanko palace of the Tagores, Lahabari of the Laha family, the Burdwan house in south Kolkata etc. Those who have seen Satyajit Ray’s Charulata, English language The Namesake and more re-

tion, ‘what is modern?’ in an ongoing debate the world over. In the 18th and 19th century Kolkata, these houses, a fusion of many styles, Corinthian, Gothic, Neo-Classical etc. which were regarded as very modern those days. Today, as globalization touches almost every aspect of our society, including in the uniformity in design of living quarters, a dedicated band of historians, built environmentalists and citizens who value heritage are trying to bring into focus the need to preserve houses what reflect sensibilities of a time, a certain grace, which would disappear otherwise, be it in the Portuguese style houses in Goa, art-deco buildings in Mumbai, the tea garden bungalows in the North East, or Kolkata’s colonial heritage structures. Well-known author, Sahitya Akademi awardee, Amit Chaudhuri has been passionately writing on the impending destruction of



cently Shoojit Sircar’s hit Hindi film Piku, among others, shot in old Kolkata houses would recognise the red-oxide floors, the green-shuttered windows, wide porches on the ground floor, the intricate cornices, elaborate wrought-iron grills etc. which showcase the 19th century houses. This leads to the ques-

tion, ‘what is modern?’ in an ongoing debate the world over. In the 18th and 19th century Kolkata, these houses, a fusion of many styles, Corinthian, Gothic, Neo-Classical etc. which were regarded as very modern those days. Today, as globalization touches almost every aspect of our society, including in the uniformity in design of living quarters, a dedicated band of historians, built environmentalists and citizens who value heritage are trying to bring into focus the need to preserve houses what reflect sensibilities of a time, a certain grace, which would disappear otherwise, be it in the Portuguese style houses in Goa, art-deco buildings in Mumbai, the tea garden bungalows in the North East, or Kolkata’s colonial heritage structures. Well-known author, Sahitya Akademi awardee, Amit Chaudhuri has been passionately writing on the impending destruction of



promoters.

Fund for preserving the houses and support from the government to save houses of heritage value from getting demolished are, of course, of utmost importance. With support from

dated this effort to draw attention of the city’s powers-that- be to stop the relentless move to erase buildings from the city’s landscape to be replaced by glass and chromium multi-storey buildings.



eminent persons from the field of arts and culture Chaudhuri has launched an online campaign “ Save Calcutta’s architectural heritage “ to draw attention of the concerned authorities on the Avaaz.org community petition platform which has attracted thousands of signatories . Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has also vali-

“Kolkata fascinates me, it has become my second home,” Taylor says even as she starts exploring heritage buildings, their state, and individuality in other parts of India, “which can be a huge and challenging job considering the country’s size and diversity in built environ,” she says. (TWF)

The great marriage escape...

Wife: "The house is on fire! Get the kids out first!" Me (Stuffing "Star Wars" figurines collection into pockets): "I'm on it! Really soon! Almost immediately!" Fortunately, it turned out to be a dream - or more accurately, a nightmare. No husband/father should ever be forced to make an impossible moral choice like that.

The challenges of being a family man were on my mind when I got to the office that same morning to find a reader had sent me an extraordinary news story on that topic.

Sixteen women in a single village went shopping one morning, and none of them came back. It is already being called The Great Marriage Escape. Some were pregnant.

That village main street is now full of dazed, stunned men trying to work out what happened to their lives - just like every other married man on Earth.

The strange tale started last year when a matchmaker turned up at Zhanzhi, a farm town in China's Fujian province, and said she had a supply of marriage-ready "plug-and-play" brides from Vietnam at just 60,000 yuan (\$9,200) each.

Women are so rare in parts of China that males form obsessive relationships with badly drawn female anime characters. No, wait, that happens everywhere.

Anyway, one farmer said yes, was delivered a pleasant, charming woman, and started a stampede by lonely men clutching

est marriage had lasted six months and the shortest three days.

The curious thing is that people to whom I showed the tale of the Great Marriage Escape had very different responses.

Married guy: "Why do some men have all the luck?"

Single guy: "Can this format be standardized for all marriages?"

Single woman: "Did the girls get to keep the money?"

The one married woman present just looked thoughtful and left the room quietly, possibly to make Group Escape Plans with her friends.

Not that everyone is so cynical about marriage. One female friend always says: "It's fine as long as women go into marriage thinking of it as a form of adoption, only you get a very large child."

I contacted the original source of the story, a China watcher in Beijing, to ask him to identify the signs of a society's wives planning to depart en masse. "In each case, the woman said she was going shopping that day for clothing and/or food," he said. "That's probably not very useful, is it?"

True. On the other hand, most married men I know hate it when women say "I'm popping out to do a little shopping", because we are misers, and now at least we have an additional reason to be suspicious of it.

A colleague has just pointed out that even the most shopping-phobic male in the world must at

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

Some time enter a retail establishment. Not necessarily. We might or might not be a romantic place on earth - until a chilly Tuesday in mid-February. The wives went out shopping and none returned. The matchmaker disappeared too. The long-

some time enter a retail establishment. Not necessarily. We might or might not be a romantic place on earth - until a chilly Tuesday in mid-February. The wives went out shopping and none returned. The matchmaker disappeared too. The long-



Deepika Padukone in Rohit Bal creation

His ensembles draw on history, fantasy and folklore and desired by discerning fashion aficionados around the globe. Ace designer Rohit Bal, who has completed 25 years in the industry, says the biggest shift over the years is in how the "fun" has gone out of the fashion world, which is now "ruthless and competitive". "Everything has changed. I've seen it all hap-

pen and start. It's like being a witness to the Big Bang. The explosion of stars into the universe (that) we call fashion. Now we are a full-fledged industry, almost ruthless and competitive. The fun has gone," Bal said in an interview. "Very few of us (are) left who do fashion because we love it. There is a big difference between being a fashion designer and someone

‘Fashion is ruthless now’

By Nivedita

who makes clothes just to sell them," added the talent, who was among those who sowed the seeds of the Indian fashion industry, which is thriving nowadays. The industry has grown by leaps and bounds, but Bal misses the "friendship and warmth that was there once". "I see more and more people running large scale factories rather than fashion houses. I miss the patronised feeling of fashion. I miss the love, calm and fun," stressed the alumnus of the prestigious St. Stephens College of Delhi University.

Often seen at most fashion events and parties, Bal

now wishes he could have



Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in Rohit Bal creation

a quieter life and is working towards it.

"Well, after reaching where I am, I really wish for a quiet life where no one will judge me for who I am and what I do. It is difficult to always be in the spotlight, but I have learnt to deal with it.

"I only go out when I am absolutely needed and where I really want to go. No more social obligations," said the designer, who is the finale designer at the forthcoming edition of Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai.

Bal worked in his family's export business before launching



Ace designer Rohit Bal

his label in 1990. His distinct sense of style and eye for detail helped him stand out from the beginning. And he unin-

hibitedly credits his success to his originality.

"For designers who do bridal couture, India still remains the

most important market. There was no industry when I started. I am lucky that my designs have been appreciated (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career as CA

CA is a common term mostly for the students of commerce stream. With the rapid development in economy, careers in finance and accounts have been in demand in many places. The term CA is connected with all these, well CA stands for Chartered Accountant and the course related to same is called Chartered Accountancy course. It is a dynamic, challenging and rewarding profession. All the countries have their own Accountancy Association which regulates the quality and quantity of the professionals in this field. Chartered Accountancy Course is a professional course in Accounting introduced in our country in 1949, with the enactment of the Chartered Accountants Act. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) was formed the same year .

There are different stages to become a CA. Aspirant may join through Common Proficiency Course. One may enroll with the Institute for Common Proficiency Course (CPC) after passing class 10th examination conducted by an examining body constituted by law in India or an examination recognized by the Central Government as equivalent thereto. To appear in CPT students must pass senior secondary level of examination.

After completing CPC one may join Intermediate (IPC) Course/ATC after passing CPT and 10+2 examination. Students need to undergo orientation programme and also 100 hours of IT training. Student may appear in Intermediate (IPC) Examination/ATE on completion of 8 months of study course as on first day of the month in which the examination is to be held and

join articulated training after passing either Group I or Both Groups of Intermediate (IPC) Course. There are courses related to management and communication in this stage for different days.

Student may also opt for the Accounting Technician Course. One may enroll for Common Proficiency Test (CPT), after passing Class 10 examination. Aspirant need to appear and pass in CPT after appearing in Senior Secondary (10+2) Examination however one should pass both CPT and 10+2 examination before registering for ATC. One may get Accounting Technician Certificate and designate as "Accounting Technician" once the course is finished successfully. There are also ways to become CA after becoming Accounting Technician.

There is provision for direct entry for CA courses for which Commerce Graduates/Post-Graduates needs 55% or Other Graduates/Post-Graduates needs 60%. Instead of CPC they may directly enroll with the Institute for Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Course for Both Groups with or without the option of Accounting Technician Course (ATC). Before appearing for the final examination there are some more stages which students must complete.

Candidates who have passed Intermediate level examination of Institute of Company Secretaries of India or Institute of Cost Accountants of India may enroll with the Institute for Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Course either for Both Groups or Group I with or without the option of Ac-

counting Technician Course (ATC). There are other stages before appearing for the final exams.

Career options and opportunities are tremendous for the registered CAs. All the companies registered under the Companies Act, are required to get their accounts audited only by practicing Chartered Accountants. A qualified Chartered Accountant has the option of joining the Government Service, Public Sector undertakings or taking up a profitable job in the private sector. Some of the opportunities available for Chartered Accountants are in capital markets, business houses and industry. Many are seen working independently as consultant and they provide services to their clients.

I have seen many students initially enroll for the course but most of them do not complete the course in due time. Once someone registered for the course they must try and complete the same with the time period. There are many who have completed CA and also completed law and they are working as consultants and earn good salary. CAs are also associated with Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and different charitable trusts and other associations.

(Writer is a career mentor and can be reached at 98640 55558 or bkranjan@gmail.com for any career related queries)

Noted modernist artist Jamini Roy's nearly century old paintings have lived beyond their time and find relevance even today.

Uma Nair, who recently curated a solo exhibition at the Dhoomimal Art Gallery here showcasing nearly 80 artworks by 20th century, calls him a "universalist."

"Jamini Roy is never out of fashion. Whatever he drew was universal. It is relevant even today. It is so important for works of art to live beyond its time," she says of the artist who passed away in 1972.

Titled "Carved Contours," the show underway at the Dhoomimal Gallery here is divided into two distinct parts - one set of coloured works and another of pen and ink drawings.

Roy who was tutored under the Bengal School of Art under the mentorship of Abanindranath Tagore, shifted from the academic tradition of drawing classical nudes and went on to derive inspiration from the Indian culture.

He captured the simplicity of the tribal livelihood in his art where he painted extensively the "marginalised" santhal community of Bengal.

"His main subjects were the humble simple people from the santhal tribe. His soft heartedness towards the community comes out of his sensitivity for the poor. In today's world when we hear about atrocities against Dalits, here is an artist who celebrated people who were marginalised," says Nair.

Roy's treatment of the female body is sensitive and respectful in a way that it appears sensuous rather than crude and vulgar to the viewer.

"I think he was very sensitive. He appreciated women. When you look at the forms of the women he does not make her look cheap but beautiful," says the curator.

Even though the artist seldom paints the faces but whatever one sees in Roy's women is all beautiful.

"He is a man who loved what he saw. In today's age

Jamini Roy - first modernist of Indian art



Jamini Roy

when we are talking about violence against women, I think respect is very important and I realise Jamini Roy was a humanist," she says.

Roy's coloured works show clear influences of the Kalighat patta paintings in his bold sweeping brushstrokes. He also turned to rural decorative traditions of alpna and kantha. According to Nair says the artist's

choice of medium of work was egg tempera and tamarind seed glue and that he soon switched from dyes to natural colors, using earth, chalk powder and vegetable colors.

"His palette was a limited array of seven colours – Indian red, yellow ochre, cadmium green, vermilion, grey and blue – prepared from materials like hingul, harital,

kak khokri, lamp black chalk or limestone," she says.

The "mother-child" figure is another recurrent subject in Roy's works, which he blends effortlessly with his other areas of interest of the santhals and bauls, mythology – both Hindu and Christian.

Roy's depiction of the selflessness of motherhood in his paintings - an image of a santhal woman embracing her child; a bronze bodied santhal mother feeding an infant - is indeed heart-warming.

"He loves portraying Ganesh and Durga, as well as Krishna, especially the child Krishna and scenes from the Ramayan," says Nair.

The show has a series of simple monumental images of sari-clad women, village dancers and domestic animals besides Madonna and Christ and the famed Ramayan series. According to the curator, Roy has dealt with the idea of 'Ravana' in a very contemporary way. Unlike his other works which have a very matte finish, this particular work depicting the evil king with his 10 heads positioned

diagonally in 'tomato red' exudes an uncanny liveliness.

"He has treated it in a very modern way. Whenever you and I think of Ravana, we think of him standing with his ten heads horizontal. He takes the Ravana and makes his heads diagonal. He gives so much joy in the destruction of evil," she says.

A 110-page book, brought out by Dhoomimal Gallery, carries a foreword



by Uma Jain and curatorial note by Uma Nair and a couple of art write-ups besides a brief biography of Jamini and the images of all his works at 'Carved Contours'. (PTI)

Northeast culture enthrals London

The northeastern region of India entered London's cultural scene this week, with an exotic exhibition of organic textiles and trendy made-for-the-west designs, as well as lively music and dance from the region.

The phenomenon was a refreshing change from the diet of garba, bhangra and Bollywood entertainment that pummels Londoners and is mistaken by the uninitiated as the 'be all and end all' of Indian arts.

The four-day event was staged at the Nehru Centre, the cultural wing of the Indian High Commission in Britain.

It included live weaving of silk cloth by a woman from a remote village in Meghalaya. Syiem with his partner Janessaline M. Pyngrope designs niche western as well as Khasi style outfits.

She sells her creations to Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House in Shillong.

"We understand the hurdles faced by our artisans in sustaining their craft, therefore sharing their story with the world is our contribution to



Daniel Syiem and partner Janessaline M. Pyngrope enable them to conserve their art," the couple said. Eri worms or silk worms are reared in the Khasi-

Eri worms or silk worms are reared in the Khasi-Jaintia hills. Silk is then extracted from cocoons, leading to spinning and reeling, yarn production, dying and eventually weaving. Natural vegetable dyes provide the colour.

Jaintia hills. Silk is then extracted from cocoons, leading to spinning and reeling, yarn production, dying and eventually weaving. Natural vegetable dyes provide the colour. The garment display was capped by music and dance from Assam, Mizoram, Manipur and Meghalaya and Nagaland. (IANS)

'Fashion is ruthless now'

(Contd from P-VI) and patronised since the beginning. I am lucky to have laid my own path and not follow one. I am lucky to have done it my way," he said, adding that the key to remain "relevant" after all these years is to be true to your art.

"As life is becoming more complicated, designing clothes have become simpler. To me, fashion is art. When you experience it, all five senses should be elated. That is why I pay very close attention to every detail... To every music, choreography, ambience and set designing detail.

"If you want to remain relevant it is very important to stay true to who you are. Just be you. Don't try to be somebody else they already exist," said Bal, who repeatedly draws inspiration from the rich culture of India.

In his journey, Bal has not just showcased his creations at major fashion capitals, but



Nivedita.s@ians.in)

even associated with international brands like Christian Louboutin, Conran Store, cosmetic giant Lancôme, Zippo lighters, Reid & Taylor, Outlander. He even runs his own restaurant named Veda.

With patrons of his work spread across the world, he maintains that India is his "primary market".

"India has such a vast reservoir of heritage and craftsmanship that is yet to be explored and we have so many occasions one can cater to. For me, India was the primary market and always will be."

Designing for Bollywood celebrities like Amitabh Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra, Sonam Kapoor, Katrina Kaif, Ranbir Kapoor and more has been a part and parcel of his silver jubilee journey, but styling for Hindi films is something Bal has stayed away from.

He feels he doesn't have the "patience for it". Nevertheless, he says he will do costumes for a project that he directs and produces.

(The writer can be contacted at

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, March 20, 2016

Venus is forming an angle of 48 degrees with Uranus on your solar return chart indicates some mixed results. Work pressure may mount and desired help and support may not be forthcoming. You have to utilize your analytical skills and also step up interactions with associates and colleagues. You will hit the target if you remain focused. It is a good time to iron out any work issues. Your intellectual curiosity will lead you to books and research and new areas of interest. There will be opportunities which can be utilized for self-promotion. You find yourself focusing on the family and family gatherings too take place. Do not miss out on travel opportunities. Health will need due attention.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

You would enjoy doing things with others at work and at home, as synergy and cooperation are available to you. You would most successfully perform tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. After dealing with tough people and complicated issues you feel much stronger and clearer about priorities. You have mental clarity and a logical approach to resolve matters. Study business offers and professional opportunities in detail. Instead of feeling hurt and suffering mentally, be patient and positive, as things are likely to turn around in a positive direction in a few days.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

There will be fabulous results for domestic and work related matters. You are strong and masterful while turning things around in a positive direction at work. Think about long term gain as opposed to quick fix solutions. Media and the arts involve you in creative pastimes. You enjoy love and admiration of the family. Artistic self-expression is important, possibly through writing or some forms of art. A strong desire for companionship and sociability dominates during this period. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at work. Sports people also benefit from the planetary alignment as they are infused with positive energy and gain recognition.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

This phase brings responsibilities, seriousness and sensitivity in relations. You are bold and adventurous right now and you cannot tolerate delays, restrictions, or any form of authority that prevents you from behaving exactly the way you want to. Your drive for personal freedom and insistence on your rights is pressing, and a confrontation in which you have to stand up for yourself is likely. You will be needed to provide inputs and your presence may also be required at home and work and you will have to divide your attention according to priorities. This is good time to achieve balance between the head and the heart, and that too in all relationships.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

There will be mixed results as success and good fortune at work opens new horizons for expansion and travel. Some changes in the business set up are on the cards. You bring stability and order in business and professional projects with a dynamic and assertive approach. You come up with original and creative ideas that surprise other in the professional area. You support people with loyalty and zeal. A person makes an impact on you and it is hard to stop thinking of this strange connection. Your relationship with your partner is rather tenacious at the moment and requires extra attention and care. Emotive issues arise with family members. Your career, reputation, and public life are influenced.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

An increase in funds brings monetary gains and you may earn from investments made earlier. There will be times when you feel stressed over details. You may want to plan every move but serendipity has some happy surprises in store. You have more faith in general regarding your career and the direction in which you are headed. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for the current planetary placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits. Your romantic relationship takes on an added intensity and you receive more than you anticipated from your partner. This draws you closer on other levels too.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

An excellent time awaits you especially regarding money and career. Feeling secure and comfortable on the job is important to you now. Money matters move smoothly even as expenses rise. It is time to get serious about other aspects of life management too. You work towards happiness and solidarity in friendship and love and this helps you get your

health and relationships back on track. You reconnect with friends and focus your attention on your relationships with your family including children. The unattached are likely to meet someone who stimulates them mentally and a great period of togetherness could ensue.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

This is a positive period that brings sincerity, cooperation and harmony in relationships. This is an excellent time under which to work on resolving differences in values or problems with joint finances in a close relationship. Old friends and close family communicate good news and remain in touch when you need to share views and feelings. This is a great time to present your ideas and to make your mark at your place of work. Your innovative ideas elicit a favourable response from peers and seniors alike. Be objective as prejudices and notions could color your view on how you tackle a given situation. Health needs the attention it deserves.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

You are likely to swing to extremes this week, sometimes being happy, celebratory and at other times low, serious and depressed. Professional situations and personal relations are sensitive and tend to go through ups and downs. Finances and material effects need to be evaluated, do not make investments or speculate heavily. You are involved in multiple activities and need to avoid mental stress. It is the right time to concentrate on your career prospects and professional skills as your workload too increases. You have to develop more energy for work and your daily routine tends to speed up now. It's a fabulous time for joining a gym or stepping up exercise and health routines.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

Financial gains and profits from business are on the cards. This can be a time of achievement, career advancement, and success in business. Work-related travel or reaching out to more people is possible now. There could be a promotion or new job opportunities. It is more about how you express yourself than the specifics of what you are saying that helps sway others to your position. Recognition is likely to come your way whether you ask for it or not, and the responsibility that comes right along with it. Do what you feel is right, keeping in mind that you are at your most visible during this week.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

This phase brings excellent opportunities for love and fun. A love affair may become a little more serious. Spending time with someone special is a focus. You pour more energy into self-promotion activities. It is a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love. More freedom is likely to be experienced in your career. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities in these areas of life. This is an especially spiritual time for you—a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you. You enjoy doing things with others at work and home, as synergy and cooperation are available to you now.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

This is a time of profitable productivity. Your mind is clear, decisive and organized in professional matters. You keep things in perspective and handle many issues and facets with ease and speed. You may feel professional unstable and emotionally insecure for a short while. You tend to apply too much force suddenly it's better to take one steady step at a time to climb the ladder of success. Your heart is with your home and family, if you happen to be traveling during this week, a romantic adventure may be on the cards. A focused effort in any direction brings success.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

Work issues are emphasized as well as mental and physical health. You are called upon to deal with the details and practicalities of everyday life, to become more organized, and to take charge of your routines. It is time to formulate some clear goals and plans. Circumstances are such that you need to develop some healthy habits, routines, and schedules. Believing in a grand plan is fine, but practical concerns need to be dealt with as well. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. A business venture could be gainful if you are willing to lend it some energy. A relaxed and light attitude would help you overcome negative thoughts.

“A vote is like a rifle: its usefulness depends upon the character of the user.”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

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Revenue from extractive industries

CHIEF Minister Mukul Sangma’s repeated assurance to the coal lobby that the State Government would accelerate its attempts to convince the Centre and the National Green Tribunal that Meghalaya is a Sixth Schedule State and that the central mining laws should not be applied here are very problematic. Coal mining is an extractive industry which has caused immense environmental damage that are yet to be reversed. The State Government does not even have a plan in place to reclaim the toxic rivers and to re-afforest abandoned mines. Yet, each time the CM tries to explain the deficit budget of Meghalaya by pointing to the revenue loss from royalty on coal mining. In a world that is concerned about environment disasters it is shameful that Meghalaya has not come up with any alternative to a destructive activity like coal mining. This is also an activity that has enriched some in the so-called ‘community’ while extracting a heavy cost on the larger population within that same ‘community.’ These are important issues that call for a public debate.

It is ironic too that on the issue of coal mining the Opposition seems to be on the same page as the Government. The reason is because coal money is intrinsically linked to political funding. It exposes the propensity for self preservation of politicians across the political spectrum. In this respect it is also unfortunate that there is not a single politician in the House who is committed to the climate and environment of this State. In that respect, all of them stand solidly with the affluent coal miners and against the larger public interest. There is much that is lost by way of the toxicity of rivers which used to provide fish and hence nutrition to the large mass of people who don’t benefit from coal mining. Anywhere else in the world, a mining activity that has caused so much environmental damage would have been held to scrutiny by a court of law or the peoples’ court. But in Meghalaya the interests of the many have always been subsumed to maintain the interests of the few. And the Government has no imagination to conceive of alternative livelihoods except to keep assuring this mining clique that their interests will be served even if that means spending public money to employ legal brains to fight that cause. Does Meghalaya need to be financed by revenue that will cause irreparable loss to the environment and ultimately to human life itself?

LOOKING BACK

Feb 3, 1989

Chinese eye on N.E. tribal areas across Burma border

The Thangsas are an Indo-Burmese tribe, living in both India and Burma. In India they live at Miao and other places along the Indo-Burmese border, in Tirap district, in south-eastern Arunachal Pradesh. In Burma, they occupy the Pangchow tract, on the other side of the international border. Every other day, one may find Thangsas coming to the bazaars at Miao, from the Burmese side to buy rice, clothes and other consumer items.

The Pangchow tract has unexploited gold-mines, rubies and diamonds can also be found there. This is an addition to silver, lead and zinc. But the area is utterly undeveloped. It does not grow enough food. There are hardly any schools or hospitals/ In fact, the Burmese Government, whose writ does not run west of the Chindwin river, has done nothing for the uplift of the Thangsas. It is difficult to assess the exact population of Thangsas living inside Burma. At least about one lakh of them may be there. One the Indian side, the member of Thangsas may be less.

The tribal people living in India enjoy a higher economic and social status. Often, Thangsas coming from the Burmese side compare their economic conditions with those of their Indian counterparts and feel dismayed. However, Thangsas,

on both sides of the international border consider themselves brothers separated by an artificial border.

A few years ago angry over the conditions of his people a middle-aged Thangsa, called Khaplang, organized a rebel brigade to fight the Burmese. Khaplang, who has not had any formal education managed to get support from them and go his men trained in guerrilla warfare. Incidentally, the Chinese have been interested in colonizing most of this uncared for barren and inhospitable land which however abounds in natural resources. Their help to Khaplang to the Naga rebels led by Muivah of National Socialist of Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and to the Kachins and the Shans in northern Burma, is not without a well-worked-out plan for gradual colonization. Some time ago Khaplang with his four hundred boys joining Muivah's NSCN and is now its vice-president. Khaplang joining hands with Muivah has given the NSCN a new base, not only in the Pangchow hill tract but also inside India in Tirap district. Muivah, it is learnt, has succeeded in persuading the Chinese not to have any direct dealings with Khaplang.

Some people in Tirap district have begun to feel the powerful and terrorizing presence of the NSCN which carries on smuggling activities.

Poor State: Big Spending

By HH Mohrmen

At the very outset it should be made clear that this piece of writing is not an expert critique of the budget but a layman’s observation and comment on the debate that was going on in the House in the past few days of the budget session of Meghalaya Assembly. And frankly speaking the debate in the sessions has not been able to provide us with necessary information which will make a layman like this writer wiser.

If we are to only judge from the report on the debate in the House during the current session it is clear that the State is in a big financial mess. What is also obvious from the debates particularly on the budget 2016, is the fact that the government instead of addressing this vital issue is acting contrary to what commonsense dictates.

We can also conclude that the future of the state is insecure not because it is neck deep in debt, but because no plan was proposed to help the economy of the state recover except by increasing tax on petroleum products and liquor. Dr Sangma should at least thank his stars for the fall in the petroleum prices in the global market which has enabled him to increase taxes on petroleum products in the state. And instead of passing the benefits to the people, he chose to enhance taxes for lavish government spending. And the irony is in spite of fiscal deficit, the government instead of introducing austerity measure to narrow down the revenue and spending gap is instead on a spending spree.

The CM presents a more than one thousand crore deficit budget but in spite of the huge deficit, no measure was introduced to revive the state’s economy which is being affected by the ban on coal mining. The government is yet to come up with plans and strategies to create employment avenues in the coal mining area be it farm or non-farm sector to address the livelihood problem of the people affected by the ban. Fishery as a livelihood activity is still not on the radar of the government because it has not even initiated a process to conduct any kind of study to declare the polluted rivers in the coal mining areas dead. If we are to have any plans to reclaim the rivers, we need data and statistics of the current status of rivers like those downstream of river Myntdu, Kupli, Lukha and Lunar so that the government can start reclamation work on these rivers.

A layman would expect that a Government which is neck deep in debt should try to control or temporarily stop spending which can be kept in abeyance, but that has not happened. Instead the government has instead announced the creation of four more Community and Rural Development block and an equal number of sub divisions in the state which is not unnecessary but the question is - where will the money come from? The question here is also about the timing. No doubt anything that brings governance closer to the door step of the people is to be welcomed, but why not wait till the economy or financial health of the state recovers? Dr Sangma still has two more years till election so why did he not wait till the economy of the state recovers before introducing these measures.

The creation of 15 new police stations in the state of which the maximum numbers are proposed for militant hit Garo hills is also a move welcomed by right minded citizens of the state, although some would conclude that it is a little too late but as the saying goes, ‘better late than never.’ But the question that begs the answer is with regards to the MLA development scheme. Why is the government in hurry to raise the fund allocation for the scheme from one to two crore per annum?

The economy of the state is already in a bad shape, and yet instead of postponing the enhancement of the MLA schemes, the government decided to double the amount. The most important question is the impact of the scheme on the development of the state. How effective was the delivery system of the scheme? Has any impact assessment study been done to find out if it has really benefitted the people? The other pertinent question is, whether there is any chance of the scheme being manipulated for the MLA’s own vested interest? And if there is no mechanism in place to check the delivery of the scheme, the other question is, how can we check that there is no duplication of work using this scheme and other central and state government schemes? We already have a national scheme in place like MNREGS and DRDA for community rural development and there are also many more scheme for urban development, The question is whether we have a mechanism in place to check that there is no duplicating of works by using these many schemes.

The MLA scheme which comes up to 120 crore per year and a total of 600 crores at the end of every five year term is a huge amount of money. The point is not what or where the MLAs will spend the money but rather how will all the 60 MLAs will execute the schemes. Many of the MLAs use the scheme as bait to increase their chances of getting re-elected in the next election and that is also why most of them spend the funds only towards the end of the five year term. This is a common practice by most of the MLAs and we all know why. If this is how the scheme is misused then is it fair to other candidates contesting against the sitting MLA when they were not similarly provided funds to buy votes?

It is rather amusing to note that in the Assembly the MLAs were debating about Rabies instead of debating about disease like Zika or even T.B., Cancer and other dreaded diseases which are on rampage in many areas of the state.

The dual post has caught the ruling Congress in the wrong foot because the Government has not disqualified P.N. Syiem who still is the only Congressman who continues to hold two posts. Ardent Basaiawmoit has every right question the Congress’ double standards

TO THE EDITOR

Another Tehelka in ARPS

Editor,

I thank The Shillong Times for publishing the hidden truth of Assam Rifles Public School (ARPS) in an impartial manner in your esteemed daily on March 14 & 19, 2016. The mental agony, exploitation and harassment caused to the teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and innocent students are nothing but the pride of the school management and Assam Rifles officer connected to this episode. They have never learnt in their life to submit to the truth. Truth is always truth, no matter how big, tall, rich, poor you may be. What more you want to proof? It is an open secret that ARPS has been exploiting the teaching & non-teaching staff who deserve more than the meagre amount you have been paying? What do they want to prove? Are they trying to repeat the Tehelka episode of corruption on October 11, 2014 again? The Meghalaya High Court has rejected their plea but they have appealed to the Supreme Court which was also rejected.

The ARPS authorities have every reason to be ashamed of the exploitation, harassment of the staff etc. being exposed to public. Their ego is not more important than the future of so many students who are there in the school. My humble request is – please get rid of your pride and accept the truth and learn how to honour the Supreme Court’s verdict. Why are the ARPS authorities threatening the staff, students and parents that they will close down the school? When the media contacted them they say they are yet to decide but on the other hand they have called the parents and asked them to take transfer certificates. Why this double standard?

If the School management has genuine financial problems that affect the running of the school then this can be settled through reasonable fee hike and help from various state or central government or different organisations under it. Instead the management of ARPS are acting in a vengeful manner and are about to spoil the lives of so many hundreds of students and the future of the teaching and non-teaching staff as well. Don’t forget your slogan – “Friends of the hills people.” Is this how friendship is demonstrated?

Does the ARPS management have any idea how much mental agony and harassment they have caused to teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and innocent students? Yours etc.,
John Vashum,
Shillong – 3

Why don’t they put themselves in this same situation? What would be their reaction? Are we even sure that the main reason behind closing down of the school is due to finance? Will they not reopen the school in the near future after kicking out existing staffs? It is an open secret that the main reason behind this episode is because they cannot accept that they have lost the case in the court of law. Run in typical military style the ARPS management headed by an army officer cannot comprehend what it is to be a civilian. But they have to remember that all are guided by the same Indian Constitution.

If the ARPS management refuses to retract its decision and continues with this drama, I draw the attention of the concerned authorities to institute a CBI inquiry into the matter. Let CBI find out the truth whether the continuation of the school is financially viable or not. If not viable, who are the right authorities to bail the ARPS out from this scenario (so many means are at hand)? ARPS management themselves cannot decide this matter unilaterally because this episode is going to hamper the life of many innocent student and staff who are studying and working there.

because he along with 7 others had resigned from the office of the MDC. So why this special treatment towards a fellow Congressman? Will P N Syiem refund the benefits that he had withdrawn when he continued to hold two posts even after the Act was passed in the Assembly? Syiem himself is in a catch 22 because if he resigns his Membership in the District Council, he will be branded as somebody who is just taking the people for a ride and all his efforts to show that he is serious in protecting the tradition will go in vain and he will no longer be treated as the Hero of the Jaitbryniew. If he retains his membership in the State Legislative Assembly he knows that he will have to eat a humble pie because Dr Sangma will still rule the roost at least till the 2018 election.

Again if Syiem retains the membership in the DC, he knows that there are already plenty of takers for the LA seat waiting for him to resign and Dr Sangma already has somebody close by in the form of a senior bureaucrat in the government who is waiting for the opportunity to contest from this constituency.

Another important subject that has not been debated in the house yet is the unemployment problem in the state. If the economy of the state is to grow, the government should create employment avenues for the youth in the state particularly the educated section of the society. But sadly, the house did not find time to debate about this very important topic which can one day lead the state to chaos.

Meghalaya was created as an autonomous state in April 2, of 1970 and as a full-fledged state on January 21, 1972, which means the legislators we will help electing in 2018 will be responsible for the state’s golden jubilee celebration and that will also usher the next half century journey of the state. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, whether we are happy with the last forty years of our statehood and whether we have any plans for the next fifty years of Meghalaya? The answer must be blowing in the strong gusts of the March winds!

Much ado about patriotism

Editor,

This refers to your thought-provoking article ‘Maharashtra butts for Bharat’ (ST March 19). The decision of the Maharashtra Assembly to suspend an MLA for refusing to shout Bharat Mata ki Jai is not fair. There is no law required to respect our Holy mother Nation. Owaisi was perhaps ill-advised to make the statement that he won’t chant the slogan even if a knife is put to his throat. Mr Oswaisi enjoys freedom of speech and wants to politicise the issue. ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ eschews conventional, singular ideas of patriotism, satirically disdaining our unshakeable dogmatism, providing a fresh perspective on patriotism. The Assembly is bound to work within the ambit of the Constitution. The Central government must put an end to such controversies.

Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad- 15

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

Progressive Thinking

By Michael Makri

I am sure that even before you could complete reading this article many conclusions might have already surrounded your mind. That is fine! That’s obvious, because any one who reads, should and must also reflect, act and draw conclusions for further action. This is what I call a ‘revolution’ (not in a strict sense of the term as we understand in history). This is a ‘revolution’ or a ‘turn around’ for fundamental change at personal levels and its effects for societal change. But for this personal revolution to happen, each one must develop progressive thinking. So what is this progressive thinking that I am talking about? Let me state my point for the benefit of those who are reading this short article.

No doubt there are myriad problems in our state, in the country and in the whole world at large. Problems with political parties, problems with educational institutions, problems with corruption, problems with non-tribal (as far as it concerns with Meghalaya), problems with NGT, problems with roads and communications, problems with safe and drinking water, problems with civic sense of citizens, problems with ethnic clash, problems with safety of women and children, problems with morality, problems with relationship and the list is long. Can any of us solve these problems? Yes we can and personally I believe all these problems are man-made and so there are solutions to them. All we need to do is to develop a ‘progressive thinking’.

My problem with what is happening in our society is not about Congress and UDP or HSPDP or NPP. If we read the different parties’ vision and mission statement, all of them state that they are ‘totally committed to solve and to ease the problems of our society’. In my search for the most credible party of all the political parties in Meghalaya, I could not pinpoint a single one. The reason is obvious! You find it right there – ‘We are committed for change and development’ is inevitably their resolution. Hence, I feel confident that all the political parties are THE BEST party.

The problem is again not with HNLC or GNLA or KSU or GSU or NEHUSU. All organizations and unions want the best for their society; liberation, freedom, peace, prosperity, harmony, progress, development etc., And who on earth would not want these? But do they have a road map for changing society or themselves and their behaviors?

My problem is also not with Tribals or Non-tribals or Khasis or Dkhars or Hynniewtrep or Hynniewskum. As far as my conscience goes they are all human beings created and crafted after God’s own image. All of them are decked in splendid beauty for the glory of our Creator. With exception to none – all are given so much gifts and talents though some ten others six and few may be one or two. The myriads of them that make a rainbow remind all of us that the world is not coming to an end so soon. But each of them manifests the many generations to come.

My problem IS therefore, our MIND SPACE! As I see it, OUR MIND is occupied with too many futile, useless, fruitless, negative and regressive thinking for so long. This is THE problem we need to collaboratively solve. We are in an age when we should be thinking and discussing about inventions and ideas instead of agonizing over meaningless issues. Hence arrogant words coupled with animal behavior emerge from the mouths of one politician against another, from one party against another and vice versa. For sure one organization will point dirty fingers at another and vice versa. In fact, this fight against tribal or non-tribal will always be an issue. Are we blind to see what is taking place in our society? We don’t need to shamelessly write them with facts and figures here.

Why can’t we have a progressive thinking instead? Why can’t our MIND SPACE be open to progress? Why can’t we discuss development and achievements in science, sports, education, health, industry, and infrastructures? Why not politicians and leaders have progressive thinking for the benefit of the society as it is written in the mission and vision statement of their political parties and not work for their personal gain? I can visualize the state of Meghalaya with only one political party discharging its role like the ‘Soti Juk’ of the golden days. Why not the different organizations and unions put to practice what is laid down in their rule of book? For whom are they fighting? Is it for their society or for other vested interests? I can assure you – millions will be following these organizations or unions in their fight for progress, development, peace, prosperity, etc... Why? Probably these questions might pertain only to people like me. So what change will it effect?

That is why the media is not talking about it. That is why the subject of debate and discussions on development are not seen in our media. That is why the Congress or HSPDP or UDP or HNLC or GNLA or KSU or GSU or Tribal or Non-tribal or the sorts are not talking about it. We are busy narrowing down our mind space curtailing our own freedom to progressive thinking on larger issues. We are caught up with the ‘NOUN’ and we fail to learn the ‘PARTS OF SPEECH’ needed for the construction of a SENTENCE. How far can we go then? ‘Until all the coal in the mines are transported; until all the trees are cut, the forests destroyed and until the central government stopped sending generous fund for us” said my friend from Jowai. With out a second thought I added, ‘this is too soon’ and in fact our forests are gone, our coal mines are gone.

So, can we have a progressive thinking? Can our mind space be opened? Can we Meghalayans talk about it on our Facebook? Can we share about it on our twitter? Or Instagram? Discuss about it in editorial or columns of our newspapers? Debate about it in our TV channels? In the end the Congress or the BJP, the HSPDP or the UDP, the KSU or GSU, aren’t they tools for progress and development? The subjects of conversations pointed above are anti-development, and anything anti-development is anti-society at least for me. And hence we should shun them NOW.

I would like to see the Scotland of the East look better than the Scotland of the West. I want my Meghalaya to do better than Kerala in the next national games. I want Meghalaya to produce better scientists than APJ Kalam, since it is in this state that he breathed his last. I want to see Meghalaya more civilized than the most civilized country in the world. I want Meghalaya to be more innovative than Japan or China. I want Meghalaya be safer for women and children than Copenhagen or Denmark. I want Meghalaya be more opened minded than Canada. I want Meghalaya to be better than what it is today. And not worse - for god’s sake. And these can happen when we start Thinking Progressively. Else, we will all be wasting time doing something that is useless, futile, and negative. Think! Is anti-development what our future generations deserve? It is time we think progressively!

“The decisions of the courts on economic and social questions depend on their economic and social philosophy.”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times
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Interest rates cut
THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to cut interest rates by a minimum of 50 basis points in its monetary policy review on April 5. Consumer price inflation was 5.18% year-on-year basis in February and was low although the country went through two consecutive spells of drought. Industrial production growth for a third straight month, January, called for a policy rate cut higher than 25 basis points. Such policies could only spur artificial growth. The US Federal Reserve has not any intention of hiking interest rates and so the lowering of rates in India will not lead to global outflow going up. The finance ministry has dropped a bombshell proposing to bring down interest rates on small savings schemes. There would be a 60 basis points cut on the public provident fund and 130 basis points on one-year time deposits. Since January 2015, the RBI has lowered its benchmark repo lending rate by 125 basis points. The cut has not benefited borrowers at all. Banks contend that lending rates cannot be reduced without cutting deposit rates. That is not advisable since post office schemes yield higher returns. But now the RBI cannot say that cutting repo rates is pointless.

The lowering of interest rates on small savings will draw flak from the opposition. It will no doubt hit middle class low income groups. Positive interest rates are conducive to the interest of these savers. One has to reckon with the fact that the CPI inflation has gone down to 5-5%. The poor and middle class may in the event benefit from stimulated economic activity as a result of lower interest rates. But from the common man's angle, that is only a long term view.

LOOKING BACK
Feb 3, 1989

Congress victory in N.E. Hills

The Congress(I) has put to rout both the Mizo National Front and the People's Conference in the Assembly election just over in Mizoram. Their leader, Mr Laldenga and Brig Sailo have lost, the former in one of the two constituencies fought, and the other in both of his constituencies. The Congress(I) victory has been total in all other respects too and there can be no mincing matters over this outstanding fact. The same thing may not however, be said about the Naga People's Council which although defeated did not yield to the same Congress (I) victory in the Nagaland election without a straight and close fight significant of its vigour and a fairly extensive area of its popularity. Not only its prominent leaders could hold their own against stiff opposition but some of its opposition stalwarts were convincingly floored. Much of the credit for the Congress success in Mizoram is being attributed to the Union Minister of Home Mr Dev, who was in overall charge of the Congress(I) election campaign and strategy. No less probably is due to the quiet work done by the Governor Mr Hiteswar Saikia who, apart from being himself a seasoned and trusted Congress campaigner in his home state, did yeoman service in streamlining the administration during the very brief period of Governor's rule given to his charge. His performance was apparently acknowledged widely against the relatively poor performance of the outgoing Chief Minister Laldenga as an administrator. Mr Rajiv Gandhi's refrain in all his election speeches was highlighting this fact of inefficiency on the part of an otherwise successful popular leader. This seems to have worked well as the election results convincingly bears out.

The greatest beneficiary

in this outstanding Congress(I) success, of course, would be Mr Lalthanhawla who gets back his Chief Ministership from which he was dislodged as the direct offshoot of the Mizo Accord. The injustice of this arbitrariness he nurtured all the post-accord period was only partially rectified when Laldenga was brought down by the President's Rule. The election verdict now fully restores his ego and position, driving his eminent rival to the role of the Opposition leader, but with a following not impressive enough for a serious challenge to the assuredly stable Congress rule for the full term of the new Assembly. The same assurance is not following from the Nagaland verdict which also, however, has restored to Mr S C Jamir the Chief Ministership from which he was dislodged earlier by his own party High Command. The Mizo verdict holds no prospect altogether for Brig Sailo. The Zoro unification which he held out to the electorate did not cut ice and could not for the sheer absurdity of casting an eye on areas belonging to sovereign States of Burma and Bangladesh. Both the MNF and the Congress(I) were more modest on the them but the latter's promise obviously gained more acceptability because of its competence to deliver the goods as the ruling party at the Centre and in the neighbouring N.E. states from which Mizo areas in question are to be reclaimed. At the political level, this issue is bound to loom large during the new term of Congress rule, but the more compelling obligation for it would be to redeem most if not all the assurance given to the electorate by the principal poll campaigner, Mr Rajiv Gandhi for an all-out accelerated development of this State. The same holds good in the case of the new government at Kohima.

The Violence that Be

By Gertrude Lamare

It is no secret that violence against women, sexual or otherwise, in the state of Meghalaya is alarmingly rampant. Most of us remember this fact only when we see newspaper reports of rape and murder cases and then we go back to sipping our comforting cups of tea in our homes and work spaces. We simply rationalize our understanding of the phenomenon seeing it as a symptom of the "bad and sinful" present as opposed to the "pure and peaceful" past. It is really this warped idea that the past is representative of a more just society (in terms of gender, class, etc) that numbs us from imagining, demanding and working towards a better reality for everyone. We need to accept that our respective communities in Meghalaya have always had undemocratic and oppressive elements in structures of the public and the private; that some sections of society were always victimized by the others who were in more powerful positions. Of course we take pride in the Khasi and Garo matrilineal system but this does not and never has ensured complete equality and freedom for women. Entitlements and privileges are all well and good but how could we conceptualize gender justice in this context when women do not have political power (exclusion from Dorbars) and when men and women are still expected to abide by various gender roles? But let me not digress, let me get back to what I had the intention of writing.

I want to talk about the recent incident of rape and murder of a nineteen year old girl from Upper Shillong. It is great that many have condemned it, including the current Chairperson of the Meghalaya State Women's Commission. It is amazing that a mother of one of the accused has turned him in to the police. However, I

cannot help but worry that this case like many others, would just slip away deep into our collective memory and be forgotten; that we, as a society would look at this matter as something to be resolved only by the courts, when the accused are finally given the hand of justice and put into jail after a fair trial. That would be a cathartic moment for all of us, won't it? But is it enough? The issue is actually not about this crime in isolation but about how a crime of this sort has emerged in our context.

I don't want to be didactic and prescribe concrete reasons but I do want to urge you to think- think about how women, girls, c r o s s - d r e s s e r s , transgenders and homosexuals are understood and looked at in our society; think about why people who in their own ways reject rigid gender norms (in terms of behaviour, appearance and action) trigger annoyance, anger, and disgust in many; think about why there is a huge percentage of domestic violence in a matrilineal society and one which the literacy and employment rate between men and women is almost at par; think about why for many people who are reading this, their mothers labour at home and the workplace. Do we really understand as a society that patriarchy is very central to the structure of our ways of thinking and being? Gender oppression and discrimination is part of our everyday lives when we expect our sisters to serve us food, when we think that it is our girlfriends and wives' duty to have sex with us whenever we want to, when we tell our sons to not do "womanly things", when we expect sexual favours from women at work and when we tell our daughters to achieve everything in the world, keeping in mind that they should marry whether

or not they want to.

Rape and let alone murder of the kind I mentioned are extreme expressions of all of these things. They are reflections of our ordinary ideas that women who speak are "oversmart", women who dress the way they want to are inviting trouble, men who do not exert power and show affection are weak, boys who like doing housework are exploited etc. Let me break it down for you: Rape is an act of violence fuelled by a situation of power where the rapist at that moment monopolizes on power while the victim is denied it completely, where the rapist does not care about the consent of the person involved. In most cases, where men are the rapists, this potential for violence is one legitimized by the way we conceive manhood, which drives us to expect out of men a display of strength, to the point of violence at times and our assumption and acceptance that men are animals whose sole interest is sex. Rape does not exist in a vacuum. It is a manifestation of our biased thoughts about and provisions for men and women, which ultimately translates into action. And need I remind you that we live in a country where rape means a different thing in the bedrooms of husbands and wives, where sexual violence there, cannot be identified as crime? Do we dare ask married women whether all the sex that they have has been consensual or forced? Rape is thus an extension of society' willingness to see women as voiceless and submissive and men as symbolic of command and strength.

I was particularly uncomfortable to see that apart from condemning the rape and murder of the victim in the case mentioned before, the Chairperson of the Meghalaya State Women's Commission "advised" parents and guardians to be

more vigilant of their daughters' movements and activities. What does this imply? This kind of advice only further perpetuates the idea that women are fit to be locked up and monitored. Instead of tackling the issue at the core, which is the patriarchal logic that governs our institutions, families and even churches, the Chairperson's idea of removing gender violence is by limiting women's freedom and independence.

At this juncture, we as a society should dare to think beyond incidents and be conscious of the fact that violence and discrimination are part and parcel of the flesh of our society; they exist because society allows them to, because women are at the end of the day are understood as objects of sex and reproduction, because men, even in a matrilineal community, are accepted as the custodians of power in politics, homes and churches. Gender sensitization (of the feminist kind) should be launched at the local level, in families and educational institutions and this should be an important concern of the State Women's Commission, not the increase of surveillance on women and girls. The legal instrument that the Commission provides is crucial but this is not about a particular case; it is about the larger structural discrepancies that despite the small difference in the male-female ratio in Meghalaya, women are still peripheralized and undermined in both public and private domains. Treat the problem where it originates and sexual violence does stem from a patriarchal mindset existing in both men and women. The discourse of rape and violence should be glanced through our own context which legitimises the hierarchy between men and women and other sexual minorities.

(The author is Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

TO THE EDITOR

Ghastly crime needs early conviction

Editor,
Apropos the news report, "Mother hands over accused son to police" (ST March 20, 2016), while commending the noble act of the mother in handing over her accused son to the police after he confessed to committing a heinous crime against a 19 year old girl who has just completed her High School Leaving Certificate Examination, I sincerely hope that the police, whose lapses in such probes are now part of folklore, get their act together and ensure that the victim gets speedy justice. If the police could show their competence when the Chief Minister's car scraped a taxi from behind nearby the crime scene, there is no reason why they cannot punish the guilty after building up an air tight case. We all want justice for the victim of brutal rape and murder. Procedural lapses should not be reason for denial and/or delaying justice. This incident is a dark spot in the culture of Shillong, and also on the Khasi society at large. While the mother of the accused has acted in good conscience by bringing her son, the accused to the law enforcement agencies, she also quoted her son as saying that there were three others wearing masks at the jungle close to the house of the victim and they had asked the accused to strangle her. This reminds us of the Delhi Nirbhaya case over which the whole nation erupted in anger. This Shillong brave-heart was also raped and murdered. Will this city be outraged?

Many political parties and civil society groups have condemned the gruesome crime and are asking for compensation to the

victim's family along with additional expenses for the funeral conducted for her as per the Meghalaya Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014. But the larger question of justice is critical here. Just a few days ago we observed the International Women's Day and expressed solidarity with the cause of women. Prime Minister, Modi has been constantly speaking on Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao. Women, in Meghalaya are often the sole bread winners in their homes. Such criminal acts must therefore receive speedy justice. The law enforcement agencies should conduct their investigation with complete professionalism and present their charge sheet at the earliest. It is unfortunate that in Meghalaya many cases of crimes against women and children are pending in the courts of law or the District Council Courts.

Yours etc.,
Ivy Warjri
Shillong 14

Uncouth policewoman

Editor,
On March 14 last at around 2 pm after picking up my grandson from St. Edmund's School, I went to hand over my daughter's mobile phone at her office in Laitumkhrah as she had left it at home. No sooner had I handed over the phone to her when she received a call. The caller was a woman with a stern and authoritarian voice. She woman asked my daughter if her name was so and so and if she had a car with a particular number plate. My daughter answered in the affirmative. Then in an intimidating and threatening voice, the person at the other end of the line, without identifying herself of the purpose of the phone call simply said, "Come and

bring your car immediately.' She did not say where and for what reason. My daughter and I were in a fix but she told the caller that she was in the office and that she had not brought the car with her on that particular day.

A few minutes later another call came from the same person telling my daughter to hurriedly come and bring the car documents with her. The caller had still not identified herself and we had no idea where we were being summoned. At this point I thought of reporting the matter to the Sadar Police Station but within a span of 5 minutes or so the third call came asking my daughter to come in the evening along with the car related papers. On asking where we were to come, she said, "To the Police Station." On further asking which police station, the reply came "Rynjah P.S."

This is not just a harassment of the general public but totally unprofessional handling of the situation. Is this the kind of training that policemen/women are given on how to engage with the public? This policewoman caused panic and nervousness and for no good reason. Its almost like treating people like criminals before even ascertaining if they had committed a crime. Such police personnel are a shame to the police force. As it turned out, we later learnt that somebody has set fire to a motor cycle in Rynjah and someone reported to the police that my daughter's vehicle was in the vicinity. By the way we stay in Upper Shillong and my daughter was nowhere near that place where the fire incident happened. And when we appeared at the Rynjah Police Station out of courtesy the lady police personnel was not even present.

All policemen/women are expected to be humane, sensitive, responsive and courteous, not brusque and overbearing. More so a woman police dealing with another

woman. My daughter's car is a self driven car and till date there is no adverse remark against her driving or her vehicle. In this incident it was a case of mistaken identity things so even if questioning was necessary it should have been sorted out in a cordial manner.

Based on the above facts, the concerned police personnel should apologise for her brusque, senseless and irresponsible act.

Yours etc.,
Kosini Hynniewta
Shillong -5

Dr S P Bhattacharyya: A tribute

Editor,
Shillong has lost a renowned surgeon of yesteryears, Dr. Shiva Prasad Bhattacharyya March 15, 2016. I knew Dr. Bhattacharyya right from my student days as a close friend of his youngest brother Dr. Shankar Prasad Bhattacharyya, Ex-Principal, GC College, Silchar. Dr. Shiva Prasad Bhattacharyya passed MBBS his from Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh in 1955. As a brilliant medical student, he was selected for undergoing the specialised course in surgery, FRCS in UK but he opted to take up a job because of his family responsibilities since he as the eldest son of his parents. He joined medical service under the Government of Assam as the Assistant Surgeon in Civil Hospital, Guwahati. After about a year, he was transferred to Shillong Civil Hospital. Since then, he served the people of Shillong as a renowned surgeon with utmost sincerity and devotion to the profession. During those days, people of Shillong used to get their best medical treatment from Roberts Hospital and Civil Hospital. As a young sur-

A Young India

By Ananya S Guha

And now, the focus is on Allahabad University, an University of historical and pristine significance, an University which had in it's portals the likes of Firaq Gorakhpuri the lyricist and his brother. An University also, which once upon a time contributed a substantial number of IAS officers to the country, some of them known for their brilliant and distinguished academic records. But does this really make much difference at a time when the past and its historical implications are being cleverly obliterated and even sullied? An intelligent and perceptive reading of historical imperatives of a country or its institutions is burnt at the stake, like a Joan-of-Arc, and is considered to be gruesome heresy.

What is happening in Allahabad University is not only another case in point of suppression of democracy and Fundamental Rights but also an infringement of women's equality to participate in all democratic processes, and a crass attitudinal stand point which relegates them to the backwaters of subservience - to men. The very fact that the President of the Student's Union out voted her male counterpart and, that he is in the forefront of making false allegations against her and her admission, supported by some rabid authorities is an example of vicious male tyranny. It is convention that any position of candidature reserved for Scheduled Caste or Tribes, falling vacant can, at the discretion of the authorities be replaced by General Candidates. The University in which I work also follows such guidelines.

What is astonishing however is why the bogey of the reserved vacancy was raised, much after her admission was confirmed? Is it because that holding the President's position, and that too becoming the first woman to do so in the country is something that her detractors simply could not take or accept? This is a rhetorical question and, in this context rhetoric implies seeking justice and freedom. The subsequent harassment to her is unprecedented in the precincts of an University of democracy and hallowed past.

This is not only a shameless and egregious violation of democratic norms, but is also an ominous sign of how hooliganism and shameless muscle power can grip all democratic and secular institutions, where knowledge is sought but not sold like, as in a raucous market place.

Historical travesty is now a singular dominance in the shaping and re-shaping of this great country. It's historical antecedents and denudation of it, is now taking the shape of a large myth, urged by fantasy and falsification of views. It is also a direct threat and challenge to the Constitution of a country which sought to seek social empowerment in terms of religion, caste and gender. In this case of Allahabad University there is blatant and incongruous subversion, not only of gender equality but a direct, unabashed attack on a woman's right to pursue the frontiers of learning, a murderous assault on learning; atavistic in intent. Moreover the constant bludgeoning of the woman, by way of harassment, threats and false charges, belie all democratic claims of a nation - state which always trumps the 'academic excellence' card, reservation for women, educating the girl child platitudes.

We are now on a myth -

geon of Civil Hospital, he gradually earned great reputation not only in Shillong but also in the entire North East India because of his exceptional expertise in surgery. He occupied various responsible positions in medical departments of Assam and later Meghalaya. He retired as Director of Health Service (DHS) of the Government of Meghalaya in 1993.

After his retirement, Dr Bhattacharyya started practising in his private chamber in Laban. He used to treat many poor patients free of cost and also gave free medicines to needy patients. As

making, larger than life destiny. How, historical forces will dispel this, is a question time will answer to record in the annals of History. This fanatical urge towards obliterating it is something which we will not only pay for dearly, but also something which the intelligent and the sensitive will resist stolidly. And I am not only talking of activists, writers and thinkers who have been raising their voices amidst the rubble, but I am also thinking of a young India: clear, visionary and articulate - the India which our politico - statisticians harp on and bandy as the future of a Nation, at the drop of a hat. I am going on to history of institutions. Well known educational institutions have a rich legacy, an aura which cannot be dispelled, a past which shapes the present. True, people may believe, that some are today simply a shade of the past, that the old 'culture' has gone or is no more like what it is before, but reputations always live, because a seat of learning acquires such reputation because of it's teachers and students, who establish the institution's credentials. Similarly teaching learning becomes reciprocal, as in universities like JNU, Delhi University etc. But an University such as Allahabad also has a solid past to fall back upon, but incidents such as this bemirches reputation not only of individuals as in this case, but tarnishes the credibility of an university or academic institution. The result is conflict, anarchy and strife.

The history of universities of repute, known for great teachers and brilliant students weaves into the history of a country. The three Presidency Universities established by the British later on went on to become the leading universities of the country. Universities such as Allahabad followed in its wake.

History has it's own logic, it shapes it's own course and destiny. Meddling it can lead to a historical backlash, which can only lead to destruction, chaos and anarchy. What is happening in the universities today is simmering discontent, because credentials have not been respected, words of distinguished academics who have made contributions to the though processes of a country have been undermined, and now in Allahabad University a woman study leader has been harassed for she dare speak the truth and do what others could not- challenging authoritarian rule. When a University system becomes partisan in whatever matter - appointments, political interference from outside, favouring one group of students and pitting them against other groups, then an university deviates from academic norms and takes the form of a political body, similarly ousting or transferring teachers because they uphold a cause, as what happened recently in Indian Institution Of Mass Communication New Delhi. Partisanship in educational institutions is the worst that can happen, because free-thinking is ruthlessly suppressed. All this happens because Vice Chancellors and others want to curry favour with a political regime. This rot had undoubtedly set in Indian Universities for a long time, but now it is almost anarchic.

a soft spoken, kind hearted and efficient doctor he will always be remembered by the people of the region.

He is survived by his wife Dr. Gouri Bhattacharyya, a retired college teacher; daughter, Dr Indrani Bhattacharyya of Woodland hospital, son Saibal Prasad Bhattacharyya, an engineer; brothers, sisters, daughter-in-law, grand son and a host of relatives & admirers.

May God give eternal peace to the noble soul.

Yours etc.,
Dr. Sudip De
NEHU, Shillong -22

“Our lives improve only when we take chances - and the first and most difficult risk we can take is to be honest with ourselves.”
—Walter Anderson

The Shillong Times

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Can a militant outfit offer peace?

OPPOSITION MLA Jemino Mawthoh brought a call attention motion on the floor of the Assembly during the on-going session. He referred to the news items in the media, "GNLA offers peace talks- Do not miss the bus this time." It is absurd that without careful reflection and introspection the NGOs and church leaders of Garo Hills are pushing the Government to grab the peace offer. In the first place, can a terrorist organization put a gun on our heads and also talk peace? The question that needs to be raised is - why this sudden benevolence from Sohan D Shira and his armed gang? Is it because things have become too hot now that the pressure is on and police have gained ground? These NGOs and church leaders should understand how the mind of a terrorist works. This is simply a ploy for buying time and reinforcements. Sohan Shira had done it once before!

The Chief Minister has stated upfront that the internal security apparatus of the State is fully geared up to deal with terrorist elements. Also the Union Home Ministry has taken a conscious decision not to entertain proposals for peace talks as they have become a rigmarole where terror mongers are given venture capital. It is a known fact that Sohan D Shira has amassed substantial wealth through extortion, kidnappings and killings of innocent citizens and is now ready to invest in over-ground business. Should peace in Garo Hills now come at the pleasure of Sohan D Shira and his band of criminals?

The NGOs and church leaders should instead call on the Government to strengthen the internal security apparatus to take on the GNLA in order to bring lasting peace to Garo Hills. The present government has been pursuing a clear development agenda in the Garo Hills in spite of threats, intimidation, kidnapping and extortions by GNLA and other criminal gangs operating in that region. The completion of NH 44 from Shillong-Nongstoin-Williamnagar-Baljek road is a classic example of development despite the presence of armed gangs in Garo Hills. Many more developmental projects are taking roots in the interior areas of Garo Hills. The State Police are doing their best to bring the GNLA and other criminal gangs to book despite resource crunch, manpower shortage and lukewarm help from the NGOs and church leaders. The Union Home Minister has also echoed the approach adopted by the State Government which is that only when these criminal gangs volitionally give up arms and shun violence then it is logical for the Government to facilitate their integration into the mainstream.

In a democracy we expect unequivocal political consensus while fighting terrorism and in dealing with armed gangs. There cannot be political one-upmanship when it comes to militancy. While there can be political differences between the Government and Opposition on a host of other issues but when it comes to tackling terror all political parties should speak in one united voice. This will be a definite sign of the maturing of democracy in Meghalaya.

LOOKING BACK

January 1, 1989

Shillong Greets New Year

Shillong greeted the year 1989 with mid-night prayers, chiming of church bells, bursting of crackers, hootings of cars and exchange of greetings. Private parties, illumination, colourful decorations were the other familiar characteristics of the New Year eve celebration in the town. However, there was some disappointment for those who are used to celebrating the occasion in hotels and restaurants, since the towns only three star hotel

Pinewood Ashok did not have any programme this time. January 1 normally is day for picnics and outdoors revelry. However it s being a Sunday most of the Christians are likely restrains themselves from venturing out. Most Christians this reported talked to said that they would go for community picnics and family picnics on the following day. The non-Christians, however, are expected to celebrate the day as usual.

Religions still play a vital role in all social systems of the world even today in the twenty first century. Hence, a discussion on religion is ever relevant for understanding social movements and social problems. I had written with good intention according to my own knowledge and belief some articles about religion in general and Khasi religion in particular. Hence, I neither need to apologise for having written them, nor resort to apologetics to defend the views they expressed. But I have the pleasure to add a few more words to enliven a good discussion.

An article in a newspaper is meant for general reading, and not intended as an academic treatise and also very rarely used as academic referencing material. Moreover, it is not a legal document embodied with the force of law. So, there is nothing to be apprehended that an article in the news paper could ever have the authority to undermine the right of the followers of any religion to practise their faith with dignity. When the apostles were persecuted for preaching about the risen Christ, Gamaliel, a Pharisee and respectable teacher of the law said, "I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fall. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourself fighting against God (Acts, 5: 35-39). No amount of persecution, discrimination, or criticism can put an end to any religious faith if it is relevant to the social and spiritual needs of the people of any community.

Likewise, if what is written in my articles is false, then all the academic criticism given to it is a waste of time. But, if what had been written is the truth, then no amount of academic analysis and criticism would make it false. It would be unfortunate if the ideas of Khasi thought expressed in my articles are contrary to the ideas that someone had expressed or taught in some University. But at the same time, there is no rationale for someone to expect me to write within the confines of someone's thought or the scope of someone's academic profession.

There is something

By Fabian Lyngdoh

mysterious about religion, and scientific methodology is not sufficient to explain the great mystery of human life in the entire system of things, unless we presume that religion, though wearing a spiritual and eternal garment, is only a social institution, the purpose of which is only to serve the society. The concept of spiritual wellbeing does not only mean emotional and sentimental wellbeing as generally understood in worldly parlance. The seeker of spiritual truth ascends and synthesizes the varieties of nature into absolute unity through spiritual realization, and sees reality as one. The scientist, on the other hand, descends and analyses nature to the basic particles and waves to see and understand it in its infinite varieties. Empirical experience suggests that both views are true from different perspectives. Religion has always been experienced and practiced by human beings in its social and spiritual aspects.

Scholarly interest concerns mostly with the social aspect of religion. Emile Durkheim viewed religion as a social fact and analysed the social factors responsible for the growth and development of religion, as well as its influence. According to him, the idea of society is the soul of religion, and that, religion has no other basis except the society. Defining religion in terms of its social functions, he said that it is a unified system of beliefs and rituals with reference to sacred things which bind people together into one single moral community. Durkheim opined that the collective power assumed the form of supernatural or divine power and it became the symbol of God, and there is nothing in divinity more than society transfigured and conceived symbolically. It was the collective actions that form what is sacred and what is profane, and God is nothing but the controlling power of the tribe or the clan.

The practitioners of religions, on the other hand, generally understand it as a phenomenon fundamentally concerned with the spiritual order. According to the Vedantists, the true

self is different from the body and different from the mind. Instead of seeing God, we see this universe as many names and forms which we believe to be real. In a state of transcendental consciousness or perfect divine union which the Hindus call 'samadhi', the illumined soul has no more ego as his ego has merged with the God-head, and realized his oneness with God and with all beings. When he returns to a lower plane of consciousness he is again aware of his individuality. Religion, therefore, is primarily a matter of direct spiritual experience. We are tied by the fetters of ignorance and live under the spell of 'maya' or the veiling power of Brahman, which makes the absolute appear as the universe of many names and forms. It is the worship of God, the impersonal-personal 'Existence' in and through the incarnation that can release human beings from the spell of 'maya'.

Hence, from the spiritual aspect, social function is not the fundamental purpose of religion but is only its corollary. Jesus said to his disciples, "As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (John, 15: 19). He also said that his kingdom (religion) is not of this world (John, 18: 36). Jesus taught his disciples not to store up for themselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break and steal, but to store up their treasures in heaven (Matthew, 6: 19-20). He rebuked Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God (spiritual wellbeing), but the things of men (social utility)." He then said that whoever wants to be his disciple, must shun vain pursuit of material achievements and social honour and take up his cross of sufferings and social condemnation and follow him; for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for the spiritual kingdom will find it. It would be futile if man gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul (Matthew, 16: 23-250). Jesus also said that if the hands or the feet cause a man to sin, he should cut them off; and if an eye causes him to sin, he should pluck it out. It is better for him to enter life

maimed and crippled or one-eyed than whole and be thrown into hell (Mark, 9: 43-47).

In relation with society, Jesus said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house - In the same way let your light shine before men (Matthew, 5: 14-16). Jesus did not intend that the values and norms of the society should guide his church, but rather it is the ideals and values of the spiritual kingdom that should shape the society through the agency of his disciples. It is not the church that should make itself relevant to the society, but rather it is the mission of the church to make the society relevant to the ideals and values of the spiritual kingdom of love and peace. Therefore, the question whether there is a need to re-evaluate Christianity in line with particular social standards, is better left to the judgment of the church leaders; it is not a concern of sociologists or anthropologists.

The social aspect of the Khasi religion concerning with the social order is found in the community religion in the raid or hima, which even included human sacrifices as those practised in Raid lapngar, Raid Thaiang and Raid Bhoilasa. The spiritual aspect is found in the clan religion. But in both cases, the foundation of the clan is indispensable. Without the clans there can be no syiem, daloi, lyngdoh, sohblei, sohsla, no altar, etc., and hence, no religion.

Our views of religion would correspond to the stress we give either to its social aspect, or spiritual aspect. To maintain a worldly kingdom, religion as a social institution commands, "Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears" (Joel, 3: 9-10). But to establish a heavenly kingdom of love and peace, religion as a spiritual institution proclaims, "They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Isaiah, 2: 4).

TO THE EDITOR

Honour killings threaten national unity

Editor, Recently, a Dalit engineering student was hacked to death and his wife met with head injuries in trying to save her husband on a busy Tamil Nadu street because of their inter-caste marriage that stood like a rock for eight months against repeated intimidation and ten lakh bribe offer. It is, highly, unfortunate that the Law Commission's recommendations to make a comprehensive law on honour killings to deliver equal punishment to the killers, plotters and the instigators at kangaroo courts have been shelved for four long years. The proposals also have provisions for protecting threatened couples against false charges. Honour (!) killing is the most savage practice where cannibal parents butcher their own children at the altar of prejudices that prevent us from mingling with our own countrymen. It is the most menacing challenge as it throttles our national unity and integrity. In this context, we need to revisit Tagore's lecture titled, "Nationalism in India," which

was delivered nearly one hundred years ago in 1917. Tagore said, "When our nationalists talk about ideals they forget that the basis of nationalism is wanting. The very people who are upholding these ideals are themselves the most conservative in their social practices.

Nationalists say, for example: look at Switzerland where, in spite of race differences, the people have solidified into a nation. Yet, remember that in Switzerland the races can mingle, they can intermarry, because they are of the same blood. In India there is no common birthright. And when we talk of western nationality we forget that the nations there do not have that physical repulsion, one for the other that we have between different castes. Have we an instance in the whole world where a people who are not allowed to mingle their blood, shed their blood for one another except by coercion or for mercenary purposes? And can we ever hope that these moral barriers against our race amalgamation will not stand in the way of our political unity?

Then again we must give full recognition to this fact that our social restrictions are still tyrannical, so much so as to make men cowards. Inter-marriage which is un-

doubtedly the best means to uphold the flag of national unity, integrity and fraternity and can go a long way in removing the walls of prejudices among Indians is still being brutally prevented in our society. India Human Development Survey (IHDS) figures indicate that while 26.9 per cent of marriages are among inter economic groups, only 6.1 per cent inter-caste and 2.7 per cent inter-religious marriages have taken place in our country in 2001-2005. Even this microscopic figure of Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages invite honour killings. According to statistics from the United Nations, one in five cases of honour killings, internationally every year comes from India. These forces of prejudices and hatred are actually killing the honour of the Indian Republic and prevent Indians from being solidified into a nation.

Thus, India badly needs a comprehensive, stand-alone law on honour killings without further delay to save Sankars and Kausalas in particular and our country in general.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Rejoinder

Editor, Apropos the news item ‘Uncouth Policewoman,’

Cricket with Pakistan is politics after all

By Tushar Charan

There is no dearth of people who would advise us against mixing cricket (sport) with politics, particularly in the context of the traditional India-Pakistan rivalry. The more we hear this homily the more we see the distasteful mixture of the two. This unpalatable truth was again in evidence in Kolkata where the two unfriendly neighbours played a T20 cricket match on March 19.

India won the match and the hyper-nationalists pumped their adrenal by shouting--no doubt about it--all the right slogans, beginning with Bharat Mata ki Jai. The media was lost for words to hail the victory and paint the 'hero' of the Indian win, batsman Virat Kohli, as some kind of a cricketing Superman. The Superman may have been different but haven't we witnessed it so many times before. And still you claim you find it exciting. Of course, poor Kohli would be described as the worst villain the moment he fails in an Indian defeat!

The Kolkata match was originally scheduled to be played in the picturesque town of Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh but the Congress chief minister nixed it to embarrass the ruling party (BJP) which has been speaking in two tongues on cricketing ties with Pakistan.

But it is not only the wild swings of Indian politicians which make cricketing ties with Pakistan such an off putting exercise. The Pakistani narrative on the subject is saturated with jingoism and India-bashing, perhaps not very different from what happens in India. The inevitable self-flagellation that accompanies it does not make it less torturous.

Politics stares out clearly from the negative spin in Pakistan on an encounter with India on the cricket pitch. The purpose is to implant the idea that whenever India defeats Pakistan it is due to some underhand trick in which the 'Indians' (Pakistani code for you know whom) excel. Recall what many Pakistanis, particularly Shahid Afridi, have said about India--before Afridi's recent 'faux pas' in Kolkata when he said that he is loved more in India than his country. So what were the tricks Indians used in Kolkata? The pitch, to begin with. The Eden Gardens pitch was tailored made for the Indian spinners. Now this can be barely denied that pitches are almost always prepared to suit the strength of the home team. Pakistan is no exception to that rule. But then it is expected that the visiting team would be prepared to overcome that 'dis-advantage', if it can be so described. Besides, before the teams descend on the ground to begin their encounter, the rival captains 'read' the pitch carefully and plan their strategy for the game. It cannot be that the Pakistani captain Shahid Afridi did not have a look at the pitch. If he 'erred' in going out with one spinner short it must have been because he had more faith in his pace battery. Not for the first time, this type of 'gamble' failed. Blaming the defeat on the pitch and the shortcomings in the bowling department only hides the basic truth that the winner played better. It is as simple as that.

What hurt the Pakistanis most was that it shattered their own illusion about their 'superiority' over Indians (at the Eden Gardens) and the failure of their carefully crafted strategy of unleashing a war of words and psychological pressure on India. Days before the Pakistani cricket team finally landed in India, the entire Pakistani establishment, including the cricket administrators, was thrashing their Indian coun-

terparts for their failure to 'assure' safety of their cricketers in India. The Pakistan team's departure was held up till the last minute even when Indian officials had repeatedly announced that the Pakistani players will be given full security cover.

Then came another round of Pakistani propaganda warfare in the form of allegations that Indian authorities were not allowing members of the Pakistani High Commission in Delhi to travel with their team to different venues in India. Indeed the Indian government did not agree to give permission to all the members of the Pakistani mission whose names were notified by the mission.

Pakistan should be the last country to make an issue out of it. It places far more and more severe restrictions on the movement of Indian diplomats than does India. Anyhow, India is also well within its rights to reject travel permission to those members of the Pakistani mission in Delhi who are suspected to be ISI operatives. Why should Pakistan demand permission for a posse of its 'diplomats' to travel to different corners of India? Is it because these members of the mission were to take up security tasks because they did not believe that Indians would protect their team? Then again, the question is can a score or more of mission members provide better security than a battalion or more of local security agencies?

Much to their disappointment, the Pakistani cricket 'icon', Imran Khan, whose services were requisitioned to boost the morale of the team and provide useful tips to thrash the 'arch enemy' failed in his mission. It must have been a personal disappointment for the cricketer-turned-politician to see his team lose to India, the country he always saw as the 'enemy' while playing cricket.

Of the various reasons given for their team's loss, perhaps the most bizarre was the allegation that a leading Pakistani singer had faltered while singing his country's national anthem in the company of Amitabh Bachchan, the omnipresent septuagenarian film star, in Kolkata.

Mr. Bachchan may be India's 'biggest superstar' or whatever, but one thing that can be said for sure is that he is no singer of any merit. That he has sung some film songs-off key, mostly--does not make him a singer in the real sense. Unfortunately not having heard or seen his rendition of Jana Mana Gana at the Kolkata stadium one can't vouch for its quality but it might not be irrelevant to add that the Pakistani singer who appeared with him does have a reputation as a competent singer. There cannot be any comparison between the singing qualities of the two. And to attribute a team's defeat to the bad rendition of the 'Qaumi Tarana' (national anthem of Pakistan) is taking things too far.

The Pakistanis did have a consolation-a big one, from their point of view--despite the Kolkata defeat. Their women's team defeated India by a couple of runs under the DL method. In all honesty, this has to be described as a fluke victory. But if one goes by the reaction in Pakistan, it was one of the greatest moments in the history of cricket in Pakistan. How many in India talked about the 'fluke' Pakistani women's victory? (Syndicate Features)

---Syndicate Features

say that being called to the Police station for verification is harassment, is to outrightly reject the enforcement of law and the process of investigation.

Yours etc.,
M.Kharkrang, IPS,
Superintendent of
Police, East Khasi Hills,
Shillong

Editor replies: The point made in the letter is not about being summoned to the police station but about the tone and tenor of the communication. We believe that all law abiding citizens would gladly cooperate with the police in helping to solve crimes but a certain decorum is expected from them.

“To announce that there must be no criticism of the president, right or wrong - is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public.”

--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

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Terror up close

TERRORISM in all its avatars has made the world a less safe place. Terrorists have the advantage of executing sharp, surgical strikes at the most vulnerable spaces, thanks to their ingenuity in mastering complex security systems and being one up on the state forces that try to preempt such strikes. The terror bombings in Brussels the Belgian capital and the heart of the European Union is a crude reminder that eternal vigilance and a sophisticated level of preparedness which involves a convergence of the global security system is perhaps what is required at this juncture.

Islam fundamentalism which has reared its ugly head and manifests itself through acts of horrendous brutality is now a clear and present global threat. The fundamentalists have sent a signal to the world that if one of their operatives is arrested they will kill at random. Hence the arrest of the accused in the Paris bombing incident - Salah Abdesalam - from the terrorist organisation Daesh (Islamic State), in Brussels a few days ago has led to the serial bombings in the Belgian capital. France has taken the Paris bombings of November 2015 as a direct affront on its citizens and wants Abdesalam to be extradited to stand trial in France. This could turn out to be a lengthy process and would further delay the trial. It would be in order therefore for countries to now think of an international court to try cases of terrorism specifically, along the lines of the International Court of Justice at the Hague which tries war criminals. This collaboration is imperative as it would lead to speedy justice and ensure that terrorists do not get away due to lacunae in the legal systems of some countries. For now, Brussels has all but shut down and it is expected that the impact will be felt in all of Europe. Needless to say anti-terror mechanisms would now be put in place which will inconvenience travelers to an extent but prevent is any time better than cure. And the loss of thirty four lives is not trivial for countries that place a premium on human lives.

LOOKING BACK

January 1, 1989

Rumbling in AGP over Karbi Anglong agitation

The Assam Gana Parishad appears to be in a fix as how tackle the political challenge posed by the Karbi Anglong agitation. The AGP Central Executive which met here yesterday listened to the party observers analyzing the causes for the party's debacle in the recent District Council elections in which AGP won only two seats out of the twenty seats it contested.

Sources said Mr Dilip Sonowal, Mr Debeswr Bora, Mr Deepak Kumar Das and the Health Minister Mr Samsing Hanse strongly argued to put an end to the peculiar situation relation between the AGP and the People's Democratic Front (PDF) which continues to be the main force behind the Autonomous State Demand Committee that defeated the AGP sponsored candidates.

Incidentally PDF MLA Mr Holiram Teron, a member of the AGP Legislature Party, is a Minister of State in the AGP Government and according to party observers Mr Teron directly campaigned against the AGP candidates causing embarrassment to them. It was generally agreed that Mr Holiram Teron should not be allowed to utilize any further his ministerial privileges against AGP interests and he should be asked to explain his conduct. But it was again pointed out that on earlier occasion Mr Teron did not reply to the show cause notice by the AGP leadership on the plea that the AGP had no jurisdiction over his organization were only towards the Legislative Party.

Under the circumstances, demand were made to straightway dismiss Mr Holiram Teron from the Council of Ministers. Later, the Central Executive en-

trusted Party General Secretary Mr Bhriгу Kumar Phukan to talk to all concerned people including Mr Teron and sort out the problem. However, this approach could not satisfy Mr Samsiang Hanse. He declared that he would dissolve the United Peoples Convention and directly organize the Asom Gana Parishad from now on. He asked the AGP leadership how they could reconcile with a group having representation in the Ministry who always insisted on not allowing the AGP to enter into the Hill district of Karbi Anglong. Knowledgeable circles believe that the AGP leadership will be compelled to shun off its relationship totally with the PDF.

Follow-up of Sino-Indian Discussion

The Prime Minister of India and China have exchanged letters recently to follow up the bilateral and international issues discussed by them in December last in Beijing.

Disclosing this, an official spokesman said this signified the impetus being given to Sino-Indian relations. He said a series of exchange of visits at various level had been planned in the near future and the exact dates being worked out.

To begin with the Chinese Agriculture Minister will be coming to attend a conference on biotechnology and will stay back for bilateral talks. Thereafter, Steel and Mines Minister Mr M L Fotedar will go to Beijing and a Chinese communists party delegation will visit India. The head of the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Mr Liu Seqing, will also be coming here.

The unfinished love story

By Paramjit Bakshsi

Nongkrem, the Laho, and the Wangala. She wore fine silks and necklaces and earrings of pure gold, without fear of being robbed because she was mostly amongst her kinsmen only. Having heard distasteful stories about the horrible Dk Hars, she kept her distance from them. She too came to believe, as the Persian poet Firdaus felt about Kashmir that, "if there is heaven on earth, it is here. It is here".

Soon she blossomed into a most attractive teenager and like most teenagers felt the need to choose her calling or her love. For a while she felt that she could, with her many charms, do well in tourism. However since she had occasional bouts of epilepsy she was prone to very violent fits of temper and many a tourist came to suffer her ire. She then had to be confined by a curfew which put paid to tourism for many a decade. For a while then she toyed with the idea of organic farming. However being a child of plenty she had no appetite for hard work. She was also loathe to allow any big industry on her land. Because of her attitude and the fact that there were many suitors hovering around her it was inevitable that she would choose love over a career.

Her first love was a person of a very adventurous bent. Unlike other people who had traditional occupations, and were basically farmers, hunters, fishermen or weavers, this one had chosen a career which was relatively new to her tribe. He was a politician. She had heard glowing tales about politicians, and had been told in her childhood that without their help, she might have never been born. She held them in high regard and was perhaps even in awe of them. Her young suitor, though having never shared in the struggle for her birth, nevertheless was part of the same noble profession and who could blame her for falling for his charm. Charming, indeed he was, and like all lovers he promised her the moon (even though all he did later was to make her see stars). He reminded her that his kinsmen had unleashed the magical powers of the Sixth Schedule.

He convinced her that he truly worshipped her, and if she believed him he would make her rich and famous. She believed him completely, was totally bewitched by him and gave up all her rationale and logic and as often happens married him in a solemn ceremony. In due course he showed her, even his power over her uncle, Mr. Central Government, who believed him completely and sent money regularly in her name. Strangely enough though money did come to her account, it also disappeared as magically as it came. She could never use it for anything good, even though her husband talked about having completed many important projects. Indeed with the increasing tribe of her children, she even felt financially constrained, to run the daily affairs of her own household. It was only later that she discovered that her husband had another mistress - a sexy and seductive siren named Personal Wealth. To her went all Megh alaya's monetary dues. Strangely this woman had many lovers, and all of them got along with each other, as if they belonged to an elite club. Initially this upset Megh Alaya very much, and she cried and protested as loudly as possible. Eventually she came to realise that even though her husband's love for her was just pretence, he would never leave her because he drew all his financial powers in her name. Being a much married lady with many children under her care she too could never leave him. Yet she worried how she would support herself and her children.

Meanwhile other prospective lovers still hovered around her because she had not yet lost all her charms. One of them was Mr. Businessman. No one knows whether Businessman was a local or a Dk Har. Perhaps like all businessmen he had no community. The fact is that Mr. Businessman had been sending Megh Alaya attractive trinkets even after her marriage. In a moment of weakness she began a very torrid affair with him. One wonders whether the word "torrid" is the correct one to use here because it was more of a horrid affair. He robbed her blind-cut all her trees on her land, dug

up her coal, ruined her sparkling streams and gave her a pittance in return. For a while she thought of complaining to her husband's friend, Mr Bureaucrat but knowing the words "IAS" affixed to his name she knew that all he would say was "I Am Sorry", about anything and everything.

In time she had many a fling. Mr. Militant loudly proclaimed his love for her, but like others he too made a public show to enrich his personal coffers. So did Mr. NGO, who even went on to ensure that no activity in the state was possible without him. Occasionally her loves had violent repercussions and surgeons from the Indian Physicians Service (IPS) had to be called upon to conduct bloody operations. It will not be unfair to say that her husband knew what was going on but turned a blind eye to everything. Perhaps the only thing he could see was Personal wealth.

I wonder which fool said that the morning shows the day. It certainly isn't the case with Megh Alaya. Today she is in her mid forties and has no illusions about the love anybody has for her. Her income is abysmal, her jewellery of green forests lies denuded, and her body bears the scars of abuse and violence. She runs high temperature, suffers from a lack of vision and does not know what will become of her. She is on life support of funds from the Central government and has no other visible means of sustenance. She suffers all that has befallen her silently. The noises one hears are from people appropriating her voice for personal gain.

Oscar Wilde once wrote, "each man kills the thing he loves,..., some do it with a bitter look, some with a flattering word, the coward does it with a kiss, the brave man with a sword! Some strangle with the hands of Lust, some with the hands of Gold: the kindest use a knife, Some love too little, some too love, some sell, and others buy; some do the deed with many tears, and some without a sigh, for each man kills the thing he loves, ." PS: Megh Alaya, disjoined as she is, is still alive. Will this story have a happy ending? It is up to all of us to decide.

The writer can be contacted at bakhshi03@rediffmail.com

Spare educational institutions please!

Editor,

NEHU, Tura Campus is a campus blessed with rich flora and fauna which comprise of many species inside the compound. All of this is hugely affected when fire broke out in the campus on Thursday evening. The fire was apparently lighted by some unknown miscreants. Such attacks against educational institution deserves condemnation from every corner of the country. It shocks the students who are pursuing higher education in this University campus which is also the only one in Garo Hills

region. I, on behalf of the student community of NEHU, Tura Campus appeal to all the citizens of the region to co-operate to bring positive about development for the campus, not to destroy its scenic beauty in the future.

Yours etc.,
Silning Sangma,
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.

Yours etc.,
Hari Subedi,
Budapest,
Hungary

Rise of religious fundamentalism

By Barnes Mawri

The curse of the third millennium in my opinion is the rise of religious fundamentalism which we are witnessing day after day. Just this week we witnessed the twin blasts which rocked the city of Brussels where about 30 persons were killed and many more injured. This was again the handiwork of ISIS a religious fundamentalist group who are bent on destroying civilization. The recent gruesome murder of the four MC nuns (one of whom was an Indian) and thirteen of their employees in Yemen by the ISIS terrorists has already sent further shock waves across the world. Killing in the name of religion which ISIS is perpetrating has been going on for years now. How many innocent persons are still to be sacrificed at the altar of religious fundamentalism is a question still to be answered. I know that what ISIS is doing is not subscribed to by the moderate Muslims. ISIS presents an extreme leftist religious ideology which de facto is posing a great threat to our civilization itself. In a civilized world of today, where freedom of expression, freedom of belief etc, are upheld with scrupulousity, such religion-based cruelty can never be condoned. Any good hearted Muslim should feel ashamed of such inhuman acts in the name of his/her religion. However, what perplexes me is the fact that till date no Muslim writer

Today with the BJP government at the helm of national affairs, it looks like religious fundamentalism is at its apex. In many BJP ruled states like Gujarat, MP, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra etc, religious freedom is being curtailed and the so called "Ghar wapsi" programme is being enthusiastically implemented. Hindu fundamentalists are taking the law in their hands and they are dictating terms even in matters of food habits, entertainment, dress etc. This is what we call "religious fundamentalism at its worst". Why condemn only the ISIS? We too have such religious bigots roaming freely under the protection of the law. This was what Gandhiji stood against all through his freedom struggle even at the cost of his own life. Religious fundamentalism is the woodworm that will gradually gnaw at our national integrity and destroy the "unity in diversity" that we have so far enjoyed.

Coming closer home to our own Northeast region, we see the seeds of religious fundamentalism being sown in the simple minds of our tribal people. The process of suffronization is being achieved indirectly through the believers of traditional religions. A Karbi friend and a Bodo

The same phenomenon is being witnessed in the Niam Khasi, Niam-tre. I have no objection to tribal people becoming Hindus if they so desire, but to sow the seeds of hatred and division among members of the tribe is something malicious and unacceptable.

has expressed strong condemnation against religious fundamentalism in our local print media. Such lack of sensitivity can be misinterpreted by the general public.

Back home in our own country, in the last few years we have seen a surge of suffronization which is another form of religious fundamentalism perpetrated by groups of Hindu fundamentalists. The gruesome events of Kandhamal in Odisha which took place in August 2008 are still fresh in our memories. Politics and religion became a dangerous concoction in those events leading to the loss of 38 innocent lives, 18000 injured and more than 50,000 displaced persons. Over these, 4640 homes, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions were torched during the attack. Hatred against the minority Christians was injected into the minds and hearts of Hindus who started persecuting the Christians systematically. The murder of Swami Lakshmanananda and four other Hindus, was maliciously blamed on Christians which added fuel to the already high degree of hatred against Christians. It is alleged that leaders of VHP and Bajrang Dal were behind the scene fanning the flame of hatred. They effectively played on the religious sentiments of the Hindu mobs. Even today seven innocent Christians are kept behind bars although no proof of their involvement in the crime has so far been established. A national signature campaign for the release of these innocent victims is being floated on the internet, but with so much of anti-Christian politics, will they ever be released?

friend of mine have told me how Hinduization is gradually taking place in the Karbi and Bodo indigenous religions in a very subtle manner. The same phenomenon is being witnessed in the Niam Khasi, Niam-tre. I have no objection to tribal people becoming Hindus if they so desire, but to sow the seeds of hatred and division among members of the tribe is something malicious and unacceptable. To my knowledge there had always been a warm relationship between tribe members (paradoh-parasnam) in the past, irrespective of each one's religious adherence. This is simple to prove because going through the earliest Seng Khasi paper "U Nongphira", I came across many articles of Niam Khasi members lauding the role of the Church (especially the Catholic Church) for its contribution to education and promotion of culture. Similarly, many Christian missionaries have shown respect and love for Khasi culture through their writings. Persons like Rev. Thomas Jones who gave us the alphabets and Fr. G. Costa, Fr. E. Bars, Fr. J. Bacchiarello have preserved in black and white our rich cultural heritage. It is surprising therefore to see how such a cordial relationship has disappeared altogether and that too within the last few decades. Evidently there is a reason for that or let us say there is a devious factor at work. I shall refrain from being judgmental but I shall leave to the wise readers to ponder and draw their own conclusions.

“It behooves every man to remember that the work of the critic is of altogether secondary importance, and that in the end, progress is accomplished by the man who does things.”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 223 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2016

Obama in Havana
PRESIDENT Barack Obama met President Raol Castro in Havana on Monday. It was the first historic meeting, since 1959. Obama proved that engagement was better than isolation. The question is whether Cuba is ready to reciprocate. US companies are eager for opportunities in Cuba. Google has struck a deal to expand WI-FI and broadband internet on Cuba. Obama paid tribute to Che Guevara and Jose Harti, two fighters for the Cuban people. The US President initiated his parleys in Havana championing Cuba’s fledgling private sector.

The young seemed more gung-ho about the US President’s visit than the elder generation who are a trifle uneasy about the pace of change. Raol Castro has encouraged the growth of the nascent private sector in Cuba since he took over in 2008. He has to pot life into a moribund economy which had been made anaemic by the US embargo. The fall of the Soviet Union had also contributed to the shattering of the Cuban economy.

Of course, Obama’s visit does not end the cold war between Washington and Havana. The embargo remains. Cuba has to improve the state of human rights in the island before the US Congress lifts the embargo. Havana wants the return of Guantanamo Bay. The economy alone can sink differences. The global slump has emphasized the need for interdependence. Cuba has approved US hotel chains Starwood and Marriott to operate in Havana. What Obama has laid stress on however is Cuba’s exposure to western values which will sap totalitarianism in the Island.

LOOKING BACK
January 1, 1989

Festival of France dazzles viewers

The year-long Festival of France in India was today formally inaugurated by French President Francois Mitterrand and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi amid a fiesta of colour and music.

It was a fantastic carnival at the famous National Centre for performing Arts a magic ‘encounter’ between an Indian boy and a French girl who kept smiling into the future. Watched by Mr Gandhi Mrs Mitterrand and thousands of Bombayites who thronged the Queen’s Necklace, the sky across Bombay Bay from Malabar Hill to Nariman Point exploded in a brilliance of fireworks and laser beams that chalked the first hesitant beginnings of the human race to the latest daring steps towards space.

The gladdened crowds let out their admiration each time the fireworks exploded in chandeller shapes and exotic colours. The images projected on the giant Air India building lingered, mesmerizing them as the festival got underway to bring the peoples of these two countries closer.

PM's concern's over Pakistan N-programme

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today expressed serious concern over Pakistan’s nuclear programme and said “India will have to seriously consider as to what could be done to defend her security”.

He said that according to intelligence reports, Pakistan have received nuclear technology and Tritium a radioactive isotope of hydrogen used in making bombs from West Germany. The use of Tritium increased the capacity of bombs by four to five

times. He said Pakistan had recently admitted to having tested a sophisticated rocket with an altitude capacity of 640 km.

Mr Gandhi who is on a day’s visit to the city to inaugurate the festival of France in India jointly with the French President Mr Francois Mittersand was addressing students and youth at a rally organized jointly by the Bombay units of the Youth and the National Students Union of India (NSUI) at the Shamukananda Hall in north east Bombay.

Stating that India would not allow its security to be weakened the Prime Minister said even the United States had now expressed doubt about the intention of Pakistan’s nuclear progmmame and believed that it was not for peaceful purpose.

The Prime Minister reiterated India’s policy of peaceful coexistence with its neighbours and while appreciating the nuclear policy of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) said if the Pakistan government followed the same in letter and spirit, there would be no cause for tension in the region. As the Prime Minister entered the hall to address the rally, slogans and counter slogans were raised by supporters and opponents of the Bombay Pradesh Youth Congress(I) president Mr Prakash Binsale.

The Prime Minister drove in a motorcade to the Shanmukananda Hall from the airport amidst the tightest ever security arrangements. Policemen and paramilitary forces lined the thoroughfare on both sides of the road and sharp shooters were placed on terraces of buildings lining the route taken by the motorcade.

Is rape an instrument of extreme protest?

The number of rape cases in matrilineal Meghalaya is just mind boggling. The latest rape and murder case at Upper Shillong is no different from the Nirbhaiya incident but I doubt that this case from Meghalaya would even come on the blip of the national news media. The Nirbhaiya case got not just worldwide publicity but also saw some very stringent reforms in laws related to rape. This then led to the making of a film on it by a white Caucasian female, film maker Leslee Udwin which exposed the ugly side of the average Indian male psyche, including the lawyers defending the rapists. The first societal reaction after a rape is to caution girls/women to dress ‘decently,’ as if a four or five year old who is raped is immodestly dressed. This is society’s convoluted mindset which almost absolves the rapist of his crime and makes the woman responsible for her own safety. What can be a more absurd reasoning!

With so many rape cases occurring in a matrilineal society that is romanticised the world over, social scientists should be pondering as to why they are happening with the ferocity and frequency they are today. What is it about Khasi-Garo-Jaintia society that has undergone such a transition as to warrant this outrage from the male of the species? It is painful to read of a father raping his own daughter, an uncle his own niece and so on and so forth. So what is it that drives a man to commit rape? Is it a case of sexual perversion or a problem with manifesting sexuality the normal way?

I came across an article by renowned psychologist Daniel Goleman (author of Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence et al) in the New York Times titled, “New studies map the mind of the rapist.” Goleman says that the mind of the rapist is one of the darkest realms of human sexuality and this is being mapped with a new precision as scientists focus their research

By Patricia Mukhim

on the psychological forces that drive sexual violence. Goleman observes that rape was earlier seen as the expression of an overwhelming sexual urge, one that women could invite by provocative dress or behaviour but more recently, it has been widely described as simple violence against women, expressed through sex. Now new findings suggest that there are many kinds of rapists and that violence and eroticism play out in varying degrees in each.

According to Goleman the new research suggests that only a small minority of rapists are sexual renegades driven by sadistic fantasies or hatred of women, and that far more common are men with a normal sexual orientation who rape impulsively as the opportunity presents itself, often while on a date.

According to Dr Howard Barbaree, a psychologist at Queen’s College in Kingston, Ontario, who is also director of a treatment program for sexual offenders, most men are repulsed by the description of an encounter where the man is forcing the woman to have sex, and the woman is in distress or pain. It dampens the arousal by about 50 percent compared to arousal levels during a scene of consenting lovemaking. Dr. Barbaree’s research was published in the Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology. Barbaree says findings suggest that ordinarily violence inhibits sexual arousal in men because a blood flow loss of 50 percent means a man would not be able to penetrate a woman.

Interestingly, according to Barbaree, rapists often recall being intensely angry, depressed or feeling worthless for days or even months leading up to the rape. Some say that the trigger for the rape was when a woman made them angry, usually by rebuffing a sexual overture. The men experienced the rebuff as

an insult to their manhood that intensified their emotional misery. However, researchers also caution that there is no single psychological formula to explain every rape account.

Dr. Robert Prentky, Professor of Psychology at Boston University Medical School has developed a typology based on an advanced computer analysis of the characteristics of close to 300 rapists. Early results were published in 1988 in The Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences. The most frequent type is the “opportunistic” whose rapes are impulsive, Dr Prentky found. Among the convicted rapists, 23 percent fell into this category. Dr. Prentky believes such rapists are far more common among those who are never caught or convicted. He says that for the opportunistic, a sexual assault is part of a larger pattern of impulsive crimes. In such sexual assaults, Dr Prentky says the rapist shows no anger except in response to the victim’s resistance and uses little unnecessary force

32 percent of convicted rapists belong to the far more violent category and are classified as the “vindictive” type. Dr Prentky says their assaults are physically harmful and their intent is clearly to degrade and humiliate the woman. They are essentially misogynists or woman-haters. Another 11 per cent of rapists are driven by anger at the world and as a result inflict physical violence on helpless victims. Dr Prentky says they pick up fights with men and rape women but they are unlike other rapists in having a long history of violent crimes of all sorts, from fights in bars to assaulting policemen.

It is quite a revelation to know that sexual sadists formed only 8 per cent of the convicted rapists. Dr Prentky says these are men who are obsessed with sadistic fantasies, which their rapes were meant to enact. For such men the victim’s fear is a sexual stimulus.

However, there are other researches to suggest that violence more than eroticism is the engine that drives the rapist’s behavior. And one would like to believe that this study correlates with the rape cases in Meghalaya, although no one has ever studied rape as a case study nor have psychologists/psychiatrists interviewed the rapists here to find out by scientific measurements as to what exactly drives this behaviour in the male. That such studies have not been conducted in India which is now known worldwide for its spiralling rape cases is indeed unfortunate. If rape is, as research suggests, a part of mental health problem then it needs to be acknowledged and those showing tendencies of uncontrolled rage or some such deviant behaviour ought to seek help in the same manner that substance abusers do. It also depends largely on parents to detect such behaviours in their sons.

The problem as always is that as a society we tend to deny that there is a problem. But I would state upfront that with the number of rape cases we read about everyday in the newspapers and those that are not reported, we are a very sick society in need of therapy. Frankly, I am tired of the predictable behaviour of “do gooders” in our society who, as if on cue, issue condemnations after every rape case and then hibernate. These are the usual suspects - NGOs, pressure groups, Child Rights or Women’s Rights institutions etc., who just refuse to think imaginatively on how to address this serious societal malady. Candle light processions are par for the course. They are unlikely to change the behaviour of the deviant. Putting pressure on the law enforcers and the courts can help to hasten the judicial process and when a rapist is convicted of his crime and gets a life sentence or some such punishment then it might deter others of his ilk from going down the same path. Everything else that we are used to doing in Meghalaya is just a rigmarole - a complete waste of time.

Why are our youth so troubled?

By Jennifer Dkhar

What is the most important thing on earth? Is it life? Is it love? Is it respect? Is it wealth? Is it peace? Is it solidarity? Well it is all of the above and a lot more that defines our existence here on earth. However, what needs to be seen is out of everything else there is but ONE source out of which everything else springs. Yes, there is and that is LIFE. What is life? Life maybe defined differently varying from one person to the other. Though, if it may be perceived from a more basic and a general understanding, then life, first of all is a blessing from God. As long as we breathe and as long as our hearts beat that is life. The very first breath that a new born baby takes the moment it is brought into this earth is life. However what intrinsically defines life is what that newly born child will make of it. What is of even greater importance is what kind of a world we adults are preparing for God’s beautiful blessings, our children?

As a human being, as a woman, as a daughter, as a sister, as a mother, I live in fear and worry. I am in fear of life. I am in fear of what has become of this world. I fear for girls and women. I fear for their pride and dignity. I fear abuse and violence, I fear

or four years of imprisonment and minimal fine nor should any resourceful and influential criminal compensate for the crime by paying a huge amount of money to the victim and be acquitted, free from blame or even pardoned. The court of law must comprehend the truth that these criminals that are without any conscience, scruples and moral values will not be deterred until and unless they are awarded punishment equivalent to the pain and stigma that the victim goes through throughout her life. Will this be just like any other rape case that will die out leaving the perpetrator untouched and unharmed while the hearts and life of the girl’s family is left with emptiness and a loss that is irreparable?

While it is certain that man has no knowledge of the future it is also a living truth that the future does not look so rosy because the present is not so cheerful. I think it is about time that we ask ourselves; why are things so wrong in this world today? Why are there crimes and negativity? Why this divide and discrimination? Is there a way out? What can be done to bring about change for the good and better of

The perpetrator often gets bail and long before he is convicted he can lead a regular and normal life without any feeling of remorse for the crime he committed, thereby setting examples for others to emulate.

for their lives. I fear for boys, I fear for their anger and anxiety, I fear for their submission to evils like liquor and drugs, looting and plundering, terrorism and violence, I fear for their lives. True, I fear for the kind of lives that we are living. I fear for the kind of negativity that our children are exposed to. And why wouldn’t I be? I have every reason to be anxious and nervous. Every time I pick up a newspaper or switch on to the news channels, there are reports of rape, murders, violence, bombs, foul play, poverty, ill health, unemployment, scams, corruption, nepotism, you name it, we have it.

For instance, how many rape cases have been reported and if reported how many rape victims have been given justice? Will the recent rape and murder of Shailina Kharrymba the 19 year old girl at 4 ½ Mile, Upper Shillong ever get justice? All that we know is that the perpetrator in spite of his confession is on a mere five days remand. Will he ever be convicted and punished for having brutally snatched the innocent girl’s dignity and life? What is sad is the bare fact that our legal system tends to be very liberal with the perpetrators of such devilish acts. At times there are no arrests and even if there are, the law works at a snail’s pace. The perpetrator often gets bail and long before he is convicted he can lead a regular and normal life without any feeling of remorse for the crime he committed, thereby setting examples for others to emulate. The law is very slow in awarding stringent punishment due to the perpetrator. Instead of immediate action to curb such crimes and thereby act as deterrents against such menace to the society, our legal system fails to deliver immediate and appropriate justice to the victims. One of the root causes of rape is low conviction rate.

The need of the hour is for speedy conviction and punishment of rapists; more so in cases of rapes of and by minors. No criminal should get away with three

one and all? First and foremost we must cherish our beings as much as we cherish ourselves. If life is really how and what we make of our blessings from God then we must choose wisely and judiciously. After all as Confucius said: “Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.”

Our journey of life abounds with temptations but the determination to walk the path of righteousness is what really matters. It needs a strong mind, a brave heart and a pious spirit to shun all that is mendacious and wrong and accept all that is honourable and right. Once man adheres to the principle of righteousness and piety the mind and the heart will be filled with love for one and all, respect for the mighty and the small and peace and tranquillity within the self will prevail. Once man is at peace with himself, he will see the world differently. Man will look at the world with eyes and a heart filled with love and respect. Man will extend his hand of warmth and love to one and all. There will be no inhibitions on his part but good faith and trust on another human being.

One of the principles of Mahatma Gandhi is for man to be tolerant. If one’s nobility is irksome and is an eyesore to the other learn to be more patient and more tolerant. Man must never give up. Instead man must adhere to the tenets of love and adoration. After all love begets love and hatred begets hatred. Gandhi once said “Where there is love there is life”. Today we need to revive our spirits of love and respect for one another in order to make this world a better place to live in. Let there be goodness. Let there be love. Let there be respect. Let there be peace. Let there be solidarity. Let there be religion that listens, hears and adheres to the commands of God: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”. [Mathew 22:39]

TO THE EDITOR

Timely article

Editor,
I write this letter in support of Gertrude Lamare (“The Violence That Be” ST 22 March) and of Deepa Majumdar (“Men Need to Protest Rapists” ST 24 March) , and to vehemently protest against rape and condemn the perpetrators of this most heinous and inhuman crime.

Yours etc.,
B Kharwanlang
Shillong-3

No respect for animal rights!

Editor,
The irresponsible and brutal attack on a police horse by a lawmaker in Uttarakhand during a political agitation should be condemned in the strongest words. The left hind leg of the horse suffered multiple fractures due to such brutal assault. The unfortunate and defenseless animal suffered amputation and has been later fitted with a prosthetic limb. A dedicated team of around 10 veterinary doctors were involved in the delicate operation and replacing the damaged limb with a prosthetic limb. In spite of this, I am doubtful that this mute and helpless animal will survive to live a normal healthy life and more especially from the perspective that it was a government owned service horse. Those in India who always cry about human

right abuses never care to raise a voice for the cruelty and abuses poor and helpless animal victims suffer in the entire subcontinent as it does not provide enough octane for their political ambitions and media coverage. The incident highlights the insensitive political elites of the world’s largest democracy who believe that every single opportunity in life is a celebration of establishing their political hegemony and not even a mute and helpless animal is spared from that. Also important to note is the poor level of awareness among communities regarding cruelty and abuses towards animals. A nationwide debate should be initiated to create public awareness about animal rights and the abuses and cruelty animals are exposed to in the world’s largest democracy. Our younger generation needs to come forward and protest in the strongest voice against such cruel behaviour.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB
Canada T1J 4B3

Rasputins ruin regimes

Editor,
A regime’s association with ‘god-men’ is always risky. Moreover, such association in our country contradicts our Constitution. The Preamble of the Constitution of India resolves to constitute our

country into a secular Republic. The word secular guarantees that our Republic shall not be connected with religious or spiritual matters. We need to learn from history that a regime’s association with a Rasputin invariably brings about a ruin of the former as their marriage results in the divorce between the regime and the people.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Regressive thinking

Editor,
This title of this letter is obviously inspired by Michael Makri’s, “Progressive thinking” (ST. 21st March 2016). The young Manila educated mediaperson sees no ‘mind space’ in organizations and individuals. The mind is not nurtured to think and think progressively. However, this letter is not a rejoinder to “Progressive thinking”.

Let us get to the point. Late PA Sangma is truly a legendary and iconic figure in North East and Meghalaya in particular. His achievements will be unmatched by anyone from this part of the world for many years to come. His popularity was evident when the sea of humanity poured its grief at his home town on his demise. He was loved by the masses. This writer has three pieces on the accomplished politician published in this paper, “PA Sangma – A man of courage (June 26th, 2012), “Lesson

of Presidential Election 2012: Dare and Hope”(July 24th, 2012) and “PA Sangma – A life well lived” (March 7, 2016). So there is great admiration and respect for the great leader.

However, I do not agree with Conrad Sangma the newly crowned NPP chief that it would be a perfect tribute to his father if the NPP candidate is elected unopposed in the Tura bye-election. In June 2015 Chokpot by-poll necessitated by the passing away of the founder- legislator of Garo National Council (GNC), Clifford R. Marak, the NPP led by late PA Sangma put up a candidate though there was a suggestion of a no-contest as a respect to the departed leader. Similarly, in October last year NCP leader and South Shillong legislator Sanbor Shullai was rebuffed by all parties when he came out with a bizarre suggestion that out of respect for Hoping Stone Lyngdoh, MLA of Nongstoin for 11 times, the seat be handed to a relative of the deceased. Late PA Sangma achieved what he achieved on merit. On merit he had all the qualities, expertise and experience to be the president of the country. Merit was his greatest armour. May his legacy live on!

Yours etc.,
Albert Thyrmiang
Tura, West Garo Hills – 02

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.

We all know the difficulties that surround any effort to improve relations between India and Pakistan. The problems are embedded in our genetic code. As a Lahori once put it brilliantly: "*Mil ke hi rahna tha to fir alag kyun hue*" (Why did we separate, if we had to stay together). But the reality is that we have separated, and this separation is irrevocable. Now how long shall we continue to be mulish and keep fighting each other? The least we can do for the people of the two nations is to play cricket as friends, without letting anything interfere with the game.

The desire of the people on both sides of the divide to be friends is not restricted to those who have nostalgia for the pre-partition India. Even younger people who wish to put behind the partition trauma and look ahead are keen to engage with each other.

The sentiment was poignantly captured by Shivani Gupta whose poem Dear girl from Pakistan, I know it has taken me 69-long- years but I hope it is not too late for me to say, Forget about what's in the news, Tell me, how was your day? struck a chord in many a heart. Her rendering on a video clip is equally touching, but the following verse distils its essence: I'm sorry. I am sorry that without so much as a second thought, I say the words your country and my side, And all that's left that is ours is a common divide, I am sorry that even my pronouns are possessive, Obsessive with a need to demarcate our partition, I have a confession, I wish I knew you better

more for the 'Dear Girl from Pakistan' and similar girls on the Indian side, rather than playing their war and strategic games, may be life would be better for millions of people. But then we are condemned to our silly genetic code that does not allow us to be friends even to the extent of having a game of cricket.

Bilateral cricket has been banished from our lexicon and is now being held hostage to cross border terrorism, and military exchanges. Considering that the root cause of all terrorism is attributed to the Kashmir problem, and we do not foresee any immediate resolution of this dispute are we to conclude that India and Pakistan would not be playing cricket till the K-issue is resolved? This is simply not on. The governments on both sides of the divide must resolve that nothing shall disrupt our bilateral sporting ties. Besides, there are all kinds of fringe elements that are always ready to threaten the resumption of cricketing ties with their own perverted brand of violent nationalism. These too should be shown their place, and not allowed to have their disruptive way.

It is true that any sporting contest between India and Pakistan is not just a competitive event. It acquires dimensions that are larger than life. In this perspective the contest between the two teams at the historic Eden Gardens was not just another group match for the T-20 World Cup tournament. It came with a history that India had

INDIA AND PAKISTAN MUST GIVE CRICKET A CHANCE IN TIMES OF ACRIMONY, WRITES FAZAL MEHMOOD



Play cricket as friends

Bilateral cricket has been banished from our lexicon and is now being held hostage to cross border terrorism, and military exchanges. Considering that the root cause of all terrorism is attributed to the Kashmir problem, and we do not foresee any immediate resolution of this dispute are we to conclude that India and Pakistan would not be playing cricket till the K-issue is resolved? This is simply not on. The governments on both sides of the divide must resolve that nothing shall disrupt our bilateral sporting ties.

on, and the masters of cricket on both sides are here for a few more days. If indeed, they have the genuine interests of cricket and goodwill between the two countries at heart, then there could be no better time for them to put their heads together and bring back bilateral cricketing ties on track. Risk taking is an essential part of good batting, and all great batsmen are known to have taken calculated risks. Diplomats are risk averse, but then for once they should bet on the intrinsic goodwill of the people and go ahead with the game. There can be only winner in such an en-



Yes, that indeed is the problem.

If the Indians and Pakistanis knew better than playing tit for tat diplomacy and if the civilian and military masters on both sides of the divide could care

never lost a World Cup game against Pakistan, and would have been clear favourites but for the setback against the New Zealanders at Nagpur in first match. But the event was sanctified by the presence of cricketing

the reigning billionaires of the country.

From the Pakistan side, Imran Khan, the 1992 World Cup winning captain, flew down to cheer the boys and give them an inspiring pep talk. Such a

come together only for an India Pakistan event. This indeed is the bonding power of cricket.

Of course, once and indeed if at all we start playing each other more regularly, this more than a game

aspect from such contests would start slipping away. The fanatic enthusiasm and feverish pitch would remain, but the syndrome that a victory means everything gained and a loss is the ultimate catastrophe would ebb. We would start behaving like normal people. In terms of Indian cricket, the game at the Eden Gardens marked one transition.

The arrival of Virat Kohli as the new Sachin Tendulkar. The manner in which he batted and steered the team to victory showed that he has developed the quality which gives Indians an assurance that as long as he is on the crease, there is hope that the game would be finally theirs. This assurance was the hallmark of Sachin's batting for India. He could be trusted to deliver. The fact that Virat on reaching the milestone half century in the game bowed before the great master watching the game from the stands, and later confessed same feat had made a deep impression on him speaks about the guru-shishya tradition, although Virat has never been coached by Sachin. This trait of bowing to the achievements of the greats who have preceded him should stand Virat in good stead as he

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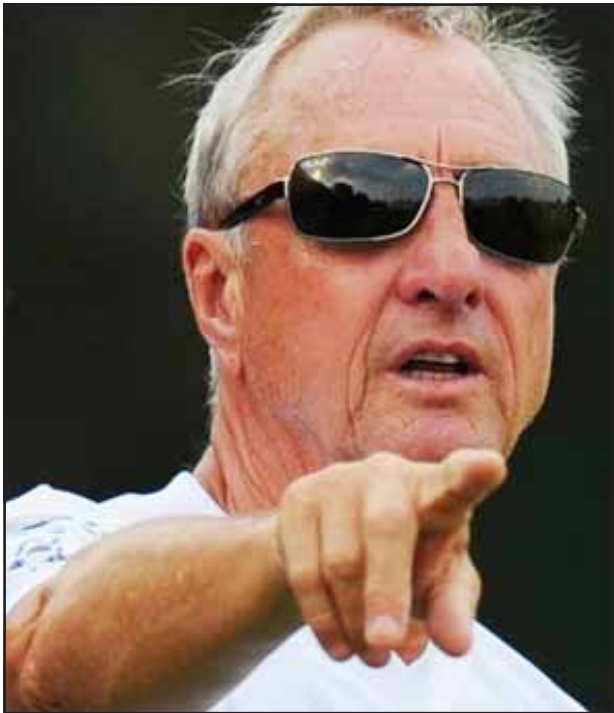


that having grown up watching the master the

achieves higher milestones. The World Cup is still

deavour. Peace between India and Pakistan. (INAV)

Johan Cruyff: Master of 'Total Football'



One of the greatest exponents of the 'beautiful game', John Cruyff will be remembered for being one of the leading stars of the legendary Dutch team of the 1970s that created the

revolutionary concept of 'Total Football'. Cruyff, who was diagnosed with lung cancer, passed away in a Barcelona hospital on Thursday at the age of 68. From the late 1960s

By Ajeyo Basu

to the early 80s, he held much of the football world spellbound with his skill, movement and vision.

Voted the world player of the year on three occasions, Cruyff guided Holland to the World Cup final in 1974 where the Dutch team left a profound mark on the evolution of the game with their 'Total Football', a philosophy explored by their coach Rinus Michels.

The concept of 'Total Football' was a fluid system in which no player occupies any fixed outfield role. Holland were ultimately beaten by hosts West Germany in the final, but their legacy left a far reaching influence on the game.

Indisputably the most thrilling national side of that era, Holland suffered yet another defeat in a World Cup final four years later -- this time to hosts Argentina -- and earned the

moniker of the best team never to be crowned world champions.

Cruyff enjoyed phenomenal success at the club level as well, first with Ajax Amsterdam and later with Spanish giants FC Barcelona.

He started his career at Ajax where he won eight Eredivisie titles and three European Cups. In 1973 he moved to FC Barcelona for a world record transfer fee, winning the Spanish league in his first season and was named European Footballer of the Year. After retiring as a player in 1984, Cruyff became highly successful as a manager as well. He started at Ajax, coaching them from 1985 to 1988 before spending eight years in charge of Barcelona. He guided the Catalans to European Cup glory in 1992 and won four successive La Liga titles between (Contd on P-VII)

By Veturi Srivatsa

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's media conference at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, after India beat Pakistan for the 11th time in the ICC tournaments, appeared more like he was addressing his own team-mates.

Like a teacher telling his students which classmate of theirs they should emulate, pointing to the most scholarly in the class, India captain sang paeans of praise for Virat Kohli's virtues as a cricketer and sincerely seemed to mean every word he uttered. He made sure the message went to his other team-mates.

For instance, when Dhoni talks of how Kohli handles pressure, he might as well be telling this to Rohit Sharma: When there is lot of pressure, often individuals go for big shots, thinking it to be the best option, but the best way to tackle pressure is to take a single and go to the other end. That will calm you down.

That's what Dhoni too does, waiting for the opportune moment to lash out.

Dhoni makes no secret of his admiration for Kohli's hunger to perform and his willingness to take up the challenge -- the qualities that make Kohli what he is, a special. These attributes don't come easily and for that he prepares well, taking care of his fitness.

Dhoni wants youngsters to observe how Kohli bats



Kohli, team's role model

on different wickets and how once he gets in, he makes sure he converts his starts into big innings.

Like a sage, Dhoni also conveys to the youngsters in the team the universal truth that when they are getting runs, they should make sure they are big because they will never know when they get into a bad patch, which everyone goes through in their careers.

Dhoni has not left any

aspect of batting that Kohli does not possess or relish, particularly in shorter formats, when he talks of Kohli's running between the wickets and how he loves batting with those who can run hard.

A fantastic runner himself between the wickets, Dhoni explains how two energetic runners can convert ones into twos hitting to midwicket and long-on regions. What he did not say

is that the fielders invariably fumble attacking the ball in a bid to prevent conceding the second run, thus putting pressure on the fielding side.

Dhoni gently reminded everyone that this is not the first time that his side staged a comeback from a bad beginning in tournaments, and that he is conscious of the fact that at some point in the next (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career as a company secretary

We have published about Chartered Accountant and how one can pursue the course. Chartered Accountant or popularly termed as CA is one of the deserving dream profession for many who are in commerce stream. Though may not complete the course due to many reasons but many aspire to become CA. Like CA, there are some other courses too which our students may pursue. One of the courses similar to CA but having different role is Company Secretary. Company Secretary is another opportunity for our student which is called CS in short.

Now we need to know who is a Company Secretary or what is the role and responsibilities. It is not like office secretaries as many ask me question thinking that CS is something like office secretary. The Company Secretary is like an in-house legal expert; a compliance officer of the Company; an expert in corporate laws, securities laws & capital market and corporate governance; corporate planner and strategic manager. A Company Secretary being multidisciplinary professional renders services in the following areas like Corporate Governance and Secretarial Service, Corporate Laws Advisory and Representation Services, Financial Market Services and Management Services

Students after passing senior secondary or graduation may opt for CS course which is provided by The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). Student from any stream may join the course

which means there is no bar for any stream. The student who would like to join the Course after 10+2 pass or equivalent has to undergo three stages to pursue the Company Secretaries Course i.e. Foundation Programme ,Executive Programme, Professional Programme. The Student who would like to join the Course after passing the Graduation has to undergo two stages of the Company Secretaryship i.e. Executive Programme, Professional Programme. Foundation Programme which is of eight months duration can be pursued by 10+2 pass or equivalent students of Arts, Science or Commerce stream (Excluding Fine Arts) Executive Programme can be pursued by a Graduate of all streams except Fine Arts / CPT passed of ICAI / Foundation Program passed of ICAI-CMA . Professional Programme can be pursued only after clearing the Executive Programme of CS Course.

There are employment opportunities for CS professionals. A qualified Company Secretary has openings in Employment and as Practising Independent Professional. Companies with a paid up share capital of Rs.5 crore or more are compulsorily required to appoint a whole-time Company Secretary under section 383A of Companies Act, 1956.

There are financial assistance to students from ST/Sc communities and also for economically poor backgrounds. ICSI awards Prizes, merit scholarships to the meritorious students and merit-cum-means assistance is granted to the economically weaker students. Many Company Secretaries are already working in various countries like the US, Canada, UK, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Middle-east, Africa, etc.

There are chapters and branches of ICSI in different parts of the country and students may collect prospectus for admission. There is a chapter in Guwahati too mainly for the students of our region .There are less CS in the region but as it is a lucrative profession, so, many of our students may start planning for the course and take admission accordingly and complete the course to become a CS. Qualified CS does not have to look for jobs as they may work independently like consultants and provide services to companies and corporate. (With direct inputs from the website of ICSI)

(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

By Uma Ramachandran

Babies are named by parent or grandparent. But my grandmother told me that I gave her the name by which she came to be called by the entire family. How? When I was 11 months old, grandpa carried me around the drawing room, showing photographs on the wall. Not flowers or animals, not Ravi Varma's gods and heroes. "Look, that is Nehruji, Sardar Patelji, Dadabhai Naoroji, Lokmanya Tilakji, Jawaharlal Nehruji. Sardar Patelji, Vinoba Bhavaji," he went on reverently, until we came to the toothless face dominating the little room, "See, that is Gandhiji, our own Mahatmaji, our dear Bapuji...." His annoyed wife marched up to him and hollered, "Don't overload the child!" That was when I jumped into grandma's arms, and spoke my first word -- "Bapuji!" Grandpa was overwhelmed by my intelligence in recognising the father of the nation. However, what I had actually done was to give my grandma a strange new name. She became "Bapuji" ever after. You can see I grew up in a family steeped in "nationalism", "patriotism", "reformism", "secularism" and every other kind of ism enthusiastically supported by grandpa's generation. We trooped up to the terrace on Independence Day to hoist the flag, and sang the Hindi flag anthem which came out in our Tamil tongues as "Chanda oonja ragey hamara", then belted out "Jaya jaya bhavani"! Subramania Bharati's version of Shivaji's battle cry for freedom, Cardinal Newman's "Lead Kindly Light", and a prayer to Allah originally in Arabic, but in our rendering could be mistaken for energetic gargling.

Then Grandma provided a "national" lunch that was always a treat to the eyes, nose and tongue. Green beans poriyal, orange car-



How to escape the age of mass delusion

rot masiyal and white cucumber raita. The kosumalli salad repeated the same colours with thinly sliced banana stem, tomato and coriander leaf. The spectacular tricolour barfi became the piece de resistance. Then she would tell tales of Bhagat Singh and Vanchinathan, as also of satyagrahi sacrifices until we shed tears. I guess for grandpa's generation "nationalism" was simply opposing the foreign Raj, and rooting for either Gandhi or Jinnah. For our parents it was hanging on to Nehruvian socialism, in lip service at least, if less in practice, through the growing disillusionment and hardships of Nehru's regime. Their verdict on the man with the rose was, "Misguided yes, but good at heart." Hope did not desert them.

I guess I remembered these long ago scenes because of the recent hue and cry about "nationalism", and the mind-boggling debates on just what being "national" is, can be, should be. Yet, from Supreme Court judges to self-proclaimed saviours of nationalism, no one seems to know quite

what the word means. Social activists are so strident that their sense gets washed out. The Left offers no balance, only babble. Meanwhile, a BJP MP has no qualms about offering prize money to cut off a student's

nounces a reward for killing three young men. And guess what, these posters are headed by an unabashed "Vande Mataram!" And despite the bursting and brewing violence, the government refuses to take

traits of "national" leaders to show my yet-to-be-born grandchild. But will I have tales of courage and hope to tell like my grandma, my own "Bapuji"? Or was I born in a progressive age of trust and freedom, only to die in a re-



tongue, an unknown "warrior" from an unheard of Poorvanchal Sena an-

off the blindfold, while continuing merrily to play. Yes, I know I will never have por-

gressive age of suppression and control? Will I be able to do something to change my fate? INAV

Kohli, team's role model

(Contd from P-VI) matches the team will have to take the net run-rate into consideration, the result of losing to New Zealand in the opening game by a whopping margin. Statisticians have numbers to tell us where and why a

Jamtha, Nagpur, quite a few expected India to make at least a couple of changes in the line-up to please the professional mourners. Dhoni went into the Eden match with an unchanged eleven and this time they won it comfortably in the end.



team has won or lost a match. They can list the games won on seaming pitches or lost on spinning tracks. They stay clear of contradictory figures.

After India lost to New Zealand, failing to chase 126 at an asking rate of a fraction over six runs an over, the commentators thought the Pakistanis could put India under psychological pressure by scoring 120 plus, forgetting cricket is not played on psycho analysis and theories. To prove the point, after the atrocious showing at

went for 10-plus in the over.

Captains can go wrong and there is enough evidence of it already. Dhoni is aware of it as he gets his troops ready for the remaining matches against Bangladesh (Which India won) and Australia to make the knockout semi-finals.

(The writer is a senior journalist and the views expressed are personal. He can be reached at sveturi@gmail.com)

Johan Cruyff: Master of 'Total Football'

(Contd from P-VI) 1991 and 1994.

He continued to remain an influential advisor to both clubs. His son Jordi also played football professionally.

As a player, Cruyff scored 392 goals in 520 matches over a hugely successful career spanning 19 years. But his influence reached far beyond creating goals, thanks

to his qualities as a leader, thinker and speaker. As a coach, he had 242 victories in 387 matches, with 75 draws and 70 losses.

Cruyff will continue to live on in the hearts of countless football fans all over the world.

(The writer can be contacted at ajeयो.b@ians.in)

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, March 27, 2016

Moon sextile Pluto on your solar return chart indicates a good year. Creativity adds weight to your work and may bring about some positive changes. Act out of conviction and confidence and embrace change and rid yourself of your preconceived notions. As you make a breakthrough in business a new association can be formed which will prove to be fruitful in the long run. This is a good phase for money and monetary dealings. Family relationships improve, as you are more expressive of your feelings.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

Your efforts, confidence and courage bring success in monetary gains and your energy increases for work projects. Your job environment is lively. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful. You may find your children at a time that requires more attention and discipline. You express yourself creatively, through activities with children, romantic hobbies, or sports when learning, short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

This period brings love, harmony and entertainment in professional and personal relations. A romantic short trip may be undertaken. People look upon you with more respect, tolerance, and acceptance. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress. It's a great time to pick up information from your environment and the people in it. Your mind is often distracted, particularly when required to stick to routine. You might spend time in traveling and visiting friends and relatives. There will be a fluctuation in energy levels before a balance is achieved. Health will take a turn for the better.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

This period brings success in professional and personal relations. You take more pride than usual in your creations, your love affair, your children, and your hobbies. After a period of self-protectiveness, you are now more spontaneous and more willing to take risks. You are inspired creatively and emotionally. Still, despite the fact that you love your career now, you are also working especially hard. The inclination is towards more detail work, and it can get to you at times. Personal projects are on an upswing. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

This is favorable time for hobbies, sports and competitive exams. You display great skills in sports or physical activity that wins you appreciation and opportunity to travel. Beware of a covetous and suspicious person around you who could cause misunderstanding in your personal relationships. You try to be just and fair when making decisions, as you do your best to see both sides of an issue. People notice and admire you for your pleasant and cheerful personality. You are bold in your love yet not aggressive either. You are fond of love and admiration. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at work.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

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

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

An excellent phase is in store especially for money, career, and romance. Friends and loved ones take priority at this time. People at work might be surprised by your ability to assert yourself and your needs. You don't find yourself lacking in opportunities to socialize. 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 waste your energy.

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)



“An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don't.”

—Anatole France

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 225SHILLONG, MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2016

Modi's dilemma

THE National Executive of the BJP at which Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his views exposed the mental schism in the party. When Modi took on the reins of the government, he spoke of development, employment generation and emphasized Indianness. There was little about Hindutva. The focus was on building a new India laying stress on innovation, investment and entrepreneurship. But by now Modi's development agenda appears to have been driven to the corner. There is a lot of frothy and irresponsible talk on Hindutva and orthodoxy. Freedom of speech on the part of Hindutva leaders has degenerated into filthy abuse. The RSS and the VHP lead the bizarre show. The modernistic attitude of the BJP, the political arm of the Sangh parivar, under Atal Bihari Vajpayee seems to have retreated into the background.

Of course, the BJP is pulled by contradictory forces in two different directions. This schism is not merely confined to ideas and ideology. It may be that Hindutva and the hyper nationalism of the Sangh parivar have given a boost to the BJP in the political arena. The ruling party cannot abandon RSS orthodoxy as it has sprung from the RSS and earlier the Hindu Mahasabha. But Narenda Modi cannot give up his goal of development and his concept of one nation. The BJP cannot follow both the RSS and the modern agendas. The time has come for it to make a choice. Its future depends on it. The lessons to be drawn from the Vajpayee government cannot be ignored. It is good that Modi has again praised the composite culture of India, different strings of a musical instrument which produce a rhythmic cohesion.

LOOKING BACK

January 1, 1989

The CEMs' new initiative

In a Memorandum submitted to the visiting Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Chintamani Panigrahi, the Chief Executive Member of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council reported that although the Chandrachud Commission had submitted its report on the boundary dispute between Meghalaya and Assam, the Council had yet been kept dark about the recommendations made. Since the dispute relates to a stretch of territory pertaining to Khasi Hills and the boundary of Meghalaya in this sector is co-terminus with that of the Khasi Hills Autonomous Council, the latter has a point in this complaint. In has not, however, been established that the State government has deliberately debarred the Council access to the report or that there has been no favourable response from the State authorities to any request from the Council for a copy of the report. It is nonetheless obvious that in any case the Council was entitled to be taken into cognisance regarding the report and its contents at the earliest opportunity.

The Council's concern over the matter of an immediate solution of the dispute seems to have acquired added urgency because of certain developments taking place in the area covered by this particular boundary dispute. The Memorandum reported that some 'foreigners' displaced from other areas of Meghalaya and Assam had been 'dumped' in this disputed territory and further that the new population had established their Panchayats to which the Assam government had extended its recognition. This, according to the Khasi Hills Autonomous Council, an encroachment on the established authority of the traditional village Durbars of the Khasi Scheduled tribe. Here also the

Community Led Eco Conservation

Though Community-led Eco Conservation is not what we would exactly call it yet the Khasi-Pnars have similar tradition of protecting and conserving the ecosystem particularly forests, where the people take the lead in conserving the environment. It is heartening to learn that we have not only successfully continued with the tradition and kept our 'Law Adong; 'Law Kyntang and in some cases even 'Law Shnong or 'Law Kur intact, but in some areas people have begun new conservation efforts to protect the biodiversity of the area. Ironically though Jaintia Hills is often in the news for the wrong reason of having three of its major rivers dead, yet many of these new efforts are aimed at protecting the rivers in entire Jaintia hills.

Not very long ago the anglers in Jowai decided to venture into a new frontier and rather than just leisurely go fishing every now and then they decided to start an organization called Jaintia Fishing Association. The sole objective of the JFA then was to protect the aquatic lives in the river Myntdu. Perhaps it was what happened in East Jaintia Hills which had influenced the fishermen in Jowai to start JFA. And we can proudly say that the upstream of river Myntdu is in its current shape and form now because of the many interventions of the JFA.

Later the JFA decided to go one step further and remodeled and changed its name to Jaintia Fishing and Environment Society (JFES). This group of anglers in Jowai has been able to save the upstream of Myntdu from pollution when the Association with the help of the District Administration were able to stop mining and remove the stockpile of coal in the villages located along the catchment area of the Myntdu like Chyrmang, Pongnoh and Mustem. And this small intervention had prevented acid mine drainage into the river body and pollute the water.

Now JFES is the only organization which is working to protect the river and

By H H Mohrmen

the environment in the entire Jaintia hills and the association is also single-handedly responsible for protecting the upstream of river Myntdu. JFES had been able to build two check dams on the river Myntdu to protect fish and conserve water and prevent pollution to the river. Recently JFES has indentified and selected Syntu Ksiar and Lynter as protected and also to declare the particular water bodies near Kiang Nangbah Memorial as fish sanctuaries. The project which is also financed by the Department of Fisheries Jaintia hills is planned to be another tourist attraction in the area. This is again a fit case of community taking upon themselves the role to conserve this historic part of Myntdu river.

Like minded people from different regions joined hands in the noble cause and JFES has now spread its wings to the other parts of Jaintia hills. The Organisation now has units in every nook and corner of Jaintia hills. All these units work to protect aquatic lives in their rivers and conserve the water bodies in their respective areas.

But the threat to the river Myntdu now is the coming up of buildings adjacent to the river on the upstream of the river near P'engkeiñ pamblah and Chah-ngit. If this trend continues, then in no time Myntdu will also go the Wah Umkhrah way where buildings will encroach right up to the body of the river. And we are yet to see JHADC coming up with regulations prohibiting construction near the rivers, so if we rely on the Council to come up with rules and regulations to protect the rivers, it is almost certain that it will not happen and very soon Myntdu will also become like Wah Umkhrah.

But JFES has a vital role to play and prevent that from happening, because if the Organization can single-handedly stop coal mining and coal depots from coming up on the catchment areas at P'ongnoh, Chyrmang and

Mustem, then I don't see the reason why it cannot stop building constructions on the bank of the river. People can bring change only if they have good intentions and are united in their efforts, and the endeavor initiated by JFES is a classic case of a successful publicled conservation initiative where government agency's involvement is minimal.

Nongbareh village is another conservation effort which was started by the Dorbar Shnong and this with a noble cause in mind which is to protect the rare Chocolate Mahseer fish in the river which is located right in the centre of the villages. Earlier this was for the residents to use the fish only for a special reason. A resident of the village can only fish in the river when someone in the family is not well and the fish caught can only be used to feed the patient. This practice continues till today and one can only fish from the river when a member in the family falls sick.

Another most interesting case of Community-led Eco Conservation is the effort made by the people of Shnongpdeng village to protect the portion of rivers Umngot which flows near the village. Shnongpdeng is located near the Indian border with Bangladesh and by the time Umngot river reaches the village it has become a big river (by our standards) and there are several 'thwai' basins in which are found large numbers of aquatic life. It all began when in the early part of 2013, the Dorbar Shnong unanimously decided to protect the river basin known as Masiah and declare it as a fish sanctuary. Coincidentally, just when the Dorbar decided to protect Masiah, the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (JHADC) as usual floated a tender to lease the river to anyone interested in catching the fish from the river. The JHADC usually leases all rivers which fall under the Council's jurisdiction on a yearly basis and the lessee would catch as much fish as he can to recover the investment made.

Naturally, because the

community had already decided to protect the aquatic lives in the water and conserve the river basin, the village Dorbar decided to object to this annual leasing of their river. They met the officers of the JHADC in Jowai who are in charge of leasing the river to register their complaints against the lease. The officer cited rules and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and expressed regret and inability to redress their grievance and to cancel the tender. The leaders of the community were at their wits end. They did not know what to do; they wanted to protect their river and conserve the aquatic lives in the river but they were helpless.

They decided to meet the Deputy Commissioner Jaintia hills Autonomous District Council and share their predicament with him. The DC also expressed his helplessness because as per Sixth Schedule rivers are within the purview of the District Councils. Then suddenly one of the leaders of the Dorbar told the DC that the lessee would use any means to capture as much fish as he can to maximize profit. He also informed that they even use explosive to kill fishes. P.S. Dkhar realized the loophole where he could intervene and acted immediately. He promulgated section 144 CrPC on that particular section of the river Umngot because it is illegal to use explosives without license. And that was the beginning of the end of JHADC's story of annual leasing of the portion of the river Umngot near Shnongpdeng.

These are few stories where communities, be it the Dorbar Shnong as in the case of Nongbareh and Shnongpdeng or a registered organization like the JFES which had played a vital role in leading the protection and conservation of the environment in the state. Real conservation can happen only when people take the lead. The Government Department can only play a supporting role in the efforts. Real change and sustainable conservation can only happen when people take ownership and lead environment conservation from the front.

TO THE EDITOR

Tabloid Journalism

Editor,

The headline “Shillong Chamber Choir faces the music” and the picture of the choir (ST Mar 24, 2016) misleads the reader into concluding that the Choir is guilty of some misdeed. It is the Dept of Arts and Culture that is under procedural and financial scrutiny, but of course a headline saying that will elicit only a shrug, whereas to cast a slur on the high flying Choir will surely get much more attention.

Most readers will be happy to see the clarification given by the Shillong Chamber Choir (ST Mar 25, 2016), but I am disheartened that one more time, a good initiative faces smear and innuendo. This a problem of our society and the media often plays to this gallery. We expect better from the most respected newspaper in the state.

I am not privy to the facts of the case, but the content of the news articles leaves one in no doubt that the choir was sponsored in good faith and that the purpose of the funding was more than fulfilled. The Shillong Chamber Choir brings delight and pride to Meghalaya. We should

nurture and protect our artists and musicians, rather than expose them to pious pettiness.

Yours etc.,
Glenn Kharkongor,
Viaemail

Christ championed cooperation and secularism

Editor,

Two of the teachings of Jesus Christ have become very relevant at present. The first is definitely his demarcation between God and government. According to Mark 12:17, Jesus said, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". Here, Caesar means government. This is a clear message for a secular government which is not connected with any religious and spiritual matters. On the other hand, we need to be very cautious about not mixing up between "what is Caesar's" and "what is God's". Had we followed this teaching, we could have avoided oceans of bloodshed and banished many Rasputins from enjoying political power. The second is his teaching, "Love thy neighbour." This is a mantra for survival. Today, living in a society of "First Boys", we are telling our

children to be competitive and to forget the art of co-operation. But can anything survive without cooperation? If various components of our mobile phones start competing among themselves then we have to run to a mobile care shop. Cooperation instead of conflict is the key for survival of everything be it simple or complex machines or rural and urban societies. We should not aim for "neighbours envy," but should try to be His pride.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata- 700110

Mortifying the synagogue of learning

Editor,

This letter is an outcome of shudder and indignity that I and many others like me feel at the current juncture. Reference here is of uncouth acts of the state machinery taking place in the Indian varisities. Food and water supply, electricity being cut off, frisking of visitors to the university, police beating students within the university premises and arresting them and virtually turning the campus into a war zone are all being done in the name of law. The question arises as to which law permits such appalling acts where people's rights to ba-

sic amenities are deprived. If any action has to be taken against the protesting students then due procedures can be followed, but forcefully ending students' protest is unacceptable. The fact that in India the police has entered the synagogues of learning to wrestle with students, is in itself an indicator of the nadir that has been hit. Universities across the globe have been the platform for debates, diverse opinions, and intellectual deliberations and in India today the very essence of higher education has been attacked by the use of force on the student community. At this stage through this esteemed paper I condemn the police brutality taking place on Indian varsity campuses. It is deplorable and unlawful.

Yours etc,
Piyashi Dutta,
Viaemail

Law must be stringently applied on rapists

Editor,

Apropos the article, “Is rape an instrument of extreme protest” by Patrica Mukhim (ST-March 25, 2016), one would find that hardly a day passes without a news-report on Rape. It is clear that rape is a sexual as well as cultural attack which has become a great social

Fasting And Alienation

By Ananya S Guha

The fifteen year fast by Irom Sharmila in Manipur is largely going unnoticed, excepting some media attention sporadically and the routine newspaper reports. But, that may not be the point. The point rivets to a larger question, the question of North East India, some part of it or the other involved for over four decades in a spate of turmoil or unrest – call it separatism, militancy, extremism or terrorism. This large question epitomizes the entire dilemma of this part of the country – alienation from the ‘mainstream’, an expression glibly but disputatiously used. What is this ‘mainstream’ or ‘mainland’, as if others are peripheral to them, and only they enjoy the large slice of our endearing ‘Bharat Mata’!

I am certainly not a social scientist, let alone a socialist; What I have observed since my college and university days is a deep seated alienation, an insecurity of being rejected, desire to be known by the rest of the country manifested by expressions such as Naga and Mizo insurgency, the Assam Agitation, the Tripura unrest against the majority etc. All these may have taken the shape of violent separatism, or secessionist tendencies most of them at least; but the point missed is the causal forces behind them, the – ‘why.’

Social Scientists in the 1980s played havoc with ideas positing geographical, international boundaries and citing them as strategic locations for a region waiting to be exploited by foreign elements. As if geographical borders did not exist earlier and as if there was no East Pakistan, an undivided Bengal and Assam existing under a large province! Of course in its wake Independence for the country brought further interrogation – the Naga question, the Mizoram trauma as a result of the famine, and the Manipur question of accession. Tripura and Assam came much later, both related to the question of influx, ‘foreign nationals’ and the outsider/insider debate, an uneasy co-existence. Further in Assam came the Bodoland consideration and now in Meghalaya, Garoland.

By and large the government used the carrot and stick policy, and in some spaces – Accord and Cease-fire. Whether these have worked or not or worked only as temporary measures will have to be examined. But the larger questions of local identity as opposed to a Pan Indian identity, unemployment and fear of jobs being snatched by ‘outsiders’ were and still are issues which are not addressed. In other words, the mindset of a peoples pitted against what they feel is at times a repression by the alien till today, I think dominates the psyche. The feeling is common to all the states, and in marking out a region nebulously called “The North East” governments have actually contributed however unwittingly to feelings of separatism, alienation and rejection. Added to this were those incidents involving students of North East India in New Delhi especially.

Having woven a matrix for a region earmarked as a sepa-

rate entity despite diversities in language and religion, has in itself invited problems for all governments though they may not be willing to share this responsibility.

The Irom Sharmila example is woven around that symbol, that tapestry of resistance to, not a country, but a Govt. which refuses to push ahead with soluble ideas and is blighted to the condition of men, women and children living in trauma, year after year with men in uniforms whom they cannot resist nor desist because there is also the dire threat of other extremist groups. Living in conflict zones and their ramifications on mobility, employment and education, have to be captured imaginatively by ruling powers.

Irom Sharmila is a tower of protest, but she is also a tower of neglected suffering, where aspects like forced feeding, release and bail are cyclical epitomes of crass neglect and – passivity.

As such, till all this seething continues the North East will remain a symbol of solidarity and empathy with one another, which means of course alienation from the 'mainland ', which in turn means that that the 'mainland ' and 'hinterland ' conflict will continue as a festering wound. Of course counter questions can be raised, for example why is there no protest against militant outrage? But in my opinion that is undoubtedly the obverse point, but the fulcrum is on her protest, non violent in nature and detrimental to the interests of the self. This self denial, self abnegation is the moot point around which this symbol of protest and recalcitrance works. Needless to say, she has numerous empathizers and supporters both within and outside the state or the North East Region. This support is not so much for the cause, but for the rectitude and stubbornness for a cause, commitment for it and totally self reliant and self annihilating. This the authorities must see in objective perspectives rather than citing vague laws for abetting suicide. She is becoming silently more and more a symbol of individual protest, largely unnoticed but noticed only when her health is failing or shadows of death impinge upon her self. That is the worry, or rather fear of the authorities. Till now they have managed to repress the fear, not gauging the storm of her protest, the historical causality behind it and above all the symbolic gesture that she represents for people living in conflict and twilight zones. There is an impasse in situations, only where there is no act of negotiation, which is essentially a two way process. There is an impasse in conflicts only when ego dominates, especially in situations like this the political ego. One can only mutter lamely and sardonically, that is only when International honours are bestowed on people struggling for a cause, then does the waking call come.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C Dixit
Ahmedabad - 15

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

“Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it.”
---Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 226 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2016

Annual CAG Reports
THE Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) keeps track of government spending and scrutinize all expenditures. A sound internal financial reporting with relevant and reliable information significantly contributes to efficient and effective governance by state governments. If private or public limited companies are expected to follow diligent book keeping procedures then much more is expected from the government which is the custodian of public funds. Hence governments are expected to comply with financial rules, procedures and directives and to report on the spending incurred with supporting documents. Any deviance from such established accounting rules and procedures would result in corruption and/or favouritism where rules are bent to favour one or the other recipient of funds instead of looking at the merit of the organization/individual who has applied for such funds.

In the latest CAG report the Arts and Culture Department has drawn much flak due to its inability to strictly adhere to laid down procedures and for allowing those who have been beneficiaries of grants from the Department to get away without submitting Utilisation Certificates (UCs). Funds were sought by various organizations for sundry activities. It is the duty of the Department to keep track and ensure that the funds were utilised for the purpose meant. No matter how high profile the recipient of funds are procedures cannot be dispensed with.

But the Art and Culture Department is not the only defaulter. Out of 6,764 Utilisation Certificates (UCs) involving Rs 95.76 crore pending as on March 31, 2015, three UCs pertaining to the North Eastern Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) amounting to Rs 37.51 crore were pending for over three years. This would mean that NERCORMP has not kept its books in order or is unable to reconcile the spending with the vouchers available, which in turn could mean misappropriation of funds by the Institution. It was the CAG that detected the 1.76 lakh crore 3-G scam and later the Coalgate scam during the UPA government's tenure. It is important therefore for the government and its functionaries to take the CAG reports seriously.

LOOKING BACK
January 1, 1989

Danger signal

With the Lok Sabha elections just 11 months away, the image and stock of the Congress(I) have plummeted sharply following its poll debacle in Tamil Nadu. It is too late in the day and pointless to speculate now that if the Congress(I) had gone for an electoral alliance with the Jayalalitha faction of the AIADMK as it had done in the past with the AIADMK of Late Mr M G Ramachandran, the poll outcome would have been different as the percentage of votes polled by these two parties indicate. The fact remains that the Tamil Nadu election had become a test case for the Congress (I) to assess if it could salvage at least one state in the south in the face of growing regional opposition backed by the National Front of five parties, three of them regional.

It was being said now on behalf of the Congress (I) that the Tamil Nadu poll results will hardly have any impact on the prospects of the party in the next parliamentary elections since the assembly elections were fought more on local issues than national issues. But there is no denying that apart from local issues a major factor which has influenced the outcome of the poll is the continuing search of almost all major opposition parties for a viable alternative to the Congress(I) at the Centre. That is why opposition leaders have characterized the outcome of this election as a vote against the Prime Minister

Mr Rajiv Gandhi himself.

For some time in the recent past Congress(I) leaders had been toying with the idea of a snap poll for Parliament provided the party did well in Tamil Nadu. Having failed to return even its old strength in the Tamil Nadu assembly, there is no reason to believe that the Prime Minister will call for a snap poll to oblige the opposition which is now demanding the same. There are ominous signs of discontent within the Congress(I) which is likely to assume alarming proportions as the Parliamentary poll approaches nearer. The recent resignation from the party and the Lok Sabha by a senior member, Mr Raj Mangal Pandey could be the beginning of a steady erosion unless Mr Rajiv Gandhi can convince the rank and file that Congress(I) continues to remain as good a vote-gathering machine as it used to be in the past. Not many just now perhaps are willing to jump the fence for the singular reason of losing their pension by not completing the full terim in Parliament.

The discontent inside the party has manifested itself in the dissidence in Bihar, Rajasthan and Gujarat, for instance. The threats to stability of ministries in Congress(I) ruled state will in all likelihood rather grow than diminish in the remaining months before the parliamentary poll.

India’s act east policy: whither Northeast India?

Observers would be one in saying that India has indeed begun to implement its act east policy. Earlier India had been overly cautious but recent developments under the Modi Government increasingly demonstrate a greater political will in playing a part in shaping the changing security architecture in Asia Pacific. The joint communique between India and Vietnam in September 2014 opposing threats to freedom of navigation and use of coercion in the South China Sea, the signing of the 2015 defence framework between India and US that includes a pledge to increase each other's capability to secure among others freedom of navigation across sea lanes of communication, the fact that India had sent four-ship naval flotilla to Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia, as part of a visit to the South China Sea etc all seem to suggest that India's Act east policy is about balancing China in the region. It is however, much more than that. China's expanding presence in the Indian Ocean, its increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea has reinforced the relevance of India's relations with the countries of Asia Pacific. The Asia-Pacific region has always drawn the attention of India's foreign policy makers. However, the contexts and thrusts of India's approach to the region have changed. The Indian government in 2015 upgraded the look east policy to act east policy that continues to be driven by economic and security interests. It is extended beyond Southeast Asia underlining the importance of the geopolitics of the region. It is therefore about renewed attempt at bolstering ties with the region, taking part in the emerging strategic discourse, etc.

The look east policy was linked with India's domestic considerations as an innovative attempt to link India's landlocked Northeastern states with the stronger Southeast Asian economies. The significance of Northeast India has grown over the years because of its land linkages with Southeast Asia beginning with Myanmar. The challenge lies in acting east in a manner that can reap

the consequential benefit of transforming India's landlocked northeast to a land linked space. The big question is how can that come about? One way would be to convert Northeast India's history and culture into a soft power resource. The shared heritage between India and the ASEAN region ranging from Borobudur, in Indonesia to Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious monument, in Cambodia, the spread of Indian mythology and folklore, the Thai epic Ramakien based on the Ramayana etc are well known and documented. The shared cultural and traditional heritage between India's northeast and the ASEAN countries are yet to be explored. The common food, culture, weaving motifs, hunting practices etc in their own unique way can be used as a link to strengthen relations. Similarly, just as educational Institutions have in the past played an important role where scholars from across Asia came to study in renowned Indian universities such as Nalanda and Takshashila in the present context educational institutions housed in Northeast India can play a very important role. Not simply as nodal points but much more than that. Courses on Southeast Asian history, politics, languages etc can be introduced in these universities so that students are exposed to the world of Southeast Asia. For this teachers specialized in the said areas can be employed to disseminate knowledge about Southeast Asian region with which India is seeking deeper engagement. Similarly, there could be exchange of students, teachers between the universities of Northeast India and Universities of Southeast Asia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a proposal to open an ASEAN Studies Centre at the North-Eastern Hill University during his opening statement at the ASEAN-India Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia is an encouraging step forward in this direction.

Northeast India houses many important Buddhist sites and important monas-

teries. Once again the path of the Buddha can be traced from Arunachal Pradesh to Myanmar and beyond. India could then utilize the Buddhist heritage circuits, so that there is an increase in the Asian pilgrims annually. This in turn will encourage greater interaction leading to an increase in trade, commerce and tourism in the entire region. While leading the Buddha Purnima prayers in May 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that "the 21st Century will be Asia's century and without Buddha, this cannot be Asia's century." Clearly Prime Minister Modi's placing of Buddhism at the centre of India's diplomatic initiatives is a creative idea. A high profile Chinese Ambassador, Hu Shih, echoes the image of India as a cradle of wisdom that has given it an unique identity when he had said "India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border." China has already started deriving geopolitical benefits from its Buddhist links. It is not necessary for India to undertake counter measures simply to checkmate Chinese Buddhist influence in India's neighborhood. More importantly, its high time for India to think of the ways in which it can win the hearts of the Buddhist population of Southeast Asia that will entail for enduring relations between the two regions. Again, in the tourism sector specifically eco tourism can be promoted. For this to translate to reality two policy goals are currently pertinent. Firstly, there is the need to improve infrastructure, particularly in transportation and the service sector, second, to involve the local people in the activities. The service sector will have to be upgraded keeping in mind the fact that this is a seismic zone and therefore any construction will have to be friendly to the environmental needs. Simple cottages with clean essential facilities for a comfort break internet access and connectivity are the basic requirements that need to be fulfilled which would attract visitors from not just Southeast Asia but from world over. Needless to say the least for this to happen air connectivity,

roads will have to sufficiently improve. For example state capitals be connected by direct flight to the capitals of the ASEAN countries together with simplifying travel formalities.

So far India has been unable to meet the expectations of its ASEAN friends who more often than not complain about New Delhi not 'doing enough'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's maiden presence at the 9th East Asia Summit and the 12th India-ASEAN summit in Myanmar provides a glimpse into India's willingness to be involved in regional security issues beyond its shores. India's maritime policy cannot be divorced from its Look/act East policy, in which the North East India factor is an important driver. For instance, the Kaladan multimodal project is intended to provide an outlet to landlocked North East India into the Indian Ocean (Mizoram in North East India to Sittwe port in Myanmar). The port connectivity has to be seen in conjunction with road and rail connectivity (the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway network). So far China has been able to draw advantage from India's inability to implement projects on time and the lack of coordination among its various agencies and departments. The high level visits to some of the ASEAN countries that the Modi government undertook in a short span of time were meant to signal the shift to the goal of making up the lost ground of implementation of that policy that broadly encompasses the key elements of development of economic relations, strengthening of soft power ties etc, India's act east policy will have to feature Northeast India with a clear road map in place. It would be action at the level of implementation indeed that will determine the success or failure of this policy. To establish its seriousness of India's commitment towards the people of Northeast India the Modi government must demonstrate that the act east policy is much more than rebranding the existing policy.

The author is Associate Prof, Dept. of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University

TO THE EDITOR

Police rejoinder too hasty

Editor,
Apropos to the rejoinder by Mr M Kharkrang IPS, SP, East Khasi Hills (ST March 23, 2016), it is unfortunate for a person of his stature to retort without grasping the meaning of the letter. It clearly shows that he is hasty and lacks sensitivity and it actually puts him in a poor light. First of all let me clarify that I never identified myself as the daughter of a retired police officer (a fact that was not verified). So why personalize the issue? Secondly, no favour was sought from any quarter but only the facts were stated. Thirdly, I was there at the spot with my daughter (who is incidentally not Kosini Hynniewta the undersigned) when the calls were received. Was Kharkrang at the spot that he could certify the tone and tenor of the caller? To defend the police force so vehemently is to be biased. Fourthly, my daughter was not against being summoned but the terse manner in which the summon was made and the handling of the case that turned into a harassment and was therefore unprofessional. Lastly, to claim that the lady police officer

is on duty 24x7 is unthinkable, otherwise my daughter should have met her at the police station when she reported there.

Yours etc.,
Kosini Hynniewta,
Shillong-5

Shillong on my Mind
Editor,
Shillong has always been and will always be on my mind! The best years were spent growing up in Shillong. But I never learned much about the culture, apart from the dress and food i.e.; of my home town. It was always cosmopolitan and the leanings were always more towards the westernized culture be it music, lifestyle or otherwise. So it is great to know that the Monolith Festival is happening. The images and visuals from the advertisements are mind blowing and I wish I could be there to take in the sights and sounds. But I got to know about it rather late so I could not reschedule work but I will definitely try to be there for the next festival

From the visuals on the Monolith Festival the celebration of the Khasi way of life that has a profound spiritual relationship with nature and the respect and gratitude that the people

have for the land and for the natural resources is brought to light in the most poignant way. From what I understand the Monolith Festival 2016 will showcase the rich tapestry of culture not just to entertain but to educate and to get a glimpse of the roots that define the identity of being a Khasi by highlighting the embodiment of the Khasi culture with nature which is manifested in the music and the instruments, the arts, the sacred groves, the living bridges, the traditional healers, the food, the traditional games, in the folk lore and belief systems etc. It's great to know that the few lah will be part of the festival too. I remember taking people from Nagaland to Bara Bazar and getting thoroughly lost there. It was fun! The Khasis as a community through their collective perspective on the political, social, economic and cultural norms have thrived for generations and the Monolith Festival 2016 will give testimony to this in a visual narrative and sensory experience that is vibrant, dynamic, embracing the essence of what it is to be, to know the roots, and to be able to coax the good earth to give its abundance, its healing power, its music, its gifts.... The theme and the visuals say it all..... Feel Culture!

Shillong revisited will

be surely enriching and profound; especially when it is timed with the Monolith festival.

Yours etc.,
J. Longkumer,
Dimapur

Climate of religious intolerance in India
Editor,
It is undoubtedly disgraceful and outrageous that the Modi Govt. has recently denied visas to the American members of US Commission on International Religion Freedom (USCIRF) to come to India to see for themselves the reported religious persecution that have been unleashed by some Hindu fanatics on the religious minorities. Markedly, if the USCIRF is unhesitatingly accorded permission to visit some of the countries that have earned infamy in terms of religious practices like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, China and even by regions with dubious human rights record on religious freedom, I can't see why the same is being unashamedly negated in this country, the abode of Lord Buddha and Gandhi, the apostle of peace and tolerance?

This studied refusal of the said visas on the part of the BJP led Government in

BJP isolated from sensitive students JNU events harden stance of Sangh Parivar

By Amulya Ganguli

It is rare for the National Human Rights Commission to intervene in the affairs of a university. If it has nevertheless done so following renewed unrest in Hyderabad central university, the reason is the BJP's inability to deal with disaffected youths.

The party knows only one way to tackle disgruntled elements. It is by using force either by its own followers as the lawyers close to the BJP did in the Patiala House Court in New Delhi when they beat up the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student leader, Kanhaiya Kumar.

Or by using the police as when former Delhi police commissioner, B.S. Bassi, considered close to Union home minister Rajnath Singh, brushed aside the incidents of assault on Kanhaiya Kumar and the threats to senior lawyers as "minor scuffles" or "jostling".

The same pattern has been seen in Hyderabad where the commission has noted the "highhanded" conduct of the police and university officials. At the time of Rohith Vemula's suicide in the university, such highhandedness was also on display, including the suspension of students and the stoppage of their stipends.

Rohith's tragic death pushed the university authorities, including the vice-chancellor, Appa Rao Podile - Smriti Irani's "poodle"? - on to the back foot with Appa Rao's decision to go on temporary leave. His return has now sparked off fresh trouble.

Any government sensitive to the sentiments of the students would have advised the unpopular vice-chancellor to stay away for a longer period or found him another position - as it has done with other RSS apparatchiki like Y.S. Rao in the Indian Council of Historical Research or Gajendra Chauhan in the Film and Television Institute.

But the government evidently regards the students as well as all those who disagree with it as anti-nationals and, therefore, deserving harsh treatment. It has used the colonial-era sedition law against the rebellious JNU students, though with limited success. In Hyderabad, it wants to impose its writ which includes propping up a puppet in the vice-chancellor's office.

As Arun Jaitley's recent comments show, the government is not only engaged in an "ideological war" with the purported anti-nationals, but even believes that it is winning since some of its opponents have had to say, Jai Hind, though not Bharat Mata ki Jai (BMkJ), the slogan which is the Hindutva parivar's litmus test for patriotism.

Evidently, unless all the suspects say BMkJ, the sword of sedition will hang over their heads. The only one who will escape unscathed with flying colours are the students affiliated to the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the BJP's student wing.

Considering that polarization is the avowed goal of the Sangh parivar, it is not surprising that the BJP is apply-

ing the same divisive methods as it does to Hindu-Muslim relations to the student community as well. But unlike in the cases of communal incidents, where the deaths of suspected beef-eaters or innocent cattle-herders do not faze the saffron brotherhood, the students belong to a different category.

The BJP runs the risk, therefore, of becoming mired in greater trouble unless it realizes that it has to be far more circumspect in dealing with students, especially because, fortuitously for them, the student community has thrown up several talented speakers like Kanhaiya Kumar (who has made it to India Today magazine's list of "powerful" people), Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya.

The last two have been called "highly educated" by a Delhi sessions court, which is trying them for sedition. It is a description which cannot be applied to most of the saffron politicians. Rohith himself was similarly gifted before his life was tragically cut short.

One reason why the BJP has had a free run till now is that it did not face effective speakers. Manmohan Singh doesn't speak at all. Sonia Gandhi reads haltingly from a paper and, while Rahul may have perked up considerably since his 57-day sabbatical a year ago, there is still something contrived about his belligerence. He is not a natural orator like the new kids on the JNU block.

Their disadvantage, however, is that they are far too young to be taken seriously. Besides, they do not yet belong to a party despite their ideological thrust. Their Leftism, too, is dated, as it recalls the period when the Soviet Union still existed and China did not believe with Deng Xiaoping that "to get rich is glorious". Their political innocence can still seem attractive because of the absence of any taint of party affiliation. But since the ultimate confrontation in a democracy is between different political parties, lone rangers cannot go too far.

Yet, they can make a worthwhile contribution to mainstream politics with their talent for making effective political points with a mixture of humour and sarcasm. Already, they have put the ABVP on the defensive despite its official backing. Moreover, their candour and intelligence have led to questions being raised about the sedition law with the government promising to take a fresh look at it.

What the government considered a handy stick in its hands to beat all those who opposed it, ranging from Hardik Patel to Kanhaiya Kumar, has become a blunt instrument because the JNU and Hyderabad central university have produced students of extraordinary calibre at a time when politicians are generally disliked for their cynicism and chicanery. (IPA Service)

Delhi will, in the final analysis lead to the path of majoritarian totalitarianism as veritably exemplified, of late, in Rajasthan, a BJP ruled state, where a group of Kashmiri students of Mewar University were arrested for allegedly cooking beef and the subsequent tortures and hanging of two cattle traders in Jharkhand on March 18 last, reportedly perpetrated by the Hindu vigilante sections who have become so viciously emboldened with the installation of the BJP to power in

New Delhi since May, 2014. Hence such revolting incidents which are seemingly going out of control as of now in India, synchronizing with the said denial of visas to USCIRF have given widespread credence worldwide of India's religious intolerance and thus vindicates the Shakespearean dictum: 'Something, is rotten in the state of Denmark'(read India)

Yours etc.,
Jerome Diengdoh
Shillong-2

“Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the president.”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 227 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

Art 356 in Uttarakhand
A day before a trust vote was to be held in the Uttarakhand assembly in view of the Congress Government having lost its majority, President’s rule was imposed in the State. It was the Congress ruling at the centre which indulged in this practice frequently. The recent decision clashes with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s commitment to “co-operative federalism”. Besides, more power is being progressively vested in the states. The Uttarakhand decision goes against the trend. The contention of the centre is that the Harish Rawat Government has lost its majority and so could not continue. But the claim has to be tested on the floor of the assembly.

Uttarakhand Governor K.K.Paul had set March 28 as the date for the trust vote. It is hard to understand why he suddenly changed his mind and asked for imposition of Article 356 in Uttarakhand. Of course, the test vote would have caused chaos in the assembly. But there was no evidence of a possible breakdown.

The Uttarakhand decision comes in the wake of the imposition of President’s rule in Arunachal Pradesh. There is a breakdown between the BJP and the Congress at the centre. The ruling party does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha. Important legislation has to be put through. Unnecessary confrontation between the BJP and the Congress is far from welcome in these circumstances. Former Chief Minister Harish Rawat moving the Uttarakhand High Court and parading MLAs to prove majority were mere gestures.

LOOKING BACK
January 1, 1989

Indian villages to have better phones than London's

Indian Villages will soon have public telephone better than the ones that dot the plush streets of London. An Indian fir has just entered into a joint venture with one of the world's top payphone manufacturers GEC Plessey Telecommunication GPT of Britain to manufacture public telephones in India.

The joint venture, which will give the Indian firm a 60 per cent holding includes technology transfer and will initially concentrate on the manufacture of payphones accepting pre-paid stored value cards.

GPT expects to manufacture 5000 to 7000 payphones in the first year and 15,000 20,000 the next year under the agreement signed earlier this week, GPT said. Kits manufactured in Britain will be assembled in India with technology being progressively transferred to India.

GPT spokesman Peter Brown said his company was the world leader in payphone technology and that the joint venture would help India meet its declared intent to provide a telephone in each village.

Most certainly, the will be an improved version of what one sees in London Mr Brown said. "Not only will the telephone sets be better, but the cards themselves are secure and damage proof.

The telephone cards will be sold in the villages once the first payphones start rolling out in matter of months. Mr Brown said.

The payphones are to be manufactured in Shilma and are also to be installed in airports, hospitals shopping complexes and railway stations.

Pak intruders kill six in Punjab

Six people, including a Sarpanch were killed and

arms and ammunition left by fleeing Pakistani intruders seized in Punjab during the past 24 hours. A Jalandhar report quoting police said Sarpanch Desh Raj was gunned down by terrorists at Mauwat village in the district this evening.

One Parshotam Lal was shot dead by terrorists at Lohar a village in Ferozepur district last night. His driver Ajmer Singh was injured. Terrorists shot dead on Mohinder Singh near Dulo Nangal village in Majitha Police District (Amritsar) and escaped on his scooter.

A bullet riddled body was recovered near a village in Gurdaspur District last night. Border Security Forces recovered some arms and large of quantity of ammunition abandoned by intruders from Pakistan who fled back when challenged. A Terrorist named Tekhat Singh was arrested in Bhatinda district last night and one 38 bore pistol recovered from him.

Blizzard topple North Point

Blizzard swept North Point out of the reckoning at the third semi-final when they dismissed them for a mere 78 runs in 28-2 over at the YMCA Junior Cricket Tournament the St. Edmund's grounds on Friday.

North Point won the toss and elected to field, but despite some fine bowling of Pradip Das, who took four wickets, Sylvester and Jeremy from Blizzard stuck in for a partnership yielding 52 precious runs. Blizzard were 144 for 9 wickets at the 30-over mark.

The North Point stint was sticky as runs were few and far between, while Andrew of the Blizzards picked up four wickets. Babul of North Point was the highest scorer with 17 runs.

Why Good Men should protest Rape

There is nothing innately rapist about masculinity. Nor is there anything innately victim-like in femininity. Men and women are gendered only peripherally. Well beyond gender lie the glorious, all-shining tiers of morally uplifting human nature. At the summit lies the divine Core or natural Light within – to be accessed equally by men and women alike.

Moreover, the ideals of Indian masculinity are the total converse of those of American masculinity. These latter perverse, anti-ascetic goals – so well exemplified by “The Donald” – are the total converse of the perennial, sublime ascetic norms. American masculinity aims at virility on the one hand – and pursuit of unlimited wealth, on the other. The greater his sexual prowess and the more wealth he amasses, the more masculine this strand of the American male is held to be. This is not to suggest that all American men follow this perverse ideal. After all, the great transcendentalist H. D. Thoreau – the total converse of The Donald – was American and male. Thus, one might say this of America – good American men thwart the prevailing norms of virile masculinity to become who they are.

When it comes to India however, one might say almost the reverse ... For the ideals of Indian masculinity (more than femininity) are forged in ascetic terms – using specifically the virtues of chastity and renunciation. Let us not forget that the first ardent feminists of India were men – not women. In the sphere of Hinduism, these first feminists were idealistic men – not romantic men motivated by the desire to forge the free woman they could fall in love with – but rather, fathers, brothers, uncles, male intellectuals and monks wholly outraged by the humiliation of the Hindu woman. Foremost among these men was the great unparalleled Swami Vivekananda, whose exhortations towards “manliness” were appeals for chastity and diatribes against moral weakness. The ascetic ideals of masculinity permitted the Indian male to transcend bodily masculinity to see the Indian woman from a humane perspective. They inspired in him the highest ideals of identity – not mere equality – the notion that whether male or female, we each possess the same divine Core within. These noble ascetic ideals continue to guide the Indian male to this day. It should not surprise us that male graduate students of Indian origin in America, are sometimes so non-plussed by the glaring worldliness of some academic fields – like Economics and Business – that they return home in a spirit of renunciation to become monks. But the sad reality of Indian masculinity wholly defeats these ideals.

If in America, the reality that belies the coarse ideals of masculinity is noble, then in India it is the opposite. A perverse reality con-

travenes the noble ideals. In contradistinction with the noble ideals of Indian masculinity, reality is perverted by horrific misogyny and a culture of rape – laced with this disgusting motif – “boys will be boys.” Therefore, the greatest tragedy of Indian history lies in this fiction concocted by masculine double standards – that although men rape women, the Indian woman is condemned as The Temptress.

All good-hearted men should protest the shameful American ideals of masculinity often prevalent among ordinary Indian men – for which we cannot blame the west. All self-respecting Indian men should find such definitions of masculinity both abhorrent and insulting. They should pray that out of the ashes of such senseless masculinity will rise the phoenix of ascetic (not puritanical) masculinity. I emphasize this because it is only when men have rejected the moniker of masculine virility that they will be able to look upon women as mothers, sisters and daughters – instead of as sexual prey. Only then can we expect older men to band together to reprimand and educate younger men – teaching them to respect women.

Let us not forget the role of women in this matter. The Indian subcontinent is unique in the world in the misogyny displayed by women towards one another. Often older women abuse younger women. Often it is women who deem the female rape survivor as pariah and untouchable. Often it is women who fawn upon spoilt, lustful Indian men. Thus women must also educate each other on rising above the passions – on conquering lust and jealousy – to reach levels of humane humanity that permit them to see younger women as individuals worthy of respect and love – instead of as pawns in arranged marriage treaties. Indian women should stop forever their fawning on unworthy Indian men – recognizing their own complicity in such fawning.

When it comes to rape, let us not forget that both women and men can be victims of rape. Let us not forget either that rape is an act of violence that uses sexuality as a weapon. Let us not forget that rape murders the soul of the victim. Let us not forget that lust and hatred are twin vices – that hatred usually accompanies lust – that rape is more an expression of hatred than lust. Finally let us not forget this truism – that nobody deserves rape – not even the rapist. No matter how women dress, and regardless of how provocative a woman might be – she does not deserve to be raped. Moreover, although the virtue of chastity is the only full-proof weapon against the vice of lust, it need not help in a case of rape. After all, it is not as if nuns have not been raped in the Indian subcontinent.

By Deepa Majumdar

This article is dedicated to Shailinia Kharrymba

Some years ago an Indian policeman advised a young woman victim of “eve-teasing” as follows: “You see mother, you get into this sort of trouble because you think yourself a girl. Learn to think of yourself as a mother.” But this exhortation to motherhood (i.e. chastity) as a mode of defense against “eve-teasing” expresses a most irresponsible idealism – perhaps a side-effect of India’s history of radical inwardness. For the Indian civilization, having the enviable history of mastering the science of meditation and hence inwardness, can be prone to inordinate idealism, to the neglect of even idealistic pragmatism. While motherhood as chastity is indeed the highest expression of the human soul – whether male or female – and while it is the only effective antidote to lust in others, it may not be adequate to stop the lunacy of the rapist. Moreover, it is in bad taste to preach this to a young survivor of molestation. For one, chastity and dispassion, brought about by sublimation of the passions, come to us only when we mature out of adolescence and youth. Often these virtues visit us at a much later stage in life. For another, in these times of supreme temptations, it is unrealistic to expect the youth to be naturally chaste. Instead, policemen and women should train young women in the basics of self-defense. They should distribute pepper sprays and other instruments of self-defense.

Having said this, let us yet remember that the sexual act itself is, even in the best case scenario, volatile (not violent) and reactive. Thus to caution women to dress properly and avoid danger need not amount to sexism. Such cautionary moves can be simply pragmatic, sensible, and realistic. They do not necessarily blame the victim. They speak rather to the dastardly assumptions underlying masculine virility – that the mere sight of feminine flesh can provoke in them the violence of rape. For in the calculation of the depraved male mind, a woman can only be a passive recipient of the male carnal act. She can only be sexually acted upon. She cannot be active – only reactive. Moreover, according to this sick mind, a “loose” woman deserves to be raped.

But contravening this sick form of Indian masculinity there are those self-controlled men in India and elsewhere, who somehow recognize their historical responsibility for the sexual act. Inasmuch as it is men who have historically possessed the carnal weapon, they recognize that it is more incumbent upon men than women to be chaste and self-controlled. Recognizing the depravities of some members of their gender, such men understand that even the most depraved of women cannot match the depravities of men. Indeed such virtuous men are likely to be more disgusted than women by the act of rape. Such men cannot imagine the sexual

act outside of love and responsibility. They cannot imagine harming the beloved.

Why should good men protest rape? Not only because every rape is a slur on their good name – this being a selfish motive. Not only because they feel intensely about the case at hand – for feelings come and go. Not only because they want relief from the group guilt of Indian masculinity and the concomitant shame it brings before the eyes of the world – because this too is a selfish motive. But because they accept group responsibility and the group resolve to never again permit another young woman to ever be violated by rape. In the end it is only men who can educate and punish male rapists on a matter as private as sexual ethics. It is only good-hearted Indian men who can destroy the self-indulgent cult of “boys will be boys.” We women already know these things. We have already protested enough.

Now it is time for good-hearted Indian men to demand that male rapists be brought to justice – that they be socially shunned when the justice system fails the rape victim because of tardiness or any other reason. It is time for good-hearted men to inspire the courts with a fast-track for the crime of rape. It is time for masculine theologians and clergymen to assure young rapists that the karmic consequences of their crimes – whether in this world or in the afterlife – is a million-fold worse than the acts of rape. Finally, it is time for good-hearted men to reflect on the outsized male ego that reacts with so much violence when rejected romantically by women. It is time for the Indian male to reflect on masculine responses as violent as acid attacks, rape, etc. It is time that society as a whole reflects on the sad plight of the physically beautiful young woman. Why should her very existence be jeopardized for no reason other than her “original sin” of possessing physical beauty?

It is my dream that all good-hearted men of Shillong will first hold a meeting to meditate deeply on the sufferings of Shailinia Kharrymba, whose innocence rings in our hearts – whose only fault was that she was female. That they will recognize in her the crucified form of Christ. That they will then march through the streets of Shillong to protest her rape and murder. That they will organize to educate and reprimand younger men to reconstruct a different culture of masculinity. That they will feel they cannot hold their heads high until they have challenged the state to treat rape and murder with requisite urgency. It is my dream that male musicians of Shillong will compose songs against rape. That masculine teachers will preach sexual ethics to their male students. That fathers and brothers will educate young men to respect women sexually.

For violence against women will not recede until Indian men decry the villainy of some members of their gender.

NDA’s defence infrastructure still not adequate North East borders need more attention

By Barun Das Gupta

Nepal and China have just signed a slew of ten agreements. One of these is on extending the existing railway line from Tibet to Nepal to boost connectivity’. China has also assured Nepal to ‘safeguard’ her ‘sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity’ and non-interference in Nepal’s internal affairs. In the backdrop of the recent cooling off of India-Nepal relations, the strategic significance of the extension of the railway line and the Chinese assurance on safeguarding Nepal’s sovereignty is obvious.

China has been relentlessly pursuing its programme of logistic build-up against India in Tibet. It has been engaged in building all-weather roads for many years now. The Chinese military strength in Tibet has increased. A number of airports and airstrips have been built in Tibet. To bring troops from the mainland of China right up to India’s borders has become far easier than ever before. A decade ago, in July, 2006, the 1956 km long Golmud-Lhasa railway line was inaugurated, enabling quick movement of Chinese troops to Tibet and thence to Indian border. (Golmud is a town in China’s Qinghai Province). In November last year, the SF group, one of China’s biggest logistics firm, announced a major programme of expansion into South-East Asia that would rapidly build up its fleet of aircraft. It was not India-specific but covered India as well.

Indian preparations to meet the Chinese threat started quite belatedly. Even the humiliating military defeat in 1962 did not wake up India sufficiently to future threats from the Chinese, despite China’s increasing hostility to India. It is only during the later part of the UPA rule that the decision was taken to raise a Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) to counter the growing Chinese threat in our northern borders.

The Corps was to be built over a period of seven years at a cost of Rs. 64,678 crore. Preparations started in right earnest for raising, initially, two infantry divisions and one independent armoured brigade which was to be trained to operate in Tibet in case of necessity. When fully raised, it would have 86,000 troops with two independent and one infantry brigades. The MSC was to have its headquarters at Panagarh in West Bengal where huge Hercules 130J transport planes would be stationed to ferry troops at a short notice. (The Corps is now temporarily headquartered at Ranchi in Jharkhand). The defence establishment also made it clear that to be fully effective the Corps must have a logistic supply line and adequate infrastructural support which would require additional funds. Apparently, the UPA Government agreed to it.

However, when the NDA came to power in 2014, its defence priorities seemed to change. It adopted a conciliatory policy toward China. This was in sharp contrast

with the anti-China belligerence shown by the BJP when it was in the Opposition. First it was reported that the new government was ‘reviewing’ the MSC project and thinking of ‘downsizing’ it because of its ‘high cost’. But in May last year, Defence Minister Parrikar categorically stated that the Government was going to ‘freeze’ the MSC at its current level, without elucidating what the ‘current level’ was. This was a setback to India’s defence preparations in the north-east.

Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force is doing its bit to reinforce air defence in the border areas. In Arunachal Pradesh the IAF is building eight Advance Landing Grounds. These are expected to be completed by the year end. They will be capable of handling the Super Hercules transport planes. The British built some airstrips in the present Arunachal Pradesh during the Second World War. These are being renovated and made serviceable. Some will be equipped with night-landing facilities.

But the air force is not a substitute for the army. The army has to be there, both to defend the country against aggression as also to carry out offensive operations whenever necessary. The importance of the MSC with its full potential cannot therefore be minimized. Of late, contradictory signals are emanating from the Government and the defence establishment.

The Defence Minister says that MSC has been frozen but the army officers maintain that work on raising the Corps is in progress and by 2021 it will be completed. In fact the MSC in its present form held war-gaming exercises in January this year, keeping in view possible war scenarios and Chinese strategy. The details of the exercises have not been made known.

The Government should assure the people that there is no let up in the efforts to strengthen our defences in the north-east; that the MSC has not been frozen; and that necessary infrastructural and logistic facilities, integral to the project, are being created. There has been no news about the progress made in the construction of road and railways all along the northern border with China as was promised with great fanfare, or about the proposed 378 km long railway line running from Missamari in Assam to Tawang in Arunachal at an altitude of over nine thousand feet. India-Nepal relations have to be viewed in this larger context. India has to cultivate Nepal and be extra careful to her sensitivities. India must not appear to be taking a big-brotherly attitude. Nepal was hurt by India’s attitude when the trouble with the Madhesis erupted last year. (IPA Service)

show respect to this great son of the soil. Historians need to be objective in interpreting the past with honesty and without bias and refrain from iconic worship of individuals for personal and political benefits.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J 4B3

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

TO THE EDITOR

Still hope for Megh-Alaya

Editor,
Apropos the article, ‘The Unfinished Love Story’ by Paramjit Bakhshi (ST Mar 24, 2016) I wish to express my appreciation for the imaginative and poetic rendition of the story of our land. The irony in the title cannot be overlooked for there was never a love story to begin with. The ‘husband’- an embodiment of politics, only wooed and courted ‘Megh Alaya’ to squander her wealth in providing for the desires and demands of his mistress ‘Personal Wealth’. The lovers that Megh Alaya succumbs to (out of desperation) are no less dangerous. What prospect awaits the

‘woman’ is but anybody’s guess. As of now, the future seems bleak indeed BUT the ‘children’ have not given up hope. Megh Alaya is in her forties. Time is still there to begin a true love story.

Yours etc.,
Meba Blah,
Viaemail

Revisiting the Nehru years

Editor,
It is important to suggest ?that ?if Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first illustrious PM of Indian Republic is credited for his role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) then he should be made equally responsible for his disastrous blunders with respect to compromises on interna-

tional boundaries with both Pakistan and China that resulted in generations of problems for India. Such a tall international figure failed to protect India’s borders during the Chinese aggression of 1962 and was turned down for any help by major global forces of that period like the US and former USSR

I wonder what the useless NAM platform provided India in spite of high decibel drum beating when the ex PM failed to protect the integrity of the international boundaries of his nation and could not find a single nation standing by India during the crisis. Nehru is solely responsible for his mismanagement of the Kashmir issue, his ‘greatest career blunder’ and always overridden Sardar Patel’s (India’s first

Home Minister) invaluable suggestions for which generations of Indians had to pay very dearly. I am unable ? to understand why an individual who miserably failed the nation during all major crises is religiously worshipped by so called Indian intellectuals not as a politician; but rather as a cult figure and a demi God. Several others like Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad (India’s first Education Minister) who made monumental contributions as architects of this nation d?o not get their due respect as a result of this over-arching shadow of Nehru promoted by sycophants in spite of disastrous blunders he self-inflicted on ?India due to his Himalayan ego that the nation had to pay so dearly for decades?.

Undue praise for ?Nehru

“I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life.”
--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

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Palmyra won!

THE Syrian Army has recaptured Palmyra. It is a big blow to the ISIS. The international community is happy. US air strikes had been telling on the ISIS power. But last May the ISIS took Palmyra, a UNESCO heritage site. It is surprising that it was Russia which is against the Assad regime which has made the recapture of Palmyra possible. It was Russia's military intervention which enabled the Syrian Government to regroup. Its attack on Raqqa and DeirEzzor is about to be launched.

Last August, Palmyra's director Khaled- al- Assad was executed as he refused to tell the ISIS where the smaller artefacts were hidden. It has now been revealed what damage has been done to Palmyra. Apart from the famous structures, countless artifacts in the Palmyra museum have been the victims of ISIS vandalism.

It will take time to assess the extent of the damage. The basement which housed hundreds of statues has been blown away with dynamite. The Syrian Antiquities Chief says that restoration/ of Palmyra treasures will take five years. It has been a tragedy in the history of civilization. It is to be seen what impact the revelations have on the Geneva talks where western powers are trying to hammer out a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis. What role Vladimir Putin's Russia will play is not altogether clear.

LOOKING BACK

January 1, 1989

Checking against sale of unfit meet
A govt decision nobody remembers

Most sold at the butcher shops in Meghalaya could well be contaminated as proper medical examination of carcasses and meat for sale is evidently not carried out. In the absence of systematic controls, meat eaters in the state cannot be certain that pork, or beef purchased from the market is disease-free and fit for human consumption.

Beef and pork are popular throughout the state. While most of the pork is home grown, the beef is brought from outside the state. Bulls are brought from Bihar and North Bengal. Most of them are Haryana bred animals unfit for plough and old castrated bulls. They are walked down to Jorabat where a check-gate manned by the veterinary department of Meghalaya has been set up. The official here checks the cattle for visible signs of disease, gives inoculations, puts a mark on their rumps, and lets them through.

"We censure that no diseased cattle come through to Meghalaya", says Dr M A Hasmat, Deputy Director Planning, AH and Veterinary department Cattle with any visible signs of disease are turned back." The catch is that in certain cases, the cattle may not have any visible signs of disease. Cattle infected with the foot and mouth disease, which is fairly common, show signs of lameness or blisters some four to five days after the disease has taken hold. The point is that infected cattle can pass the check post if the infection is fairly recent.

"Injections are given to the cattle which have contracted common ailments. These ailments blisters, boils, can be effectively combated and the meat is not contaminated" asserts Dr Hasmat. While foot and mouth disease may not be fatal to the infected cattle, and consuming of infected meats might not affect a healthy man adversely there are a host of diseases that can be contracted by eating infected meat, anthrax, a pox like disease that claims the lives of many cattle can be transferred to humans as Anthracosis. Another dis-

ease called Hs, short for Haemohorric septicemia can be transferred to humans. Liver fluke, that attacks the liver can be contacted by eating the flesh, especially the liver, of the infected cattle and pigs. That is why proper checking of the carcasses is important.

The according to Dr Hasmat, lies outside the ambit of the Veterinary department. "We take responsibility for the living animals, he said, the slaughter house and the meat is the responsibility of the Municipality. It is they who should make sure that the meat is hygienic and fit for consumption.

A visit to the slaughter house at Mawlai did not turn up any positive answer scores of animals were killed everyday they readily admitted. But who certified that the meat was fit to be eaten? Butchers have no idea whether a procedure for checking the meat existed. In other words, If such a system existed, the butchers knew nothing about it.

Two successive visits to the Shillong Municipality turned up no trumps. The Health Officer Mr A K Roy, received a curt reply "the Municipality has only one doctor and the checking of meat in the slaughter house was not the responsibility of the Municipality. The Health department may kindly be contacted in this regard". The proverbial buck was passed once again.

It will be recalled that following the outbreak of USD, the sale of fish was banned in the state. A few days later, on August 18 last year to be exact, the Chief Minister Mr Purno A Sagma had said that henceforth meat for sale would have to be certified by vets of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department. There was also talk of setting up a modern slaughter house. Meghalaya Health Minister Mrs M War was also present at the meeting. Talking to reporters later she said that Health Inspectors would be given instructions to all go out to combat disease. They would check foodstuff for signs of contamination.

Demand for ILP: introspection needed

By Morning Star Sumer

the garden path by both the governments and NGOs who have been barking up the wrong tree. To see the problem as a mere influx is to pull the wool over our eyes. The imperial/colonial power had taken steps to protect the indigenous citizens by promulgating the Regulation, which is retained by the Constitution of India, 1950 and, therefore, is in the statute book. It had been amended as considered necessary and expedient from time to time: now it has eight Sections, each providing for solutions of a specific problem. The demand for implementing only the so-called ILP is not appropriate. What is needed is invocation of the whole Regulation which also provides for drawing an Inner Line and, consequently, to prescribe the ILP. If no Inner Line is drawn, there is no need for ILP. The most important provision of the Regulation is in Section 7, which reads, "It shall not be lawful for any person, not being a Native of the districts...to acquire any interest in land or the product of land..." This provision debars any non-indigenous citizen(s) in the districts from owning landed property or to deal in the products of the land. The denial of rights to own land and deal in products of the land helps to protect indigenous citizens from being deprived of their land and from social and economic exploitation by clever and cunning non-indigenous citizens. This means that non-indigenous citizen(s), may hold/ possess land on lease with lease deeds executed according to law but not with sale deeds, which, if executed, would be invalid and not recognized in law. It is necessary now therefore, to have a suitable land law to cover cases of land holding and usage. The Mukul Sangma government, however, is against such law. This is evident when, the suggestion offered by the KKR convened by me and held at the Khasi National Durbar Hall, Mawkhair, Shillong, on 6th of December, 2011, to legislate a suitable land law has not been considered by the Chief Minister though he was provided with a copy of the Organisation's own Proposed Draft of Model Act and when requested to grant us

an audience with him to discuss it, he refused even to acknowledge it in spite of my own personal effort, as the convener of the KKR to get his acknowledgment.

The demand for implementing only one provision of the Regulation does not seem to be appropriate. My views expressed to both the govts. and the agitating NGOs at some meetings as well as in articles published in local media made no impression on them. To mention just one article I would refer to one under the caption, "ILP: time to call the govt's bluff" carried on the op-ed page of a local daily in September 10, 2013.

To make matters worse, celebrities jumped into the ring to air their considered opinions without official evidence to support their views. Concerned people usually listen to celebrities' speeches with rapt attention and read their statements in the media with studied attention. They (concerned people) cannot miss the fact that these statements are not supported by any historical, factual or interpretative evidences.

Late Purno A. Sangma, former speaker of Lok Sabha gratuitously offered the opinion that the ILP was "...set up to protect the residents of the country from the fury of the tribals of the state..." (Meghalaya Times, August 31, 2013). No official record was mentioned.

To the question as to why the provisions of the Regulation was prescribed "...for the adjoining district of Cachar (adjoining Lushai Hills)" "...under the same Regulation..." the explanation is obtained from the Foreign Department Notification No.2299 P dated 20 August, 1875, which reads, "...to prevent adventurous planters, traders and shikaris from making excursion across the boundary line which might lead to political complications...". There is no mention here of the fury of the tribals endangering the country's residents.

In a meeting held at the Science and Seminar Hall of NEHU on 28th September, 2012, to 'debate' (later changed "to discuss") the question, "Do we need the Inner Line Permit (ILP) in the State?" another celebrity RG Lyngdoh, former Home Minister of the State, now Vice Chancellor MLCU, had stated authoritatively that

the ILP was devised for the protection of the outsiders, not of the indigenous people in the area! He did so without supporting evidence/facts. This authoritative outlandish statement was carried the following day in all the newspapers in Shillong - English as well as vernacular.

Those who agree with RG Lyngdoh that the Regulation is not for the protection of the insiders but for that of the outsiders, may kindly read the reply of a Minister of State in the ministry of Home Affairs, Shri R.P.N. Singh, to Question No.393 in the Rajya Sabha on 27/Feb/2013, which reads, "The main aim of ILP system is to prevent settlement of other Indian nationals in the States where ILP regime is prevalent, in order to protect the indigenous/tribal population".

Evidently, the hon'ble Minister of State had read and understood the provisions of the Regulation though his wording seems to hide some ulterior motives. However, these facts should put paid to RG Lyngdoh's pet theory.

In a booklet titled "VISION FOR MEGHALAYA on and Beyond the Inner Line Permit" (Editors H. Srikanth, C. Joshua Thomas and Recordus Enmi Kharbani) all the learned contributors to the volume had not touched upon the real purport of the ILP which they had apparently not studied with sufficient circumspection on and about the originator of the ILP - the Regulation itself. Had any of them deigned to read any of my articles with even an iota of concerned attention, none of them would have written in the vein they had done in their contributing articles published in the volume - all had flown off at a tangent from the central point (the Regulation); perhaps, (being carried away by emotions.

No state government(s) had deigned it necessary to counter or confirm any of my views as expressed in my articles/write-ups; especially since the publication of my article carried on the issue of Meghalaya Times dated September 10, 2013.

In spite of my painstaking efforts, I have not come across any official statement to refer to any acts of savagery by the so-called savage indigenes, which could have anything to do with the need to promulgate the Regulation since 1873 until now.

The farce called Acche Din

By Kajal Chatterjee

Had the BJP had ever uplifted itself from its basic ideology ie the rabid divisive parochial policy of 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan'? Prior to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, had the BJP declared that it has forsaken its dream of building Ram Temple at Ayodhya? Had the BJP ever uttered a sole word of repentance for demolishing the Babri Masjid? Had the BJP apologised for the devastating riots in Bombay and large part of the country following that demolition? Had the BJP expressed a bit of regret for the Gujarat pogrom or at least admitted the absolute failure of the Gujarat administration in preventing the mayhem? Had the BJP declared that with the advent of "Good Days", it would forsake its Hindutva policy permanently and identify itself as representatives of all Indians only irrespective of their linguistic and religious status? Certainly all the answers are an emphatic 'No'. So by means of which logic can it be declared that an attempt was taken to give a different orientation to the agenda of BJP prior to the general election? Yes, shrill rhetoric of "development" was certainly rendered long enough and loud enough so as to convince the electorate about its "truth". But people who prefer to keep the windows of their minds open and refuse to get brainwashed by the vested interests had clearly noticed that the BJP was boldly exploiting rabid Hindutva, communalism, racism and casteism to reap electoral dividends.

During the phase of campaigning, BJP boldly and barbarically came up with slogans like "Muslims prey on the honour of Hindu women", "all terrorists are Muslims" and "cow-killer Muslims are by default deportable infiltrators". What a vitriolic campaign in a secular democratic republic! It is nothing but an absolute myth that the "historic" mandate of the BJP had swept away caste, creed and identity politics! If indeed slogans of "development" and "governance" were the only mantra behind the success, why did the BJP leaders have to constantly engage themselves in rabid Hindutva during the campaign? Didn't Amit Shah call for "revenge" while campaigning in Muzaffarnagar? Didn't the most high profile leader of the BJP deliver a speech in Faizabad with a banner and picture of the proposed Ram Mandir at Ayodhya? Why did a certain leader continuously stress on being the "Friday samrat" of a particular section of population? Why did the BJP constantly focus on the caste status of Narendra Modi? When Priyanka Gandhi had merely and rightly spoken of "Nich rajniti" so as to condemn the degrading electoral "culture" of mud-slinging and personal attacks, didn't Modi immediately project the comment as an attack on his "humble" caste origin and started playing to the sentiments of the "backward" castes? While campaigning in Kolkata, BJP leaders felt no qualms in boldly declaring that the migrant communities are being "tortured" in West Bengal just because of the state's "sin" of rightly arresting the Hindi-speaking marauders of a Hospital (that too for merely a short period) whose supreme callousness, failure and antipathy towards all norms of fire-safety regulations had nipped the precious lives of more than 90 vulnerable patients! What a barbaric show of racism and inhumanity practiced by the BJP just for the sake of garnering Hindi-speaking votes

of West Bengal! The whole campaign machinery went all-out to exploit race, religion and caste, that too by casting aspersions on the nationalism of our very own Muslim brothers and sisters; yet a section of the media foolishly declare that caste, creed and identity politics had been swept away by the BJP!

So the party, which did not feel a bit of hesitation in exploiting religion caste and race in the most disgraceful and communal fashion possible in the run up to the general election, will naturally get a huge boost on being rewarded with maximum votes and securing Central power with massive majority and boldly carry on communal programmes and rabid Hindutva with renewed zeal and energy. Apart from the brainwashed lot, no secular rational person is getting surprised by viewing the antics of BJP. The sane tolerant secular people of the country were very much aware of the real face of BJP and didn't vote for such an outfit. Since electoral politics is nothing but sheer numbers and gainer of maximum votes will form the Government, BJP-led NDA had won the game or "war". But the fact remains that only 31 percent of the electorate who actually voted had pushed the button in favour of BJP! Yes, only the corporate sector, communal elements and the brainwashed lot had voted for the BJP.

Prior to the 2015 Delhi Assembly election, none other than the BJP President had candidly declared that Modi's shrill cry of depositing Rs.15 lakh on the bank account of each and every individual after bringing in the black money was nothing but "jumla"! Now perhaps the brainwashed lot are arriving at the realisation that all the slogans of "development" and "Good Days" were nothing but "jumla"!

And what one utters is absolutely irrelevant. A man/woman needs to be judged by his/her action. Mere rhetoric of "We are all Indians" or "India First" will not do. What is the picture in the ground level? How could a person accused in the Muzaffarnagar riots find for himself a proud place in the Union Ministry? How could a leader continue to remain in the Ministry by dividing the electorate on the lines of "Ramzaade" and "...zaade"? How can the marauders enjoy a free run and continue to kill the Kalburgis, threaten the Bhagwans, kill innocent persons of minority denomination for their alleged "sin" of consuming beef and burn churches? Still not a single word of condemnation is being uttered by the Who's Who of Central power!

The nation will at last get "developed" by attaining Mars orbit, building gigantic statues, running bullet trains for the super rich, Yoga, Gita, Sanskrit, Hindi imperialism, cow mata and what not! And let the common people continue leading a life resembling hell thanks to the devils named hunger, poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, sex slavery, child as well as bonded labour and sexual atrocities! Yes, only when welfare measures will get conducted for the upliftment of the downtrodden and all communities are placed on an equally honourable secured platform, can any Union Government lay any moral claim to represent all Indians.

stituency and intensive tours were conducted by him to various areas with great promises to the people. Surprisingly, distributing of money is also allegedly taking place in the office of the Directorate of Social Welfare

which is a stone's throw away from the Secretariat and the office of the Director General of Police. Are people conniving with him?

Yours etc.,
K. Kharbanga,
Shillong-4

TO THE EDITOR

Better law enforcement needed

Editor,
Apropos your thought - provoking and eye-opening article, "Why good men should protest Rape" by Deepa Majumdar (ST March 30, 2016), one finds the scenario for women very grim indeed. This will continue so long as the basic social and economic structures remain unchanged and the implementing and law and order agencies show indifference. It is obvious that there is much to be done to change our laws on rape. While Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code are the major laws dealing with rape, they have failed to match the international standards of addressing the crime. Making tougher laws will only be as effective as their implementation. Violent assaults, rapes and murders of women are symptomatic of a deep societal dysfunction. Any new law on rape should include the conduct of the defence lawyer and bar unethical questions

against the rape victim. If an FIR is registered against a person in a rape case, he should be automatically disqualified from contesting elections. The prosecution for rape and sexual harassment should have toughest lawyers pleading the case to have 100% conviction and not one in over 1000 cases. Before the dignity of more women is sacrificed, we need to have a real change for a better democracy, greater freedom, full transparency, strict law enforcement, and mandatory punishment for heinous crimes against women.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C Dixit,
Via email

Poor debate on Budget speech

Editor,
Observing the discussions on the Budget speech that took place on March 18, 2016, I am pained to see the poor quality of our MLAs who instead of raising issues of importance to the state and make pointed comments on the Budget speech of the CM, spoke instead about petty

political issues pertaining to their own constituencies. For eg Titos Chyne's demand for a PWD subdivision at Laitlyngkot, upgrading Sohra as a District etc., could have been taken up in other forum without wasting the precious time of the Assembly, especially that of government officials who had to spend a lot of time to attend the Assembly session leaving behind other important development related activities and public services, which in turn affects the general public. Amongst those who participated in the debate, only Paul Lyngdoh and Jemino Mawthoh spoke sense and made points that are relevant to the budget speech. All the speakers with one voice supported the hiking of MLA scheme from Rs one crore to Rs two crores, which exposes the self-centred and narrow mindset of our MLAs.

Yours etc.,
Rijied Kurkalang,
Shillong-2

Of favouritism and pre-election play!