

"A pessimist is a man who thinks everybody is as nasty as himself."

--- Henry David Thoreau

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Power of One

The #NotInMyName# campaign of June 28 which happened in several cities across India was triggered by a Facebook post of one person. Delhi-based documentary film maker Saba Dewan's Facebook post on Saturday last, exactly a week ago read, "Shouldn't there be protests against the lynchings especially after the murder yesterday in Delhi NCR by a mob of a 16 year old Muslim boy? If not now then when? Why wait for political formations to organize a demonstration? Why can't all of us as citizens repulsed by the violence get together in protest at the earliest next week at Jantar Mantar under the banner - Not in my Name.

Dewan's post convinced thousands of people to stage similar marches at Kolkata, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram and Bangalore. Even in Guwahati, like-minded people representing different organisations met and supported the campaign. The silent protest with powerful placards forced Prime Minister Modi on Thursday to condemn the killing of people suspected to be eating or storing beef, by gau-rakshaks (cow saviours). But even while the Prime Minister was exhorting the gau rakshaks to abstain from these ghastly killings, another meat trader, Alimuddin Ansari succumbed to injuries after being assaulted by at least 10 men who intercepted his van carrying cattle meat in Ramgarh district near Ranchi. The van was set aflame even while the victim was lynched in full public view, many of whom recorded the event on their phone cameras. While Ramgarh Police claim that the attack was linked to a dispute the trader had with the group, which had been extorting money from him over a period of time, the fact remains, that another person selling beef has lost his life. The cow is becoming a prime reason for the series of lynchings taking place in this country. Social media has become a powerful medium - nay a moral imperative for bringing together people of who share a common concern at the targeted killings that have become a pattern in this country. Prime Minister Modi needs to address this sense of disquiet that is gripping the nation since he took over the reins of governance in 2014.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

5 policemen among 20 killed in Bodo violence

At least twenty people including five policemen and a home guard were killed and 16 others injured in the escalated violence unleashed by Bodos in Kokrajhar district of Assam in the past fortyeight hours official reports said today. Four policemen were killed on the spot and eight others seriously injured when the Bodo extremists detonated a powerful bomb on the Bahalpur Kokrajhar road last night damaging completely a police vehicle. The police party was on a routine patrol, reports said. The injured policemen were admitted to the hospital.

Earlier, seven extremists were killed in a heavy exchange of fire with the security forces at Nilgar-Kaliama area of the district. While four bodies were recovered by police, three were carried away into deep jungle by fleeing extremists. A police havildar and a home guard jawan were killed and four other policemen injured when extremists hurled a bomb on the police party escorting the district Superintendent of Police at Ranijura. Another civilian was killed and some others were injured when the extremists attack the members of the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), a regional political party, who were holding a meeting on the same day in the district.

Three persons were burnt alive when the extremists set ablaze the house of one Ghanasham Rai at Saluguri

on the same day, reports said. The extremists also kidnapped three from Saluguri area of the district.

Govt not to legislate population control

Minister of State for Health Ms. Saroj Khaparde today ruled out legislating population control since the country's family welfare programme was being promoted on a purely voluntary basis. Intervening in the discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the working of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ms. Khaparde said the government was keen on making population control a people's movement.

This is being achieved through inculcating the sense of responsible parenthood and the two-child norm", she said. Besides, the government was financially assisting voluntary agencies and other institutions in providing health and family welfare facilities to the masses. These agencies were playing an important role in educating the people about the benefits of the two child norm and adoption of suitable contraceptive measures for restricting the family, she added. Earlier, Ms. Khaparde listed the salient features of several government programmes aimed at controlling eradicating various diseases in the country.

Show me the Money!

By Avner Pariat

Business and economic planning in Meghalaya is arguably the most neglected area of governance by past and present policymakers. Now there are a number of problems within the entire topic. There is immense wastage of energy and time, inefficiency, corruption on a sinful scale. The officers are drowned in off-times pointless paperwork and become indifferent while the MLAs use the misery and poverty of people as an excuse to accentuate their supposed nobility and generosity, when they deliver umbrellas and blankets to the constituency. It is a cyclic nightmare. None of the people will escape poverty and the rich will continue to dominate elections.

No one wants to give serious thoughts to creating a Meghalaya which is self-sustainable and economically independent. Forget the pre-election rhetoric, the policies do not reflect it. To actually initiate such a task would require work, will power and actual thinking. A Meghalaya that stands on its own two feet is a Meghalaya where the citizens stand on their own two feet, and that my friends, is dangerous for the dominant power structure. An economically confident citizen is not going to simply follow what is ordered from above without questions. Such a citizen would have the means to critique Power. This is why an economically feeble state is such a danger to the democratic ideal. I am aware that there are a number of other threats. After all, even economically powerful states and countries have to deal with other dangers to their democratic apparatuses. Europe is a good example currently. However, as any good Wiki Marxist will remember: a sound and the stable economic base is what ultimately drives people to higher goals and ideals.

Going back to the broad topic of economic planning, I would like to talk about a

single but crucial issue that keeps coming up: capital, or the lack of it. I would like to build upon this with an example. There is a shop in Laitumkrah which initially opened up as a retailer of specialty baked goods (in this case, cookies). Their products were priced along the lines of similar establishments in the major cities like Delhi. Needless to say, the shop didn't flourish. After all, there are a number of other local purveyors of baked goods which have been selling their wares for half the price that the shop was offering. It was forced to shut down after a while. This would have been the end of the story - had the proprietors been Khasi/tribal. I know how that last sentence sounds but please read on. The same shop space later transitioned into a boutique (if I remember correctly) which also failed to attract customers. Finally in its last and latest avatar it came out as a cafe and since then it has become a popular eatery frequented by tourists and college goers. Now as I said earlier had it been a Khasi/tribal business, in all probability it would have rolled down its shutters forever and a new tenant would have taken up the space. The lesson we must learn from this story of the trans-mutating store is this: when people have capital they can afford to innovate. Or it can also be argued that a conducive environment allows for experimentation, but I want to look specifically at the issue of capital and its availability.

The cafe in my story is owned and operated by a Marwari businessman. The ability that the businessman had to continue paying rent in spite of bad sales indicates his financial capacity. A capacity that few tribal businesses can compete with! There are many sad

instances that I have personally seen where the promise, excitement (and perhaps naivete) of a new undertaking quickly gives way to dejection and finally abandonment. Many Khasi parents are quick to further their children's dream of being financially independent by shelling out the cash needed to set up a business. These are usually out of their own savings. Now one must be very practical with money: can the business survive in the marketplace against constant competitors and toughened veterans? Would it be money well spent? Business literacy seems to be the need of the hour. The cafe in Laitumkrah, for the Marwari businessman, is probably a diversification of money he has made from the 'unglamorous' and 'uncool' shop he keeps which sells dal and chini in Iewduh. It is based on risks which he can afford to take.

One must also keep in mind that the Marwari community like many successful trading communities has traditional institutions that aid it. Their community can 'move' money from project to project in an informal but highly efficient "banking system" which was honed over hundreds of years. This makes it extremely easy for them to access capital from anywhere provided that the proposal is sound. How do tribal businesses compete with years of such experience (and money) if there is no helping hand from the government? Government intervention in economic affairs must surely extend into areas beyond infrastructural development! A policy of 'positive discrimination' would ensure that the current economic state of affairs does not spin wildly out of control. Measures like rent allowances (or control) for young start-ups, orders guaranteeing floor and shelf space for local produce are

just some of the ways that a smart and progressive government would take.

If you look carefully you might notice that most protests in the state are, at the core, economic agitations. The ILP imbroglio, the predicament with the hawkers and many others are all economic issues. The government CANNOT absorb every single resident of the state into its service. It would be ludicrous for it to try. It must promote and regulate private enterprises. Especially the small and medium scale enterprises which are usually (I might be terribly wrong) tribal enterprises. Easy access to capital is one of the most important ways to ensure that these businesses are nurtured and reared properly. Right now, government policy with regards to banking sector practices more or less ensures that only the already wealthy tribal elites get their hands on capital. It is very hard for the people who need investment to get their hands on it. Instead of judging a proposal based on its merits and demerits, the only thing that seems to matter to banks is that one must have heavy-weight "guarantors" for everything. What happens to those who don't have any guarantors? The current manner of running financial institutions within the state is creating an inequality which we have never before seen in our tribal society. It will tear this society apart and I don't think it is hyperbolic to imagine such things. The government has been impotent for too long in planning out poverty, in addressing unemployment, in mitigating income gaps. Ensuring the proper dispersal of capital investment into crucial areas would surely be a major step in righting the wrongs.

TO THE EDITOR

Kudos to Tailin Lyngdoh!

Editor,
I join the Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal, Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Dr Mukul Sangma and the Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) in condemning the Delhi Golf Club for the act of discrimination against a Khasi lady - Tailin Lyngdoh just because she was wearing her traditional dress (Jainsem). This discrimination happens to people from Northeast India all the time when they are out to study or work outside their states. In different metropolitan cities like Bangalore, Delhi etc, many Northeasterners are beaten up and even called foreigners and this I have heard from my friends when they were in Chennai. They were told that people coming from the Northeast do not like Indian but more like people from China and Mongolia and that's the basis of the discrimination.

I wonder what dress we should wear and what physical attributes we should have to be accepted as 'Indian'! Are people from Northeast not Indian citizens? India is a Republic since January 26, 1950 when the Constitution of India was adopted yet many Indians are unaware that our country is an example of unity in diversity and we fail to respect each other's cultures (dress, food habit etc). Article 15 of the Indian Constitution speaks clearly that there should be no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth etc.. Why should a boy of 16 years of age be killed in the train in the state of Haryana just because he is a Muslim? Remember we are all Indians irrespective of caste and

even if we wear our traditional dress. In the Fundamental Rights, Articles 29 and 30 clearly guarantee that all citizens of India have the right to preserve their own language, script, literature, and culture. Therefore, the big question is who is above the Constitution? Why should people be sent away just because they are in traditional dress? Did not our beloved Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore in his poem, "Where the Mind is Without Fear" pray for our country India that it should not be divided against itself but that it should be united. Hence he says, "Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls.....".

Once again, I strongly condemn the Delhi Golf Club employers for not knowing the Indian Constitution in spite of living in the national capital. As a person from Meghalaya I salute Tailin Lyngdoh for the courage and good example to the people of Meghalaya in preserving the culture by wearing the traditional dress wherever she goes even around the globe to different countries as reported by the news. This sad incident that befell her is also a strong reminder to the Khasis to retain their dress and be proud of it because today many are more comfortable with the western culture and dress.

Yours etc.,
Aiborlang Nongsiej
Mawkyrwat

Free flow of liquor on highway

Editor,
The report in your paper

about a woman's body being found near Mawblei Petrol Pump, is shocking to say the least. The area near the petrol pump has the Maruti showroom and a bit further up the State Bank of India branch and the Renault showroom as well the Hyundai service centre. This stretch of road on the highway also has numerous illegal liquor joints, frequented by many especially drivers on the way out of Shillong. Many residents have complained to the police and local authorities and raids have been conducted and then it's back to business as usual. In the evening vehicles are hazardedly parked along the roadside and the area becomes dangerous for pedestrians and girls and women folk on the way back home. Will we then say this was just another alcoholic's death or will the District Authorities, the Police and local authorities finally do something to eradicate this menace or will we wait, God forbid, for something worse to happen in the future?

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request
On behalf of concerned residents of the area.

GST hard on the poor!

Editor,
This refers to Shivaji Sarkar's article, "GST must end barriers" (ST, June 24). The Goods and Services Tax (GST) can indeed streamline our indirect tax collection. But what India needs now is not a GST regime which is just another avatar of indirect tax but a direct tax regime that has helped many countries become developed economies. The

poorest of the poor are to cough up substantial and same amount of indirect tax as their creamy counterparts when they are to buy anything from salt to slippers and from food to medicine. While direct taxes depend on the taxpayer's ability to pay, indirect taxes being blind to the economic status of the taxpayers, hit the poor the hardest. Given huge income disparity among Indians, India should rely more on direct taxes which is just for all.

Our indirect tax regime is also one of the factors for rising inequality among Indians. According to the New World Wealth report, our country is ranked seventh in the list of top wealthiest countries in the world but on a per capita basis, the average Indian is quite poor. This is a clear case of lopsided growth of our national body that can turn out to be malignant if not immediately taken care of. While the richest 10 per cent of our population has 76.3 per cent of nation's wealth, the poorest half is reeling with a meagre 4.1 per cent.

So, a direct tax regime, with more than 60 per cent of the total tax revenue coming from direct tax, along with GST taking care of indirect tax and earning less than 40 per cent of the total tax turnover, is needed.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

Read between the US lines India-US relations in the age of Trump are becoming more transactional, less strategic

By Shyam Saran

Despite the hype surrounding the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, in particular the serial bear hugs that marked their public encounters, the most important outcome of the summit may be the sense of relief on the Indian side that the new boss in White House did not spring unpleasant surprises on his anxious guest as he is often wont to do. In these uncertain times, a public display of personal chemistry between two key leaders meeting for the first time is important in itself. Perceptions matter, and in that respect, the Modi-Trump summit gave out far more positive vibes than several other recent summits involving Donald Trump. Think of the grumpiness that came out only too clearly when Trump met Angela Merkel of Germany.

For PM Modi, the visit should count as a success. He believes in the value of personal diplomacy. Sometimes this works, as it has with Shinzo Abe of Japan. Sometimes it doesn't, as has been obvious in more recent meetings with China's Xi Jinping. One must concede that it has worked, for the present, with Trump and this should stand India in good stead as it re-orientes itself to a very different America from what we have been used to in the past.

Make no mistake, the frame of Indo-US relations is undergoing a change and the sooner we recognise this and adjust our foreign policy, the better it would be. From the statements Trump made and the contents of the Joint Statement, it is clear that the strategic dimension driving these relations over the past decade and more has diminished in salience. The transactional elements in the relationship, which were always there, have become more prominent. For example, Trump referred to India purchasing US defence equipment and technology - the best in the world, as he proudly described it - as a trade matter, as helping create American jobs rather than as part of the strategic convergence the two countries share.

Again, the most prominent part of the Joint Statement is the section entitled "Increasing Free and Fair Trade". Its intent from the US side is unmistakable. There is to be "a comprehensive review of trade relations with goal of expediting regulatory processes; ensuring that technology and innovation are appropriately fostered, valued and protected; and increasing market access in areas such as agriculture, information technology and manufactured goods and services." Reading between the lines, this is really a charter of demands on India to open its markets much more to American agricultural commodities, reduce regulatory barriers and strengthen intellectual property protection. And the Indian side was unable to balance this with even a token reference to the removal of barriers to its professionals offering services to the US market. So despite the bonhomie on display, expect some tighter squeeze on the trade side. US companies, especially in the pharmaceutical sector, are likely to find a supportive US administration as they resume their heavy duty offensive against India, as we witnessed a couple of years ago.

It is good that India and the US continue to strengthen their counter-terrorism cooperation. This will receive a boost given Trump's own predilections. The designation of Syed Salahuddin, the Hizbul Mujahideen chief, as an international terrorist is welcome as is the ratcheting up of pressure on Pakistan on the issue of cross-border terrorism. The formulations

are more explicit than before. However, it has always been clear that neither the US nor the international community in general would go beyond rhetoric in punishing Pakistan for its addiction to terrorism. And now the Chinese shield protects Pakistan more effectively than before. It may also be noted that the statement on Salahuddin continues the old American practice of referring to "Indian-administered Kashmir." Not a formulation we should expect from a strategic partner.

The Indo-US strategic convergence in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region that has been the most important underpinning of the relationship has undergone re-definition though this may be obscured by the high-sounding formulations adopted in the Joint Statement. The South China Sea has disappeared as a specific theatre of Indo-US security concern and, therefore, of cooperation. A more nebulous reference to the Indo-Pacific now appears, signalling a new found sensitivity to Chinese sentiments. The novel reference to North Korea as an issue of shared concern, reflects US and not Indian preoccupations. It is not certain what advantage we may get out of this beyond perhaps mildly annoying the Chinese. The Chinese know that we are and will remain a marginal player on the Korean peninsula. Joining Trump in putting pressure on China when the overall thrust of US policy seems to be in the direction of not confronting China in the South China Sea, where it matters, appears gratuitous in the new transactional frame that our relations have acquired.

This brings one to the current trend in China-US relations which will determine the nature and quality of the Indo-US strategic partnership. It may be early days yet, but one gets the sense that the US under Trump is moving away from confronting China in the Asia-Pacific towards some kind of a modus vivendi which delivers some important gains to the US in terms of reframed and more transactional objectives. These include trade and investment issues, dealing with the North Korean nuclear programme before it begins to threaten the US mainland itself and being a supportive rather than a disruptive presence in West Asia and the Gulf. It will be noted that in contrast to Russia, China has, of late, been remarkably muted on developments in the region and has avoided pillorying the US in the manner of Putin.

India needs to reassess its options in this changing world. China remains an economic and security challenge and this challenge is likely to grow. Getting rhetorical support on issues such as Pakistan's resort to terrorism, China's pursuit of geopolitical advantage through its One Belt One Road initiative and substantive support through technology and defence partnerships which build up Indian capabilities, should be on the agenda of our relations with the US and other friendly countries. At the end of the day, however, we will need to rely upon our own resources and capabilities to overcome the challenges we confront such as the current stand-off with China on the Sikkim sector of the India-China border.

There are no allies that India can rely on for its own security and well-being. A set of strong and diversified relations with other major powers can be a critical asset but more so if India has credibility as a capable power itself. (Courtesy Indian Express)

The writer is a former foreign secretary. He is currently senior fellow and member of the governing board of CPR

An American dream in flux

Change in US political climate could derail Indian students' American dreams. Uliana Pavlova, Carolina Vargas, Shuya Zheng, Souvik Ghosh and Adit Majumder report from India & USA

After living with his parents for 24 years, Sai Kumar Kovouri decided to give up his life in India for a chance at the American dream. His plan? Get a master's degree in computer science at the University of Missouri, then hopefully land a great tech job in California.

Now he worries a drastic change in the American political climate could derail his dreams.

Since President Donald Trump took office this year, Indian tech students in America — and Indians at home hoping to join them — are worrying new "America First" immigration policies may affect their futures.

"I haven't planned what I'm going to do in two years after my graduation, because the situation here is not like before," Kovouri said. "And even employers are not coming forward to give us jobs. I'm completely confused right now."

In order to work in the US, educated foreigners must get a type of temporary work visa called an H-1B. This has long been a ticket to America for Indian students. Indian nationals working in the tech sector are the largest recipients; almost 70 percent of H-1B visas were granted to Indians in 2015, according to estimates by Bloomberg.

But on April 18, Trump signed a "Buy American, Hire American" executive order that promises to switch these visas from a random lottery system to one that gives preference to those with the highest level of skills or the highest pay. The order says it will "protect the interest of the United States workers in the administration of our immigration system..."

It's unclear exactly who qualifies as a high-skilled worker under the order. But no doubt it will be harder for foreigners to find jobs because employers will have to prove they can't find Americans with equivalent sets of skills.

Daniel Costa, director of immigration law and policy research at the Economic Policy Institute, said he thinks the Trump administration will prioritise visas based on the highest wage, but doesn't know if the type or location of a job will be considered.

"Taken into context of everything that the Trump administration has said and done, in terms of how they criminalized immigrants, it is hard for me to believe that they will do anything" that helps foreign workers over the long run, Costa said.

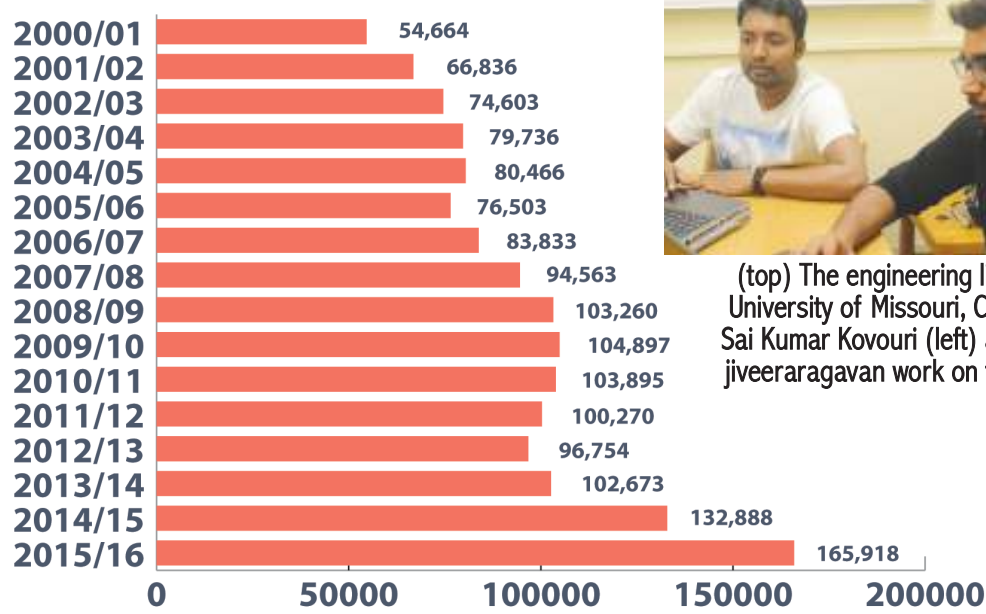
Ticket to an American job

Each year, the US gives out around 65,000 work visas. The H-1B programme was designed as a transitional stage between temporary employment and permanent residency. An employer may choose to apply for a green card for the worker, but getting one can take as long as 10-12 years depending on the worker's home country. Workers from India and China tend to wait the longest because they get the most applications.

Indian IT outsourcing companies take the most H-1B recipients, paying them a lower wage than they would American workers. In some cases, an H-1B worker



Number of Indian Students in the U.S. from 2000/01 - 2015/16



Source: Institute of International Education



(top) The engineering library in the University of Missouri, Columbia; and Sai Kumar Kovouri (left) and R.R. Balajiveeraragavan work on their projects

is 40 percent cheaper than an American.

H-1B workers declined comment for this story, saying they were afraid of the consequences of speaking publicly. If an employer decides to fire an H-1B worker, the worker can immediately be deported.

"(A) more fair system would be for a worker to petition for themselves for a green card," Costa said. "(An) employer can control the worker and make sure they don't complain because they don't want to get fired and lose their permanent residency."

But Mary Lacity sees another side of the coin. "Indian companies are global—

they hire many Americans," said Lacity, a professor of information systems at the University of Missouri who researches global IT services. "In turn, U.S. companies hire (a lot of) global talent, including professionals from India."

Changing the equation

Kovouri is following a long tradition of Indians pursuing education and jobs in the United States. According to the Indian Students Mobility Report, about 150,000 students a year say goodbye to their loved ones in India in the hopes of

making a better life for themselves in America. U.S. universities and companies, in turn, gain tuition and talent.

But policy changes and anti-immigrant sentiment threaten to change the equation.

Open Doors 2016, a report by the non-profit Institute of International Education, indicates that students from India and China make up 47 percent of international student enrollment in the US. According to a recent survey, by the non-profit Advancing Global Higher Education, 26 percent of institutions reported declines in undergraduate Indian

Love for motherland

While some Indian students long to go to America to pursue engineering degrees, others are perfectly fine staying and studying in India.

Anirban Sarkar is one of them. He's studying engineering in Jadavpur University in Kolkata.

Unlike many of his peers, Sarkar is not wooed by the United States or American education.

"I think what Trump did will affect U.S. more than India because Indian engineers are more efficient than American ones," Sarkar said. "Indian engineers can work anywhere."

Sarkar currently works at Accenture India and does not plan on coming to the States anytime soon.

He has plenty of role models in his own country. Neeraj Krishna is a great example that you don't have to

leave India to be successful. Krishna received his bachelor's and master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Kharagpur. While still at college, he started his first venture, which has generated exponential revenue growth since then, with multiple Fortune 500 companies as clients.

In the beginning of 2016, he started Kolkata Ventures, the largest network of startups and entrepreneurs in East India. Currently, he is the VP Marketing of Aiwa India.

"Since I was doing my startup here," Krishna said. "...I thought to stay back because I felt opportunities will be much more in India 10 years down the line if I would be in the commercialized sector, instead of doing a PhD in (the) U.S."

(IBNS-TWF)

applications and 15 percent reported declines in graduate Indian applications.

One of the most frequently cited concerns from international students and their families is a perceived rise in student visas denials, especially for students from China, India and Nepal. Students and families are also concerned about having fewer employment opportunities after graduation and living amid a political climate less welcoming of foreigners. They fear Trump's recent travel ban may expand to include more countries, making it tougher to get in and out of the US. And they fear possible changes to student visa rules down the road.

Family concerns about safety are another big deterrent for students. News headlines about protests and racism-fueled shootings strike fear in Indian parents.

"My parents are a little worried after the new immigration (policies) have been introduced and the shootings that have been happening," Kovouri said. "They ask me every day if I am safe."

Kovouri hasn't personally experienced violence or racism, but understands that news such as the recent shootings of two Indian men at a Kansas bar can be scary when a child is halfway around the world.

Neeraj Krishna of West Bengal, India, vice president of marketing an Aiwa India, has a lot of friends currently in the United States who share similar concerns with him.

"Not only (about the) shooting, but also about verbal abuses," said Krishna, who is an alumnus of India's prestigious IIT Kharagpur. "At the same time, I think it is not such a huge problem that it may stop a large number of people from going to U.S. but definitely few people would restrict themselves."

Standing to lose

Indians who decide not to pursue education in the U.S. could lose out on something that's much harder to get in their home country, Krishna said — exposure to practical work experience.

"The research and everything is much more practical in US, so it gives people a great experience there," he said.

In the workplace, this translates into a lifelong advantage, whether they stay in the US or return to India.

Universities and companies also stand to lose out if fewer Indians seek technical educations in America.

At the University of Missouri alone, international students make up about 21 percent of graduate student enrollment and nearly 7 percent of the total student population. They provide an important source of revenue for the school that could be threatened if fewer international students decide to pursue higher education in the States.

International students are usually charged full tuition and are even sometimes expected to stay on campus dorms. These students are also circulating money into the economy through purchases, travel, and other expenses associated with living in the U.S. In 2014-15, Miz-zou's international students pumped \$72 million into the local economy.

Indian information-technology outsourcing firms like Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro Ltd., and Cognizant Technology also stand to lose. These companies tend to hire Indian citizens on work visas, train them and rotate them back to India, keeping their costs low because the average pay is lower than in some American tech giants like Google and Microsoft.

Trump's new executive order may disrupt this strategy, since it will become more expensive to sponsor H-1B visas without offering higher pay.

But while concern persists for companies, universities and students, the future remains unclear. Miz-zou engineering grad student Rajesh Raghavan Balajiveeraragavan is one young Indian determined to make the best out of the situation — by hanging tight for now.

"I follow what is happening with Trump very closely," he said. "But at the same time, I try not to let it affect me because it is what it is and I can't make any change about it." (IBNS-TWF)

Hard lives of irony sufferers

Traffic police stopped a friend of mine and asked: "Is this your car, sir?" The driver, a cheery man suffering from advanced irony, replied: "No, I stole it!"

Bad idea. It took him two hours to convince them that he'd had congenial sarcasm all his life.

As a fellow sufferer, I concur that this is one scary disease. When applying for a US visa, I had to fill in a form asking whether I "intended to commit terrorist acts" while on US soil. (Not a joke, this is actually what the form asks).

It is Virtually Impossible for chronic irony sufferers not to answer "yes" to such a question. Luckily, I was stopped by my companion as my spouse no longer allows me out of the house unsupervised.

Yet it seems to me that people in general are highly experimental these days, taking risks at big and small scales, just to see what happens. My daughter told me about a guy who went to a hi-tech burger shop and asked the order-taking computer for a cheeseburger with no meat, no bun, no pickles, no salad and no sauce. Result: it gave him a thin square slice of cheese.

The same week, a reader told me about a judge in the United States who set bail for a run-of-the-mill arrestee at \$4 billion just to see what would happen.

The process went through unchallenged. I'm sure court staff were mightily amused, although the man's family probably spent a lot of time with hands down sofa cracks looking for cash.

These reports reminded me of a story I covered as a travel journalist in the 1990s. The pilot of a passenger plane found an unlabeled button

in the cockpit and pressed it to see what would happen. Nothing, as far as he could tell. But it sent a secret signal to his destination, Manila's international airport, saying that sky-jackers had taken over the flight. The pilot landed to find the army waiting with heavy weaponry pointed at the

plane.

Just a thought: Maybe curious people who press random buttons for experimental reasons might not be ideal pilot material? "This is your captain speaking. Please return to your seats and put on your seatbelts as I want to try something, yeah, baby."

I once asked a famously irresponsible friend who was always in trouble how he could take such huge risks, and he replied: "Because one day the Earth will be sucked into the sun and humanity will disappear forever."

It was a brilliant answer, and one I've used often. But it doesn't work on traffic police. I know that now.

The key to good sarcasm, of course, is keeping a straight face. The day before writing this, an impatient co-worker pressed the lift call button twice. I told him: "If you press it three times, it goes into hurry mode." He gave me a suspicious glance — but he pressed it a third time. Score.

Tip: Sometimes you do something and get "Thanks a lot" in reply, and you don't actually know if the respondent is expressing gratitude or being sarcastic. Simply nod and reply with an equally ambiguous phrase: "Yeah, right."

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

Not just regular teaching

By Ranjan K Baruah

Before publishing about NDA exam in the last edition, we had published career options related to education. We are publishing more information on education as a career. Some of the areas where one might get employment apart from regular teaching are as follows:

Curriculum Developer: Schools and textbook companies hire individuals with a Masters in Education to assist in the research and development of curriculum. This may be in different languages. These days, there are options in creating digital contents too.

Trainer/Motivator: Corporations prefer to higher individuals with Masters in Education who are highly skilled to train and motivate employees. Training and motivation are part of many companies to achieve more targets and business and hence they also contribute towards training. Aspirants must be well-skilled to be successful as trainer or motivator.

Tutor: Tutoring can be a very flexible and lucrative career option with a Masters in Education degree. This can be teaching directly or may be through online mode. Online mode of tutoring is new and is be-

coming popular.

Child Care: The knowledge and skills obtained with an MA/ M.Ed. will greatly equip you to provide leadership and support to children, teachers, and families of a developmentally appropriate child care programme. One may be working in the government sector or non-governmental sector when they are engaged with child care.

Educational Consultant: Many private schools hire consultants with Masters in Education for classroom design and management, increased parent involvement, fund-raising and motivating staff.

Counsellors: Academic counselling or career counselling is required for students and one may become counsellors after completing course in Education. Career counseling and life skills have become important since school days which bring opportunity for trained, motivated and committed young people.

Educational Policy Developer: The government is interested in hiring candidates with Masters in Education to develop, revise and promote educational policies. This is important in countries like India and hence there are possibilities for young people to be into policy development.

Special Education Teachers: Special education teachers are highly trained indi-

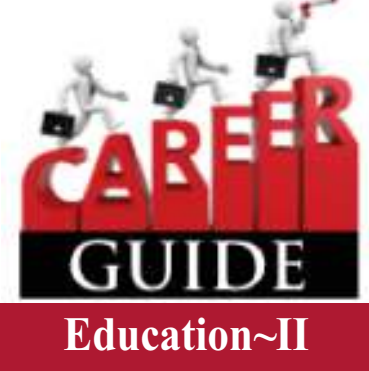
viduals who teach and supervise students with diagnosed emotional or physical impairment. They are the teachers who help prepare, implement and assess Individualised Education Programs. They may create specialized curriculum to meet the student's requirements.

Managing NGOs: NGOs which are focused on educational development needs qualified people and aspirants from education background may be part of similar NGOs or other civil society organisations.

Like MA in Education we also hear about B Ed and M Ed. Well, B Ed course can be pursued after graduation. It prepares teachers for upper primary or middle level, secondary and senior secondary classes at the school level according to the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE). It is usually a one-year course that can be pursued only after a Bachelor's degree. Similarly one may think of M Ed after completing B Ed course. B Ed degree can be matched to a variety of career options other than just school teaching.

Students may also go for higher education like MPhil or PhD in education. Every one may not get job immediately. What we need is to think like 'edupreneurs' and plan ahead to be in the industry or in the sector. One must be well-trained and it is good to have exposure of the current scenario. It is important to be technologically sound.

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



Naga group releases new album

Abiogenesis, the Howey music band from Nagaland, has come up with its latest single 'Up on the Mountains'. The album was globally released on June 25 through Songdew Music Label and is now available on all major digital stores.

The starting line 'Ororo' is an Ao-Naga exclamation to draw attention or cheer. Tikzik, the new bamboo percussion with multiple sounds, is played in the beginning and between breaks and the Bamhum, the unique wind bamboo musical instrument, is played before the guitar solo. Both Tikzik and Bamhum are invented by Abiogenesis band member Moa Subong.

Moa has also received the national award for his unique creation of Bamhum and is planning to produce it in bulk with help from the central government.

The audio of the new album is recorded and mastered by Moa Subong at Abiogenesis Centre for Performing Arts and Crafts and edited and mixed by Sosang at Music Bakery, Dimapur.

The song is available at <https://songdew.com/fresh/songdew/up-on-the-mountains/124>. The music video was also aired at the newly launched Songdew Satellite Music TV. Besides the band, the music video also features cultural dance by Kuyingong Cultural Society, Dimapur, and couple Alex Murry and Marjo.

It is a collaboration of various production houses and videographers from Dimapur like Tinted Lights Studio, Menang Jamir, Abiogenesis Films, Akum Aier and Spong AI and directed by Arenla Subong.



'Focus on India's luxe buyers'

By Suman Das

Journalist-actor-corporate communication professional Mahul Brahma's maiden book *Decoding Luxe* is on luxury brands, exploring their various facets. Brahma is a luxury commentator and columnist who heads corporate communications and branding for Tata Group company mjunction. A former journalist, he also dabbles in acting with his debut film screened at Cannes Film Festival. As the realms of luxury and affordability fuse with common people, Mahul's book takes a strategic, behavioural, historical, experiential, demographical, psychological, dynamic, mechanical and also a philosophical look at what constitutes luxe or dazzle.

The book is meant for all stakeholders of luxury brands — owner, custodian, retailer, connoisseur as well as student — helping them understand and formulate, with a historical perspective, an effective strategy for conceiving, positioning, placing, promoting and pricing these luxury products.

What does luxury mean to you?

What is luxury? No matter how obvious the question might seem, it demands some contemplation. What does luxury mean to you? Expensive? Exorbitant? Unaffordable? The word luxury has its origin in 'luxe', which means 'dazzle'. So technically, anything that dazzles you is luxury and it is this dazzle that commands the premium. Whether you call that dazzle 'brand equity' or 'razzle dazzle' is completely your call.

Why a book on luxury?

Unfortunately, the literature on luxury is very limited, globally, and writers have mostly focused on cataloguing luxury products and showcasing them. There was an urgent need to narrate a wonderful tale of luxe -- capturing this wonderful dazzle in a holistic way, unveiling its various facets. My columns for *The Economic Times - ET Retail* have been a great avenue for narrating the untold luxury story. Whether you can afford it or not, you can always appreciate it. However, through my columns I was not able to paint a holistic, all-encompassing picture of luxe. I felt the need to pen a book that captures the essence of luxury and its long-standing romance with India. This book is a result of that quest on which I had embarked on, two decades ago. It has been a great adventure and I want more and more people to set sail.

How is Decoding Luxe different from other books in this genre?

Decoding Luxe essentially explores various facets of luxury brands, which used to be a niche market, but only till some time back. As the realms of luxury and affordability fuse with common people, this book takes a strategic, behavioural, historical, experiential, demographical, psychological, dynamic, mechanical, and also a philosophical look at what constitutes luxe or dazzle.

It is a bible for all stakeholders of luxury brands — owner, custodian, retailer, connoisseur as well as student — helping them understand and formulate, with a historical perspective, an effective strategy for conceiving, positioning, placing, promoting and pricing these luxury products. However, this book is not at all about product reviews, which is what is largely considered as luxury writing in India and abroad. This book will not tell you what to buy and from where to buy it. No! This isn't a catalogue of luxury goods and boutiques. *Decoding Luxe* takes you on a quest through dreams, aspirations, contradictions, myths, royalty, and realities that shroud this very mysterious element called luxury.

You have written that luxury is relative. Can you elaborate on that? Luxury is relative. The luxe quotient and luxe factor (measures that I have created to measure this dazzle) are fundamentally relative. However, what dazzles you may not dazzle me. Also the degree of dazzle becomes a key differentiator. Let me elaborate with a few Indian examples the degree to which the razzle-dazzle differs. I drool over a Cartier Panthere ring, or a Louis Vuitton hot-stamped trunk. For me that is luxury. However, making an apple to apple comparison, my dazzle just seems lacking any lustre when we look at the way the Richie Riches of our 'Great Nation of the poor' have dabbled in luxury; be it the Maharaja of Patiala Bhupinder Singh's Cartier crown with 234.69 carat De Beers diamond or Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir Hari Singh's customised 30 Louis Vuitton trunks, one of which is still on display at one of the LV stores.

You have said that the e-commerce in luxury will not work. Why so?

The reason behind the success of e-commerce in India is our love for price-sensitivity. We love discounts, we love value for our money. The entire machinery of e-commerce or e-retail runs on unrealistic deals and discounts. And this is where the meeting of hearts between e-commerce and luxury doesn't happen. So let us understand the premises on which luxury buying is based in India. Luxe is a purely experiential phenomenon as it is heavily dependent on how your senses perceive something. If your senses feel dazzled, you are convinced to shell out that premium for a luxury brand. The entire shopping experience wherein you try a great pair of shoes or a lovely shirt and look at the mirror and then decide whether you should buy it or try another one can't ever be replicated by an image of the same product, even with a 360 degree view. It is next to impossible to excite and convince our senses via a laptop, tab or mobile screen.

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can you not feel elated? You have already "bonded" with that timepiece. You just know this is the one.

I was quite intrigued by the chapter on luxury counterfeits. Do you think it is growing market? Do you really online presence has helped counterfeit market grow? Growing at a compounded annual growth rate of almost 40-45 per cent, the counterfeit luxury products market in India is likely to more than double to Rs 5,600 crore from the current level of about Rs 2,500 crore. A reason why the market of luxury fakes is growing at such a fast pace is the advent of e-commerce platforms selling them at lucrative prices. Web shopping portals account for over 25 per cent of the fake luxury goods market in India. The size of counterfeit luxury industry in India is currently about 5 per cent of the overall market size of India's luxury industry which currently is worth over \$14 billion. With a share of about 7 per cent, fake luxury products account for over \$22 billion of the global luxury industry worth about \$320 billion.

Luxury counterfeits are not a new phenomenon, but with technological advances and sophisticated new ways to reach consumers, the business is increasing rapidly. Historically, luxury counterfeits were often shipped in large cargo containers and passed through numerous middlemen before reaching the final consumers. However, now counter-

feit sellers set up online presences on auction or marketplace sites and ship luxury counterfeits directly to consumers. They also use the internet and social media tools to generate web traffic and to divert consumers to rogue e-commerce websites selling their goods which often have the same look and feel as the brand owner's site.

Can you share with our readers a little on the two measures of luxury that you have coined?

Luxury is all about the dazzle. And dazzle is all about perception. So, there is no universal 'Luxe Quotient' or 'Luxe Factor', as I will like to name them. Luxe Quotient or LQ is a unique measure for capturing the longing and desire for a luxury brand. It has the ability to capture the relative dazzle factor between two or more comparable brands from the perspective of a customer. The difference in dazzle is captured by Luxe Factor. This is from the perspective of the brand towards the customer. So it will be the same brand and different customers and their dazzle factors.

What do you think is the future of luxury in India?

With the ebbing Chinese luxury story, most luxury goods providers — including world's biggest luxury group LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE) — are shifting focus to the growing luxury consumer base in India, which is poised to grow at 25% from 2013 till 2018, and is likely to touch \$18-billion mark from the ongoing level of \$14 billion.

You are a communicator with a Tata group company, you have acted in a film that was screened at Cannes Film Festival, you are doing your PhD, where did you get time to write?

I have been a journalist for over a decade, writing is my passion. So I always have time for writing. Writing a book, however, has been a different ballgame altogether. I was a great experience, especially when it is on a topic that I love — luxury. God has been kind and so I have got opportunities to do things that I love. Cannes Film Festival has been a great experience. My second movie will be out later this year. Need your wishes. My role as Head of Corporate Communications and Branding for mjunction, a Tata group company, has been a learning experience for me. As the brand custodian of the largest B2B e-commerce company in India, it is a challenge that I look forward to embracing every morning. (TWF)

(Brahma can be reached on his Twitter handle @mahulbrahma)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, July 2, 2017

Moon square Mercury on your solar return chart indicates a mixed year. In order to avoid feeling stuck or suffocated, it is advised to express yourself with a class that stimulates your artistic side. You possess a natural psychic gift, and you'll be encouraged to explore it more this year. However, in order to break through any blocks you encounter at work, you'll have to speak up and ask for what you want, rather than waiting for someone to notice you're unhappy. Your most intimate relationship can help you to discover more about yourself this year, as you're encouraged to share on a deeper and more trusting level.

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. Your responsibilities might interfere with your social life. Responsibilities on the home front are likely to conflict with career matters. 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. Career offers come now, and money owed to you could also arrive suddenly. A balanced approach to life, in terms of realistic expectations, is the best approach for maximizing success. 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. Focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends and exploration. A new project begun has a good chance of being successful and long-lasting. 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. The way you present your ideas, certainly helping to smooth over differences in your personal relationships. 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. 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. Surprises surrounding intimate matters, shared finances and resources and financial support may be in store. 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)

You are likely to be actively involved with teamwork and collaboration with others. You are taking on new responsibilities, but generally enjoy the challenges. Concerns about your career, work, long-term goals and life direction, reputation and public image, and professional issues arise now. This is a good time for peaceful meditation and spiritual renewal. You are more perceptive and sensitive and easily affected by what is going on in your environment, particularly the feelings and emotional currents of the people around you. Being at home or in a comfortable, supportive atmosphere feels best.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This period brings good financial returns. Your desire for comfort, security and privacy is stronger now and spending some quality time with your family or by yourself at home is satisfying. You will get yourself organized, work to build your resources and keep busy. Channeled positively, you could move mountains when it comes to pushing your projects ahead. If mishandled, however, you could be argumentative, stressed, and hell-bent on having your way. Avoid taking extreme measures to make things happen your way, and avoid people who might be doing same. Also, sharing and comparing your spiritual, religious, or philosophical interests with a friend or loved one may open up a whole new dimension of your relationship.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

New horizons in your romantic and love life open up. You may also wish to enhance your personal appearance in some way, such as getting a new hair style or purchasing clothing, cosmetics, and the like. Social gatherings are also very positive for you now. You also tend to spend money on impulse or whim, especially on something that has more emotional appeal than practical value. You might enjoy favourable outcomes when it comes to legal affairs, education, and travel. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. At this time you are inclined to invest your time and money into making your environment more beautiful and comfortable.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

Domestic or family matters are emphasized by the planetary combination. You need not over-analyze personal relationships but rather respond with your heart and deep feelings and a new understanding and maturity with others around you at home and work. This is a time for taking care of your possessions and personal belongings. Simple activities such as washing your car, putting your home in order, maintaining your yard, or attending to your wardrobe give you a sense of satisfaction and security. You are a peacemaker since harmony in your environment seems more important than ever. Loving relationships, giving and receiving affection, and attracting people into your life who are good for you are very likely at this time.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

This phase brings mixed results. You feel more comfortable with the way your relationships are right now. You seek out and receive assurance from family, old friends and allies. Also, your emotions are more intense and you may overreact to some encounter. You can emerge from this period with more compassion and sensitivity toward loved ones, once you free yourself from being too dependent upon them. At this time it is easy for you to express yourself boldly and confidently. Concern over health, diet and nutrition, putting your life in order, and self-improvement is also important this week.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

Your career, social standing, or reputation is favored at this time, especially by making personal contact with superiors or by socializing and making friendly contacts at work. You may make a good friend or meet someone beautiful and charming through your work. Now is also a good time to enhance your public standing and to create good will with the public. Your desire for comfort, security, and privacy is stronger now and spending some quality time with your family or by yourself at home is satisfying. This is a time for going within to replenish yourself in order to meet the challenges and stresses of your usual activities. Domestic and family matters are emphasized at this time.

Be a feminist, not feminazi

Feminism by definition is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities — economic, social and political. But this movement for equality of the sexes has lately become synonymous with man-hating or "feminazis" as they call it. It's the equality between men and women and does not in any way suggest superiority of one sex over the other. A few months ago, I began questioning the real idea of feminism and did not realise that I too am a feminist.

Being labelled a feminist is almost insulting to some. Feminism has become an unpopular word and we need to change that notion. Whenever a woman's expression is seen as too strong or too aggressive, isolating or anti-men, she is seen as rather unattractive and unabashed. But this myth that feminism is anti-men is just that, a myth. It is not anti-men but anti-patriarchy and we are still clarifying people about it even today.

I would like to take for instance the feminist movement in 1992 by rural women in Andhra Pradesh known as the Anti-Arrack Movement (against the sale of cheap liquor) as a sign that feminism has been present in patriarchal India for quite some time but was never given the chance to explode into a full movement.

We need feminism now more than ever. The crimes against women are rising and women still have not received the respect we deserve in this country.

I would like to take the example of the matriarchal society that I belong to. Many are in awe of this utopic society in the far North East where women are heads of households and they are seen as equals. But I'm afraid to say that has changed and I am a witness to that change.

Crimes against women in the North East are increasing manifold and a rape, a molestation or a kidnapping or even murders, occurs every day in my own state. Men have taken for granted the role of a woman and have become, dare I say, lazy. A friend who visited the state once insightfully mentioned "for a state that prides itself on its matriarchy, the women seem to be doing a lot of the work" and it was then that I knew all we had was just the surnames and the property rights, but with the elements of patriarchy embedded in it.

However, it's not everyone yes, there are families where males and females are equals and it is then that a generation of



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children are taught from their homes what equality is and why is needed. A quote by Angela Davis "I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept" is what I live by to get through the patriarchy.

Males are usually excluded from the conversations about feminism but how can we ever make a change if the other half is not inclusive in the journey? Gender equality is a man's issue too. There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not lead single-issue lives.

There are a lot of feminists out there, men included.

I will not say male feminists because you are a feminist. In fact, I believe everyone should be a feminist. It is only then that we can achieve the equality and respect between the sexes. When males and females co-exist, on equal terms, is when we can say that the feminist movement is a success.

Smash the patriarchy is what a true feminist would do. I would like to convey this

to all the women and men here that if we are not advocating for those whose realities do not look or feel like our own then we are unequivocally a part of the problem. We too become bearers and witnesses to the patriarchy and the misogyny, we are imprisoned by the gender stereotypes.

We need to perceive gender as one instead of a set of two opposing ideals. We can all spread the true ideals of feminism so we can be free from prejudice and be freer with one another.

Feminism shows everybody as equal. It is literally about allowing a woman to stand next to a woman equally rather than depicting them as beneath a man's feet making them inferior, as it has been perceived in many generations. If not now, when? If you believe in equality then you are an inadvertent feminist and for this I applaud you.

(Contributed by Alicia Bakor Phanwar, Student, St Aloysius College, Mangalore)

“Our truest life is when we are in our dreams awake.”

--- Fran Lebowitz

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Grappling with GST

THE Goods and Services Tax (GST) launched by the NDA Government on July 1st is a brave attempt at introducing a transparent taxation regime where compliance is rewarded and evasion attract stringent penal action. The one nation, one tax slogan is being received with mixed feelings by the business community. What is clear is that the ‘business as usual’ regime is over and so too the physical interface between tax official and tax payers. The reduction in human interface automatically means a reduction in corruption. Before the GST, those manning the Sales Tax Department literally lorded it over the large and small business owners and often harassed them. Now that all transactions and processes are digitized it will be an era of non-intrusive administration. GST will also facilitate the taxpayers by prescribing grant of refund within 60 days, and provisional release of 90 per cent refund to exporters within 7 days. Any delay will result in payment of interest and the refund would be credited to the taxpayers account. Above all its envisaged that the GST would control profiteering, since neither the manufacturer nor the other buyers down the line will be charged more than the prescribed taxes. It is also expected to improve the ease of doing business in India in which the country scored very poorly until now.

Critics of the GST, and there are many, have opined that countries that have implemented the GST have seen those governments lose the next elections. If that be so, it can be said that the NDA Government has shown extreme courage to take the plunge despite knowing the consequences. The Congress party has meanwhile taken the credit for initiating the GST. The question then is why did the Congress not bite the bullet when it had the mandate to rule the country? In Shillong city, Friday evening witnessed a flurry of activities in shops selling electronic and electrical gadgets even as the proprietors gave away items at 50% of the cost. This apparently was done because taxes for all the items have been paid under the old regime and reformatting the taxes under GST would require phenomenal accounting work. So the lesser the goods remaining with the dealers on July 1st the easier is for them to cope up with the process. All change is painful and as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley says, there will be initial hiccups but these can be corrected along the way. For the NDA Government the GST is a big leap of faith. For India it is the beginning of a new post-independence era.

Relevance of the ADCs in contemporary society

By H H Mohrmen

Recently there was a call by the leaders of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) and the traditional heads to strengthen or give more power to the Councils but a section of society have demanded that the ADCs be abolished altogether because they believe the Councils are no longer relevant. True, there is no better time to debate and review on the relevance of the Autonomous District Councils in a tribal area now and the state of Meghalaya is a classic case for carrying out this exercise.

The Sixth Schedule is an instrument of the Constitution which was designed to protect the interests of tribals when most of the tribal areas were part of the larger, composite state of Assam. But things have changed now; we have a state of our own. Meghalaya is a tribal state where majority of the people who live in the state are local tribals and almost all the elected representatives to the legislative assembly are also tribal. So, the question is how can there be a threat to the people when we already have a state of our own?

When we talk about the relevance of the ADCs in the state, the first question that comes to my mind is ‘protection from what?’ Why do we still need protection? If we still feel insecure even after four decades since Meghalaya was carved out of Assam, the question is whom should we blame? The insecurity persists partly because the ADCs have failed us. In the more than four decades of its existence, let us see how the ADCs have performed and whether they have achieved the goals that were envisaged in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

If we take the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council into consideration, it has become infamous for misappropriation of funds. If a study is conducted on the performance of this ADC, one will find that there are several cases of misappropriation of public money by those in power. Even the Comptroller and Auditor General had made

an adverse remark on the Council’s way of maintaining their accounts but not much has happened except punishment and transfer of a few officers.

But the issue that irks young people the most is the recruitment process (or in many cases the absence of any process) in the appointment of employees in the ADC. And even if interview was called and due process was followed, at the end of the day only the candidates who have the support of the MDC in power are appointed. The JHADC was in the news a few days back for making back door appointments and then regularising the same.

Employment in the JHADC has reached saturation point; some have even concluded that it is a sinking ship because of irregular appointments like this. JHADC now employed more than the required man power and there is no more space to accommodate the staff. Some staff do not even have proper seats.

Take the case of Lower Primary School which was the subject under the Councils as per the Sixth Schedule. Why did the government have to take it away from the ADCs? It is because the ADCs in the state have not only failed the District Council Lower Primary School teachers and the students but the people of the state altogether. Another case which made JHADC compromises its position vis-à-vis the State government is the collection of royalty from minor and major minerals. The royalty was earlier collected by the respective ADCs but now it is done by the state which in turn releases their share in a piecemeal manner.

The Constitution has mandated the ADCs the with responsibility of protecting and preserving the culture and tradition of the tribal people in the area, but what have the ADCs done in this regard? What is culture? And how do we protect that which is

evolving with time? Take language which is part of the culture for example, isn’t it true that the Khasi, Pnar, War, Maram, Bhoi language is evolving with time? Words or items that our grandparents used are no longer popular now and it is not part of the vocabulary anymore. If the ADCs are really serious in their efforts to promote our local language then how many MDCs still send their kids to study in the LP schools in which the medium of instruction is Khasi or Garo?

Among the elites in Shillong, English is more popular than Khasi. They are more conversant in English than in Khasi and of course it is fashionable to speak in English even amongst the Khasis in Shillong. Even our God/gods now have evolved with time and they prefer prayers offered in English than in Khasi or Pnar. Can the ADCs stop the indigenous language from declining when the people themselves prefer to speak English to Khasi?

The ADCs are supposed to protect land rights of the local people, but what has happened now? Take the case of eleka Narpuh as an example. People very soon will be landless in the area because a large chunk of the land is now owned by the cement companies. In Jaintia hills farmland or agriculture land and even community forest can easily be converted to private land for mining and construction purposes, which creates more problems than solution.

Rivers are the subject of the District Council too but what have the ADCs done to protect our rivers? Wah Umkhray is gone and all major rivers in Jaintia hills are polluted and now it is the NGT and not the JHADC which will be able to save Myntdu from going the wah Umkhray way. How many more rivers will be polluted before the ADCs wake up from their slumber to save them?

The funniest imbroglia involving the KHADC is the Meghalaya Urban Development Agency building bylaws. Those in the KHADC who oppose the implementation of the

bylaws in the rural areas speak of MUDA as a kind of external agency intruding in the tribal areas. What is MUDA? What is the purpose of the building bylaws? MUDA is the state government agency and bylaws are meant to regulate construction of houses, considering the fact that Meghalaya is an earthquake prone area. Why is the KHADC acting like a dog in a manger? The law is meant to protect the people and the objective is to prevent catastrophe from happening in the event of natural calamities. The state government hopes to achieve this goal by implementing the law, so why is KHADC against it?

The ADCs are now becoming merely a temporary refuge for junior politicians; it is like a training ground or a springboard to prepare the MDC to become an MLA. All MDCs have one goal and they all aspire to one day become MLAs. Give them a choice and they will opt to be MLAs than MDCs. Of late we have also seen the conflict between the State Government and the ADCs, but the conflict is superficial because the MDCs will take a new stand once they become MLA.

The point therefore is that even in spite of having our own state and we still feel insecure, then who do we blame? Can we blame the outsiders (Dkhars) for the mess that we are in? Can we blame others for the kind of political leadership we have now? Who elected them and put them on the pedestal of power in the first place? The problem is not only do we not have good leaders in the Legislative Assembly but that the MDCs in the ADCs are considered second to the MLAs. This can be concluded from the fact that recently, leaders who held membership in both the State Assembly and ADCs chose to retain membership in the former when they were given the choice. Now we realize the situation and the condition that the ADCs are in. But we have only ourselves to blame!

My bleeding India!

By Barnes Mawrie

Way back in 1992 the BJP tried to rally Hindu unity in India by targeting the minority Muslims. They came en masse to pull down stone by stone the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. More than 2000 people most of whom were Muslims perished in that gruesome incident. Yet even today many of those responsible for that criminal act are still at large. The present avatar of the BJP under PM Modi has resorted to yet another religious issue by which they try to further consolidate Hindu votes by victimizing the minorities. Today, the “sacred cow” has become a politico-religious issue by which they have been winning elections in many states including the recent one in UP. No one would have objected if such a religious belief is publicly professed by them, but the fact that it is indirectly being imposed on members of other religious groups, has become a nightmare for the country. The rise of cow vigilantes in the country is synonymous to the rise of an “evil empire” which is going to destroy our nation from within. These are worse

in India taking the law into their own hands and victimizing minority groups on issues related to beef etc, speaks badly about the law and order status in our country right now under the BJP. PM Modi has so far been silent about this issue and only recently did he make a statement condemning the incident of mob violence. But we know that it is only a diplomatic statement which probably did not come from his conviction about the evil of the act. A question that comes to my mind right now is: is the BJP government really serious about ending such atrocities perpetrated by groups affiliated to them? If so they should ban religious fundamentalists because they are no different from terrorists. But I guess they would never do it because there is a mutual understanding and support between them.

Killing persons in the name of a “cow” is such an abominable act which would make civilized people shock stricken. Where on earth do we hear animal life being preferred to human life? Even if an animal is considered sacred or holy,

The ongoing nationwide protest “Not in my name” against the mob lynching of Junaid, indicates a nation that is wearied of such brutality. As per report of NDTV, about 18 mob violence cases have taken place in 22 months and most of them are related to beef issue. The minorities in India today be they Muslims, Christians, Dalits or Tribals are living in fear and insecurity. The manner the cow vigilantes roam freely in India taking the law into their own hands and victimizing minority groups on issues related to beef etc, speaks badly about the law and order status in our country right now under the BJP. PM Modi has so far been silent about this issue and only recently did he make a statement condemning the incident of mob violence. But we know that it is only a diplomatic statement which probably did not come from his conviction about the evil of the act.

TO THE EDITOR

Coping with mental illness

Editor,

Very often the reason that causes our depression is a grave and genuine one. Any issue be it the death of our dear one, injustice, social ills, unbearable financial constraints, physical abuse or emotional torture ~ is indeed very serious in nature. When we suffer from depression, our well wishers generally advise us to share our pain with them, to listen to soothing music, to read an inspiring book, to get solace in the beauties of nature and to consult with a doctor. Needless to say, they advise such things not to get any money or favour from us. They only want to comfort us as they are our friends in need. Unfortunately, we sometimes think that they are trying to belittle the gravity of the problem that is causing our depression. And also we are apprehensive about whether they are casting doubts on our mental strength. Such thinking actually belittles our genuine friends and isolates ourselves from them.

The funny thing is that when we suffer from cough and cold or from asthma, we do not hesitate to go to a doctor and give her/ him medical fees to get necessary advice. And we eagerly follow doctor’s prescription which advises us to drink plenty of water, soup and to

inhale water vapour apart from taking medicines. Our doctor prescribes those things not to pooh-pooh air pollution which is indeed the main reason for our bronchial disease but to give us some relief. Ironically, had our doctor finished her/ his job by saying, ~ “You see, air-pollution is the main culprit. Let’s solve that problem first. You mustn’t try to get some temporary relief!” ~ we would have been very angry!

As a matter of fact, the social stigma attached to mental problems makes us behave in this manner. Such stigma can wreak havoc especially on the psyche of a man as we have been brainwashed with such nonsense as ‘a real man should not cry.’ If a man becomes emotional then he runs the risk of being branded as a “cry - baby”. The problem of dancing with the tune of such a male - stereotype adds insult to injury.

It is time to break ourselves free from gender stereotypes and to shed all inhibitions about depression or any other mental stress. We must not forget that no disease can be branded as exclusively mental or physical one. Our diseases are mainly psychosomatic as the mind and the body are closely connected.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Importance of independent M&E

Editor

Apropos HH Mohrmen’s article relating to the Integrated Basin Development and Livelihoods Programme (IBDLP) where the writer spoke favourably about the programme and to the extent possible spelt out the efficacy of its approach which sounds revolutionary and promising. Subsequent reactions in letters published by your paper however contradicted the observations made in the article with critical opinions especially on the implementation aspect of the programme. There was even a call to review or revisit the programme to assess its actual impact on the ground so far.

While it is typical to have contradictory observations on developmental efforts especially on the innovative ones, however in this particular instance such observations assume significance as these are related to an ambitious programme believed to be initiated by the Chief Minister of the state himself with high expectations that it will bring the much required positive changes

in the related field that it covers. It is also understood that substantial funds have been drawn in from different sources in order to provide financial support to the programme

Since both these observations were personal valuations without substantial evidences to support either, the actual position on the ground is therefore vague and inconclusive. But given the magnitude of the programme, the proposed extent of its reach, the huge investment being poured in for its implementation, the apparently serious commitment that has been made so far and its projected scope of advancement, one would tend to agree with the observation that there is certainly a need to evaluate the programme on the ground by now to determine if it is moving on the right track before fast forwarding it further. The evaluation should, of course, be done by an independent monitoring and evaluation (M&E) agency.

The evaluation of the programme is necessitated more by the fact that though its exponents claim that it is sound and feasible for the intended objectives, it is also understood that its concept

has not really sunk into the psyche of many in government and many public representatives as well and therefore it could be regarded as an incompatible and unworthy proposition. However a proven success after evaluation will strengthen the cause for its continuity while a proven failure will justify its discontinuance regardless of any government or leadership that comes in later in the state. By now the state perhaps cannot afford to change horses midstream with every change of government while pursuing plan and strategies as inconsistent development paradigm and short term tactical policies could lead to growth that is vague, incomprehensible and unrewarding.

Likewise, evaluation of any Mission initiated by the government which is in the advance stage of progress would determine if the administrative and strategic approaches adopted therein are effective enough to bring reasonably satisfactory results so that such approaches can be relatively replicated in any new Mission being introduced. In fact such other development programmes which aims at expanding human capability for expansion of resources and production under implementation in the state

since many years may perhaps be also evaluated by now to highlight the achievement and failures, the extent that old problems have been solved, what is left to be done and if there are new problems to be addressed.

Undoubtedly, innovative programmes for development are essential as these will define future approach towards progress and advancement. However, these should also be buttressed with sound guiding principles that are significantly derived from a holistic and genuine appraisal of interventions made so far. Thereafter a modest beginning conforming with the built up capacity in place to ensure a sound approach, commencing steady monitoring and subsequent evaluation with progress will determine the worth of such programmes for expansion. It might sound like a slowdown approach but it could be a slow and steady move towards growth that is definite, plausible and beneficial.

Yours etc.,
KL Tariang,
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.

it is common sense that human life should not be sacrificed for its sake. As I am writing, I know there are still similar incidents taking place in some parts of our country. India the land of the great Buddha (a messenger of peace and ahimsa) and of the great Mahatma (a prophet of universal brotherhood), is now bleeding to death. Innocent blood is being spilled everyday by those persons who claim to be “orthodox” Hindus (a misnomer for “good Hindus”). Unfortunately, the BJP has bought up the media and therefore what is being projected to the public are the so called “achievements” of the government (demonetization, GST etc). Through this strategy, the cry of pain of the poor victims of violence is being muffled by the loud noise of the media clattering about the economic progress of India. But right minded people will know that what the media propagates are all half truths if not total lies. So India is back to the rule of the jungle where “might is right.” I hope that the “Not in my name” campaign will gain momentum from day to day because what India needs today is citizens’ awareness of the true state of our country and the decisiveness to fight against all divisive elements.

“A day for toil, an hour for sport, but for a friend is life too short.”

--- Aristotle

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JULY 4, 2017

GST - the begining of a journey

THE Goods and Services Tax (GST) enforced from July 1 in a midnight session of Parliament was a landmark event. Combined efforts of different political parties brought it about. It was for the greater common good. But it is not an end in itself. It is the beginning of a process of reform which is expected to rejig the economy. The intention is to compress multiple indirect taxes into a single tax that would simplify the complexity of multiplicity. It will also remove fiscal barriers between the states. These barriers impede transportation of goods and that encourages corruption. The previous system betrayed a fragmented structure of the national economic edifice. It is estimated that GST will contribute 1.5% of economic growth and accelerate it. The advent of GST was of course preceded by differences and compromises. Every state raised its own hassles so the focus now should be on stabilising the new tax system. A simple and efficient GST should lead to easier business transactions. Economic activity should brisk up. There should be greater job opportunities. And corruption plus tax evasion should be minimised.

The sector to benefit is manufacturing with 'Make in India' in focus. But that cannot be achieved without other necessary reforms. The stress should be on actualising GST. Industry should absorb the surplus from agriculture in the rural sector but that calls for speeding up of industrialisation which may run into numerous obstacles. Another imperative is eradication of the farm prices. All states should jointly make the resolve behind the measure a reality. At the same time, today's pains for tomorrow's gains should be smoothed out. For instance, the anticipated rise in the price of essential drugs should be taken care of. If the poor of this country are relieved of inflationary trends on account of the GST, then the exercise would have backfired! For now people are adopting the wait and watch policy!

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Disrupted Bodo agitation

The Bodo agitation is lately taking a different turn and assuming a violent character and complexion which arguably can be said as not having been in the minds of the originators of the initial movement. There are distinct sings of the agitation getting out of the hands of the ABSU leaders who have since been compelled to stay outside their operational area now appears to be more under control of the extremists. The latter came initially on to the scene rather timidly, indulging in violent acts only during the period of bandhs organised by the ABSU, which gave them also a safer cover to their own intentions and plans. Some of their early success, in which the imported paramilitary forces could not readily and competently the Bodo guerrillas now to indulge in more systematic acts of sabotage. The recent series of railway derailments involving destruction and loss of innocent lives indicate that the extremists have since graduated to a violent course of their own independent of the support earlier coming their way from the popular bandhs.

This division of the movement dissipation from the point of the ABSU's recognized leadership is a dangerous development about which the State government should have been much more worried than they seem to have been so far. The last of the chances to bring the ABSU to the negotiating table has been allowed to fritter away for an absurd obduracy on the part of Dispur not agreeing to the agitation leaders plea for inviting a Central observer to talks. The request was very modest, since it was far short of a demand for a tripartite talk involving the Centre as

direct participants in the proceedings, which could have reasonably been asked for. Dispur on the contrary disrupted the last chance for bi-partite talk, and the next one if any can be expected to be on a tripartite level, the Centre being associated with it as a direct participant.

To prevent the situation getting much worse, it is essential that New Delhi evince more active interest both administratively and politically. Dispur can hardly meet the growing extremist violence in Bodo areas. The Centre has lent aid to Dispur in tackling the law and order situation which is fast assuming the complexion of insurgency and much more is necessary. The Centre can ignore the writings on the walls at the cost of its own party's political calculations, not to speak of the safety and security of the entire north-east.

A bit of research

Although the Governors' post is not a scholastic one, the gubernational speeches tend generally to sound scholarly. Political speeches are out of their bounds and hence may be this instruction into other fields. Mr R B Pradhan, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, told a gathering at Pasighat last week that the Britishers had first discovered tea in Arunachal's Lohit district as early as in 1835 but later took it to Assam for commercial production. We are not in a position to vouchsafe for this piece of an administrator delving into remote history. As purveyor of drab news, it is enough for us to know that the Governor has successfully unit in Arunachal, that of the Rs. 65 crore Oyen tea estate covering an area of 600 hectares for producing best quality tea.

Toward 'multicultural citizenship' in India

By P Niroop

The recent unsavory episode of turning out a Khasi woman dressed in her traditional attire of 'Jainsem' from an elite club of India's capital, speaks volumes of the lack of 'political civility' and 'cultural sensitivity' on the part of the Management of those involved, especially, in the hospitality sector, to the aspect of promoting a 'Composite Culture' for National Unity, which the Constitution of India embodies, as every Citizen's Fundamental Duty under Art. 51A (f) of Part IV-A "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture".

India is the envy of the world for its rich diversity, starting with its geographical features and percolating down to its culture, which gets reflected in its peoples' dress, food, language etc., and dress of course is a definitive aspect of any 'distinct culture'. One can easily identify a Khasi woman, just by her Jainsem, which hangs over her shoulders. In fact, people in Shillong recall Ms Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister coming to Meghalaya to inaugurate their new State in 1972, dressed in their traditional 'Jainsem' and uttered the following words, which are etched in public memory and which goes to show her 'political sensitivity' as embodied in her 'integral vision of India'. (From P.R. Kyndiah's book 'No Hill State, No Rest').

"India is a tapestry where many colours exist side by side to make a beautiful pattern. It is not a melting pot where the ingredients are compelled to lose their identity"

She again stated, in very clear terms about 'Indianness' that, "Our great pride is that Indian culture is a composite one, born of many strands, and that, in the process of assimilating or influencing, it has been India's special genius to allow each component to retain its distinctive flavour and character".

And she further goes on to describe as to 'who is an Indian' by stating "There is no pure unalloyed Indian. He can be a Dravidian, an Aryan, an Australoid or a Mongoloid. His hair may be fair or dark, straight or wavy, the skin very fair or wheat-coloured, beige, brown or ebony. For, India has always accepted races, tribes, ways of thought and life, without demanding from them conformity which would negate individuality, yet stamping on them the unmistakable mark of Indianness".

That was, a unique 'gesture of culture' on her part. But, we as a nation seem to be moving away from the ideal and goal of evolving the concept of a 'multicultural citizenship' in the constitutional context of 'composite culture'.

To put it more comprehensively, in the words of the National Poet and Nobel-laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, in his famous "Gitanjali", which encapsulates the Indian ideal of 'unity in diversity'.

".....a land uncrippled/ Whole, uncramped by any confining wall/ A place where reason's flow is not soaked up/ By barren desert-sands of bigotry/ Where niggling rules and dogmas do not sap/ Its vigour, but joy in work and thought has mastery/ With pitiless blows/ Father, from your hand/ Bring India to that heaven; Wake this land." (This is an English, poetic rendering of the original Bengali by William Radice).

The unfortunate event that took place at the Delhi Golf Club, is only a symptom, of an underlying malady of 'insensitivity to national unity' though, on the surface, it may seem to be a stray incident, which happened to an unfortunate individual. That is not the case, and in

fact, it is a question of collective rights of minorities - be they religious, cultural or indigenous. In the present case, it is question of the rights of the indigenous people of Meghalaya, a State which is predominantly tribal, having its own unique cultural traits as reflected in their dress, food, language and ways of being.

In the recent past, one has witnessed loud protests especially from the North-Eastern States, against the Central Government's ban on sale of cattle for slaughter, as a move to impose on the eating habits on the people, in the meat eating regions, or for that matter, the imposition of Bengali as a compulsory language in the schools, in the predominantly Gorkhali/ Nepali speaking areas in the State of West Bengal, leading to a large-scale agitation, in and around the Darjeeling Hills.

The larger question before the civil society and the nation, is how to harmonize the existing concept of 'composite culture' as it was understood at the time of the making of the Indian Constitution, to mean a common culture, which may be singular, unified and homogenous, an idea that is at the root of the concept of a 'nation-state', with the contemporary concept of a 'multicultural citizenship'.

There is a need to distinguish that a 'shared culture' need not be unified and homogenous always, as it could also be composite, internally diversified and yet multi-culturally constituted, so as to be in tune with the pluralist character of Indian society, and also in step with the contemporary philosophy of 'multiculturalism' across the World, in modern times of globalization, rapid technological advancement and extensive international migration.

In fact, the whole world seems to be moving toward multi-culturalism and India is

a good example of a 'multi-cultural society' striving toward a Composite Culture, which is a collective creation of major Indian communities be they Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh or indigenous elements.

The starting point for inculcating this concept of 'multicultural citizenship' within the broader constitutional theme of 'composite culture' is to initiate a 'inter-cultural dialogue' between the various regions of India, in order to celebrate its rich cultural diversity through a 'dialogue among cultures'. The other practical aspect, that can be taken up for immediate implementation, is for the Government of India, to come up with a model 'code of conduct', to be displayed and implemented by all national institutions, be they public or private, for inculcating tolerance and imbining the principle of 'multi-cultural citizenship' failing which, we are doomed to slide into a 'de-civilized society', which India can ill-afford with its rich civilizational resources and a repertoire of cultures.

Before I end, let me quote a couple of memorable lines from Minoo Masani's book "Our India", which after foreseeing a great future for it, as early as 1940/1953, ends on the following note:

"We are proud of our country and we want it to be just a little proud of us".

To add to this, it is the salutary warning that before we embark enthusiastically on to the slogan "Make in India" there is a dire need to "Make India" in the first place. India is a great culture and civilization but nevertheless a 'nation in the making' in the modern sense of the term.

(The writers is Advocate, Supreme Court of India & former Additional Advocate-General, Meghalaya)

TO THE EDITOR

Delhi Golf Club affair!

Editor,

I am deeply saddened by the incident which a fellow sister, Tailin Lyngdoh hailing from Meghalaya faced on 25th June. Now, it makes me think twice and check back on what a golf club is and if the dining hall has a dress code or a dress theme. Or is it a racist dining hall? I would like to meet the DGC staff and learn more about the policy and set of rules vis a vis the club dining hall. Normally, a manager is expected to be welcoming and also fulfill the customers' needs and demands. But I am amazed and disappointed to know that a manager and the staff are concerned with how people look and their attire and then pass racial comments about their customers. Was it really Tailin's attire that was disturbing or was it her physical appearance that the Club lackeys could not stand? This point needs clarification as I really cannot understand why one should be made to leave the dining table because of one's looks and dress. If that's the case, the DGC will have to face all of us. Trust me we are cool but we don't just stand and let go of insults and prejudices.

Though, its unfair anywhere, it would have hurt less had the incident occurred in a foreign land where people are completely ignorant about us. But it is more painful that Tailin was insulted in her own country, by her very own people that too in a Club that is supposedly well organised and reputed. It is more agonising because she was asked to leave the dining hall with such insulting and demeaning comments. The DGC reckons she is alone and so they could say

anything to her and she would remain silent, but, she is not alone. We all felt the pain and it remains fresh in the sentiments of all the north-eastern family who to the snooty DGC look like maids. As much as you respect your saris, dhotis, kurtis, salwar we love our traditional attire and we respect it. What we drape around our bodies is none of anyone's business if I am capable of paying for the food I am eating in the Club.

Under the protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 denying access to a person to any shop, hotel or places of public entertainment is an offence and even if Tailin was a maid no one has the right to kick her out. Therefore the DGC has no right to call her maid and insult our beautiful 'Jainsem'. By the way maids in Delhi also wear saris, kurtis, churidars et al. So what's wrong with the Jainsem? Had the Club management been curious about the attire they should have asked Tailin about it. Instead, they are guilty of ignorance and hostility.

If Tailin had been a typical Indian lady and worn a sari the Club might have welcomed her with a smile and treated her with respect. Also if she was a popular media icon like Gigi Hadid or Kylie Jenner the DGC manager would not have had a problem with her attire and might have thought the 'Jainsem' to be a trending fashion. She would have been accepted without question!

I deeply regret that Tailin did not see the unwritten books of rules that the Club has set for its members and pasted in front of the dining hall and also that the Club has no idea of how we look like. India is a democratic country and we have the

freedom to wear and practice our tradition. It is pathetic that the Club does not acknowledge that India is a multicultural country. Indeed the staff of DGC are unqualified to manage this Organisation. Meanwhile we from the North East are going to continue to wear our respected traditional attire which according to an ignorant Club is a maid's dress. Tailin Lyngdoh is not alone. The seven sister states are with her. And the Club's opinion is not going to matter. The Club members and staff should learn better about the country and its people and yes their half-hearted sorry is not enough.

Yours etc.,
Lyna H.Misao
M.Phil Sociology,
JNU, New Delhi

Humiliating the Khasi people!

Editor,

The deplorable incident that took place on June 25, in the Delhi Golf Club where one of our own was humiliated makes me furious. Time and again, we from the North-Eastern part of the country are subjected to attacks, both oral and physical. From being disregarded as Indians to being subjected to severe name-calling like "the chinks", we from the North-East have borne it all for a very long time. Be it the capital of the country or any other state, there seems to be a lack of knowledge and information about this part of the country. However ignorance is no excuse, be it by those on the roads, bus stops, market areas or even the most elite and refined sections. Before any kind of man-made distinction comes the unity and oneness in creation of mankind by God. When God created all humans why are there such man-made distinctions on

the basis of caste, class and wealth to the extent people are humiliated for not meeting those superficial standards! What happened to Kong Tailin Lyngdoh on that unfortunate day is a slap on the face of fellow human beings and an exhibition of high-handedness and monstrosity of those who belong to the elite and supposedly genteel society. This saddens me further because even after 70 years of our Independence, we the people of this beautiful country are yet to imbibe and develop the feeling of oneness and harmony and are as yet unable to lead our lives in the true spirit of what our country actually stands for - unity in diversity.

Yours etc.,
Jenniefer Dkhar,
Via email

Age no bar!

Editor,

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks for the article "An expedition to remember" by Sushit Kanti Choudhury (Sunday Shillong 1st July, 2017) and sincerely congratulate the author for having completed the expedition described by him and also for taking the pains to report the experience so succinctly. We, on the wrong side of the pinnacle of youth, do feel encouraged to continue onwards in life's arduous journey upon reading such inspiring writing and look forward to more in future. May the youthful author have many more of such wonderful experiences and also provide write-ups on the same for the benefit of others.

Yours etc.,
Subhasis Tilak
Chakrawarty,
Shillong-3

Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of Family and Culture in Crisis

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

Elegy in modern literature is often interpreted as a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead. Here the dead could perhaps be replaced by a dying culture, a dying way of life, rotting from within. And it is this dying culture that JD Vance hopes to capture in his offering "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of Family and Culture in Crisis". Vance beautifully captures growing up in the Ohio Kentucky region in a steel town that had been haemorrhaging jobs and hope as long as he can remember. Along the way he seeks to answer the question that experts had been trying to answer for some time now, as to why the Middletown Southern regions went from staunchly Democratic to Republican in less than a generation.

At 32, Vance a Yale graduate with a previous stint in the United States Marine and a well settled job in San Francisco area, is an epitome of the American dream. As he himself said, he believed that he was in the greatest country on Earth and the country made it possible from him. Yet as he takes us on a whirlwind tour of his childhood and adolescence years, one gets the feeling that this journey was anything but easy.

A childhood in the Rust Bowl had very peculiar challenges and Vance articulates the same. These regions had big corporations which employed a large number of people primarily from the Southern regions; whole towns were built around the companies and the jobs they provided. Communities sprang from within these companies and they stayed as long as the companies stayed. As the companies began to leave, towns began to wither and decay and it was in the middle of this decay that Vance found himself in. The economic decay gave way to social decay that is the root of the social deprivation of the American blue collared working classes face today. Not only is it a community without jobs, it suffers from drug problem, students don't pass out of high school, broken families the social motivation is low as well. In fact as the author himself quotes, the social condition of the white blue collared working class is often as bad the ghettoised Blacks or the Latinos. Yet little attention was ever paid to this dying system. And this is where the problem lay.

His grandparents originally from the Appalachian Mountains had come to Middletown in search of better lives. While there may have been many reasons why they left the mountains, the author chooses to leave that part and proceeds to talk about the life his Papaw and Mamaw built for him. As jobs began to dry up, the great white working American population - the worker class - found itself in destitute and poverty. Between changing homes and changing husbands, his mother could provide Vance and his sister Lindsay little support. His biological father Bob was a good man as Vance would later admit, but Bob had walked out of them fairly early in life. Since then Vance had seen a number of father figures in his life come and go, watched his mother battle her drug addiction, saw his grandmother nurse neighbourhood poor kids, his sister becoming an elder quite early and most of all the Appalachian code of honour. There is honour in how the author chooses to captivate his life but in that honour lies the sadness of a decaying community.

At the core Vance chooses to establish the fact that the American white working class, once a backbone of the community is decaying and there are many ways that it is happening. As Vance chooses to unravel the hillbillies, he narrates his own demons along the way. He demystifies how policies

made for the poor people often end up being used the wrong way, precisely because those making the policies have little view of poverty themselves. He expresses discontentment at how the poor had gamed the American welfare system.

Democrats with their suave niceties and their global outlook couldn't reach out to this average American voter. The average American white working class voter was losing jobs as the Rust Bowl began to lose prominence. As great industrial towns decayed, people fell into poverty. In the author's own hometown of Middletown, no great shopping complexes or business exist anymore, not because people moved out but because the malls had moved out. And malls and shopping complexes had moved out because people could not afford to buy anymore. The rot in the American working class was real and it had set in. And the solutions offered were inadequate.

Yet he does not limit his dissatisfaction to the government policies alone, he blames the community as well. Anyone who makes it big from the community is earmarked as a "smart" man rather than appreciating the hard work that the person might have put. The American working class woke up Pillsbury Cinnamon rolls and had McDonalds for dinner even though cooking at home was much cheaper. They bought things they didn't need and couldn't provide for their children's education when the time came. They would game the system by bringing beer via food stamps and feed cold drinks to their children as small as 9 months. Decaying teeth in the opinion of the author is a very American white working class-hillbilly- feature thanks to years of carbonated drinks. The difference between the rich and the poor, he opined was not only what the rich did but how they did it. The rich have a certain lifestyle in stark opposite to hillbilly way of life. And this hillbilly way of life, the author felt, was also central to the decay that had set in.

The working class had lost the zeal to work hard. The author provides us a funny anecdote on the same; a friend of his left his job because he could not work for long hours. His Facebook post however talked about how "Jobs were moving overseas". The author says that while jobs going overseas are a reality, it was not the reason why his own friend had lost the job! The author also observes how, once the decay sets in, people start believing in ideas that undermine the very root of democracy, hearsay precisely. Vance quotes a large number of Americans believing Barack Obama was a Muslim, when even Fox News channel does not propound the same. In short, the author points to the deep impact myths can play in decaying society.

The book is a caricature of the Trump voter in the Rust Belt. The modern working class man is at odds with the liberal politician and liberal politics because they feel liberalism does not understand the lives of the working class anymore. This book offers an extremely nuanced view of something fundamentally wrong that needs correction. The global contours of such societies could not be sharper. As new jobs in automation and other sectors emerge, old factory towns would lose their prominence. Such towns stare at a future of desolation and decay unless policies are put in the right places. Such policies also need to have their heart in the right place. This book not only provides a look into the past but also provides an insight to the future. JD Vance has truly come a long way from the Rust Bowl.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

"The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls."

--- Pablo Picasso

The Shillong Times

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Gorkhaland demand

THE unrest in Darjeeling fuelled by the demand for a separate Gorkhaland entered its 20th day on July 4. Schools and colleges have remained closed and internet services suspended for the last 17 days. Tourism has suffered a hit as this is the peak tourist period even as hotels are all empty. The agitation was triggered by the West Bengal Government's decision on May 18, this year to make Bengali compulsory in all schools. This short-sighted decision inflamed passions and the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha took this announcement as an affront to the cultural sensitivities of the Gorkha people who have their own language. The agitation is reminiscent of the Gorkhaland movement led by Subhas Ghising's Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in the mid-1980s. As is usually the case, the West Bengal Government has treated this matter as a law and order problem and is dealing with it in that manner. For the people of Darjeeling, however, the issue is political as language defines and promotes culture and history of a people. Take away language and you take away a vital part of their history!

Meanwhile Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee has thrown the problem to the Centre and demanded central forces to deal with the situation. The Centre has refused to comply citing this to be a state problem which can be tackled by the state police. On July 4, the Calcutta High Court has intervened and asked the Centre and the West Bengal government to resolve their differences over the deployment of Central Armed Police Force in the hills. At present, in addition to the state police there are 11 companies of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) in Darjeeling which comprises the districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, for tackling the present issue. But the point is whether mere deployment of forces can quell the disturbances which have taken a strong political hue with the demand for Gorkhaland having become more strident. Examples abound from the North East where the overwhelming presence of security forces has failed to control sub-nationalist movements!

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Forest policy still vague

The new National Policy on Forests (1988) has not drawn the kudos from the public which the Central Government might have been expecting. If anything, it has met with sharp criticism from the public and for their reasons. Under the new policy, the Government has set a national goal of putting one-third of the total land area of the country under forest cover in the near future. "Forests are not looked upon as source of revenue. Forests are a renewable natural source," says the policy document. They are a national asset to be protected and enhanced for the well-being of the people and the nation. These are laudable objectives indeed, but they were also there when the old policy on forests was launched in May, 1952. How is it then that the old policy which is sought to be replaced by a new one did not work during the last 36 years. Statistics speak the truth louder than words. Studies reveal that instead of afforesting the country in reality, the forest cover has shrunk to about 17 per cent (official version, again) from 22.8 per cent estimated in 1972-73. Policy or no policy, it shows that the axing of trees has continued to date at the rate of 1.5 million hectares a year. No one believes that it is going to stop with the drafting of a new policy of forests alone. It can be if the Government is sincere in implementing what it tries to profess on paper. What has happened in Uttar Pradesh is typical of the country as a whole. A survey has found that the actual forest cover in this state has shrunk to a

mere 1 percent from 2 percent in the fifties despite numerous afforestation plans launched during the old policy period. However, officials take pride in saying that the old policy did succeed significantly on at least one point. It helped arrest the annual diversion of forestland for non forest purpose from 150,000 hectares a year to only 15,000 after the 1980 Forest Conservation Act came into force. Surprisingly, this figure has been greeted with disbelief not only by the detractors of the Government but also by some people from the herding party too. In fact, these projects are so designed that with their completion vast areas of virgin forests get submerged under water. Once construction begins, vested interests slaughter the trees and share the loot. Conservationists cite the latest case of controversial Bodhghat project in Bastar to illustrate this point. Once completed, the project will submerge an area where around two million sal trees (each valued at Rs. 15,000 in open market). Its principal aim is to ensure environmental stability including atmospheric equilibrium which are vital for all life forms -- human, animal and plant. Again, forest protection will also have to be flexible enough to tackle effectively a variety of situations in different regions of the country. For instance, the guidelines equating the deforestation caused by industrial agencies is totally unjustified. Vested interests have always made the 'villagers' and the tribal's search for fuel wood.

An Identity Denial

By Anuran Medhi & Zoukim Tungnung

The marginalisation of people from the north eastern states of India is not a new issue. In fact, over the last decade, instances of such marginalisation has only increased exponentially. Despite the government's efforts of bringing North-east into the larger union of India as a country, it has not been sufficient. The fault is obviously in the proper lack of implementation of the various laws that have been issued for the above-mentioned cause.

The Fundamental Duty under the Article 51A(e) of the Indian Constitution is "to promote harmony and the spirit of brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religion, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to dignity of women." However, on Sunday, 25th June, 2017, not only did a few Indians disregard their fundamental duty, they also proved that discrimination in India is still prevalent even after various Constitutional laws.

Tailin Lyngdoh is a governess who is originally from Meghalaya. She works with an Abu Dhabi based doctor from Assam. She was not allowed to enter the Delhi Golf Club on the pretext that she looked like a 'maid'. "They told me, 'Leave the dining hall, maids are not allowed.' They were very rude. I felt ashamed and angry," said Lyngdoh, who was wearing a Jainsem, a traditional dress worn by the indigenous Khasi women. When the staff was questioned as to how they could decide that she was a maid, they responded in a mix of Hindi and English that, she looked like a maid, her dress looked like that of a maid and she resembled a 'Nepali'. The Golf Club management has arrogated the right to insult domestic workers as well as people who look like domestic workers. This incident caused an uprising not only in the NE states but also among NE people living in cities. That Lyngdoh being a scheduled tribe whose rights are protected under the laws governing Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes of India, was vehemently discriminated so.

Her employer Nivedita Barthakur was not amused when they asked Tailin Lyngdoh to leave the table where they were about to have their lunch. She tried explaining to them that the lady was wearing the Khasi traditional dress which is similar to a saree or a salwar suit. That it's accepted attire in all formal occasions and state occasions. They refused to budge and said that she had to leave as domestic helps are not allowed inside the dining room. Dr. Sondhi, who was amongst the guests, also pointed out that Lyngdoh belonged to a scheduled tribe and they were treading on dangerous ground as they were clearly discriminating against a woman by racially profiling her. Their response was a curt "jo karna hai kar lijiye."

Barthakur wants to take legal action against this incident and she is seeking help from Kiren Rijiju (Minister of State for Home) and Conrad Sangma (Lok Sabha MP from Meghalaya). On a Facebook post, she wrote, "It was because you and your Delhi elites are too embarrassed to sit with your domestic help and refuse to treat them as equals. This is about your colonial hangover which refuses to treat citizens of India equally and as per the Indian constitution."

This incident is a shameful spot on the Indian constituency which prides itself for its diversity. That despite Constitution of India guaranteeing equal rights to every citizen of India, a person was denied her fundamental right and discriminated against based on her physical appearance, ethnicity or profession is untenable. Since independence, the leaders of India have always had a tendency to ignore the north eastern side of the country. Frontrunners in the fight against racism such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King were in fact inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of equality. Even on world forums and platforms, India has been outspoken about

its unacceptability of racism and has imparted sympathy for victims of racism. Therefore, it is ironic that the country has failed to practise what it preaches.

It is evident from the number of cases and incidents related to *i n s u r g e n c y , u n d e r d e v e l o p m e n t , u n e m p l o y m e n t* and most importantly, lack of recognition and respect for those hailing from NE. One of the foremost reasons for this discrimination is the difference in the physical appearance of Northeastern people. This prompts people from the mainland to abuse NE people with various racist and unflattering terms such as 'chinki' or 'momo' and even 'Chinese' or 'Nepali'. In addition, the influx of Tibetan refugees in Delhi, which consists of a large proportion of NE people, has given the general people more motive to categorise and harass both the communities.

Like Tailin Lyngdoh, there have been more many more North-easterners who had to face the brunt of racial slurs and discrimination. On 26 October 2009, a woman was allegedly burnt to death in the kitchen of her home by a stalker whose unwelcome advances she had rebuffed. On 29 May 2013, a young Manipuri girl was allegedly murdered in a rented apartment in the national capital. On February 7, 2014, a minor girl from Manipur was raped by her landlord's son. On February 9, two Manipuri boys were beaten to death by a group of five men who subjected racist taunts on them. On 25 January 2014, two young women from the north-east were subjected to racial taunts and molestation and soon thereafter on 29 January 2014, a young student named Nido Tania was racially ridiculed and assaulted to death in the Lajpat Nagar area of New Delhi. These cases are only a pinch of the various forms of racism which people from NE face on a regular basis. Statistically, the age group between 18-30 are in constant threat of racist attacks as they are the ones who migrate to bigger cities for education or job

opportunities especially in cities like Delhi and Bangalore. In addition, sexual harassment of people of NE in other cities has also increased.

Recently, after the death of Nido Tania, the Bezbaruah Committee, headed by retired bureaucrat MP Bezbaruah was commissioned in February 2014 to come up with stringent measures to stop these kinds of racial discrimination. Some of the key measures that this committee has come up with are the creation of anti-racism law, accountable law and order, interventions through education, social media outreach and legal awareness and bonding with the power of sports. Unfortunately, despite submitting the report, the centre still remains silent on these recommendations.

The question to be asked here is how long will the government continue to ignore the NE people? Every day that goes by in ignorance, another NE person becomes a victim. It is a matter of great shame that North-easterners are treated as outsiders in their own country. In the 21st century its is appalling that there are still institutions in this country which deny citizens their basic rights as citizens and as human beings. It is also of concern that an institution which supposedly receives funding from the Government can so blatantly practise discrimination. Therefore, it is the need of the hour that the centre and the people of India stop treating NE like some burden that was thrust upon them during independence. The foundation of India is its unity in diversity and that is exactly what NE needs right now. The region is as much part of India as every other state and it is high time that it gets its due.

(The authors are from Kirori Mal College and Lady Shri Ram College, respectively)

TO THE EDITOR

The Delhi Debacle

Editor,
Having first read about and then watched an NDTV discussion on the disgraceful behaviour of the Delhi Golf Club, I share the general revulsion and outrage. To a certain extent most of us have suffered from the ridicule heaped on us because of the way we look or, even worse, do not look. It is no wonder then that what happened to Kong Tailin Lyngdoh touched such a raw nerve.

Robbing anyone of hard-won self respect is a social crime and Kong Tailin Lyngdoh's undeserved public humiliation merits more than its fair share of sympathy. And naturally because like her I too am a Khasi I feel even more incensed. So how grateful I was that Dr Nivedita Borthakur defended Kong Tailin with such robust and sincere passion, referring to her as "my colleague", and more importantly "a human being". Dr Borthakur dismantled the male opposition and ruled the airwaves! What a champion! And well done to Kong Tailin too for not kowtowing to an elite prescription of how she should look and not altering her appearance in order to 'improve' her image at subsequent meetings with the press. What a lesson in dignity and integrity taught to us by these two women.

Maybe sometimes the stars do align and we can then see that the North-East does belong to that group of Seven Sisters. One can only hope.

But above all what I took away from this episode was the beginnings of some troubled soul-searching. Would I have leapt as courageously to the defence of someone belittled in this way? Or would I have caved in to the intimidating pressure of public opinion as to what is 'right' and acceptable defined by the few possessing social rank and wealth? Or, under the pretext of not creating a fuss, would I have refrained from questioning the tyranny of such hurtful cultural judgments? It therefore makes me wonder if we are just cheering at the end of a battle someone else fought and won for us. But then aren't all significant wars won in this way?

To have so clearly been shown the difference between image and substance is a valuable life-lesson for me and I am glad that what happened in Delhi has caused ripples that go far beyond the confines of an exclusive golf club. I have personally experienced that sense of naked vulnerability felt by all those who are told or are made to feel they do not fit in, and in this regard I too am just another Kong Tailin asked to leave for not possessing the right

credentials.

Yours etc.
Janet Hujon,
Via email

Whither Swachh Bharat!

Editor,
Meghalaya has implemented the Central flagship programme of Swachh Bharat (clean India campaign) since the past three and a half years in several parts of the state but it has not implemented this campaign in the Meghalaya Secretariat which is the seat of power. The office chambers of almost all categories of employees, including those of the IAS are awful. The lavatories are dirty and awfully stinking; the verandahs are in shambles; the drains are heavily clogged and stinking with emission of toxic wastes from septic tanks; the surrounding compounds are cramped up with the ugly looking condemned vehicles. Lo and behold what a miserable sight it is! It represents a very poor picture of the whole of Meghalaya.

I strongly appeal the New Chief Secretary of Meghalaya to ensure that Meghalaya Secretariat should show the way in cleanliness and also to ensure that all government offices in Meghalaya, wherever they are, should be spotlessly clean both internally and externally, free from corrupt practices as well

because 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.' The Government spends huge amounts towards the salaries of the cleaners, sweepers, gardeners, supervisors, superintendents, et al but what a poor sight. Most of the offices of the Government of Meghalaya are like cow sheds and pig sties or haunted houses. This is not acceptable to the people.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via email

No justice for the disempowered

Editor,
Apropos the report, "Gang rape victim attacked fifth time in nine years" (ST, July 3, 2017), in Uttar Pradesh, a woman has been facing perpetual acid attacks for seeking justice against those who allegedly gang-raped her in 2008. Indeed, we all got acid on our faces. Why do we go to slumber after Nirbhaya? How can these criminals pooh-pooh our justice delivery system? The victim's nine year wait for justice and multiple acid attacks on her in the process portray all of us in a bad light. Justice delayed means no justice at all.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Rising above the binary frame of mind

By Yona Nonglang

An intolerant, raucous, polarised and partisan posturing can be rather unpalatable to people who desire a more level-headed and less feral approach to political discourse. Fortunately, there's always an alternative to extremism. And those who prefer this option are not some unimaginative, spineless weaklings who are too timid to join the either/or crowd. It, actually, takes sagacity and moral fortitude to be not swept away by the tidal wave of viciousness that is sweeping whole communities because of the many forms of political radicalism.

Indeed, on an almost universal scale, the insularly regressive and the free-wheelingly progressive

countries have been seizing their moment of opportunity for the better way forward by deciding on a less bellicose political narrative. It's been remarkable how they've managed to silence divisive and intolerant rhetoric with the sheer power of their ballot. Even if it meant handing over the reins of power to utter neophytes, as in the case of France, because its people saw the need to reinvent their political system by propelling into power a presidential candidate and his legislators who speak a civilised, conciliatory and moderate political language.

Indeed, entrusting such an enormously complex, nuanced and comprehensive power of national and transnational

" Indeed, entrusting such an enormously complex, nuanced and comprehensive power of national and transnational magnitude to virtual unknowns in public service was a ground-breaking and courageous decision in these very troubling days of radicalism. "

have been busy making the loudest and most divisive noises through the various broadcasting outlets of our tech-abundant, albeit, tech-naïve generation.

The calculated engineering and amplifying of various controversial disputes and the escalating of clashes of opinions on a whole host of social and economic issues have been the convenient publicity grabbing methods of the Johnnies-come-lately, the Johnnies-come-hungriest, the swaggering-nihilists and the unabashed "moralists" among us. So what, even if they're sowing needless hostile sentiments and injecting hysteria into the minds of many a gullible victim of their machinations! Sending whole societies into existential mayhem seems to be the stratagem of anarchic resourcefulness, anyway.

And the question uppermost in people's minds is the oft repeated FOR WHAT? In a world full of twisted logics, those who are the problem can also easily make it look like they're the only solution, too. And so, it has been, that in a world that's grown comfortable with twisted logics, self-proclaimed saviours of the very same societies they had helped push to the brink of self-inflicted ruin, get propelled into public offices that are too dignified and too laden with responsibility for them to handle. At the end of the day, these are the societies that end up descending lower into the nadirs of dystopian existence.

And so, thank goodness, for the people who choose to not capitulate to the belligerent mind-set of the day. And what a relief that there's still a section of the general public that dares to break free from the shackles of the binary mind-set of radicalism.

For the love of our common humanity, all the children and the future that awaits them, let's not forget that the best thing about democracy is the fact that ordinary members of the public have the power to change whole political trends by either re-electing or replacing governments through the simple act of participation in the voting process.

As of now, while most countries are stuck in some never ending cycle of policy deadlock because of polarised politicking, thankfully, some European

magnitude to virtual unknowns in public service was a ground-breaking and courageous decision in these very troubling days of radicalism. It could have either been a foolhardy experiment on one hand, but, it could also prove to be a judicious move on the part of the people of France.

As for the post-election bickering over numbers, that less than fifty percent of the French population voted in the parliamentary rounds, it has been more of a trivial and inconsequential case of your grapes are sour, to say the least. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Macron and La République En Marche are now legitimately occupying the highest political offices of their country.

Besides, what actually needs to be considered noteworthy is, how that section of the French population, that felt it was their civil duty to show up for voting on Election Day, succeeded in cementing the authority of Mr. Macron and his party colleagues. And, more importantly, even if only for the time being, that that percentage of the electorate, has also, on behalf of the whole of France, managed to put a stop to the xenophobia that had been threatening to dominate their political landscape for a number of years.

No doubt, it's up to Mr. Macron and his party's legislators to prove whether or not they're deserving of the trust and expectations of their countrymen and women. Time, indeed, will tell. But don't we so wish, that, for once, in our own generation, we might get to witness an administration, formed by a newly created political party, deliver its promises to an electorate that was willing to give it a chance to lead their country forward?

If that, indeed, would be the case, Mr. Macron and En Marche will not only win a second term of office, France could also end up being a political beacon in a century that is, so far, ravaged by mindless greed, inequality, anger, violence and this ever present binary, opportunistic and anarchistic mind-set that has been killing reasonable dialogue in the public square.

(Yona Nonglang is the author of 'TEILANG' and 'THE WAY AS THEY SEE IT,' which are available online as e-books).

"A really great talent finds its happiness in execution."

--- Oscar Wilde

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2017

Modi in Israel

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel is long overdue. Diplomatic relations with Israel were started 25 years ago. But progress in bilateral ties has been halted owing to the traditional bond with Palestine. Modi's visit marks a pragmatic turn. It should not however cause an estrangement with Palestine. There is no reason to think that amity with Israel will impair good relations with the Arab world which is itself divided. Saudi Arabia and China are low down on the human rights index but India tries to be friendly with these countries. Israel is a vibrant democracy. It is said that Muslims are persecuted by Jews in Israel. But Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are blacklisted for the persecution of Shias and China for the persecution of Uighurs.

It should also be recalled that Israel supported India during the 1971 and Kargil wars with Pakistan. Modi's visit to Tel-Aviv should deepen engagement in traditional and non-traditional sectors. Defence ties and cooperation in security infrastructure will take precedence. Since April India has signed three missile deals with Israel worth \$2.6 billion. Armed drones are expected to come. Agreements on space exploration, agriculture and water are on the drawing board. Israel has the second largest number of start-ups and a robust R&D culture. Ties with Israel will help the 'Make in India' initiative. There will be a strengthening of counter-terrorism in mutual interest. Finally, it should facilitate ties with the Jewish lobby in the Trump administration in the US.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

AGP MP lashes out at Karnataka Governor

Mr Dinesh Goswami (AGP) today accused in the Lok Sabha the Karnataka Governor Mr P. Venkatasubbiah for acting in a "Malafide" manner in recommending imposition of President's rule in the state and dissolution of the state assembly. The Governor had no business to make the recommendation he did without allowing Chief Minister Mr S R Bommai an opportunity to prove his majority in the assembly, he said. Mr Goswami is initiating a simultaneous debate on his motion seeking to "censure" Mr Venkatasubbiah and his removal for his action and the Government motion seeking approval of the presidential proclamation on the subject. Mr Goswami

said over the years the ruling party at the centre had been misusing the Article 356 of the constitution, which relates to the imposition of the President's rule in state for partisan politician gain.

He said successive commissions including the Sarkaria Commission on centre - state relations had commented disapproving of the practice and stressed that the floor of the house, and not office of the Governor, was the right forum to test the majority of a Government. He said the Sarkaria Commission had given 75 instances when Article 356 had been used and remarked that "the figure would soon touch the 100 mark from way the Rajiv Gandhi Government is behaving."

Development Dilemma

India vs Western World

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

these business houses and not benefitted society in any way. Even the quality of their services leaves much to be desired.

The strategy that has been followed with industrialisation, on the one hand, and digitisation, on the other, can hardly help in employment generation. Porter is possibly not aware of the population and workforce dynamics in this country compared to that of America. The huge unemployment and underemployment here is indeed a big problem and the solution lies in adopting a completely different approach to planning that may even stagnate our GDP growth.

The focus of our strategy needs to shift from giving impetus to heavy industrialisation to encouraging micro, cottage and medium industries, primarily in rural and semi-urban areas, as also start-ups that could generate employment opportunities. Moreover, special incentives should be given to labour intensive sectors so that there is absorption of labour. Meanwhile, skill upgradation has been taken up by the government so that there is sufficient skilled manpower in sophisticated areas.

The other component of our development strategy has to focus on the rural sector, specially giving focus to its infrastructure needs. After a long time, the present government in the last two budgets has allotted maximum resources to the rural sector and has been trying, through its diverse programmes and projects, to promote development at the village and/or block level.

The rural sector has to be transformed as engines of growth with participation and involvements of the people. Instead of centralised control, powers have to be decentralised, right down to the panchayats, which was visualised by Gandhi, Jayaprakash Narayan and even our late President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. But over the years, the yearning for power and control of authority has motivated States not to decentralise authority to the panchayats while they

claim for more power and resources from the Centre.

There has been some change in this direction due to the fact that years' of planning and development has not had the desired effect on say 40 per cent of the population. It is surprising that most economists, influenced by Western thoughts, have tried to implement their strategy in this country. The high density of the population living mostly in rural areas, the high incidence of poverty and the growing unemployment and underemployment has possibly escaped their attention.

The idea of universal basic income has gained credence recently. But for that to become a reality, subsidies to better-off sections have to be brought down -- though some initiative has already been made -- while tax collection has to be substantially improved. With resources available with the government at this point of time, it may not be possible to focus on public goods and welfare services and also ensure universal basic income for all.

The geographical and population position, the rural population and their livelihoods and the undeveloped social infrastructure in villages are not quite understood by most of our economists and planners -- coming from urban backgrounds -- who visualise development as something that can accelerate growth without considering who benefits from following such a path. Thus foreign experts advice us, based on their expertise and knowledge, on following the same strategy here where population pressure is indeed a big problem.

The proper distribution of resources and ensuring that it reaches the intended beneficiaries is indeed a big challenge for the government. Lack of poor governance and political interference in siphoning of resources for the poor needs to be checked but unfortunately there is lack of sincerity in executing these projects and schemes.

At present economic success and progress are measured almost entirely through concepts like GDP, which accounts merely for the total material exchange in society and is blind to the dimension of actual social

welfare and ecological sustainability. As Mark Lutz aptly pointed out: "It is important to realise that a line of universal material abundance is not a realistic ideal (or real development) for the planet. Life's destiny for the human being must be something other, something more meaningful, than that".

Like Adam Smith, who cautioned us that wealth are mere 'baubles' and trinkets of frivolous utility, most other philosophers also outlined that higher pleasures have no value. This is why, Lutz concludes in his book, Economics for the Common Good, "what is at stake is not just a new world order but the world itself."

There has been serious debate the world over in understanding real development that would benefit the common man. Mention may be made of the The Other economic Summit (TOES), a platform of alternative economists, greens and community activists, who, in the words of James Robertson, "is grounded in social and spiritual values to address concerns the G7 consistently neglects such as poverty, environment, peace, health, safety, human rights and democratic global governance."

Whether this worldwide movement would have any effect on conventional economics and change the economic thinking of nation States, including India, remains to be seen. However, as regards our country is concerned, it would be pertinent to refer to Mahatma Gandhi who stressed on political and economic decentralisation and involvement of the people in the decision-making process so that their actual demands and needs are given priority in planning and development.

It remains to be seen when the strategy of alternative economics that was also propagated by Gandhi years back would be implemented in the country and how soon. But if the government is serious about poverty eradication and improving the living conditions of the people, it would be better if the new strategy of development is adopted. --INFA

Qatar to Karnataka, press under pressure

Media sinking under rising authoritarianism

By Amulya Ganguli

A curious item in the charter of demands presented by Saudi Arabia and its allies to Qatar is a call for banning the popular and highly rated television channel, Al Jazeera. One can understand the insistence on outlawing the supposedly terroristic Muslim Brotherhood and the closure of a Turkish base on Qatari soil, but shutting down Al Jazeera?

At one stroke, the Saudis have revealed their claustrophobic, medieval mindset which is at odds with the open, inquiring outlook of the modern world. Al Jazeera is an exception in the Islamic world, which is known for its veiled women and a lifestyle which appears devoid of intellectual content as bookshops and libraries are conspicuous by their absence. It is undoubtedly for this very reason why the antediluvian desert kingdom which lives in the earlier centuries wants to scupper

their supporters in the social media a justification for a crackdown on the so-called mainstream media which includes newspapers which have published whatever is fit to print for over a century.

The onslaught on the media has led to India dropping three places on the world press freedom index compiled by the Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF), which ranked the country at 136 in a "difficult situation" slot. The watchdog body found that prosecutions were being used to "gag journalists overly critical of the government". The sedition law of the colonial era has proved handy for the government in this regard. It is worth recalling that a foreign embassy in New Delhi had to cancel a meeting on press freedom because of threats from activists associated with the ruling dispensation because they did not approve of the presence of

In India, too, the media is not a favourite of the powers-that-be. For instance, neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor the leader of the 132-year-old Congress party, Sonia Gandhi, has attended a televised press conference where they can be closely questioned by newsmen. Instead, they prefer one-on-one interactions with journalists whom they can trust to steer clear of controversial topics. Being of the same mind where the media is concerned, Trump and Modi did not take questions during the latter's recent visit to the US.

a distinctive feature of the modern age which telecasts diverse views. Strangely, however, this regressive demand of the Saudis may not worry the Trump administration which, too, is not too enamoured of the free press despite being the putative leader of the free world.

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As if to drive home the point that the fourth estate is of no consequence, the Karnataka legislature sentenced two journalists to jail for a year and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 each for writing defamatory articles against the Speaker and the MLAs. Not surprisingly, the decision was unanimous because both the Congress and BJP legislators supported the jail term, which was described as a gross abuse of the powers and privileges of the state legislature by the editors' guild and is being probed by the Karnataka high court. The arrests have now been put on hold.

From Qatar to Karnataka, therefore, the press is under pressure. The authorities no longer seem to be interested in upholding its reputation as a symbol of democracy, like an independent judiciary, presumably because they have found in the vituperative utterances of

two journalists who have been "overly critical of the government".

The Paris-based RSF has noted that the US and Britain, too, have dropped two places to being 43rd and 40th among 179 countries because of Donald Trump's "toxic" media bashing similar to that of the pro-Brexit campaigners in Britain. In the fitness of things, North Korea brings up the rear, but the fact that India is just 43 places above the lowest rung cannot be a matter of pride, especially when the unleashing of the "caged parrot" - the Supreme Court's term for the CBI - on a media house was described by Arun Shourie, who was a minister in Atal Behari Vajpayee's cabinet, as a case of "killing chickens to frighten the monkeys".

Ironically, the expansion of the areas of the dissemination of information and exchange of views via the Internet has worsened the situation with the entry of ill-informed, ill-educated, biased and abusive writers who have vitiated the atmosphere of reasoned discourse. As a group of retired bureaucrats wrote to the prime minister, "we are seeing an ugly trend of trolling, threats and online intimidation of activists, journalists, writers and intellectuals who disagree with the dominant ideology".

As the supporters of the dominant ideology, viz. Hindutva, admit, they have come to the fore with all their virulence because they believe that for the first time in Indian history, they have the opportunity to peddle their views which had been negated and ridiculed for decades by the purveyors of the previous ideology which was diametrically opposite to that of the present one. In the process, however, they have been inflicting grievous damage to the concept of the freedom of the press which enables a nation to listen to itself, so to say. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Why GST for sanitary napkins?

Editor,
It's the fourth day after the "biggest tax reform since 1947" was rolled out. Taxes are obviously important and the concept of GST in the country seems to be a positive move. However, in a country like India where many goods are subsidized by the government and remain untaxed, it's unfortunate or rather quite interesting to note that sanitary napkins are not included in that list.

80% women can't even afford proper menstrual hygiene, and now we have 12% GST on sanitary napkins as if women can choose to do without them! The least that the government should do to those who are badly off, is try and introduce schemes where sanitary napkins are given out at subsidised rates.

For all those who are confused, for women menstruation is not a choice. And healthcare isn't a luxury! It's a necessity where unnecessary taxes should not be imposed.

Yours etc.,
Manisha M Pala,
Shillong - 21.

Women equal to men!

Editor,
Women all over the world have established that they are not lesser humans. They deserve equality with men in every walk of life. Today, what our college going daughters and working women wear are indeed in tune with their changing roles. A girl goes to a college/working place by braving crowded buses/trains or driving all by herself. So, she needs to get her hair cut short and to wear what a boy wears - T-shirt/trousers etc., to get her going without any difficulty. Garments need not be gender-specific. And we must accept such unisex dresses. What we really need to protest with one voice is against projecting women as commodities in movies and advertisements. Women are not meant to be confined to a feudal home. They are not meant to be sold in a capitalist market either.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Kudos to DTO staff!

Editor,
I went to the District Transport Office (DTO) Shillong, today to renew my driving licence which was to expire in a few days. With the perception that all government offices adopt a lethargic approach, I was prepared for a long haul, but I was completely taken aback by the attitude and work culture of the employees there. They were friendly and prompt in service. I was through with my entire process of renewal within 45 minutes.

I applaud this work culture and hats off to all of the employees of DTO. Keep it up and continue to do good!

Yours etc.,
Yogesh Agarwal,
Viaemail

Life over death!

Editor,
An ethical fundamental principle states that life is precious. I agree with Barnes Mawrie's article 'My bleeding India' (ST July 3, 2017) where he states that

nowhere on earth are animals preferred over humans. India is a democracy where people have the power to elect their leaders. It is shocking to watch television news and read of many innocent people being killed just because they are considered, 'beef eaters.' This is unacceptable in a country where the preamble of the Constitution itself declares India to be a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic. Since the BJP came to power in 2014, till date there is general unrest and a climate of turmoil in the country on account of the beef issue. No doubt the BJP government has done a lot to develop India but unless there is social peace all the achievements of the NDA Government will go in vain.

The saying goes 'violence breeds violence.' So far I have seen only violence and most of the crimes are related to the beef issue even though BJP has invaded the media with its achievements in demonetization and GST as Mawrie had stated in his article. The rights of the minority to live freely in our mother land, India is taken away by the majority. The

minority live in fear and are insecure in their own beloved motherland. The BJP-led NDA Government's decision to make Ram Nath Kovind from the Dalit community as their presidential candidate looks like a cover up for all the crimes against minorities. Remember evil cannot produce good. The act of killing a person in the name of a cow as happened in the train in Haryana recently is totally wrong and condemnable. Who is more precious? A human being or a cow? By saying this I do not mean to insult the sentiments of the Hindus who consider the cow a sacred animal. However, to harm or kill people for the sake of a cow is universally wrong, because religion is meant for good and not to create violence or disharmony. The universal principle is, 'Do good; shun evil.' We are no different from terrorists if we continue to kill people.

Why should a vast democratic country like India, a secular country, a country with the beauty of unity in diversity impose a beef ban on all the people for the sake of the majority? Of what use of the Ministry of Minority Affairs if all of us follow what the majority

does? I thought this ministry is created to protect the rights of minorities and it exists because there are minorities in this country. Therefore, let us respect human beings first, irrespective of who they are. It is also very unfortunate that most of the incidents connected with beef ban happened only in the BJP ruled states (Junaid's case in Haryana and Asgal Ali in Jharkhand). As a common man I would advice our central government to consider this matter with the seriousness it deserves if we want India to be great. No country will progress if there are internal social problems. The father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi has taught us the path of 'Non Violence'. Hence, let us respect one another irrespective of the religion we belong to because we are all Indians.

Yours etc.,
Aiborlang Nongsiej
Mawkyrwat

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.

“Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.”

--- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JULY 7, 2017

UDP's equivocal stance

INDECISION appears to be the Achilles heel of the regional parties. They are cogitating on who will form the next government in 2018. The indecision stems from a lack of self confidence. They know they cannot muster the required numbers to form the next government and are unsure who to align with after the election results are out. Why have the regional parties failed to capture the imagination of the voters in Meghalaya? Why are they second best and have nearly always had to align with national parties? This predicament should have sent them into a retrospective mood. They should be going out to feel the pulse of the voters as a party and not as individual MLAs seeking re-election. But this daunting task does not seem to be a priority for the UDP leadership. Is it an intrinsically cultural flaw that regional party unity is only a fig leaf that hides the inherent disunity that baffles a particular society? It has been said in the past that national parties are cohesive because there is a centrifugal force - a high command - to hold even the most headstrong members together. In the case of the regional parties there is a distinct lack of respect for the leader since every member believes he is best placed to lead the party. They are not entirely at fault. Leaders stand out and are able to provide leadership. They don't vacillate at crucial junctures in the life of the party.

The UDP's stance vis-à-vis Meira Kumar the presidential candidate put up by the Congress can at best be understood as schizophrenic. While the UDP President, Donkumar Roy has, as claimed by Ms Kumar assured her of his Party's support, he has been rather coy in stating this upfront to the media and is simply buying time. Critics have repeatedly alleged that the UDP is the Team B of the Congress. This allegation is proving to be a reality since the UDP now appears to have decided to stick by the Congress party candidate even though she is unlikely to win the race to Rashtrapati Bhavan and is merely putting up a principled fight.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Bandaranaike escapes attempt on life

Former Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike this morning escaped an attempt on her life the second in less than two months when unidentified men threw bombs at her party election campaign meeting in eastern Sri Lanka. Police and party

sourcenessaid. Meanwhile, continuing violence involving extremists elsewhere in the island left 22 people dead, security officials said. SLFP sources said that at least four bombs were hurled at the dais at the inaugural parliamentary election campaign.

TO THE EDITOR

Will the food inspectors act?

Editor, Shillong is slowly becoming synonymous with food, from regional cuisines to exquisite fine dining. For those with the sweet tooth, new joints like UNIQUE SWEETS are a welcome addition to the more

traditional Delhi Mistan Bhandar and Palace. Inspired by its growing fame I decided to purchase some sweets and a few pieces of "Dhokla" on July 5th, 2017 from their joint located at Police Bazar. The "Dhokla" turned out to be stale and rancid when I opened them for consumption the same day. When the stale "Dhokla" was shown to the proprietor, he was combative and aggressively dismissed

it as foul play. The reason for this quibble over such a trivial issue was not influenced by my desire to seek compensation for a few pieces of "Dhokla" but was only meant to apprise the proprietor of the need to value his brand name and the consumer's health and safety. However, the reaction of the proprietor was like that of a snarky rich kid rather than an apparently successful young entrepreneur.

Besides, the reason for writing this needless letter to the editor is not simply to

express my anguish as a consumer who felt humiliated and unsafe, but to prod the departments of the government invested with the authority, to routinely monitor the quality and hygiene of food served in these joints. I also wish the snarky rich kid grows up to be an ethical entrepreneur interested more in brand-name and goodwill rather than simply money-making.

Yours etc.
Rajesh Dev
Camp: Shillong

History revisited

Editor, The Khasi lady who was at the receiving end at the Delhi Golf Club (DGC) last month has evoked many reactions from the political dispensation to commoners like us. It is not difficult to gauge the quick reactions from the chief minister of Meghalaya, his counterpart in Assam and even the PMO, given the assembly elections due early next year. Their take is more or less centered on the throne that is up for grabs. But there have been many reactions from ordinary people and quite rightly so! However in these emotional outbursts we have tried to fathom only one side of the story leaving aside the other. Undoubtedly North-easterners are facing all

Why do we elect representatives to the Legislative Assembly? And I am asking this question because I suspect that many MLAs do not yet know or care to know what representative democracy is. Many are in this game of politics to serve their selfish interests. If there is something left behind in the kitty then the constituents gets the crumbs. After the MLA scheme was increased to Rs 2 crore annually many MLAs have used this money as capital investment in their businesses. They only start implementing schemes after they have earned their profits. Few actually utilize the money judiciously. There may be just one or two MLAs who do so.

Apart from legislating laws and advocating for policies that can provide a coherent roadmap for the state and its people and thereby charting out a vision which can be assessed periodically through clear and measurable objectives, the MLAs are also tasked with looking after their constituencies by way of providing drinking water, motorable roads and footpaths, schools and colleges, through government schemes. And the MLA can claim no credit for doing this job since he/she is paid for it. During elections the person cannot go around saying he/she has done this or that for it is a responsibility they have chose. The rules of this game have to change in 2018. Social organisations cutting across ideology should get together to prepare a report card of every MLA. The MLA is not meant to give personal help to constituents but to make their lives easier by providing the basic necessities that they can access, such as health care, education et al which are public utilities. Trying to bribe voters on the eve of the election means only one thing- the MLAs have not done their work in all the five years that was given to them.

MLAs that are in the opposition have to be the eyes and ears of the people they represent. They should be taking regular stock of the performance of the Government and check corruption at all levels. They

How will we rate our MLAs?

By Patricia Mukhim

should be questioning why there is delay in implementation of schemes. They should make a list of delayed projects and do an RTI to find out why the delay and how much the government is losing in such delayed projects. Are the MLAs actually doing that? Has any MLA done an RTI yet? I don't know of any opposition MLA who has taken the RTI route. Most of them depend on newspaper reports for raising questions in the Assembly. And because they are remiss in doing their homework they are quickly made to take their seats by a Government that has learnt every trick in the trade to obfuscate issues. It is painful to see that no one has yet been able to put the state chief minister in the docks! He almost appears like a political saint about to be beatified so that he can continue to lead Meghalaya in 2018- 23.

Many of us are still unaware of the ramifications of the MLA scheme and except for the late TH Rangad and Ardhendu Chaudhuri and after him Manas Chaudhuri, no MLA till date has had the courage of conviction to give a report card of how they expended their MLA LAD funds. Just to re-jig our memories let us take a look at what the MLA-LADs is meant to be and what it has turned out to be.

Important Features:

1. The type of work under this scheme should be developmental in nature based on locally felt needs
2. The work should be such that it can be completed within one financial year and lead to the creation of durable assets.
3. Minimum of 10% fund allocated should be utilized for capacity building and training of unemployed youth in the state.
4. The work to be taken under MLALADS should not be under Rs 1 lakh in each case.

Works that may be taken up under MLALADS:

1. Construction for buildings for schools, hostels, libraries and other buildings of education institutions belonging to

government.

2. Construction of village roads, bridges, public irrigation channels and public drainage schemes.
3. Providing drinking water to the people in the area by digging tube-wells or other works that may help in this respect.
4. Construction of public health care buildings, public toilets and bathrooms, footpaths, pathways and foot bridges. This should include residential quarters for the ANM.
5. Construction of common gobar plants, non-conventional energy systems/devices for community use.
6. Bus Sheds/Stops for public transport passengers.
7. Social forestry, farm forestry, horticulture, parks and gardens in government and community land.
8. Construction of Crèches and Anganwadi centres

Each MLA will give a choice of works to the concerned Deputy Commissioners and also choose the Government agencies for implementation of the scheme in the districts as per established procedure. The Deputy Commissioners will get them implemented through the Govt. Agencies as desired by the concerned MLA. The purpose of the schemes is to create durable assets. Funds provided under the scheme should not be used for incurring revenue expenditure. The sites selected for execution of works by the MLA shall not be changed except with the concurrence of the MLA himself.

Among the important features of the MLA-LADS point no 3 merits attention. It says that a minimum of 10% fund allocated should be utilized for capacity building and training of unemployed youth in the state. Is this really happening? How and where? Can civil society use the power of social audit to find out which MLA allocated funds for skill building of unemployed youth in their constituencies and how many have since found jobs. If we are all looking at the Integrated

given rhythm to enhance the Khasi language but due to illiteracy and other reasons it was not recorded until "Soso Tham's" collection of poems called "Ki Poetry Khasi" come up in 1925.

When Meghalaya was created in 1972, Mr RS Lyngdoh was the first Khasi to be nominated as member of the Sahitya Akademi. He has vociferously advocated for the recognition of Khasi language. Even the late chief minister of Meghalaya, B.B. Lyngdoh was a staunch advocate for getting the Khasi language recognised by the Sahitya Akademi during his term as Chief Minister. Even Paul Lyngdoh, MLA and former minister has been advocating for the same.

Kolkata University recognised the Khasi language up to the Degree level to be at par with Assamese language in 1919.

When the Assamese language got recognition by the Sahitya Akademi and was also placed in the 8th Schedule, the non-inclusion of Khasi language by the Sahitya Akademi reeks of discrimination especially when it has fulfilled all the criteria laid down by the Akademi. The Khasi language is one of the recognised subjects for Honours and Post Graduate teaching in North Eastern Hill University (NEHU). Many authors, poets, intellectuals and above all Education Department, Govt. of

Basin Development and Livelihoods Project (IBDLP) as the only magic wand to create employment and to skill the youth then all the MLAs should be giving their share of the 10% of Rs 2 crore annually which is Rs 20 lakh per MLA x 60 MLAs or Rs 12 crore annually to the IBDLP. It might make more sense and allow for better monitoring. As of now I have not heard of any social audit being carried out on implementation of MLA Schemes in any constituency.

A critical point for judging an MLA is to go into his/her constituency and check out the roads. At no point in the history of Meghalaya have roads been as decrepit as they are under the MUA-2 regime. But let me point out to one critical road link and that is the one going towards the Union Christian College, Umiam, one of the premier colleges of the state of Meghalaya. That road is a killer. It hardly exists now and yet that area has some of the best social institutions such as Siloam, an institute for the hearing impaired and a Jesuit institution. On that road is also a premier 5-star resort - Ri Kynjai and several other much sought after, guest houses. All these institutions claim they have written several memoranda to the Chief Minister but have got no response. The coal trucks carrying coal illegally from West Khasi Hills and violating the NGT, have literally killed this road. Yet the MLA, Ngaitlang Dhar is not only all set to contest the 2018 election, but his brother, Sniawbhalang nurses ambitions of being the next Chief Minister (from Jaintia Hills)! If that happens and these contractor-businessman and part time MLAs become part of the ruling clique then as the Khasis say "Lah jah kwah artad" and the Jaintias even better "Da chem ka bei." I don't think these phrases need interpretation. They mean "nemesis." And nemesis is where we are headed for, unless, we the people, get real, forget our differences and come together to defeat these depraved forces!

Meghalaya have time and again advocated for its recognition. We are now awaiting a notification from the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi to rejoice in the aspiration of the masses.

I am optimistic that, if intellectuals and various committees of the State raises their voice for its recognition then it will not take long before the Khasi language is recognised by the Sahitya Akademi. "The Meghalaya Nepali Sahitya Sammelan" is of the opinion that with recognition of Khasi language, Nepali language would also be enriched and there will be mutual co-existence by exchanging views with one another. It has been decided that the Meghalaya Nepali Sahitya Sammelan would take up the matter vigorously with Sahitya Akademi after the concluding function of the ongoing 203rd 'Bhanu Jayanti' celebration on July 16, 2017 along with a member of the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi and other like-minded persons for inclusion of Khasi language. I also request other intellectuals and organisations to take up the matter with zeal.

Yours etc.,
Dinesh Sharma,
Advisor
Meghalaya Nepali Sahitya Sammelan
Shillong-2

upon others then it is no pain. My sympathies are with Kong Tailin for what she had gone through but I totally agree with Janet Hujon when she wrote in her letter "The Delhi Debacle", (ST July 5, 2017), that the takeaway from this episode is some "troubled soul searching". "Would I have leapt as courageously to the defence of someone belittled in this way?" wrote Hujon. My own takeaway from this episode is that history repeats itself.

Yours etc.
A Lyngdoh
Shillong - 4

Time to recognize Khasi Language

Editor, Sohra, the world famous place formerly known as Cherrapunjee is the home of standard Khasi dialect. Even the Gorkhas before entering Shillong on their expedition with British Force have of their own volition started to speak the Khasi language with the Sohra people. If we look back at the history, the refined Khasi dialect was spoken by the tribe since 1841. In Khasi some of the Sanskrit as well as Nepali/Gorkha words such as dhoti, balti, mamlā, chatni, roti/aata etc were also accepted as common dialects over the past 200 years. If we go through the literary criticism in Khasi since 1920, there were many poets who had

China poses serious threat to entire North-East

'Middle kingdom' mentality increasingly on show

By Barun Das Gupta

In the last four or five weeks, the military threat from China to India's entire north-east has become apparent. Not since 1962 have Chinese troop movements become so menacing. The trouble started on the 1st of June when personnel of the PLA were found constructing a road in the Doko La or Dokolam area near Sikkim, which India claims as its own and the Chinese claim to be theirs.

Doko La is situated in the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet trijunction in the Chumbi Valley. A look at the map will show that the valley is like a dagger lunged between the Indian state of Sikkim and Bhutan, which is a protectorate of India. It is

omitting Assam and Tripura. The local people of the first four states are of Mongoloid origin. Assam and Tripura are non-Mongoloid. It may be recalled that the Naga insurgency movement, in its early days, got help from the Chinese.

It may not be entirely fortuitous that China's face-off with India at Chumbi Valley has come at a time when, first, the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha has revived its militant movement for a separate Gorkhland and the Darjeeling hills are burning; and second, Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chhangling has supported the separate Gorkhland demand as the only way to bring peace in the hills. And thirdly, the

“Students of Chinese history know that the Chinese rulers - ancient or modern, dynastic or nationalist or communist - have always been obsessed with the 'Middle Kingdom' mentality. The characteristics of this mentality are, first, that the Chinese are superior to all other races, second, that China is the centre of civilization and third, the Chinese have the inherent right to rule the world. This mentality runs counter to the very concept of democracy.”

not necessary to go into old history or examine the Chinese claims and the 'documents' they show or refer to in support of their claim. The simple fact is that for all these years since India's independence and even after the 1962 Sino-Indian war, China never tried to build a road in this highly sensitive and strategically important area.

Another look at the map will show that the construction of the road will enable the Chinese to bring the point of the 'dagger' to the vital Siliguri corridor, just short of touching it. The Siliguri corridor, or the 'Chicken's Neck', which it is commonly called, connects mainland India with its north-east comprising seven states with an aggregate geographical area of 2,55,511 sq. kms or 98,653 sq.miles. China has for a long time been claiming the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, calling it 'Southern Tibet'. But cutting off the Chicken's Neck will mean the whole of north-east will come under Chinese control. This is the crux of the problem and that is why India can never allow the Chinese to build a road in the Doko La region.

Three years ago in 2014, China's official news agency Xinhua in a report said, among other things, that: "Experts say that isolation and years of neglect by the Indian government have fuelled underdevelopment, occasional tribal unrest and insurgency in the region, thus hampering overall growth of the north-eastern India." The message is clear: India has neglected the north-east and is responsible for its underdevelopment or backwardness. The charge is, of course, not true. The Union Ministry of DONER (Development of North East India) has been pumping in massive doses of funds to accelerate the pace of development of the N.E.

China has, time and again, expressed its sense of identification with the Mongoloid people of the North-East. Intriguingly, the Xinhua report mentioned above identified only Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland as India's north-east,

Intelligence agencies of West Bengal have reported that Chinese arms are clandestinely flowing into Darjeeling through Nepal.

In July, 2013, an article was posted in the website of the Chinese news agency Zhongquo Xinwenshe. The article titled 'Six Wars China Must Fight in the Coming 50 Years' laid out the time table of the wars: the war to unify Taiwan (2020-2025); the war to recover the various islands of the South China Sea (2025-2030); the war to recover Southern Tibet (2035-2040); the war to recover Diaoyutai and the Ryukyus (2045-2050); the war to unify Outer Mongolia (2045-2050); and the war to recover the territory seized by Russia (2055-2060).

Students of Chinese history know that the Chinese rulers - ancient or modern, dynastic or nationalist or communist - have always been obsessed with the 'Middle Kingdom' mentality.

The characteristics of this mentality are, first, that the Chinese are superior to all other races, second, that China is the centre of civilization and third, the Chinese have the inherent right to rule the world. This mentality runs counter to the very concept of democracy.

In his book The Birth of Communist China, C.P. Fitzgerald, who had spent years in China and studied the Chinese at first hand, observed: "No ancient Chinese terms meaning 'democracy' or 'aristocracy' ever existed. But the Chinese sages did very actively contend for opposed systems of autocratic rule."

It would be naïve to believe that the Indian Prime Minister's recent meeting with Donald Trump or his current visit to Israel has provoked Beijing to raise the threshold of hostility and confrontation in the Doko La region. The Chinese are pursuing a cold and calculated policy to retard India's economic growth and prevent India's rise as a strong military power that can stand up to China's bullying and be a source of strength for China's smaller neighbours. (IPA Service)

"A man's dreams are an index to his greatness."

--- Woody Allen

The Shillong Times

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Communal violence in West Bengal

COMMUNAL violence gripped parts of 24 Parganas in West Bengal. A class XI student had posted derogatory religious imagery on his Facebook page. As a result, a mob took to the streets. Curfew had been imposed and para-military forces have been deployed. The usual blame game has begun between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP which rules at the Centre. There is no joint effort to contain violence in the area. Instead, mutual recriminations are flying thick and fast. State governor Keshari Nath Tripathi spoke following a meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and a team of BJP and RSS representatives. The discussions were far from pleasant. The Chief Minister in anger called a press conference and accused the governor of humiliating her. She also said that the governor was in cahoots with the BJP. The BJP wants President's rule in West Bengal. The Trinamool Congress wants the removal of the governor. A BJP delegation will visit the area in 24 Parganas which was afflicted by communal violence and report to party president, Amit Shah. Obviously, the political parties are trying to make political capital out of the unfortunate incident.

It is a far cry from the tradition of harmony in West Bengal. The Congress and the Communist Party worked together during the Calcutta killing and the partition. West Bengal has been noted for communal peace since 1947. The BJP cadres are no doubt trying to foment religious strife. Recently, there has been a rash of communal incidents in West Bengal which threaten the state's social fabric.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Orissa minister resigns over police excess

The communal tension which has been prevailing in many parts of Orissa's Koraput district for the last few days, took a new turn today. Minister of State for Community Development and Reconstruction Mr Habibullah Khan told UNI on phone that he has sent resignation both as a

Minister and as an assembly member to Chief Minister Mr J B Patnaik.

He said he had resigned in protest against, what he called, police excesses on people who were peacefully demonstrating at Nawrangpur in the district during a bandh there earlier in the day.

Retired non-native bureaucrats a burden to the state

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

Most of the time we blame the politicians for all the mess that happens in the state and society and this is correct because they are the ones who should monitor and oversee that there is no misconduct and faulty practice in the government. But in contrast, they are not doing what should be done as patrons of the society and democracy. They fail because they do not have the guts and capacity to confront and address the problems that cripple other functions and

Most politicians are concerned about their own local issues, which in other words are individualistic in nature. But those in power have to bend to the whimsical advice and suggestion of their bureaucratic masters to create projects and missions that do not have physical substance but are just an alternative for easy transaction of by-passing the due financial processes. One such project is the umbrella project by the name Meghalaya Basin Development Authority where nothing concrete and meaningful is being done except primary works and activities of various other departments.

Coming back to the purpose of this writing, it is not meant to criticize but to ascertain if there is a shadow business behind the scenes. I wonder why most of these non-native retired IAS or IPS officers, whatever the case may be are still lingering around even when they have completed their tenure in the state. Some of them are even staying in government quarters free of cost with all facilities which I believe the rule book does not allow and is probably illegal. What business and relationship do they have with the state government? Even if this government has reapportioned them, on what basis were they considered indispensable? What is their significant contribution to the state during their

years of service? How long can our poor state government feed them? On the other hand, I salute those retired local bureaucrats and technocrats who immediately gave up the facilities provided by the government which includes vehicles, residences, etc. upon retirement. Some of them even refused to accept second appointment in order to pave the way for the next generation. They have set a good example and others should learn a great lesson from these

The reason is purely because a small and poor state like Meghalaya cannot afford any wasteful expenditure. Therefore, my sincere appeal to the leadership of the state is to see that these types of injustices by undeserving persons should not be perpetrated again and again, thereby robbing the poor people of the state.

local gentlemen. And those who try to manipulate the government and the system to achieve their personal goals should be ashamed of themselves because they are attempting to snatch away the rights of the new generation professionals.

Apart from the pension that they are getting, these people are enjoying free quarters, vehicles and are paid extra income for their advisory or chairmanship role, which according to my understanding is unproductive and meaningless. One can imagine how much our government is spending monthly on these people. There are many local, retired bureaucrats who can be substituted and that too with a minimum expenditure. Why is this idea not considered by the government? Is it not that something fishy is going on somewhere? How these people are able to persuade

the Chief Minister is something that people should know or is it that the Chief Minister himself is scared of getting rid of them? Some may argue that being non-local officers from mainland India they may have a better chance to liaise with various ministries in the national capital but this is just a lame excuse and a cover up. Another sad thing that these ex-bureaucrats are doing is their constant interference with the affairs of the department as if they are the owners of that department and founders of

a cascading effect and impacts on the common citizens of the state. If the founders of our state are still alive today, they will be greatly disappointed and sad to see the condition of Meghalaya as it is today where opportunists are taking advantage of this poor state in every aspect. In the past most of the non-native officers who have served in the state for many years in various capacities have happily relinquished their posts on superannuation without seeking any post retirement appointment because they understand where they belong. If retired people are still involved and interfere in every affair of the department, then transparency is under threat and misdeeds will not be unearthed. Their undue interference will hinder the smooth progress of a department and will deprive the rights of the new functionaries therein to discharge their duty responsibly.

These are few of the issues that the new government or for that matter political parties should address and deal with firm determination if they are serious about the well being of the state and its citizens. One may say that I am a bit communal but that is not a fact. The reason is purely because a small and poor state like Meghalaya cannot afford any wasteful expenditure. Therefore, my sincere appeal to the leadership of the state is to see that these types of injustices by undeserving persons should not be perpetrated again and again, thereby robbing the poor people of the state. As citizens of the state we have the right to express and interfere because this government belongs to the people and people have the right to know everything that is going on within the government and its of functioning.

While the state is reeling under severe financial crunch, these payments for superfluous posts seem to be legitimate expenditure but in fact are the hidden costs and burden to the state exchequer which in turn has

Reeta Ghosh
Shillong-4

Pilgrimage, transgressions and Chinese threat to North East

Editor,
India and China have disputes over the long 4,057 kilometre border. But Sikkim is the only state in India which has demarcated borders with China based on the 1898 treaty. After a referendum in 1975, Sikkim voted to merge with India. The Kailash Manasarovar Yatra through the mountains terrain of the Tibetan Autonomous Region takes place from Nathula Pass since 2015. It is a 1500 KM long bus journey. The other older route Lipulekh Pass is there to trek through rough terrains of Uttarakhand, Nepal and Tibet. The abode of Lord Shiva is believed to be there.

Recently, China forcefully entered into the 89 square km Doklam (Doko La for India and Donglang for China.) plateau. The unmarked disputed border of China and Bhutan is strategically important to Chumbi valley at the intersection of India-China-Bhutan. Bhutan army protested that the construction of a road there violated a bilateral agreement and raised an SOS. The tri-junction is just 20 KM away from the brigade HQs. The specialized mountain force ITBP marched ahead and have been locked in a standoff with PLA for a month. Indian Army displayed utmost restraint. In retaliation for the alleged Indian Army action, Beijing blocked the entry of Indian

pilgrims. Chinese refusal has frustrated a large number of pilgrimages from Hindus to Buddhists and Jains. Interestingly on both the sides 33 Corps HQ and 141 PLA Division are accusing the other of territorial intrusions and illegal troop encroachments.

China does it often to gain strategic edge over monitoring movement along the international border. Their game plan is to conduct military manoeuvres aimed at blocking the Siliguri corridor (chicken neck) the narrow stretch of land that connects India's seven north eastern states. Both the countries even exchanged war of words over escalating border dispute. India's presence in Bhutan has irritated China, where they have no diplomatic relation with Bhutan. The construction of road near tri-junction would cause serious security implications for India and Chinese have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Is North East now in real danger of a possible military conflict after Chinese strategic calculus? Delhi and Beijing have been at loggerheads over the situation. Will China go safeguarding its border sovereignty even at the cost of war? China and India should help each other to bring hope for the depressed world economy and illuminate the world. Also India should keep an eye out for further Chinese transgressions in the future.

Yours etc.,
Kamal Baruah,
Rukminigaon,
Guwahati

Pak - China poses joint threat to India

By Brij Bhardwaj

The need for national unity is necessary at all times but it acquires paramount importance when the country is facing serious threats to its integrity from hostile neighbours. India at present faces a serious challenge on Western front where Pakistan is waging a proxy war with the help of local militants. The activities of Kashmir militants backed by some who have come from across the line of control has claimed lives in hundreds and normal life has been disrupted in Kashmir for over a year.

The militants who in the past attacked paramilitary

Central Asia .

Under the circumstances India has no option but to prepare for dual threat from Pakistan and China. Such a situation has been visualized but the question is are we prepared for it. There is urgent need to upgrade our forces which are running short of equipment Air Force is running with poor availability of fighter planes while Navy program to acquire submarines is running well behind schedule. There is urgent need to put process of acquisition for defence forces on fast track.

At the same time need for

The activities of Cow Vigilante groups have been condemned by many including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but on ground things have not changed. The attacks on people carrying cattle across the states continue and lynching has become a norm instead of being an exception. The police forces in States seems to be more keen to check cruelty to animals particularly cows instead of punishing those guilty of killing human beings. One hopes, the seriousness of threat to the country and challenges posed by China and Pakistan will be realised as it would be difficult to meet it in the absence of national unity.

forces or politicians belonging to mainstream parties have now made local police officials their target and even an army officer on leave was kidnapped by them and killed. The result is that militancy in Kashmir has reached dangerous levels. There is no attempt to diffuse this challenge politically or by starting a dialogue. Para Military forces and army are doing their best to meet this challenge but are finding going tough in the absence of any political support. They have not only to fight the militants but also contain the challenge of civilian population in every encounter. Stone pelting mobs appear suddenly to help the cornered militants to escape during encounters

On the Eastern front China is becoming equally aggressive. It has tried to capture strategic area which provides a link between the mainland and North East region. China has so far refused to resolve this issue through talks and warned that if Indian troops did not withdraw they would face a humiliating defeat as was the case in 1962 war. Chinese not only claim large portion of Indian territory, but are also threatening that the efforts to resolve the border dispute will receive a major setback in case India did not withdraw.

Chinese hostility is also shown in international forums where it has blocked India's entry into Nuclear supply group or attempts to declare terrorists like Hafeez Sayeed as international terrorists on the list of United Nations. China is not only backing Pakistan in international forums but is also supplying them hardware for Air Force, army and navy. Pakistan is a major partner in China attempt to build roads and port to link

national unity cannot be over-emphasized. At present serious threats exist in Kashmir, and North East. In states like Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh there is threat from Maoists while agitation for Gorkhaland in Darjeeling in West Bengal has created a dangerous situation. Besides these challenges and threats we are also finding that divisive forces raising their head in the name of cow protection which has divided people in Hindi heartland in states of U.P, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Cow vigilante groups are creating problems even in States like Assam. The result is that when all energies should be directed towards meeting the threats facing us from countries like Pakistan and China, serious law and order issues are becoming a serious challenge. This has not only created tensions, but also created a feeling of insecurity among the minority community which feels that attempts to put restrictions on what people can eat or how they dress are uncalled for.

The activities of Cow Vigilante groups have been condemned by many including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but on ground things have not changed. The attacks on people carrying cattle across the states continue and lynching has become a norm instead of being an exception. The police forces in States seems to be more keen to check cruelty to animals particularly cows instead of punishing those guilty of killing human beings. One hopes, the seriousness of threat to the country and challenges posed by China and Pakistan will be realised as it would be difficult to meet it in the absence of national unity.

(Brij Bhardwaj is a veteran journalist and commentator)

TO THE EDITOR

High office a grave responsibility!

Editor,
It is all very fine to have a sense of pride in one's job but when the importance of a post which a person is holding goes to his head then that sense of pride turns to arrogance. The office which a person holds is only a sacred trust to be discharged with utmost honesty, sincerity, dedication and with sense of fair play and justice. Importance of a high level post lies not in the power and authority that a person wields but in how much difference he is able to make to the society at large by putting in place systems and processes that ensure transparent and corruption free governance so that each penny of tax payer's money is utilised on developmental activities. In the final analysis, it is only a good human being who can make a good officer. And one of the defining characteristics of a good human being is humility. A good person who makes it to a so called important post always remains humble and rooted to the ground. Whether a person holding an office behaves arrogantly or with humility actually reflects on his upbringing. A person who held a high office once is remembered not for the power or authority that he had wielded then but for the difference that he could make while holding that office. While holding a high office, each day, indeed each waking moment affords an opportunity for making a difference which a person wouldn't get once he ceases to hold that office.

Therefore, what is truly needed is to make the most of the high office that a person is holding in terms of the services to the society at large.

Yours etc.,
Prem Singh, IPS ret'd,
Viaemail

India must change its development policy!

Editor,
This refers to Dhurjati Mukherjee's timely article, "India vs western world" (ST, July 6, 2017). India has been following the model of capitalism in its very primitive stage, in the name of liberalization of economy since 1991. But we must not forget that this kind of barbaric capitalism has been discarded by the countries in North America, Europe and Australia. They have graduated from police states to welfare states and are according top priority to human development.

A welfare state which ensures freedom of an individual as well as guarantees his or her social security is a synthesis of the thesis of capitalism and antithesis of socialism. Surprisingly, India is made to walk backwards from a welfare state as guaranteed in Article 38 of our Constitution to survival of the fittest raj of archaic capitalism. The disinvestment policy and the policy of gifting education and health sectors to private players without meaningful control negates the concept of a welfare state as they cause unemployment and robbing of one's social security. The employment to

population ratio is a clear indicator of what is the general outcome of our liberalization policy. While employment to population ratio was 58.6 per cent in 1994, it has, alarmingly, come down to 52.2 per cent in 2013. Thanks to this policy, 2011 census has witnessed a phenomenal 5 per cent increase (23 to 28) in just 10 years in the number of households with unemployed members. The liberalization policy helps carry coal to Newcastle leaving the suicide door open for the unemployed who have, now, become almost half of the employable persons in our country.

Unemployed persons receive a handsome allowance from the state in the US but there is no such security in India although protection of life (Article 21) is a fundamental right and right to work (Article-41) is a directive principle in our Constitution. India needs to review her policy of liberal lopsided malignant growth that has catapulted her to the seventh rank in the list of top wealthiest countries in the world leaving the average Indian quite poor on per capita basis (New World Wealth Report). While the richest 10 per cent of our population has 76.3 per cent of nation's wealth, more than half of our population is reeling with a meagre 4.1 per cent.

The sucking of blood of our labour force by the much pampered market players has come to such a pass that it has trapped 18.35 million Indians as slaves (Global Slavery Index, 2016) and 10.2 million child workers that tell tales of gross human rights violation. It is a

constitutional duty of the government to take India to the path of inclusive growth that can make our country a welfare state and rescue her from abysmal 131st position in Human Development Index.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Drug abuse among children

Editor
Apropos the news item, "No space , manpower for drug abuse rehab centre" (ST July 3, 2017) this is a very serious problem that Shillong is facing today. Innocent children's lives are getting ruined. Previously there was only alcohol, now drug abuse has been added to intensify the problem. Kripa foundation, Sanker, Asha Bhawan etc are some of the institutions which have been working with dedication for several years in this field. But it's not enough. To solve the space problem, the old T.B. hospital in Jhalupara area may be used for an ideal drug rehab centre. Manpower may be managed by engaging experts from the field both from the state and outside - if government so desires. Merely observing International Drug Abuse Day in the schools through some lectures and posters can never solve the problem but only create awareness only. Can government first stop drug trafficking because after treatment the victims should not be trapped by the traffickers again

Yours etc.

By Sonali Jha Chatterjee

Jammu & Kashmir has often been in news for turmoil and disharmony. Amidst all this, however, creativity flows too in different forms. Theatre person Aarushi Thakur, thinks that the urge to create often overpowers despair about the conflicts around.

The 27-year-old stage artiste's plays are often adapted from the English classics and is enacted in English for a primarily Hindi and Dogri audience. The audience has not only accepted it but is clamouring for more.

Daughter of well-known theatre director Balwant Thakur, Aarushi, however, never had plans to enter the stage though she often travelled with her father's theatre group, Natrang. In fact, it was the travelling that attracted her more than acting.

While studying International Politics in London, she attended a theatre workshop at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA).

"I realised then that I liked theatre after all. I could work 24 hours without getting exhausted. Theatre consumed me," she recalls about her stint at RADA.

Back home, while preparing for UPSC, she realised this was not her calling and got involved in various theatre productions. What about the absence of any formal theatre training?

"Well, it would have been a good idea to be formally trained, but I feel that this lacuna has made me more cautious and led me to work doubly hard since I didn't have the backing of any formal coaching by teachers in this profession. My father did introduce me to various books on theatre but didn't coach me," she says.

Since then she has acted and directed unique productions that pushed her prowess to the limits, way beyond what she thought was possible. She began with Great Expectations by Charles Dickens, which she feels is her best production.

The story played and replayed a thousand times in her head like a movie while going through the text in school. After adapting and scripting it she selected a part of the novel and took a huge leap of faith by putting up the play in English. This play performed by amateurs, not very comfortable with English, received widespread appreciation. Her father's praise for her theatrical skills as a director, "When Dad said, Iske aur shows karwaenge (we will have more shows of this), I knew I had achieved something.

The world as a stage



A scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and (below right) Aarushi Thakur

New-age theatre director Aarushi Thakur brings fresh whiff of air to trouble-torn Jammu

That was my biggest push," Aarushi says.

What Aarushi had achieved was unique in Jammu. No one had performed from the Classics in English for the stage. The encouragement she received from the theatre fraternity spurred her and she picked up her next production, Roshomon. Movie buffs know of this iconic movie directed by Akira Kurosawa where the characters of the movie provide different versions of the same incident.

Again Aarushi came up with her version and she had characters playing three wives with their perspectives. It wasn't surprising that she was discouraged from

taking up this work.

"I was not concerned about the success of my play, I had no yardstick to measure myself. I simply believed in what I was doing. That led me to take unconventional topics, I suppose," she says, recollecting those days.

She chose Jammu's Amar Mahal, a beautiful building located on a hillock as her venue, with the summer breeze adding to the magic. The play's success went beyond her imagination, especially so when some remarked that the play was good enough to be performed in Broadway. "Thankfully all the praise didn't get into my head, all due to my Dad, who

kept me grounded."

After this success, Aarushi staged Dickens' Oliver Twist and Roald Dahl's Matilda, both with children. She consciously moved away from the dark themes of her first two productions. She, of course, was not happy with doing only adaptations, and wrote her play, Let my Country Awake, a hard hitting piece on child abuse.

"Though my Dad was against doing this play with kids, I felt I was doing the right thing. We as theatre people need to raise these issues."

Henry and Ann came next and this was executed after six months of research,



I'm ok, you're not!

By Alfonso Elengikal

Some time ago, I read an interesting story about a senior citizen who felt that his wife, of late, isn't hearing what he is communicating to her. He felt she possibly needed medical care. So, he quietly shared the matter with a doctor friend of his.

After listening to him, the doctor said: "Before we proceed further, let's double check that she isn't really hearing what you say. When she is in the kitchen, ask her something from the next room. If she is not replying to your query go closer, say about 30ft away from her, and ask her the same question. If you feel she has not heard you, go closer still and from about 10 ft away, repeat the question. If she is still not replying, you can bring her to me for a check-up, and I shall do the needful."

The man went home deciding to act, the very next morning. His wife was as usual preparing breakfast in the kitchen. He called out to her, "Darling, what's that you are preparing for breakfast, today? There was no reply. So, as the doctor had advised, he went nearer and asked her: "What do we have for breakfast, today?" There was still

Many of us go ahead in life with the attitude 'I am okay and you are not okay' or 'I do not make mistakes; he/she is the one who is at fault' mentality

no answer! He went closer, and asked again: "Darling, what are you cooking for our breakfast?" The wife still did not reply. He was now fully convinced that she needed to be taken to the doctor friend, soon.

So, they went to meet the doctor that evening. The doctor saw the couple coming in, and he greeted them from his consulting room. "Good evening, please come in." The wife promptly replied, "Thank you, doctor."

As they entered his chamber, the doctor asked: "How are you doing?"

The wife quickly replied: "We are fine, doctor." The doctor told them, "Please sit down." The wife soon sat down while the husband remained standing, looking at his wife scornfully for being bad mannerly!

The specialist did not require much time to find out who needed treatment first. He gently convinced his reluctant friend

that it is he who requires treatment, and not his wife! He wrote down on his pad "HEARING AID", gave it to him, and saw them off.

Many of us go ahead in life with the attitude of the elderly man: the "I am OK, and you are not OK attitude" or "I do not make mistakes; he/she is the one who is at fault mentality" and so fail to make true progress in life, besides making a fool of ourselves.

A woman was waiting at the Guwahati Airport, after the security check, for her Jet Airways flight to arrive from Kolkata. She was immersed in reading when an announcement was made that the flight is delayed. So, she went and got a packet of biscuits for any further eventuality, returned to her chair and continued reading the book in hand. After a while, she turned to the other side and was surprised to see the man sitting on the next chair opening a packet of biscuits. He took out a biscuit, ate it, and kept the packet down. The lady frowned at him and continued reading.

Before long, she saw him picking up another biscuit from the packet and eating. Unable to control her anger, she snatched the packet from him and walked off, by when the flight had already landed. She soon boarded the flight, still holding the packet of biscuits in her hands. Once seated, she opened her bag to keep it in. To her shame, she saw the packet she had bought intact in her bag, and realized, though late, that she was eating the biscuits the man had bought for himself!

I vividly remember a man telling me, years ago, "I have never made a mistake over the past twenty-five years!" I retorted spontaneously, "It is time then to celebrate the silver jubilee of your not making a mistake over that many years."

Surprisingly, there are quite a few of them around. It is regarding them that Jesus once told the following story to his listeners, about two men who went to pray: one a religious leader, and the other a tax collector (Luke 18: 9 - 15).

The religious leader went straight into the temple and prayed aloud: "I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest...like everyone else. I am not even like that tax collector over there; I fast twice a week, and give you one tenth of my income." But, the tax collector beat his breast, and prayed from outside, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

The first man thought God was highly pleased with his prayer. But, Jesus told the people that it was the tax collector who went home, at peace with God.

We shall never please God or men with our "I am OK, You are not OK," attitude, or by thinking that all mistakes are made on the other side of the fence, and that we are always on the right side. It is wiser, then, to acknowledge that we are all prone to make mistakes, and seek guidance from God and from the learned!

Tailin Lyngdoh is proud of her profession and believes that there is no reason for anyone to discriminate against a human being on the basis of his or her job profile. She also believes that a person cannot be judged by his or her attire. So when on June 25, Lyngdoh, also lovingly called Kong Tailin, was asked to leave a luncheon, organised by P Thimmayya Goel (niece of General Thimmayya, one of the most famous army men of post independence India), by two officials of Delhi Golf Club because "maids" are not allowed, she felt demeaned. The officials' words discomfited her and eight other guests, including Lyngdoh's employer Nivedita Barthakur Sondhi, who walked out of the club without having their food. For Lyngdoh, it is still a mystery how can her Jainsem, the Khasi traditional dress that she had worn proudly to many a high-profile get-together, be marked as a "maid's dress".

Lyngdoh opens up to The Shillong Times and shares her bitter experience at the elite club. She also tells the newspaper how the rudeness was in sharp contrast to the warmth she had received from people in western countries.

Can you narrate what exactly happened on June 25 at Delhi Golf Club?

We reached from Abu Dhabi on Saturday (June 24). On the 25th, Pam aunty had invited all of us for lunch at Delhi Golf Club. Pam aunty was there to receive us and we sat at our table at the end of the room. After we had ordered our drinks and 10-15 minutes into our lunch, two persons, a man and a woman came to me and said that I look like a "maid" and therefore cannot sit at the table and be in the dining room. When Nivedita asked how can you say she is a maid? Pam aunty also said that I am her guest.

They refused to believe and said I look like a maid, I am dressed like a maid and I look like a "Nepali". Nivedita tried explaining that Pam aunty (Goel) had invited us and that I was amongst the guests at the table. She also explained that her dress is Khasi Jainsem and that she herself is from Assam. And that I belong to Shillong. But they did not listen.

After that we all, nine of us, including Raghav (Sondhi's nine-year-old son), left the Golf Club as they would not let me stay and eat inside the dining room.

Was there any direction from the Club on the dress code for that function for men, women and children? This was not a function. Pam aunty, who is a member of the club, invited us all. Why would I go to a place if I was



(Left) Lyngdoh with nine-year-old Raghav and a day out with Sondhi family in Abu Dhabi



"The club is wrong here because if they did not have the rule against domestic workers' entering their dining room, they would not have dared to come and ask me to leave. They were only following the club rules. I would like to say to the club that all professions are same — no job is bigger or greater"

Tailin Lyngdoh

TALKING POINT

not invited? Raghav was asked (to wear) long pants and shoes but we all wore our own dress; two other ladies wore sarees, Nivedita wore a dress and Pam aunty wore a skirt. I wore my Jainsem.

Do you think attire should be the reason for discrimination? People wear different dresses now; how can people be told 'maid' or something by what they wear. I am proud to wear my Jainsem and I always wear it. How can they say it's a maid's dress!

What would you like to tell those two employees of the club?

The club is wrong here because if they did not have the rule against domestic workers' entering their dining room, they would not have dared to come and ask me to leave. They were only following the club rules. I would like to say to the club that all professions are same — no job is bigger or greater. I

look after children and I do it with dignity and pride. You have no right to treat me or anyone like me so badly or unequally. I am as human as you are.

Your humiliation is the culmination of ignorance. However, do you think it was only discrimination against the traditional dress of a particular tribe or class differentiation? I saw rich people and educated people there that day; they were not ignorant people! They do not think people like us are worth treating as humans; as if we don't have heart or pride.

If you think Jainsem is the sole victim in the fiasco, then why? They thought Jainsem was a maid's dress and I looked like a maid in that dress. How can they think like that?

Do you think discrimination on labour identity is a gross violation of human rights in this century?

based on the love story of King Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn. During this time, she attended a workshop with the National School of Drama (NSD) and the story played on in her mind. For the first time, she explored body theatre.

Strangely, though a new age director, Aarushi feels strongly about excessive experimentation on stage and finds most young directors crossing limits in the name of creativity. She is a stickler for stories and does not believe in being casual while handling classics.

About a year ago, Aarushi made a conscious decision to direct plays in Hindi. Seeing people interested in theatre, she felt the use of Hindi would attract an even larger audience. This time she picked up Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This was her first comedy in Hindi and it took her more than three months to prepare.

She had to create a flow chart to explain the story to her actors because the plot was quite baffling. There were three different plots, 31 actors and the play was an hour and a half long. All of these could drive a director up the wall, but not Aarushi. She gave each actor a specific character and a specific costume. The punch lines had to be timed appropriately. There were times when the actors would roll in laughter while rehearsing and as the frequency of rehearsals grew, the laughter died down and the group worried over the fact whether the audience would laugh at all. But laugh they did and each show was packed.

"While conducting workshops at Natrang Theatre, I find that parents are very interested in getting their children involved in theatre. This trend has come in since the past five years or so. Also the fact that theatre has been introduced as a curriculum in many schools speaks of its importance. This gives an outlet to the creativity of students and builds their confidence," shares Aarushi.

So where is Aarushi headed next? "I need to fall in love with a script and then start work on it," she says. For the last couple of months she had been working on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

"This has taken long to materialise as my actors were busy with other plays being staged by Natrang. But finally the play has hit the stage." And how! On June 19, the play opened to a packed house at the famous 'Kingdom of Dreams' venue in Gurugram. Next it hits Chandigarh and Jammu.

Who would say that Aarushi was a reluctant entrant to the stage? (TWF)

I only know the club did not think I should be treated as their equal or as a human being. They did not think I was good enough to eat with them.

You have been to several countries. How is it different from India?

I have stayed in London for eight years and then now in Abu Dhabi. I have been to other places in England and Europe and Sri Lanka. These countries are very different; in their food, weather and people. Most people don't treat me differently just because I work as a nanny. I have always been treated as an equal.

Have you ever faced any kind of discrimination or endured glares because of your attire or economic status?

Never. I have always worn a Jainsem and never has anyone told me my dress looks like a maid's. In foreign countries people walk up to me and say what a beautiful dress I am wearing. Even in Bangalore, Goa, Kerala and other places I have travelled in India (but) no one has ever thrown me out like this.

Keep the weird news coming

A boy named Hal Warden, 16, successfully divorced his wife, who was 13. They had been married a year.

It was actually the boy's second marriage. His first marriage had been to an "older woman". He'd been 12, she was 14. Both marriages produced children. But family life was all too much for Hal.

His first wife complained to the judge about her 12-year-old husband: "He was acting like a 10-year-old."

That's a true story from the US state of Tennessee which is remembered with great affection by columnists such as the present writer, who specialise in amazing-but-true tales from around the world.

That's because it appeared in the very first News of the Weird syndicated newspaper column, in 1988. I was reminded of it by the news that that column's writer, Chuck Shepherd, has just announced his retirement.

Individual odd-but-true news items have always appeared in the media, but some streams ran for decades, like Chuck's series, and that of the present writer, who has been writing funny-but-true columns since the 1980s

Clinic.

Earlier this year, two of the Internet's best weird news websites, Nothing To Do With Abroath and The Presurfer, stopped abruptly after the deaths of their respective writers (Kevin Gray and Gerard Vlemmings).

Does all this mean that the world will become less weird?

The opposite seems to be true: Life is getting increasingly bizarre.

Just in recent weeks, readers wrote to me about a mass outbreak of transgenderism in a river's fish population, the discovery of a tribe which evolved to be immune to poison, and a man who "identifies as an alien".

People are weird. Life is strange. There's really nothing quite like it.

But let's give the last anecdote to Chuck Shepherd. In 1995, he alerted the world to the antics of jailbird Robert Lee Brock, who filed a \$5 million lawsuit against Robert Lee Brock.

Yes, Brock sued himself, arguing that his dark side, by committing numerous crimes, had violated the rights of his good side. "I ask the state to pay it on my behalf since I can't work and am a ward of the state," he said.

Judges threw out his lawsuit. But at least his cheekiness gave people a smile.

In the meantime, thanks to Google Translate and Autocorrect, the number of funny menu items sent in by readers, particularly in East Asia, continues to grow. From Japan, we have "Roasted Husband", from China we have "Stir-Fried Wikipedia With Pimientos" and an item on a Taiwanese menu is translated: "I Can't Find On Google But It's Delicious".

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

'My daughters have determined mindsets'

By Shoma A. Chatterji

This writer met Sridevi at the Cairo International Film Festival some years ago. She was much more beautiful in a gold lame sari in person than she appeared on screen. An interview could not happen because she was constantly surrounded by her Egyptian fans and wives of bureaucrats in the Indian Embassy. She was a picture of her unassuming self, far removed from the halo her star image exudes. But ahead of Mom's release she gave a candid interview. Excerpts:

This is your 300th film. How have things changed since the time you were ruling the industry as leading lady?

I am happy with the way things have changed. But I also hold on to the sweet memories of my Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada films way back so many years ago. The nostalgia of old films is directly linked to memories of my mother who would always be by my side since I made my debut as a child artist. Even when I sometimes chance upon an old film on television, it takes me back to those years and I enjoy the feeling.

You are now a mother of two growing daughters. How much is your role in Mom close to your real life role as mother?

I do not think an actor needs to com-



(Above) A scene from English-Vinglish and poster of the new film Mom

pare between real life and screen characters. The two are very different. But it helps internalising the character as it did for English-Vinglish in which I also play mother of two kids.

This is a woman-centric film and so was English-Vinglish. Bollywood films are now portraying very strong women characters as protagonists. What is your take on this?

I am very happy the way things have changed. We have wonderful films like Kahani, Queen, Neerja, NH10 and so on. But in the past too, I have done quite a few woman-centric films or very challenging roles in films like Mr. India, Chandni, Nagina, Chaalbaaz, Lamhe, Gumraah, Ladla and Judaa. I am happy because my recent films are in keeping with this change.

What was your take on the thumping success of English-Vinglish?

It was necessary to discover what happens when as an actress, I come back with a completely different image. English-Vinglish opened that window for me. My mind was filled with questions. There was a lot of intrigue. I was

riddled with an inner tension. So, when the film became a critical and commercial hit, it was a different kind of happiness that gave me the confidence to go on acting.

Is Mom mainly about a mother and her relationship with her daughter?

It is not just about a mother and the issues that crop up between her and her teenage daughter. Let us say that it goes much beyond that. It also probes into issues teenagers face while growing up, with problems of adolescence where they feel their parents do not understand them and so on. It is basically about family relationships tweaked differently. I am very happy that the director placed full faith in me to play this character.

How different is your relationship with your daughters Jhanvi and Khushi compared to your own relationship with your mother?

I was an extremely obedient child and my mother used to say I was very shy and she was right. Her word was the gospel for me and she practically held my hand, took me through the lanes

and alleys of life which includes my career. She decided on my dress, make-up, films, diet, routine, everything. But today, I find that my daughters have very determined mindsets. We do have a give-and-take relationship where they often give suggestions and I accept them when I find they are interesting. They always ask me before deciding on something serious and that is a strong point. They are independent but they also need me around. (Smiles).

What is your criteria for accepting a role or film?

It is mostly my instinct that decides me on a role. It is the screenplay that holds the greatest importance for me. I see what my role is within a screenplay that keeps with the changing trends of stories and characters today. I insist on reading the script which gives me a clear idea of my position within the film and how my character fits into the script.

Mom is a home production by you and husband Bonny Kapoor? Was there a special burden this placed on your work in the film?

I was not within the production scenario at all. Bonny-ji was at the helm of affairs. I concentrated only on realising my character in the film. Bonnyji is experienced as a producer. I am not. Today, producers give their actors and technicians enough creative freedom. To tell the truth, I was an actress doing my job and I was so immersed in my work that it often happened that I did not have the time to even talk to Bonny-ji during the shooting of the film except greet him in the morning and say 'good night' at night. He bore the entire burden, not me.

Since English-Vinglish, your screen image has changed from what it was before in films like Himmatwala and Tohfa. Is this a conscious decision?

I believe that one needs to keep with the changing times. Earlier, I had a glamorous image because of the films I featured in that projected me as a glamorous character, singing and dancing and romancing the hero. Today, I am the mother of two growing daughters and I wouldn't fit into those roles any more. I am happy that I am now doing films that are offering me a platform that matches my age and the audience has liked me doing this. (TWF)

THE FUNNY SIDE

Nury Vittachi

This is bad news for the planet. The less weird news there is, the more people will discuss boring, serious things such as the impending end of civilisation, etc.

Individual odd-but-true news items have always appeared in the media, but some streams ran for decades, such as Chuck's series, and that of the present writer, who has been writing funny-but-true columns since the 1980s, including the Traveller's Tales column in the Far Eastern Economic Review.

That column featured funny stuff that travellers had seen — such as the amused Chinese reader who sent in a photo of a German hostelry called The Bad Hotel. (Bad in German means spa-bath.)

And the Western traveller who found a medical practice specialising in sexual diseases in Taiwan called the Happy VD

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, July 9, 2017

Full Moon on your solar return chart suggests a good year ahead. Upgrade your friendships and social circles to reflect the higher spiritual vibrations you're now operating with. New opportunities to fine-tune your spiritual awareness and intuition will appear that will encourage you to live life to the fullest this year. Yellow can awaken your enterprising side, so add this color to your wardrobe and surrounds to ensure that all your efforts bear fruit. You'll be focused on enlarging your career this year, as new opportunities take you out of stagnation and inspire new growth and direction.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You tend to concentrate your vital force on self-nurturing as well as nurturing those close to you. It is a time to honor your roots, stabilize your home life, and build the connections you have with the family. It's a favorable time to open up conversations with loved ones. This is a good time to go for higher learning and joining new courses to enhance your professional skills and efficiency. Your mind is especially inquisitive and you bring in a new perspective too. Short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

Your social life is likely to increase and bring you in contact with influential and helpful people. It's a good time to do something that requires additional bravery or courage, as some of your inhibitions are released and you live more spiritedly. Competitive activities, such as sports or business, thrive in this period. Career and reputation matters require extra attention. Realistic levels of optimism and confidence are with you, and you are able to attract fortunate circumstances into your life. Problems are easier to resolve.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would be establishing a happy and harmonious work environment through friendly relations with co-workers. Tidying up your work area too comes into focus now. Romantic and social activities may revolve around your working environment. You are generally well liked and respected socially on the job right now. Some laziness is possible now, as you tend to be drawn to leisure activities. Perhaps you are socializing more than usual. You have good team spirit and are more tactful with your co-workers.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

This phase brings new responsibilities. These are likely to present themselves and you would take them more seriously. You are especially fond of the home life and are more family oriented. Take care when it comes to presenting ideas, writing letters, and any detail work. You may not see the whole picture. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to real estate matters and domestic issues. Be as non-judgmental as you can with family members. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering; you have to positively use your talents and efficiency.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Matters related to higher education, religion and worship and publishing proceed smoothly. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training and further your education. You would work in association with well experienced people and this brings more confidence and you use your best talents and co-relate all activities related to augment the business and boost work opportunities. It may be challenging to keep a healthy perspective regarding deeply personal matters and family. It's an excellent time for entertainment and to pursue hobbies.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

People in authority tend to be more inclined to appreciate you and recognize your work. This is the right time to share views, ideas and feelings with people around you. You would do best to allow yourself to explore your inner needs so that you can nurture yourself and others in a healthy, growth-oriented manner. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. You would

be able to see the world around you in practical terms. There are chances of new associations and beginnings as new opportunities and changes come about.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Any love affair begun now will be characterized by good cheer, having fun, and a fair share of emotions. You would enjoy increased powers of concentration. You may require solitude in order to get mental work done. Your memory is more retentive than usual, and your thoughts often turn to personal matters, family, and loved ones. Try to hold off on household repairs if you can. Put off decision-making with regard to home improvement, moving, and family matters for the time being. New initiatives surrounding home and property are best left for a better time.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily the self-discipline to match. You have more energy at your disposal to express yourself creatively, through activities with children, romantic activities, hobbies, or sports. This could be an especially passionate time as your love life may step up and you tend to put more energy into play and pleasure. You are more playful than usual, and especially magnetic. The flowing, expressive, and spontaneous energy surrounding you attracts like-minded people. Be sure to take time to enjoy yourself. You remain practical, realistic and your judgment is sound.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

New horizons in your romantic and love life open up. You may also wish to enhance your personal appearance in some way, such as getting a new hair style or purchasing clothing, cosmetics, and the like. Social gatherings are also very positive for you now. You also tend to spend money on impulse or whim, especially on something that has more emotional appeal than practical value. You might enjoy favourable outcomes when it comes to legal affairs, education, and travel. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. At this time you are inclined to invest your time and money into making your environment more beautiful and comfortable.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You would maintain an optimum balance between optimism and practicality. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of security and status. Your business partnerships are highlighted right now, and it's time to compromise and adjust. Insecurities in your partnerships are brought to light now, and the best way to handle this is to understand that you need others instead of competing. Trying to go it alone won't work just now. Concentrate on truly listening to those close to you, and on playing a supportive role. You feel reflective rather than expressive.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

An especially busy, and perhaps hectic, period on the domestic front is indicated. For example, you might take work to your home or find that people drop by your home often. You may need to adjust your plan of action. Errors in judgment made now are likely due to impulsiveness and the overlooking of crucial details. You could have so many new ideas that you don't have time to implement. Your family, home, property concerns, and heritage come into focus and become a source of pride. It's perhaps not yet a time to make a vital presentation or to come on strong to the world.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. The seeds you plant now, you will reap later. You might pay attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain. Career and reputation peak at this time. Your credibility is important and efforts at self-promotion might be made now. You're at your best when you are showing the world your practical, competent, and responsible side. There will be a fluctuation in energy levels before a balance is achieved. Health will take a turn for the better.

Looking through the lens

By Ranjan K Baruah

All of us want to keep memories captured in some forms. One of the best sources of keeping memories is photographs. Photographs or photography have been integral part of one's life. But with the progress of science and technology there have been changes in photography. Now it has become easy for many to click easily and save the photographs for a long period of time or publish it according to their need.

With the explosion of the communication network, the growth of advertising and media and the fashion boom, and digital photography, it has now become a profession with great commercial value. Photos are an essential part in both print and electronic media. So this is an area offering great scope for those who have an interest and attributes needed to be a professional.

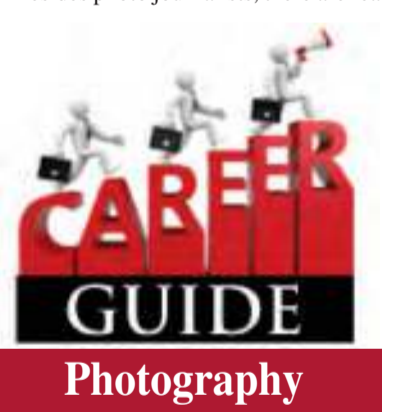
The best part is someone with less academic qualification may also excel in this field. Being a creative medium, photography requires more of inherent talent for success than formal training and exposure.

There are no specific academic requirements for full-time courses in photography; however, candidates who have cleared the 10+2 exam are eligible for the diploma/certificate courses in photography.

But to be successful photographers it is

always advisable to do formal college or higher studies which bring more value to the individual. Photography is also offered as an optional subject for a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. Besides the academic requirements, having a background in computers or electronics, related work experience and training is beneficial for making a break in the field.

Besides photo journalists, there are fea-



ture photography, commercial/ industrial photographer, advertising photographs, fashion photography, fine arts photographers, digital photography, nature and wildlife photography, wedding photographer, kids photographer, forensic photography, etc.

Some of the courses associated with photography are Certificate Course in Advanced Photography, Basic Photography, Digital Photography, Fashion Photography, Photo Journalism, Photography or some special diploma programme in Fashion Photography, Professional Photography, etc. One needs to have some of the good qualities to excel in this field. Communication skill is important at the same time command over English language and other language is always considered as added feature.

There is scope for this profession in places like Meghalaya as the state's rich biodiversity and culture is to be known by people outside the state. People who are photographers can click the pictures and send it to various sources through which they can earn name and fame.

Using appropriate technology is must as that helps someone to prove his or her talent through photography. Successful photographers are always in demand by people or various departments. Freelancing has been always a good option for the photographers as they can explore more with this but they need to be good in networking so that people know about them.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkrjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries.)



Naga super model Ketholeno with participants at Nungshiba's First Basic Doll Making Training, a 45-day course which concluded on June 21, in Dimapur. Five candidates (four are in picture), two of whom are differently-abled, have got job offers from Nungshiba, said proprietor Zuboni Humtsoe. The training is supported by the Women Resource Development Department of Nagaland. The second training will commence from July

“We all have ability. The difference is how we use it.”

--- Charlotte Whitton

The Shillong Times

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Modi's Israel sojourn

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's Israel trip proved a great success. Bilateral ties between the two countries have been elevated to a strategic partnership. Modi and Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu got on extremely well. Netanyahu described the partnership as a 'marriage made in heaven'. Policy synergies have emerged. A number of agreements have been signed in such sectors as agriculture, water conservation and satellite technologies. India is already Israel's largest defence client. The collaboration is expected to expand considerably. New Delhi is looking forward to the supply of armed drones from Tel Aviv. India and Israeli companies inked strategic pacts worth \$4.3 billion. About thirty CEOs from both sides promised to develop economic and investment ties. A \$40 million innovation fund is on the way.

Besides, there will be a direct flight between India and Israel. Rules for overseas citizen cards for people of Indian origin residing in Israel are being simplified. People-to-people contact has been appreciably enhanced. Netanyahu has spoken of a human bridge between India and Israel. Modi met 26/11 survivor Moshe Holtzberg and visited the India War Cemetery in Haifa. Throughout the parleys, people formed the core of the efforts to cement bilateral ties. That an Indian Prime Minister visited Israel only now after 70 years, in itself, shows that the present Government has a larger and strategic vision of what diplomacy is all about. The Haifa visit was particularly remarkable since it is an integral part of our history (1918) and one that is lesser known by this generation. Jodhpur, Hyderabad, Mysore cavalry brigade also known as the 15th Imperial Brigade fought the last cavalry war in World War I. After the Battle of Haifa cavalry brigades became untenable since the world had progressed to tankers and machine guns.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

New taxation measures

Food and drinks served in hotels and restaurants, cosmetics and shaving sets, bone china crockery and ladies handbags, ready made garments and alcoholic drinks are to cost more in Meghalaya. In his budget proposals for 89-90 Chief Minister Mr Purno Sagma has proposed higher sales tax, and availability fee. At the same time, sales tax on school uniforms is being withdrawn, and tiffin boxes and school bags are also to be exempted. Butter

not sold in sealed containers will also be exempt from tax. Biscuits are cost less as the rate of tax is being reduced from 7 to 5 percent. The availability fees of whisky, brandy, gin and rum have been increased from Rs5 to Rs. 10, while the fee for beer, cider, are have been hiked from Rs 3 to Rs. 6. The concessional rate of excise duty for canteens has also been raised from Rs 9 to Rs.12 per LPL. The licence fees for different categories of outlets for these drinks will also be revised.

The Joy of learning and its cost

By HH Mohrmen

There is a huge dropout rate of students between higher secondary and degree levels. Do we need to ask why? The reason is because we do not have enough colleges which offer degree courses to cater to the youth who have passed their Higher Secondary school to continue their education. Another reason why the youths drop out after Senior Secondary level is also because none of the colleges offer courses or programs, other than the usual Arts, Science and

or examinations. Education, particularly higher education in Meghalaya, is very expensive because we have very few government colleges. The rest are all private institutions and even colleges run by religious institutions are called private institutes and they charge hefty fees. A member of one of the SHGs we promote shared with me her ordeal that because she has many kids she finds it difficult to provide education to all of them. When I mentioned that she can avail education loan that the banks offers now, her reply was that she has no close relation who is working in the government and willing to stand surety for her.

Education in the state is becoming so hectic that at times one wonders whether we are trying to produce robots or educate a child. Children as young as two and half years old are sent to pre-school where they supposedly play and learn. The rat race begins when they are so young and it is instilled in the minds of the youths that unless they score good grades in their public examinations they are not going to be successful in life.

A friend who is a parent of a student who has just passed his SSLC told me that his ward is going to study science and boasted that he is sending the young-adult to a school where he will remain in the school campus from eight thirty in the morning till seven in the evening every day. He also elucidated that we are living in a difficult time and unless kids work hard during these two formative years then they will not make it in life. So where is the fun of being a child? And do our young adults have time for fun at all? Where is the joy of learning even as we force our kids to study to get good grades?

To make matters worse the government is insisting on entrance tests like JEE and NEET. There is no time for kids to enjoy life anymore and parents are sending them for coaching so that they crack the entrance tests. Learning is becoming very hectic and is also very expensive. Now it looks like higher education is meant only for those who can afford it.

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Commerce streams. Of course there are institutions which offers courses in Social works, Mass Media and Environmental Studies, but the need of the hour is to have courses or programs which are down to earth and which can be applied to the day to day lives of the local people in the area.

In the state education system there is no avenue or alternative for young people who do not want (or cannot afford) to pursue a college degree so they have no option but to drop out. One can argue that of course we have only few ITIs and Polytechnic and the usual courses they offer is diploma in Electricals, or train people to be electricians, mechanics, short-hand, beautician or hairdressing, costume designing or dress making etc., But the pertinent question is whether the courses actually provide jobs to the youths who have completed the courses? What about their placements? Do we follow our youth after they have completed their trainings?

We are yet to see an institute which 'thinks out of the box' and offer courses or programs which are not 'run of the mill and

The people of the region cannot live without meat. Perhaps a short term course in livestock rearing will be something that will have ready market in the area. Special emphasis should be given to cattle rearing in the context of beef ban in the country. In the past the status of a person in the community is measured by the size of cattle herd he has, but now cattle rearing in the old tribal style is becoming unpopular because no shepherds are available to tend the cattle in the villages. A more modern method of cattle rearing should be introduced so that villagers can continue with the activity which has ready market.

Rote learning and memorisation is still the popular teaching system amongst the schools in the state and as some has rightly said that the system of teaching in Meghalaya is that the kids will have to learn, commit and vomit. There is no room for critical thinking or creative thinking perhaps we really are producing robots and don't want people to ask questions. The teacher's main goal is to complete the syllabus and the test of whether students understand the lessons or not is by conducting tests

could certainly cause anxiety for many.

This premiere institution has provided quality medical treatment to the people of the North East in general and to those of the state of Meghalaya in particular and the increasing number of patients flocking to the institute nowadays would reflect the confidence that people have in the services available here so far. Therefore any news which has a negative bearing towards it progress would naturally be taken by many as disturbing and could be considered as setbacks towards their pursuit for better health care.

The latest news report of clarifications which probably emanated from the NEIGRIHMS management itself seems to indicate that the setback therein are not weighty enough to bring adverse consequences in the long run and that the management is confident enough to resolve these soon. This is certainly reassuring and the apprehension of many that NEIGRIHMS would likely collapse as reported earlier is now unfounded.

Israel has struggled hard to emerge as a powerful nation

By Harihar Swarup

Few in India know how Israel has come up, the struggle and hardship it has to face. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel and it is a wise decision. It is a small country, surrounded by hostile neighbours but lives on its own terms. Israel's population is mere 80 lakhs; it is surrounded by 56 Arab countries having population of 150 crores.

Israel came into existence in 1948, and despite small population and lack of resources, it made its separate identity. Ranging from Agriculture to Defense, this small nation achieved remarkable success. The first President of Israel Wiseman died in 1952 at the age of 73. The problem arose who should succeed him. The then Prime Minister Ben Gurion approached Nobel Laureate Albert Einstein who was living in Washington. When Hitler started persecution of Jews in Germany, Einstein escaped to US and settled

MOSAD traced the extremists one by one and killed them. Not only this, during Hitler's rules Jews were killed in large numbers. MOSAD traced those involved in murders of Jews and killed them one by one. Some of those responsible of extermination of Jews were kidnapped, tried and hanged. These persons had fled Germany after fall of Hitler and settled in different countries.

Even though Israel was born in 1948, India recognized it in 1950 and that too under pressure of America and gave permission to it to open its consulate in Mumbai. In 1992 Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao established full diplomatic relations with Israel and an embassy was opened in New Delhi. The building on Prithiviraj Road in which Israeli embassy was opened belonged to Biju Paknaik. His son Naveen sold half of the building to controversial builder Tejwant Singh.

“Einstein declined to accept Israeli citizenship and become the country's President, saying that all his life he has been away from public life and devoted his time in research. “I will not be able to discharge this responsibility. Moreover, I have also aged and not fit to carry this responsibility”.

Followers of three great religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—are connected with Jerusalem. Judaism is 4000 year old. Karl Marx, Picasso, Michel Angelo were all Jews. ”

down there.

Einstein declined to accept Israeli citizenship and become the country's President, saying that all his life he has been away from public life and devoted his time in research. “I will not be able to discharge this responsibility. Moreover, I have also aged and not fit to carry this responsibility”.

Followers of three great religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—are connected with Jerusalem. Judaism is 4000 year old. Karl Marx, Picasso, Michel Angelo were all Jews. After advent of Islam, clashes started between Muslims and Jews.

Militarily Israel is very strong; it is said to be having biggest Air Force after US, Russia and China. Most of its land is barren and there is acute shortage of water. Despite this drawback, Israel produces 95 per cent of food grains to meet its requirement. To tide over the shortage of water, it has developed drip irrigation. The country uses 85% of sewage water for irrigation. In the field of agriculture this small nation has performed wonders; developed crops which can be grown with scant water.

Despite desert all round, Israel has developed technique to grow a wide variety of fruits like oranges, grapes, mausami, apples and bananas and export them to Europe. An Israeli cow produces maximum quality of milk—10,000 litres while American cow produces 9331 litres while cows of European countries produce 6139 litre each.

One peculiarity of Israel is that it does not crib when made target of terrorists' attack; neither it asks help from other countries. When in the Olympics held in Germany the Israeli sportspersons were attacked and killed by terrorists, its Intelligence

Tejwant, in turn, handed it over to Israeli embassy.

In 1962 war with China, Israel came to help of India and supplied it arms and ammunitions. In 1965 war with Pakistan, both US and Soviet Union declined to give arms to both India and Islamabad. At that time Israel militarily helped India. In 1968 when under R N Kaw, Indian intelligence agency RAW was setup, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi asked him to try to improve India's relations with Israel and take help of MOSAD. Later during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as the Prime Minister, he wanted Raw to seek more cooperation with MOSAD.

The advantage of improving relations with Israel was far reaching. When India propped up Mukti Bahini (liberation army) in Bangladesh, Israelis provided arms and ammunitions.

Israel knew that China, North Korea, Pakistan, Libya and Iran were giving training to terrorists. Therefore, Tel Aviv wanted India's help to keep an eye on these countries. Situation changed when in 1977, Janata Party government was formed..

The then Prime Minister Morarji Desai invited Israeli Prime Minister Moise Dayan on a secret visit to India. Morarji cautioned Dayan that this visit was made known, it may pose danger to his governments Both the Prime Ministers discussed the possibility of destroying the nuclear site being developed by Pakistan in Kathua, near Rawalpindi.

In 2008 when Mumbai came under terrorists' attack, the then Israeli Prime Minister talked to his counterpart Dr. Manmohan Singh and offered to send a team to deal with terrorists but Dr Singh was not ready for it. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Comedy by comedians

Editor,

I am a woman who has waited patiently for our menfolk to come out and speak the truth. No one has come forward, I can wait no longer and so I have to step forward to say what has to be said. Your page three story of (ST July 8, 2017) “Ex KSU chief ask NGOs to fight under one flag” should have made the front page headlines. It's a scoop which the Shillong Times failed to take note of. The irony and comical part of the call for unity is done by someone mainly responsible for the breaking up the KSU. Is the HYC serious? Must be some hidden agenda somewhere so let us begin to unite to create more public mayhem seems more like it. Fishing in troubled waters is always a favourite pastime for people who have nothing else to do.

People nearly died laughing when they read that Anthony Kharbuli had condemned NGOs for extorting money from non tribals. Who is he trying to fool? Every petrol pump, every business house, shops of Iewduh, Police

bazaar, Laitumkrah and Polo, each and everyone pays extortion money to the KSU, FKJGP, HYF and all the so called Youth NGOs of Shillong. The opposition to the railway also needs to be questioned as the persistence on entry and exit points also has a suspicious smell. These points are ready made counters to make easy extortion money. Everything and everyone in the name of the Jaitbynriew! How the money is spent, no one knows. All NGO leaders lead a lavish lifestyle yet no NGO has ever come forward with an audited statement of its finances to be released to the public. Please let's not speak of dirt and smut when your own snoot remains unwashed from your own face.

Truck and transport related businesses form one of the major contributors to NGO funds. Ask the fruit sellers, transport agencies and fish sellers and they will tell you to whom they pay protection money. If railways come all this regular income of our youth NGOs will dry up. Sometimes it is wise to try and find out why NGOs are

so negative about development. Yes Mr Donkumar Roy is correct when he calls for further negotiations on the issue. Yes unity and transparency is needed to kick out useless corrupt politicians and parties that encourage corruption. Unity is needed to have a stable government. Unity is needed to bring likeminded parties together. Unity is needed to address the economic improvement of Meghalaya. The last thing we need is a call for unity to further divide the public. But perhaps divisive experts know of things you and I don't.

Yours etc,
Saphishisha Kurbah
Shillong -8

NEIGRIHMS a gift to the North East!

Editor NEIGRIHMS which usually made news in the past because of some of its successful endeavours in the medical field has lately been affected by negative news relating to technical issues which are beyond the layman's capacity to comprehend but which

"Life is something you do when you can't get to sleep."

--- James Allen

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When words come to haunt

RAM Nath Kovind, the Presidential nominee had reportedly stated in 2010 that Islam and Christianity are alien to the nation. He has since clarified that what he actually said was that Christianity and Islam are alien to the 'notion' of caste. In India it is common to hear people pronouncing 'o' like 'a' due to the mother tongue pull. But coming to the crux of the matter, Islam and Christianity are religions and not castes and there is a difference between the two. A Dalit can be a Hindu, Muslim or Christian. His/her caste remains the defining factor despite the conversion to so-called casteless religions like Islam and Christianity. In many churches in India, Dalit Christians are seated separately from the rest of the congregation. It as if Dalits carry the caste mark on their foreheads. Kovind's comment which came in the aftermath of the Ranganath Misra Commission report recommending 15% quota in government jobs for socially and economically disadvantaged sections among religious and linguistic minorities in India, therefore merit some introspection instead of undue criticism. The Misra report had recommended 10% quotas for Muslims and 5% for other minorities in government jobs and also proposed Scheduled Caste status for Dalits of all religions. Kovind was probably speaking as a Dalit leader and his contention that the inclusion of Muslims and Christians in the Scheduled Caste category would be unconstitutional needs to be looked at from the perspective of caste, and not religion, being the overarching issue which continues to push Dalits to the margins irrespective of their religion.

Reservation per se is a contentious issue in India. To further expand the scope of reservation to include religious minorities would open up a can of worms. Amongst Christians the Scheduled Tribes already enjoy reservation under the Constitution. If they can also claim reservation as religious minorities then they would be enjoying double advantage. Undoubtedly reservation is necessary to bring up that section of Indians who have fallen between the cracks as far as their socio-economic profile goes. The poorest deserve to be uplifted by strategic interventions and reservation is one of them. But reservation cannot be extended across the board for people of a tribe/community/caste without assessing their socio-economic statuses. This is the only way to bring fairness and equity to the idea of reservation.

TO THE EDITOR

The dark aspects of Aadhar!

Editor,
Most people in Meghalaya have been thrown into a welter of anxieties regarding the issue of Aadhar given that it was previously reported that Meghalaya was being exempted from its purview. Of late, however, it has been made known that Aadhar has become mandatory nationwide in order to avail public benefits, for banking transactions, filing of income tax returns etc. And in sequel of this fresh order, I see common people, government employees and even Catholic priests and nuns jostling for space to get themselves included in the Aadhar registration. However, it is mind-blowing to recount that a few months back a lawyer who goes by the name of Shyam Divan had in his stellar submission legally argued that by making Aadhar compulsory the BJP led NDA govt. has arguably promulgated a sweeping regimentation more oppressive than what our fore-fathers had experienced in the last colonial era. Divan has further emphasized that

by way of letting finger prints imprinted and scanning of our iris on a certain mechanical device, we are virtually renouncing our basic Right to Privacy and by virtue of this self-assertive action we are literally transforming ourselves into a dog tethered under an electronic leash being pursued and tracked by the powers that be, throughout our life span, thereby any inalienable rights premised on privacy are ironically robbed off in this democratic Republic, of the world's largest democracy founded on the sufferings of our patriots nearly a century ago. Those selfless leaders must now be turning in their graves at the grim thought that now we are conversely ruled, not served, by our own elected-welfare govt. since we have been obliged to disown the core components of our body. Indeed, this govt. has initiated a violence of sorts against another individual by imposing this Aadhar regime.

I'm afraid that, through the mechanism of Aadhar, free speech, right to self-acquired property and legally disposing the same are at risk. The essence of the Constitution is to checkmate the dictatorial powers of the state from being a

On the 21st of June 2017, ICARE organised a seminar titled 'Reclaiming Education'. The focus of the seminar was on the status of School Education, especially Lower and Primary Education in the state of Meghalaya. The title of the seminar was deliberately suggestive because of two critical aspects of the subject under discussion. Firstly there is this universal belief, in all strata of Meghalayan society, that something somewhere has basically gone wrong with the education we are imparting to our children. Secondly, despite the above feeling, people in general are loath, reluctant and shy away from attempts to critique the problem in public. Why is not known but Education it seems has been placed on the same pedestal as religion. No one understands what it is but everyone has faith in it, so best leave it to the people ordained to deal with it even if they, in fact, are as vague as the next person on how to proceed ahead. ICARE sincerely believes that those mandated with the task of providing meaningful and qualitative education to the children of Meghalaya have abdicated their responsibilities. Education in Meghalaya is going to the dogs but in the process it is also dragging our children along with it. The time has come for all stakeholders, the parents, the grandparents, the aunts and uncles, the kur and the shnong of all school going children, to take the bull by the horns and to question the pundits of Meghalaya Education. We need to openly question the state of education in Meghalaya; publicly debate on it; expose the rot and reclaim education from the abyss it finds itself in. Hence the seminar of the 21st where concerned stakeholders participated.

The first question that should be asked is, what do we expect from education? Or what is the ultimate goal of being educated. My generation sincerely believed that acquisition of knowledge and learning was the end goal of education and we were educated along those lines. Bookish knowledge and what we gleaned from the syllabus at school formed only part of our education. Social skills and values, respect for elders, the ability to comprehend what is read, the development of reason, logic and common sense, plus recreation to sustain a

voracious parasite on its own denizens or to arbitrarily send anyone to jail for the expression free speech a la the student leaders of JNU some months back; or if one eats his/her choice of food being repugnant to the majoritarian Hindu Rashtra, led by Praveen Togadia, the VHP leader, who the BJP dreadfully fear lest they lose the 2019 elections.

Had Modi been sitting in the opposition bench in Parliament, he could, with his gift of the gab, have successfully torn to shreds any attempt to even initiate the idea of Aadhar. However, since presently he is at the helm, things have dramatically turned otherwise. Being apprehensive, as I am of this Aadhar scheme, that it might have adverse impact especially on us the tribals, and being in concurrence with what the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stated on June 17th last that: "The poorest of the poor, the marginalized people will be the worst sufferers if Aadhar is made mandatory unilaterally," I, therefore, as of now would prefer to exclude myself from the parameters of the latter. Significantly, the implementation of this

scheme could assuredly put the political rivals on the back foot and perceptively the ploy would turn out to be a political game of one-upmanship. And given the prevalent social circumstances vis-à-vis Aadhar, I personally agree to a fault what John Locke, the 17th Century English philosopher had said: "Every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has any right to but himself."

Atrocious food at NEIGRIHMS canteen!

Editor,
There is a saying that health is wealth' and that prevention is better than cure. However this is not practiced by a canteen operating in NEIGRIHMS. Anyone who has eaten at the Hospital Canteen of NEIGRIHMS will be shocked to know that the food quality is simply indigestible and not worth

Yours etc.,
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end product of the current system. When we speak of the deterioration of our education system, the worst we can do is to base our accusations on sentiment and emotions alone. We need hard data and facts to make our arguments acceptable. It is therefore shocking to be told that in Meghalaya, class VIII students can hardly read a class II text books. (perhaps not applicable in elite schools but certainly quite common in most of the rural and Govt run schools of the state). Quoting from an ASER survey for 2016 we find that more than 30% of class 8 students cannot read class 2 text books and only 19% of class 8 students can do simple division. It's a nightmare for all except those managing education! What are we teaching our children? English is the medium of teaching in all primary schools. In rural Meghalaya no one speaks English at home. How then does the education department expect 4 & 5 year old rural children to understand lessons written in English? Result they simply mug it up and reproduce it verbatim without understanding a word of what they have regurgitated. This is pure rote learning and we have the gall to call it Education! Wouldn't primary books in the local language serve the ends of learning and understanding better? Why was imagination and common sense not employed while prescribing books for our primary students? We also learnt that in the last 20 years no Education Minister has ever called for a review on the education policy of the state if we ever have one. In some countries such crimes of neglect carry a death sentence! They have murdered education and in so doing murdered a generation of their own people. In Meghalaya such people have no shame in seeking re-election!

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"One of the great ironies of life is this: he or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served."

--- Gordon B. Hinckley

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Victory over IS

THREE years ago, the Islamic State (IS) captured Mosul, the hub of its Caliphate. The city has now been liberated by Iraqi forces. The IS loss is significant. Mosul with a population of 1.5 million is the second largest city in Iraq. Its capture established the IS as a formidable force and it stood for the fall of an ideology dating back to the 12th century. It was here that Abu Baker al Baghdadi, the IS leader declared the setting up of his Caliphate. From Mosul, the IS traded in oil with neighbouring countries and inaugurated its reign of terror. Al Baghdadi is now reported to be dead which has decimated the strength of the terrorists. A battle had been on for nine months to liberate Mosul. A US led international coalition helped the Iraqi forces in their struggle against the IS. In the process Iraq lost about 1000 men. But now the IS does not occupy even an inch of Iraqi territory.

It is only the beginning. A war has to be carried on against the Islamic fanaticism of the IS. The IS has spread its wings worldwide. The outfits in different countries will now be out to avenge the defeat of Mosul. IS terror has hit France, Germany, Belgium and the UK. Indonesia claims that there are 1200 IS fighters in the Philippines. Fifty or so IS recruits are reported to be in India. IS brainwashing is common. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi should go for power sharing and make friends with the Sunnis to wipe out the IS. Reconstruction in the liberated areas should also begin in earnest.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Another step forward

Almost the last of the theoffshoots of the 1962 Indo-China war is at last going to be removed shortly following an agreement between the two countries favouring reopening of their Consulates in Shang-hai and Bombay. This is a direct outcome of the fairly successful eight round of talks between the officials of both countries. Agreeing to raise the exchanges to a political level following these talks, there is the reported effort to ease tension along the border. This would formalise the existing clandestine border trade which needs to be brought under establishment rule and procedures would only step up the volume of the trade to the benefit of the remote border inhabitants in all respects. Through such effective control over the border trading the administrative influence over the remote areas would also increase, which would

thus be an extra premium gained in the whole process China's relations having been normalised in all respects at the economic level initially, it would not be long when the pending boundary issues would also get gradually removed without raising any outstanding political divergence or disputes.

Coordinated move more welcome

A central scheme to try and wean people away from "Jhum" or shifting cultivation is to be launched in nine States these in the north eastern region and Orissa and Andhra Pradesh included. The works to commence in the current financial year itself, but the amount of Rs. 75 lakhs which the Centre will provide for it would appear to be too inadequate considering that it is to be spread over a period of five years.

One evening an elderly gentleman, who I have known for decades, was telling me something about his people. When I enquired who his people were, he somewhat incredulously answered, "My community, who else". Of course he is not the only one who talks like that; most of the time we all do. Especially if we live amongst "our people", in "our land" and most of "our" relatives and friends are "our people". For those of us who consider ourselves multicultural, and have even married somebody who was not originally one of "our people", the identification is and cannot be as precise and clear cut. Having lived amongst, though not identified with, many cultures one then comes to the sad conclusion that though ghettos might not be so outwardly visible, they do exist in most of our minds, and what passes as liberalism is a dress people wear at times, especially to public forums, because it is fashionable. It is also fashionable today to talk about the environment. For most people taking care of the environment means just having a little sensitivity about littering. For them buying goodies packed in non bio degradable packaging, driving SUVs, jetting around the world and living on a heavy meat based diet do not constitute environmental "sins". One could go on and on about the righteousness which many people not just flaunt but also publicly peddle. However please do allow me a little digression.

Every morning I see a group of young footballers, practising under the watchful eyes of a foreign coach. One sees them run forward, either in a straight line or in a zig zag, turn sharp left or right, run backwards, or around markers. In fact apart from diving there is no movement required of a footballer, that is not practised with some zeal. Yet after a while the tutorial gets over, the coach having done his duty departs, as do all his pupils. I guess everyone has duties to perform, classes to attend, or errands to run. Without disparaging the efforts of either the coach or the players, however one can safely assume that no Diego Maradona, Cristiano Ronaldo or Lionel Messi will emerge out of this group. One comes to this conclusion, because the consuming passion or love for the game appears to be lacking. The drill is all there, but the "dil" is absconding. One cannot be perpetually coached on every right or ethical decision to make in life. To

be taught everything we correctly ought to do in this lifetime, will take at least two life times of learning. The syllabus handled this way is just too vast. And our reformers and activists who make a living, travelling and expounding ethics cannot be our gurus. Being a Guru or a prophet, like Jesus or Buddha or Krishna is a fulltime job without any salary or perks or privileges to go with it. Hence there are few, if any of them around. So without their living guidance the best we can do, is to be continually aware about the errors in our perceptions. The commonest misperception is dividing the world into two: ours and theirs; in terms of race or in terms of religion. It should be apparent to even the simplest minds that the instant we use the labels - us or ours, we simultaneously create the tags - them and theirs. This is what creates the fertile ground for all conflict. A Course in Miracles says, "You are making him a stranger by misperceiving him, and so you cannot know him. It is because you made him a stranger that you are afraid of him". That conflict is a historical reality, cannot be denied. As communities and as nations we have fought each other for survival. We also fought against animals and even with the environment. This had some relevance then, when our very existence was at stake when we were in a less evolved stage of evolution, but in a mindless manner we are still doing, what our ancestors did, even though the times have changed. Today armed with very ruthless tools of technology, fighting each other is a fight against humanity, wholesale slaughter of animals is a cruel reality and drastic tampering with our environment is making this planet inhospitable to our own existence. We now live in a world where cooperation is not just a necessity but an existential reality rather than an utopian dream.

It is an undeniable reality that from the moment any child is born, the whole of humanity contributes to his or her life. Often he is delivered in a hospital where the equipment and the doctor have come from very far away. Even if the doctor is "ours", he would have learnt his vocation from people of "other" communities. Most of the clothes worn by the child, or the medicines given to

The Ghettos of our Mind

By Paramjit Bakhshi

him are more likely those made by "others". The lessons and textbooks at school are mostly written by "others", and the religion we impose on the child is often of "others". Electoral democracy which we practise and proudly flaunt is also not originally "ours" and neither is most of the food we eat grown or manufactured by only "our people". The eggs, fish and rice may come from Andhra Pradesh, the wheat from Punjab and the recipe for Kentucky fried chicken from America. In reality today the host community itself contributes very marginally to the child's physical and intellectual development. What it does instead, is still stake a claim on the child by providing the notion and the emotion that he or she belongs to them. And that he or she should not belong, to any other community.

This claim was beneficial in the past but not anymore. To succeed in this modern, complex and interconnected world, an individual has to successfully work together with people, of diverse communities. In the agricultural age he may have related with a just score of his "own" people; today in the course of his life time he will have to interact with a multitude of "others". After being indoctrinated in the exclusiveness of his community, he is forced to attempt the opposite - to get integrated with "others". But the community based software installed in his psyche cannot be so easily overwritten, and it becomes difficult if not impossible for him, to become truly inclusive. So all he learns is to have transactional relationships. He can be kind as long as he gets more than he has to give, to "others". But when this equation changes or is perceived to change, his anger which is simmering below the surface comes to the fore. His relationship with other communities is based not on love but on fear and on what he can get. Sadly every relationship of his bears this hallmark. His relationship with the environment is based on creation of wealth by plundering the planet. He mines the earth ruthlessly for minerals and kills animals for food, fur, aphrodisiacs and worst: for the pleasure of the hunting. He also relates only to his often very narrow and medieval concept of God, and he does not mind abusing and denigrating "other" Gods, little realising that if there is only one Creator, he has created us all. He thus leads a life of

insecurity without the realisation mentioned in the Course in Miracles that it is "my (own) attack thoughts that are attacking my invulnerability." Dividing and defending "our" own people is still very much in vogue. Not just crafty politicians but even simple minded souls exhort us to rally together the moment anybody of "ours" is discriminated against. Some organisations use violence to settle scores with "others". Even the more enlightened amongst us are prone to irrational emotional outbursts, and rave and rant loudly and publicly. Social media today provides an instant outlet, for us to express our views, without a moment's introspection. Our views are picked up by our followers and opponents, and often what is supposed to be a discussion becomes a verbal brawl, with abuse, insults and threats traded freely.

Mistakenly it is thought that our ability to use technology will liberate us. Little do we realise that as long as we live in any duality, imprisoned in dark dungeons of fear and insecurity, technology will only bring to our door, not solutions but merely, more battles to fight. There are battles being fought in God's name, and some in the name of the community. Battle over beef eating is dividing some and uniting some people. People who consider forests sacred wonder how cows can be holy. Elites who keep governesses for their children battle elites who keep some distance from them. Everywhere the home turf is well protected and the turf of "others" is sought to be demolished. We keep the chips on our shoulders and want to knock them off everybody else. Half truths are used to battle half truth and the whole world is a murky grey.

It requires clear perception to spot the innumerable and almost invisible ghettos in our world for they are created and exist primarily in our minds. Training only the body in soccer or fighting for justice with prejudices seldom bears desired fruit. Our hearts too have to be in the right place. Just as the passion for football makes good footballers it is love for all people that makes real humanitarians. The writer can be contacted at bakhshi03@rediffmail.com.

pathetic that though some may claim and still do that the outsiders come over here and take away our "piang ja" (rice plate) the truth here is that we are the ones who simply hand it over to them. So let us stop fearing, stop burning and stop killing. I promise you if we could do all of the work on our own and have the right mentality towards work that is locally available to all of us we will not have to chase the outsiders. They will simply leave on their own. Yours etc., Carlden M Kharbanger Shillong-8

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Why Gorkhaland? Editor, A scholar from Punjab recently wrote on his Facebook wall -- "While our brave Gorkha soldiers are shooting the dreaded terrorists in the hostile Indo-Park borders, in Darjeeling their relatives are being gunned down by the West Bengal Government. What a contrary fact and heartless act!" Logically speaking, is

this the price for being patriotic, and serving the country at the cost of life? Does it come under the laws of the land that those who shed blood for the nation should also be treated apathetically and even hurt fatally? I think we have to recheck the Constitution and sit down for a serious introspection. I guess, it is never right to hit a person with a ladle who lovingly cooks and serves you the food. Unlike her predecessors, the Bengal Chief Minister has now been steadily eyeing Darjeeling and its adjoining areas as her private fiefdom. It seems a bunch of good scholars are now urgently required to wise her up about its history. She probably does not know about the Nepal Kingdom which was prudent enough to have a patch-up agreement, under the Treaty of Sugauli 1815-16 with then the rapacious imperialist 'East India Company'. An insightful article by KK Muktan - 'Darjeeling is

clamouring for statehood' (ST, 29 Jun, 2017) lays out all historical facts in details. The areas of Darjeeling, Sikkim, Nainital, Kumaon, and Garhwal came under East India Company administration. Rationally speaking, if all this vast area of land, its mountains, its pristine hills, rivers, flora and fauna can be regarded as Indian then why not the human inhabitants in it? Why is there so much skepticism and callousness till date? It is totally unconstitutional. Well, if our leaders still dilly dally and desist from resolving the identity crises of the two-legged natives of this land then I would suggest them to meet and consult the bio-scientists and geoscientists, and if doubts still persist then rush for the psychiatrist.

When I shared this letter and historical facts with friends from Delhi he sharply retorted - "it is total injustice to the Gorkha people by our leaders. Such apathy of a pluralist nation towards those brave soldiers who 'came with land' is unbecoming. Even

UNO or world leaders will be shocked to know how Gorkhas are ill-treated in their own land." Incidentally, India's leaders are ecstatic when Sunil Chhetri scores a goal and lovingly call him Ronaldo of India. Shiva Thapa was affectionately patted on his back by none other than PM Narendra Modi while being seen off for the Olympics. One feels, Gorkhas have had enough of lip service from Indian leaders. Now what is most important is a "true pat" on the back of the "whole Gorkhas" by addressing their identity crises. Well, Gorkhas came with the land, never like other "invaders or infiltrators" who have been posing serious threats to the nation. Gorkhas are the stout walls of security and integrity for the country. It's time the Indian Government pays back their dues with gratitude. They can't bite the bullet all the time under the brutally "heartless administration" of West Bengal. Yours etc., Sajib Gwali, Shillong-2

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Human trafficking in India

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

An estimated 700,000 to 4 million people around the world are being trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation each year. Human trafficking is the fastest-growing source of profit for organized crime. Trafficking is a lucrative industry. It has been identified as the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. It is second only to drug trafficking as the most profitable illegal industry in the world.

Victims of human trafficking are not permitted to leave upon arrival at their destination. They are held against their will through acts of coercion and forced to work or provide services to the trafficker or others. The work or services may include anything from bonded or forced labour to commercialized sex u a l exploitation. T h e arrangement may be structured as a work contract, but with no or low payment or on terms which are highly exploitative. Sometimes the arrangement is structured as debt bondage, with the victim not being permitted or able to pay off the debt. Bonded labour, or debt bondage, is probably the least known form of labour trafficking today, and yet it is the most widely used method of enslaving people. Victims become bonded labourers when their labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan or service in which its terms and conditions have not been defined or in which the value of the victims' services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt. The value of their work is greater than the original sum of money "borrowed."

Sex trafficking victims are generally found in dire circumstances and easily targeted by traffickers. Individuals, circumstances, and situations vulnerable to traffickers include homeless individuals, runaway teens, displaced homemakers, refugees, and drug addicts. While it may seem like trafficked people are the most vulnerable and powerless minorities in a region, victims are consistently exploited from any ethnic and social background. Child labour is a form of work that is likely to be hazardous to the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development of children and can interfere with their education. The International Labour

Organization estimates worldwide that there are 246 million exploited children aged between 5 and 17 involved in debt bondage, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, the illegal drug trade, the illegal arms trade, and other illicit activities around the world. The issue of trafficking in India is almost multidimensional. When analysed it is found that the human trafficking industry in India has certain "supply" and "demand" factors. The "supply" factors include - poverty, child marriage, non preference for a girl child among others. The "demand" factors include migration sex tourism among others. Victims of trafficking very often are subjected to particularly detrimental forms of physical and/or psychological violence. Human trafficking is a risk to the right to life, liberty and security of person, as victims face physical and psychological violence, are kept against will, being held in slavery and servitude, being subject to torture cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, etc. To summarize, when each of the above control mechanisms are considered together, the outcome is a regime of actual and p s y c h o l o g i c a l imprisonment and torture. Victims of forced prostitution are often subjected to psychological and/or physical torture (threats, humiliation and degradation, beatings and rape) by their traffickers. In many cases the women blame themselves for having become involved in trafficking and prostitution. They later feel ashamed to have given in to the demands of their tormentors. When forced to return home, the victims are faced with disappointment from their families and friends, having fallen short of everyone's expectations to make a new start.

Victims are very often regarded as offenders and accomplices instead of victims of crime. Hence they are - instead of receiving assistance and protection - accused of offences such as illegal entry and stay, illicit employment, illegal prostitution, impermissible begging, dealing in illicit drugs, and other petty crimes. (Views expressed are personal)

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TO THE EDITOR

Chaos in the living waters!

Editor, This letter seeks to bring to light and seek clarification from the concerned authorities. Recently, a friend of mine had applied for the vacant UGC sanctioned post of Assistant Professor in one of the deficit colleges in Shillong. In spite of having the necessary qualifications as mandated by the UGC notification 2010, this particular candidate was called for the interview but not allowed to present himself at the interview and the explanation given was that he is over- aged. My point wise argument pertaining to the above are:- 1. Education is not a state subject and falls under the concurrent list. 2. I also wonder at this new age limit restriction imposed by DHTE, if at all it exists. As I understand, when state laws come in conflict with central laws in the matter of subjects that fall in the concurrent list then

the central laws prevail. In this aspect, I seek clarification whether the DHTE has sought and obtained any permission from UGC regarding this implementation of age limit for recruitment to UGC sanctioned posts. 3. Further, the post advertised is not a state post but a UGC sanctioned post hence the rules of recruitment is as per UGC guidelines(as clearly stated in the advertisement) which I presume must also include the age factor since UGC Regulations of 2010 which are followed by all deficit colleges do not mention any age restriction. So how can the concerned authority apply state government regulations in respect of age limit? 4. Further, if the candidate has forwarded an NOC and applied through proper channel why is it that his case is rejected and his service in the previous institution not counted as service but only as experience. 5. Being technologically savvy I have downloaded the rules pertaining to

government colleges where age limit is 27 yes plus relaxation to ST/SC. I wonder is this the rule applied for a UGC sanctioned post and if yes, may I bring to the notice of the concerned authorities that some candidates who appeared are above the age limit which is 33 years. This letters is not intended to malign the image of the particular institution but to awaken my fellow teachers especially those serving in the particular institution on the importance of seeking clarification. Perhaps if they had raised the concern, an outsider would not have had to do it. Yours etc., Amanda Basaiamoit, Via email

Editor, In the midst of our state literally being burnt in the fight against the so called "outsiders" one fears that lawlessness may once again be the order of the day as it used too. For a tribe as small as ours one can understand

on what grounds such fights are happening, though the path taken to achieve victory is condemnable. As the saying goes, "Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat for it is momentary". The real question here is not whether or not we should allow outsiders to come to our land but the real question is, why are they coming over? The answer is simple-JOBs. Seriously! They come here for jobs? Strange isn't it that in a state where more than half of us (youth) are unemployed that they come over and take up jobs here? Most of them are daily wage workers like masons, carpenters, shopkeepers, waiters etc. What's the matter? What's wrong with us? Don't we have the skill to engage ourselves in all these activities? We do, perhaps some even more but the reason here is the ugly truth behind all of this! We all know the answer to it but are just too proud to admit it. Our commitment, our culture our respect towards work is horribly

pathetic that though some may claim and still do that the outsiders come over here and take away our "piang ja" (rice plate) the truth here is that we are the ones who simply hand it over to them. So let us stop fearing, stop burning and stop killing. I promise you if we could do all of the work on our own and have the right mentality towards work that is locally available to all of us we will not have to chase the outsiders. They will simply leave on their own. Yours etc., Carlden M Kharbanger Shillong-8

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"A true friend is one soul in two bodies."
--- William Shakespeare

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 331 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2017

Terror attack

ON the death anniversary of the Kashmiri militant leader, Burhan Wani, there was a terror attack killing seven and injuring many among Amarnath pilgrims from Gujarat. Admittedly, whenever there is a loophole in the security arrangements, the blame for such an outrage always falls on terrorists. A security blanket was spread over Jammu and Kashmir on the eve of Wani's death anniversary. Terrorists however tore the blanket to shreds. The pilgrims to Amarnath were killed for a special reason. Such incidents have happened before but only infrequently. Both people and leaders of J&K condemned it. The J&K economy is dependent on the pilgrimage to Amarnath. The attack on worshippers of Shiva went against Kashmiriyat which advocates syncretism among religions. Of course, pilgrims to Amarnath have never been completely safe. But it was only when cross-border terrorism from Pakistan came to the aid of Kashmiri militancy that pilgrims became casualties. But now militancy in Kashmir has acquired a religious context. There are even adherents of a Kashmiri Caliphate. The attack on the pilgrims this time may have been inspired by communal hatred.

The emphasis on Kashmiriyat and social harmony should be reaffirmed. The J&K chief minister and even separatist leaders are stressing the importance of such a mindset. On the other hand, the RSS in Kashmir is getting increasingly aggressive. It should realise that creating communal discord will strengthen the hands of terrorists. The IS is at work and spreading poison all over India.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Dreaded ultra among 7 killed in Punjab

Dreaded terrorist Satbhan Singh, self-styled Lt General of the "Bhindranwale Tiger Force" who carried a reward of Rs. 50,000, was gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Hoshiarpur district early today. Constable Bikar Singh, gunman of a deputy superintendent of police, was also killed in the encounter.

Elsewhere in Punjab 7 people including a terrorist, were killed in Punjab in last 24 hours. Terrorists waylaid a shopkeeper and shot and wounded him a Jalandhar city last night. While escaping on the shopkeeper's scooter they

again opened fire, injuring two more people. Hardcore Terrorist Jaspal Singh alias Jassa of the "khalistan commando force, escaped from police custody near Narianwala Village in Batala police district (Gurdaspur) last night.

Police arrested three terrorists and recovered two pistols and some cartridges from them during a raid at Moosapur Village in Jalandhar District last night. They were identified as Kullbir Singh Ranjit Singh and Harjinder Singh.

One Gopal Singh was arrested in Ludhiana District on charges of harbouring terrorists.

Neighbour or enemy? Both. Indeed, India-China relations are like playing a game of poker. Show no emotions even as one plans strategy, play is multi-causal, defiantly stand one's ground and gamble on a winning hand. Both New Delhi and Beijing are doing just that, betting, with the underwritten message: Don't mess with me.

The latest flashpoint is an 89 sq km Doklam area close to Chumbi valley at the corner of India-Bhutan-China tri-junction not far from Sikkim witnessing a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops after the Indian Army blocked construction of a road by the Chinese PLA. Whereby, India made plain that this was aimed at getting closer to its last military post on its border with Bhutan and China and represented a significant change of status quo with "serious" security implications for it.

China retaliated by accusing New Delhi of "trespassing" on its recognised "undisputable sovereignty" over the delineated boundary between them, accusing India of being a "third-party" to the China-Bhutan dispute and demanded withdrawal of Indian troops as a precondition for "meaningful dialogue" to resolve the situation. This stand-off resulted in not only cancellation of the Kailash Mansarovar yatra through Nathu La in Sikkim but also a bilateral between Modi and Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Hamburg as the climate was not conducive. Never mind a five minute guftagu.

Undoubtedly, this till yesterday unknown place, is important for India as it could allow the Chinese to further run roughshod over a key precept of India's foreign policy vis-à-vis Bhutan. China has no formal diplomatic ties with Bhutan and India through the 2007 Friendship Treaty serves as a virtual security guarantor of Bhutan.

The valley holds strategic significance for India, China as well as Bhutan. India sees it as a dagger pointed towards its so-called 'chicken's neck' sector in the Northeast and rapid Chinese road construction in Tibet could make things difficult for India. At the same time,

India-China Poker Who will come up trumps?

By Poonam I Kaushish

Sikkim is one of the few sectors where India has an advantage. China, citing the 1890 China-Britain treaty, calls Doklam its own while Bhutan has disputed the fact saying the convention applies to the India-Bhutan border, not Bhutan and China.

Questionably, does India have the appropriate diplomacy to counter China's drive for supremacy in the region? Can it defuse this? What options does it have on the table?

And do the present assertive trends of Indian foreign policy portend the likelihood of an aggressive outcome?

Indisputably, New Delhi is busy countering China's 'string of pearls' strategy (befriending its neighbours to check Indian interests on multiple fronts) by claiming its space in Asia's sun by forging alliances with Beijing's neighbours. In its Look-Act East Policy it is engaging with Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Vietnam etc. Aware of the deep inroads China has made in Myanmar New Delhi is making an effort to woo the generals back into its fold. Last month, Indian Army Chief Gen Rawat made an important trip to Myanmar.

Vietnam renewed a license granted to ONGC Videsh, to explore an oil block in the South China Sea which has seen disputes between China-Vietnam-Philippines, a clear indication that the decision is driven by strategic rather than commercial considerations since return on investment in the area is minimal.

Worse, a defiant Beijing prone to bullying smaller neighbours into submission through a mix of cheque book diplomacy and military heft, is trying to squeeze Indian influence and interests and circumscribe the foreign-policy choices of India's smaller neighbours. Be it influencing Nepal's domestic politics, funding Bangladesh's new ports with the potential of dual-use in the foreseeable future, constructing roads through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir or drowning Sri

Lanka in debt in order to gain eventual political leverage, Beijing continues to successfully block India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group. It is furious about India's rejection of the 'One Belt One Road' initiative, a personal prestige issue of President Xi. Today, a chill has set in Indo-China ties. Deep mistrust and lack of confidence is apparent. Yet the two have not rejected dialogue, even when it is no more than a repetition of known positions. New Delhi cannot afford to take any chances with what constitutes India's national security and strategic interests and pursue them doggedly.

Craft a long-term China policy that combines dialogue with diplomatic pressure. Simply interacting, is not a solution. We need to take the bull by the horns and hammer out differences across the table. Irrefutably, time for out-of-the-box thinking and guts. Beijing has to match its words with deeds.

Modi realizes only too well that in today's geo-strategic political reality pragmatism dictate real politics. There are no short cuts. New Delhi needs an all-encompassing and multi-pronged strategy to deal with Beijing even as it wants durable peace though this alone cannot guarantee non-escalation.

What next? In this trilateral poker, New Delhi needs to watch out for two serious consequences. One, should it back off, it would send a signal to Bhutan and other neighbours that its policy of relying on India as protector is not good enough. Bhutan could establish formal diplomatic ties with China. Consequently, this could change the balance of forces in the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction in favour of China further imperiling the strategically-sensitive Siliguri Corridor.

Two, if India abandons Bhutan, it would showcase that New Delhi is not trustworthy and expecting it to stand-up against China is imprudent. To put it succinctly, its bark is worse than its bite. Certainly, a disaster for India's elusive pursuit of regional primacy

as an aspiring hegemon does not abandon allies.

Thus, New Delhi's new assertiveness would need all the wisdom and restraint to ensure that it remains in control of the Indo-China script. Certainly, in this zero sum game the muscle-flexing and one-upmanship will continue till both get a face saver and back-off. The long-term prospects of India-China relations will be determined to a large extent by India's strategic goals and objectives in the context of the evolving regional and global security environment.

There is definitely a strategic imperative of peace between the two Asian powers as both need to focus their energies and resources on the gigantic task of economic evolution necessitated by the changing competitive global environment. Modi is slowly changing the rules of the game from defensive posturing to being a hard negotiator whereby India is no longer China's underdog but an equal, controlled aggressor.

Modi should take a leaf from ex-US President Nixon book The Real War: "Nations live or die by the way they respond to the particular challenges they face. The time when a nation most craves ease may be the moment when it can least afford to let down its guard. The nation that survives is the one that rises to meet that moment: that has the wisdom to recognize the threat and the will to turn it back, and that does so before it is too late."

It remains to be seen if Modi will rise to the occasion and sustain his 'zero tolerance to provocations' policy as he navigates tricky ties with China. Tough responses to provocations and clear red zones are the best guarantee of peace in the sub-continent. An intoxicating mix of muscular diplomacy and ruthlessness masked in velvet gloves is the need of the hour. By changing the rules of the game, Modi has spelt out: It takes two to tango! ---- INFA

China's habit of playing foul

By Kanwal Sibal

China's current provocation in the Tibet-Bhutan-Sikkim tri-junction area adds to the long list of its taunting conduct against India in recent years. India, however, has been extremely restrained in reacting to Chinese provocations. Unfortunately, this has given China the room it needs to play the double game of using engagement to contain India strategically.

China has the habit of projecting itself as the injured party and it has sympathisers for its line in India, but in reality China has been very belligerent towards India. It has begun asserting its claims on Arunachal Pradesh with greater aggressiveness since president Hu Jintao's visit to India in 2006. In a further hardening of position, Chinese officials began calling Arunachal Pradesh "South Tibet" in recent years. This nomenclature was formalised in Chinese maps in April 2017 which also carried "standardised" Chinese names of six districts in the state to show that these areas were historically under China's administrative control. China has not shirked from protesting each time either our Prime Minister or other political dignitaries visit the state, which is offensive. It

internationally to have its way when it wants.

To the long list of provocations one should add China's obstinate opposition to India's NSG membership unless Pakistan is simultaneously accommodated. Likewise, China has opposed the designation of Masood Azhar as an international terrorist by the UN. It has added insult to injury by calling on India to settle the issue with Pakistan bilaterally. This hyphenation with Pakistan is intended to lower India's stature internationally.

It is important to note that China has engaged in almost all these provocations during the course of the 19 rounds of SR level talks on settling the boundary issue. By its actions on the ground it has knowingly eroded the purpose for which the SR mechanism was set up.

The latest Chinese provocation in the Doklam plateau of Bhutan is consistent with Chinese tactics of rejecting any contention that the territory it wrongfully occupies is disputed and treating those areas as disputed where it wants to lay claim. Besides the fact that the Doklam plateau is disputed between China and Bhutan and China's act in wanting to

China's grave provocations over the last 14 years since the SR mechanism was established have to weighed against India allowing the Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh and Tawang in March this year over China's strenuous objections and menacing statements. Earlier, in December 2016, he was invited to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. There is no proportionality here.

has admonished India for initiating development projects in Arunachal Pradesh, while being itself involved in development projects in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. China's official comment on the inauguration in May this year by of a bridge across the Brahmaputra in Assam was diplomatically totally inappropriate. Through its previous Special Representative (SR), China has in March 2017 made it known publicly that the cession of Tawang by India is a pre-condition for considering a border settlement. In the context of 19 rounds of SR talks, this entirely untenable position reveals the degree to which China negotiates in bad faith.

In Ladakh too, China has pursued its tactics of engaging India politically while exerting military pressure. It engineered the Depsang incident in advance of its prime minister's visit to India in 2013. It staged the Chumar incident in 2014 to coincide with the Chinese president's visit. Its other provocations have included giving stapled visas to J&K residents, refusing a visa to India's army commander in J&K, shortening the length of India-China border by excluding J&K (and Arunachal Pradesh), all implying that J&K was not sovereign Indian territory.

It has launched the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in total disregard of India's legal claim over POK. It is unbothered that its position on the CPEC is totally contrary to the positions it takes on areas where it disputes India's sovereignty such as Arunachal Pradesh. It is unconcerned about inconsistency, believing that its big power status now entitles it too to the practice of double standards. China believes that it is now strong and important enough

construct a road there changes the status quo in violation of the understandings between the two countries, not to mention those between India and China. China is fully aware that this area is acutely sensitive for India's security because of its closeness to the Siliguri corridor. It is also aware of India's security commitments to Bhutan and that an Indian intervention will be inevitably triggered by any threatening Chinese move.

China's grave provocations over the last 14 years since the SR mechanism was established have to weighed against India allowing the Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh and Tawang in March this year over China's strenuous objections and menacing statements. Earlier, in December 2016, he was invited to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. There is no proportionality here. The root of the problem in India-China relations lies actually in China's ambition to dominate Asia, impede the emergence of India as a rival power, contain India in South Asia by continuing to build Pakistan and undermine India's position in its own neighbourhood.

Amazingly, the Chinese state media is accusing India of bullying and regional hegemony when the actual bully in Asia is China and it is China that has hegemonic ambitions in Asia. The calls for supporting Sikkim's independence show how China's hubris is blinding it to its own vulnerabilities in Tibet and East Turkestan.

To defuse the situation the ball is not in India's court as the Chinese ambassador to India claims. If China binds itself not to disturb the status quo, the ball would be in play again, though China will always play foul.

(The author is former foreign secretary)

TO THE EDITOR

Misleading advertisement!

Editor,
In front of the Rhino hall and before reaching the Civil hospital I see an advertisement for recruitment in the army with the headlines, LIVE A LIFE LESS ORDINARY. This is quite misleading! It could have been 'LIVE AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE, or LIVE A LIFE WITH HONOUR, DIGNITY AND PRIVILEGES. I hope through this column the concerned in the ARMY may take note and corrective measures.

Yours etc.,
P Naik
Chairman ARRRAC
Govt of Meghalaya.

On Reservation

Editor,
Apropos your editorial, "When words come to haunt" (ST, July 11, 2017), we must not forget that the policy of reservation in the government is not a charity but to make our government inclusive. Reservation in government sector is to

ensure proportional representation of all the people of our country in it. Our Parliament is an ideal example of proportional representation where every state sends as many Members of Parliament in proportion to its population. No federal country can afford to do away with this system and introduce meritocratic yardstick. Indian cricket team where merit is the sole criterion of selection does not have any representation from many states of India. This is alright for a cricket team but it would be ludicrous if our Parliament fails to have representation of all the Indian states. Some people argue that such provisions of proportional representation should not get extended to the post of cabinet ministers, prime minister or president. But we must not forget that the President of India is very much a part of our Parliament. Article 79 of the Constitution of India says, "There shall be a Parliament for the Union which shall consist of the President and two Houses to be known respectively as the Council of States and the House of the People." Likewise, a Council of Ministers is just another part

of the Parliament. Article 74 of our Constitution says, "There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President..."

So, what is indispensable (proportional representation) to the whole (Parliament) must also be indispensable to its parts (the President, the Prime Minister and the Council of Minister).

Moreover, India is not just a conglomeration of States and Union Territories but also of languages, religions, castes and cultures. Therefore, proportional representation of Dalits, women, minorities as well as of all States and UTs is absolutely necessary in every legislative and administrative machinery to make our government truly federal in character, inclusive in nature and a perfect reflection of our unity in diversity. Indians from North East to South, from Santhal to Bhangi, from Tamil to Gujarati and from Andaman and Nicobar Islands to Lakshadweep must get a chance to make our government a perfect example of a democracy of

the people and not just merely an aristocracy by the people. It takes 24 spokes to make a wheel (Ashok Chakra) at the centre of our multi-coloured national flag to represent India. It also requires the representations of all the people of our country in every machinery of our government to eliminate inequalities among groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations as has been directed by Article 38(2) of the Constitution of India.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Iconic blue and white sari

Editor,
It is our immense pride that Mother Teresa's simple white cotton sari with three blue borders has been acknowledged as an Intellectual Property of the Missionaries of Charity. The sari, particularly in white with three blue borders was chosen and bought by Mother Teresa herself for Rs 2.50. It is said that she chose the colours for the

sari as the white stands for truth and purity while the three blue stripes on the border represent the vows that the nuns take. The first one represents poverty, the second one is for obedience and the third wider stripe represents the vows of chastity and whole hearted service to the poorest of the poor. In those days, female sweepers in Calcutta used to wear a similar kind of sari. So, perhaps it is symbolic to serve the poor by making them comfortable with her. It is also noteworthy that for the first time a uniform has been protected under the Intellectual Property rights.

Yours etc.,
Sanjukta Maiti
Shillong - 6

Human trafficking

Editor,
This refers to the article, "Human trafficking in India" (ST-July 12, 2017). It is clear that Nepal is a source country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and involuntary servitude. About 7,000 sex workers

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad - 15

"Isn't it wonderful to be alive? You know, you can forget all about it. Then suddenly you remember, and think of all the things you can do. Here I am. I can walk around. I can talk. I can see things and remember things. I am alive. How wonderful!"

--- Sophia Loren

The Shillong Times

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Assam floods an annual feature

YEAR after year Assam has had to deal with floods caused by the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries. This time about 15 lakh people in 24 districts in Assam have been hit by floods and about 431 villages in seven revenue circles are submerged. In Lakhimpur district alone over 3 lakh people are marooned by flood waters. Heavy rainfall in the upper catchment areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Lakhimpur tend to raise the water levels of all the 14 rivers and their tributaries in the district. The Ranganadi, Dikting and Singra rivers swelled up after NEEPCo opened its dams to release surplus water in Yazuli. This is not a rare phenomenon and the fact that no solution has been found to contain this man-made disaster shows a lack of concern for human lives.

Much has been spoken by experts about learning to live with floods but that is easier said than done since people hardly learn lessons. The flood plains are fertile agricultural lands and farming communities take risks, albeit not calculated ones. The sensible thing to do is to build their dwellings some distance from the rivers and at a reasonable height. But we are talking of the poorest of the poor who depend largely on agriculture. Union Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju has undertaken an aerial survey. He has urged the district administration to expedite relief operation since there have been no rains in the last two days.

The only way to control floods reasonably is to create more wetlands which can act as sponges to soak up moisture and to undertake afforestation in degraded areas along the ridges of Arunachal Pradesh where there has been massive deforestation leading to erosion and floods downstream. It is time to halt deforestation in Arunachal Pradesh and restore damaged wetlands to reduce the impact of climate change which in turn is responsible for more flooding. Better warning systems could save more lives and properties.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Central University to be allotted to Cachar in the Barak valley

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

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

On being a Peoples' Representative

By Patricia Mukhim

This article is a humble submission that it is not easy to walk in the shoes of an MLA. To be one, you require extraordinary leadership qualities which includes being a 'mindful' leader who has time for daily introspection and yet plunge into the daily grind of meeting constituents whose needs are as varied as a the biodiversity in a virgin forest. They are like Maslow's hierarchy of needs! Sitting and listening to an MLA is a learning experience. And I am talking here of Jemino Mawthoh, a friend and person I respect because of the clarity of his thoughts and his personal and political conduct. But native wisdom would tell us that it is futile trying to transform political behaviour if you do not have a critical mass of people with the same objectives.

Elections are round the corner and there are several aspirants wanting to claim political space. Each person seeks a different comfort level with his/her MLA. Every person will weigh the pros and cons of voting a particular candidate based on their personal experiences. Sometimes families differ on who they vote for. And unlike Nagaland where the village headman votes for the entire village, in Meghalaya we are hopefully more democratic. The state of Meghalaya as indeed the region, the country and the world is desperate for great leadership. But in our state the very word "leadership" needs drastic deconstruction and reconstruction. For a long time people have been led to believe that someone who has led a pressure or interest group is a natural leader, although that person may not have the qualities of head and heart that leadership entails because such groups don't promote accountability for the actions of their leaders or followers.

So yes, all around us we see and meet people with private struggles and secret dreams, personal demons and public virtues, deep wounds and unique gifts and above all, a deep yearning to really matter. MLAs meet such people on a daily basis. It is a great attribute that they still maintain their calm and are

able to deal with the spate of demands, most of them related to personal needs. And yet, the reason why people approach their MLAs for personal needs is because they have reached the end of the road. Or so one would like to believe! There is a system in place which is meant to deliver these goods and the government has the resources which an MLA does not. So it must be the aspiration of the MLA to push the government to deliver, rather than appease the constituents and act God.

In this respect one finds there is very little scrutiny by MLAs of how the government functions. Look at the daily newspapers. Do we see an MLA trying to sort out the mess in the PWD, PHE, Power, Health, and Education Departments etc., and unearthing the wrongs that have persisted in them? And what about political parties? How many scams have the UDP or HSPDP unearthed in these four years? Or are we trying to suggest that all is well? Or is this because the Opposition is a government in the waiting so there is a cunning resistance to expose government malfunction?

But political change is what Meghalaya needs. We can no longer have a business as usual attitude to politics. Alas! Politicians like everyone else are immune to change even while time demands change. This is where the goals don't converge!

Harvard psychologist Robert Kegan writing about immunity to change says, "Desire and motivation are not enough to change even when it is literally a matter of life and death because of the internal mechanisms that make humans highly resistant to change." He cites a landmark study which showed that even after suffering a stroke or developing coronary heart disease, only one in seven patients will change their smoking, exercise or eating habits. I have friends with these infirmities and know how difficult it is for them to stick to a strict diet or to get out and exercise. But I

will not judge them. It must be a hell of a task to change especially eating habits! So is it futile then to expect political change? Or is change easier suggested? Are those of us who suggest change ready to face the pain it entails?

Kegan says we resist change because our mind acts as an immune system to protect us from the psychological trauma and danger that sudden and drastic changes can bring. Unfortunately this same system meant to protect us from negative changes can also prevent us from making significant positive changes. Kegan says one of the strongest sources of resistance to change is our firmly entrenched self-identity. He cites the example of a heart patient who stops taking prescription drugs because it makes him feel old. One patient, in fact told him that he stopped taking medication because he was only 58 years old and in the prime of his life and not an 'old man with one foot in the grave.' For that man, taking a daily pill threatened his identity as a healthy and younger man! This sounds amusing but it's how many of us react to huge doses of prescription drugs.

To get over this identity-based resistance and I know as a society that we have many biases that prevent us from looking to the future which also means changing our way of doing things, Michael Bunting in his book, "The Mindful Leader," suggests that mindfulness is the single greatest antidote to identity-based resistance to change because this practice teaches and enables us to let go of our self-identity (much of which we have constructed from past experiences and prejudices since the time we were hunter-gatherers) and truly know ourselves and enhance our self awareness as we observe the changes throughout our lives. Mindfulness releases us from the need to identify ourselves in rigid and inflexible ways. Mindfulness takes us out of the prison where we are taught to cling on to transient and intangible thoughts in order to find security. That's how behavioral change is

wrought in our lives and that is why it is so difficult. Most of us have been in training sessions where drug addicts or alcoholics are told categorically that if they don't give up their habits they would have a limited life span or where women are told to plan their families to get out of the poverty syndrome. But the trainings glide like water over a duck's body.

Behavioral change is tough and that is why we need leaders because they are expected to have enough experience to lead all of us through change, one step at a time. When we make behavioral change we are challenging deeply held habits, particularly the dysfunctional ones which develop over time in our psyche in order to shut out pain and problems instead of facing them. But all this, Bunting says from years of experience, can be overcome by mindfulness. So what is mindfulness the reader might well ask. The Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says, "The behaviour of leaders has enormous impact on those they lead and the more senior they are the greater the impact. Leadership is both a privilege and a burden. It is incumbent on leaders to lead from a centre of wellness and non-reactivity. Leaders set the tone for the entire team when they are calm, confident, open and relaxed. They spread that same feeling in their followers. Similarly when leaders are stressed, fearful and closed-minded they also spread those same feelings around. Mindfulness is to be here and now; to deal with the present and not be overly worried about the future. Insecurity in leaders is a bad trait because they tend to promise what they can't deliver and they make bad judgments. Also they lead their followers downhill!"

As we head to the polls in early 2018, what sort of leaders are we looking for? There are many insecure souls around looking to enter the portals of fame - the State Assembly - to secure their own futures. Are we going to invest our trust and votes on them? The choice is ours!

Gag on 'The Argumentative Indian' The Clear Stream Of Reason Has Lost Its Way

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

The freedom to interrogate is a part of Indian Hinduism since the days of Gargi and Arjuna. Arjuna interrogated Lord Krishna and Gargi interrogated Yajnavalkya. Lopamudra Maitreyi all were loud argumentative Indians. Even Lord Krishna did not throttle the voice of Arjuna and on the other hand convinced him by giving his rational reply which later became Bhagavad Gita. But in the name of Hinduism, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen is being barred from uttering the word 'Cow' in the recently produced film on him 'The Argumentative Indian' by Suman Ghosh.

Last year 'Uda Punjab' a film on epidemic drug abuse was censored and the Bombay High Court later overturned the dictat of the Censor Board for making 90 changes. Another film 'Lipstick Under My Burkha' where four women were shown struggling for identity and safety in a small Indian city was also censored as 'lady oriented' in the name of audio pornography. High quality journalism is an intellectual nourishment for any nation. But even on journalists the pressure is mounting day by day. Only last month the Modi Government tried to throttle NDTV and the voice of liberal-learning news channel was throttled. Prominent journalists of the channel were warned and all these only reflect an assault on freedom of expression.

Now the political bias becomes strong in the decision of the censor board when the hyper-activity is seen in gagging the voice of Nobel Laureate and Harvard Professor Amartya Sen in the film, 'The Argumentative Indian' directed by Suman Ghosh on filmy grounds. The producers were ordered to secure the approval of the prime minister's office before the release of the film. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) told film maker that words like 'Gujarat', 'cow' 'Hindu' 'Hindutva view of India' should be removed from the dialogue of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen in the documentary.

Reacting to this Sen said, "This shows again that the country is in the hands of authoritarians." What they did not like is not the word Gujarat but what Amartya Sen said about the happenings in Gujarat in 2002. In the documentary, the Harvard Professor criticized the 'restricted vision' of India espoused by the present Modi Government. The Nobel Laureate is always against attempts to redefine India as a Hindu nation and advocated boldly in favour of pluralist vision of democracy which had been the vision of far-sighted Indian leaders. In the context of recent mob attacks on cattle traders and dairy farmers and even on an innocent boy like Junaid by the cow vigilantes from fringe Hindutva propagators, this censor is quite significant. But it was never imagined that the cow gag can come to this height. The appointment of the staunch Modi supporter two years ago as the Chief Censor seems to have pleased the Hindu India dreamers who want to throttle the voice that can keep democracy alive.

The first part of the documentary was shot in 2002 and it was re-edited in 2017 because the documentary wanted to accommodate the latest happenings in India and the world. Suman Ghosh feels that his film is vindicated because the very title is

justified which is taken from one of the essays of the Laureate and the film really sparked off a violent argument in the country. Only the other day the BJP activists and RSS fanatics have shouted slogans in Bashirhat which was almost on the verge of communal riot to make West Bengal a Gujarat. The hyper-sensitivity on the portrayal of Gujarat in the film is now understandable. Lynching, the Cow and Gujarat in the film now seem to have ironical implications. It is interesting that the word 'Cow' is not the only favourite word of Amartya Sen if one reads his works seriously. It is rather the most uttered words for the Hindu -India supporters. So the demand for removing the word 'Cow' is quite significant but ridiculous at the same time. Suman Ghosh raised the question pertinently as to who these censor boards really serve now. At least one good the censor board has done for the documentary is that now many will know and argue about it and may be many more will now be interested in watching the film which ends with the famous poem of Tagore 'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high' recited by famous actor Victor Banerjee.

That in Tagore's Land the icon of staunch liberalism Amartya Sen cannot say 'Cow' is really painful. He had his schooling in Shanti Niketan and his name was given by Tagore himself. His grandfather K.M. Sen was a Sanskritist and an expert on Hinduism although they never had any religious rituals at home. The Sen family had fairly religious convictions in conformity with non-ceremonial version of Hinduism and world view of Tagore. So Amartya Sen cannot do anything that may go against India and Hinduism in the true sense. Appointment of a Hindu extremist like Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh where about a fifth of whose 200 million people are Muslims is really disappointing. Too much sensitivity over cow is being manufactured by the Hindutva propagandists. Too much dependence on a strident form of Hindu nationalism has already done much harm to the secular foundation of India. Finally, even an intellectual of Amartya Sen's stature is being maligned in the name of 'Cow' and 'Hindutva.' This shows the extent of repression going on and how violently these Cow-mother worshippers are trying to communalise the secular structure which is really unconstitutional for a socialist secular republic as India is envisaged in the Preamble to the Constitution. "Religious minorities will all have the right to practice their religion" wrote even Vinayak Savarkar of an India he envisioned. Today that too is forgotten. Hindu nationalist agenda which Modi Government is reinventing after a few years of power will affect regional as well as global phenomenon and it will encourage the fundamentalist forces to ignore the principles of tolerance.

Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee is Associate Professor and Head, Post Graduate Dept of English. He is a poet and also contributes articles to national dailies. He may be reached at prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

TO THE EDITOR

Terror attacks!

Editor,
This refers to your editorial, "Terror attack" (ST, July 13, 2017). We must condemn with one voice all cowards, fanatic terror brigades - be it ISIS/Taliban terror brigades or Gau Rakshak terror brigades. These regressive agents masquerading as religious forces want to pull us back to the dark medieval ages. Both ISIS/Taliban and Gau Rakshaks are the two sides of the same coin. These cowards are on the prowl to find soft targets to lynch humanity. Indeed, they want to replace democracy by mob rule and humanism by cannibalism. We should have zero tolerance towards such intolerant forces.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

The Amarnath tragedy

Editor,
After 16 long years a deadly terror attack on Amarnath pilgrims on Monday has clearly shown the recklessness of Lashkar-e-Taiba which will not spare even the pilgrims from its vicious attack. Seven of the pilgrims died in the attack as the hospital sources informed and over nineteen pilgrims who were

injured were hospitalized. Many people and news channels have made the driver of the bus a hero as he drove amidst the gun shots and safely got over the grave danger. But the logical question arises as to why the bus was carrying pilgrims without having any Shri Amarnath Shrine board and violating the rule of not travelling on the Yatra on the Srinagar - Jammu highway after 7 pm. It's obviously a security failure on the part of India and our inefficiency against Pakistani aggression but we should also be more careful about observing the rules laid out for all pilgrims. Had the driver not violated the rules and driven after the scheduled timing perhaps all the pilgrims would have been saved.

Yours etc.,
Sanjukta Maiti,
Shillong - 6

Iran-Turkey nexus impossible

Editor,
The world media has been speculating that two non-Arab Islamic nations, Iran and Turkey are coming together to forge an alliance against the West and the Arab Union of the Middle East and North Africa. However, I don't agree that Iran and Turkey can ever come together. The greatest problem with any Islamic nation is their extreme, right

wing politics, narrow vision and disruptive diplomatic association with one another. None of these nations actually trust the other in the real sense and this has been a historic crisis that cannot be overcome over few recent incidences. Both are ruled by extreme hardliner governments that make strategic, diplomatic as well as meaningful, long term socio-economic associations impossible. Currently both nations are extremely vulnerable to extremist ideology. Turkey does not have strong support of the West any longer and there is strong distrust, disgust and dislike about Erdogan Government by all nations on either side of the Atlantic representing NATO alliance including the Pacific nations. The relation between US and Turkey is now mostly superficial, and the US-Iran ties are absolutely strained. The best alliance that can jump out of this muddy water is actually China-Pakistan-Turkey nexus to counter US-Israel-India tripartite global alliance. A destructive and assertive China is looking for hoodlums and goons among nations for her own hidden agenda of establishing global hegemony and who can be her best ill-earned partners than N. Korea, Pakistan and Turkey under the current global scenarios. All these nations are cash starved and has very little opportunity for any meaningful financial investments in the distant

future and are partially immersed in concealed civil wars within the nation, proxy wars with adjacent neighbors, satellite wars overseas and/or impacted by various forms of violent insurgent movements that hinder socio-economic development. China, the "global bully" has been historically known to support such miscreant nations for her own benefit and then transforming them into overseas colonies and satellite nations to flex her concealed arms. Turkey and Iran both aspire to lead the entire Islamic world and there cannot be two dominant tigers living in the same forest. Hence a meaningful alliance between the two nations is a distant dream. It is also difficult for Iran to join the China nexus as Iran herself is extremely suspicious of Chinese and Pakistani activities adjacent to her borders and with a strong Shia-Sunni based hatred existing in Pakistan, there has been historic animosity between Iran and Pakistan in sharing a common platform. Further, both Iran and Turkey are extremely nationalistic in their outlook, making it difficult for them to engage in the same depth and dimension as India and Israel.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
TIJ4B3

"Friendship is essentially a partnership."

--- Sir James M. Barrie

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, SATURDAY, JULY 15, 2017

Sen and the Censor

PAHLAJ Nihalani has become quite a stellar attraction with his censorial scissors. Since he became chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in January 2015, he has been in the limelight for the wrong reasons. He has raised a new issue objecting to "double meaning any kind of word." He has no interest in the laurels that Indian cinema has won on the international scene. Nihalani disapproved of scenes and words used in 'Udta Punjab' and did his best to stop the release of 'Lipstick Under My Burkha'. 'The Shyam Benegal Committee said that the CBFC should only certify and not censor films. Now the dictatorial and unimaginative scissors of the Censors have stretched to a documentary which simply cannot corrupt people's morals. It is a documentary about the Noble Laureate economist, Amartya Sen called, 'The Argumentative Mind.' It is not even a biopic like 'Azhar' which did have some controversial scenes denigrating a cricketer who seemed to be Ravi Shastri.

Of course, an argumentative genius like Amartya Sen is a centre of controversy. Does the CBFC even abhor controversy of argumentation? He is considered fit for censorial cuts when he uses words like 'Gujarat', 'Hindu India', 'cow', 'Hindutva view of India.' Even the print or electronic media are not persecuted for using such expressions. Are just words considered objectionable like swear words in 'Udta Punjab'? The only good thing is that Nihalani has aroused public interest in a documentary about an eminent intellectual.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

Opposition condemns President's Rule in Karnataka

The seven non-Congress (I) opposition parties of Assam today expressed concern at the imposition of President's Rule in Karnataka allegedly in violation of all democratic norms and constitutional properties. In a statement, the parties appealed to the people to raise their voice for thwarting such "authoritarian action of the

centre." They alleged that by using the Governor's office the Central government and the ruling party subverted the Constitution of the country for narrow political gain. They also proposed to observe April 27 as "Karnataka Divas" in the state in protest against the dismissal of the elected government.

TO THE EDITOR

Waning ethics of the media

Editor,
One of the basic ethical principles of the media is "to tell the truth" and not to mislead people by lies and half truths. Knowing that media today is the most powerful agent in the formation of human reason and conscience and a shaper of human behaviour, it is all the more important to safeguard the above principle at all cost. Media persons have a great responsibility not merely to inform but also to form character. Perhaps it is not wrong to affirm that the media has usurped the role of parents and teachers today. The invasion of media of all sorts both in our private and public forum is simultaneously a blessing and a curse. Someone has rightly said that the media has invaded even our bedrooms. The all pervasiveness of media is an accepted fact today. What is however troubling us is not the presence of the media in our life, but the waning ethics that we see in it. What we witness in India now is the unethical conduct of the media in the manner the events are reported. Most of the media channels we have, are patronized by politicians or one political party or the other. Consequently, the media channels tend to project only what is favourable to the party or parties.
For example, the issue of

demonetization has been projected as a success story all the way. But facts have shown that the negative impact has been devastating not only on the national economy but on individual entrepreneurs as well. The assessment made by Forbes Magazine clearly shows that everything that the media projects about demonetization is far from the truth. The media is trying to convince the public today that the BJP government is the best government and Mr. Modi is the most ideal PM so far. This is how the media is fooling the public and taking the citizens for a ride. If media ethics is on the decline then we can imagine the damage it is doing to people especially the masses of illiterate persons in the country. It is time to lose faith in the media in its present avatar. I for one, have stopped watching many of the national news channels. How many uncritical viewers are being bombarded with these lies and half truths and it looks like the whole nation is being nourished by false hope and empty promises. When will our media be liberated from such deviations? I hope that educated Indians will become more critical about what they read and watch in the media and not be led by the nose by such banal presentations.
Yours etc.,
Barnes Mawrie sbc,
Via email

On freedom of speech

Editor,
On the censoring Suman Ghosh's documentary, Ratan

Population pressure in India which has created diverse problems, has now forced the Government to go back to the concept of family planning. Like the western world, which has made strides in controlling population, India too needs to take significant steps. Undeniably, serious efforts are needed to tackle the mounting challenge of this phenomenal increase, especially in our country, more than that of China.

With the realisation having dawned, the government recently decided to accelerate family planning measures by identifying 146 districts where the total fertility rate is more than three which add up to 28 per cent of the population. The Union Health Ministry has rolled out Mission Parivar Vikas in the districts to improve access family planning services, create awareness and make family planning choices available. As part of the programme, the ministry would distribute a kit containing products of family planning and personal hygiene among the newly-weds.

The focus as reported would be strategic towards "improving access through provision of services, promotional schemes, commodity security, capacity building, enabling environment and intensive monitoring." Officials have been asked to undertake half-yearly review of the programme and correlate the achievements with time to gauge whether the programme was moving in the right direction or not.

The high focus districts are in the seven States which include the four BIMARU States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, as well as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Assam. While these are recognised as relatively backward States, some are trying to come out of the morass.

Though statistics reveal that India's population growth rate has declined, the pace is uneven across States and the more prosperous ones especially those in South India, have done remarkably well. As per government data, the

Bhattacharjee in his article, "The clear stream of reason has lost its way," (ST, July 14, 2017) rightly points out that no one will ever be able to gag the voice of argumentative Amartya Sen, the icon of Indian Hinduism which embraces a secular world vision. However, the censor board's action is an attempt to mute our Fundamental Right "to freedom of speech and expression" which is guaranteed in Article 19 (a) of our Constitution. Freedom of expression is central to democracy and we must resist any attempt to bring back the days of Emergency that India had to suffer four decades ago. We need to remember what George Washington had once said, "If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter house."

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Chinese threat to North East

Editor,
India and China have disputes over sovereignty of the 4,057 kilometre border. But Sikkim is the only state in India which has demarcated borders with China based on 1898 treaty. After a referendum in 1975, Sikkim voted to merge with the Union of India. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the mountains terrain of the Tibetan Autonomous Region has

country's fertility rate declined from 2.6 in 2008 to 2.3 at present. It is now just 0.2 points away from reaching the replacement level of 2.1. Similarly fertility rates are dipping globally, some regions like Africa see a much lower decline from 5.1 to 4.7, while in Asia it has fallen from 2.4 to 2.2.

Further nine countries led by India, Nigeria, US, Uganda, Tanzania, Pakistan etc would account for more than half the growth in global population between now and 2050. Most of these are Third World countries and are constrained with meagre resources for developmental needs. The need for population stabilisation is imperative at this juncture to enable the country to move up the economic ladder and the new programme is aimed to achieve this. The greater the total fertility rate (TFR), the more will be the maternal mortality rate (MMR) and also infant mortality rate (IMR). Hence, reducing TFR would lead to decrease in maternal mortality and infant morbidity and mortality through the Mission, noted Health Minister Nadda. In fact, he went a step further and on the day of the launch to mark World Population Day, he stated: "We have enhanced the basket of contraceptive choices to meet the changing needs of people and have taken steps to ensure quality assured services and commodities are delivered to the last-mile consumers in both rural and urban areas."

Regrettably, previous governments didn't lay emphasis on the fact that family planning requires and it is time to see how the new programme is geared to achieve the desired objectives. It has to be seriously taken up and it may be expected that the Modi government would do so as it has taken up most of its projects and schemes in a professional manner. Hopefully, like the Swaach Bharat Abhiyan,

taken place from Nathula Pass since 2015. It is a 1500 KM long bus journey. The other older route Lipulekh Pass is there to trek through rough terrains of Uttarakhand, Nepal and Tibet. The abode of Lord Shiva is believed to be there.

Recently, China forcefully entered into the 89 square km Doklam Plateau; it is Doka La for India and Donglang for China. The unmarked disputed border of China and Bhutan is strategically important to Chumbi valley at the intersection of India-China-Bhutan. Bhutan army protested that the construction of the road violated a bilateral agreement and raised an SOS. The tri-junction is just 20 KM away from Brigade HQ. The specialized mountain force ITBP marched ahead and have been locked in a standoff with PLA for a month. Indian Army displayed utmost restraint. In retaliation for the alleged Indian Army's action, Beijing blocked the entry of Indian pilgrims. Chinese refusal to allow the pilgrimage has frustrated a large number of pilgrims from Hindus to Buddhists and Jains. Interestingly both the sides 33 Corps HQ and 141 PLA Division are accusing the other of territorial intrusions and illegal troop encroachment.

China does it often to gain strategic edge over monitoring movement along the international border. Their game plan is

the Parivar Vikas programme would have to be given equal attention.

Keeping in view the meagre resources of developing countries like India so as to achieve a level of social and economic development of its people, there is an urgent necessity to keep fertility rate to below two, i.e. a maximum two children per family. China has taken several steps in this regard and the population growth is around or less than 0.5 per cent. In fact, reports reveal that India would overtake China in population growth by 2024, two years ahead than scheduled.

There can be no doubt that a vigorous campaign has to be launched, specially in the villages of northern and central India, to raise awareness about the beneficial aspects of a small family. In view of the mounting health, nutrition and educational expenses, as also shelter needs, a small family can only ensure all-round social and economic development of the family.

Much would depend on the efficient implementation of the present programme and how the Centre and States would be able to make inroads into the villages. But it needs to be pointed out that to make the programme a success, the involvement of the panchayats and the grass root organisations would be greatly necessary as a house-to-house campaign has to be launched in telling the people about the effectiveness of a small family.

It would not be out of place to point out here that the Muslims still believe in having multiple wives and have no control on their number of children. Moreover, being a minority community, they want to increase their population by hook or by crook. This tendency has to be stopped, if necessary, through stricter measures. The Supreme Court judgment in the triple talaq case is awaited and, if the Muslims have to follow the personal law of the land, their number of children would come down.

The poor and those from the economically weaker

sections, who are normally found to be illiterate, do not think about family planning and the educational and health needs of their children, specially of their daughters through programmes like 'Kanyashree Prakalpa' of the West Bengal government, which recently received UN award for empowering the girl child. This is because of the lack of awareness of the older generation but this is steadily undergoing a change with education and awareness spreading.

Family planning has, no doubt, become quite effective but concentrated mostly in metros and cities. This has to spread in a vigorous manner to all the semi-urban and rural areas. For this orientation is education is necessary while adult education, primarily sex education, has to reach all segments of the population in the age group 18 to 45 years. This type of education has been largely ignored as a result of which family planning has not been quite effective. Thus, family planning camps have to be organised in most of the districts and sub-divisions to make this segment of the population aware of the ill effects of large family.

Western nations have been able to march forward and develop fast as their population growth is much less and per capita income quite high. Though India cannot bring population growth to around such levels, it can, at this stage, implement the family planning programme seriously and try to check population growth. This would help the country to move ahead in its efforts at faster social and economic development. The emerging youth population, most of whom are quite aware and socially conscious, should have a major role to play and recent projections have considered this aspect. - INFA

economy class, international flights. Since all airlines except Jet Airways and Air India have discontinued serving free food on their domestic flights, it should also follow those private airlines in further cost-cutting. It can even follow Indian Railways by charging cost of earphones from passengers desiring to use TV-screens on seat-backs in domestic flights of Air India.

However, it is senseless of Air India to expect passengers to share the in-flight magazine by keeping only one of them to be shared by three passengers. If the cost of the magazine is recovered through sponsorships and advertisements, each passenger should be given one copy. It is senseless to argue that reducing the number of copies of magazines can appreciably cut down the weight of the flight. It may be mentioned that all other domestic airlines are still continuing with separate copies of in-flight magazine for individual passengers.

Yours etc.,
Madhu Agrawal,
(Guinness Record holder for letters in newspapers)
Delhi - 6

Air India cuts cost

Editor,
Air India has further stepped up its cost-cutting measures by not serving non-vegetarian food in its domestic flights, after earlier it announced that salad would be discontinued from

Trump throws a spanner at Hamburg Summit Nations have to cope with emerging disorder

By S Sethuraman

Under Donald Trump, America seems to have begun a process of disengagement, though selectively yet, at the risk of forfeiting its global leadership and its prized "exceptionalism". This has now become formal with US withdrawal from Paris Agreement on climate change, announced at the G-20 Hamburg Summit, while Mr Trump remains equally determined to scuttle moves on free trade, away from protectionism.

In strategic terms, Mr Trump's Presidential statements early in office had already disillusioned long-term US allies in East Asia on future dependence on American defence umbrella while European partners, on the other side of the Atlantic, were no less left to wonder about Washington's commitments to NATO, the post-war defence architecture it had helped to create to provide common security, especially European, and safeguard world peace.

What is more in a speech in Warsaw ahead of the G-20 Summit in Hamburg (July 7-8), his first encounter with leaders of major economies, developed and developing, Mr Trump raised eyebrows with his disparaging observation, "The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive". He left it there without attempting to elaborate on what ought to be done for the future.

And he had also both during election campaign 2016 and after entering the White House, not made a secret of his admiration for his tough Russian counterpart, Mr Putin. It is thus no wonder that the Hamburg Summit should have revealed the fault lines. First thing he did in Hamburg was to greet Mr Putin and take his word that there was no interference from Moscow in the US Presidential elections, hardly convincing for his own Republicans at home or vast influential sections of US media.

The US President has been enmeshed in what has come to be viewed as a political scandal that Mr Trump's election managers and senior son himself had contacted influential Russians and were prepared to accept any dirt that Moscow was willing to throw at Trump's Democratic rival Ms. Hillary Clinton in the 2016 campaign, helpful for Mr Trump's prospects.

At a time, allegations of Russian interference in the US electoral processes were under investigation by the top US intelligence Agency, FBI, the Trump-Putin interface, lasting two hours, with business-as-usual approaches, proved too galling for Congressional leaders to relax the current US sanctions on Russia (enforced by the Obama Administration) that Mr Trump is inclined to favour.

Most Republicans realise the folly of having promoted a crude business Moghul to the world's highest office. His economic agenda - set of policies on tax, infrastructure spending, growth and Federal budget - are all hanging in the air a full six months after his inauguration. In this uncertainty, even IMF had moderated its earlier upbeat growth projection for the US economy in 2017.

With "America First" as his war cry, Mr Trump had begun reversing globally acclaimed policies of his predecessor President Barack Obama, especially climate change with all commitments under the Paris Agreement (December 2015) including nationally determined contributions on lowering fossil fuel emissions.

Mr Trump had equally denounced free trade accords, instantly rejected Obama's carefully negotiated TPP with eleven Asia-Pacific nations, excluding China, and put Canada and Mexico on notice for revisiting NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement.

A major preoccupation of Republicans and Mr Trump for months has been to repeal the American Health Care Act and provide a substitute to Obamacare, which brought millions of Americans under health insurance, but they have stumbled and unable to come up with legislation acceptable to all sections of Republicans.

At Hamburg, playing host, German Chancellor Angela

Merkel, announced in the Summit Statement US withdrawal from the multilateral deal and its cessation of national contribution for emission reductions, as spelt out by the former Obama Administration. Instead the new US line is in favour of an approach that lowers emissions while supporting economic growth and improving energy needs.

Mr Trump has thus upset a universally agreed framework to tackle global warming through commitments to reduce emissions with commitments to help developing countries in their mitigation efforts. He has in the process broken the extraordinary unanimity that has been in display over the last decade among the major economies, advanced and emerging, through G-20 which emerged over the post-crisis decade as the world's principal economic decision-making institution on issues of global concern.

All major economies had invested their interests and resources in this mechanism to promote inclusive growth, financial stability and clean environment for the future. Undeterred by the Trump posturing, the Summit declared that the Paris Agreement is "irreversible" and reaffirmed strong commitment to it and moving swiftly towards its full implementation in accordance with the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities".

The leaders also reiterated the importance of developed countries fulfilling their commitment in providing means of implementation, financial resources to assist developing countries for both mitigation and adaptation actions in line with Paris outcomes.

Mr Trump had already thrown overboard many of former President Obama's regulations for achieving emission reductions and securing cleaner energy. The Hamburg Summit outcome underlines the division for the first time with the United States led by Mr Trump asserting his "America First" priorities and the other 19 countries determined to stand on both key issues of climate change and free trade.

Taking a realistic view of global growth which has slowed, the Hamburg Declaration focused on G-20 nations sharing the benefits of globalisation, building resilience, improving sustainable livelihood and assuming responsibility in shaping an interconnected world.

Unlike the Paris Agreement, totally unacceptable to Mr Trump, the G-20 Summit Declaration took a guarded line on trade and investment issues. Recognising international trade and investment as important engines of growth, productivity, innovation and job creation, the Summit leaders said they would keep markets open "on reciprocal terms and observe the principle of non-discrimination".

The reference to protectionism was guarded, possibly to mollify Mr Trump, by stating they would continue to fight protectionism "including all unfair trade practices and recognise the role of legitimate trade defence instruments in this regard". They would strive to ensure a level playing field, in particular by promoting a favourable environment for trade and investment in this regard.

Mr Trump strongly opposes large trade deficits USA has been running for years. The deficits with countries, big and small, totalled around 750 billion dollars in 2016. While China remained the largest gainer with 327 billion dollars, US trade deficits were accounted for by other G-20 nations including Germany and some EU member-countries and countries like India and South Korea.

In the unsettled geopolitical conditions and uncertain US policies under Trump, security and terrorism pose greater challenges to nations working together on international economic issues with a degree of harmony, as has been the G-20 experience thus far. (IPA Service)

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.

State to observe 182nd death anniversary of U Tirot Sing

Democratic ruler & undaunted soul

By Uma Purkayastha

U Tirot Sing, the legendary freedom fighter of Khasi Hills, died a martyr's death on July 17, 1835, in Dacca jail (in present Bangladesh) during British rule. The last days of the great hero as far as known, were tragic. Despite being a young man of strong determination and personality, a skilled warrior, a well-disciplined leader and ruler, he had to surrender to the conspiracy of the British, and die in captivity. But the great hero, despite extreme pressure and lucrative offers, did not sign the treaty of suzerainty to the British. His principle was, 'better death than dishonour', which he followed till his last breath.

It is unfortunate that the great Tirot, despite his democratic outlook towards his countrymen, had to be a victim of conspiracy not only of the British but some of his kinsmen, including his own mother.

It is more unfortunate and heart-rending that while Tirot, keeping himself underground, had been furiously fighting against the well-equipped British Army, he was injured by a gun shot of the British; and hid himself inside a cave; his secret shelter was disclosed to the British by one of his chiefs.

Tirot was caught by the British and the betrayer chief was rewarded with gold coins. That treachery of his own countryman shocked and pierced the patriotic heart of Tirot Singh, which was more painful to him than his defeat. His last days in imprisonment were full of frustration, disgust and despair.

U Tirot Sing, the first freedom fighter against the British in the northeastern region, was born at Nongkhlaw in the Khasi Hills towards the end of the 18th century.

Being the Syiem (King) of Nongkhlaw, Tirot, a tall and stout young man, was adept in archery, swimming, riding and hunting. His martial skill was extraordinary. His method of controlling the common people was democratic and disciplined. As a ruler, Tirot Sing gave ample proof of his extraordinary capacity to maintain peace and order in his state.

He was well-versed with a number of languages like Bengali, Assamese, Garo and Bodo, which made him popular in the neighbouring states too.

In 1824, David Scott, an agent to the East India Company was deputed as Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit in the district of Assam who keenly observed that the Khasis were obedient under the able and strong leadership of U Tirot Sing.

Scott was a shrewd politician who thought of establishing British sovereignty on the hill states and from the military point of view, for quick communication particularly, he felt the

necessity of a link road from lower Assam to Sylhet via Khasi Hills.

Scott made friendship with Tirot Sing and gave him the proposal of constructing a link road through the Khasi Hills and to build a Sanitarium at Nongkhlaw for the treatment of the invalids. Scott convinced him about the facilities of the quick communication from the hill to the plains, particularly from economic point of view.

Tirot Sing called the state Durbar at Nongkhlaw in November 1826 and the proposal to construct a road for the British troops through the territory was accepted. But there were some conditions — the British raj should not interfere in any internal affairs of the state and they should protect the state from foreign enemies.

The treaty made with Tirot Sing was ratified by the Governor General of India in due course but within a short period, Tirot could read the evil motive of Scott, as he betrayed him in some very important matter of the state. The British government failed to keep the terms and conditions of the treaty and imposed revenue on the Nongkhlaw state. Tirot Sing, united with other chiefs of the hills, was determined to drive out the white strangers from his motherland.

On April 4, 1829, Tirot sent a band of Khasi warriors and declared war against Lt. Burlton at Nongkhlaw. Thousands of young men and women joined Tirot Sing to fight against the foreign power. It was the first uprising against the British power, in the North East region of India, headed by Tirot Sing, which is known as 'Nongkhlaw Massacre' (Alexander Mackenzie 'memorandum 1869').

Lt. Burlton and his soldiers escaped and fled towards the plains of Kamrup but were caught and killed by the Khasi warriors. Another group of fierce warriors burnt down all the buildings of Nongkhlaw constructed by David Scott and released all the prisoners from the jail who were punished by the British.

Tirot Sing sent another band of warriors to attack David Scott, the ring leader of the total betray who was in Cherrapunji. But Scott was helped to escape to Sylhet by the mother of Tirot, who was very much kind and friendly to Scott. Lt. Bendingfield and Dr. H. Beadon were brutally killed in that attack.

In the book, 'British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance', K.M. Munshi appreciated the war-skill of Tirot Sing and his super guerilla tactics and compared his talents with that of the great Maratha King, Shivaji.

The way Tirot Sing organised the movement and received the co-operation of all the Khasi Syiems and warriors, was highly appreciated by the observers. Tirot, himself could create a terror to the powerful British, as the record reads:-

'Tirot Sing and his associates with a military force estimated to be 10,000



evaded the British, but occasionally swooped down upon the plains, causing alarm all over Assam. Once the panic was so great, even in Gauhati, the head quarters of the British, that large number of people including high officials kept boats ready to evacuate at a moment's notice'. ('British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance')

Scott observed the strong determination of Tirot Sing and his followers and devised the methods of 'divide and rule' by sowing seeds of distrusts among the top leaders of Tirot Sing.

Sing Manik, the chief of the Khyriem estate offered his service to the British to negotiate between the Khasi and the British for some peaceful settlement. He arranged a meeting at Nongkhlaw on August 19, 1832; but Tirot declined to meet the British officer, who came to the meeting fully armed. It was decided that the parties should attend the meeting unarmed and accordingly the meeting was held on the August 23, 1932.

The British representative gave a solemn promise to spare the life of Tirot Sing and his followers provided Tirot signed the treaty with the British, acknowledging their suzerainty.

The bold reply came from brave Tirot Sing — 'Better death of a free commoner than the life of a chief who is a slave'. The brave hero had the strong guts to say

'No' to the powerful British, knowing fully well its dire consequences.

So there was no compromise. As a result of the prolonged war the common people of the Khasi Hills had been suffering miserably. Their trade had come to stand still and many a family had lost either a husband or a brother or a son in the War. Tirot was very much pained at their distress and decided to surrender, considering the greater interest of his countrymen. Moreover Tirot was shocked to get the scent of playing double role by some of his best supporters. While guerilla fighting, Tirot was injured by a gun shot, and was captured by the British from his secret shelter.

On January 13, 1833, the great warrior surrendered very gracefully to the British officer Captain Inglis, at Lum Mardiang, near Elephant Falls, Shillong. At that fateful moment of surrender, Tirot conveyed his love and gratitude to his countrymen, whose love and devotion he cherished till the last moment of his life. His only request to the British was granting full justice to the rights of his countrymen.

In trial, Justice T.C. Robertson pronounced the sentence of his life imprisonment, but the council of the supreme government, however, revised the order and Tirot was sent to Dacca jail for detention.

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When Tirot Sing arrived at Dacca, he was treated very inhumanly. He was not allowed even any personal belonging except a blanket to cover his body. But Tirot bravely said, 'I came from a royal family and I claim royal treatment'.

Ultimately, the British government had to issue a special order to treat him as a State prisoner and Tirot was granted an allowance of Rs 63 with permission to engage two servants. (March 19, 1833 p.c No 55).

But till that order was passed, his sufferings knew no bounds as an ordinary prisoner.

Tirot spent his last days in confinement, with despair and disgust. He had to spend more than two years in imprisonment, without further investigation. Nothing is known so far regarding the physical and mental condition of the great leader, in British custody.

This untold chapter of the life of the great patriot has remained a mystery to his countrymen, till the day. In the death report, no mention of any disease of the hero is found which could cause his death. Is not it very difficult to believe a normal death for a young strong and stout person like Tirot Singh in captivity?

Even there is no record of disposal or handing over his mortal remains to any member of his family. Even there was confusion among his countrymen regarding the exact time and date of death of the great hero.

Jerlie E. Tariang, former MP, in his book 'Tirot Sing' said, "To ascertain the correct date of the death of this heroic personality of the northeastern region of India, I contacted the India Office Library and Records, London. I received a photo copy of the letter, written by the Officiating Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca, dated July 18, 1835, addressed to the Secretary to the Government in the Political Department, forwarding, in turn, copy of a letter addressed to him by S.C. Scott, Officiating Magistrate, Dacca, undre whom Tirot Sing was a state prisoner".

The copy of the letter dated July 18, 1835, addressed to the Secretary to the Government in the Political Department Fort William, Calcutta, by the Officiating Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca Division, enclosing the letter dated July 18, 1835, of S.C. Scott, Officiating Magistrate, on the death of Tirot Sing, as follows —

'Sir, I have the honour to submit copy of a letter from the Officiating Magistrate of Dacca, communicating the fact of the death of the state prisoner, the ex. Rajan Teeruth Sing for the information of the Honourable Governor of Bengal'.

To The Officiating Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca.

Sir, I have the honour to report for the information of Government, the demise of the ex. Rajan Teeruth Sing, a state prisoner under my charge, which event took place yesterday at 1 p.m.

I have etc. Foujdary Adawlat sd/- Zillah of Dacca, S.C. Scott 18th July, 1835 Offg. Magistrate

So it was confirmed that on July 17, 1835, Tirot Sing died at 1.P.M. in Dacca, under British custody.

Thus ended the career of Raja Tirot Sing, the Khasi hero or yore, one of the most heroic sons of Mother India who is claimed to be the first freedom fighter of the North Eastern region of India.

July 17, 'U Tirot Sing Day' is observed in Meghalaya as a state holiday, but schoolchildren do not know even what is the day meant for. Many of them take the day as the birth anniversary of U Tirot Sing. The inspiring patriotic life history of U Tirot Sing should be more keenly known by the school children, the youth and intelligentsia of the country. More researches should be done by the students of history on the last days of the great patriot in prison and his subsequent tragic end.

Exploring the Bavarian Alps

TRAVELLER'S DIARY

Five years ago I had the fortune of travelling to Europe through the Bavarian Alps region of Germany, Austria and Italy. I shall try to retrieve some of those wonderful and cherished moments from my memory.

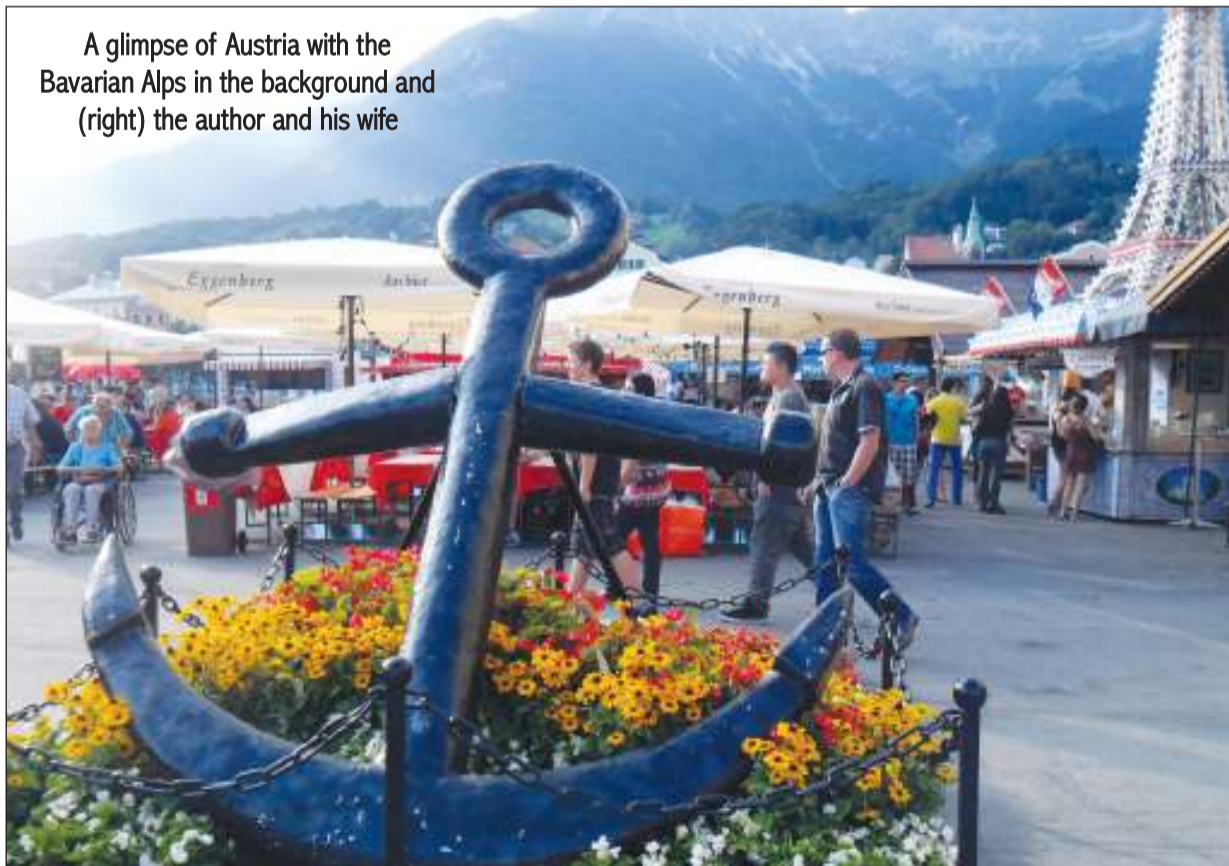
The Bavarian Alps region is known for its stunning beauty and considered to be one of the most picturesque regions of Germany. My wife and I were on a 15-day group tour of Europe organised by one of the leading outbound tour operators of India, SOTC.

We travelled in the second week of August 2012.

August 14: Engelberg (Switzerland)

We moved onto Austria through the Alpine country and the minute principality of Liechtenstein, the smallest and one of the most beautiful countries of Europe. We were told that the Prince of this country, Hans Adam-II, is the fifth richest man in the world. On our way to Austria we had the fortune of spending some time in two of the most beautiful locations of the entire tour, Vaduz and Wattens.

After travelling some distance from Engelberg, the Alps and beautiful lakes were our constant companion to the left. We had our first toilet break at Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein. Situated by the mighty Rhine and with a geographical area of only 160 sqkm, and a population of 35,000 thousand (2012) it is a major tourist destination. The main attractions of this beautiful Alpine town were the



A glimpse of Austria with the Bavarian Alps in the background and (right) the author and his wife

majestic Castle of Vaduz and a tram ride. The Castle is the palace and the official residence of the Prince.

It was the cleanest city I have seen in Europe and one can literally sleep on the road. We did not want to explore Vaduz, so I had the leisure to waista a moment and went for a photo shoot along the cozy street cafes, beautiful houses, quiet, beautiful streets with almost no traffic and of course, the presence of the

mighty Alps.

After spending about half an hour we continued our journey towards Innsbruck, the capital of Tyrol, a region of Austria. On the way, suddenly we were on detour as the coach driver left the highway and started descending to a place that looked like a motel. We enjoyed our packed lunch, sitting under greenwood trees and lush green grass that looked like a Persian carpet.

The beauty of the Austrian Alps was breathtaking. After relaxing for sometime in the lap of nature, we proceeded to Wattens (13 km from Innsbruck) for a visit to the amazing Swarovski Crystal World. With the backdrop of the Alps, and gently rolling grassy Alpine Meadows and pine forests the setting was perfect for a holiday resort. To commemorate the hundred years of the famous Swarovski brand, a museum was built at Wattens in 1995.



The retail counter of this brand spreads all over the world and has stores in India as well. On entering the Crystal World Museum I was delighted to find that a replica of Chetak, the famous horse of Maharana Pratap, mounted on the wall and studded with precious gems. Vaduz-Innsbruck stretch was a real treat to our eyes and souls as we crossed the beautiful Austrian Alps and passed by old valleys, ruins of fortresses, and beautiful lakes.

After reaching Innsbruck, we were on an orientation tour of the city. Along a cobblestone street of Innsbruck and among quaint road side cafes stand the 'Golden Dachl', the 'Golden Roof' — a beautiful Gothic style structure and the most iconic landmark of Innsbruck. Other important places we visited were a 17th century fountain with the equestrian statue of king Leopold V, St. Anne's Column, Innsbruck Cathedral and others.

We had a brief stroll along the bridge on the river Inn, after which the city was named. The view on the other bank was simply fascinating with a backdrop of the Alps, looking bluish, lovely houses and dense conifers on the mountain slope. Because of low altitude this part of the

Alps was not snowbound. What added to the beauty of this canvas were the hanging flower pots from the poles, with lovely natural flowers, along both sides of the bridge. Our stay for the night had a wonderful surrounding, close to the river Inn on one side and the Alps on the other. It was August 14 and young boys of the group had a wonderful idea of celebrating Independence Day in the evening.

Two Euros were collected from each family for the purpose. During dinner everyone was told to be present at the lobby. When we came down to the lobby I was thrilled to find the Indian tricolour on the table.

Patriotic songs were sung in different languages and I was requested to say a few words on Independence Day. It was indeed an honour for me. That was the most memorable experience for us, celebrating Independence Day in Austria!

(Contributed by Parag Ranjan Dutta, former professor at St Edmund's College)

(To be concluded next week)

Get ready for adventure

By Ranjan K Baruah

There are some people who dare to dream unique and love adventure. Some might dream of scaling Mount Everest or dive into seas and oceans. For the daredevils, adventure sports will be the perfect career option.

Some of the adventure sports are paragliding, sky diving, sky surfing, rock climbing, mountain biking, skiing, trekking, ice yachting, scuba diving, white water rafting, kayaking, canoeing, yacht racing, powerboat racing, etc.

There are training institutes in the country that offers different courses related to adventure sports. There are basic and advanced courses for both male and female. To join this courses physical fitness is essential as these are challenging activities. To secure employment in this field, certification from any adventure sports institute is enough.

Instructions, Special course, skiing, skiing and trekking, water sports, paragliding. These courses may be for few days to few months.

Apart from being entrepreneur and self employment there are other options and opportunities related to adventure sports.

Career options in adventure sports sector can be as Instructor of Adventure Sports, Adventure Sports Athlete, Outbound Training Facilitator and Trainer, Adventure Sports Photographer, Adventure Tourism Facilitator, Adventure Camp Counselor, Extreme Sports Specialist, Water and Aero Sports Specialist, Trekking and Mountain Guide, Adventure Tour Guide, etc. Opportunities are available in excursion agencies, holiday resorts, leisure camps and commercial recreation centers, Sports centers, athletic club, etc.

There are many individuals from the North East who have successfully climbed Mount Everest.

In the state of Meghalaya, there are many opportunities for adventure tourism and adventure sports like trekking, camping, caving, rock climbing, water sports. The state is full of potential as tourist from neighbouring states and other parts of the country visits Meghalaya. Interested individuals from the state may take up career in adventure with proper planning.

Updates

Young Professionals Programme at World Bank: The program is designed for highly qualified and motivated individuals skilled in areas relevant to World Bank Group's technical/operations such as economics, finance, education, public health, social sciences, engineering, urban planning, agriculture, natural resources and others.

The last date for sending application is 28th July.

Rhodes Scholarships India 2018: Rhodes Scholarships are awarded for pursuing full-time postgraduate studies at the University of Oxford, UK. Rhodes Scholars have selected from many countries around the world annually. Last date is July 31.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjn@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

A home left behind

Paul Harris discovered McCluskiegunj while researching for a long-term project. Thus emerged his documentary 'Dreams of a Homeland'

By Shoma A. Chatterji

McCluskiegunj, a small town in Jharkhand, is the setting for Konkona Sen Sharma's well-appreciated debut directorial feature, *A Death in the Gunj*. The place is also the focus for Australia-based filmmaker Paul Harris who almost accidentally came across it while researching for a project for his documentary *End of the Raj*.

Fascinated by this tiny little world of old Anglo-Indians who settled down here many years ago, he decided to make another film, *Dreams of a Homeland*.

Harris himself is an Anglo-Indian now settled in Down Under.

He became a documentary filmmaker by choice. "In 2010, when I was researching for *End of the Raj - A History of Anglo-Indians*, a long documentary, I visited McCluskiegunj, around 70 km away from Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand. I was curious about the history of a section of my community that had migrated to this place. I decided to make a film about the 'Gunj' as it is fondly called by the locals," says Paul.

McCluskiegunj was the brainchild of Ernest Timothy McCluskie who created this homeland for members of the Anglo Indian community. Between 1930s and '40s, scores of Anglo-Indians from all parts of the Indian sub-continent came to settle in this remote location once called Lapra, now in Jharkhand.

Harris's film explores the historical context for the creation, development and eventual failure of the town now almost bereft of the community. It no longer throbs with the exclusive lifestyle, noise and music of the Anglo Indians who gradually shifted to discover fresher pastures leaving a handful of senior citizens behind who have no wish to go elsewhere. It is now almost a ghost town.

Harris chanced upon fantastic archival material from *The Col-*



(Above) A bungalow in McCluskiegunj and the director with a resident

onization Observer, an old journal. "I wanted to make a film which is part travelogue and part history to document what the town is like today," Harris says.

It is an honest film stripped of glamour, or cultural pretensions. The camera wanders around an old brick kiln that has now been reduced to a public toilet for passers-by.

Paul wanders across old homes, captures a construction in total decay and stands against a backdrop of hoardings inviting boarders to the many of the boys' hostels in the town. Surprisingly, the small town boasts of a good number of boys' hostels. Students from Ranchi, Kolkata and other nearby towns come here to study in the Don Bosco Academy and several schools dotting the place.

The Colonization Observer published by the Colonization Society of India was a historical treasure trove and an excellent record for the period 1934-1944 and all that happened in the



colony. I spoke to locals, read some more books, and then cross-referenced them to material from the magazine," explains Harris.

Harris had heard about McCluskiegunj from his parents and elders. He grew up in Gomoh, a town about 100 miles from McCluskiegunj.

Filming on a shoe-string budget made Harris decide to play multiple roles — those of anchor, commentator and interviewer. He trained a friend to

operate a camera, drove from Patna to McCluskiegunj to shoot the film. It was difficult to locate specific places, like an old bungalow too deep into the forest.

"It was physically challenging because there was a lot of walking and hiking involved. I had to practise my narration in front of the camera, then review it and then go for a final take sometimes doing the same shot nine times to get it right," says Harris.

Another big stumbling block

was the heat. "Shooting at the height of the Indian summer was almost impossible.

"The temperature varied between 40 and 44 degrees Celsius during the day. We would rise early and shoot between 7 and 11 am, rest in the afternoon to review the footage and then resume shooting in the evening till it got dark. There were other interruptions such as the traffic of both people and animals and road traffic we had to contend with. But all this made the work extremely challenging," Harris recalls.

The film offers an insight through three talking heads. One of them is Mrs Goss, then 83, straightforward and forthright, who has lived here for many years. She lives alone with her pet dog, her only friend. Another gutsy lady is Kitty Kitty Teixeira. "Many have negative perceptions about Kitty. They feel that making a living by selling fruits at the railway station is something Anglo Indians should not be doing.

But I understood her plight. She had never ever gone to school and yet had to earn a living. Selling fruits is the only way she could survive. Her children live with her and she invited me into her home, centered in a vast tract of land that hardly has any selling value today," Harris elaborates. He also met Joshy T.D, Principal of the Don Bosco School who spoke of the students taking their public schools examinations.

"For me, documentary filmmaking is about learning something and then sharing it with others. I was fortunate to visit McCluskiegunj and more fortunate to make a film about its history and get access to some fantastic archival material," says Harris.

Harris was struck by the mystery of what made a group of Anglo Indians set up their home in the middle of a dense forest and even made it work for some time. "I have dedicated my film to the spirit of those settlers who dared to dream of a homeland," he sums up. (TWF)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, July 16, 2017

Moon opposite Jupiter on your solar return chart ensures an excellent year ahead. This is extremely strong and tide year. Be brave, resourceful, do not step back from your aims and plans, but act and take a risk- you will be very well rewarded. Be loyal to yourself, respect the others and do not divert from your way for any reason. Don't let yourself get lazy during the year. On contrary, this is moment now to plant this which you going to collect for the coming 9 years. Now is the time for some kind of serious change, something colossal and shaking your world from the bases. Always listen to your inner voice and never over trust the others.

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.

'I was forced to stay away for illness'



My daughter is just 19... You people have highlighted her and now she has an inclination towards this industry. At the moment she will study in USA and when she comes back, we will take a call

Away from public life for a long time owing to his ill-health, '80s disco sensation **Mithun Chakraborty** is back to the studio floors. **Sanjib Guha** caught up with the National Award winning actor in Mumbai

Chakraborty may not have the following that a Shah Rukh Khan or a Salman Khan has but he is still a craze to many. *The Disco Dancer* was in almost oblivion since 2016 end when he resigned from the Rajya Sabha (as Trinamool Congress MP) citing ill health. To be precise, the man almost reinvented himself a couple of days ago at the Filmistan Studio in Mumbai when hundreds of his fans thronged the studio just to get a glimpse of the star who once ruled their hearts. There, he unveiled the new comedy show on Sony television — *The Drama Company* — where he is playing the anchor as *Shambhu Dada*, a character that always leaves his peers (on the show) flabbergasted.

Termining this as a new challenge in the world of comedy, he had glowing praises for present day comedy king *Kapil Sharma*. *The Drama Company* apart, he has at least four projects. The 67-year-old actor says he was never detached from the industry. In the studio, he mingled in his usual way with co-stars *Krushna Abhishek*, *Sudesh Lehri*, *Ali Asgar*, *Dr Sanket Bhonsale*, *Sugandha Mishra* and *Ridhima Pandit*. Excerpts:

What made you anchor this comedy show *The Drama Company*?

This was the only genre left — a comedy show. The circle is complete now. In past, I often thought of doing comedy but scope didn't come my way. Now that it has come, I am a bit nervous as all stars are fantastic actors and are great performers.

What made you do television shows?

I don't why people underestimate television. Whatever you call me — superstar, megastar etc — I have become so also because of television. *Dance India Dance* (DID) has also given me good mileage as I have entered people's drawing rooms with DID.

Is it a sort of comeback for you?

I didn't stay away. I was forced to stay

away for illness. Physically I wasn't fit to do my job...bedridden, but now I am fit and that is a past for me. Now I want to work again like I used to do earlier. I won't call this a comeback as I had never gone anywhere. More importantly, nobody left me, this industry never left me. I would say I am happy that I am with the industry people.

Your daughter (Dishani) has grown up to be a fine lady. Can we expect to see her on silver screen?

My daughter is just 19... You people only have highlighted her and now she has an inclination towards this industry. At the moment she will study in USA and when she comes back, we will take a call. It all depends on what the almighty wants.

Any take on your political stint?

No comments.

Don't you think your comedy show *The Drama Company* will be competitor to *Kapil Sharma* show?

How can it be a competition? Both are being aired in the same channel and I have no idea about any competition. I have been to *Kapil Sharma*'s show and I do watch it. *Kapil* is one of the biggest talents in this industry. Industry has seen very few like him.

Do we expect to see you as Mahaguru in DID?

Why not? There will be no clash of time, I will do it again.

Is television work taxing?

Yes it is, but I think it's slightly less than films.

Can you please name a few projects you are working on...

Quite a few actually. *Ram Gopal Verma*'s *Gehar*, *Anil Sharma*'s *Genius*, *Anup Jalota* is making a film called *Sahaas* and one Kannada film with superstar *Shiva Rajkumar*'s *The Villain*. They wanted me desperately and I said, yes.

Your reaction on *Soumitra Chatterjee* getting *Legion of Honour*...

Soumitra Da is immortal. (IBNS-TWF)

“Ambition breaks the ties of blood, and forgets the obligations of gratitude.”

--- Edmund Burke

The Shillong Times

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Great leap backward

CHINESE Nobel Laureate Liu Xiabo was a prominent dissident who died in a Solzhenitsyn style Cancer Ward. Beijing even denied him treatment abroad. It was a tragedy reminiscent of the Nazi times. Liu was the moving spirit behind Charter 08 signed by 350 Chinese intellectuals. They demanded rule of law, democracy and freedom of expression in their country. With the rise of China it was expected to see the advent of citizens' personal freedom in the country. But President Xi Jinping has on the contrary tightened curbs on civil society and on debate and dissent. Liu was imprisoned from 2009. His wife is also under house arrest. China has also turned its heat on India exacerbating relations over the border dispute, India entering the Nuclear Suppliers Group and according permanent membership to it in the UN Security Council.

What is more, China has more or less succeeded in persuading Western powers to dilute their advocacy of democracy and human rights. China's economic strength despite the slowdown in its growth rate has proved decisive. The West had once stood up for the rights of Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov and Nelson Mandela. The West appears to be reconciled to peaceful co-existence with tyranny. It always exhibits a tilt towards Pakistan viz a viz India which emerged with President Eisenhower's meeting with Ayub Khan. The liberalisation in China with Benjiao Ping withered away in Tiananmen Square.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Youth Congress (I) meets Purno Sangma

A delegation of the Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress (I) led by its President Mr John A. Lyngdoh, called on the Chief Minister Mr Purno A Sangma to convey its solidarity with him. In a press release issued on Tuesday, it was stated that the delegation was "fully satisfied with the positive attitude and response" displayed by the "young, dynamic" Chief Minister. The press release did not make any mention about the Youth Congress stand on the controversial railhead issue.

The delegation urged upon the government to take possession of the gutted Kelvin Cinema and the

adjacent burnt shops, as well as the old Civil Hospital Complex for the construction of a car-park public garden-cum-shopping complex. The delegation suggested that the razing of these buildings and the construction of a shopping complex would give this area "a fresh look". The MPYC (I) also welcomed the decision of the Union Government to extend the Central Policy of Reservation for another ten years. The delegation consisted of, apart from the MYPC (I) president, the Vice President, Mr C. Khongsit, the Shillong City MPYC(I) president, Mr Fearless Warjri and other office bearers and party workers.

Dr Mukul Sangma a survivor

By H H Mohrmen

located near the highway, schools and churches were closed and revenue collection dropped.

The change of power at the national level also saw the change of Dr Sangma's status from the blue-eyed boy of the then Congress led UPA government to a pariah in the corridors of power in Delhi. This has also affected the flow of funds to the state because Meghalaya is no longer a most favoured state of the powers that be in Delhi.

Then another issue which could have deposed Dr Sangma and bring the MUA government down was the protest on the Village Administration Bill. The imbrogio has seen the coming together of the

papers and resigned their membership in the District Council. The only permanent outcome of the entire hungama was that it created a rift between the diehard upholders of dual posts P.N. Syiem. Syiem continues to portray himself as a victim of Sangma's actions and rebelled against the party and the rest is history.

The MUDA building bylaws issue only gave Syiem more ammunition to attack Dr Sangma which also makes him gradually distance himself from the Congress. It has not only created a rift between the two leaders but using the MUDA building bylaws issue, Syiem, tried to portray the state government as anti rural areas and anti poor.

The outcome of the protest was that the act proposed by the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council received the assent of the governor, while the bill proposed by the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council is still waiting to see the light of day.

people and all the traditional heads (particularly) those in the Khasi and Jaintia hills area which has culminated in a huge rally in Polo, but this rally failed to reach a logical conclusion. The outcome of the protest was that the act proposed by the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council received the assent of the governor, while the bill proposed by the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council is still waiting to see the light of day. Now it is for the people to decide who is to be blamed in the entire situation- the executive committee of the council or the state government.

When the dual post issue came to the fore, everyone expected Dr Sangma to lose the support of the MLAs who also held the office of MDC, because it was expected that they would rebel against any move to bar them from holding both the offices. But when the Bill was introduced; all (including those in the opposition) except one, put in their

Whereas the MUDA building bylaws are simply mechanisms meant to control and monitor the construction of safe buildings considering the fact that Meghalaya is an earthquake prone area.

At the personal level, Sangma has a case which challenges his Scheduled Tribe status which has gone from one court to the other. Now the case is in the Apex Court of the country and no doubt it has been a spot of bother for him, but it looks like the impending case does not affect his performance as he continues to nonchalantly dispose of his duty as the CEO of the state.

Perhaps the only minister that does not have a secret desire to become a Chief Minister and challenge Dr Sangma is Dr R.C. Laloo. Otherwise each and every minister nurses a desire to become a CM and is only waiting for an opportunity to remove him from the position. There is continuous wrangling within the Congress in the state and fighting amongst the leaders of the Congress is an open secret. But a doyen like

Sangma learns to live and deal with the challenges, the way leaders do and achieve the goal of completing his tenure as the Chief Minister of Meghalaya.

The way the incumbent MUA government deals with the railhead protest by putting its feet down is worth praising and it is also for the first time that the culprits who are suspected to be involved in damaging public property were booked and the law of the land is taking its own course. During the last five years people could freely celebrate the country's Independence and Republic day without any hindrance and this itself is an achievement.

Dr Sangma steered through the tides and storms and has overcome many obstacles and ultimately becomes a survivor. Dr Sangma maybe a late-starter but his intelligence, knowledge and his calibre as a leader is exceptional. The arguments here are not presented in a chronological order but never the less it only goes on to show that Dr sangma has carried his mantle with due diligence and dignity. He has done the state and its people proud and represented the government and the state well at the national and international forums.

To borrow from late Soso Tham's poem about U Dieng Bilat in which he compares a good and true leader with the tree standing tall, Dr Sangma is similar to the tree which Soso Tham says 'la u phi lah ban bein; hynrei kumno phin rat?' (We may condemn and blame our leader for all that is happening in the state and call him names, but how do we uproot him?)

With the elections round the corner, it is indeed heartening to know that Meghalaya is blessed with a leader with the potential to lead the state in almost all the parties in the state. To name a few we have leaders like Paul Lyngdoh and Jemino Mawthoh in the UDP, James and Conrad in the NPP and of course Dr Sangma of the Congress. These are names of a few leaders who have the potential to take the state to new heights.

'When You'll Leave Me': Paradigm of Patience and Poetic Protest

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

Penelope the wife of Ulysses patiently waited for her husband for nineteen years to return home to Ithaca from the Trojan War. Winnie Mandela gained nearly mythic quality by her long wait for husband Nelson Mandela's release. But Liu Xia who waited for her husband knew that he would never be released and the last eleven years had been days of isolations and anguish. 'I know sooner or later the day will come / When you'll leave me / And alone down the road of darkness' - wrote Liu Xia about her dear husband Liu Xiabo, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate of China who breathed his last after eleven years of being behind bars with dreams of human freedom.

These were lines from one of Lu Xia's poems to be published in her forthcoming book in which she wrote about the constant police watch and her pain of loneliness caused by her own house arrest by the Chinese government. Her agonized voice was louder in the poems where she wrote about the sufferings of her husband Liu Xiabo, China's most prominent human rights advocate, who was suffering from liver cancer and not released even for medical treatment during his long imprisonment for protesting in the Tiananmen Square.

These words are not just those of a wife but of all those who uphold human rights and whose hearts bleed for human sufferings. She led the solitary life of an intellectual simply for being the spouse of an imprisoned activist. The last lines her husband wrote for her as a tribute just before his demise which showed his great love for his wife reflecting his own isolation and anguish will be in the introduction of the book: "Love as intense as ice, love as remote as blackness". In another poem Liu Xia wrote: "I don't know where you are / But nowhere you are / You are always the air / And for this reason I don't care". Lu Xia's love for freedom and her anguish reminds us of Winnie Mandela whose bitter-sweet relations with her imprisoned husband led her to write poems although unfortunately there was a divorce appeal. But the emotional relationship was no less warm for the Mandela couple. When Mandela was in prison, she was the spokesperson for Mandela as Liu Xia too had been all her life for Liu Xiabo. The world could connect to her husband only through her.

In violation of human rights, China has no parallel. The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 were student-led demonstrations in Beijing. But it gradually took the shape of popular movement against the evil effects of market economy which reached a small section of elites. Common grievances at the time included inflation, restrictions on political participation and freedom of the press. Liu Xiabo was the key organizer of this protest. The Chinese government drew widespread condemnation for its suppression of human rights activists and became nearly a pariah country and was increasingly isolated on the global platform in spite of its participation in free trade. China was known to the world as a repressive regime although it tried to show itself as a global economic and military

partner. But the way Chinese government ill-treated the democratic activist Liu Xiabo who always staunchly supported non-violence astonished the world. He was a blood cancer patient and even on that ground he was not released.

Liu Xiabo said: 'I have no enemies' but China proved that its government regarded him as their worst enemy. Liu Xiabo once said "Free expression is the base of human rights, the root of human nature, and the mother of truth. To kill free speech is to kill human rights to stifle human nature and to suppress truth." China is constantly doing that by keeping human rights activists under strict police watch. Westernisation is not the only salvation of China. So by protesting against it Xiabo only tried to focus on indigenous culture and tradition of China. Liu Xiabo was not just a politician. He was a writer, a professor and a key leader during the Tiananmen Square protests and led a life of fearless activism. He started a poetry group 'The Innocent Hearts' and gained fame as a quarrelsome literary critic for his outspoken voice against China's suppressive regime.

After his demise in the prison democratic voice is really numbed and the human activists are 'alone down the road of darkness' as his wife Liu Xia wrote in her poem. His only crime was that he could not bear the pain when he saw over ten thousand people arrested for protesting against the violation of human rights in China. He was at that time working in Columbia University in the US. But he left the job and returned home only to protest against the crackdown. He was arrested on charges of 'state subversion' which was nothing but a justification of Chinese suppression of the democratic voice in the name of national security. His wife Liu may now be treated the same way and her voice too may be similarly muffled. World leaders are all appealing to allow his wife to leave China for living the last days of her life in mental peace. Her agonies are unbearable. But it is still uncertain if China will at all respond to the appeal. Her husband was imprisoned on Christmas Day in 2009 and the Nobel Peace Prize came to him in 2010 which China regarded as 'blasphemy'. So there is no hope for the release of his widowed wife. She will have to live a painful life as the icon of patience and poetic protest by remembering the days of separation with her beloved husband She was alone on the dark roads and the darkness will prevail. Only how long she does not know as do all others who love democracy in China. Liu Xiabo died but he will remain the loud voice of non-violent struggle for fundamental rights in China. The responsibility is probably left to his poet wife Liu Xia to whom he rightly gave the tribute, "Love as intense as ice, love as remote as blackness". This is a story of human love, conjugal love and love for humanity and freedom.

Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee, Associate Professor and Head, Post Graduate Dept of English Dum Dum Motijheel College is a columnist and poet. He can be reached at prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

TO THE EDITOR

Need to value our culture

Editor,

The Indian Constitution provides to every citizens of India the Right to Equality (Art:14-18), where there should be no discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. The right of an Indian citizen to enter any public and private place (with permission) is one of the fundamental rights. This right is equally applicable to anyone and everyone in the country as a whole. When we look at the Khasi society and the state as a whole, we realise that we are isolated from the rest of India. We are not known to many people in this country leave alone our traditional attires. Sad to say that most Indians in the mainland have a very poor knowledge about the Indian map and its inhabitants.

Having said that racial discrimination is unacceptable in a country like India where rights have been bestowed on every citizen. We are all equal by birth and by law. Let alone kicking a person out of any place (club or otherwise) due to the traditional attire,

every individual has a right to wear the clothes he or she is comfortable in. And why should a person be called a "maid" outside her work place? Does any person become a maid only because of her dress? What about a maid wearing a foreign attire? Where was it mentioned that a maid cannot enter a club or restaurant or to dress according to her choice? Nobody holds the right to look down at another's profession and nobody is supposed to consider others as inferior or superior! This is sheer egotism and we say SHAME to that!

If India is a democratic country, then why does there exist such discrimination? The identity of the people from north-eastern states is being projected wrongly and negatively to an extent that it amounts to racial discrimination. India's custom, culture and traditional attire complete its scenic beauty. Therefore every Indian is supposed to respect and recognize each and every culture in India.

On the other hand, it is most upsetting that most of the north-eastern people particularly youth in Meghalaya are proud to adopt foreign lifestyles rather than valuing their own culture and traditions, leave

aside wearing their traditional attire. Now whom should we blame? People for not respecting and knowing our tradition? Or ourselves for not being able to promote our own language, culture and traditions? This attitude has put our culture and tradition at stake and could lead to their extinction.

Yours etc.,
B.L. Nonglait, K.
Nongrum
& M. Kharsyntiem
Shillong-14

A proper apology

Editor,

Like any other Khasi, I share the same sense of pain, anger, disappointment, outrage at what happened to Kong Tailin Lyngdoh who became a victim of discrimination at Delhi Golf Club. At the same time I am grateful to Dr. Nivedita Barthakur for standing up for her. As Khasis we need to learn from this. I would like to share an incident in the Bible (Acts 16: 19-40) in which Apostle Paul and his colleague Silas were arrested for preaching the Good News. They were dragged into the market place before the authorities.

People accused them for teaching a custom which was not lawful. Then the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods and thrown into prison. While they were in prison praying, something supernatural happened. There was a great earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison. Immediately all the doors were opened; everyone's chains were loosened. The keeper of the prison awaking from sleep thought that the prisoner had fled, and was about to kill himself when Apostle Paul with a loud voice said, "Do not harm yourself" for we are all here. So the keeper of the prison reported the matter to the magistrates, having heard of all that was happened. They quietly sent the officers saying let those men go. But Apostle Paul said to them, "You have beaten us up in public and thrown us in prison and now you want to let us go secretly? No Indeed! They made a public spectacle out of the our arrest and they will make a public spectacle out of our release too." So,

the Magistrates and the officers came and pleaded with them and brought them out.

In a similar fashion, ASAN APOLOGY, the Delhi Golf Club must invite Kong Tailin Lyngdoh and Dr. Nivedita Barthakur for lunch again, and the very officials who humiliated, insulted and asked Kong Tailin Lyngdoh to leave the restaurant on the Club premises because of her 'Jainsem' should serve them. They made a public spectacle out of her dress and looks; they should also make their apology a public spectacle in order to redeem her self-respect. To me this is a true gesture of Apology.

Yours etc.,
Tirot S Suchiang,
Shillong-2

India must address human trafficking

Editor,

This is in response to Ibu Sanjeeb Garg's article, "Human trafficking in India" (ST, July 12, 2017). Human trafficking leads to slavery and slavery kills democracy. On being asked about the definition of democracy, Abraham Lincoln had said, "As I would not be a slave,

so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy."

It is an irony that India being the largest democracy of the world has the highest number of slaves. According to Global Slavery Index 2016, India has the highest absolute numbers of people trapped in slavery with 18.35 million slaves. We should all take the pledge of not visiting those houses and shops where the working class is getting inhuman and degrading treatment or where children are employed as labour. On the other hand, the government must stop the juggernaut of human trafficking and slavery before it tramples on the democratic flowers of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

A slave has but one master. An ambition man, has as many as there are people who helped him get his fortune.

--- Cesare Pavese

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 336

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2017

Presidential election: flip flop stances

THE die for the Presidential election is cast. That Ram Nath Kovind will be the next President is a foregone conclusion and Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr Mukul Sangma too seems prepared for the verdict. In fact, he was not saying anything new when he said the RSS was behind the radical agenda of the NDA government at the Centre. Unlike the Congress Party whose grassroots units have whittled away, the RSS is the dedicated workforce of the BJP. Whenever the RSS have worked in tandem with the BJP, the latter has won elections. In Bihar there were differences between the BJP and RSS and the result was a Nitish Kumar rerun which allowed Lalu Prasad Yadav and his family to be in the seat of power. To counter the RSS the Congress needs to have a similar dedicated workforce which unfortunately it does not have. So for the Chief Minister to keep reminding the people of Meghalaya about the hidden agenda of the BJP-RSS combine without his own party being able to make a resurgence and to capture the imagination of the voters, is pointless.

Meanwhile the HSPDP has not had the courage of conviction to make its stand clear. By desisting from voting in the Presential election the HSPDP is telling the people of Meghalaya and particularly its supporters that it chooses neither the Congress nor the BJP nominees. So who does the HSPDP want to see in Rashtrapati Bhavan? The BJP, Congress and CPM are, for the moment, the only national parties with the Left having lost much ground and the Congress reduced to a paltry number in Parliament. In a country like India regional forces have limited appeal as they cannot hold the country together, besetted as they are by their regional concerns and pulls. The HSPDP would need to explain its ambiguity to the electorate. Has the Party consulted the electorate before the Presidential poll and is the abstention from voting a popular mandate? In a democracy you cannot fool all the people all the time because come 2018, there is a possibility that the HSPDP might have to sup with what it considers as the 'devil' today.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

The new CEM

The newly-elected CEM of the new Khasi Autonomous District Council, Mr G S Massar has assured in one of his earliest pronouncements in this capacity that his endeavour would be to develop a healthy relationship with the State government.

There could not be a more welcome statement than this in the interest of the district's smooth progress in today's overall tempo of growth in the State and the country. The new Executive Committee, over which he is to preside is the product of the joint parliamentary party which is a coalition of Hill People Union to which he personally belongs, the Hill State People's Democratic Party which was in office in the earlier regime and the Public Demands Implementation Committee.

It was a good gesture on the part of Mr Hopingstone Lyngdoh, the outgoing CEM, to have withdrawn his candidature for a renewed term, thus facilitating infusion of new blood in running the Council administration. That helps it also to start on a clean slate, but not losing at the same time the experience of the outgoing regime as is assured by the HSPDP's support to the new.

What is important is not so much an emphasis on the autonomy of the Council in

relation to the State government as a concentration on the overall development of the Autonomous area covered by the Council. The autonomy has to be respected on either side, but in any unfortunate conflict between the two the Council has to accept its limitation if it is only not to let the advancement of the autonomous district suffer a bit because of an unequal fight carried too far. The State government in its turn has to reciprocate in good measure and thus benefit from a healthy and cooperative relationship with its Autonomous District for the overall growth and progress of the State as a whole.

There has in recent times been an overdose of politicization in the Council government relationship, for an antidote to which the installation of the same political party at the helm of both the institutions may not be the only prescription. Mr Massar's gesture emboldens us to hope that diverse parties can also coexist and function in a cooperative role for the furtherance of the common good of the people at large, the common master of all.

The other statement by him which instills not less hope is that he would do his best to provide a clean and efficient administration.

Marxism and Business! But I am a Khasi

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

Marxism (a term used to project the works and contributions of Karl Marx [1818-1883]) is a thought. It encompasses a series of theories, some of which are considered fundamental truths and even further still, some are considered as law. Be that as it may, for the purpose of this article, Marxism is an argument. As such, although Marxism is more of a philosophical and a sociological phenomenon, there is also a business connotation to it. Importantly, there is a dynamic interaction between Marxism and business. This is even more so when considered from the context of a striving and struggling community; hence, the aspect of a Khasi is in perspective here. Accordingly, the discourse is presented in the following pointers -

Firstly, the Marxism thought specifically applied to the current argument is superstructure and base. The superstructure refers to aspects of society and includes culture, ideology, norms and expectations, social institutions, political structure and the state. The base represents production, means of production, operations, processes and procedures. As such and within the continuum of business, the base covers business practices from the prism of operations, processes and procedures. The important point here is the interaction between the superstructure and base. This is the crux from which the discourse continues. The interaction flows in the form of a spiral; but where is the starting point? Well, the starting point is the base precisely as it is subject to constraints and limitations (as in, the means of production are always scarce). Be that as it may, this base influences the ideologies and outlook (superstructure) and this flow continues in the form of an ever expanding spiral. Hence, as the interaction continues, it impacts upon the growth and development of societies.

Secondly and continuing

from the above, the more vibrant and pragmatic is the base as seen in business practices the more broad and dynamic is the ideology and outlook as represented by the superstructure. This is basically the model upon which communities learn, adapt and grow. As such, it can be stated that communities with broad ideologies tend to apply more dynamic business practices and vice versa. Hence, there is a need for synergizing to this end. Critically, businesses that can synergize and strategize accordingly can expect a continued path of economic growth and overall development. As a result, the business can scale up into a different level in terms of products/services and market. Thus, the conceptualization of this Marxism thought in relation to business is a key for mapping a path towards prosperity; both in terms of economics and behaviour. Importantly, the examples are not few and far between. In Shillong city itself we can compare between successful and struggling businesses (of similar size and nature); obviously there is a difference. Interestingly, this difference can be inferred on the basis of this Marxism thought.

Thirdly and in relation to the above, where do we stand as a community? Here, let us first resign to the fact that by blood and by nature we are predominantly not a business-oriented community. However, this does not imply a situation that is bereft of learning and adaptation. Over the years the populace has struggled through difficult situations and scarcity of job opportunities have propelled the spirit of entrepreneurship. In addition, there are a few beaming examples of successful businesses. Disturbingly, in general, many of our businesses

seem to struggle and slip into stagnation and sometimes into oblivion. As an analogy, our businesses life-cycle is best represented by a depiction of a kerosene/oil funnel. We start out big with a lot of fanfare, but over time we narrow down into a narrow tip devoid of any economic life or potential for positive impacts. On deeper introspection, the main reason for this is glaringly visible and it smiles at us like a demon waiting to be conquered. The fact of the argument is that we do business as a last resort and not as a choice. We do business because we have to and not because we want to. We are being pushed/forced into doing business rather than pulled/motivated. The ideology behind business is despair and compulsion and not drive and determination. As a case in point, we can all look into the businesses present in our localities. Do we ever wonder that why even after so many years of existence most of them still stay the same, or some shrink in size, and even worse, some close down all together. Food for thought!!!

Fourthly, what about our business practices? In relation to this, I am trying to be as progressive in my expression as possible. However, the more of that is tried; the more depressing are the experiences that come to mind. As such, I state that in the context of business, the Khasi community is a complacent community. We do it for subsistence and not for growth and advancement; or even social change. However, we can see specific reasons for this. The reason is our values and norms. On record, I state that I respect them wholeheartedly; but I will also continue as follows. We are more into think small and do small and expect small and help small and so forth. Everything is small in our discourse. Sometimes it seems as though we tie ourselves into small tight-

cornered boxes. Well, wake up and smell the coffee; the world is moving on and we must not get left behind. It is time to break the shackles and pop out of our boxes. Our business practices must reflect our ideologies. Bizarrely, in one of my interactions with an educated lady selling groceries at Mawlai, the discussion percolated into business practices in relation to this Marxist thought. We delved upon how Marxism can contribute towards business expansion and behaviour thereby leading to social change. At the end of it all, the reply and conclusion from her was 'But I am a Khasi and how does some alien theory apply to us?' Well, that was that for the evening and the result of the talk was more questions and intrigue rather than answers.

I say, in general it is high time to have a relook at our values and norms. To close on this, it is no surprise to experiment and find that the business behaviour of entrepreneurs at Laitumkrah and Laban is more robust as compared to the ones at Mawlai and Jaiaw. This shows that being exposed to a mixed clientele, helps in shaping ideologies and outlook.

Lastly and in conclusion, small drops of water make a mighty ocean. Hence, be in relation to business or community as a whole; it is time to start; never mind if we start small, but it has to be sustained over time. Victory is in the mind and actions. As such, we have the potential to realize this victory. Some of us have realized this, but the need is to realize this en masse. To this end, ideologies and outlook can be the factor towards learning-oriented and growth-motivated business practices. As in the words of Karl Marx again, 'a community that strives and struggles, grows'.

(The Author teaches at NEHU)

TO THE EDITOR

Whither the legal system for rapist legislator?

Editor,

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution states that all are equal before the law, yet it is surprising that when the rich or the influential commit a crime, the legal system is very slow to act. The tardy legal process encourages more crimes. The year 2017 began with the molestation of girls on the New Year's eve in M.G road Bangalore. It was in January this year that I too was in Bangalore and this news spread like wild fire. However, the culprits of this particular crime were immediately arrested and the case proceeding very quickly because the culprits were common people. On the other hand when I read the news from Meghalaya I found that an MLA Julius Dorphan of Mawhati constituency was accused of raping a minor girl of 14 years. On New Year's eve there was an incident of rape in Mawryngkneng but the Sordar sided with the rapists. How shameful it is to hear of news from our own state where the matrilineal system is extolled sky high. It is unimaginable that an MLA committed such a crime after being elected by the people to represent the constituency in the Assembly. He is supposed to be the law maker, the protector and the guardian of the people. It is also very shameful that our state legislative system has produced not only corrupt politicians but also a rapist. I believe that people had elected him to fight for their

rights and to bring development in the constituency, not to acquire power in order to do whatever he likes to the common people.

I am shocked to see the news report that the case of Dorphan, the accused rapist is still pending in the court. Why should the legal system be so slow to act on this matter? First of all rape is a serious crime and to rape a girl below 18 years of age is absolutely unacceptable, more so for a lawmaker. Let us not forget how HNLC used Operation Kyllang to deal with this crime and I am sure that Dorphan knew very well about this operation when he was the Chairman of the POSCO Act, the CSWO, TUR and other NGO networks of North East, the legal system is yet to dispose off this case. What about the victim/s who have been waiting for justice since the beginning of the year? Justice delayed is truly justice denied.

Yours etc.,

Aiborlang Nongsiej Mawkyrwat South West Khasi Hills

Mamata soft on terror; hard on subservient Gorkhas

Editor,

The nation wants to know why Mamata is so inhuman towards the citizens of Darjeeling and

Sikkim. Lots of videos that have gone viral on social media are enough to arouse a sense of outrage against the West Bengal Govt and empathy for those who suffered under the Mamata regime. These videos are potential evidences to legally implicate the West Bengal administration. Trinamool ruffians aside, on several occasions, the Bengal police themselves have been noticed acting like highway robbers. In Siliguri town, they deliberately halted the vehicles heading towards Darjeeling and Sikkim and unloaded the bags of food items, maybe medicines, and also humiliated the passengers/owners. How on earth could the administration and police forces be employed to make the citizens suffer? Is it not utter cruelty of the West Bengal government which is constitutionally condemnable?

On other hand, this state is apparently too soft towards certain communities these days because of which West Bengal has often witnessed many horrifying activities that have literally convulsed the state. Here now exist a swarm of "special citizens" who never hesitate to have a connection even with terror elements/groups within and outside. But they all are well snuggled by all-comforting and forgiving Chief Minister. It is often reported that many of her loving voters, who are mostly ill-bred but over pampered, were even caught red-handed manufacturing bombs. Such "special citizens" are round-the-clock posing threats to the "indigenous Bengali" populace also --- "Baduria and Basirhat communal"

clashes being the latest. In the midst of anti-national slogans, the rampant violence and arson attacks against other communities here, the army has no power to use even a "Lathi" while in Darjeeling Didi has given the draconian power to the army even to gun down innocent pedestrians.

Yes, thus the West Bengal CM's excessive passion for remaining in power has amply brought out what is worst in humans. She never gave a "second thought" to deploy the central forces in Darjeeling. And consequently, seven innocent Gorkhas have so far been shot dead and countless others injured. But it has not touched the CM's heart. Her police force often pounce upon even the poor and naive women from the villages and torture them brutally. It is usually expected of one wrapped in a "white sari", and with a "hawai chappal", to always walk on the path of humility and compassion, not ever being overcome by the materialistic greed and antagonism. But Mamata has virtually beaten even the snobbish pretense of a Bollywood star by cleverly masking her "true self" with the garb of "sanyaasini". One wonders when Didi will truly realize that her downright disparity in action and policies, inhuman treatment towards the Gorkhas in Darjeeling and a series of scams by her party men have long sullied her "lily white sari".

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwali,
Shillong -2

Restructuring the Indian Railways

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

In September 2014 the government had set up a high level committee under Prof Bibek Debroy to look into restructuring of the Indian Railways. On March 31, 2015 the Ccommittee submitted its interim report which has suggested sweeping changes in the workings of the Indian Railways. The reforms targeting the successful restructuring of IR will require, as a prerequisite, continued and committed support at apex levels; use of effective "change management" and "internal communication" strategies; involvement and buy in from various stakeholders, and strengthening of the human resource function to enable it to adequately support the management.

This report in its findings recommends certain changes that are not only path breaking in its format but also in its approach. First of all it gives a clear time frame of seven years within which it envisages the transition of IR into a fully government owned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). The major recommendations can be divided into commercial, operational, human resources management and finally financing aspects.

With relation to the commercial changes the committee recommends the movement to a more simpler accounting system because the present accounting system of the Railways is complex. Next it recommends setting up of a completely independent tariff regulating authority that would take tariff decisions only on the basis of economics while absolving itself of the political commitments that pose to the tariff issue today.

Any increase in fares must be accompanied by the betterment of passenger amenities and services. A railway infrastructure company should be created which takes care of the rolling stock and the infrastructure which is delinked from the daily operations of train running. Suburban services should be hived off or integrated under a Joint Venture mechanism with respective state governments. Private entry must be allowed in operational level eventually.

With regards to operational aspects the committee delves into the present functioning of the Railways and recommends entry of private sector in the operational aspect of Railways as well. It should distance itself from non core activities like running of hospitals and schools and concentrate on the core activity of running trains. Another major recommendation is delinking the RPF or the Railway Protection Force from the IR mechanism.

All existing production or manufacturing units must be integrated into one Indian Railway Manufacturing Company (IRMC) and no privatization must be contemplated at least initially. There is a need to shift focus to business/customer units like freight business, passenger business, suburban business, parcel business etc. which is essential for IR to be competitive, for its long term economic viability, customer satisfaction and for being an adaptive/flexible organization. All A1 and A type stations should be manned by gazetted officers as station managers. This will also enable Group A services to have mandatory exposure to working at the grass-roots level in stations earlier in their careers, perhaps for 2 years. In the Junior and Senior time-scale, these posts will have to be re-designated as general posts. Supervisors and other staff who work in the stations will report to their departmental divisional officers only

through the station manager. The committee also recommended that there are too many Zones and Divisions and thus a rationalization exercise is required. Further, Kolkata Metro should not be treated as either a Zone or as a part of IR.

IR with its 9 major services often suffer from what is called departmental squabbles. The five engineering services absorb officers via the Indian Engineering Services exams while the four non technical services the Indian Railway Traffic Service, the Indian Railways Account Service, the Indian Railway Personal Service and the Railway Protection Force officers are absorbed via the Civil Service examinations. Apart from these there is a separate Indian Railway Medical Service. The committee recommends the abolition of this system and creation of two major services technical service IRTechS and a non technical service IRLoS, while the IRMS must be restructured and eventually abolished. Also GM's and DRM's must be given greater autonomy and greater financial powers. Apart from these the committee recommends setting up an Indian Railways General Management Cadre from within the officers of the two above mentioned services to man the posts of GM and DRMs to be selected by UPSC in a fair transparent manner. This Committee recommends that Railway Board Secretariat Services (RBSS) and the Railway Board Clerical Services (RBSC) be merged with the Central Secretariat Services.

With regards to financing of IR the committee had a few prescriptions as well. State governments must show greater partnership with Railways especially in terms of forming JV's with regard to suburban projects. The Central Government should review the dividend policy for IR and provide it with a GBS net of the dividend payment. The committee also stressed that it is very important for GOI to provide funding for projects that are commercially viable to IR not in form of grants, but as loan guarantees, so that the corporate entity implementing the project is market-focused from inception. The committee opined that IR must reach out to multilateral funding agencies as well as tapping its land banks for funds.

Overall most of the proposals mooted in this report have been in vogue in connection with the workings of IR for a few years now. IR has already started looking towards multilateral funding agencies and state governments for funding of projects. While it is easy to pitch a role for the private sector very often the IR acts in its social capacity in connection to setting up new routes etc which would initially be economically non viable for e.g. a train line to Naharlagun, a risk which the private sector would not be willing to participate. While the departmental squabbles are a reality in Railways yet it can be denied that with 17 lakh employees Railways is unlike any other organization and hence it requires specialization at operational levels. To smoothen the inter services seniority process and the access to open line posts like GM's the policies must become more transparent and steps like rotational posts for each of the service for the GM posts can be thought of. Nevertheless the report is pragmatic and gives a certain direction towards which IR can work in the future.

(Views expressed are personal)

“Ambition is a Dead Sea fruit, and the greatest peril to the soul is that one is likely to get precisely what he is seeking.”

--- Thomas Otway

The Shillong Times

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Nawaz Sharif indicted

A Joint Investigative team appointed by Pakistan's Supreme Court probed the Panama Papers and indicted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his children for financial skulduggery. The Judiciary takes its cue from the Army. A weakened Sharif will strengthen the hands of the army. A crackdown on political corruption is fine but other sectors of society should not be left out of the drive. Former cricketer turned politician Imran Khan has joined hands with the Army in attacking Sharif. In the process, Pakistan's democracy is undermined. The country's bipolar politics revolves around the PML(N) and the PPP. Two Army officers with links to the ISI capital were on the Joint Committee. Sharif's supporters therefore have reason to question the findings of the probe. The Pakistani Army controls foreign policy even after the removal of President Musharraf, a former General. The civilian government in Islamabad has to acquiesce in the system.

Sharif used his prerogative in appointing Qamar Javed Bajwa, the Army chief. The 'Dawn Leaks' however exposed his weakness in relation to India and terror. The Army stood in the way of Sharif's efforts to build a bridge with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A spate of Pakistani attacks on the Indian military followed. Elections in Pakistan are slated for 2018. Sharif looked like being on a safe wicket. His indictment is a blow to a healthy economic outlook and an improvement in India-Pakistani ties as Rawalpindi calls the shots.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Mahanta, Sangma to meet today

Assam Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta is arriving in Shillong on Thursday for holding "informal talks" with his Meghalaya counter-part Mr Purno Sangma on "matters of mutual interest". Mr Mahanta is scheduled to arrive in the afternoon and the meeting is slated for 3:30 PM at Mr Sangma's bungalow. Sources said that the two Chief Ministers are likely to discuss among other items, preliminaries on the vexed border issue besides the Bodo problem.

The talks which are the second such exercise after Mr Sangma assumed office last year, are considered to be important since both the Chief Ministers are presently under considerable pressure to ease the tension.

On the Bodo movement Assam Chief had accused Mr Sangma and other Congress(I) Chief Ministers of the North East having abetted the movement. Mr Sangma who promptly contradicted the allegation, is expected to allay the misgiving of Mr Mahanta. The recent arrest of 14 Bodos in Shillong while trying to buy arms will come handy for Mr Sangma to drive his point home. According to one source, the two Chief Ministers are also likely to delve on working out a possible pattern of solution to the Bodo problem. The source said that on knowing Mr Mahanta's mind, Mr Sangma will apprise the Prime Minister during his impending tour of Delhi scheduled to be from May 4 next.

As for the boundary issue although Mr Mahanta has been persistently advocating for adherence to Chandrachud Committee recommendations, Meghalaya is not agreeable to that. Mr Sangma categorically stated in the State Assembly last week

that a solution would be found out not on sole basis of the Committee report but also on other considerations.

Accord with PLA soon, says Manipur CM

The Manipur Government is likely to reach accord with the underground People's Liberation Army (PLA) soon Chief Minister Mr R K Jochandra Singh said here today. Speaking to newsmen after laying the foundation of the Manipur Bhavan in central part of the city, Mr Singh said people of Manipur by and large supported the present Government. Besides, a large section of the PLA activists wanted to come overground and join the national mainstream.

He said the strength of the PLA was on the wane with many of its activists feeling that the present Government in Manipur had been able to bring down the level of corruption. The Manipur Chief Minister hinted of clamping down heavily on the extremists if they failed to respond positively to the offer peaceful negotiations suggested by Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi earlier. Commenting on NSCN leader Mr Muiviah, Mr Singh said he should come over ground. "Muiviah can't fight with an army. He would only create problems. I would be happy to initiate negotiations and we would definitely consider amnesty if asked for" he observed.

Regarding the killing of lady IPS officer Ms. Vandana Malik Mr Singh said some PLA activists who recently returned from Burma were behind the crime. He, however, believed that it was not a planned attack. The case had already been handed over to the CBI, he added.

Mergers & IBC

Turning around banking sector

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

As is generally agreed, the banks form the bedrock of the financial sector of a country. As such, the recent decision to merge smaller banks with the larger ones such as Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda and Canara Bank, to gear up efficiency and profitability is believed to be a step in the right direction. The idea behind this merger is a larger regional bank to take on a pan-Indian footprint. This is one of the important steps the Government has thought of in gearing up the banking sector.

Regional consolidations have also been considered so that a North-based bank takes over another in the same region. The NPA problem is not expected to come in the way of such mergers. The only consideration would be not to make the merged entity weaker but a little stronger to take on future challenges.

The merger of five associate banks of the State Bank of India created a larger banking behemoth with some \$37 trillion in assets with it earlier this year. This motivated North Bloc to think of stronger and bigger bank entities to stand up competition from global banks, which would eventually have to be allowed to enter India as part of either a WTO deal on services or as part of bilateral or regional free trade pacts. However, the question of bad loans has emerged a big problem and the Government is aiming to resolve this issue under the new Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). The Code's objective would be to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit and to look after the interest of shareholders and amend the law relating to insolvency resolutions not confined to corporate functions but also to partnerships and individuals in a time bound manner. Moreover, it is significant to mention that the Code offers a market

directed, time bound mechanism for resolution of insolvency, wherever possible or required, and thereby ensured freedom to exit.

A section of experts, however, believe that the application of the Code would be limited due to strict time-lines for resolution, which may force some companies into liquidation and increase banks' capital requirements, according to a report of the global credit rating agency, Moody's. But this may not be a cause for concern.

High provisioning for banks would negatively affect banks' profitability over the next year if they need to take large write-down loans relative to their existing loan loss reserves for these assets, the report further pointed out. This comes in the wake of a recent notification of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which stated all accounts -- fund and non-fund based outstanding amount greater than Rs 5000 crores with 60 per cent or more classified as non-performing by banks as of March 2016 -- would be referred to the IBC.

Meanwhile, the Government wants to push two key legislations in the monsoon session of Parliament. The amendments to the Banking Regulation Act would allow banks to take over companies unable to pay back loans while Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill 2017 would handle bankruptcies in the banking and financial sectors. The amended act was earlier notified as an ordinance, empowering RBI to issue directions to banks to initiate proceedings in case of defaulters. Apart from these amendments, the RBI would set up oversight committees to advice on bad loans and give specific

solutions.

One may refer here to the Credit Suisse Report which pointed out that during the past three years there has been a steady increase in NPAs. As of June 2016, the total amount of gross non-performing assets for public and private sector banks was around Rs 6 lakh crore. The top 20 NPA accounts then stood at Rs 1.54 lakh crore.

Thus, these bad loans have become a serious lingering problem for the public sector banks. As such, the RBI has taken the matter in right decision and initially taken up stressed accounts, totaling about 25 per cent of the current gross NPAs and referring them to the IBC.

Meanwhile, it remains to be seen how the promoters of the 12 companies selected for resolution by the RBI would participate in the solution process over the next few months. Though lot of reforms have been made, experts are of the opinion that the regulatory changes don't address the gaps in the institutional framework within which NPAs have to be resolved.

There are expectations that the clean-up drive would lead to restructuring of stressed assets which may necessitate massive provisions that may wipe out a major part of many banks' capital. The Ordinance was necessary as the Government is willing up fresh capital. It is expected to infuse Rs 70,000 crore in public sector banks over a period of four years (from 2015-16 to 2018-19) while the banks are to raise another Rs 1.1 trillion from the market to meet their capital requirements as per Basel-III risk norms.

There are experts who feel that RBI's involvement should be limited while these public sector banks need to embrace higher levels of professionalism and adopt more scientific techniques of

decision making and due diligence checks. To start with the boards of these banks, instead of being filled with representatives of ministry officials, should have professionals with adequate industry experience. The industry perspective is very important in taking a view of the bigger picture while evaluating project proposals and then taking credit decisions.

One may mention here that the P J Nayak Committee had strongly recommended induction of professional bankers in the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) but this has yet to be heeded. In fact, the committee suggested a phased reform process that envisaged the BBA as the first step culminating in the creation of a Bank Investment Company that holds all government stakes and thereby, govern the public sector banks.

Though the present reforms of the banking sector may invigorate it, there are expectations that fresh credit growth may decrease over a period of time. Bond markets should be able to fuel a major portion of fresh credit growth as this has increased significantly over the years.

The concern of the Government in tackling stressed assets needs to be appreciated as there was no other way but to bring them down these from the present figure of 8 per cent of GDP. It is expected that if the whole issue is handled in a professional manner, banking reforms, as envisaged, including merger of weak banks with stronger ones would turn around this sector. Moreover, insofar as NPAs are concerned, political will and courage would go a long way in arriving at a solution. --- INFA

Will States act to curb cow vigilantes or ignore PM's call

By Lalit Sethi

Will Prime Minister Narendra Modi's command or request to the State Governments to "crack down" on cow vigilantes have any impact? Or is he responding to a notice sent to the State of U.P. and possibly Centre as well to let it know about all the breaches of law and order in the past five years until now? Where does the Centre stand on this in view of public interest litigation before the Court? The litigation came up before the Court prior to its summer vacation.

The cow vigilantes attack or kill those who transport cows from one place to another point within that State. Does it matter that it could be a case of transporting a cow from one State to another in the neighbourhood? Would those people who consider themselves self-appointed cow protectors or saviours of the Mother Cow, two words Mr. Modi does not tire of using, remind the Prime Minister of his eternal reverence for the cow, especially since his days in Gujarat? Would a lot of people in India be entitled to believe that Mr. Modi spoke about the breakdown of law and order by cow vigilantes after he possibly heard 20 or more heads of government and heads of State during his 10 days of his most recent world tour as they might have expressed their surprise that beef was such a sensitive issue in India.

Incidentally, China has just lifted a ban on the import of American beef. Was it not

Right or wrong, would the Yogi be laughing in his sleeves ~ but he wears no sleeves; he wears only a saffron robe, not tailored, in the north Indian style ~ if he is secretly or openly wondering whether the Prime Minister or his Home Minister would be able to convert the Presidential Ordinance on cow protection into a law, approved by both Houses of Parliament during the current Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The Ordinance is not a Money Bill and has to be approved by the Rajya Sabha where the BJP and NDA are in a minority and will not be in control for a year or two to come. If not enacted by Parliament within six months or in the first available session, does the cow Ordinance lapse automatically? Or does the Union Government ask the new President to sign a new Ordinance for use until the Winter Session of Parliament in November this year? Is there any constitutional sanction to keep issuing ordinances beyond two of them at the most? Does that entitle an ebullient Yogi Adityanath to tell the Centre to forget about enforcing law and order in his State and let him take care of the cow vigilantes, who, according to his way of thinking, the Central ordinance seeks to protect and do as they please? A judge has commented that while a man killing someone in a road accident might be convicted of rash and negligent driving and

The BJP appears to have been immensely pleased about winning the support of the Bihar Chief Minister, Mr. Nitish Kumar, for its candidate for the office of President, Mr. Ram Nath Kovind, for his credentials as a Dalit leader and a cordial relationship between the two as Chief Minister and Governor of Bihar until recently.

surprising to notice that the White House working dinner for Mr. Modi and President Trump was held in a relatively narrow dining hall with two narrow tables dividing the Indian and American delegations? It was not a single wide table. Was Mr. Modi's Gujarati fare cooked by his own chefs or cooks, purely vegetarian, whereas Mr. Trump and his own American guests took their usual non-vegetarian food? Was customary wine or champagne omitted as were toasts to one another's good health? Yet the Union Government has promulgated a Presidential Ordinance several weeks ago which lays down that anyone slaughtering a cow could be sentenced to life imprisonment! Has the Union Government issued the Ordinance at the behest of hot-heads like Yogi Adityanath, the new-born Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh? Other Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States may not be as enthusiastic about protection of the cow as the Yogi, but helpless nevertheless as far as the antics of the cow vigilantes go, as they are bringing a bad name to the glory of India, which boasts of its democratic institutions.

Does the Yogi think, believe or consider that he is as powerful in his State as the Prime Minister is in handling international relations? Would he be right or totally incorrect if he insists that law and order is purely a State subject under the Constitution and neither the Union Home Minister nor the Prime Minister could issue any directive to him since he enjoys two-thirds majority in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly where the BJP won a landslide victory only in April this year?

Or would Mr. Nitish Kumar rather prefer to dissolve the legislature and advise the Governor to go in for President's Rule in Bihar? Does Mr. Nitish Kumar think that enough is enough, be it an alliance with the RJD or the NDA or just the BJP as crutches for sheer survival, which may be pointless in a beefless era for poor Dalits? To hell with the forgettable Mahagathbandhan or the great alliance as well!

Lalit Sethi is a Journalist of long standing and a commentator on Political and Social Issues.

TO THE EDITOR

Drug menace in the city

Editor,

Of late Shillong city has seen a growing menace in the form of drug trafficking and the growing number of drug addicts. This is a serious issue which should not be taken for granted by the authorities concerned. It is affecting not only individual lives but the community as a whole. Drugs ruin the future of our youth and saps away the energy and potentiality of the community. When our youth take to drugs, our society is doomed. Today drugs are being sold almost openly in some corners of the city and Polo Bazaar is one such place. What is worse is that girls and women are also involved in this racket. There is a huge network of drug peddlers in the city involving locals and non locals as well. Many of the suppliers are from Manipur and Mizoram and they have link persons among the locals. Mawlai of late has been haunted by this social evil and in many localities of Mawlai, drug peddlers and drug addicts are rampant. This menace cannot be resolved by the police alone, but in my opinion, the village traditional bodies in the form of the rangbah shngong and his council can become more effective in tackling this problem.

I wish to commend the efficiency and resoluteness of Mr. Sylvester Kurbah, the rangbah shngong of Mawlai Phudmuri who succeeded in containing the problem in the locality. Due to his efforts and decisive actions, drug

peddlers have been nabbed and drug addicts have been sent to rehab centres. I hope that other rangbah shngong will follow such an example. The village dorbar is such an effective body of administration and discipline that we have inherited from our ancestors and it should be utilized to the maximum. My humble suggestion is that all rangbah shngong of the city (those which fall under the traditional administration) should really come together and network with each other to root out this problem. Sharing of information and strategies could be one important approach towards this goal. Each rangbah shngong and his dorbar is familiar with the situation and persons of the locality. They can easily track any outsider and also monitor the activities going on in the locality. So if each local dorbar is aware of this menace and they identify the culprits, they can share such info with the other localities and in this manner it would be easy to apprehend the culprits and bring them to book. If all rangbah shngong work together as one body there is no problem that cannot be overcome. Church leaders should not shy away from this problem instead they should speak about it in churches and gatherings and conscientize people about the short terms and long terms effects of drug addiction. I would emphasize that this is an urgent task both for the village authorities and for

the police as well. We have to save our youth from the danger that is affecting them today.

Yours etc.,
Barnes Mawrie sdb,
Via email

Enough of symbolism!

Editor,

The Government of Meghalaya has declared a holiday every year on July 17, to commemorate the death of the renowned Khasi chieftain of Hima Nongkhlaw who led from the front the battle to flush out the mighty British from the Khasi land. Ironically no official functions are lined up for the day to mark this special occasion. And its not as if Meghalaya has too many heroes whose lives we can celebrate. The whole purpose of declaring a particular day as a holiday is to facilitate the observance of that day by citizens and government officials. If we can observe Gandhi Jayanti in so many ways then why can Government of Meghalaya not organise a public functions and also exhort schools and colleges and other institutions to celebrate Tirot Sing's life and achievements. In fact an excellent institute of learning in art and literature or a state of the art hospital offering free health care for the poorest of the poor ought to have been set up by the Government in honour of this great hero. Somehow, none of these things have been initiated by the Government and neither has

there been any private initiative. I know of only one school - the Tirot Sing Memorial Higher Secondary School at Nongkhlaw set up some years back but it is far from being excellent. It should have been the best school cum college in the entire North East, where students from all over the country and the world would flock to since it has a historical background and is situated in Nongkhlaw the famous capital of U Tirot Sing's Sijemship.

Again, laying of floral tributes at the base of U Tirot Sing's memorial pillar is too insignificant an act and not befitting his greatness. In fact on this day, every year, there should be a series of noticeable charitable works being done for the poorest of the poor in every hamlet and town all over Meghalaya, especially in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, by NGOs and Dorbar Shngong, KSU Units, FKJGP, HNYF, HNC and all those who claim to be the protectors and defenders of the Khasi race. In fact, if we want to follow in Tirot Sing's footsteps we should be doing thrice the amount of work that we do on other days so that we can build the state and our Khasi-Jaintia and Garo land more rapidly. This is real patriotism and nationalism.

A mere holiday and floral tributes are just not symbolic gestures that do not do justice to the memory of U Tirot Sing.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via email

“The greatest gift of life is friendship, and I have received it.”

--- Hubert H. Humphrey

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Drive against ULFA

THE NIA is up against the banned ULFA which is reported to have a strength of 400 cadres mostly taking shelter in Myanmar. Its charge sheet has been filed to initiate extradition proceedings against the outfit's chairman, Dr Mukul Hazarika from the UK. The NIA also states that the ULFA is on a massive recruitment drive in the rural areas of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Lakhimpur and Nalbari districts of Assam. Hazarika regularly travels to camps in Myanmar from London. It is said that a non-bailable warrant will be issued against Hazarika. Interpol will be approached for a red corner notice against him before a formal extradition request is sent to the UK government. It is hoped that there will be no problem as was in the case of Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the Khalistani leader based in London. The operation is expected to be completed in six months and Hazarika brought to India. As an ideologue, Hazarika has been in contact with the UN demanding independence for Assam. He has also been in touch with organisations in China.

Along with Hazarika, Paresh Barua has been involved in terrorist activities and killed several security personnel together with innocent civilians. They created trouble in the last two Assam elections. They intimidated supporters of the Congress and the Asom Gana Parishad. Paresh Barua has drawn flak from the Bangladesh government. China has also disowned him. With the death of S.S. Khaplang, he has lost an ally. It is time to mount a crackdown on the militants and start talks with the pro-peace ULFA leaders.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

40 died in Mysore studio fire

At least 40 people were killed and several others injured in night's devastating fire in the Premier studios here. Twenty seven people were killed on the spot while 13 succumbed to injuries in hospital, according to Additional Superintendent of Police Mr M R Poojar. Actor Producer Sanjay Khan suffered serious burns on his back and was stated to be in a critical condition in Bangalore. Five of the victims were young women who were dancing when the fire broke out. Of the injured 15 were undergoing treatment at a hospital here where the condition of ten was said to be serious. The fire was caused when crackers and other fireworks were set off while filming a wedding scene for the television serial "Tippu Sultan". The studio soon turned into an inferno when the fire, which

first caught on the fabric and cardboard used for the set, spread to the gunny bags covering the ceiling. Studio sources said several wires had been found burnt in the studio indicating that there has also been a short circuit. About 200 people and been on the set when the fire broke out. Noted art designer Kalkar of "Pakeezah" fame was among those killed in the fire, while actor-producer Sanjay Khan was admitted to a private hospital in Bangalore with burns on his back. Actress Nina Gupta escaped unhurt as she was in the make-up room. The set consisted of a house in a village. Palm trees and hay had been used to create the village atmosphere. The studio had only two doors, one of which was partially blocked by the set while the other was closed as shooting was in progress.

Modi-Netanyahu bonding is based on common values

Israel looking for major business deals in India

By Arun Srivastava

political career by portraying Palestinians as an existential threat to the Jewish state of Israel. He has thrived on playing the politics of fear and demonising Muslims. Modi too has been pursuing a far-right politics in India.

Modi nursing anti-Muslim view has been an open secret. From refusing to wear scalp cap to denying ticket of his party to even a single Muslim in UP election are some of the glaring examples. While the Muslims were being lynched on the plea of carrying and eating beef he has been maintaining a reflexive silence. He cautioned criminals but did not warn his saffron friends.

“Modi ignoring the basic tenet to say even hallo to Palestine, while on visit to Israel, has embedded the feeling in Israeli people that the Hindu India was closer to them than any other country.”

The increasing tempo of attacks and lynchings shows the Prime Minister's inadequate response to rising communalism. What could be better exposure than befriending Israel for the BJP to show the way to suppress minorities and all those who do not accept the dictates of the NDA?

India and Israel have never before referred to each other as "strategic partners". India has strategic relations with only a handful of countries. France in 1998 and Russia in 2000 were its earliest strategic partners. The US, the UK, Japan and Australia are among the country's major strategic partners. The idea was to broaden India-Israel ties so much that unravelling the partnership becomes difficult for future governments in either country. The two leaders had made clear that they wanted to insulate the relationship from any future upheavals in the Middle East.

Interestingly Netanyahu had referred to the bilateral relationship as "I square T square" - Israeli technology and Indian talent. Modi was more candid. Modi told Israeli President Reuven Rivlin; "It means 'India for Israel.' They agreed, in a joint statement, to not only condemn terrorism in "all

forms and manifestations" but to take strong measures against "those who encourage, support and finance terrorism, or provide sanctuary to terrorists and terror groups".

The prime minister is free to enter into relationship with any country he likes. Look at the way he brought India closer to America even at the peril of risking the defence needs of the country. In spite of serious protests and even objections from the defence experts he has made India virtually an ally of America. In its quest to have a strong relation the government preferred to ignore the anti-India rhetoric and remarks of the USA president Donald Trump. IN fact 2017 has already become

a record year of Israeli weapons sales to India.

It is worth mentioning that at a time when Israel prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing growing isolation internationally and even its traditional patrons have started to lose patience he desperately needed India on his side. It would help salvage the situation for Benjamin. It is Israel that is looking for new international partners to ease the international pressure. Benjamin's agony also got its manifestation in his two remarks.

Netanyahu was obviously thrilled on receiving Modi who is the champion of Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra. One thing is certain that Benjamin was trying to convey his and his countrymen's feeling towards the saffron India. Modi ignoring the basic tenet to say even hallo to Palestine, while on visit to Israel, has embedded the feeling in Israeli people that the Hindu India was closer to them than any other country.

It is a known fact Hindu nationalists in India admire Israel for its domination on Muslim neighbour. Sangh's passion for Israel is almost legendary. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who coined the term Hindutva, had hailed the creation of Israel as a "joyous" moment. He had even publicly clashed with

Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalist leaders for opposing the forced displacement of Palestinians to carve out a Jewish homeland. The previous Indian governments, which supported the cause of Palestine had achieved a strong defence, intelligence and security relationship. The relation blossomed even when both the countries did not have full diplomatic relations. Obviously in this backdrop Modi skipping Palestine question needs to be understood in proper perspective.

Netanyahu's euphoria was evidently much in the form of coming together of anti-Muslim countries and forces. Paradoxically Modi who give Palestine a miss refrained from saying that India would recognise Jerusalem as an exclusively Israeli or Jewish city, for centuries sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is significant that the momentum for Palestinian campaign for statehood has gained in recent weeks. Several European states, including Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, have already recognised Palestine as a state. But the question arises, amid all this, where is India, one of the Palestinians' oldest friends?

With Palestinian campaign's growing momentum and diminishing clout of Israel, around 138 countries voted to give Palestine the enhanced status of a "non-member observer state" at the UN general Assembly in 2012. In April 2016, India joined 32 other countries on the Unesco general board to condemn Israel for its excavation and exclusion policies around the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Al-Haram Al-Sharif area.

The Israeli ecstasy could be understood from the fact that they described Modi's approach and action as tearing down of the "final walls" dividing India and Israel. In Israel Modi identified himself more as an ideological friend of Benjamin than merely performing the role of the Indian prime minister. There is more visible warmth between the two countries since 2014, after Modi became the prime minister. India and Israel view each other as victims of Islamist terror which matches Modi's Hindutva background. (IPA Service)

Nitish Kumar's confession of failure in improving education

Decline beginning with Lalu's time deteriorates further

By Arun Srivastava

Nitish Kumar had taken over the reins of the chief ministership with the promise to usher the state and its people into a new bright future, take them out of the morass of backwardness and empower them. But after 13 years of his government, which incidentally was acclaimed and applauded as the example of good governance, it is an irony that the state has failed to achieve any major success in providing a new direction to education, a major component of the human development index.

The admission of failure has come from none else but the chief minister himself. What he said at the Bihar Skill Development Mission on Sunday to mark the World Youth Skills Day was virtually his self-indictment. Ever since he ascended to power and entered into the cozy office of the chief minister in 2005, Nitish has been consistently harping on reaching education to the door steps of the poor and downtrodden. For him education is the best instrument to fight poverty and empower them, especially poor women. But after 13 years of his performance as the chief executive of Bihar, he has come to realise the bitter truth that he has failed to live up to his promises and give concrete shape and character to his vision.

Addressing participants at the Youth Skills Day, Nitish lamented that Bihar has a Gross Enrolment Ratio of just 13 per cent in the field of higher education. It means around 87 per cent of those who pass Class XII board exams stop studying further, or in other words, drop out from the education system. However, he did not lose hope and asserted that it was time to overturn this trend. Significantly, he reiterated that the state government was taking steps towards this goal. Obviously it is imperative because neither the nation nor the state will progress without the development of the youth.

No doubt Nitish initiated the process of curbing the issue of drop-outs. But all his efforts proved futile. In 2011 it was revealed that more than 1,50,000 bogus and false names were enrolled at the primary levels in government schools. By the time the government could act, the scamsters had defrauded the state exchequer of crores of rupees meant for the purchase of dress, books, cycle and other requirements. In fact, in 2013 Nitish had asked his ministers and district magistrates to move around in the districts and ensure that all eligible boys and girls are enrolled in schools. But there were no takers for his instruction.

In fact, six months ago, his new comrade in arms, the BJP leaders, had leveled serious allegations that the OBC and dalit students were not getting the scholarships and the 'student credit card scheme' was non-functional. Nevertheless, Nitish claimed that the state government was providing Rs 1,000 per month as self-help allowance for two years to youth in the age group of 20 to 25 years so that they could visit different places and search for employment. The plight of the education sector also got manifested in at least three schools running from the same two-room campus. Two class rooms of Balak Madhya Vidyalaya, located in the heart of Patna on Beer Chand Patel Marg, are used by Kanya Madhya Vidyalaya and Madhya Vidyalaya Mithapur. The

Madhya Vidyalaya Mithapur was shifted here after its building was demolished for construction of the Buddha Smriti Park in 2007. Around 1,000 students study in the three schools that run on shifts, with neither enough classrooms nor toilets. They have no other alternative but to run classes on the veranda. There is only one urinal for girls but it is used both by students and teachers. The academic session started in April, but the schools have not received textbooks even after four months.

BN College, a constituent college of Patna University established in 1889, is facing acute shortage of teachers, with many departments running without any or just one or two faculty members. While the physics department has no teacher, the sections of history, political science, Hindi, Urdu, zoology, botany and statistics are running with just one teacher each. Dearth of well-qualified lecturers and professors is a major problem that haunts the colleges and universities. To meet the teachers' crunch the university usually hires some visiting faculty members or students of senior classes at a fee of Rs 250 per class. The college has a sanctioned strength of 102 teachers, but is running with just 32.

A most audacious aspect has been the conduct of the education minister who indulges in self-eulogy. He claimed; "Bihar mein shiksha ka DNA shandar hai (The DNA of education in Bihar is good)," at the foundation day event of the Bihar State Educational Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited. "The students of Bihar have lots of potential and there is big challenge too, but we are taking these challenges as an opportunity in providing quality education to students," he added. The state this year notched up its lowest intermediate pass percentage in over two decades. Naturally, the minister was derided by Shatrughan Prasad Singh, general secretary of Bihar Secondary School Teachers Association, who said that the government's promise of "providing quality education" stands exposed as more than 12,000 subject expert teacher posts are vacant at secondary schools. Even for teachers who are employed, salaries are not paid regularly.

Higher education is languishing in Bihar. All the universities in the state are facing an acute shortage of teachers and lack of infrastructure facilities. For example, there are just 27 physics teachers in the 197 government high schools in Patna district. There are around 41,000 teachers at 5,200 government high schools. Out of these, 34,200 are working on contract while the rest are regular teachers appointed by the government. Teachers' proficiency test has not been held for five years. Unfortunately the government has no parameters to judge the quality of teachers. Academics allege that the government is not interested in filling up teachers' posts at state universities as they want to promote private universities. The Bihar Public Service Commission has to recruit 3,364 assistant professors at nine state universities, but till date only around 750 candidates have received their joining letters. The nature and quality of education provided in a state define the character of that state and the educational institutions. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Myanmar : India's gateway to the East

Editor, When Indian and Chinese troops are in a continued stand-off near Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction, India rolled out the red carpet for Myanmar military chief Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing, who recently visited India. India has long been concerned about cross border activities of North-East insurgent groups taking shelter in Myanmar. India is also worried about China's aggressive sway over Myanmar's peace process. On the other hand China kept providing shelter, aid and weapons to NSCN-IM, which is fighting for independence of Nagaland for decades from Sagaing region of North West Myanmar. The recent attack on pilgrims of Amarnath yatra at Anantnag is a cowardly act supported by

our unfriendly neighbour. Also a closer relationship between Burma and India is not in China's interest.

Myanmar is India's strategic neighbour and the two countries share a 1,640-km-long border with the north eastern states. Now Myanmar looks to India for not just bilateral defence and security cooperation but also to keep a balance on strategic dependence on China. New Delhi is closely watching multi-role combat aircraft deal to Myanmar jointly developed by China and Pakistan with Russia providing training to Myanmar Army Officers. In June 2015, Indian army carried out operations near Indo-Myanmar border against NSCN (IM). Is ULFA (I) in real trouble after the NIA charge sheet recently? India is eyeing shared counter insurgency operations and intelligence sharing on Islamic insurgents operating along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Myanmar is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy. Both countries have

a shared history of colonisation by the British. Ahoms are the descendants of the ethnic Tai people of Burma that ruled the Brahmaputra valley for six centuries. Myanmar has also been attached to India from the time of Buddha.

Myanmar has finally realised after New Delhi distanced itself from China's One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR) which is linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. India is ready to prevent Chinese strategic inroads by expanding defence cooperation with ASEAN countries. India has already signed a USD 37.9 million deal for military weapons and equipments to Myanmar. Indian army is speeding up cooperation with Myanmar Army for patrolling along the porous border. Also Indian Navy warships undertake bilateral maritime surveys. Beyond meeting the military commanders and engaging in diplomacy, the General took time to visit the centre of Buddhist world at Bodhi Gaya and placed keen interest on successful co-

operative movement of Amul Dairy and Tata's cheapest car project Nano. Myanmar is not just a little corridor for trade but a gateway to the South East Asian countries in the future. Is that India's answer to China's one belt one road (OBOR)?

Yours etc.,
Kamal Baruah,
Guwahati

Artefacts must be respected and conserved

Editor, Culture refers to the way of life of people including their behaviors, beliefs, values and symbols and heritage is the full province of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects and culture. It is passed from one generation to the next by communication and imitation. It is our responsibility to protect the culture left behind by our ancestors. Precious stones like diamond, sapphire, emerald, ruby etc and precious metals - gold, silver

etc are plenty in our earth but culture and heritage need to be conserved lest they are forgotten with time. So, whatever we have inherited from our ancestors, we must preserve and maintain it and levitate to the next generation. Two noteworthy incidents must be mentioned as those have happened in recent times. The 4500-year-old mummy of Egyptian Princess Naishu, daughter of the Pharaoh VI was successfully restored by Anupam Sah, the head conservator of Mumbai's Prince of Wales Museum. Princess Naishu's mummy has been in Hyderabad State Museum since around 1920 in an airtight glass enclosure. But still the printed hard crust covering of the mummy began to crack and fall apart. As a result, the bandaged areas began to get exposed. None could help with positive results including the British Museum in London and Museums of Egypt as well. Finally arduous labour of Mr. Sah and team was successful and a nitrogen chamber is made for the mummy which will lead to

complete zero-oxidation or further ageing. Out of the six authentic Egyptian mummies in Indian museums, Naishu's is the only one in South India. The other incident is about a 3000-year-old axe from the Neolithic period that has been shifted to the Pashassi Raja Archaeological Museum at East Hill in Kozhikode. Before shifting it was in a village office in Kasaragod district lying unattended. The axe is 22 cm long, weighing 1.48 kg and made with granite. Similarly, many more axes from Neolithic period were discovered in Kozhikode. We are bestowed our identity and individuality by history and should consider it fortunate to protect our graceful past.

Yours etc.,
Sanjukta Maiti
Shillong - 6

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

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

--- Helen Keller

The Shillong Times

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Sohra Marathon abandoned

THE Sohra Marathon started in 2015 under the aegis of RunMeghalaya a group that has creditable experience in organizing such runs since they are themselves global runners, could not be held this year for want of government support. This was billed to be an annual event and is much looked forward to. It should have figured prominently in the tourism calendar of Meghalaya as it brings runners from across the globe and the country to the state. Held on July 17 every year, the first season was inaugurated by the Chief Minister himself who is also the Tourism Minister. Sports and Youth Affairs Minister, Zenith Sangma was also present and so too were other ministers, MLAs and senior bureaucrats. The Sohra Marathon was meant to be a big ticket tourism promoter as several ancillary units in and around Sohra are set to benefit from the presence of such a huge crowd. But this was not to be. In a state that does not have too many corporate entities, getting sponsorship for such events is a tall order. It is here that the Government should have come in to support the organizers in what should have appropriately been a joint venture. And this is not even a big budget event!

The problem with the Government's Tourism Department is its inability to envisage and nurture a big vision and to sustain any new initiative. Moreover, Tourism is a major Department which should have been handled by a senior minister with adequate experience. The Chief Minister is already overburdened with Finance, Agriculture & Horticulture, Mining & Geology, Planning, Commerce & Industry etc. It's difficult to imagine one person handling so many important portfolios and to be able to keep abreast of the developments in each department. Tourism must not be featuring in the CM's list of priorities! Those in the Department have neither the drive nor enthusiasm to bring key issues related to tourism to the CM's attention. So everything moves in fits and starts. It can be said of Meghalaya that tourism here progresses despite the government. Meanwhile, all who await the annual Sohra Marathon are left hugely disappointed! Wonder what the Tourism Minister and his Department have to say. So too the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs!

Social audit: An element of transparency, accountability and participatory democracy

By Fullmoon Lyngdoh

Social audits refer to a legally mandated process where potential and existing beneficiaries evaluate the implementation of a programme by comparing official records with ground realities. In simple mathematics, RTI plus Public Hearing is equal to Social Audit. Social audit is based on the principle that democratic local governance should be carried out, as far as possible with the consent and understanding of all concerned. It creates an impact upon governance. It values the voice of stakeholders, including marginalized/poor groups whose voices are rarely heard. Social auditing is taken up for the purpose of enhancing local governance, particularly for strengthening accountability and transparency in local bodies. These audits were first made statutory in a 2005 Rural Employment Act.

One of the key ideas of Social Audit is that people should be equipped to carry out audits themselves. The Rajasthan based Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) played an important role in the formulation and passage of the RTI and MNREGA acts and was the first in the country to pioneer social audits. It was one of the basic mechanisms used to establish why the Right to Information was needed. Without information, there's seems to be no way to start questioning. They serve as an important tool to detect corruption and influence redress.

Social audit is no longer a choice. Along with other transparency and accountability platforms, it is a legal, moral, and democratic necessity. The government can decide to use these interventions and harness peoples' energies in facing the vast challenge of implementation and monitoring.

The objectives of Social Audit includes: Prioritization of developmental activities as per requirements, Proper utilization of funds, Conformity of the developmental activity with the stated goals, Quality of service etc. The benefits includes: Involvement of people in developmental activities to ensure that money is spent where it is actually needed, Reduction of wastages, Reduction in corruption, Awareness

among people, Promotes integrity and a sense of community among people, Improves the standard of governance and many others.

Since in every budget, be it the Union Budget or State Budget, more than 50% of the budget goes towards welfare schemes, therefore it's important to track how, and how much money is diverted away from intended recipients. Social audits serve as a better monitoring tool for these schemes.

In some states like Telangana the digitally monitored scheme MGNREGA is physically audited through a system of Social Audit and the images of worksites are captured and uploaded online. MNREGA is world class as every rupee is tracked, but still manipulation is possible. So to say that physical verification is unnecessary because everything is digitally captured is to allow ourselves to fall into a trap. In Meghalaya too, the social audit carried out so far under MNREGA has unearthed several anomalies and irregularities and several FIRs have also been filed against the Rangbah Shnong for failing to provide an account of the implementation of the right to work scheme.

There have been instances where the field personnel have been implicated or removed based on the findings of the social audits. This is indicative of the fact that Social Audit is working and is a tool to further reinforce transparency and accountability in governance.

Social Audit is a must to bring to light lapses, misdeeds and misappropriations in various fields like Education, Healthcare, Employment, treatment of women etc. In Education sector, there have been many allegations on the misuse of the mid-day meal scheme. In Healthcare, the poor patients are subjected to maltreatment and exploitation with funds disbursed for supply to them through medicines, diet etc. Under MNREG Scheme, the number of people actually working is much less than that shown for claiming the wages

payable and the work done is poor in quality and quantity. In several departments/agencies/ Authority etc., be it the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, PWD, Water Resource Dept etc. public money intended for a particular purpose (say blacktopping of a stretch of rural road) is diverted towards purchasing luxury vehicles for officers even though the department's demand for grants submitted to the Assembly Secretariat to finalize the appropriation bills never mentioned such requirements.

Meghalaya being a state not much penetrated by Information Technology, the talks of Digital or e-governance is still a possible distant reality. Many schemes, programs or projects implemented so far have reached the beneficiaries either partially or disproportionately as no audit mechanism is available as of now except for the centrally sponsored scheme-MNREGA due to a statutory provision under section 23 and section 17 of the Act. With the enactment of the Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Service Audit Act, 2017 let's hope that there will be better implementation of government schemes and empowerment for the citizens of the state to participate in the developmental exercise by bringing in an element of transparency and accountability in governance.

The act mandates the inclusion of at least two women in the Social Audit committees (section 11 (3)(iv)) which is very much required in a land, where traditionally only men have been running the show. The objective of this act is to review delivery of public services and implementation of government schemes, programmes and projects through a participatory social audit by the stakeholder as well as the objectives of the act is to educate the citizens and to make them aware of their rights and entitlement thought the process of social audit. It will enhance citizen's ownership in the development initiatives taken up by the Government in the true spirit of participatory democracy. Social audit process will be a

platform for airing of public grievances and ensure a time-bound redress of the same. Under the Act, the government is mandated to constitute a State Social Audit Council. The programmes, schemes and projects implemented by different government departments, agencies or organizations that will be subject to social audit include Education (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Midday Meal), various healthcare services, services provided by MeECL, Climate Change activities and services provided by the PHE department among others.

However, not all is rosy and hurdle free. Experiences indicate that institutionalization on the ground has been inadequate, and has faced great resistance from the establishment. The lack of adequate administrative and political will in institutionalizing social audit to deter corruption has meant that social audits in many parts of the country are not independent from the influence of implementing agencies. Take the case of the Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Service Audit Act, 2017, the act provides for the appointment of members to the State Social Audit Council to be made by the government. As long as the appointment procedure is not neutral and independent, the function of the Council is bound or prone to be influenced by the implementing agency. Effective audit process will highly depend on the integrity, probity and honesty of the District Social Audit Coordinator and the cooperation of the Social Audit Facilitator.

Awareness on the importance of social audit by the village/locality social audit committees will be crucial and the active participation of the masses will be significant which we have to wait and watch. So far there is no news of the above committees having been formed. No NGO has pushed the Government to craft out the rules following the passage of the Act so that it becomes effective at the earliest. Without public pressure the Act will remain another paper tiger.

Drug prices need streamlining for affordable health care Profit margin must be based on actual costs

By Dr. Arun Mitra

In the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 document the government has admitted that every year nearly 6.3 crore people go below poverty line because of out of pocket expenditure on health. About 70% of this expenditure is on drugs and other consumables alone. There has been talk of producing cheap bulk drugs, use of drugs under generic names and also there have been fixation of price of some medicines by the government and opening of fair price medical shops. But the issue still remains as before. The government also admits that the public spending on health is very low. Therefore it is important that the issue is addressed seriously and in right spirit.

intervention of the government to check this raises scepticism. It is important to make it clear to the public as to who fixes the ceiling price and the MRP. How can the companies/dealers afford to sell the products to the hospitals at much lower the amount mentioned as the MRP? Money for all these comes from only one source, that is the patients.

Several organizations including All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN), Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare (ADEH), Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD) had been taking up the issue of price of coronary stents since long. It was after a PIL filed by Advocate

Supply of cheap drugs involves their manufacture, supply chain, proper pricing and quality control. National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) was established in 1995 to fix/revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Price Control) Order 1995. Medicines were split into two parts the essential and nonessential medicines. The NPPA fixed the prices of essential medicines on the basis of National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) provided by the government.

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Birender Sangwan that the government was forced to reduce the price of the stents after a court order.

Therefore it is required that:

The price of the drugs & implants used in healthcare should be calculated as per the costs only. No other method can lead to justifiable fixation of prices of drugs.

The profit margin on the cost thus calculated should not be more than 10% for the wholesaler and 20% for the retailer. No other profit should be given to the health provider.

The difference between the actual price of the drugs and the MRP should not be more than 20% because at present it is up to 700-800% in some cases.

The generic drugs here should mean the pharmaceutical formulations and not the branded generic medicines. To make use of pharmaceutical formulations, compulsory mechanism should be evolved for its application because it cannot be left to the chemists to give medicine of their choice.

Price of same salt by different companies should be same.

Quality control of all types of medicines should be ensured.

All the drugs should be labeled as essential because once a chemical is named as medicine, it automatically becomes essential because no one takes the medicines by choice. (IPA Service)

The writer is a leading ENT specialist based in Ludhiana. He is the Senior Vice-President of Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD). He is presently the member of the core committee of Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare in India. Email ID: idpd2001@hotmail.com.

TO THE EDITOR

Irresponsible HSPDP legislators!

Editor,
As reported by the media, especially by your esteemed daily, I wish to express my utter disappointment, though belatedly, over the boycott of the four HSPDP MLAs of the presidential elections held on July 17 last. This is most unfortunate coming as it does from the honourable members. Though the right vote or not to vote is their prerogative but the right to franchise is their fundamental right, and to elect the president of India is a privilege given only to the members of the Legislative Assemblies and Parliament. I long for the day that this privilege is also extended to all eligible voters of India by amending the Constitution of India. The MLAs may not want to vote for the BJP candidate or the Congress candidate but they should have shown maturity in exercising their franchise and not waste their precious votes. After all there were only two candidates in the fray and there was no HSPDP presidential candidate in the reckoning. They should have set up their own

candidate but they could not due to logistical, practical and technical qualification difficulties. They should have exercised their voting rights and could have chosen either of the two aspirants. But they did not, very sad indeed.

I understand that the four HSPDP legislators will be contesting the upcoming general elections to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly slated for early 2018. They will be striving to canvass for their candidature and will be urging and appealing passionately to voters in their respective constituencies to vote for them. What moral right do they have to do so if they themselves have shirked their responsibilities by not voting for the hallowed office of the country? What example are our legislators setting before us? Do they deserve our votes when they themselves do not vote? When they did not vote in the presidential elections on July 17, it means that their constituents had no hand at all in the election of the President of India because this is, after all, an indirect election! Away with your cheap politics of distancing yourself from the BJP and the Congress. For how long? And don't teach people, for they understand politics

more than you do!

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via email

Animals in distress!

Editor,
With regard to the article Government officials and residents rescue dog (ST July 19, 2017), it may be noted that it is the undersigned, a resident of Nongrim Hills who's son, while playing, actually heard the dog crying and called me. The dog was injured and stuck in the drain. Residents were passing by looking at the creature in distress but sympathy is all they could give to help it. I tried to call all emergency numbers 100, 101 and 108 but all were not reachable. Somehow I got 108 but they refused to help stating that they can only send an ambulance (understandable). I got Laitumkhrah police beat house but all they could advise is "collect some people from the locality and pull it out".

I even called PETA's emergency number and got a lady with sympathy overloaded who said she would send me the numbers of concerned NGO's and departments for which I'm still waiting.

Eventually I called The Shillong Times and it was with the help of the News Editor of the newspaper, Mr EM Jose who himself called and also gave me several numbers, amongst which was that of Mr Aldous Mawlong, IAS, Secretary, (Labour Deptt) and Deputy Commissioner, East Khasi Hills District, Shillong. I called Mr Mawlong and it was he who initiated the whole process of calling the Municipal Board, Forest Department and Veterinary Department after which we could eventually rescue the dog.

I also appreciate the efforts of Aafaque Hussain, reporter, Shillong Times who came and tried his level best to rescue the dog until help arrived. I am really grateful to Mr Andrew Umdor from the Shillong Municipality who took the trouble to come to the rescue even though Nongrim Hills is not their jurisdiction and also Doctor Bateilang Wanswett from the Veterinary Department who came and saved the dog from the jaws of death.

I sincerely hope that the government takes this incident seriously and comes up with a Help Desk that people can call and ask for help in case they see an animal in distress so that

they do not have to go through the rigmarole of calling the entire administration of Shillong to rescue such animals.

Yours etc.,
Vicky Vadera,
Via email

Who will address corruption?

Editor,
It is shocking indeed to read that a Centrally-funded agriculture scheme under Saipung Block of East Jaintia Hills District meant for our poor farmers, to the tune of Rs 15.15 crore was siphoned off to ghost beneficiaries. Your newspaper and another local vernacular paper had reported the same news which reflects how deep the scandal is if there is proper investigation. The block-level agriculture officer, who as alleged, was instrumental in this entire scam and others with him if implicated should be put behind bars. In fact this is not the first such scam to have happened under this Block. Anyone who travels between Sutnga towards Saipung can judge the condition of the road and the role that the PWD department plays along with its contractors. To assume that the sitting local MLA, Hopeful Bamon does not see all this happening and that he does not understands the

plight of his constituents is a joke. Perhaps the Chief Vigilance Commissioner who is the Chief Secretary should take a ride to these places and see for himself the reality that happens around.

Yours etc.
Dominic S.Wankhar
Shillong-3

Using children as human shields!

Editor,
Apropos your editorial, "Gorkhaland demand" (ST, July 5, 2017), Gorkha Janmukti Mocha is showing little respect to our Constitution and human rights. They have stooped so low as to expose children to a violent atmosphere by using them in their rallies. The Child Rights Commission has served a show-cause notice on the Gorkha Janmukti Mocha for bringing out a group of bare-chested boys in fetters and making them walk with the demand for Gorkhaland written in black on their bodies in a Morcha procession. Those who fail their own children cannot be the champions of their own rights.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

“Ambition is a lust that is never quenched, but grows more inflamed and madder by enjoyment.”

--- Charlie McCarthy

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, MONDAY, JULY 24, 2017

Azad Kashmir

INDIA is understandably indignant that the US State Department's "country report on terrorism 2016" referred to Pak Occupied Kashmir (POK) as Azad Jammu and Kashmir. This in spite of the fact that the US report also states that the area is being used by terrorist groups to target India. An official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs in India has said to a daily that the government has not merely taken note of the reference but also raised the matter with the US authorities both in New Delhi and Washington. It is the first time that the US has referred to POK as 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir'. The region is closely controlled by the Pakistan military in the face of Indian protests. The US has used the nomenclature "Pakistan administered Kashmir". It is surprising that while the US state department report praises Indian efforts to combat terrorism, the reference to Azad Kashmir produces a harsh note. India has however reason to feel satisfied with the report referring to J&K as Indian-administered Kashmir which goes against militant demands in the state.

The state report also says that Harkat-ul-Mujahideen operates from Muzaffarabad in Azad J&K. Muzaffarabad is also the headquarters of Lashkar-e-taiba and other terrorist groups. It says that POK is used to launching terrorists into India and plan attacks on Indian military and civilian targets under the direction of the Pakistani army. The US nomenclature is particularly galling to India which is always protesting against Pakistani occupation of the territory. Its objection to China's 'one road, one belt' is because it runs through POK. If the US is keen on countering terrorism, it should do something about controlling activities in the territory.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Bhriku invites ABSU for informal talks

Assam Home Minister Mr Bhriku Kumar Phukan today invited the All Bodo Students Union (Upendra faction) for an informal talks at his residence on either May 5 or 6 to discuss the issue of the presence of a central government observer during negotiation on their demands. The ABSU has been demanding presence of a central

observer during talks with the state government.

In a letter to ABSU president, Mr Pradeep Kumar Diamary, Mr Phukan said that inviting a central observer to future meeting would be appropriate only when "we arrive at mutually acceptable arrangement" in this regard through informal exchange of ideas across the table.

Political Development in the State: So far so Good

By H H Mohrmen

A lot has happened during the last few weeks and all the political developments are linked to the bigger picture which will culminate after the election process to the assembly is completed. The MUA government in its effort to woo voters to its fold has inaugurated not only Mawlai Block but off the cuff, it has also generously given the people of Mawthadraishan a Block of their own. Obviously creating Mawthadraishan Block was a bolt from the blue and the same was done without any proper study or plan.

Dr Mukul Sangma is on an 'inauguration and opening spree' and today it is the inauguration of Community and Rural Development Block, tomorrow it will be bridges, roads and what have you. Obviously, the goal is to make people aware of what the MUA government had achieved in the last five years and the people are not complaining. But the question is why did the Government wait until the eleventh hour to make all this inauguration and announcements? The Government is even launching a new sports policy for the state. But isn't this too little too late? The Government may have achieved much, but the point one should take into consideration is that the Congress is a house in disarray.

The question is whether the Party will face the people in the ensuing general election to the state assembly, en-bloc and united as it is now? Above all the question doing the round is whether the Dhar brothers will remain with the Congress? And reports have also surfaced that the NPP is waiting with open arms to welcome the Dhars to its fold, but it all depends on whether the Congress can allot the party ticket to the family's new entrant to the state politics and contender for the Congress ticket from Jowai. Can the Congress deny the ticket to the party's doyen of several decades in favour of a

greenhorn whose only qualification is because he is the brother in law of Sniawbhalang and Ngaitlang? Sniawbha has already indicated that this is possible.

A precedent has already been created in the case of his older brother who had won from the Umroi constituency by denying ticket to an incumbent MLA. It is also true that Dr R.C. Laloo is no longer the shrewd politician that he once was and more importantly his health and age is working against him. And considering the way MPCC treated the complaint made by the Jowai District Congress Committee against Sniawbhalang, it will not be surprising if Laloo is asked to make way just to please the Dhars. Earlier, Sniawbha assumed that since his main contender is Draison Kharshiing he is confident that Nartiang would be a cake walk for him, but now the game has changed as former bureaucrat Jopthiaw Lyngdoh, IAS has decided to enter the fray. Lyngdoh may not have the kind of money that the Dhars have but he has the experience, the education, the charisma, the respect that Sniawbha does not have and most of all, he has the love of the majority of the people in the area including those in Wahiajer village which used to be Sniawbhalang's stronghold.

In the coming election, all eyes will be on Nartiang, as Jopthiaw will give Sniawbhalang (literarily), a run for his money and it will be a test case which will decide if wealth and money will prevail over education and experience. Then the other pertinent question is also about the independent MLAs who have supported the MUA government for five years now. Are they going to contest on the Congress tickets or are they going to join other parties or remain independent? The three

independent candidates from Jaintia hills who have supported the Mukul-led Congress Government in the State have not made public their stand as to which way they will move but they have made it amply clear that they fear the anti-incumbency factor and most likely they will desert the party.

The good news for the supporters of the regional parties is that major regional parties in the state which include the UDP, the HSPDP and the GNC have finally agreed on a seat sharing formula. The agreed arrangement is that the UDP will contest 17 seats, HSPDP 10 seats and 9 seats would be open to friendly matches in the Khasi Jaintia region of the state. In the Garo hills the UDP has agreed on seat sharing with the Garo National Council. Although some of the legislators complained about making their constituencies open for friendly contests between the regional parties, the alliance will go a long way in consolidating the position of the regional parties in the state.

It is clear as the morning sky that the election will produce a hung assembly and the only option post 2018 election is a coalition government. Therefore the other advantage of having a pre-poll alliance of the regional parties is that in the event of a hung assembly result, the Governor will have to invite the leader of the alliance to form the government even if other parties have won the single largest numbers of seats. Dr Sangma and many Congress leaders claim that after the election, the Congress will emerge as the single largest party and that could be true, but the alliance of the regional parties could also have an impact on the party's chances to form the next government.

The other development that needs to be taken into account is the fact that during the election of the 14th President of the country, it

turns out that the MLAs who voted for the UPA candidate are Congress MLAs and their associate members who support the party in forming the MUA government. Even if the parties did not make it public as to who they voted for in the presidential election, the UDP votes obviously went to the NDA candidate. This also gives the impression that NEDA is still intact and the UDP or the regional alliance and the NPP are likely to partner with the BJP in the event that a non-Congress coalition is in the offing. From the way the MLAs voted, it also indicates which direction the coalition will move in case of a hung assembly in Meghalaya. But the bad news for the NPP is losing the GHADC to the Congress and this will have its impact on the party's performance in the ensuing assembly election in the state. The outcome of the imbroglio in the GHADC is an advantage to the Congress both psychologically and in term of numbers too.

The Congress with only seven members is now ruling the roost in the ADC. This will change the direction in which the result of the elections will go (particularly in the Garo hills region of the state) after the general elections. The resignation of a former minister and a NCP/NPP loyalist in Jaintia hills ECB Bamon will also have an impact on the performance of the party in the Jaintia hills. We still have six months to go before the next assembly elections but the movers and shakers in the state's politics have already created a ruffle here and there. The picture will be clearer after the House meets for the summer session of 2013-18 Assembly. As the saying goes, this is just the beginning. The fun is yet to begin. Till today all the political parties share and agree with the common refrain which says 'so far so good.'

Bahujan Bahumat Sangh ideology in Raisina Hill

By Poonam I Kaushish

The old gives way to the new on Raisina Hill. Meet India's 14th Rashtrapati Ram Nath Kovind, a BJP old hand. While the symbolism of his accession is huge it underscores an important milestone in our political history which till date has been dominated by the left liberal Nehruvian ideology. Call it destiny or a conspiracy of political circumstances, Kovind's ascendancy to the Presidency has broken with tradition. Time will tell how it changes the future. How should one describe him? Kovind 71, a low-profile Dalit leader enjoying a clean reputation who has steered clear of controversy in his over 26-year-old political career who held various organizational positions in the BJP has already secured his place in history as India's first President from the BJP-RSS's ideological stock. Said he, while filing his nomination papers last week, "The President is above Party politics.

The country comes first, not politics". Undeniably, in this "battle of ideologies for a new India" the Opposition, has not only lost real time but also emblematically overtaken and out-smarted by a restless over-active Saffron Parivar, thereby marking a paradigm shift whereby the top four Constitutional positions President, Vice President, Prime Minister and Lok Sabha Speaker are from the Sangh stable and tutored on its ideological moorings. A Saffron quadruple heralding a new political model: The Sangh Model to Power crafted to grab power, debilitate the Opposition and pursue Modi's governance agenda in the run up to the 2019 elections. Whereby, all four in coordinated conjunction would ensure that governance is fast-tracked with two years to go for general elections. With Kovind at the helm, Modi can hope for a smoother ride. He might give a leg up to plans for merging Assembly and State elections, electoral reforms etc along-with giving NaMo moral and institutional support to bring all stake holders on the same page.

Two, Kovind the second Schedule Caste Head of State after KR Narayanan reflects a change of course for the Modi-Shah BJP from its traditional Brahmin-Bania vote base to emerge as a champion of the 'Bahujan samaj' with both Prime Minister Modi and President belonging to a backward caste and Dalit. This outreach is not only to woo the community comprising Mahadalits, OBC's tribals etc which constitutes 20% of the population and garner votes but a signal that the Saffron Parivar intends to expand its share pan India's political map. Said Kovind, "There are so many Kovinds' in the country... this Kovind is going to Rashtrapati Bhawan as their representative." At a time when the Opposition is busy heaping blame on lynching deaths on the Government, the Party can blunt its attack of being anti-Dalit by touting Kovind's example. Alongside the President can help the Saffron brigade cut its losses by raising his voice against lynching, pitching for greater cohesion among the society. Specially, with Mayawati looking to retrieve her Dalit votes, a MahaDalit in Raisina Hills may go a long way for the BJP to keep the Hindu votes united, especially in the politically sensitive and critical state of UP. Of course, despite being an old Sangh hand Kovind must keep equidistance from his old cronies as the equation between the Rashtrapati and our jan sevaks is based on mutual regard and respect which facilitates a healthy give and take. That JD(U) Nitish Kumar broke opposition ranks to hoot for him underscores Kovind has the ability to build confidences with those who hold diametrically opposite political views and work in harmony.

The real acid test for the new Rashtrapati would be to assert his Presidential authority on Constitutional

grey areas and issues having no precedent and exercising his discretion. Towards that end his track record in Bihar will hold him in good stead unlike other NDA Governors in Opposition ruled States who have had numerable run-ins with the Chief Minister at the behest of their mai-baap Centre. How he handles all these will determine his place in history. He needs to keep in mind that 2017 is not the India of 1947, today the President's role has become critical, if the nation is not to be hijacked from its democratic and Constitutional path. The challenge before Kovind will be to come across as neutral and balanced certainly not an "activist" whenever the Opposition knocks on its doors and never be swayed by his ideological background and Party. Succinctly, take a conscience call. This is not to suggest that Kovind will stay silent on any transgressions if done by the BJP Sarkar given his fine record as Bihar Governor, notwithstanding being part of the same ecosystem his actions should be perceived as measured. Consequently, he is unlikely to rock the boat without any pertinent reason.

In this 24X7 digital age and competitive politics, Kovind will have to give all it takes to adhere to the spirit of the Constitution, rather than its letter and act as the nation's "conscience-keeper" along-with balancing the ever-growing inherent contradiction within our polity. Address basic questions vital to the healthy growth of India's nascent democracy. As the country's first citizen he will have to purge caste, creed, regional and linguistic identities which dictated nominations. As President he enjoys vast powers yet he must adhere to what Ambedkar called 'Constitutional morality' whereby he is required to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution to the best of his ability and not that of his Council of Ministers. Kovind would do well to take a leaf out of India's first President Rajendra Prasad's book.

The President is empowered by established conventions to ask questions, delay signing of any proclamation or other papers till the authorities satisfy him fully. He could put pertinent questions to the Centre before signing any document and demand full satisfaction. There is no time limit for him. Thus, as President Kovind needs to be wholly Constitutional and yet act impartially, objectively and independently. Among other things, he could always exercise his judgment and ask for any decision to be reconsidered by the Government Constitutionally, he could even go to Parliament and also seek the opinion of the Supreme Court on any issue of basic importance.

All in all, he can serve the country faithfully only so long as he functions independently and have the guts to speak his mind out on matters that concern the aam aadmi. He should and not hesitate to send Bills back to the Cabinet for reconsideration, in case of disagreement in the best national interest. Given the all-round public cynicism about our netas and the continued erosion of Constitutional institutions, it is vital Kovind redefines the Presidency. India needs a President who would act as the check point for the ruling Government not as a rubber stamp. Recall, Abraham Lincoln's famous quote: public opinion goes deeper than he who enacts statues or pronounces decision." How he achieves this will make or mar his bequest. --- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Vulgar roar of Hindu mission

Editor,
Purity of action and thought are the fundamental principles of every religion. What we do as an action invariably affects our thought processes. So, every religion insists and preaches to its believers to be extra watchful as to how they conduct themselves. It is because of such reasons that we don't see any religious missions and organizations ever encouraging or allowing indiscriminate drinking, partying and such other outrageous activities in their premises that might contribute to contamination of one's mind or that disturb others around. So, it's usually considered impious to organize disco dance or to play vulgar music at least at "places of worship" like a temple, church, masjid, gurudwara etc. Of course, for such naughty fun, the special hotels in the market are available.

Unfortunately, these days one notices many unholy things happening in the holy vicinity of some Hindu temples and its institutions. Thank God, despite the overwhelming surge of consumerism and hedonism the "spiritual sanctity" in churches, masjids, gurudwaras is still perfectly maintained by their respective custodians. About nine months ago one of my relatives' son was disillusioned as he could not

reconcile himself with the deafening music booming out from the Mawprem Hindu Mission, (Shillong). It practically disturbed his class-IX exam that was held in the month of November. Another local resident divulges outright - 'I have long stopped visiting the temple in this Hindu Mission because I practically fail to see any religious values here. I have with my own eyes seen more drunkards dancing recklessly in the high decibel vulgar numbers than the devotees singing devotional songs. I totally blame its management which has literally reduced this sacred institution into a hotel with disco and bar facilities'.

Then recently, on 20th July, many sleeping residents in the area were startled and panicked when some marriage revellers in the Hindu Mission let off firecrackers for about "two-minutes". It was 2:09 AM then. How can they with impunity disturb others in the dead of the night? Has not the Supreme Court "banned" all kinds of noise after 10 PM, not to speak of firecrackers? Again, was this holy "mission" not established in order to uphold and promote Hindu culture and tradition based on the time immemorial sacred Scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita? I can pointedly quote for the management at least a score of couplets from the above scriptures which logically explain why sense-indulgences are the major impediment to spiritual-

awakening and so such religious intuitions should encourage them.

In sharp contrast to it there exists just within 200 meters a Mawprem Presbyterian Church --- undoubtedly a seat of peace and solace. Even during marriage ceremonies, which are often solemnized here, not a single funky song has ever been heard being played and nor could we see any revellers under the influence of alcohols and other intoxicants. The environment here is holy and soul lifting. So, I earnestly urge upon the management of the Mawprem Hindu Mission to uphold "dharma" by taking a cue now from the adjoining Mawprem Presbyterian Church. Please do not make this sacred intuition a butt of ridicule in the eyes of other faithfuls.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwali,
Shillong -2

Sohra Marathon: A clarification!

Editor,
While appreciating the editorial "Sohra Marathon Abandoned"(ST July 22, 2017) for highlighting the significance of the Sohra Marathon, we as members of RunMeghalaya would like to clarify our position regarding some of the concerns raised on this annual sporting event. The Sohra Marathon has been a roller-coaster ride for a

number of issues such as the inability of the organizers to bear the major part of the financial burden, however the biggest issue has always been marathon logistics. This is one of the only Point-to-Point marathons in India - which means that the starting and ending are 42.195km apart. Coupled with the cumulative effects of monsoon rain and storm like the one faced in the last edition, it compromises the safety of runners - which was our biggest concern. And while RUNMeghalaya is driven by the utmost passion to ensure a World-Class marathon event in our State, we felt that the current event was not sustainable in the long run and limited the scope to promote other beautiful and unique regions in Meghalaya that are currently undervalued. After thoroughly reviewing the pros and cons of the last editions, we are currently working together with the Department of Sports and the Tourism Department to now create a more inclusive event under the name - The Meghalaya International Marathon - where we envisage taking the marathon to other regions of Meghalaya annually to encourage tourism and sports in those regions.

This event is planned for December; this year along the Laitlyngkot/Pynursla route and the dates will be released soon. In addition, the State Tourism Department has in fact been one of our strongest supporters and their

cooperation in the past has allowed us to make this event memorable. Along with the Tourism Department we are now working together on a new concept of 'Running Tourism', with an Ultra Marathon called The Mawkyrwat Ultra to be held on the 27th of October. Running Tourism is a concept where runners from across the globe can come and stay with families in the Villages of Mawkyrwat such as Shngimulein for example - eat their food, witness their lifestyle, and run in those unique landscapes of the West Khasi Hills, the region that produces and nurtures the most talented long-distance runners in India. This kind of tourism has the potential to introduce an additional economy throughout the year in a poor region with a limited resource. I would like to wrap up by saying that there are always challenges with any new event and it usually takes a few years for unforeseen issues to be resolved. However a sporting event such as The Sohra Marathon or the now Meghalaya International Marathon, should be the pride of Meghalaya. It is an event where people come together from various parts of India and the globe once a year to run and witness Meghalaya - they are not passive observers but Active Supporters of the event and we as a society are the hosts. I take this opportunity to call on our collective conscience to embrace this event, make it your own - and even if you are not up for running 42 or

21 kilometers, come out and volunteer or cheer for those attempting to complete this incredible feat.

Yours etc.,
Gerald Pde,
RunMeghalaya,
Via email

Gau rakshaks a threat to India's plurality

Editor,
Apropos Lalit Sethi's article, "Will states act to curb cow vigilantes or ignore PM's call" (ST, July 20, 2017), at present gau rakshaks are the most dangerous threats to our national unity. They are destroying pluralism and secularism on which India's unity is based. Lynching in the name of cows not only creates divisions between Hinduism and other religions but also divides Hindu religion itself between orthodox Hindus and liberal Hindus as well as Dalits.

Moreover, the hysteria against beef eaters is going to jeopardize India's labour intensive tourism industry.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

"Ambition is a poor excuse for not having sense enough to be lazy."

--- Robert Southey

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 343 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2017

Outgoing President's nuanced message

IT must be said to the credit of Pranab Mukherjee that he has maintained the dignity and integrity of his office despite being a Congressman appointed during the UPA regime. His broad national vision and outlook have served him well in managing the pressure and pulls of overseeing a Government at the Centre that is seen to be leaning towards a rigid Hindutva ideology. Mukherjee has spoken unequivocally about the essence of maintaining India's pluralistic culture which is an assimilation of diverse ideas over centuries. He spoke at length about maintaining the decorum of parliamentary democracy which respects dissent and works through a cohesive amalgamation of ideas. The outgoing President made an important point about education being the alchemy that will take India to its next golden age. He couldn't have made a more important point. As I had said on assuming Office of the President, education is the alchemy that can take India to its next golden age. A liberal education that respects differences, encourages debates, nurtures creative thinking and a scientific temper are imperative in institutions of higher learning. Indeed the right mix of theory and practice coupled with the social skills to learn to appreciate diversity is what the youth of India needs today. As Pranab Mukherjee says a reordering of society is possible through the transformative power of education.

These thoughts make sense especially in an India that is seeking to place itself amongst the comity of nations. Mukherjee's successor would do well to keep in mind all that his predecessors over decades have done to retain the dignity of Rashtrapati Bhavan through words and actions. It cannot be overemphasized that a President ceases to belong to any political party once he assumes that august office. Ram Nath Kovind would do well to keep his distance to the party he used to belong to and to maintain equi-distance from all political groups.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Growing anti-Assam wave in Arunachal

Assam Police resorted to firing at Tarason village in East Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh injuring two tribal villagers yesterday, official sources said here today. The sources said the firing was resorted to without any provocation on the part of Arunachal tribals but to evict them from the village bordering Sonitpur District of Assam.

High civil and police officials have rushed on a spot inquiry in view of prevailing tension, the sources added. Meanwhile anti-Assamese posters have appeared in this Capital complex and adjoining districts demanding withdrawal of Assam police battalion from Arunachal Pradesh. The posters appeared in the name of the Arunachal Pradesh volunteer force, self styled organization formed recently to defend the state's territory and protect the life and property of the people along the foot hills. The posters also demanded an inquiry by the CBI into the alleged murder of an Arunachalee recently in the lock-up of Assam Police at Silapathar.

Scared by the posters, Assamese residents have also demanded the CBI inquiry into the murder and setting up by the two states a joint inquiry committee headed by a high court judge in this connection. The Assamese have appealed to the people of both the states to maintain their age-old tradition of

peace and amity.

Failing telecom services hit Shillong media

The functioning of the print media news agencies, and radio has been severely affected in Shillong due to frequent Telecom failure for nearly a month. Almost every single day of April witnessed breakdown or disturbance of either the microwave or the VFT, thus disrupting the flow of news from the rest of the world. The working of the two major news services here, UNI and PTI on which the local radio and press depend for news, have been affected due to the communication breaks.

The Shillong Times has been particularly hard hit due to the failure of the telecom services and many important national and international events could not be covered in the paper. Shillong based correspondents of national newspapers and publications who depend on the telex to file their reports have been complaining bitterly about the perpetual failure of telex lines. It may be recalled that the Union Communications Minister had recently made an announcement in New Delhi that a high powered cell had been set up in Shillong to facilitate quick dispatch of press message sent by journalists in the North East. Nothing definite is known about the existence of the cell and its failure of functioning.

The famous song of John Lennon, "Imagine" is perhaps one of the most thought provoking songs ever written. The theme of the song is so prophetic that it deserves to be quoted off and on. In the context of what we are witnessing today where some countries become so ambitious and greedy that they trample upon the rights of weaker nations, nothing could be more relevant to put forward as food for thought. The surge of nationalist feelings be it in China, Russia, US or India and anywhere in the world, is dragging the world to the edge of a nuclear war. Today in the stand-off between China and India, both countries are not budging an inch and this could lead to some dangerous spill out. China for one, is a highly imperialist nation that seeks to grab as much as possible and trying to impinge its power on others. Perhaps what it did in Tibet in 1950, it is trying to do the same in Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. The belligerent attitude of China betrays its spirit of intolerance and contempt for its neighbours.

It is strange that humanity has never learnt hard lessons from history. The German nation under Adolf Hitler, the Italians under Benito Mussolini and the Japanese under Emperor Hirohito, were roused to an exaggerated nationalist sentiment and the consequence was World War II where millions of innocent people lost their lives and untold destruction was wrought upon the world. Today China and India are doing the same and God forbid, a war could be in the offing. Both countries have strong leaders and what could be more

"Imagine there's no country"

By Barnes Mawrie

dangerous than this. There are two types of nationalisms, namely, inclusive nationalism and exclusive nationalism. Inclusive nationalism or positive nationalism is one that transcends one's own country or one's own community. Thus while being loyal to one's own country, one does not disrespect or violate the integrity of others. Inclusive nationalism is inspired by pure

The European Union founded by great visionaries like Robert Schuman, Paul-Henri Spaak and Altiero Spinelli, is one typical example of how different countries can come together to form a community. As of now, it is unlikely that any of these countries would go to war against the other.

humanism. Exclusive nationalism or negative nationalism on the other hand generates narrow-mindedness and tends to look upon others as hostile to oneself. This is what leads to wars and conflicts. What China and India need today is to foster an inclusive nationalism among their citizens. That is the only formula to a peaceful co-existence between the two nations. Imagine what would happen if the two countries go to war. Everything that they have built up all these past decades will be wiped out in seconds, so where's the benefit of a war? It is only a display of pride and ambition.

the old ideology and stop the old habit. Humanity must begin to live as though there is no country but just one community. Is this possible? One may ask. In my opinion, it is possible to a great extent if not totally. Human beings after all, are capable of the most noble sentiments of love and brotherhood as has been displayed by many great souls in history. The European Union founded by great visionaries like Robert Schuman, Paul-Henri Spaak and Altiero Spinelli, is one typical example of how different countries can come together to form a community. As of now, it is unlikely that any of these countries would go to war

against the other. The fact that they are able to form a common Parliament, the EU Parliament which legislates on the basis of common welfare, the use of a common currency and the presence of a schengen visa (which theoretically wipes out territorial demarcations), are ample proofs that when leaders have the goodwill and are motivated by an inclusive nationalism, there is always a possibility.

China, India and Pakistan need to learn a lesson from the EU that instead of bickering with each other, they should try to cooperate more. The greed for more territory in the case of China is a clear sign of human greed that can never be satisfied even if they occupy the whole continent of Asia. In fact, it should be considered a sort of mental derangement. However, the type of solidarity like that of the EU, would not be possible until and unless all the three countries let go of their eccentricity, greed and hypocrisy. First of all, they need to nurture an inclusive nationalism and become more transparent in their relationship. As of now these countries are operating on mutual suspicion more than on anything else. Such a diplomatic relationship is superficial and is like an inflated balloon which one day would burst. What we need to do is just pray and wait so that these leaders would gradually be guided by right reason and wisdom and would never discard the universal value of "brotherhood of man."

TO THE EDITOR

Sohra Marathon!

Editor,
I was one of the runners who had participated in the Sohra Marathon of 2015, which was inaugurated by the Chief Minister, Dr Mukul Sangma. It was nice to see him there with many dignitaries including some of his colleagues like Ampareen Lyngdoh. The then Chief Secretary, Barkos Warjri was also present. Their presence combined with the runners' enthusiasm rendered an almost festive air to the whole race. It was a great mix of professionalism and pure fun. These kinds of gestures by the top people of the Government is rarely shown where I come from. Though I worked for a University based in Shillong I was not from hereabouts. I am from Chennai. The sheer hospitality was overwhelming. I had sponsored 10 boys and girls from Umsning where I am based. They came to know what a Marathon was and what it took to win one! The youngsters definitely got a good exposure which I am sure they will not easily forget. I am highlighting these and many other good points which went to make the Sohra 2015 a great success. I only wish that the RunMeghalaya Convenor, Gerald Pde... (three cheers to him for remaining calm and collected throughout the event in spite of various responsibilities)...could persist with his wonderful initiative to continue this beautiful event with suitable changes which may be required due to whatever factors which forced them to discontinue it this year. I, for one can liaise with some top corporate houses down south to sponsor this event if there are financial constraints.

Yours etc.,
Sushil D Bhagavandas
Umsning - 5

Quest for mental peace!

Editor,
It is human greed that causes poverty, slavery and all kinds of human miseries for the needy and mechanical existence and boredom for the greedy. And these products of human greed trigger depression among us. Indeed, if we can change ourselves, we will be able to make our political, social and economic environment free from pollution and there is no question of searching for an antidote to depression in such an ideal environment. But it would be foolish to let depression snowball within us just waiting for such an egalitarian world. In that case, depression will overpower us and ultimately kill us. So, we need to desperately search for immediate relief for our own survival. To combat bronchial disease, our doctors sometimes advise us to wear masks. This is not to belittle air pollution or our physical strength but to survive amidst pollution. Similarly, when a psychologist or a friend advises us to listen to soothing music, to read an inspiring book and to get solace in the beauty of nature, she/ he also does not belittle social pollution or our mental strength. Such prescription is only for getting us going even in a bad environment.

It is dangerous to try tobacco products, alcohol or drugs to rid ourselves of depression or any kind of mental stress. These will only add insult to injury. It will be like pouring diesel to put out the fires of depression. It is also dangerous to nurture the idea that mental illness and physical illness exist in two completely separate compartments. Such prejudices make us treat

mental patients with suspicion and make fun of them especially in working places. But we need to remember that the mind and the body are closely connected and therefore such rigid compartmentalization does not make any sense.

We all need a good natural and social environment to keep all diseases away. Indeed, we all need an environment where everyone can get such material things as potable water, nutritious food, enough money and such spiritual things as cooperation, compassion, love and satisfaction. Until we can make our world such a heaven, we must not hesitate to get solace in music, books and in the beauties of nature even if they provide us only with temporary relief. After all, they have no negative side effects but only positive ones.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Expression of gratitude

Editor,
We take this opportunity through your esteemed daily to thank the staff and plumbers of Shillong Municipality Board (SMB) for doing a great job in repairing the big water pipe which had broken at two places since July 13, near Pine Mount School and just over the Umshyri stream. With a lot of effort by the plumbers, finally a new pipe was installed and water supply was restored on July 20. The non-stop rainfall deterred the workers because they had to work on a bamboo platform set up over the gushing stream.

The telephone operator at the SMB Public Grievance Cell too was very helpful and courteous.

Please keep up the good work!

Your etc.,
Jjyrya, M Mawrie,
K Acharya & Z Khan

Stop interfering!

Editor,
When we talk about the political scenario of Meghalaya, I cannot help but comment on it. The war of words between the two national parties - the Congress and the BJP is getting murkier by the day. From the BJP's side we have seen Nalin Kohli, Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union Ministers, etc pointing their fingers at the Congress-led Government in the State on various issues. I cannot understand why these people from outside Meghalaya are interfering into the everyday affairs of the state! Why are they pointing fingers at our political affairs? We have never seen a political leader of Meghalaya pointing fingers at the political matters of any state. These loose cannons should not be allowed to have a free run of Meghalaya. They have better things to do elsewhere and in their respective states.

People and political leaders of Meghalaya should not allow these loudmouths to have their way. This is our state hence people coming in from outside should learn how to practice restraint. The Chief Minister of Meghalaya had been aggressive in replying to their accusations. Others should follow suit.

Yours etc.,
Joannes JTL Lamare,
Nongkrem

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.

Data Protection and Privacy

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The recent debates in the Supreme Court on the issue of Aadhar have forced us to ask another fundamental question to ourselves - What is the status of the data that we would all generate? Irrespective of how the Hon'ble Court would view AADHAR the question of data and data protection becomes indeed more fundamental in itself. To understand the data position we must however digress from the issue of AADHAR and instead chose to focus on what AADHAR encompasses and what it seeks to do.

AADHAR number issued to each individual would capture biometric data of each individual. Scientists and activists worry that such data might fall into the hands of unscrupulous people tomorrow who make take advantage of the same. Yet to limit the discussion to biometric data alone would be akin to not being able to understand the nuances of data protection. Data on a more basic level is information. This information can be in various forms from medical records to biometric information. It may also mean information of financial details, bank passwords, and corporate formulas among others. In a rapidly changing world which is increasingly being governed by the Internet of Things (IoT) a person generates a number of information each day that he/she interacts. This can take the form of book preferences in Amazon to route preferences in Uber.

data protection. Data protection has two aspects. One at the individual level, the other at an institutional level.

On an individual level data protection has to start recognising that the potential as well as the risks to an individual are immense. And the first step towards that is recognition. Often individuals are not aware of risks that such systems pose. They log into airport Free Wifi as soon as they get one, little realising that they are handing away their data and personal information to private companies. At other times they have no problem sharing phone numbers with shopping malls. Little do the people realise that every action of theirs is potential data which can then be solved by these companies to those who require data for a hefty price all without the knowledge of an individual. Such actions might have even larger ramifications like leaking of personal financial records and cyber theft among others. Hence, as a first step to data protection an individual must be made aware of the importance of data and the need to protect the identity and integrity of that data.

The second part of this problem is with data protection at an institutional level. India is waking up to the problem of data protection. While the right noises have been made and some steps have been taken, yet more concrete steps must be taken in this regard. As a first step all companies and entities must be made responsible for the data that

AADHAR number issued to each individual would capture biometric data of each individual. Scientists and activists worry that such data might fall into the hands of unscrupulous people tomorrow who make take advantage of the same.

And each bit of information becomes a window to the person. And this is what makes this information valuable. Companies who are looking to sell products would make a killing to be able to access such information. In the modern world 'data is the new oil'. It is the new fuel that will run the growth engine of companies. As the business world rapidly transforms itself, it is data that gets that will drive the growth and balance sheet of companies.

In a digital world, the word digital would mean different things to different people. And yet the question of data is not limited to IT companies alone. For over two decades now IT majors have partnered with Formula 1 racing companies helping them design algorithms working on different projections which have increased their efficiency while reducing the fuel intake at the same time. At the core of such partnership is how these companies have tapped into the data of the original brick and mortar companies and used it to design better systems. Thus data and its utilisation is something which will only increase in the years to come. Thus it is not surprising that the protection of data is important as well.

In the past few months there have been repeated attempts in premier banks like Axis and SBI to steal data and financial details of people who have their accounts in these banks. While because of the heightened security that banking companies employ these attempts were largely thwarted yet it opens the question of vulnerability to data theft and the need for

they collect. That data should be confidential and should be used by the company only in a manner and form that the customer had wanted it in the first place. If any company is found violating the same strict punishment must be imposed on those companies.

Secondly it must also be ensured that cross border trading of data among multinational corporations must be under specific guidelines and must not continue unregulated. Unregulated flow of data of citizens in foreign shores can itself signal a threat to national security wherein new forms of cyber terrorism might take place while using identities of those who are citizens of the nation itself. Hence the government must monitor the data that travels out of the national shores in a vigilant manner. On the other hand the lack of a strong data protection regime can harm India's image and vision to be a market leader and a world leader in cyber security. To counter the same India needs to develop a stronger data protection regime.

One of the first steps that would go a long way in allaying these concerns would be to bring effective changes in Section 43A of the Information Technology Act 2008. The discourse has to shift from maintaining "reasonable" protection to complete protection as India marches into the new era of Industrial Revolution and the next stage of the Digital Revolution. In such changing circumstances it is imperative that India redesigns its data protection and security regime.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

"Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody."

--- Robby Novak

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 344

SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Blowing hot and cold

INDIA is never soft on China but the Narendra Modi administration has tried to avoid jingoism in its current standoff with China. It is sensible because war mongering is counter-productive. At the present moment the country's limitations are many. Demonetisation has dealt a blow to the economy and the impact of the GST is still hard to assess. In such circumstances, New Delhi cannot afford a military confrontation. The Comptroller and Auditor General has told Parliament that some of India's military supplies may not last even 40 days in case a full scale war erupts. Modi has of course built a bridge with several foreign heads of state but they are busy protecting their own interests and can hardly have time for India's concerns.

The Indian Foreign Ministry has said that Indian troops entered into Doklam claimed by China and Bhutan in coordination with the Bhutan government according to a 2007 bilateral agreement. New Delhi fears that by taking control of Doklam, China may create a tri-junction with India and Bhutan, closer to the chicken's neck which connects north-eastern states with mainland India. It is the Chinese foreign ministry which has been spewing rhetoric. China insists that India must pull its troops out of Doklam as a pre-condition for talks. India merely seeks a return to the status quo ante. Delhi emphasises its commitment to diplomacy in resolving the present conflict. India's foreign policy is perhaps sometime clouded by a big brotherly aggressive attitude. But this time diplomacy has held sway. The Prime Minister has to resort to behind the scenes diplomacy in dealing with foreign affairs if there are conflicts.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Bill on Chakma autonomy

A Dhaka report says that a Bill has just been introduced in Bangladesh Parliament to grant limited autonomy to the tribal people in the three trouble-torn hill districts in south-eastern Bangladesh,

that is Chittagong Hill Tracts. Mr Maudud Ahmed, the Prime Minister, who introduced the Bill in the House, said this 'historic step' would bring about a political solution to the outstanding problems.

TO THE EDITOR

Who will regulate the SPTS?

Editor,
Rarely has there been a time when taking the bus was a joyride. Being groped & grinded on from the man behind are just two of the scarring & humiliating moments of my bus riding school days. I would prefer taking the taxi, but that is another issue in itself, what with many taxi drivers demanding a king's ransom for a 15 minute drop. I'm twenty two years old now, and much has changed in the public transport scene...and it's not all good. We've got, as usual, many awfully rude bus conductors who hold out on 5-rupee change for 'lack of it'. But it wasn't until recently that I realised the dudes have upped their game in that regard as my 15 year old sister was getting off of a bus and asked the conductor for her change, to which he sarcastically replied that she'd get it if she rides the same bus the next day. Pardon my language, but the guy is an ass who needs a couple of workshops on being nice. The second thing I'd like to point out is the capacity of passengers allowed on each bus. I don't know when 50-60 became the new 32, but I'm pretty sure sardines in a can get packed better than humans in a Shillong bus. The last thing I want to address is safety. A few weeks ago, a drunk man was cussing as loud as humanly possible at the packed potatoes in the moving bus to make room for him, all while hanging from MY window bars at the side of the bus. It was insane, to

say the least! And while we're on the subject of insane passengers, the stampeede that patiently (and not so patiently) wait for a bus in Motphran during the evening hours is the scariest situation I would never want to be in. Little kids, old grannies and grandpas get painfully pushed to the side while the younger lot rush in to get a seat. It's so unreal, so crazy! I sincerely request the traffic police to step in before someone gets hurt or worse and for the bus conductors and us the passengers to step up as kinder & more sensible people.

Yours etc.,
G. Thangkiew,
Shillong-17

UDP-HSPDP duping people

Editor,
The Shillong Times and other media have highlighted about the pre-poll seat sharing pact between the two principal state parties, United Democratic Party (UDP) and Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party (HSPDP). The latest agreed pact was that out of 36 assembly seats within Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the two parties will not contest against each other in 27 seats. Out of the 27 seats, UDP will contest in 17 seats and HSPDP in 10. The remaining 9 seats are left open for both parties to engage in friendly contests. This is a big sham and a farce. There is no such thing as a 'friendly match' or friendly contest in election. A contest is a contest. There are only election fixing contests, not friendly. On the other hand in the Garo Hills, the

HSPDP has no stake at all as it has absolutely no base and it is left to the UDP to have a pre-poll understanding with Garo National Council (GNC).

Though majority of the people of Meghalaya are regional minded and would certainly like to see the regional parties coming to power in Meghalaya in 2018, yet due to the non-inclusion of all regional parties (nay state parties) like KHNAM and PDF into this pre-poll pact, the regional minded people in the state are frustrated. They see this alliance between the UDP and HSPDP as a pretension and a ploy to deceive common people. They also strongly suspect that this pact is nothing but a match fixing between the top brass of the UDP-HSPDP and the Congress. In fact, at present the combined strength of UDP-HSPDP is 12 MLAs. What they need is just another 19 more MLAs in 2018 to form a government. If they carry along the other state parties and have a sincere pre-poll understanding, they will easily get additional 20 MLAs which is enough to form a government in 2018, taking into account the strong anti-incumbency factor and other political discontentment that is brewing in the state.

But that is not to be as things stand today. In fact this political game of 'friendly contest' has been tested in the past at least in two occasions and it proved disastrous.

Immediately after the seat sharing pact which was announced recently, a lot of confusion has arisen. There is open rebellion in the party rank and file within these parties in nearly all constituencies. Some of the sitting MLAs of these

parties and also prominent MLA aspirants are planning to contest from other parties' candidates. Again, prominent and ardent supporters of these two parties cannot see eye to eye with each other because of traditional political rivalry between them. If their parties' candidates are not contesting, they would rather abstain from voting or vote for some other candidates not belonging to UDP or HSPDP. This pact will defeat the very purpose of the poll strategy. However, either ways, this may work in favour of the Congress or independents in many constituencies since NPP is yet to be properly rooted in K&J Hills and BJP is yet to find its base in rural constituencies and is active only in some urban areas.

In this climate of political uncertainty such as the one prevailing today in Meghalaya, the ultimate alternative is the BJP, but the party has no organisational units in rural areas and the BJP has no leader with a mass following. Nor can the BJP show up any good work it has done in the villages and towns of Meghalaya which can draw people to its fold. Instead there is only strong propaganda of anti cow slaughter and anti beef selling and eating, which the state BJP is unable to counter.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via email

Do we deserve bad roads?

Editor,
I felt a chill down my

spine when I read the news of how a woman biker was crushed to death after she fell off her motorcycle when it hit a pothole in Mumbai. We usually perceive bikers as being reckless and unmindful of other vehicles and people but here the issue is of a blatant display of lack of responsibility of our government and representatives. The five year term has always been for the good of the self first with public welfare coming last. This state of affairs is no different in our state as well. Apart from our roads being so narrow, there are potholes galore that make driving dangerous, risky and life threatening in almost every part of Shillong. A classic example is the approach road to the parking lot at Khlieh Iewduh. It's just been a year since that particular stretch was repaired and today the road wears a dilapidated look filled with potholes so vehicles plying along this road screech endlessly. The road is used by people from all parts of the state for trade and commerce. I would like to remind all that the road is very important as it is the lifeline to Iewduh which is one of the biggest markets in the state. The condition of the road is such that one fears that precious lives may be lost any day should a goods laden truck/bus turn turtle in one of the potholes and collapses on pedestrians or the smaller vehicles parked along and plying through this road. What is sadder is that this road is not being used by the elite, government officials and higher echelons of the society therefore it is not being taken care of. However for the well-being of the common people of the state isn't it the duty of the authorities concerned to

micro environmental factors are stable and in a much better shape than it was a few years back, it is often said. A strong leadership, political stability and a pro business attitude of government has set a solid ground for future growth. If all goes well we could be at the beginning of mother of all bull runs. But a lot depends on how demand picks up locally and globally from here in coming years and how fast corporate can translate these into their quarterly results.

Presently, if the CAG report is to be believed much of it is window dressing despite the rules having been made more stringent by SEBI and other government agencies. However, there are a few positive factors. India is doing better than slow moving Europe and the US, which cannot grow more than 1-2 per cent a year. Indian growth is to hover around 7 per cent.

The second aspect is that global and domestic liquidity is stated to be high. While the west is awash with cash, in India large amounts of money are flowing into stocks with bank money. Another factor is helping the stock market. It is the underperformance of other assets like gold, real estate and even debt. In short term, the revival of these assets is not foreseen. So the money flows in to the stocks.

Mutual funds too are playing big. They have invested Rs 2,21,033 crore between May 2014 and June 2017. During the past three months itself they invested Rs 26,503 crore. So would not the market fall? A market crash is inevitable. But when will it occur? Nobody can say. If it happens there can be mayhem. ---INFA

have repaired the road well before the monsoons? The rain is only making it worse because at present the condition of the road is such that can only deteriorate further. I appeal to both the print and electronic media to take time and visit the road and bring its pathetic condition to light so that the government and concerned authorities wake up and do the needful. As a concerned individual, I hope I am not asking for too much!

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Kudos ladies in blue!

Editor,
This refers to the report, "Women in blue : An inspiration for the next generation" (ST, July 25, 2017). Hats off to Jhulan Goswami (10 - 3 - 23 - 3) and Punam Raut (86 runs) for their brilliant performances in the World Cup final. It was so near (191 for 3) yet so far (219 all out) for Mithali and her girls at Lord's. Only 9 runs separated them from the World Cup! This World Cup is a turning point in women's cricket in India as it has aroused tremendous interest among Indians. Now, India must start IPL for women's cricket and stop using girls as cheerleaders only.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

Boom and bust Stocks upsurge, economic mayhem?

By Shivaji Sarkar

a bull run. That means some people are putting in large sums in the capital market. Does this mean that falling bank interests and inflation led to improvement in the health of the capital market? If it is so, it is a danger for the economy. It is an indicator that bank deposits are being utilised to buy shares and do speculative trading. Interest rates are low and so are the commodity

That these fears are not unfounded is supported by the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) latest report that found that major telecom companies -- Bharti Airtel, Vodafone, Idea, Reliance Communications and Aircel -- revealed "total understatement of adjusted gross revenues (AGR) of Rs 60,064.5 crore" between 2010-11 to 2014-15. The CAG says this is for saving taxes. But such understatements

"So the fear of bank money being utilised for speculative investments may be real."

prices. This means that while the common bank depositors are gasping as their interest hedging is coming down, equity market speculators' earning is going up. In other words, as the poor suffer, the rich are gaining!

This is a danger for both the economic and sociological factors. Some large companies have come out with results of huge profit in the April-June quarter. It is said that some more may be doing it. While announcing profits, many of these companies carefully conceal their debt in the balance sheet.

In other words, the performance of these groups may further be affecting the health of the banking sector. It may be recalled that two of the worst stock scams -- Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh -- were funded by the public sector banks. The UTI and LIC scams were of similar nature. Public money was lost and the public institutions bore the brunt. The lurking question is whether the better performing equity market would increase bank NPAs?

are not uncommon. Recall Satyam too had grossly inflated its statements.

The CAG stated the understatement of AGR was linked to promotional schemes, which included free talk time, discounts as well as non-inclusion of profit from sale of investment. The recent boom in prices is significantly linked to the announcement of many such free schemes by one of the biggest operators. In 2014, the government had issued show-cause notices to some of the top telecom firms for under-reporting revenues.

So the fear of bank money being utilised for speculative investments may be real. It means there are larger threats to the Indian economy than being perceived.

An interesting aspect is that mid-cap and small-cap stocks have seen greater increase in their prices based on "future" earnings growth. If it fails to keep up with expectations, a sharp fall in their prices would be the only possibility. The risk factor is serious as many of these companies lack a strong track record of sustainable earnings. India's own macros and

India must stand firm on Doklam

By Kanwal Sibal

Sushma Swaraj's statement in parliament on the Doklam plateau standoff should be commended. It was restrained, unlike the belligerent statements emanating from the Chinese foreign office. By declaring that China's road building activity in Doklam was a threat to India's security she sent a firm message that India will resist Chinese attempts to determine the Sikkim-Tibet-Bhutan tri-junction unilaterally in violation of its understandings both with Bhutan and India.

Her approach that the solution to the impasse in Doklam lay in both countries withdrawing their soldiers to previous positions and restoring the status quo

facilitate the use of the Arctic route for trade with Europe provide massive opportunities for Chinese infrastructure companies. That a line like this can be purveyed, fed probably by the Chinese embassy, with accusations against the Prime Minister for making a series of provocative moves against China and peddling scenarios of a crushing, humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chinese of our unprepared army headed by a politically appointed army chief, shows the extent to which we are ready to sap the national morale to the advantage of an external adversary because of internal political prejudices. In reality, China's diplomatic and media-

"Swaraj's statement is significant as it follows a spate of dire warnings from China, officially and through its state controlled press, that India should heed the lesson of 1962, that China will not compromise on the issue as it involves its sovereignty, that as its patience eventually runs out, China will use force to evict the Indian troops and so on."

ante is eminently reasonable. She has implicitly dismissed China's imperious demand that India must first withdraw its troops from "Chinese territory" prior to any dialogue. This attempt to dictate terms to India by a country that has deliberately triggered the current confrontation through a calculated act that it knew would attract an Indian response has been rejected. India and China have had a conflict in this general area in 1967 but, more pertinently in terms of more recent experience, the two countries were locked in a confrontation in Depsang (2013) and Chumar (2014). China has therefore not walked into the current border stand-off as an unwary party falling victim to an unprovoked warmongering by a third country.

Swaraj's statement is significant as it follows a spate of dire warnings from China, officially and through its state controlled press, that India should heed the lesson of 1962, that China will not compromise on the issue as it involves its sovereignty, that as its patience eventually runs out, China will use force to evict the Indian troops and so on. If the purpose of employing thunderous language was to intimidate India and unnerve its leadership, the external affairs minister's statement shows these tactics have failed. The government is showing signs of confidence in dealing with the situation despite China's psychological warfare against us getting a boost from some Indian commentators who have purveyed the Chinese line with some gusto and much of our media that has been uncritically disseminating China's propagandist versions of the stand-off and echoing its menacing statements as well.

Preposterous explanations have been given by some China apologists in our country that China is building the road in Doklam because its infrastructure companies have run out of orders, and as its military have large budgets to spend, some powerfully connected construction company is trying to fill its order book! One thought that the humungous Belt and Road Initiative, the \$ 50 billion China intends to spend on infrastructure in Pakistan, and \$ 20 billion that it is committed to spending on developing ports to

channeled tongue-lashing against India reflects its frustration at not being in a position to take India head-on militarily in a localised conflict in this theatre without suffering heavy casualties. Talk of evicting Indian soldiers from this area by force is just bluster. If it opens a front in a disputed area elsewhere where it is advantageously placed- though we will be able to monitor a Chinese build up through our technical means and prepare ourselves- it will be seen as responsible for broadening the conflict. If we, in return, opted to retaliate in disputed areas where we have advantage, it will mean a further step on the escalatory ladder. China has no easy options just as we do not either. A sane Chinese approach, in its own interest, would be to resolve the current stand-off diplomatically on an equitable basis and tone down its trade-mark arrogant and crude behaviour. If the Chinese up the ante in Kashmir or the north-east, they must think of their political vulnerabilities in Tibet and Taiwan.

Much is being made by some in Indian quarters of Bhutan's reticence on the developing situation as a sign of its reservations about our intervention. This too contributes to the Chinese game of weakening India's position. It is politic on Bhutan's part not to get caught too much in the cross-fire between China and India and let the latter handle the situation. Bhutan's statement about China violating bilateral understandings over this disputed area is sufficient. By being too vocal and inviting more Chinese bullying, it will draw India into the quarrel even more, which would be undesirable for both Bhutan and India. Some Bhutanese may prefer to distance themselves from India-China frictions for sovereignty reasons, but in falling prey to China's strategy of destabilising India's neighbourhood they would seriously hurt their own self-interest.

That Sushma Swaraj's enunciation of India's position has come before the National Security Adviser visits Beijing for a BRICS NSAs meeting means that any dialogue in Beijing will have to be within its scope. India should neither seek escalation nor accept China's hegemonic conduct.

(The author is former Foreign Secretary)

“All sins have their origin in a sense of inferiority otherwise called ambition.”

--- Sir James M. Barrie

The Shillong Times

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Law on abortion

A 10-year-old girl was raped in Chandigarh. The state is in a dilemma as to what is to be done with her pregnancy? The law should allow abortion in cases of pregnancy caused by sexual assault. But the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act of 1971 is very complicated. The Supreme Court has now sought the opinion of a panel of doctors to affirm the health of the 10-year-old who has been raped. It is to be ascertained if her health is to be adversely affected if her pregnancy is allowed to continue to its full term. The MTP Act allows abortion if only it is necessary for the health of a pregnant woman. The judiciary's sanction is also necessary. Abortion petitions have been rejected on more than one occasion because of the legal impediment. A 26 week old foetus could not be allowed to lead to the birth of a child if it is likely to be born with abnormalities. The abnormalities are said to show up after 18 weeks. But sufficient time should be spent by the parents to decide if they should keep the baby.

Changes in the law were drafted in 2014. The amendments dispense with the court's sanction for aborting of a more than 20 week old pregnancy. The decision should lie with the health care provider provided pregnancy is likely to jeopardise the health of the mother or the child. Rape causes grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman. That should be a case for abortion. But the changes in the Act have not been implemented yet. It is ironic why such a law is not debated in the light of so many rape cases in this country.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Panel to explore Sikkim-Centre Tax Wrangle

A committee consisting of three representatives each of the Centre and the Sikkim Government is being set up to go into the issue of extension of direct central tax laws to the Himalayan state. Chief Minister Mr N B Bhandari in a statement said today that the committee would go into the issue in order to evolve an amicable solution acceptable to both the centre and the state. He said that in view of the Prime Minister's assurance,

the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, the ruling party in the state, had decided to call off the proposed dharna at the Boat Club here tomorrow. Mr Bhandari said the suggestion to set up a committee was made by him during his meeting with the Prime Minister this morning. Mr Gandhi, who accepted the suggestion, proposed that the committee should consist of three members each from the centre and the state.

The Sun rises in the East

By Anuran Medhi & Layan Kaushik

India stretches from 68°7' East in Gujarat to 97°25' East in Arunachal Pradesh and measures about 3000 km from its east end to its west end. The time difference between these extreme points is approximately 2 hours leading to differences in time of sunrise and sunset.

By following the IST, a common man in North east India has to wait for two extra hours to send a letter from the local post office as these government offices are accessible only after 10 AM. By the time government offices or educational institutions open, many daylight hours are already lost in this region thus giving West India the upper edge.

The same logic can be applied in case of sunset. As the twilight hits NE earlier compared to the western side, it leads to lesser duration of working hours during daytime and more consumption of energy due to the plentiful use of artificial lights. This problem gets even more noticeable during winters as the sun sets approximately around 4 PM in many parts of NE.

The ventilation of the idea of a separate time zone for NE India started around 2 decades back, when the government established a small committee in 2001 under the Ministry of Science and Technology to examine the strengths and weaknesses of multiple time zones in India. Kapil Sibal, who was the then head of the ministry, disregarded this issue and asked to stick with the IST. Most recently, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu, has also advocated the idea of a separate time zone for NE.

In 2006, the Planning Commission (now NITI Ayog) recommended the introduction of another time zone for more efficiency. Former Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, argued about the unproductivity and inefficiency of Assam due to less daylight in the region and dynamically demanded for the enactment of the bagaan time zone into its state official time. But all these efforts went in vain owing to indifference of the Union government.

However, scientists and researchers from the National Institute of Advanced Studies have insisted on advancing IST

by half an hour. They justified their stand with data-centric Research Paper published in 2012 which reported an increase to 17-18% saving of daily energy consumption that is saving India more than 2.17 billion kWh of electricity every year. A petition was signed on change.org regarding the same but it only ended as a futile attempt.

The British Raj adopted 3 different time zones; a Bombay time zone, a Calcutta time zone and a tea garden time or the baagaan time which was followed by the tea plantation workers in India. This chai baagaan time was one hour ahead of the IST which helped the workers do their work according to the sunlight. Present day workers still follow this routine for better productivity and efficiency.

If the USA having an end to end area of approximately 4300 km can have 4 different time zones, why cannot India have at least 3 different time zones?

The Gauhati High Court recently dismissed a petition which sought a direction from the central government to approve a separate time zone for North East. The High Court said that two time zones can cause unimaginable chaos, considering the country's demographic size. India is a country where trains change tracks by manual switching. Different time zones could cause major confusion in communications between train operators and lead to accidents. However, these limitations are not sempiternal and can easily be taken care of.

But why won't India introduce a new time zone? Apart from the above official challenges, there are powerful psychological reasons behind this reluctance. In official phraseology, NE is still regarded as a troubled region. Every state in the region has suffered from violent insurgency and brutal counterinsurgency since independence. Some insurgent groups, seeking full secession from India, are still active. Beijing, which already claims Arunachal Pradesh as its

own, is repeatedly prodded by ultra-nationalists in China to annex the entire region.

In such circumstances, the grant of a different time zone for the area, as the academic Lawrence Liang has observed, is viewed by New Delhi as the first temporal step towards conceding spatial autonomy. Indian nationalists naturally saw the place differently. Their decision to enforce IST made sense in the immediate aftermath of partition and independence when India's future as a united entity was uncertain. Today however, to deny 45 million Indians in the North East more daylight saving time is to place the insecurities of India's founders above the urgent needs of India's citizens.

As anyone vaguely familiar with the North East knows that the principal cause of unrest in the region is its economic backwardness. A new time zone will go a long way towards addressing this problem. It will save daylight, boost productivity and conserve electricity. A prosperous north-east is less likely to yield to the temptations of separatism. People can engage in other activities with the extra daylight which can have a positive impact on their health and psychology in the long run. Regular activities like cycling and walking would provide a better platform for improved health. Also, morning sunshine affects circadian rhythms indirectly aiding the sleep patterns. As India is largely an agricultural nation, more daylight can lead to better productivity. Even children will get more time to engage in outdoor co-curricular activities.

The time distance between the North East and the mainland of the country is also responsible for the difference in development index between the north east and the rest of the country. All the highly developed cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Ahmedabad etc are located west of the IST thus enjoying more daylight. This might be one of the reasons for lesser industrial developments in NE region otherwise known for its rich and vast natural resource

base. With the diminishing problem of connectivity and insurgency, lesser daylight hours is one of the reasons for MNCs and industries to avoid setting of offices in NE. The basic deterrent of the industrialist to invest in this region is the lack of power supply and huge expenses to run factory after sunset. This basic demand can be fulfilled by diverting the already saved energy for the industrial needs. So with the creation of different time zones, we not only welcome the idea of saving precious time but also help us address the problem of underdevelopment and health security in NE.

The advantages are many; from the increase in productivity to the increase in efficiency and decrease in energy consumption. But it can somewhat provide NE recognition in mainland India and also around the national media. As we all know this region was neglected ever since independence in various fields. This small yet meaningful approach can provide recognition and the autonomy that the people of NE craved for since independence. Further linked with the increase in infrastructural projects in this region and NE being the pioneer in India's Act East Policy, the formulation of another time zone in this region can prove to be pivotal in binding the people of NE together with the rest of the nation and hence enhancing the unity of our nation. Apart from the socio-economic benefits, this time zone can also prove to be politically beneficial.

As Darwin once said, "a man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of time", we will similarly fail to understand the value and the importance of having more than one time zone if we do not take a chance by investing in it.

Anuran Medhi is from Kirori Mal College, Delhi University and Layan Kaushik is from IIT Roorkee

One language; many languages: Harmony and disharmony

By Ananya S Guha

The language issue has come up in Karnataka, as a resistance to Hindi. The Kannada Chief Minister's demand for a separate flag is of course overdoing things. If every state demands a separate flag then where is the country? Sociologists and political scientists have always spoken of sub-nationalism in the country. If sub-nationalism takes on overtones of nationalism, then matters become complicated. Having regional flags is like having a nation state. The language issues in the country are varied and complex. There is a multiplicity and diversity in local levels having at the same time an allegiance to a single country. This singularity is a political dimension and the cultural dimension is plural. Pluralism then hinges on nationalism, which is varied and complex. Languages change even after few kilometres of geography. There are languages which

of cultures. To quarrel with history can have disastrous consequences, fall outs being seen today rather ominously. To strike issue over a particular language, instead of seeking diversification in a culture spread with linguistic wealth can only have reactions such as that of the Chief Minister of Karnataka. The southern states especially Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have a history of separatism or separatist fights.

The entire issue revolves around the premise that this may be articulated by other regions. The political situation is tenuous, not because of political instability at the centre, but because of the flimsiness of projected superiority of culture and religion. Added to it is the myth of the cow cow vigilantes and the obfuscation of religion, history and now language. The singular philosophy of the thus professed is antithetical to what the

These are not good augury. Nor is the professed desire to devise a flag for the state. It indicates a reversal of history and turning back the clock. But why is this happening is the reversal of history is working the other way too. The strict emphasis on a cultural monolith in the country! Then a linguistic one, then of course the sanctification of a particular animal, all these bludgeon history, and tend to divide the country leaving a fractured consciousness of the oneness, we have all been talking about.

are not scheduled, but they are languages all the same, revealing the spirit of a community or tribe and its very ethos.

But what prompts a Chief Minister of a state to say this, is indeed revealing and unmasks some unpalatable truths. It is jingoism which makes people say that there is one National language, and that it is official. Then what happens to the states which have their official languages, sometimes more than one? When we bind the country culturally, what is this one culture? The homogeneity and heterogeneity of a huge diverse country is the very issue of cultural complexity. Cultural unity will come only when such heterogeneity falls in order and is not discordant with the many languages in a country. Geography is in a sense, history. The change of landscape is change in culture, language, racial looks, food habits and even religion.

So what is happening is reaction. You thrust your language on me, I will revert the entire process. So if Karnataka says that all who come there must know the language, I must compulsorily learn it, then in a way reactionary forces beget other reactionary ones. These things happen because we have an overdose of the language syndrome. Of course we know that Hindi is for official communication, but we converse in the language we feel comfortable with. That is why the Indian who speaks two or three languages stands out as an individual owing loyalty to the country, in the different languages he or she speaks. The colours of languages and cultures invest the country with innate strength and beauty, manifest in efflorescence of say, the Urdu language. It is history which presides over such flowering and assimilation

country is. These are not good augury. Nor is the professed desire to devise a flag for the state. It indicates a reversal of history and turning back the clock. But why is this happening is the question? Perhaps because the reversal of history is working the other way too. The strict emphasis on a cultural monolith in the country! Then a linguistic one, then of course the sanctification of a particular animal, all these bludgeon history, and tend to divide the country leaving a fractured consciousness of the oneness, we have all been talking about.

Unless we learn each other's language or adapt to cultural sensibilities of area specific people in this vast country, we will not be divested of ethnic moorings. We have to disperse as people, race or community members. This will not strike a discordant note but will be in harmony with the overarching diversity in the country. This will counter any strategy to make the country a huge monolith ignoring the other cultural streams revolving around it. Above all history is assailed in the most devious manner, the past is blacked out and obliterated, as if it did not exist. A rationale is being built for a country which existed even in very nascent stages with a super structure of technology. In other words the country existed even before it's birth. These are difficult times and we are grappling with paradoxes, contradictions and projecting the inadmissible.

Languages are many, the country is one, the many language issue or the one language formula if it disrupts nationalistic formulations, the essence of which is quintessentially one, then there can only be severance and bedlam of chaos.

TO THE EDITOR

India has huge human potential

Editor,

Every human being has the potentiality to become a great person if she/he gets the opportunity, just like a small seed has a blueprint within it to grow up to become a very big tree. But two things are necessary for their survival and growth. The first is definitely material ones (water, fertiliser etc.) that can be seen. And the second thing is mental/ spiritual in nature (love, care etc.) that can be felt. The combination of these two things can work magic by developing India's huge human resources and bringing success in every field of activity from sports to education to science and technology etc.,

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,

Kolkata North East Time Zone

Editor,

Every place in the world has its natural local time. However, time zones are decided by Daylight Saving Time (DST) standards, international and national conventions. In India the time difference is around 2 hours between the westernmost Gujarat (68°E) and the easternmost Arunachal Pradesh (97°E).

The time difference between 2 longitudes is (24×60)/360 i.e. 4 minutes. India accepts longitude (82.5°E) as their Standard Time UTC+5:30 (Coordinated universal Time). UTC is successor to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). GMT is a time zone and UTC is a time standard. Kolkata and Mumbai retained their local time until 1948 and 1955 respectively. Government should consider the woes of North eastern states that have been raising their voices on this issue for long.

NE India region is closer to Dhaka, which is 30 minutes ahead of New Delhi. It shares borders with China, Myanmar and Bhutan as well as Bangladesh. India would have saved huge units of electricity by shifting IST meridian eastwards from 82.5°E longitude to 90°E. Daylight time constraints often hamper international events in our region. Does Bangladesh offer quality manpower because of UTC 06:00?Gujarat pushed back working hours by an hour. Even banks follow state guidelines. Rajasthan went ahead with half an hour. The British adopted a time zone for tea plantations, where 'bagan time' started one hour ahead to make the most of the daylight. The delay over availability and usability of daylight has resulted in loss of working hours. North East is at loggerheads with the rest of India over this critical issue.

Advancing the clock or adjusting it back by an hour is not a new thing for the

world. NE must reset the clock an hour or two ahead of IST. Even a five day week will work wonders in saving electricity. Railways, Defence have their own working hours in each region. The US follows nine time zones for its 4800 km longitude. India stretches 3000 km from east to west and it makes sense to have a separate time zone. Now China follows one 'Beijing time' to enhance national unity. The UK is not on GMT throughout the year, it uses British Summer Time (BST) one hour ahead of GMT. And Arab clock begins at sunset. Hope India will give serious thought to this issue and examine the merits of a separate time zone to save precious DST for the North East as well as the western region.

Yours etc.
Kamal Baruah
Guwahati

Sugar – the hidden enemy!

Editor

Sugar consumption is increasing in the world, passing from 5.1 kg/capita at the beginning of the 20th century to an average of 24 kg/capita in 2014. A big contrast is observed between developing and developed countries. With the globalization of the economy and the increase of free trade among nations, sugar has been rapidly commercialized as a cheap available product. Significant part of sugar use

comes from soft drink consumption that include sugar-sweetened, high-sugar categories carbonates, juice and sports energy drinks, and the sugar substitutes with colourings preservatives and other ingredients. With the diversity of meals and recipes, the sweet taste is controlling the nutrition of millions of people around the globe. Although sugar consumption is essential for the body, soft drink consumption must be regulated. High sugar intake increases the chance of obesity and obesity related ailments, like diabetes, cancer etc.. It abnormally impacts mental behaviour and has negative impact on the local environment. WHO recommends a daily maximum of 10% of calories from free sugars.

Sugar is being added to all dishes and drinks creating nutrition imbalance among the consumers. US is one of highest sugar consumption countries per capita. Big multi-national food companies like Coca-cola and PepsiCo spent 7.27 billion US\$ in advertisement in 2013. The omnipresence of these companies in the strategic sector of nutrition is changing the availability, affordability, and desirability of soft drinks, thereby reshaping sugar consumption patterns across the globe. The economic agreements between

nations in North America (NAFTA) resulted in the preferential elimination of tariffs on soft-drink imports. Furthermore, the stronger protections for US investors, is giving companies free pass to reshape world nutrition patterns from diversity to a uniform, unhealthy and unbalanced diet. Significant correlation has been established between sugar consumption and the annual rate of depression. Comparing the effect of coffee and soft drinks on depression of US citizens, frequent consumption of sweetened beverages (1-4 cans/day) can slightly increase the risk of depression, while coffee consumption slightly lowers the risk of depression. Furthermore, an addition of sweeteners in beverage, coffee or teas increases the depression risk.

A study on a UK-based soft drink industry identified five sectors (packaging, ingredients, manufacturing, waste management, and transport) on greenhouse gas emission (GHG) with large impact in the environment. Based on their findings, carbonated drinks in the UK produced over 1.5 million tons of CO2 eq. greenhouse gas (GHG) per year; which represented 13% of the GHG emissions from the whole food and drink sector in 2010. This is equivalent to the emissions generated from burning 3390 barrels of oil which contribute to global warming that affect the survival of ecosystem. Furthermore, the

use of artificial sweeteners in soft drinks is raising concerns because these products pass undigested and end up in stored water.

Presence of several artificial sweeteners in the aquatic environment has been documented around the globe. As a consequence, aquatic organisms are subjected to long-term exposures which could have a negative impact on the natural ecological systems. The large amount of unmetabolized artificial sweetener in rivers are likely to negatively impact the local environment, natural biodiversity and endanger several aquatic organisms. The negative relation between frequent soft drink consumption and prevalence of diseases is a serious issue from the perspective of public health and needs immediate attention. It is therefore important to impose a ban on soft drink advertisements and to put a statutory health warning on all soft drink bottles and cans for making public aware of the risks associated with soft drink consumption.

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.

“Success is not just the crowning moment, the spiking of the ball in the end zone or the raising of the flag on the summit. It is the whole process of reaching for a goal and, sometimes, it begins with failure.”

--- Erik Weihenmayer

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 346 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JULY 28, 2017

Yechury out!

Bickering between Kerala and West Bengal factions of the CPI-M has impacted on the Central Committee of the party resulting in the withdrawal of nomination of the party general secretary, Sitaram Yechury for a third term in the Rajya Sabha. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan orchestrated the move against Yechury. According to him, his nomination would have prevented Yechury from discharging his functions in Parliament and party affairs. The Left is getting marginalised in national politics. The number of its Lok Sabha members came down from 43 in 2004 to just 9 in 2014. Unless the Left reorganises itself and refashions its strategy, it will become irrelevant in Indian politics. Yechury's term as Rajya Sabha member expires next month. Elections for six seats from West Bengal will be held on August 8. The West Bengal CPI-M's proposal to join hands with the Congress to back Yechury was rejected. It may be recalled that Yechury wanted the CPI-M to have an understanding with the Congress in the 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections.

Yechury acknowledged responsibility for the signal defeat of the CPI-M in the last polls. Yet he is all for a secular alliance. The CPI-M is in direct contest, however, with the Congress in Kerala. The BJP is full of self-contradictions. The CPI-M may follow the example and change its policy from state to state so that it can have an alliance with the Congress where necessary. The Left should connect with the people. The Sitaram Yechury decision is supposed to have brought the TMC and the Congress closer in West Bengal.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

The Andhra drama

Although the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Mr.N.T. Rama Rao left acting when he joined politics, his antics of asking all his Ministers to submit resignations on February 8 and immediately forwarding them to the Governor for acceptance indeed belong to the genre of political drama.

To top it all, after removing all the 31 Ministers he disappeared from Hyderabad for four days, first to New Delhi to attend the non-Congress(I) Chief Ministers' meeting and then to Guwahati to address an AGP rally.

There was not a single Minister to look after the Government at Hyderabad when Mr Rama Rao was

away to attend to matters incidentally connected with the government of his state.

Although the leakage of the budget said to be the reason of removal of all the Ministers at one go is a serious constitutional lapse and needed some action, the fact remains that Mr Rama Rao found this excuse to demand resignations of all the colleagues in his council of Ministers only speaks of a serious malady afflicting his party and government.

Ever since there cent turmoil in the state following the murder of a Congress (I) MLA, Rama Rao was finding it difficult to enforce discipline in his party and government which was also plagued by rumours of corruption incircles close to the Chief Minister.

Meghalaya Tourism turns freakish

By Patricia Mukhim

Quite likely, tour operators benefitting from the new tourism boom will not like this article. But when was an article ever written to win applause? On July 22 last, people both visitors to Shillong and beyond and local commuters experienced the most horrendous traffic jam which started from Barapani to Mawiong-Mawlai up to the city. It took some people nearly three hours to commute between Barapani and Shillong. This is not funny, considering that it takes only 2.5 hours to fly from Delhi to Guwahati and it should take not more than three hours to commute between Guwahati airport and Shillong city on a good day. But July 22, was nightmarish. This traffic mania continued until Sunday. Normally the locals take time off to go drive beyond the city for a breath of fresh air. But on Sunday (July 23) Mawkkok bridge with its scenic beauty turned awry. It was choc-a-bloc with traffic and you can guess where the cars are from. And why was there a traffic jam? Because the selfie mania has overtaken all of us! I am not against taking selfies. After all it's the latest craze. But when selfies become the cause for a traffic melee then someone somewhere must be held accountable. But who can be held accountable since Meghalaya is now free for all? One traffic cop is hardly adequate to control unruly tourists! Today in Meghalaya, any number of tourists can come any day and they can enter our most sacred grounds including the sacred groves, by the hundreds on a single day, as long as they pay for it. No one can say a thing!

Our village communities have become victims of selfish greed and commerce. I wonder if those who collect entry fees at various tourist hotspots consider it appropriate to even get their accounts audited and share with the village the amount collected annually and how that money is used to upgrade infrastructure. Is tourism as it is happening today in Meghalaya a sustainable venture or are we heading for an overkill? And how can we evaluate ourselves without a policy that is well defined and has a long term vision of the impact of mass tourism on a state whose road infrastructure is overstretched and whose car population has shot up wildly to make the present size of the roads unsustainable?

If anyone cares to count vehicles coming up from the Mawlai-Mawiong stretch they will notice that for every one ML 05 vehicle there are at least 3-4 AS

vehicles. I have tried counting. Those who don't believe me can try this any day. The road leading to Mawlai from Barapani onwards is overstretched. You can get caught there for two hours or more. We didn't need a garrulous Nalin Kohli to be given a motorbike lift to Shillong to tell us that our roads have reached breaking point. But is anyone in the Government even discussing this? We are now so tired of the serial inauguration programmes by the head of this state who operates like a Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director of a company with passive/sleeping Board Members who don't seem to have the acumen to check his wild adventures. He is doing good for himself but what about Meghalaya the public limited company? In case it slips the CM's mind, (and that is likely to happen, considering that for the last five years he had been given a clean chit to do whatever he thinks is 'good' for the state), Meghalaya is not a private venture. Any decision the CM takes will affect 3 million people in the short and long run. Of course as John Maynard Keynes has said, "In the long run we will all be dead," but what about the generation after us and the one after that?

The other day I posted on social media about the mindless traffic jam in the city due to the large influx of tourist taxis and private vehicles from Assam. One Facebooker commented, "Didn't the promoters of Mawlynnong think of the future impact of selling the destination as the cleanest village in Asia? That's an apt comment. Did anyone sit to think of the long term impact of having a daily footfall of nearly 500 tourists and some more on weekends on the Living Root Bridge after paying a pittance of Rs 20 per visitor? Is this how we value our heritage? Am I being fastidious in pointing this out? For goodness sakes, lest we forget, the Living Root Bridge is a LIVING breathing creature of nature as much as humans are. It has taken centuries to come to what it is today. And the present generation are so derelict in understanding the worth of this bridge that they are selling it for peanuts. I have, on several occasions, spoken to the village leaders of Mawlynnong and adjoining villages that they should package the sacred destinations we

have with a little more thought and consideration for the future losses they will sustain once the destination packs up. For instance, a gate some distance away from Nohwet village (which owns the bridge), with well trained tour guides who will not allow any plastic items to be taken into the village is an imperative. Cars should not be parked too near the village since tourists who come to Nohwet and Mawlynnong or anywhere in Meghalaya should be ready to trek. The reason one points to vehicles is because the entire village is bearing the brunt of pollution and noise including little babies whose naps are disturbed by intrusive and cacophonous tourists.

I am sorry to point this out but Indians are the worst tourists whether we talk of Bangkok or Singapore or Switzerland. They are not looked upon too kindly. Reason? We have no culture for silent appreciation of nature. We want it all and we flock to a destination and junk it up. Period! Well what can we expect from people who have never lived close to forests and lakes and waterfalls? Would they know what it is to listen to the birds chirping early morning or at dusk? Would they care to just listen to the sound of the wind? No, all they look out for is a selfie click at a picturesque spot and then food to stuff in and then drive away. That's it! And yes many of them eat packets and packets of chips and drink coke and throw the packets and bottles anywhere they like. That's tourism for many of the Indian visitors. Excuse me but I am not being proachial here; simply realistic!

The questions one wants to ask those in Nohwet and Mawlynnong is whether they have sat together to think together? Has anyone from the village been taken to other tourist destinations abroad for them to learn a few lessons? I guess not. Else why would the shops all the way down to the Living Root Bridge sell Uncle's Chips or Lays and a host of packaged eatables? What about the local products? The pineapples and several other local fruits and home-made snacks that they can introduce to tourists! What about pukhlein, putharo, punei pumaloi and pu-doh? When we travel to South India does anyone care to serve us our local dishes? Don't we have to eat dosa, idli or appams there? And we do it without complaints! So why are we diffident of selling our local food in Meghalaya? The profit from selling packaged products is a pittance. We are only

enriching some multinationals even while our own food products are becoming a forgotten culture.

Alright, so what's the takeaway from this article? Firstly, while there are many who believe that tourism is best left to the private sector, without stringent guidelines and a robust tourism policy each tour operator is going to go laissez faire (do as you please). Few have the conscience to develop tourism for the long term. Many are just cashing in on the boom and the profit and we can't blame them. No one does anything out of altruism or enlightened self interest. Moral yardsticks and sensitivities are hard to apply in business. But a Tourism Policy that clearly lays out how sacred and rare (sacred groves and living root bridges) destinations are to be sold must be followed to the letter and there has to be supervision. Short-selling of destinations has led to the rush of day tourists who don't generate income for Meghalaya since entry fees to these destinations are pitifully low. The road from Mawiong to Mawlai needs to be reconfigured. Not all cars carrying tourists and are bound for Sohra and elsewhere need to enter the city. We need a bypass, else someday soon a road rage will lead to murder along this stretch.

It's high time that we in the media ask those villagers around the tourist destinations what they feel about the tourist influx. Let's hear them out. Everything is not about money. Peace of mind may be important for some.

And by the way, what is the Meghalaya Tourism Development Corporation doing other than having a Chairman? They have not been able to resolve the Crowborough imbroglio yet. Time to file an RTI on this white elephant and dismantle it!

Also we have not heard of any action from the Meghalaya Tourism Development Forum (MTDF) in a while. They first marketed Mawlynnong. Will they stand up and be counted now that Mawlynnong is about to fall off the ranks of the 'nth' wonders of the world? After the living root bridge collapses there will be nothing worth seeing there! The bridge is now held together by planks and all sorts of adhesives. But for how long??

Truncated India gained independence on 15th August, 1947 and Pakistan was created as a new country. Jammu and Kashmir was, by that time, a princely State ruled by the king Maharaja Hari Singh. On 6th of October, 1947, some Muslim tribes supported by Pakistan Government invaded Kashmir with the sole intention of forcible accession of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh immediately requested the Government of India for military help. Home minister Patel's trusted aide V P Menon rushed to Srinagar and had discussion with the Maharaja. Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession with India which was immediately accepted by the Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten.

SK. Abdullah, Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, was kept in detention and later released by the Maharaja. Abdullah approached Prime Minister Nehru for more autonomy to the State. Dr B R Ambedkar, principal drafter of the Constitution had initially refused to draft Art. 370. With the continued intervention of Nehru, Art. 370 was incorporated in the Constitution only to grant special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Empowered by Art.370, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir on 17th November, 1956 which came into force with effect from the 26th day of January, 1957. Thus Jammu and Kashmir has become the only State to have a separate constitution within the Union of India. The State enjoys maximum autonomy not enjoyed by other States. Parliament cannot legislate on subjects under concurrent List. Residual powers are vested in the State Government. President of India can declare emergency in Jammu and Kashmir only in case of war. The provisions of the Constitution of India in Part IV (Directive principles) and IVA (Fundamental Duties) are not applicable in Jammu and Kashmir. Our Constitution has adopted the concept of single citizenship for the whole country while the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir defines a wonderful concept of permanent residency. The permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir enjoy special rights over property depriving the people from other States. Citizens of India from other parts of the country cannot buy land or other property in J&K whereas a Kashmiri can buy property in any part of the country. The period of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly is fixed at 6 years while for the rest of India it is 5 years.

No doubt the Judges of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court are appointed by the President of India in accordance with the provision laid down in the Constitution of India. They take oath to uphold the Constitution of the State instead of the Constitution of India. The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has no power to declare any law unconstitutional. Unlike its counterparts in rest of the country, the J&K High court is not empowered to issue Writs under Art. 226 of the Constitution of India, except in case of enforcement of Fundamental Rights. Judges from other High Courts would not favour a transfer to Kashmir to work in a suffocating judicial atmosphere.

To understand the relations of the State of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union of India in its true

perspective, one has to understand the Preamble to the constitution of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Preamble reads-"WE THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR having solemnly resolved in persuasion of the accession of this State to India which took place on the twenty sixth day of October, 1947, to further define the existing relationship of the State with the Union of India as an integral part thereof and to secure to ourselves....."

Needless to say that the preamble is the introduction to the constitution and clearly defines the relationship with Union of India. Article 3 of the Constitution of J&K reads as-The State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India. The Constitution also made elaborate arrangement for the Pak occupied area of the State. Art.48 recognized 24 assembly seats for POK which will remain vacant till Pakistan ceases the "occupation". It is crystal clear that the State of J&K including the area under occupation of Pakistan is an integral part of India. Some critics in the country mostly intellectuals with left ideals are in doubt as to the accession of J&K. Mere reading of the Preamble followed by a bare perusal of Art. 3 and 48 of the Constitution of J&K, I bet, will remove their unfounded doubt.

Art. 370 of the Constitution of India has extended greater autonomy to the State of J&K with minimal jurisdiction of the Union Government. Adoption of the state constitution is the corollary to Art. 370. The Union Government cannot interfere in the affairs of the State even in case of breakdown of law and order machinery. Emergency for that reason cannot be declared in the State. The State has a separate Flag which also encourages the separatists. The Right to Education is not applicable in the State where education is the prime need of the hour. Most of the people living in the Kashmir valley are quite ignorant of the provision of Art. 3 of the State Constitution which finally settled the undesirable question of Kashmir's accession to India. The separatists in the valley, time and again, points to the Instrument of Accession signed by the Maharaja Hari Singh which was no doubt a temporary and transitional step. But they, taking advantage of the ignorance of the gullible masses, wilfully ignored the relevant provisions of the State Constitution drafted and adopted by the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

A moot question arises as to whether Art. 370 can be abrogated? Art. 370 of the Constitution of India can be abrogated under Art. 370(3) which states that the President of India may declare that Art.370 shall cease to be operative but in doing so, the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State shall be necessary. At the moment, Constituent Assembly is defunct and there stands no alternative provision in this respect. Perhaps the disputable Article may be removed by an amendment of the Constitution of India itself which appears to be a herculean task for the Government. Any attempt to disturb the present constitutional set up in Jammu and Kashmir may further encourage the separatists. We do hope Government will maintain status-quo and wait for the glorious morning.

(The author is a Retired District Judge)

One country: two Constitutions

By Sarat C. Neog

Truncated India gained independence on 15th August, 1947 and Pakistan was created as a new country. Jammu and Kashmir was, by that time, a princely State ruled by the king Maharaja Hari Singh. On 6th of October, 1947, some Muslim tribes supported by Pakistan Government invaded Kashmir with the sole intention of forcible accession of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh immediately requested the Government of India for military help. Home minister Patel's trusted aide V P Menon rushed to Srinagar and had discussion with the Maharaja. Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession with India which was immediately accepted by the Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten.

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TO THE EDITOR

I fear terror-rakshaks than 'gau-rakshaks'

Editor, Media is rife with news that nothing is as dangerous as gau-rakshaks. "Gau rakshaks --- a threat to India's plurality" by Sujit De (ST, 24th July, 2017). I don't fully agree with the writer and his types. In my unbiased judgement the alarm has long been sounded by the "terror-rakshaks." Well, those terror saviours who are in various garbs and disguises are virtually strangling the nation, but screams against such subversive acts are systematically suppressed or ignored. Why is it so? Perhaps a series of books could be written for answers. Some perpetrators are political leaders --- a good many from the writer's own state.

Of course, figuratively speaking, a rat can bite you;

some variety could be poisonous too. But you can't ever compare a rat with a poisonous snake. It's sad, that a prolific writer friend merrily puts blinders on those varieties of poisonous snakes and cries hoarse that the "rat will take your life, the rat will take your life" as if the 'rat' is the only dangerous creature on earth! Frankly speaking, it is for these harmless rats that an army of terror-snakes are crawling around.

Sujit De never uttered a word when West Bengal was rocked by the recent communal clashes in Baduria and Basirhat. He could probably not have kept quiet if the perpetrators of the violence and arson attacks were ones who are often the victims. This I say given his obvious abhorrence towards certain classes of people which are reflected in his endless letters. "Pluralism", "dalit", "secularism" communalism" are Sujit De's cliched terms on which

he cashes in. The writer also recently pointed out in his letter "Using children as human shields" (ST, 22 July), about the scary rallies in Darjeeling where small children were also made to stand in the front row as a "shield." I agree. But why Sujit De's eyes not see how the ruthless Chief Minister of West Bengal is taking the "shield" of the imported folks to strengthen her brutal power in the state and subsequently made others suffer.

Needless to say, the majority of the sons of the Bengal soil are now in the whirlpool of distress as Didi's "terror shield" is getting bigger. If Sujit De has doubts I can provide him a few contacts from his own community. They can surely share with him the horrid saga of terror and how it is hurting them and their native land. As a prolific writer, I am certain it will melt De's heart, and he will get down to "write" for those oppressed, "terrorized" and

much ignored indigenous Bengali masses too.

Yours etc.,
Salil Grewal,
Shillong-2

Parking inside Pine Mount School

Editor, Apropos the news, "Call for using Pine Mount campus for parking", (ST, 27 July, 2017), I am totally in unison with the public for parking of vehicles of the parents' of Pine Mount School students inside the school campus and not on the Pine Mount Ridge Road, which is for the aam admi like me. I don't have a vehicle and I rely on my two feet and public transport to move around and I can understand very well the difficulties that pedestrians have to endure on this road everyday because the road has been grabbed for parking by the guardians of the students of this school.

I found the version of the school principal absurd when she said that the ground behind the school cannot be allowed for parking of vehicles or that if vehicles are parked inside the school campus they would hit the students. If that is the case then what about those students of this school who are encountering the menacing traffic situation and still make their way to the school unhurt every morning on foot. This is not an excuse to prevent parents' vehicles from parking inside the campus. As it is rightly pointed out by the parents' themselves in the said news, the school has numerous interior roads and if I may add there are many nook and corners where vehicles can be parked. Apart from these there are two good width roads, one of which has been tarred recently, in the entrance to this school. These roads are always empty and should be allowed by the school

authorities for parking of guardian's vehicles instead of littering the public road.

The school should call a parents' meeting immediately. Regarding the ground, it is not in a very good shape first of all and has been neglected. Given the size of the ground the periphery can be developed with cemented tiles to put in place a walkway which can also be utilized for car parking. This will not reduce the size of the ground in anyway. This ground can be opened up near the Red Cross junction for the guardians to park their vehicles. In this way the school can also develop the ground. The solution to the traffic mess on this road actually lies inside the school, not outside of it, and with some clear thinking everything can be sorted out.

Yours etc.
A. Lyngdoh
Shillong - 4

"We can bring positive energy into our daily lives by smiling more, talking to strangers in line, replacing handshakes with hugs, and calling our friends just to tell them we love them."

--- Brandon Jenner

The Shillong Times

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The Bihar drama

BIHAR Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has changed sides again. He left the NDA led by the BJP after an alliance of 17 years. He was Railway Minister at the Centre and the Bihar Chief Minister in alliance with the BJP. He could not reconcile himself to Narendra Modi's political orientation. He called for a Sangh-mukta Bharat. Nitish joined the tainted Laloo Prasad and the Congress to form a ministry. A mahagathbandhan was tied on the plank of secularism. Nitish has since then stressed the importance of secularism and social justice. He was at loggerheads with BJP Chief Amit Shah. He was even projected as an alternative Prime Minister. Has the CBI FIR against Tejaswi Yadav cancelled out all that?

The Nitish-BJP government which has now been sworn in has not been elected by the people of Bihar. Is the alliance for good governance or for the sake of office? But of course the split with the RJD and then the Congress is significant. It was considered a model for Opposition unity. One suspects that the split has been caused by sheer opportunity. At the same time, Laloo's refusal to come to terms with the political scene is relevant. The BJP under Modi has stood for individual merit and probity in public life. Nitish's political record is also blameless. Laloo definitely tried to feather his son's assets. He is notoriously corrupt.

The Bihar scene shows up the tactical acumen of the BJP's political managers. They lose no time in cashing in on political flux and form governments. Goa and Manipur came first. Now Bihar is a big catch.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Twenty-three burnt alive, 150 injured in fire

Twenty three people were burnt alive and 150 injured when the VIP enclosure caught fire during a march past at Jamshedpur Tata's 150th anniversary function here today.

Most of the victims were women and relatives of TISCO officials sitting in the enclosure, packed to a more than 1,000 capacity.

TISCO chairman and managing director Mr Russi

Modi told newsmen that all the injured were admitted to the Tata main hospital where the condition of many was stated to be serious.

Unconfirmed reports, however, put the death toll at 30. Mr Modi said the fire was first noticed by sub-divisional officer, Mr J R K Rao at the "Gold gallery" where the officials along with members of their families were witnessing the colourful function.

Nitish Kumar has acted as per BJP script

Tejaswi issue was a ploy to ditch alliance

By Arun Srivastava

Now there is no more ambiguity. The closely guarded secret was out on Wednesday in the public domain with Nitish announcing his decision to break the mahagathbandhan and going to the BJP fold. It was not only the charges of corruption against the deputy chief minister Tejaswi that in fact made Nitish to crash the mahagathbandhan of secular forces; instead it was the nasty political scheming by the BJP that made him part company with Laloo Yadav.

For last couple of months conjectures were being made in the political circles and among the politically conscious people of Bihar about the reasons for Nitish Kumar planning to sever relations with his one time elder brother Laloo Yadav and wrecking the grand alliance. While Nitish blamed Laloo Yadav and his style of functioning as the real villain for forcing him to take the decision to quit the government and also the mahagathbandhan, the people of Bihar by now had come to know of the actual reason for his parting of ways.

An astute politician, Nitish Kumar had fallen victim to the politics of bullying and his quitting the mahagathbandhan was the price he ultimately had to pay. Though whispers were there in the political as well as in legal circles about Nitish being named as an important accused in a murder case which had taken place some years back in his home area, it got revealed just ahead of Nitish announcing his resignation. In the case, section 302 of the IPC was slapped on him. For some time the case had been raising its ugly head. Scared of this situation, Nitish had no other way out but to depend on the generous help of the union government.

Though the CBI had filed an FIR against Tejaswi, it was certainly not so serious a development to make a strong case to seek his resignation as the deputy chief minister. But an impression was created in Bihar that this was the major hindrance in the path of the smooth functioning of the government. The situation will improve and normalcy would return only after

Tejaswi put in his paper. What was quite intriguing in the entire controversy is that Nitish at no stage asked for his resignation. Instead other leaders and spokespersons of JD(U) raised the heat.

Yesterday's development makes it explicit that Nitish must not have succeeded in his mission had he not painted Tejaswi and Laloo as the villains. The alacrity with which Nitish moved made it crystal clear that he was acting according to the script written of course by the BJP leadership. However the fact that he would smash the alliance on Wednesday was known. He was waiting for Ram Nath Kovind to take over the office of President. There were apprehensions that his predecessor Pranab Mukherjee might not have allowed this to happen.

The BJP was in fact ready with its action plan. It lost no time to swing into action and seize the moment. No sooner Nitish came out of Patna's Raj Bhavan after submitting his resignation, the BJP Parliamentary Board met and took the decision to join the new government under Nitish. Senior BJP leader J P Nadda came out of the meeting and declared that the party was "not in favour of a midterm poll in Bihar". It took only a few moments after Nitish's resignation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come out in his support and

tweet: "Congratulations to Nitish Kumarji for joining the fight against corruption. One twenty five crore people welcome and support the honesty... The need of the hour is for a joint fight against corruption, rising above the political differences for the bright future of the country, especially Bihar."

The RSS and BJP had hatched up the conspiracy long back. They were sure that with the mahagathbandhan in power in Bihar their going would be really tough during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Laloo will emerge as the focal point in the Hindi

heartland. It will even have adverse bearing in Uttar Pradesh. Once it is finished, even a person like Mamata Banerjee would be weakened. They were working on the plot to wreck the mahagathbandhan.

They were confident of fixing Laloo once the mahagathbandhan is out of power. It would not come as a surprise if the CBI, ED and other prosecuting agencies intensify their assault on Laloo in the coming days. The best recourse for the Sangh to immobilize Laloo and keep him out of active politics is to get him more involved in legal tangles. This would provide opportunity and space for the BJP and RSS to act and maneuver the political scenario.

The outburst of Congress vice president, Rahul Gandhi must be seen in this backdrop. It is widely known that he has a soft corner for Nitish and sees him as a gentleman politician. But he was forced to say that Nitish has betrayed him. This manifests the nature and amount of Nitish losing goodwill. Little doubt this move of Nitish has been an act of revenge. He was playing the game of tit for tat only for the reason that the Congress refused to accept and elevate him to the rank of leader of the united opposition. But for this no one but Nitish is to blame. He lost his credibility by supporting some of Modi's actions. He tried to sail on two boats at the same time.

It is not that Laloo is unaware of the designs of the Sangh and BJP. This is the reason that he has been pushing his son Tejaswi to the front and projecting him as the heir apparent. Nitish and BJP mounting their attack on Tejaswi ought to be seen in this perspective. For BJP crushed in Bihar barely 20 months ago despite being resurgent across the country, joining the government there with JD(U) is a massive psychological and sociological gain.

Laloo was absolutely right when he said "There had been a setting with the BJP." When someone asked Nitish if he could go with BJP, he did not say no. It clearly suggests BJP setting. The

PM's congratulatory tweet followed to prove my point. I knew about this case for long but had kept quiet. How can he ask for Tejaswi's resignation when he faces such a serious case as murder that entails life imprisonment and capital sentence?"

Once Nitish was considered as the only potential challenger of Modi - one who is untainted with charges of political corruption or nepotism-but his eccentric actions cost him dearly and in the existing scenario there are no takers for him. BJP has lapped him up only to serve its gains and interests. Nitish and BJP might appear gainers in the present scenario but in the long run they would ultimately prove to be losers. Already the general mood is in favour of Laloo and Tejaswi and once Laloo is convicted and goes to jail, Bihar will become a waterloo for BJP and Nitish as the popular mood will swell in favour of him. Already the people from Yadav community and OBC castes have started saying that BJP, the party of the upper castes and Nitish have been victimizing Laloo without no proof and tangible reason.

Nitish significantly does not have mass support. Neither the non-Yadav OBCs and poor sections follow him nor do the Dalits repose their trust in him. This is yet another reason that he is the darling of the RSS and BJP. They know that Nitish cannot be potential challenger to their hegemony. One thing is absolutely clear; Nitish will have to do a lot of explaining. Signs are already visible on the streets of Patna. People have refused to accept his volte-face in a lighter vein. They recall what Nitish had said after the grand alliance was formed. While announcing the list of candidates in Patna on September 24, 2015, Nitish had said: "RSS is like the Supreme Court for BJP. BJP talks about development, but does the politics of dividing... be it in the name of caste or religion." (IPA Service)

PPP in district hospitals

NITIAYOG plan unhealthy

By Shivaji Sarkar

Health has remained an issue for decades. Out-of-pocket expenses, the euphemism for increasing individual spending on seeking health assistance is eroding incomes. Public health care unfortunately has remained in unenviable state.

Amidst this the NITI Ayog (NY) has pitched for public private partnership (PPP) model to improve health services in the country against the backdrop of dismal performance of public hospitals at district level. In other words, it suggests virtual handing over the district hospitals built by State governments to private sector for 30 years, two generations!

District hospitals just after primary health centres are health spots. Despite the State governments spending, hospital services have not improved the way these should. The high population, despite its dividend in some areas, is a deficit in health. Infrastructure is overburdened and India faces the twin epidemic of continuing and emerging infectious diseases as well as chronic degenerative diseases.

Economic deprivation in a large segment of population results in poor access to health care. Unwary of facilities there is high non-utilisation of scanty health services and increase in avoidable risk factors. India faces high burden of disease because of lack of environmental sanitation and safe drinking water, under-nutrition, poor living conditions, and limited access to preventive and curative health services.

Expenditure on health by the Government continues to be low. It is not viewed as an investment but rather as a dead loss. States under financial constraints cut health budgets. Growth in national income by itself is not enough, if the benefits do not manifest themselves in the form of more food, better access to health and education.

The NY's prescription for handing over even the rudimentary public services to the private sector is apparently a desperate move. It is based on the premise that the State is unable to invest and there has to be a system even at public cost. The NY possibly has not taken into account that private sector involvement adds to the cost of delivery and further burdens the people with additional expenses draining their resources.

In the mid-1990s, the Planning Commission came out with a view that any services being availed by an individual from government departments was to be considered an income. This was a move to bring down the number of people below poverty line. It might have improved the statistics or not but it certainly did not help conceal the reality.

The nation thus has been reinventing the wheel for a long time. In between the rise of the insurance industry has led to another situation. Those having medi-claims are billed too high against the normal costs. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBM) has helped the poor to an extent but it has not been able to make the health care universal.

The malaise of the sector is deep and complex. The pharmaceutical industry, it has become obvious, has been fleecing the people. The way public and NDA government's moves brought down the prices of several drugs and equipment, including heart stents and other overpriced medical aid, is a testimony that the industry is more interested in its profits than the welfare of the people.

This is a global trend. In the US, the industry is acting against the Obamacare.

Thus opening up public district hospitals to the private industry would change the shape of health care is a bit over-expectation. In many cases, where such liaison was tried to be established, it was found not only in India but elsewhere that it ended up in benefitting the private sector and the costs to the care-seekers increased manifold.

Thus despite possible good intention, the NY apparently has given a quick draft to solve the deep-rooted problem, which is how to raise the finances for this critically important sector. Any ailment leads to losses to the suffering people -- the high costs of treatment and wage loss.

The sector needs large funding. According to the Union Budget 2017, the allocation for Health Ministry for 2017-18 is Rs 47,352.51 crore in comparison to allocation in 2016-17 of Rs 37,061.55 crore, an increase of 27.76 per cent from previous year. The revised allocation for 2016-17 was Rs 38,343.33 crore. But this was above the 20 per cent cut in budgetary allocation in 2014-15 due to fiscal strains.

States also add to this. But it is too inadequate for the 125 crore people. Compared to even the road sector the allocations are too little. In 2015-16, expenses for the road sector were from Central Road Fund (CRF) collections of Rs 69,809 crore in 2015-16 and Rs 54,787.21 crore from 2012 to 2015. The CAG noted burdening users of Rs 28361 crore while providing benefits to private parties by fixing a longer concession period.

The CAG said the NHAI failed to fulfill the role assigned to it by the government and provided undue benefits to three large corporates. That is the crux. The benefits in a PPP model go to the so-called service providers. Health is too delicate a sector. The NY's proposal to link it to PPP is fraught with danger. The leakages are likely to be large and benefits negligible.

India has an abysmal doctor-patient ratio. Regulation of medical colleges emphasises more on curbs in supply than on ensuring that doctors with a licence to practice are of a minimum quality. Such irrational restrictions need to go. Unless India produces more doctors, whether for the public or private sector, healthcare delivery will not improve.

The NY draft is faulted for another reason. It has not done the study at the ground level. Before coming out with the draft, it should have studied the conditions and done surveys in 100 districts having hospitals and primary health centres (PHC). The people should have been asked about their needs, problems and expectations. The number of users at any government hospital is high and so is the workload on the skeletal medical staff, even at remote districts of UP, including the VIP district of Kannauj.

The NY should not suggest simplistic solutions. It needs to redo a holistic study on the health system all over the country. Different States have different experiences and needs. The model has to be State specific and not omnibus. No way can it be a PPP model to burden the users. ---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Time to say goodbye to Parliamentary Secretaries!

Editor,

On July 26 last, the Supreme Court has declared as "unconstitutional" the Assam Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004, by which the state had appointed 8 Parliamentary Secretaries to circumvent Article 164 (1A) of the Constitution which provided that the size of the Council of Ministers in a state should not exceed 15 per cent of the total Assembly strength. Going by the ruling of the Supreme Court, should the

Meghalaya Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Act, 2016 and its principal act-the Meghalaya Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2005 also not be considered "unconstitutional" and become null and void? Under the pretext of this Act, which was notified and published in the Gazette of Meghalaya Extra-Ordinary issue, dated 27th September,

2016, Meghalaya government has appointed 18 Parliamentary Secretaries in addition to 12 Cabinet Ministers which runs contrary to the Constitution 91st Amendment Act 2003, and which restricts the ministry size of small states like Meghalaya to just 12. Will the Government of Meghalaya act spontaneously to do away with the post of Parliamentary Secretaries which is anyway an unnecessary burden to the state's limited coffer, without the need of the High Court/Supreme Court to intervene or has someone has to approach these Courts?

Yours etc.
Dr. Lakhan Kma
Shillong-4

Needed a futuristic tourism policy!

Editor,

Readers will agree in to with Patricia Mukhim's article highlighting the dangers of a weak and an uncharted tourism industry this state is seeing in these last few years. months. Her article, "Meghalaya Tourism Turns Freakish" (ST July 28, 2017) reflects the apathy of the state government, especially those at the helm of the tourism department. They are blind to the reality

and dangers of over-hyping the state tourism when community infrastructure, traffic management, sanitation and other aspects connected to the hospitality sector are at breaking point. We hear people talking the 'Sikkim Model' whereas what we have here is absolutely ZERO. The Crowborough Hotel adjacent to the old Assembly building is a classic showpiece of how an inexperienced businessman with no knowledge of the hotel sector fails to complete it. Another white elephant in the making is the so-called Marriot Hotel standing tall without much news about its completion. So are the pathetic roads with holes big and small in and around the city. They speak volumes of the PWD department and its contractors. Is this how we love our visitors to travel around the city. Too many hawkers, overcrowding of tourists spots and lack of cohesive planning has made this state more like a fish market rather than a tourist destination. When places like Mawlynnong, Shnongpdeng, Sohra etc lose their sheen what will be left will only be crumbs. Before it is too late and things come to a virtual collapse the State Tourism Department and tourism strategists should start working out a strong but vibrant tourism policy and

not a half-baked policy. Yours etc...
Dominic S.Wankhar
Shillong

not a half-baked policy. Yours etc...
Dominic S.Wankhar
Shillong

Diversity India's forte

Editor,

This is in response to Ananya S Guha's article, "One language; many languages : Harmony and disharmony" (ST, July 27, 2017). Our national unity can only be effected by respecting our diversity. There exists a wide range of culinary tastes - from pork to beef. There are many languages from Tamil to Gujarati. So the policy of introducing pan - Indian dishes and a national language might hinder national progress, which is well represented by the Ashok Chakra with 24 spokes at the centre of our multi - colour national flag.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Criticism the soul of democracy

Editor,

Apropos the letter to the editor, "Stop interfering" by one J Lamare (ST, July 25, 2017), since the comments

and criticisms were directed primarily at the leaders of the BJP, it is up to the Party leadership in Meghalaya or the central leaders/spokespersons to reply to them. However, as a citizen, I wish to state that freedom of expression by way of comments, criticisms or dissent expressed by individuals, groups, NGOs or political parties is guaranteed by the Constitution of India. When they (Nalin Kohli, Himanta Biswa Sarma or others) criticize the performance of the MUA Government in Meghalaya led by Dr. Mukul Sangma or they point out how he conducts himself as the CM of Meghalaya, they are well within their rights to do so. Their criticism is premised on the fact that governance in Meghalaya has faltered under the leadership of Dr Sangma.

Many issues raised publicly by the BJP leaders are correct but the people of Meghalaya have chosen to keep mum over these issue. People of Meghalaya know and see the ills that are going on under the governance of the Congress led MUA government but we all keep quiet. This has encouraged bad governance in the last ten years. If we, ourselves, dare not raise our voices against the ills that happen before our eyes then what right do we have to find fault with people who raise their voices against those ills? In fact, we should

be thankful to them for doing the job that we should have done! It is this conspiracy of silence that allows every government that rules this state to do whatever they like because the people of Meghalaya are too docile and tolerant to protest against mal-governance

Conversely, anyone from Meghalaya can criticise the President of India, the Prime Minister, any central minister, any chief minister of any state in India if we see that they are not doing the right thing or if they misgovern. So whether Nalin Kohli or Himanta Sarma or anyone else criticizes the CM of Meghalaya for his commissions and omissions, they are well within their rights to do so. Why should we judge everything from the political angle alone or accuse them of playing politics or brand them as interfering in the affairs of another state? The affairs of our state should have been dealt by us, but we failed to do our part as vigilant citizens. That is the pity. We may belong to one party or the other but we cannot afford to keep quiet when we see that our party leaders or our party men or our government is doing wrong and wicked things.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Viaemail

Here comes the tiger

Man-tiger conflict in Sundarbans drops, Pritha Lahiri reports



A Royal Bengal tiger and (below) forest guards get ready to start the day. Photos: Dibyendu Ash

While less human lives are lost from tiger attacks now the big cat population is not declining in the Sundarbans National Park (SNP), the world's biggest mangrove forest and gene pool and UN heritage-listed natural wonder, say officials of the West Bengal forest department.

Not all incidents of tiger attacks do not reach the mainstream media. But the one that made headlines was when a villager who was crab fishing in June 2014 was snatched away from a fishing boat by a tiger as his children looked on helplessly.

Sushil Manjhi was crab-fishing with his son and daughter when the tiger leaped aboard the boat and preyed on him, dragging him into the mangrove swamp and then disappeared with his body.

While stories of man-animal conflict abound, the Park authorities say they carry out meticulous conservation efforts. A 96-km-long nylon net has been strung across the village-forest interface to prevent straying of the beast into human habitation.

"We carry out extensive awareness campaigns among locals to dissuade them from going into the core area," says Nilanjana Mallick, Chief Conservator of Forest and Field Director, Sunderbans Tiger Reserve.

"SNP is the only forest in India where no human habitation has been allowed," he adds.

Not just that, intensive patrolling is carried out in the buffer and core areas and at strategic locations in the park that was brought under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act in 1973. The patrolling is as much to contain man from venturing into the restricted area as to ward off poachers — a major threat to the striped beast.

The Sunderbans National Park, located at the South Eastern tip of the South and North 24 Parganas districts in West Bengal, got its name from one of the mangrove plants known as Sundari (*Heritiera minor*).

The Sunderbans are a part of the world's largest delta formed by the rivers Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna. Sunderbans is a vast area covering 4262 sq km in India alone, with a larger portion in Bangladesh. The 2,585 sq km of the Indian Sun-



darbans forms the largest Tiger Reserve and National Park in India.

It mainly consists of mangrove forests. The core area of the park has its own natural boundaries with the river Matla on its west, the Haribhanga on its east and the Netidhopani and the Gosha in the north.

Sunderbans tigers are a little smaller and slimmer than those elsewhere in India but remain extremely powerful and are infamous for destroying small wooden boats. They are not the only big cats who live close to humans though.

The locals and government officials take certain precautions to prevent attacks. Local fishermen will say prayers and perform rituals to the forest goddess Bonbibi before setting out on expeditions.

Invocations to the tiger god Dakshin Rai are also considered a necessity by the local populace for safe passage throughout the Sunderbans area. Fishermen and bushmen originally created masks made to look like faces to wear on the back of their heads because tigers always attack from behind.

Even at the rate of 50-60 kills per year, humans would provide only about 3 per cent of the yearly food requirements for the tiger population of the Sunderbans. Thus humans are only a supplement

to the tiger's diet, not the primary food source.

This does not mean that the notoriety associated with this area is unfounded. Even if only 3 percent of a tiger's diet is human meat, that still amounts to the tiger killing and eating about one person per year, given the amount of food a tiger typically eats.

Villagers in the area have agreed to occasionally release livestock into the forest in order to provide an alternative food source for the tigers and discourage them from entering the villages. The government has agreed to subsidise the project to encourage village participation. "The human death rate has dropped significantly due to better management techniques and fewer people are killed each year," Mallick maintained.

"No illegal entry is allowed. Neither is encroachment encouraged," he specified.

The efforts have brought in two-fold results. Human casualty has decreased and the number of tigers has increased.

Before modern times, Sunderbans were said to "regularly kill 50-60 people a year". The number has drastically slumped to three kills a year now, according to statistics.

On the brighter side the number of tiger has registered an upswing.

According to Mallick, camera trappings carried

out in 2015-16 showed their number at more than 86. "This number though does not include cubs and sub-adults," the Chief Conservator said.

Despite all efforts some people do sneak in, he rued.

Apart from poaching, which has been considerably contained, threat to the king of the jungle comes from another quarter.

"The tiger may slowly lose its habitat as the rise in sea level because of global warming may swamp land," Mallick warned.

The four Sunderbans National Park have been lumped together as they all share common features of the estuarine mangrove ecosystem.

The park area is divided into two ranges. Each range is further sub-divided into beats.

The park also has floating watch stations and camps to protect the property from poachers.

The delta also harbours large reptiles like the Monitor Lizard, Estuarine Crocodile and the Olive Ridley Turtle, for which there is a conservation programme in the Indian park. The Leopard, Indian Rhinoceros, Javan Rhinoceros, Swamp Deer, river terrapin, Ganga river dolphin, hawksbill turtle, Hog Deer and Water Buffalo have all become locally extinct from the delta in recent decades.

It is also home to a variety of bird, reptile and

invertebrate species.

The present Sundarban National Park was declared as the core area of Sundarban Tiger Reserve in 1973 and a wildlife sanctuary in 1977. On May 4, 1984 it was declared a National Park. It is a UNESCO world heritage site inscribed in 1987. It is considered as a World Network of Biosphere Reserve (Man and Biosphere Reserve) in 2001.

The natural environment and coastal ecosystem of this Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site is under threat of physical disaster due to unscientific and excessive human interference. Conservation and environmental management plan for safeguarding this unique coastal ecology and ecosystem is urgently required.

SNP also offers exciting boating facility. Boat rentals for Sundarban from Godkhali on a per day basis is available. Well equipped modern boats with sitting capacity on the deck for 60 persons and overnight stay facility in the boat for a maximum of eight persons are available. Meals are provided on board. The charges are Rs 600 per person per night.

Navigational direction is the sole discretion of the boat crew as cruising in the Sunderbans is dependent upon the timings of tide and avoiding shallow rivers and creeks. (IBNS-TWF)

The locals and government officials take certain precautions to prevent attacks. Local fishermen will say prayers and perform rituals to the forest goddess Bonbibi before setting out on expeditions.

The four Sunderbans National Park have been lumped together as they all share common features of the estuarine mangrove ecosystem. The park area is divided into two ranges. Each range is further sub-divided into beats

Study in Angst: Marginalisation in India

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

Marginalised sections were always on the periphery and distanced from the power centres. Marginalised are the 'depressed classes' and it has similar connotations like that of Dalits. The very terms 'marginalised' or 'Dalits' give a sub-human status to the poor people who are always kept outside the Hindu social order.

Now the subaltern communities found a new name by coming together with the perspective of the Fourth World Literature. The term 'marginalised' rejects the sub-human status imposed on the poor people by the Hindu social order.

In the tribal belt of India this marginalisation is prominently visible and in two writers the renowned novelist from West Bengal Mahasweta Devi and eminent poet from Meghalaya Biswajit Nandi, we see conscious efforts for focusing the woes of these less equal people and their writings become a study in angst.

The poet-editor from Tura, Biswajit Nandi, Ambedkar Excellency National Awardee 2012 brought to life the experience of Garo Hills. His poetry for the marginalised sections of people of Meghalaya was deeply rooted in inequality which causes insecurity, injustice and exploitation.

He created awareness about Dalits through his writings published in many literary periodicals of New Delhi, West Bengal, Assam, Andaman, Jharkhand, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Mumbai and also in the tribal belts of Bangladesh.

Some of the important writers specialised in

voicing the pangs of the marginalized in literature are: Namdeo Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Rabi Singh, Basudev Sunani and many more who theorised the struggle of the poor people. But Mahasweta Devi is amazingly voicing the oppression that the tribes face in India. In all the works of Mahasweta Devi, social activism remains as a dominant theme.

These concerns can be seen in the works such as Aranyer Adhikar (Rights of the Forest), Nairhite Megh (Clouds in the Southwestern Sky), Basha Tudu, Of Women, Outcasts, Peasants and Rebels, Dust on the Road and a number of articles published in various newspapers and magazines. Mahasweta Devi's social activism took concrete shape in 1965 when she visited Palamau, a remote and impoverished district in Bihar whom she calls "a mirror of tribal India".

Moving from place to place on foot she witnessed the savage impact on indigenous society of landlordism, a despoiled environment, debt bondage and utter state neglect. In India's other tribal districts she subsequently the same dismal conditions.

Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* concentrates on the issues of exploitation and marginalisation as long continuing socio-historical process embedded in social and cultural practices, a focus on the interlocking structures of oppression, the criss-cross of multiple hierarchies of class, caste and gender.

Mother of 1084 emerges as a loud voice of the marginalised people and their fights against oppression and exploitation in both shorter and longer terms. She creates the heroic character of

Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* concentrates on the issues of exploitation and marginalisation as long continuing socio-historical process

Brati Chatterjee who works as a connecting chord because through him the marginalised are united to involve themselves in a fight against exploitation and oppression.

Samik Bandopadhyay's translation of Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* has been looked upon as a communist manifesto, but it could well be translated as a study in angst.

GP Deshpande in his anthology on Indian English Drama introduces the play with a brief note: "Mahasweta Devi, very eminent writer of fiction, has been active with tribals of West Bengal and Bihar. In this play she looks at the urban 'bhadrolok' Bengal in the context of the rising people's movement. She offers us a view of politics which is both moving and disturbing."

Mahasweta, in fact does much more. She makes a vehement protest against the manner in which people generally stay, or pretend to stay, unperturbed and complacent at a time when society stands on the brink of a crisis.

The facade of nonchalance is not only targeted, but it is challenged in the play. *Mother of 1084* is a dramatization of Mahasweta's Bangla novel Hajar Chaurashir Ma, in which she provides a documentation of the Naxalite Movement of the seventies.

This was an important aspect of the political climate of West Bengal, now Pashchim Banga. The Naxalites raised their voice against the established order, and fought for the cause of the poor, exploited by the landlords, industrialists and bureaucrats. The oppressive and inflexible attitude of these highhanded men forced a group of young men to take up the cudgels against them. The revolt of the farmers of Naxalbari added fuel to the smouldering sense of resentment against capitalist economy.

Biswajit Nandi stressed on communication among the marginalised people and in his opinion language is no bar. His poems outlined the vision and roadmap for development of Dalits not only in Meghalaya but all over the country. He attempted to voice in poetry what Mahasweta Devi did in her novels.

He edits the vernacular magazine 'Milan' which is a great venture in spreading awareness regarding Dalit life. His poetic efforts got recognition and he has been honoured with number of awards from India and Bangladesh. He received the prestigious Michael Madhusudan Award for his poetry collection in 2013, International Matri Bhasa Award, Dhaka in 2011.

These awards are only recognition of his commitment to the cause of Dalit life in the tribal belt of India. His journal has a huge readership both

within and beyond the boundaries of India.

Dalits in Meghalaya and in North East regions are mostly Christians who suffer daily oppressions.

John Webster writes in Religious and Dalit Liberation: "Although they form a majority of the Christian community, they have been an oppressed majority."

Like other Dalits, Christian Dalits live in a caste-based society and their conversion did not change their fate. Conversion to Christianity did not warrant redemption from discrimination and untouchability which only means that they are doubly marginalised. Dalit writers should keep writing on the Christian dalits too as they constitute a huge population in the tribal area.

They are excluded from reservation system. According to Godwin Shiri the famous Christian Dalit writer they are not only deprived of scheduled caste benefits but also of other benefits meant for other backward classes. New writers should voice against cultural subjugation and political marginalisation of Dalits including Christian variety.

Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout India. People who are marginalised have relatively little control over their social cultural and political lives. This results in making them handicapped in delving contribution to society. It has serious impact on development of human beings as well as society at large.

(The author is Associate Professor and Head of the Post Graduate Department of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College, Kolkata)

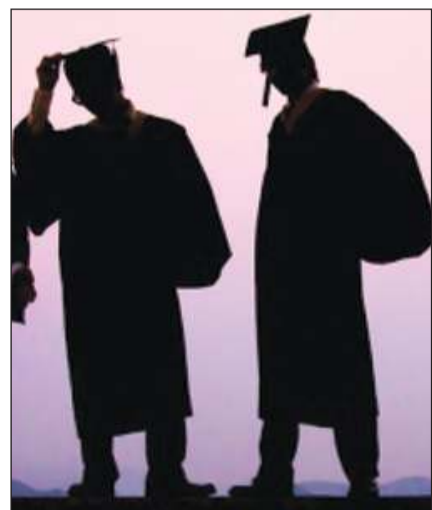
What do you need to be employable

By Ranjan K Baruah

In the last edition we had mentioned about employability skills and its importance. In today's edition we are publishing more about such skills which are needed to be employed.

Basic Academic Skills: Many people say that academic skills are not needed to become successful. But the fact is academic is important. One may not get good marks but more educated or academically strong means more chances of getting employed and getting promotion. Some jobs need strong academic skills or performance.

Though the academic skill level required for some jobs may be low, basic academic skills are still essential for high job performance. These include the ability to listen, understand and carry out instructions, ability to record and relay information, ability to respond properly and ability to complete basic mathematical computations accurately.



but some of them are communication, decision making, problem solving, conflict management and team work, etc. However employability assets are attitude, motivation, confidence, lifelong learning, reliability, self responsibility and presentation. Poor employability skills lead to unemployment or under employment. Every student must prepare well to know about the employability skills and acquire them since school or college days.

Students must start to learn the employability skills once they in colleges or any higher education institutions. The sad part is that many of our graduates are not aware of the present job market and hence they make mistake by taking admission in courses which are widely advertised.

Widely advertised courses may not give a good placement as we are aware that credible institution does not make much publicity. I would appeal students mostly from arts background to learn more about the employability skills else getting a well paid job would be mere dream.

Every student may learn the skills when they wish to do so. One needs to have a planning and start learning the required skills and practice them accordingly. Remember none is perfect in the initial stage; it is only about our constant practice and perseverance that brings success after certain period of time.

As we have published about the difference between employment and employability, so, students may learn the difference and plan for their future for vibrant careers. Getting good marks will not guarantee any job but good marks and employability skill will make sure that once gets good sustainable placement in different sectors.

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

'Never had to give up on good film for theatre'

Do not ever mistake Saurabh Shukla as any other Bollywood comedian. He is one of the finest actors in Bollywood and his National Award for his performance of the small court judge in *Jolly LLB* is just a drop in the ocean. *Barff*, a Hindi play directed and written by Saurabh Shukla in which he also plays one of the key roles, is being staged successfully across the country. In a one-to-one with Shoma A Chatterji, Shukla holds forth on theatre, cinema, acting and the direction in which these cultural worlds are flowing.

Tell us a little about the play *Barff*.

It is based on a short story by Ranjeet Kapoor. I bought it to make a film but when I got a call from Bharangam to stage a play, I felt it could be turned into a play. It is a very unusual play produced by Ashvin Gidwani. *Barff* is a thriller that covers the events of a cold, snowy night in a village in Kashmir. I play Dr. Siddhant Kaul, who comes to the aid of two desperate parents of an ailing child persuaded by the cabbie who is driving him around to come and take a look at the child.

The press notes and ads tout the play as a thriller. Why?

Thriller as a genre is not very popular in Indian theatre. Thrillers are a great medium to tell a story because they not only provide you with an edge-of-the-seat experience, but are more engaging. But as you go along in *Barff*, it moves much beyond the thriller genre bringing across conflicting questions of truth, reality and belief.

Since it is set in a small and deserted village in Kashmir Valley, would you call it a political play?

The story was not written with the agenda of Kashmir's politics. But I believe that a story is never free from the politics of the land it is set in. At many levels, the beliefs of the doctor and the Kashmiri couple never meet on common ground. This brings out the larger theme of 'what is truth and what is illusion', something one need not travel to Kashmir to learn. We are faced with this question in our daily lives too.

As an actor and writer on stage and on screen, what differences do you find in these two media?



For me, a play and a film is the same so far as the writing of it goes. A film is written three times — once during the scripting, once during the production and once when it is being edited on paper and later on film. For me, theatre demands the same industry and focus. So far as acting on stage goes, for me the writer stopped the moment I decided the story was good enough to go on stage. I then had to think like a director, how to amalgamate various elements like set design and lighting and visually translate the script. But in theatre, actors play a huge role in interpreting the larger picture, serving as a micro-view to the subject. Switching roles needed to be very fluid.

Why choose Kashmir of all places?

Barff was originally set against a rainy day in Malshej Ghat, which gets secluded during the monsoons. But I felt the story and characters demanded a more-than-normal setting and exclusive seclusion that would help construct illusions, so I chose Kashmir. Unlike everyone who lives in the Kashmir Valley, the people in Maharashtra do not have to face anxiety and a fear of the unknown every minute of their lives. I had travelled to Kashmir

for the shooting of a film. The local people are as beautiful as the place is. While I interacted with them, I could sense volatility in them when it comes to trust. Villages deserted by the inhabitants in search of safer pastures complemented the demands the story made.

Why do theatre when an actor already has a good demand in cinema?

I never had to give up on a good film role because of my preoccupation with theatre. So when actors say that they do not do theatre because it might mean giving up on a meaty film role, they are wrong. For films, I agree that we are all busy actors and I am one of them. Most of it comes from the passion we have for our work. We must also earn from acting. But as actors, theatre allows us to grow, to develop and not to get stuck in the groove with similar roles in umpteen films.

Has commercial cinema changed in recent times?

Yes, of course it has. You have mainstream films which have wonderful stories and span a multiple of genres. Films like *Paan Singh Tomaar*, *Jolly*

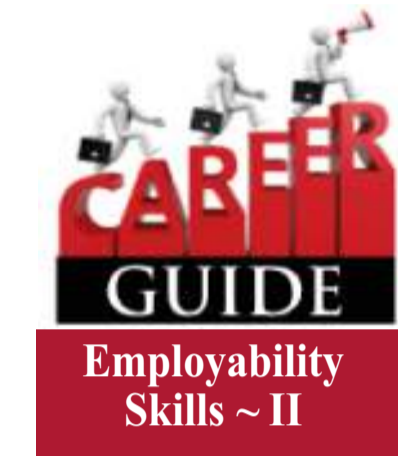
LLB, *Neerja* and *Dangal* are all mainstream films made on big budgets with big stars. But their storylines, treatment and strategy do not fall within the 'mainstream' as we know it. This is a quality theatre already has grown with.

What has your encounter with cinema been before you stepped into it?

I grew up in Delhi in a musician's family. I grew up watching films like *Ben-Hur* and was fascinated by the works of Bimal Roy and Hrishikesh Mukherjee. I often felt that we over do emotions in our films. I don't like hyperbolic cinema. The base has to be realistic. I always remind myself from where I started.

Appearance-wise, you do not fit into the scheme of a film star. So, what was your biggest challenge?

When I started my biggest fight was that the industry should not consider me a fat man on whom they can laugh. Thankfully, they have not reduced me to perform comedy. They have given me all kinds of roles. People do not take me because I am of certain weight. They take me because I lend certain weight to the story. (TWF)



Creativity/Thinking Skills: It is important to have these skills to be equipped in the job market and move ahead of the peers. In today's competitive world, it is important to have creativity and ability to think and think critical to be successful or to be employed.

Personal qualities: People with good personal skills have self confidence in themselves and deal with others honestly and openly, displaying respect for themselves, their co-workers, clients and customers regardless of other people's diversity and individual differences. They have a positive attitude and take the initiative to learn new things to get the job done and take responsibility for their actions. They also have the ability to set goals and priorities in their work and personal lives so that resources of time, money, etc., are conserved and managed better.

Though there are many employability skills

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, July 30, 2017

Moon opposite Uranus on your solar return chart suggests a good year ahead. The personal changes you make this year will provide you with a more balanced and progressive lifestyle. To create more financial stability, it's time to streamline and purge unnecessary expenses from your monthly budget. Your talent for seeing both sides of an issue is admired by your peers, which could put you in the position of advisor as well as therapist this year. Travel will be highlighted, so start a small savings account designated for a trip you're planning. Adopt orange as your power color and add it to your surroundings to stir the imagination, as this color carries the power to open your mind to new possibilities.

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. This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily self-discipline to match. 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. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

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. You don't feel the need to prove yourself, and that feels good. You have the chance to shine. You are especially appealing and charming in personal and family relations. Opportunities both personal and professional are likely to present themselves as a result. You may enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. 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. 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. Pleasure and amusement play an important role in your search for freedom of self-expression now. Some form of pleasant result in your professional life brings rewards and recognition. 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 would be able to maintain peace and harmony at home. 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. A strong desire for companionship and sociability dominates during this period. 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. Work that needs to be done in and around the home becomes a priority. You have many opportunities to boost your feeling of security and comfort. 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.

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 likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness

and solidarity in friendship, or with groups of like-minded individuals. 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)

There is success, responsibility and maturity at the work place. You have much energy for new money-making projects, or for stepping up existing ones. This is a rather happy, goal-oriented time on the professional front. Relationships take on a fun outlook and activities with children increase. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional and your ideas are original and progressive. This is a time to follow your dreams and ideals, and to plant a seed in the form of a wish for the future. You possess extra charm in your professional life. Strong opportunities for love and fun would occur. More opportunities to socialize and network could present themselves now.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This week is good for money, family, status and happiness. Money matters come into focus for you. You would adopt a serious approach to business because you are in the spotlight. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional success, and leadership. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. Your love and affection life is more attractive and charming.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

Public relations work, promotion and other such endeavors come to the fore. Diplomacy, correctness in manner, finesse, and charm will be a big plus in aiding financial gains, especially in areas requiring public contact. You feel attracted to people with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas. You know how to relate to others and you do it in a natural and warm manner. Your vision is practical right now, and you want to see tangible results for your efforts. More contact with authority figures is likely. Recognition is likely to come your way whether you ask for it or not, and the responsibility that comes right along with it. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

This is an excellent time to create a budget or financial plan, or to rid yourself of old habits that undermine your sense of personal power and self-mastery. A love affair may become a little more serious now. Spending time with someone special is a focus. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy at this time. If single, you are more willing than normal to enter into a committed relationship. In general, you are adaptable when it comes to your affections. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. Foreign places may particularly appeal now. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love. Dealing with one situation at a time releases some tension and anxiety.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

All the matters hidden and personal come into focus now. Conflicts with a partner over values or personal possessions are likely to occur. Circumstances are such that your diplomacy skills are required. This is the time when you are most desirous of change on a deeper level. You are more willing than usual to explore life's secrets. On a more practical level, you may be dealing with joint finances and shared resources now more than usual. Social life takes priority in your life. You have recently become very serious about your long-term goals and motivated to put your plans and dreams into action. Your popularity is increasing, and is reinforced by your own ability to cooperate and harmonize. A health routine started now is likely to be successful.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

It's a generous, pleasantly emotional and creative time. Striking a balance between your attention to your career and to your family life is necessary. Taking steps to improve your family and home life as well as your career and public life will be in order. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, especially in the company of a loved one. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. However, bending too much to the will of another is not advised either. You take more pride in the work you do and in your health routines than any other time. This is a good time to build your skills, get organized, and attend your health and well being.

Animals can be altruists

(Continued from last week)



In another incident in New Zealand, a group of human swimmers were surprised when dolphins began circling around them, splashing in the

water. The swimmers initially thought the dolphins were displaying aggressive behaviour, but it turned out that they were warding off sharks.

Classic examples of altruists are ravens. If one, or a few, come across food, they make loud calls to attract even more ravens. Most ecological theory stipulates that a food bonanza should be defended, not shared.

But these birds do share — to the point that some of the ravens even return to their roost to bring in more birds.

Social insects live together and allow an individual to flourish by helping every other insect in the community. But that is not pure altruism. I would count it business as usual, or programming for survival.

Bees protecting a swarm by stinging and, in the process, dying horribly as the stinger pulls out the entire abdomen, or certain species of termites releasing a sticky secretion by rupturing their own glands to protect the nest against invaders, is also programmed behaviour.

In ants, wasps, bees and termites, sterile workers devote their whole lives to caring for the queen, constructing and protecting the nest, foraging for food and tending the larvae. That's not altruism. That's just doing their jobs.

For instance, meerkats have one standing guard to warn the community while the rest feed in case of predator attack. Into that category I would even put examples of extreme sacrifice.

For instance, the mother spider *Stegodyphus*, who allows her infants to eat her, or a male spider allowing a female fertilised by him to eat him.

I would not even put trading in kindnesses as altruism. For instance, a monkey will get its insects pulled out by a member of the pack and then, in return will do the same.

Or a female wolf that offers to stay behind with the cubs while the rest of the pack goes hunting.

Altruism would be those single wolves



● Rats are the most altruistic of species. They go out of their way to help others in distress. They will share food with strangers. Their decisions are always kind

● Elephants go out of their way to assist others in need — like saving a calf from drowning and spraying water on an injured member of the herd to keep it cool

who bring back meat for those too sick or nursing to go on the hunt.

Altruism is the following: Mongooses and bonobos who support sick, handicapped or elderly animals. Chimpanzees who help other chimpanzees and even humans without expecting anything in return. Dolphins who support sick or injured animals, swimming under them for hours and pushing them to the surface so they can breathe.

Walrus adopt orphans. African Buffalo often turn around in their flight from predators in order to rescue a member of the herd who has been surrounded.

Male and female lemurs take care of infants unrelated to them. Vervet monkeys send out alarms to

warn other moneys of predators, even if it means putting themselves in danger, by attracting attention.

In many bird species, the parents receive help from unrelated "helper" birds in feeding their babies. Harpagiferbispinis fish live in the Antarctic peninsula. If the parent guarding the nest of eggs is removed, an unrelated male will guard the nest from predators and prevent fungal growth that would kill off the brood.

A unique example of altruism is found in the *Dictyosteliummucoroides* slime mould. These live as individuals until food is so short that they start starving. Then they get together and form a body in which some cells sacrifice themselves to promote the survival of other cells.

Elephants go out of their way to assist others in need — like saving a calf from drowning and spraying water on an injured member of the herd to keep it cool.

A study in the journal *Marine Mammal Science* described the altruism of humpback whales, giving examples of how the giant creatures help seals and other creatures being attacked by killer whales.

The researchers concluded that while it made sense for humpbacks to defend their own calves, they had nothing to gain by meddling in attacks on other species. "Inter-specific altruism," the scientists wrote, "could not be ruled out."

Have you seen the You Tube video of a rhesus macaque successfully resuscitating another of its species which had been electrocuted at a train station? The persistence and concern was amazing and entirely selfless.

Rats are the most altruistic of species. They go out of their way to help others in distress. They will share food with strangers. They will refuse in scientific experiments to inflict pain on each other even if it means dying themselves. When given the choice of escaping or staying to help a strange rat in distress, they almost always choose the latter. Their decisions are always kind. How sad that we use these creatures to experiment on, killing over a billion a year. All societies, whether human or bat, depend on deliberate and reciprocal kindnesses. Violence spreads and nations shatter when we forget that.

(Concluded)
(To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org)

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

--- Harriet Tubman

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SHILLONG, MONDAY, JULY 31, 2017

Sharif out

THE Supreme Court of Pakistan has disqualified Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif over the Panama Paper case. Sharif has bowed out. Last year The International Consortium of Investigative Journalist had leaked documents on the case. It appears that Sharif's children may own at least 3 offshore companies registered in the British Virgin Islands. Sharifs were alleged to own assets which were disproportionate to their income. The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) probed the matter and concluded that Sharif could not clarify the financial irregularity. The Supreme Court has accordingly delivered its judgement. The PML-N led by Nawaz Sharif commands a substantial majority in the National Assembly and the civilian government may not fall. Elections in Pakistan are only a year away. Sharif's ouster may change the political contours of the country plagued by terror and riddled with corruption.

It is a fact that the judiciary has cracked down on Sharif's corruption but the canker in other sectors in Pakistani society goes unnoticed. The upshot of Sharif's ouster will be the strengthening of the army and the ISI. The political Opposition is insignificant. The civilian government in Pakistan has now sustained a blow. India-Pakistan relations are already on shaky grounds with the Pak Army calling the shots. This crisis is cause for concern in New Delhi.

LOOKING BACK

April 26, 1989

Political scene: How manyfronts?

For a long time last year leaders of major Opposition parties were seriously discussing the possibility of the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi deciding to go in for a mid-term Parliamentary election, though Mr. Gandhi vehemently denied that he had any such intention.

Now Mr. Devi Lal says that Mr. Gandhi may actually delay the poll as no one invites his political demise. Last year's speculation was fed by the belief that the Congress(I) wanted to thwart Opposition unity. The Haryana Chief Minister now seems to

think that Opposition unity has been consolidated that Mr. Gan-dhi and his party would like to avoid facing the electorate as long as possible. The election, in the normal course, is hardly a year away, and there is nothing to indicate that it is not going to be held as scheduled. Mr. Devi Lal is his own greatest admirer. So is his Andhra Pradesh counterpart Mr. N.T. Rama Rao.

Since the two of them played a leading role in the efforts to forge Opposition unity they have persuaded themselves to believe that they have succeeded in achieving the impossible.

Shillong: A case of split personality

By HH Mohrmen

Shillong was once the capital of Assam and it can also be said that it is the first city in the region which began in the colonial era. Since then and till today, whenever the Khasi-Pnar from various parts of the state travel from their villages to Shillong, they would say “ngan leit sha sor” (I am going to the city or the urban area). But is Shillong a city really? If so what percentage of the city is under the urban agglomerate and how much of the city is still under the rural setup? And the most challenging aspects are our own views and attitudes and hopes for the kind of future we aspire for Shillong.

The creation of the two new Blocks in Mawlai and Mawpat was welcomed with open arms. But if one looks at the list of the villages included in the two blocks, one will find that almost half of Shillong falls under the two newly created Community and Rural Development (C&RD) Blocks. Still there are shnongs (villages) we consider to be part of Shillong city which are included in the Myllem Block too, so the question is whether Shillong qualifies to be called a city.

If for administrative conveniences, more than half of what we consider as Shillong city is included under the C&RD Blocks then is Shillong a ‘sor’ or a ‘nongkyndong’? Or is Shillong an urban area which is also a rural area? People who live in Shillong, particularly in the suburbs of the city love to say that they live in Shillong but they would also proudly display their allegiance to their respective villages. Claims like, “I live in Shillong but I am from Mawlai/ Malki/ Nongthymai/ Riatsamthiah, Mawkar etc are common. Fortunately or unfortunately, this is the kind of mindset that prevails in the minds of the people who live in the city. We want to be ‘nongsor’ (urbanites) yet we don't want to let go our myopic attitude of not wanting our locality to be part of Shillong which is growing and is fast becoming a cosmopolitan city.

We crave for all that is modern and are proud that

Shillong has Dominos, Pizza Hut, KFCs, Pantaloons, Westside etc which are symbols of a city, yet we are not willing to let our minds grow and accept the reality that we are living in an urban locale. It is like our heart is in one place but our minds are somewhere else. We want to be called city dwellers yet we are partly nongkyndong (suburbans).

When there is a traffic jam in the city, we blame the traffic police, the tourists and all sundry but we don't realize that we are the real cause of these problems. We want Shillong to be a city, but we also want it to remain a nongkyndong and we don't want any changes to happen. The only change that the people welcome with open arms is to create more C&RD Blocks within city limits and that is the kind of development we want. Traffic problems persist because our city is growing but our roads have not. It all boils down to the kind of mindset we have. We live in a city but we are still governed by our respective dorbar shngong. We live a flamboyant life style and wear branded clothes and we buy big swanky cars but in many cases the roads in the rural areas are much bigger than the ones in Shillong.

Shillong is a city which has not grown. If at all the city grows it is only in population and the space it covers. Other than that it is but a city with many villages. Like any city Shillong's major problem is waste disposal and again we blame the government, the Shillong Municipality, the Meghalaya Urban Development Agency etc when more than half of Shillong is under the jurisdiction of the C & RD Block. How can we blame these agencies when the major part of Shillong is not under their jurisdiction? What about the KHADC? What has the Council done, when most parts of Shillong is still under the different dorbar shngong?

Shillong is a city of many villages and it cannot work as a single entity and

that is where the problem is. Take for example the effort to clean Wah Umkhrhah. Almost all agencies had tried their hand at cleaning the river, but they have all failed miserably. The reason is because it is a city of many villages, which means if the village downstream of the river try to clean the Wah Umkhrhah but the village upstream do not cooperate or remain indifferent then the entire effort becomes futile. This important issue has never been addressed from a holistic point of view and it is almost impossible to get all the dorbar shngong in the city to agree on one single issue, hence cleaning the Wah Umkhrhah remains an unfinished agenda.

Perhaps it is not out of place to mention that even the KHADC under which the dorbar shngong is supposed to function has failed in its efforts to save Wah Umkhrhah because each dorbar shngong has absolute authority over its supposed territorial jurisdiction.

We are good at pointing fingers, blaming others for the problems that we face and we are quick at looking for scapegoats to blame for anything that is happening. Right now there is so much hate in the community because the pressure groups are trying to outdo each other to prove which of the group loves the jaitbynriew more. The HYC and the KSU are even wooing each other's members to one fold and in the mêlée the non tribal is becoming a scapegoat. We blame the entire gamut of problems on the immigrants and anybody who dares touch the non tribal becomes an instant ‘Facebook hero.’ And when the two ladies tried to prevent the ‘Facebook hero’ from assaulting a non-tribal man (as was reported recently), they were branded ‘ba iashah dkhar (taking sides with a dkhar).’

A young Khasi man is in two minds. He claims to love his jaitbynriew but he does not respect its profound value system. Where is the ‘tip hok tip sot’ (justice) that the Khasi-Pnar used to be proud of? The Khasi-Pnars always set their cases in the altar of ‘ka nia ka jutang’ reason and argument and

fight happen only when reason and arguments fail, but now blows and petrol bombs take precedence over anything else. The same young Khasi-Pnars who regularly attend church services every Sunday have no remorse on attacking a person without any rhyme or reason just because he is a non tribal. Do we need to again ask Jesus the age old question, “Who is our neighbour?” Where are the merciful and where are the peace makers?

The people in Shillong are in two minds. We live in a city yet we owe allegiance to our dorbar shngong. We are urban yet we are rural. The problem is we cannot solve urban problems by using rural tools. Similarly we will not be able to address all the urban issues with a rural frame of mind. Shillong's problems will persist because of the kind of mindset that people have - from our attitude towards others to our mind-sets about everything around us. One can also ask: Can we solve our traffic and road problems by using MNRGS? Instead of looking at the problem in Shillong from an urban perspective, we now have to use the schemes and projects available under the rural development scheme to do so. Shillong's problem is complex not only because the people who live in the city of many villages are in two minds. The worst part is also because we have a government which has no mind. A government which fought for Shillong to be included in the government smart city project has in one fell swoop decided that more than half of the city is under C&RD blocks.

If we want to address the problem Shillong is facing we need to look at the city problem from a holistic point of view. We need to look at Shillong as one entity and not as a constituent of various dorbar shnongs. Toki Blah in a write-up had earlier suggested that we need a dorbar sor (urban dorbar) to deal with the problems of our sor (urban areas). This is the crux of the matter.

to make both ends meet. Municipality can we make our localities cleaner?

Yours etc.,
Michael Makri
Shillong - 3

Nawaz Sharif Unseated

Editor,

The Supreme Court of Pakistan disqualified Nawaz Sharif from holding public office and ruled that graft cases be filed against the beleaguered leader and his children over the Panama Papers scandal. It is the second time in Pakistan's 70-year history that the Supreme Court has disqualified a sitting prime minister. In India fodder-scam superstar RJD Chief Lalu Prasad Yadav siphoned off the treasuries of Bihar/Jharkhand. While serving terms in jail he virtually pulled the strings of “Siasi” through his wife Rabri Devi, a pawn implanted by him as Chief Minister and even managed to get bail. In the name of Mahagathbandhan Laloo was trying to feather his son's illegally amassed disproportionate benami assets.

The CBI had registered an FIR in the case of two prime hotels owned by railways that were transferred to a private company during Lalu's tenure as rail minister and raided at least 12 locations, including Lalu's residence in Patna, in the first week of this month. ED has filed case against Lalu and his family members. The Income Tax Department has

provisionally attached more than half-a-dozen properties in Delhi and Patna allegedly belonging to Lalu's family members worth over Rs 170 crore. Apart from being a master money launderer Lalu Prasad has deftly completed criminalization of the RJD party by protecting and patronizing hard core criminals like Shahabuddin of Siwan. The recent revelations that Lalu was taking advice from imprisoned Shahabuddin for meddling with state administration from behind the scenes is a serious concern for the security and integrity of the state as well as the country and tantamounts to treason.

Such politicians deserve to be banned for life from contesting elections as representative of people by the Election Commission of India.

Hats off to the Supreme Court of Pakistan for disqualifying two sitting Prime Ministers from holding public office on corruption charges. It is expected that the Judiciary of our country would also disqualify corrupt politicians from holding public office in the near future to make India corruption-free and to save and strengthen democracy.

Yours etc.,
Samares
Bandyopadhyay
Advocate, Kolkata
High Court

Doklam standoff: Develop good ties with South Asian neighbours to counter China

By Shyam Saran

The standoff between Indian and Chinese forces at the Doklam plateau in Bhutan is now over a month old and though diplomatic efforts have continued, no early solution appears to be in sight. India's national security adviser, Ajit Doval, is in Beijing for the BRICS NSAs meeting. It is possible that on the sidelines, he will be able to engage with Yang Jiechi, his counterpart in the special representative mechanism between the two countries. One should remain hopeful that these talks in Beijing will lead to a satisfactory resolution of the impasse and pave the way for relaxing tensions between the two countries. Confrontation will be damaging to the interests of both countries and is best not allowed to persist.

Such confrontation is also not in the interest of Bhutan, India's neighbour

the contrary, has tried to assert its claim unilaterally through its road building activity in the area.

China has objected to India getting involved in an issue that is between China and Bhutan and that India's action violates Bhutan's sovereignty. The injured party, as per Chinese reckoning, that is Bhutan, has made no such complaint. In fact an official statement from Bhutan has, on the contrary, protested at Chinese incursion into Doklam and has termed this a violation of a bilateral understanding reached between the two sides not to disturb the status quo until the territorial disputes have been settled. By all accounts, India and Bhutan have acted in close consultation in terms of their treaty obligations. This is not a case of big brother India coming to the rescue

“China's encroachment on Doklam is often characterised as a security threat to India, particularly to the narrow Siliguri corridor linking India's North-East to the rest of the country. But it is also a threat to Bhutan whose main communication links south also traverse the same Siliguri corridor.”

with which there is a special relationship of mutual trust and understanding. The two countries have shared security interests, acknowledged in the revised bilateral treaty concluded in 2007. Any threat to Bhutan's security will always be a major concern to India and similarly a security challenge to India will impact Bhutan as well. China's encroachment on Doklam is often characterised as a security threat to India, particularly to the narrow Siliguri corridor linking India's North-East to the rest of the country. But it is also a threat to Bhutan whose main communication links south also traverse the same Siliguri corridor. The action taken by Indian forces in Doklam is in response to a serious security threat to both countries. Any notion that India has drawn a reluctant Bhutan into a crisis which is specific to India's security interest alone, ignores this ground reality.

It is also important to keep Bhutan's interests foremost while talking about the legal basis for the Sikkim-Tibet border. Bhutan was not a party to the 1890 Anglo-Chinese convention, nor to the subsequent 1906 convention. The Bhutanese claim on Doklam cannot be dismissed by reference to treaties or conventions to which it was not a party. Despite this, China has itself recognised in border talks with Bhutan that the Doklam plateau is disputed territory and had agreed not to disturb the status quo in the area. Furthermore, in the special representatives (SR) talks, both India and China had agreed that notwithstanding historical and documentary evidence, both sides needed to consult with the third country involved in determining the trjunction among respective borders. This figures in the minutes of the SR talks of 2012. India has observed this understanding faithfully. It has confirmed the alignment of the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as defined in the 1890 convention but reserved the issue of the trjunction keeping Bhutan's interests in mind. China, on

of a ‘tiny’ neighbour. The 2007 treaty was between two sovereign and independent nations which celebrated their longstanding relationship of mutual trust and close friendship and acknowledged the need to cooperate closely in upholding their shared security concerns. It is this spirit which must prevail as we continue to grapple with the challenge both our nations confront on our sensitive borders. We must not allow China or misinformed opinion to create misunderstanding between our two countries because we need to be seen as being united as governments and peoples in meeting China's aggressive posturing on our borders.

Just as India seeks good relations with China and peace and tranquillity on our borders, it has every reason to wish for the same on the China-Bhutan border. Good neighbourly relations between Bhutan and China are in India's interest just as good relations between India and China is in Bhutan's.

Unfortunately, recent Chinese actions appear to reflect a competitive frame within which it looks at its relations with countries in the subcontinent. Just as it has tried to sow discord among Asean members through intimidation and blandishments, it is seeking to do the same in our neighbourhood. Both Bhutan and India understand this strategy very well even if some others in our region do not.

Indian diplomacy needs to engage more intensively with all our neighbouring countries not only to expose Chinese strategy and risks for countries of the region, but also to expand our relationship with them much beyond current levels. This is irrespective of how the Doklam impasse eventually gets resolved.

(Shyam Saran is a former foreign secretary and is senior fellow, CPR)

The views expressed are personal (Courtesy The Hindustan Times)

TO THE EDITOR

Plight of farmers in Meghalaya

Editor,

Your widely read daily, the ST in particular, and only two vernacular newspapers have carried a very brief report on the plight of farmers in Meghalaya recently. Though the report was quite brief but, to me, it was a very important report since it has brought into the public domain a very important issue, namely, the plight in which the farmers of Meghalaya are in today and even from before.

For the benefit of the readers and policy makers, I would like to emphasize here, that farmers constitute nearly 75% of the population of the state and majority of them are small and marginal farmers and cultivators. Moreover, these farmers are landless but they still continue to engage in subsistence agriculture, horticulture and other allied activities in somebody else land (soil) by paying huge rent. Apart from huge rent, they have to spend a lot on tilling the soil, on seeds, fertilizers, weeding, pruning, irrigation wherever required, fencing from animals, harvesting, transportation and other related processes till final food crops reach home for consumption or till the cash crops reach the market. On reaching the market the middlemen exploit them in weighing and price. Hence, farmers are at the mercy of the traders and

middlemen. The government intervention is nowhere to be seen. They are facing this vicious circle year in and year out and they still languishing in poverty even during the last 46 years of Meghalaya statehood. The government has invested huge funds in this primary sector but most of the funds have gone towards salary of the employees of the concerned line departments under this sector, in corruption and in the name of exhibitions and other extra-curricular activities but nothing much has really benefited to the real farmers. Though, I cannot deny the fact that only few farmers have gained much from the government interventions.

Hence, I strongly suggest that Meghalaya government ought to bring out and put in place a sound Farmers' Policy from now onwards. It is indeed a shame that till today there is no policy for the farmers, even after 46 years of statehood. I wish also to point out the fact that all governments that came to rule the state for the last 46 years, it was because of enthronement by this majority electorate. Yet they are still being ignored till today. The MLAs and the aspirants remember the farmers only on the eve of the election. I also appeal to the farmers to throw away wholesale, the present set of MLAs during the coming elections who did nothing for them during the last 46 years and elect the new brand ones to teach them a lesson or two. Let the new ones learn this hard lesson.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via email

Act of courage

Editor

As a human being and more importantly as a woman, I am heartened by the courage and humanitarian feeling displayed by Deigratia Pohthmi. At the end of the day, we are defined by the truth of our existence here on earth as creations of God. We are human beings first before being defined by our names, identity, community, and ethnicity. One does not mean to imply that one's sense of belonging, roots, culture and community is not important but it is equally important to understand that being human and understanding the value of a human life is even more important. What Ms Pohthmi did is in fact commendable and in no way degrading. All that she did was to shield the man whose guilt and crime has not yet been proven but to also discourage and stop a group of men, who failed to show any sense of ethics and moral principles, from taking the law into their own hands. What is even more disgusting and disheartening are the comments on the video on social media that are prejudiced, narrow-minded and above all a gruesome display of a sorry and pathetic mindset and attitude of our men towards a woman. I for one salute Deigratia Pohthmi. Well done Kong!

Yours etc.,

Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Dear Municipality

Editor,

Cleanliness is next to godliness they say. If so, can we presume that we are marching towards hell, because of the dirt that is in our localities? I am speaking of dirt and filth in our Laitumkhrhah area. Almost everywhere garbage is dumped. If you doubt me, take a morning walk and breathe the polluted air in the early morning hours. This situation is made worse, because every corner has turned into a urinal. It is unthinkable for the Municipal to close their eyes on such unhealthy practices in their jurisdiction. I have visited a lot of places in the world and I realized that ‘public pay toilets’ are made available in common areas or junctions. These ‘public pay toilets’ generate a lot of income for those who construct and run them. They maintain it well with enough number of workers. Can our Municipality in Laitumkhrhah think of making such toilets at Don Bosco Square, Police Point, Beat House, Fire Brigade, Laitumkhrhah market, Dhankheti and other localities too? These will make our municipalities cleaner, less polluted and more importantly they will give jobs to a few more citizens who are struggling