

"It is not God that is worshipped but the authority that claims to speak in His name. Sin becomes disobedience to authority not violation of integrity."

--Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

The Shillong Times

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Longevity at what cost

A global health study has revealed that men and women in India are living longer lives than ever before. But it is not necessarily a happy and healthy life. As India follows in the footsteps of the developed world, it acquires the illnesses of affluent societies. Loss of life in India is now mostly due to cardiac problems. These are connected to obesity and high blood pressure. Such ailments are common in developed countries as well. At the same time, India is still vulnerable to tuberculosis and neonatal infections. It has not succeeded in eradicating these illnesses for decades. All this is at odds with the announcement made by the World Health Organization that India is now free from maternal and neonatal diseases.

What is strange is that Indians are now also prone to some affluent society afflictions, for instance, mental depression often causing suicide. Of course, the fallout of industrial and economic growth can often be growing anxiety neurosis. Medical facilities in the country are hardly adequate to cope with it. Common people cannot even think of psychiatric treatment and counseling. Special care for the old is also not taken seriously in the country although life expectancy here is on the rise. Indian cities, even smart cities, can hardly deal with the needs of the elderly. What is done to help the aged who cannot see clearly or move easily to cross crowded streets is not something to write home about. Even metropolitan cities provide little helpline to them. The joint family network is on the way out and so the aged have to be on their own. Old age homes are still dreaded by the old.

LOOKING BACK

February 01, 1988

4 killed in accident in Cherrapunjee

A private bus carrying some 42 Catholic pilgrims rolled down into deep gorge about 8 kms from Cherrapunjee on Sunday evening killing at least four persons and injuring another 30.

Reports available here that the pilgrims were returning from Catholic shrine at Cherrapunjee after attending the centenary of Don Bosco's death anniversary. The accident occurred when the ill-fated bus tried to overtake another bus.

Police, fire brigade were engaged in the rescue operation. Sources said police suspect that more bodies may be lying in the gorge.

Union Surface Transport Minister Rajesh Pilot and Home Minister P. R. Kyndiah were among others who rushed to the spot on hearing the news.

Tension brewing along Assam border

Tension is brewing in the disputed areas of the Meghalaya-Assam border following the latter's refusal to allow setting up of polling booths in these areas for the February 2 election.

According to reports available here, the polling personnel and police escort which went to the disputed areas to hold the elections, have not been able to set up polling stations in the disputed areas.

UNI adds: reacting sharply to Assam Government's pressing inability to allow setting up of polling booths in the disputed areas, Meghalaya Home Minister P. R. Kyndiah said "we have decided to go ahead have decided to go ahead with conducting the election in the location of the existing polling stations as was done in the past.

Mr. Kyndiah told UNI that "unilateral decision of the Assam Government is very unfortunate and we have established necessary contact with the concerned authorities at the centre for the smooth conduct of the election in these areas".

The Meghalaya Government, he said, had not accepted the opinion of the Committee.

Meanwhile, Union Minister of the State for surface Transport Mr. Rajesh Pilot who has been camping here is closely monitoring the situation in the disputed areas to prevent any incident there, according to informed source here.

V. P. Singh tirade against Rajiv Government

Jan Morcha leader Mr. V.P. Singh today said the Rajiv Gandhi Government had not only miserably failed to solve people's problems but had also acted in a manner which burdened the common man with more problems.

Addressing a public meeting here today the Defense Minister said there had been deterioration in all spheres of ration in all spheres of live political economic and social. He said that with prices shooting to every day, black marketers were making profit out of the drought relief operations, communal tensions were rising and the problem of unemployed youth was becoming more and more acute.

Mr. Singh held the Government's policies responsible for what he termed as "worsening economic situation of the country". Citing example, he said soon after this costly holiday trip to Lakshadweep Rajiv ordered hike on prices of petrol and edible oils.

Don Bosco Desecration, Intellectual Response and the Act of Otherisation

Dr. Jyotirmoy Prodhani

The people, who quite often look up to Prof. Hiren Gohain whenever a voice of erudite rationality becomes a critical need, were in for a rude shock when Prof. Gohain (in one of his articles in an Assamese daily on 12 August) lent his voice with confounding obstinacy to support the vandalism leading to the mindless desecration of the life size statue of Don Bosco on the eve of its formal inauguration as a tribute to the great pioneer of education on his bicentennial birth anniversary. Prof. Gohain is one of the most eminent minds of Assam who has always been above the shallow sectarian shenanigans that have been periodically dominating myriad discourses of Assam's politics, society and culture. When some self styled patrons of Assam's culture and history gathered early morning on 7 August at the bank of the river Bharalu, a rivulet that turned into a pathetic drain with the active contribution of the same lot, and pulled down the veiled statue from its pedestal to drag it down with ferocious disdain to dump it in the river, we, as part of Assam, did not have any other option but to hang our heads with irredeemable shame. To add to this horrendous disgrace even a section of Cotton College students, which is supposed to be the breeding ground of enlightened youths, arrived with their pharynx sticking out to support this barbarous act. As the day was maturing with brighter sun the predictable protagonists were being allegedly revealed - BJP, ABVP, Bajrang and the like. But the most disturbing revelation was the forging of an uncanny alliance with this curious conglomerate of some of the 'nationalist' elements and a group of intellectuals including some journalists, editors, social activists and others. The vociferous

aggression with which the whole exercise was accomplished and later justified through belligerent public outcry seemed almost a portentous recapitulation of the heady intensity of Assam's eighties.

The arguments favouring the vandalism have taken recourse to the same hegemonic peroration as to what contribution did Don Bosco have to the Assamese people and culture to have a place of some respect in her soil. Prof. Gohain, being an erudite scholar of cultural history, made the same argument more sophisticated and apparently plausible by citing several deserving names that have not found as much attention and space in the cultural discourse of the state yet. This is true that there are several figures who we would keep on discovering that deserve more attention and due recognition but this cannot be a reason to necessarily force a nation to ineluctably remain engaged in the sole exercise of discovering its native icons and be absolutely oblivious and disrespectful to its broader context. The argument that Prof. Gohain put forth suggested, rather unfortunately, that such obsession should be the only preoccupation of the people of Assam. The perpetrators and the ideological supporters of this marauding act might well have the same logic even if there is a move by the state to pay a similar tribute to the great figures like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Leo Tolstoy or Mother Teresa, for the simple reason that they are mostly from the West and more specifically, what contribution did they have to the Assamese language, Assamese people or Assamese culture to find a place of respect in this territory. In fact, the same logic can also be applied to the installation of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Parliament Square in London and it may be subjected to

similar desecration by the native Britishers.

Prof. Gohain has argued that there was no 'consensus' among the people of Assam to consider Don Bosco as having made any contribution to Assam worth a name. This particular proposition is quite sadly predicated upon the quintessential matrix of exclusion, for he has, in effect, referred to the mainstream Assamese as the only legitimate agency to form, what he calls, 'consensus'. Prof. Hiren Gohain has provided a dangerous alibi which can be conveniently used as a subterfuge for any kind of mindless hooliganism ranging from destroying the symbols of cultural representations of 'others' to killing human beings with any excuse by categorising them as speakers of languages other than 'Assamese'. In fact, every so called Hindi speaking individual killed by the terrorist outfits like Ulfa have been justified through such morbidly fallacious logical premises.

The recent history in Assam has witnessed it time and again that any kind of social mobilization invariably degenerates into a discursive exercise of 'us'/'them' binary eventually forcing such mobilizations to inevitably digress onto limitless trajectories of adversary constructions thereby constantly narrowing the space of its own habitation. The Don Bosco vandalism is symptomatic of Assam's proverbial malaise. Prof. Gohain's argument that the gratuitous vandalism was a manifestation of pent up wrath of the masses against the state government's copious moves of anti people policies is untenable. However intense the anger and disappointment of the masses might be against the state but that can never be a justification enough for an act of collective irrationality as a

passable misdeed of mass subconscious. Should they behave the same way even if the same 'disappointing regime' initiates something rational and ostensibly good?

This turbid act of vandalism, in a way, is as acute and hideous, if not more, like that of the horrendous massacre of the Adivasis by the Bodo terrorists last December. While the act of the terrorists aimed at physical annihilation of their perceived ethnic 'other', desecration of the Don Bosco statue and its vociferous intellectual justification are acts of ominous epistemic violence aimed at delegitimizing the very existence of the peripheral other. Don Bosco is integral to the consciousness of the numerically tangential Christian community largely formed by the Adivasis and the Scheduled Tribes in Assam. More than a symbol of Catholic spiritual order, Don Bosco is deeply understood and perceived as a source of empowerment and social transformation for many communities. Don Bosco is more a secular symbol than a religious saint. Millions of abandoned communities have been socially enabled because of the interventions made by the institutions fundamentally inspired by Don Bosco. This act has a chilling resonance with the notorious Beltola gang molestation by the same representatives of the Assamese mainstream. A section of the Assamese has once again demonstrated the terrible intolerance towards the vulnerable of the society precluding them, quite literally, even a symbolic entry into the space of the mainstream. In order to save ourselves from the eternal disgrace and embarrassment in history the only way is to reinstall the statue of Don Bosco with due veneration on the same spot where it was earlier vandalized. This is a necessary imperative for a nation's collective atonement.

(Jyotirmoy Prodhani is a Professor of English at NEHU, Shillong. Email: rajaprodhani@gmail.com)

TO THE EDITOR

IoA & Standstill Agreement: Clarification

Editor,
In a letter under the caption, "Clarification Needed" (ST Aug. 28, 2015) by A.W. Rani, the writer had asked for some clarification of the statements made by me in my very brief speech at the seminar referred to by him in which I had introduced the idea of international involvement in the process of signing of IoA and the phrase "peripheral non-princely states".

That the Khasi Himas are not princely states can be logically understood from the definitions of the words themselves as well as by the actual practice of administration and governance in the Himas. No one has ever doubted that the governance and administration as practised by the Khasi Himas and those in the plains/adjacent regions were and are poles apart! To clinch the arguments on this issue it is suggested that interested person(s) may check with the records of the central government whether the Khasi Himas were/are

princely states: Jaintia State was under the list of princely states.

That the Khasi Himas were and are peripheral is obvious from the definition of the term "periphery" - "The outermost part or region within a precise boundary", according to the RDU Dictionary. An average intelligent person should not take long to grasp the meaning and purport of that definition. Even today, our Himas seem to have only minor/incidental impact - economically and politically: certainly not, culturally - on the polity of adjacent states like Bangladesh and Assam. The phrase, "peripheral non-princely states", was also used in correspondences between various officials of the British era. Unfortunately copies of those correspondences are not in my possession since I had only read them and was not authorised to keep copies. May be, at some opportune time copies may surface by serendipity!

Both the Standstill Agreement, 1947 and the Instrument of Accession (IoA) were considered to be instruments that should be signed by member states before accession by any state to body/bodies, national or international, in ac-

cordance with some terms and conditions. There is a quotation from the writings of an eminent and controversial writer which reads, "Reputed Indian intellectuals refuse to acknowledge the existence of these two treaties in their critical or dishonest writings". One may or may not subscribe to this view. It is a fact that the Govt. of India acknowledged their existence, since the Govt. of India Act, 1935 had created one of them, viz. the IoA. The Standstill Agreement was a child of the Cabinet Mission which followed the Cripps Mission. It does not really matter how or when or by whom the Instruments were created. What matters is that they are recognized in the UN Charter which had provided for their recognition which opens the door for approaching the International Court of Justice in the event of any need. I trust my explanation satisfies the query of A.W. Rani.

To get a correct perspective of the then government's policy on the accession of states, princely or otherwise, it should be relevant to quote from statements by eminent personalities who were at the helm of affairs at the time covering the pe-

riod from 1935 to 1947. One of these was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who issued a statement on 5th July, 1947, which read, "We ask no more of them than accession on these subjects (Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications) in which the common interest of the country are involved. In other matters, we would scrupulously respect their autonomous existence".

This quotation raises a question: Was the IoA signed by the heads of the 25 Himas couched in language to attract both the letter and spirit of the quoted statement? If not, why not?!

Yours etc.,
Morning Star Sumer,
Shillong - 2

Sangakkara deserves our respect!

Editor,
But unlike India, Sri Lanka is not a large cricketing market that can be exploited to the full by the commercial enterprises to make a quick buck. This is the very reason why Sangakkara did not get his due praise and appreciation despite his extraordinary feats. But true cricket admirers, irrespective of their nationalities, are in awe of the talent and skills of this phenomenal cricketer and feel privileged to have watched

Hell on earth

By M J Akbar

Murder becomes hypnotic when it is pure evil. We stare at it compulsively, obsessively, with limitless appetite.

A psychoanalyst would be able to suggest reasons; I can only offer observation. Evil is never warm, it is cold-blooded. Evil is icy calculation wrapped in endless layers of deceit. And when a high profile murderer gets protection from a social cabal, then each lie, masquerading as a theory, seeks to mislead a police force looking for leads, even as it provokes the public thirst for macabre entertainment to generate confusion. The murder of Sheena Bora is evil in its purest incarnation.

A lie cannot be sustained unless the press is utterly gullible and the police hopelessly compromised. India media may have its faults, but it cannot be taken for a ride. It can volley and smash. Take the latest story promoted by the main accused, Indrani Mukerjea, that Sheena was born after she had been raped by her stepfather, Upendra Bora. The Times of India considered this worthy enough for lead prominence. But on the same day, Saturday 29 August, the same paper carried Bora's version [albeit inside, on page 17] denying this allegation, and claiming that the real father was the man that Indrani married when she was a teenager, a certain Siddhartha Das. There is a very simple way towards clarity: DNA tests.

When dust makes a story, there will be dust storms in the air. It is easy enough to blame media, but media will travel only so far as public interest takes it. If there were no readers there would be no story. Why are we so transfixed by this murder? Because this is not just another murder: the depth of barbarism is beyond the comprehension of imagination, let alone the much smaller circumference of our experience. The holiest moral code of life, whether in the human or animal world, between a mother and daughter, has been brutalised beyond belief.

It so happened that I was reading a splendid new book, The Golden Age of Murder, when this story broke. It is about that exhilarating generation of British writers, from G.K. Chesterton to Agatha Christie, who created such an extraordinary oeuvre of British literature, the murder mystery. The murderer is always beyond suspicion because he or she is so normal, so "one of us". It takes the genius of an

eccentric sleuth to serve justice.

No one does murder with the finesse of the British. Americans excel in gang slaughter, which is quite a different story. [Indians have nothing comparable. It cannot be because we do not have murders in India. We probably simply do not have any faith that it can be solved.] I was a bit surprised to learn that many of these mysteries were based on true life murders in Britain. What strikes me now, is that there is no book in such a vast library of fiction where a mother murders a biological daughter - not in sudden anger, and certainly not with the cool ferocity that Indrani allegedly displayed when she first drugged and then strangled Sheena. It seems Sheena's brother Mikhail was on the hit list too, which confirms another truism established by Christie: the first murder is such a liberation from any moral code that there will inevitably be a second.

The biggest motive for murder is greed, closely followed by fear. Those who live by greed begin to believe that they can buy safety with money. They have cause for confidence. Never forget that Indrani almost got away. This case could have blown up three years ago, but the police officer posted to the area where the burnt corpse was abandoned refused to investigate when a tribal villager brought information. Why? Was he paid? If yes, who gave the money? Why did the Mumbai police take Rahul Mukerjea's complaint three years ago lightly?

But what is truly astonishing is the silence that suddenly descended upon all concerned. Indrani's affluent husband, Peter, says he bought the nonsense that Sheena had disappeared to some place in America, which does not have either an address or a mobile phone. He must have travelled to America in these three years. He even abandoned curiosity? This is hard to digest.

The silence of Indrani's second husband, Sanjeev Khanna, who helped strangle Sheena, is more explicable. He was bought out. This one-time petty businessman suddenly became affluent. Money does buy everything, including murder.

For a while. Perhaps this case also proves that there is justice - divine justice. The silence was broken by one of those accidents that can only be explained by some sort of divine retribution. We think of Hell as God's punishment after death. But there can also be hell on earth. This is where Indrani Mukerjea and Sanjeev Khanna have already reached.

the game of the great named Kumar Sangakkara.

Moreover unlike certain "superstars" who preferred to linger in the team, despite being an absolute liability, by banking on past records, glamour and influence; Sangakkara has voluntarily yielded place to new players immediately after he witnessed a bit of dip in form. We all should learn from Sangakkara what accountability and selflessness are all about. Not to forget the gentle behaviour of Sangakkara on the field. What a contrast to certain "brave" cricketers who try to prove their aggression through verbal abuses and obscene gestures towards opponents! Indeed no thanks are enough for

Kumar Sangakkara for providing pure entertainment in the cricketing field and also for being a role model as far as being an ideal human being is concerned. Lastly, Hats off to the Sri Lankan soil which keeps on presenting to us the likes of Mahela Jayawardene, Muttiah Muralitharan, Sanath Jayasuriya and Kumar Sangakkara --- all epitomes of gentleness, politeness, greatness, civility and selflessness.

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee
Kolkata - 114

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

"We all have big changes in our lives that are more or less a second chance."

--- Harrison Ford

The Shillong Times

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Manipur's congenital disorder

AFTER the Manipur valley had virtually come to a standstill for over two months with schools and colleges shutting down on account of the demand for Inner Line Permit System (ILPS) by civil society organisations in the valley, the State is once again on the boil. On August 31 the Manipur Assembly passed the three Bills namely the Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015, The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh amendment) Bill, 2015, and The Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill which have led to violence in the Hills. At least four people were killed and 13 others injured in the violence that broke out in Churachandpur district. The homes of minister in charge of family welfare Phungzaphang Tonsing, an MP and five MLAs were set on fire by unidentified people in Churachandpur and a charred body was recovered from the debris.

Three tribal students' organisations which had called a 12-hour bandh in the hill districts on Monday to protest against the passing of the bills in the 60-member assembly, are suspected to be behind the arson. The non-Meitei groups (Kukis and Nagas) have been against the passage of the ILPS Bill as it puts 1951 as the cut off year for determining a person as a permanent resident who would enjoy state welfare. The tribal organisations say the Bills are against the interests of the tribal people and violate Article 371C and Manipur Hill People Administration Regulation Act of 1947 that safeguard the rights of tribal people over land and resources.

The Bills are expected to pave the way for ILP on the lines of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. The Bill was deemed to be important because of the rapidly changing demography in the State. The combined population of the indigenous people living in the hills and plains of Manipur is around 18-19 lakh, while the outsiders, including those from Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh, account for more than 10 lakh out of the state's total population of 28 lakh. It is this stark demography that has prompted the Meiteis who have been squeezed in a space which constitutes only one-tenth of the geographical area of Manipur, even while nine-tenths of the hills are occupied by the tribals, which has provoked the demand for the ILPS. The Meiteis (who adopted Hinduism and therefore lost their tribal status) living in the valleys are not allowed to buy land in the hills. This rather iniquitous arrangement has resulted in grave misunderstandings between the people in the hills and plains. In fact the hill people have been against the passage of the ILPS because they were never consulted. This continued protest is the bane of Manipur. It is important for those who rule the state not to take hasty decision to appease a section of the people.

LOOKING BACK

February 02, 1988

Meghalay, Tripura go to polls today

More than 2.14 million voters in Meghalaya and trouble torn Tripura got to the polls tomorrow amid stringent security to elect new assemblies.

While police and paramilitary forces will supervise the law and order situation in comparatively calm Meghalaya, army will join these forces on Tripura where extremist violence has taken a toll of 80 non-tribals since the state was declared a disturbed area on Friday.

In marxist-ruled Tripura, polling is to take place for 59 of the sixty assembly seats election having been countermanded in Fatikroy constituency following the death of sitting CPI-M member Mr. Tarini Mohan Sinha in a road accident.

Tripura will have its eighth assembly and Meghalaya its fourth.

The Congress(I) is seeking to dislodge the CPI-M led Left Front which in power in Tripura while in Meghalaya it is facing the main challenge from regional parties.

In Meghalaya 271 aspirants will seek the mandate of 8 lakh voters, while more than 210 candidates are in the field in Tripura.

The Congress(I) is contesting all the sixty seats in Meghalaya and its main rival Hill Peoples Union 55.

Counting will start on Wednesday and by Thursday night results from all the constituencies in both states are expected to be available.

The fundamental purpose of the Law

By Fabian Lyngdoh

As I had previously expressed, the basic co-ordinates of the 'social order' which keep human society in existence, are 'individual freedom' and 'collective order'. In today's modern tribal societies, as in the Khasi Hills, 'individual freedom' is mostly determined by tradition and convention, and 'collective order' is mostly determined by the laws of the State. The fulcrum of balance between these two co-ordinates, or the point of intersection of their graphs in relation to the prevailing level of civilization, is the seat of 'Justice'; and the fundamental purpose of the law is to regulate this balance. No law can exist apart from these two fundamental elements, so legislators should consider the balance of these sociological co-ordinates in any piece of legislation. The frame of reference of all good laws is not the legitimacy of the Government to rule, or its continuance in power, but the maintenance of the 'social order'. For a State law to be just, it must not curb 'individual freedom' beyond a maximum level of tolerance; and for a convention or tradition to exist justly, it must not endorse 'individual freedom' beyond a minimum level of order. The maximum level of tolerance and the minimum level of order should coincide at the point of 'Justice'. A law to regulate the construction of public and private buildings is made primarily in the context of 'collective order'. The building laws of the State and the District Council can be examined with reference to this context.

There are oppositions to the building law of the State from various agencies. This opposition must necessarily arise from the context of 'individual freedom'. In the Khasi Hills, neither the District Council nor the State Government has acquired territorial authority over the land. It has been a general conception that the private owners can do whatever they like with their lands whether for construction of buildings, digging coal or gold or silver, whatever it is, without any external interference over their private kingdoms and sovereignties. From this conceived independence arose the idea that no other authority should have any intervention in the village affairs without the knowledge and consent of the dorbar shngong and the dorbar

shngong. So, the first factor of the opposition is based on the concept of absolute private ownership of land and the idea that the dorbar shngong and rangbah shngong are not sub-ordinates of any constitutional authority. Both these attitudes arise from territorial authority vacuum. The second factor is the fear of taxation and cumbersome bureaucratic hurdles entering into people's simple and liberal day to day living. It seems that the MUDA could not function properly even in the Normal Areas of Shillong. There are complaints regarding corruption and red-tapism in its functioning. So why does it want to spread those diseases into the Sixth Schedule areas as well? Before the MUDA can attempt to stretch out its hands into rural and semi-urban areas it should first sanitize its internal affairs and sterilize its agencies so as to genuinely win the trust of the people, otherwise they would only see its move as a ploy to enlarge the corruption market of its officers and staff, or as hidden agenda to dilute their sovereignty over their private kingdoms.

It is a common knowledge that private buildings in the rural areas constructed by the village engineers (mistris) are safer and last much longer than the Government buildings, school buildings, village community halls, etc., which were constructed by the contractors under the expert supervision of the Government's engineers. Anyone can verify this fact. If these Government engineers are so incompetent, or rather, badly incapacitated by the politicians and their cohorts, how can we expect the MUDA to regulate construction of private houses of the village people?

The building law of the KHADC is unopposed because the people believe that the District Council would not interfere with their private freedoms, and at the same time they take it merely as a shield against any perceived interference by the State Government, not because of any special attachment to the District Council. In reality, both the District Council and the State Government are considered as external authorities. If the District Council were to impose taxes or encumber the people with bureaucratic hurdles, or claim territorial authority over their lands,

they would rush to the State Government for protection. That was how the management of primary schools was transferred from the District Council to the State Government. But if the State Government also turns a deaf ear, then they would surely rush to the Governor as the political agent of the Central Government for redress. All this is not because of any sense of respect for constitutional authorities or for strengthening the 'collective order', but for safeguarding their private freedoms.

'Individual freedom' in the Khasi Hills, especially the right of individuals over their lands is over-stressed. Absolute collective authority of a community over the lands in its territory is a Khasi tradition, which does not curb 'individual freedom' beyond the point of tolerance, and does not endorse it beyond the point of order. But the present tradition of absolute right of individuals over land is only a legacy of the British rule. This invented tradition endorses 'individual freedom' beyond the minimum level of 'collective order', and the two co-ordinates of 'social order' are never in equilibrium. On the other hand, the State laws may be just and conducive to the 'social order', but the way they are implemented and put into practice by the bureaucracy and the judicial machinery is mostly unjust and threatening to the sense of security and freedom of the simple tribal population, thus instigating a defensive projection of 'individual freedom' into the domain of minimum level of 'collective order'.

The minimum level of 'collective order' keeps rising with the growth of population and development of socio-economic infrastructures; and if the maximum level 'individual freedom' does not correspondingly fall, there would be strain in the balance of 'Justice'. In such a situation, amendments of existing laws or new legislations to redress the imbalance are required. There is a need to regulate the construction of commercial buildings, Churches, Temples, schools, dorbar halls, theatres, hospitals, hostels or apartment buildings, etc., which if badly con-

structed, would endanger the lives of the public. There is also a need to regulate the construction of high and massive private residences in high density locations even in the Sixth Schedule areas because such constructions might endanger the lives or affect the easement facilities of the poor and helpless neighbours, as after all, the people who can afford to construct such buildings are powerful and live far above the common citizens.

It is the responsibility of the State Government to manage infrastructural development and civic affairs of the people. The MUDA is not for municipal administration, but it is concerned with guiding, assisting and regulating urban development throughout the State. The District Council is presently neither constitutionally mandated nor institutionally competent to guide and regulate urban development. If the State Government has nothing to do in the Sixth Schedule areas, then it has no responsibility also to construct roads, bridges, hospitals, irrigation projects and other development infrastructures in the State. The war cry, 'District Council in Sixth Schedule areas' is only a sentimental exaggeration camouflaging an entrenched sense of fear, and inflamed by party politics. In a society with territorial authority vacuum, and without a required minimum level of 'collective order', 'A smart city' is a 'far cry' reality from this 'war cry'.

However, no law should be made merely for establishing the legitimacy of the Government to rule without the actual need to re-establish a balance between 'individual freedom' and the 'collective order' which might have become destabilized by emergent demographic and socio-economic developments. The State Government should not unnecessarily interfere with the construction of the ordinary dwelling houses of the common people, especially in sparsely populated areas by introducing corruption ridden bureaucratic procedures just to fulfil the concept of uniform application of law. The reality of the local conditions should be the guiding principle, and not the uniformity of law. Finally, the MUDA should establish its credibility as a facilitator of urban development, as a saviour from natural calamities, and as a regulator of 'Justice' among the rich and the poor living together in any urban locality.

TO THE EDITOR

Kudos to Don Bosco

Editor,
In an article captioned, "Don Bosco Desecration, Intellectual Response and the Act of Otherisation" (ST Sep 1, 2015) by Dr. Jyotimoy Prodhani, the writer has caught the bull by the horns. It is edifying and bold indeed on his part to stand up for the Truth. By this audacious act he has joined the throng of the righteous who are fearless even to the point of being discredited for a just and right cause. He has clearly expounded that even the so called enlightened ones and the intellectuals can still be chained by petty ideologies. A great and holy man like Don Bosco cannot be measured in terms of religion or sect or nationality, nor can he be categorized according to finite human standards. To do so would only unravel the narrow mindedness of the weak minds.

Yours etc.,
Daniel Cajee
Sacred Heart Theological College
Mawlai-8

Accept existing realities

Editor,
Toki Blah's satirical letter "The Secular Common Denominator" (August 26, 2015) has brought home the truth about the "sleazy practical world" where "Money is God, Greed is King and Corruption runs the game". My gratefulness to Mr Blah for commenting on the origin and status of Law Syiem but again, on the same note he writes, "somehow this seems to spring more out of emotional conviction rather than acceptance of existing reality." Indeed, Mr Blah because emotional conviction emerges from an inherent native instinct and had it not been for such emotional conviction, we would have failed miserably in our ability to see the "existing reality." Mr Blah's campaign can be summed up as an initiative for good environmental governance over Law Syiem soon before the Syiem and his Dorbar conspire to barter it all away for personal gain. Fair enough! But why is an Agreement with the KHADC crucial? Is it be-

cause that's how things get done in a "sleazy practical world" by "acceptance of existing reality"? As far as my knowledge goes, in Khasi hills even the Government has no right over the land not to think of the Dorbar of the Syiem Mylliem and the KHADC so why would a responsible civil society opt for an Agreement with KHADC when they are aware that *ki kur Syiem Mylliem* are the traditional land owners of Law Syiem. Ma Toki's ranting about the "existing reality" of *Ka Ri Raid and Ki Law Adong Lum Shillong* is the same handiwork of the stewardship as he points out but making a deal with the KHADC junta is as good as jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

People still reminisce about the lush green forest of Law Syiem. It is only recently that the whole forest started to dwindle due to all the wrongs committed by the Syiems and their cohorts in their ploy to usurp it from *ki kur Syiem*. No one will be happier than the *kur Syiem Mylliem* if Law Syiem is protected

and preserved.

If civil societies are committed to protecting and preserving Law Syiem, it should be done without upsetting the cultural framework and I'm sure *ki kur Syiem Mylliem* will totally support such a noble endeavor.

To sum it all, I believe we are on the same page, fighting the same irresponsible stewardship but should we trample all over our traditional land ownership which is fundamental to the identity of a clan in our community by wiping out this cultural heritage in our attempt to redeem the forest for the purpose of environmental rejuvenation without taking into consideration the cultural and symbolic bearing it has on *ki kur Syiem Mylliem*? If so we are on a par with the likes of those we stand up against. I believe that we can protect Law Syiem if we work together selflessly till it is replenished and preserved as a Cultural Heritage and an epitome of environment protection by creating productive ecosystem that would benefit not only the neighboring localities but Shillong as a whole.

Yours etc.,
Daphishisha Syiem.

Mid-day meals for poor school children in a mess

By Nantoo Banerjee

However laudable may be Union Minister Maneka Gandhi's bid to restrict consumption of fast food and drinks by school children, it would be a futile exercise to achieve the objective by merely banning their sale in and around schools in India. If the United States, the world's original and largest promoter of fast food and fizzy drinks, could do little to change the eating and drinking habits of its children despite voluntary measures by some institutions to ban their campus sale, there is no reason to believe that an official dictat in India to this effect will succeed. Instead, a strong and sustained campaign against the ill effects of such consumption by children to influence the mind of parents as well as children may help.

Paradoxically, the women and child development minister's official plea before some of her concerned cabinet colleagues from ministries of health, education and HRD for action against consumption of high-fat 'junk' food and fizzy drinks by school children came on the day when the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) had reportedly sought intervention of the prime minister's office to help stop Maggie-like controversies that may impact fresh foreign direct investment (FDI) in the food processing sector in the country. It appears that the government itself is divided on the issue of production, sale and consumption of processed foods, including fast food and sweet drinks. Logically, the sale of popular 'mithai' products, which are hardly healthy, too needs to be restricted, if not banned altogether. Indians - from children to grandparents - are almost pathologically attached to sweetmeats of all sorts. Sweets are part of almost every Indian celebration, including political victories.

However, it must be admitted that there is nothing emotional about Ms Maneka Gandhi's letter to her cabinet colleagues raising a debate on the need for banning junk food sale and consumption within school premises and around such institutions. She has merely gone by the recommendations of a high-powered working group, constituted by her ministry, on 'consumption of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) and promotion of healthy snacks in schools in India' to combat childhood obesity, non-communicable diseases during early adulthood, including a range of chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and dyslipidemia. The country is facing a major burden of malnutrition and under-nutrition among children as well as excess intake of calories by a section of children causing overweight and obesity.

The terms of reference of the working group covered a whole lot of areas - from definition of junk foods to guidelines for adaptation by state governments/ union territories on sale of junk foods in school canteens or in the vicinity of schools by private vendors and guidelines for use by print and electronic media and advertising agencies on promotion and marketing of junk foods. National Institute of Nutrition director T Longvah was group's chairperson.

Among others, the working group recommended the ban of all HFSS foods in school canteens and private vendors and street vendors should not be allowed to sale such foods during school timings - from 7 AM to 4 PM - within vicinity of 200 meters. And, the school management

must promote healthy, wholesome and nutritious foods with right portion size. Foods to be prohibited in school canteens include fried foods such as fried potatoes and chips; sherbets, ice golas, sweetened carbonated and non carbonated beverages; rosogullas, gulabjamuns, peda, kalakand, jalebi, boondi, Imarti, etcetra; ready-to-eat noodles, burgers, pizzas, tikka and gol gappas; chewing gums and candies; chocolates and all confectionary items; and cakes, biscuits, buns, pastries, jams and jellies. It also recommended restricted sale -- for instance, once a month - of non-standardised or proprietary foods such as "Samosa, pakora, bread pakoda, tikki, etc." with proper display of nutrients and after making them more nutritious.

The working group wants a school canteen of any type - primary, secondary, day care and boarding - for even such as class parties, school camps, school fetes, sporting carnivals and, picnics, social events like annual functions should provide nutritious, wholesome and healthy foods to children. The purpose of making these school canteen guidelines are to encourage the development of healthy eating habits among school children; provide a wide range of options for healthy and nutritious food and beverages in schools and enhance the intake of nutritious and well balanced diet among students. The ideas are lofty, if not utopian altogether. The bureaucrats and veteran members in the working group probably have little knowledge of the modern society where parents and guardians of most children are working couples, who use professional caterers and fast food joints for even small domestic parties such as birthdays and anniversaries. Given the modern day living pressures and conditions, few would opt for implementation of such grand guidelines for food and drinks for school children.

In fact, the administration is facing a serious problem to run the free mid-day meal scheme for poor children up to junior school standards, even 20 years after it was first launched by the Narasimha Rao government. The scheme has created more corruption and controversies than any other social support programmes in the country. The whole project is under review. The scheme failed to inculcate proper education among poor and hungry children, who are sent to schools more for mid-day meals and uniforms than real study. All that it may have achieved is to feed 120 million poor children across the country daily. The programme is rife with corruption. It frequently endangers and lets down the vulnerable population it seeks to serve. The news of contaminated or poor quality mid-day meals killing hordes of children is common every year. The situation is worse in remote villages and locations, where children are most in need of a nutritious meal.

If the present government is rethinking on the mid-day meal programme for the famished and under-nourished junior school children because of the way it is being misused or delivered, why is it out to underline a food-habit changing programme for those less-controllable richer students in schools to ensure their balanced nutrition? Instead, the government and the school management would do well by educating parents on preferable diets to their children and, maybe, control the latter's daily pocket money to restrict their daily expenses on junk food and beverages. (IPA Service)

"Intense love does not measure, it just gives."

—Mother Teresa

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 24 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2015

The State Govt-KHADC tussle

That there is complete chaos between the different hierarchies of power in Meghalaya is evident. And this has surfaced after the High Court ruling stripping the Rangbah Shnong of their arbitrary powers such as issuing character certificates for opening bank accounts etc. which they claimed they were doing as a traditional practice. But the Court argued that such was not the practice even 25 years ago and hence the claims that such practices were part of tradition were tenuous. The District Councils which should have crafted a Bill to define the terms of reference on which the traditional institutions were to function did not do so for half a century. They made a semblance of a Bill that tended towards exclusivity and gender inequity apart from lacking the accountability mechanisms and passed it. The Bill was sent to the Governor for his assent but was returned with some remarks which sought to make the Bill more progressive and inclusive. The Khasi Hills District Council passed an amended Bill and sent it to the Governor but meanwhile the State Government also stepped in and passed an Ordinance to restore the powers of the Rangbah Shnong but it also expanded the ambit of the Bill to meet the present day needs. The Village Administration Bill (VAB) of the KHDC is still awaiting the Governor's assent.

Meanwhile another issue that has got the Councils and the State Government at each other's throats is on whether the ambit of the Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA) should extend to the Scheduled areas. This matter also has arisen after the High Court ordered the sealing of several buildings which violated the MUDA Building bye-laws and went up to seven stories, thereby violating the G+3 bye-law. But there are equally dangerous concrete structures several stories high which are beyond the writ of the MUDA. That there should be two building bye laws in one state is, in itself, an untenable idea since badly constructed high rise buildings in an earthquake zone can cause similar same damage and disaster should the earth quake. The KHDC has now hurriedly jumped in to construct its own building bye laws for Scheduled areas. How the State Government can allow such ambivalence on issues that affect people equally whether they are in scheduled or non-scheduled areas is difficult to understand. It has only succeeded to confuse the citizens of Meghalaya further. The reason for non-acceptance of the MUDA bye-laws is because of the maze of corruption in that Department. The Government needs to bring transparency and accountability in MUDA.

LOOKING BACK

February 02, 1988

11 more massacred in Tripura

Tribal National Volunteer insurgents massacred 11 people in a midnight raid in South Tripura last night, even as the troops started 'plunging operations' in the troubled borders of this strategic northeastern state.

The killings, which took place in an obscure hamlet in the Shantibazar area Relonia subdivision bordering Bangladesh, raised the toll on TNV violence this year to an all time high of 96.

Unconfirmed reports, meanwhile, said the paramilitary forces have arrested two TNV rebels.

The victims included three women and a tribal. Six-member family were completely wiped out in last night's incident which took place around 2200 hours.

A senior army official said the soldiers have already started 'plunging operations' in the south and western sectors. Besides, there have been routine marches in the interior as well, he said and clarified that 'these are not flag marches'.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen.

Harjeet Singh said the recent statement by some state ministers of the ruling Left Front Government that the army has been sent to help the Opposition Congress(I) to win the assembly elections was unfortunate.

Meanwhile hundreds of soldiers, flown in from morning, left for the troubled borders of the state in army vehicles.

The victims, which includes a tribal, were identified as Pradesh Debnath (20), Jibanbashi Pal (65), Krishnabala Choudhary (21), B. Choudhary (19), N. Pal (23), Sandnand Pal (17), Nanibala Choudhary (60), Govind Riyang and Ranibala Choudhary (23).

One of the five admitted to the local GB Hospital, succumbed to his injuries, Director General of Police Mr. R.P. Sharma told reporters.

Mr. Sharma said all flights from here to neighbouring Guwahati were cancelled to flow in additional battalions of the army following declaration by the Centre of the Disturbed Area Act throughout the state, which goes to the polls tomorrow.

Europe witnessing massive migration from Syria

EU nations differ on tackling the crisis

By Arun Srivastava

European Union has been facing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that while the German chancellor Angela Merkel has cautioned that the European Union could be forced to bring back border controls, the demographic character of Britain will undergo a major change with the population likely to soar by 21 million due to rise in migrant influx.

Britain's think-tank Population Matters claims that it is going to get a lot more difficult for people living in Britain, which is already one of the EU's most densely populated countries. With huge population shift due to migration, Britain will overtake France and Germany to become the most populated country in Europe in future.

Even the United Nations acknowledged that EU authorities were unable to cope with the refugees influx from countries like Syria, who are seeking to move to prosperous Germany, Sweden and Britain. Europe's Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, who is Greek, said that the situation in Greece was "particularly urgent," adding that it would be an "understatement to describe as challenging."

Greece has been flooded with refugees and economic migrants, mostly from Syria with more than 125,000 of them reaching the eastern Aegean islands this year, a 750 per cent increase compared to 2014. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced Friday that the number of migrants and asylum seekers who have been arriving in Europe is approaching a quarter-million this year. The EU expressed its intent Friday to fast-track new funding to help Greece cope with the wave of migrants. In addition to funds, the EU has also proposed a relocation system to transfer 16,000 people in need of international protection from Greece to

other EU member states.

This migration has been worst also for the reason that this has enraged the local people and they have turned hostile to the refugees. The local people are scared that the migrants would endanger the cultural and social ethos of EU. Letters bearing these feelings have already started finding space even in the dailies. This migration is worse because the migrants are not Christian Europeans, they are Congolese, Syrian and Iraqi, Libyan and Malian. They share nothing with Europeans except the desire for a better life. After WWII cities all over Europe needed rebuilding, there was a labor shortage and everyone was at least European. What stares at EU now is a future cultural catastrophe masquerading as a humanitarian effort. There is apprehension that future governments elected will look nothing like the liberal governments of today.

The Germans also allege that Britain is not bearing its fair share of the burden of migrants. As an EU member it is obligated to act like a member of a union. If it doesn't like it, then it should get out. If it wants the privileges, then it should share the responsibilities and burdens that go with them. There is a feeling that Europe is accepting a changing face with both hands tied behind its back. They even argue; 'If they didn't help the US in starting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and helped in bombarding Libya and killing Qaddafi, and helped in supporting the overthrow of Assad in Syria, none of the millions of migrants would be coming to Europe?.. It'll be many many years before the European migrant problems can be resolved, even if the wars end?'

The intensity of the migration could be assessed from a single incident that by the side of a road in Austria, 71 people, believed to be Syrian, lost their lives in a refrigerated food lorry. Among them were four children, three of them aged between eight and 10 years old. The safe passage for which their par-

ents paid the traffickers turned out to death sentence. Despite the risks, the people – the refugees and economic migrants – keep coming to Europe in ever rising numbers. Already this year an estimated 300,000 refugees and illegal migrants have made the journey into Europe, an increase of 80,000 or so on the total for 2014.

Chancellor Angela Merkel told the German people that she expects the country to take another 800,000 migrants and she has urged other countries to do similar. She categorically told that Germany wasn't responsible for the growing crisis as thousands of migrants try to board trains to the country from Hungary. In fact Hungarian government has blamed a German decision to suspend EU asylum rules for asylum-seekers fleeing the civil war. However Merkel rejected the criticism. Syrians were likely to be granted asylum in Germany, she said, but added: "That should come as no surprise. Actually, it should be the same in every European country."

The migration has been compounded by the crime syndicates. With the motto to make some fast buck they have been smuggling the migrants to Germany. It is feared that the Balkans are now the centre of Europe's people smuggling web. Only a day after 71 people suffocated in a chicken lorry, three children were rescued from a crammed truck in Austria. All had been on a road route controlled by criminal gangs. So terribly decomposed were their corpses that passersby noticed putrid liquid dripping from the air-tight interior once used for transporting frozen chicken. Inside, police found no air vents. Between January and July this year, 102,342 people crossed into Austria via the western Balkans, more than 10,000 higher than the total who entered Europe via the so-called "central Mediterranean" route, according to

Frontex, the EU border control agency.

The latest intelligence assessment of criminality in the western Balkans – an area with a well-known history of violence, instability and organised crime – is worrying. It is now beyond doubt that some of the region's established criminal syndicates have moved into migrant smuggling. A third of the 130 ongoing Europol investigations into people smuggling are, according to the Observer, linked to criminal gangs that have previously had form for drug trafficking, supplying girls to the sex trade or money laundering. On Friday the agency said it had now identified 3,000 serious players linked to people-smuggling in Europe, including a number of Britons.

Police evacuated Budapest's main station as huge crowds of migrants tried to get on trains. Many of the migrants are Syrian and want to get to Germany, which has said it will not send them back under EU rules, but will process their claims itself. With Europe's great migration under way, and globalisation and air travel making mobility easier, it would be naive to believe that the British government can or should make the UK a fortress and stop refugees from entering the country.

Those fleeing Syria, for instance, have to pay a fee of around \$1,000 (£649) to squeeze into an inflatable dinghy for the short passage from the Turkish coast to nearby Greek islands. Inside Macedonia, migrants pay, on average, \$500 to smugglers to navigate the country using off-road routes to Serbia, a journey that can take 10 days. Many are "led through the forests" by their guides. Investigators for Amnesty International documented a grim pilgrimage. "Walking through all weathers, over mountains and wading through rivers, sometimes without food and water for days on end, the challenges are immense. Exhaustion, pain and hunger take both a physical and a psychological toll. For the migrants, journey to Germany and other developed western nations is the road for hope. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Public Durbar in public places! What's the District Council House for?

Editor,

It is both strange and surprising, nay, irresponsible for anyone – individual or authority including that of the President of India who holds the purse strings, to go berserk as to use money so recklessly as the KHADC is doing now. This is evident from the mind-boggling mass media coverage of the District Council authorities' call to the public to swarm the polo ground on the 5th September to hear the KHADC's views and reasons for opposing the proposed Bill which had not even been introduced in the House – on the roles of Heads of traditional institutions (from Rangbah Shnong to Syiems etc.) in the Districts of Meghalaya as well as other issues. It raises serious questions about the lack of understanding of the peoples' representatives' about their responsibilities in the process of administration and/or governance as well as about the proper/improper use public funds. This kind of exercise negates the very purpose for which the representatives have been elected to serve!

The peoples' representatives, including the MDCs are there to discuss things and to act on behalf of the electorates who had elected them. In a word, they are mandated to work in constitutional bodies to highlight their wards' problems and to find ways and means to solve them without wastage of time, labour and money! They should also know that the Houses of People in District Council, Legislative Assembly and Parliament are as sacrosanct as are the temples, churches or mosques in Religion! In this, they have failed miserably!!

Granted that it is natural that a labourer should aspire to get to the top of his profession, whatever that profession may be. It is natural for any MDC to aspire to be CEM or for any MLA to be Chief Minister and, for anyone to become the President of India. But, those goals should be achieved only through hard and honest work – that is merit! Now it is apparent that merit almost always takes a back seat in any exercise to place a person on the top of any profession on consideration of merit! This exercise – convening a Grand Durbar at polo ground – is evidently one to pull the wool over the eyes of unsuspecting or gullible electorates by appealing to base emotions rather than to plausible logical reasoning. It is not needed! What is needed and mandatory is that the good MDCs should hon-

estly do their work to carry out their self-imposed responsibilities to discuss, debate and, find solutions to problems including that of the definition of the roles that should be played by Heads of our traditional institutions in the process of good governance!!

Yoursetc.,
Morning Star Sumer,
Shillong-2

To differ without being abusive

Editor,

Let me from the onset clarify that I normally never respond to rejoinders to what I write. This time I want to make an exception and it's in relation to Ms Daphishisha Syiem's letter, "Accept Existing Relitities" (ST 2nd Sept 2015). I wish to thank Ms Syiem for her most dignified and mannerly constructed letter. It revives my faith in Khasi womanhood and its ability to showcase to the world that we are an indigenous community still very much connected with our cultural value systems. "Da ka akor ka burom," "Da ka nia ka jutang", (decorous interaction by logic and reason) is core to our identity as Khasis. We can still afford to differ without being abusive. It's social capital that few communities can boast of. Thank you for reminding us of it.

Coming back to the topic of the Law Syiem at Mawpat, I have no qualms by whatsoever name the forest is called. My only concern is that it should, for reasons both of us agreed upon, be preserved, protected and safeguarded. So why an agreement with the KHADC for the above? I too agree that perhaps a deal with the KHADC junta is as good as jumping from the frying pan into the fire. District Councils are one of the major culprits for the disappearance of our forests. However, fortunately or unfortunately, like it or not, "making laws for the management of any forest not being a reserved forest" is one of the constitutional mandates of the ADCs. The agreement, as such, appears to have the sanctity of the law behind it.

Ms Daphishisha has made mention of the Kur Syiem Myliem's readiness to come forward in support of traditional measures to protect the forest at Mawpat. I leave it to the wisdom of the Kur on how this is to be done. Under prevailing circumstances it is vital that such Kur initiatives provide legal protection to this forest. Protection from the ravenous eyes of the Hima Dorbar and its bakhras and maybe from the slipshod attention of KHADC itself. ICARE will give its whole hearted support to any initiative, traditional or otherwise, that has the legal sanctity to protect our forests in a sustainable manner.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah,
Via email

Right to Services

Mark of good governance

By Dr S Saraswathi

An ambitious people-oriented legislation, Right to Services Act, is reported to be under the active consideration of the Government of India. Falling under the Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances it is concerned with the execution of policies and programmes of all ministries and departments and covers procedures, methods, strategies and impact.

Rights-based citizen entitlements are an advanced concept of democracy. It is demanded and conceded in many democratic countries all over the world. A product of neo-liberalism, it has engulfed thinking and action towards freedom and equality. It has become a prerequisite for development ethics. India's move towards this ideal follows the prevailing global trend in democratic practices and patterns.

The proposed legislation, concerned with a "right", has to guarantee not only freedom to obtain the right, but also equality to enjoy and exercise the right without any discrimination. As such, it has to pay special attention and take care of the weak, the depressed and marginalized groups, the un-informed, and the disabled who may lag behind in the race.

On the other side, it has to evolve methods to tackle the growing VIP culture, and cope up with the enormous privileges given to and appropriated by the rich and the powerful. For, every privilege granted to one person cuts into the right of another person, and should therefore be granted with utmost caution.

The foundation of democratic government is rooted in the concept that all public power rises from the people. Everyone theoretically enjoys the same rights and opportunity. It is the right as well as the duty of the citizens to watch and scrutinize how the public authorities exercise their power and discharge their functions.

In rights-based governance, service is a right and guarantee of service delivery. It is offered in a variety of forms in many countries. Common among these are proclamation of a Citizens' Charter, certification of processes adopted for ensuring compliance with agreed standards of service delivery, legislations like the Right to Information Act, and Consumer Protection Act, introduction and institutionalization of regulatory authorities, adoption of results-based management, introduction of outcome budgets, and promotion of public-private partnerships in public service delivery.

During the 1990s, a number of countries within and outside the Commonwealth adopted citizens' charters following the initiative taken in the UK. They were all designed to empower the citizens in relation to public service delivery. The principles were to maintain quality and prescribed standards and provide procedures to deal with lapses, and maintain accountability and transparency. Later, these were elaborated to cover accessibility, choice, involvement, fairness, consultation, etc., which put citizens at the centre of the delivery system.

Some countries have also moved beyond proclamation of charters. In the UK, a process labeled "Public Services: Putting People First" has been initiated. Since India is far behind and Indian citizens are yet to become aware of their rights, it is necessary to know what is happening in the rest of the world.

Right to Services Act, now under consideration, is intended to guarantee time-bound delivery of various public services rendered by the Government to the citizens. It provides a mechanism to check and prevent deficiency in services including punishing the errant public servant. The right neces-

sarily includes right to transparency and accountability in delivering the services and also right to information and accessibility to the services.

The legislation can thereby bring the public authorities closer to the people. It is an indispensable step towards good governance. In 1997, in a conference of Chief Ministers, an "Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government" at the Centre and the States was adopted. Within a decade, over 100 citizens' charters were issued by various agencies of Central and State governments. These were voluntary declarations.

Madhya Pradesh government is the first to enact the Right to Services Act in 2010 followed by Bihar in 2011. Several other States enacted similar laws including, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. However, most of these have remained ineffective.

In most of these States, the law is applied for issuing essential documents like birth, marriage, and domicile certificates, electricity connection, voter identity card, ration card, etc., which are essential and due to citizens as a matter of right.

Karnataka's Guarantee of Services to Citizens Act 2011, popularly called the Sakala Services Act has become a model worth examining. It is considered an "institutional attempt to functionalize day-to-day people-centric governance". It applies to 151 services spread in 11 departments all of which have crucial importance to people. The term "sakala", which denotes the service delivery programme in Karnataka, means "in time" or "good time".

Right to Services is primarily concerned with timely service without delay. If service organizations ensure that all activities are every time from the first time onwards carried out in the right manner, it will cut waste of time and resources. Mistakes – wanton or by oversight – very common in public offices, is a disservice to the client and liable to punishment.

The Citizens' Charter Bill, named as The Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill was tabled in Parliament in 2011. Under this, it was mandatory for every public authority to publish a citizens' charter within six months of the commencement of the Act. It laid down the obligations of every public authority towards citizens in time-bound delivery of services, in public grievance redress, and in case of non-compliance with the charter. Every ministry and department was obliged to take action on every complaint within 30 days. The bill provided for appeals and designated appellate authorities at various levels for careful disposal of public grievances.

The bill came after Anna Hazare's insistence on including it in the Jan Lok Pal Bill. It lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

Hence, our immediate task is dissemination of information to reach all sections of the population throughout the country. Despite the tremendous growth of communication media, people's ignorance of public policy and programmes is enormous.

A common political argument advanced against administrative reforms is about encroachment into the sphere of the States. When citizen-friendly legislations are proposed under concurrent powers, issues like federalism seem silly. The political class has to come out of its narrow party shells and think of the good of the nation and people as a whole and extend legislative cooperation. There can be no two opinions on the importance of the right to service which is indeed a mark of good governance. --

INFA

“When other people reject positive changes you make for yourself, there is always some nerve to get to the root of in those other people.”

--- Jennifer Hudson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 25 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2015

Voyeuristic media

THE Sheena Bora murder case has held the attention of the nation since August 25 last when Indrani Mukerjea, the high profile socialite married to media magnate Peter Mukerjea was arrested on the suspicion of having murdered her daughter, Sheena. Television channels are churning stories that are riddled with speculations and quick conclusions. The media believes it is feeding a voyeuristic audience hungry for lurid details of the personal lives of the dramatis personae in this crime mystery which takes sudden twists and turns. Indrani Mukerjea's personal life should not have been a matter of public disclosure and debate since the sole objective is to find out who is behind the murder of Sheena Bora. But the media in its quest for TRPs has taken upon itself the role of policing, judging and even passing the verdict before the law could take its course. In this case the media has touched a new low.

Then also manner in which those associated with Indrani Mukerjea's past life have been hounded and their relationships exposed is abominable. Those people have a present and their families to deal with. The trauma that would visit these families is incalculable. What has happened to the media ethics taught at media institutions across this country? There are murders committed everywhere, everyday but they do not get the attention that this particular case has. Why is the Indian media obsessed with the celebrity status of the alleged criminals here? Now even the details of diary maintained by the deceased, Sheena Bora, are being made public. Was that necessary? Don't the dead deserve their privacy? Even if the diary records could help unravel the psyche of Sheena Bora, would the journals she kept as a school girl help to piece together this murder most foul? And even if it did, should the police not hold the diary in their custody and not disclose the content to the media? This case should make the media reflect on its rapacious quest for news at all costs, throwing all decorum to the winds. Informing the readers/viewers is one thing; feeding their voyeurism is not part of media responsibility.

LOOKING BACK

February 05, 1988

Meghalaya may host Taekwondo national meet

All Taekwondo Association of Meghalaya has decided to host the 9th national taekwondo championship in Shillong towards the later part of December this year. Thus was decided at a meeting of the Association held here recently.

The Association also decided to hold the 2nd Meghalaya Taekwondo meet in the third week of April next. It also elected the following office-bearers for the next term: President: Mr. M. N. Syiem, Vice President: P. Rharbani, General Secretary: Mr. Teibor Nongkhlaw Treasurer: Mr. T. Sangma and Technical Advisor: Mr. Suraj Tamang.

The meeting also congratulate all the participants of the Meghalaya in the 8th national Taekwondo Championship held on the 21st-23rd Jan 88 at Guwahati.

Vijay meets Oresar in Davis Singles

Vijay Amritraj will take on Yugoslavia's No 2 Bruno Oresar in the opening singles of the world group first round Davis Cup match between India and Yugoslavia at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) courts tomorrow. In the second singles Ramesh Krishna will face Slobodan Zivojinovic, Yugoslavia number one.

The draw was made here this morning by Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi at his residence. In the doubles on Saturday, Vijay and Anand Amritraj will clash with Slobodan and Oresar and in the reverse singles on Sun-

day Ramesh plays Oresar while Vijay faces Slobodan in the last match.

Fernandes arrive today

AICC- (I) General Secretary Mr. Oscar Fernandes is leaving for Agartala tomorrow at the crack of dawn in a chartered aircraft and later arrive at Shillong to explore the possibility of ushering in Congress (I) led Ministry.

Mr. Fernandes had 40 minute talk with Prime Minister here this evening and discussed the post election scene in the two states. Mr. Fernandes later told Shillong Times that he would address the CLP meeting at Agartala to elect a new leader of the party.

About Meghalaya, he said that being the single largest party in the Assembly, the Government should call the party leader to form the govt. He said in Shillong he would hold informal discussions with the MLAs for paving the way for election of a party leader. He said he would also try to meet the "likeminded" MLAs.

In reply to a question Mr. Fernandes said that the Congress(I) performance has not been all the poor. The party never had obtained absolute majority in any of the elections held so far.

Mr. Fernandes said that the Prime Minister Rajive Gandhi had asked him to thank the people of Meghalaya for the support extended by them to the party

No point in having silent academics

By Patricia Mukhim

university walls. On such occasions they will call up newspaper offices, essentially to fight their battles through the media. This, if anything, is selfishness at its worst.

Last week I had taken a dig at the Departments of Economics and Sociology NEHU, which should have been the first to alert us on the socio-economic caste census which has shown an alarming 76% of rural Meghalayans as being landless. The statistics also show that 5.2% of families in Meghalaya are headed by women. These surveys are being conducted by the Government with the purpose of measuring poverty and developing tools to address it. Normally you would have expected NEHU to organize a seminar on this contentious topic of landlessness among tribals even when academics have stoutly defended that land and resources in Meghalaya are community owned. You would also have expected NEHU scholars to interpret the SECC for all of us who might not know to read numbers and graphs. But there is complete silence from this castle of knowledge. You wonder if they are worried about what happens outside the campus and whether they even care a hoot. You can understand the indifference of professors from other states who are employed by NEHU (because of their academic brilliance or other reasons). Those cannot be expected to shed a tear for the growing poverty and landlessness of the people of Meghalaya. They have only a short term interest. But what about the local scholars - an emerging class of tribal elite who are expected to take their teachings beyond their classrooms and to provoke their students and research scholars to think imaginatively (whether that is outside or beyond the mental box)? I am sure not all the research scholars enrolled at NEHU come from the affluent class. What do they think about these appalling statistics that affect their people? Do they have a view? Is that view allowed free rein?

Writing in the 16th century, Francis Bacon said that knowledge should be practical and "not be a courtesan, for pleasure". Bacon probably meant that university education which

is hugely subsidized by the state ought to have some measurable achievements in terms of pushing public policy that is enlightened, equitable and inclusive. Academia should provide the model for a sound economy, a necessary means to achieve our social goals, depending on what those social goals are. It is the university which should tell us what the ends are that it is striving to achieve and the means adopted to reach those ends. The short answer is that universities must strive to bring about greater social justice. Now some learned Profs will turn back and tell me, "Do you think we are reformers?" Well, if universities don't produce reasoned reformers then why are we surprised when rabble rousers hold us and our intellect ransom and inflict on us the illogic of the street.

Indeed, the goal of university education is to help build a fairer, more just society, says Steven Schwartz, Vice Chancellor Brunei University. Students learn the importance of public service from their university's example. Through interaction with academics and their own peers, students learn about freedom of expression, tolerance and responsible citizenship and they transmit these values to other people who are not fortunate to afford the leisure of university education. Participation in higher education means exposure to liberal social attitudes. Dung Nguyen writing in "The purpose of college and higher education", says today Universities seek to attract accomplished researchers from around the world, putting less and less emphasis on dynamic curriculum and "credential" teachers. Instead of making education a diverse and interactive environment where one challenges known assumptions, and probes mysterious realms of thought, it has become one where the same topics are taught repetitively every year, making students cynical and unconcerned about real learning. Rather, students care much more about getting an "A" and graduating with their degree on time.

Nguyen says the need

to provide higher education for the masses has also diluted the emphasis on learning from being an interactive, diversifying experience to one of an assembly-line process where everyone endures the same classes and does the same monotonous tasks. There is little diversity of experience and no challenge to answer the deep questions fundamental to what people are learning. Hence the deeper questions about society, politics, and the economy remain unanswered.

The states of Meghalaya and Manipur are in a state of flux at the moment. In the first there is a huge tussle between two constitutional authorities, namely the State Government and the Khasi Hills District Council on the Village Administration Bill and the Meghalaya Urban Development Authority's (MUDA's) building by-laws. The third extra-constitutional power holders (extra constitutional because the Constitution has not defined their powers) - the Dobar Shnong are doing a tango with both and therefore are unstably poised. Doing a tango requires that you be nubile, sure-footed and flexible and not tied in knots by archaic ideas. But the Rangbah Shnong are so paranoid about stepping out of their comfort zone even when the situation today warrants a progressive, futuristic and inclusive mindset. In Manipur, the politics of ethnocentrism has rendered the state defunct. Do students of Manipur studying in NEHU have any idea on how to reduce the pangs of ethnocentrism?

These twin dilemmas require seasoned debates which could have been kick-started by the Department of Political Science, NEHU for they should give us the roadmap to sustainable governance. But we are greeted by a stunned silence from the University. You begin to wonder if students of political science are even thinking about what's close at hand or are still regurgitating on the political theories of Foucault or Chomsky; or the Sociologists to Durkheim But both these political theorists are known to promote models of social justice. So where is the glitch here? Frankly speaking NEHU is a big let down to itself and to the people of the North Eastern region. It has become only another employment agency! What a fall from grace!

TO THE EDITOR

Sub standard repair of NH 44

Editor,

The repair work of NH-44 road (Portion from Puriang to Mukhla) is of a substandard quality. The portion of the road repaired, the length of which is 12 Kms was done by M/s Dhar Construction Company (DCC) for improvement of riding quality programme (IRQP) for the year 2014-15 from 41st-53rd Km of Shillong-Jowai as per job No.TA-044/MG/2014-15/123. But only after less than three months after the road was repaired, the condition of the same is in a pathetic condition. The tender value of the work is a whopping Rs 9, 66, 91,395/-(Rupees Nine crore sixty six lakh ninety one thousand three hundred ninety five) but the portion of repaired road is now not worth even one tenth of the amount spent.

The item of work as specified in the work order is providing and laying of 50mm Bituminous Macadam (BM) along with 30mm Bituminous Concrete (BC) and the work was commenced on June 2015 last. Surprisingly, part of the work has been executed even during the rainy days where tack coat was washed out by rain water. The reason that the road is already in a bad shape is

because the quality is very poor, it lacked supervision at the time of construction, grading of materials was not done according to MoRTHS specifications. Materials used were of substandard quality; the chips were of soft stones (moorum/shale) which cannot withstand the sheer stress of heavy axle vehicles. Even the thickness is less than the specifications and binding content is very poor as the required percentage of bitumen is not given.

As per estimated provision the company should use bituminous concrete to be mixed with cement, but they instead used semi-dense bituminous concrete (where cement filler is not required). Durability period of the project is supposed to be for a minimum period of 3 years but commuters find the road not usable only after 3 months and the newly laid BM pavement started to show its inferior quality where countless potholes have developed.

The question is why do officials like Regional Officer and others from the Ministry of Surface Transports and Highways (MoRTHs) turn a blind eye on this sub-standard work? Is this not a scandalous waste of public money? As per information the contractors have already been paid half the bill amount.

NH-44 is the lifeline of most people in northeast, the Barak Valley and even Bang-

ladesh. The Oriental Company constructed the same road which lasted double the durability period that doubled outlast the durability period? The PWD Minister himself should be held accountable for this mess and stripped of the PWD portfolio. This is the least the Government can do!

Yours etc.,
H H Mohrmen
Jowai

Confused FKJGP

Editor,

As appeared in some vernacular papers it is comical to observe one of the stalwart NGOs in the State being confused and faltering on what it stands for. It was reported prior to the Notification and De-notification of MUDA bye-laws that the said NGO would fight resolutely on any attempt by the state Government to bring the Scheduled localities within the ambit of MUDA. They even threatened to gate-crashing into the Meghalaya Secretariat. But now it seems like "all is well" with the said NGO even after the announcement that several Scheduled areas would be under the supervision of MUDA. The question is, 'What were they fighting for and what result were they expecting, after that loud thundering noise?' This gives an insight into the kind of think-

ing and decision-making within the FKJGP's ring of Leadership. They fought for de-notification and it was identified! But did they even care to look at the contents of the new notification? Are they confused? Yes we all are. So, here's my piece of advice, Do not make decision for others, if you don't know what you are doing for yourself, because it's simply embarrassing!

Later in a press release by its Circle's president, the names all the parties involved were mentioned but the President did not dare mention the KSU-Mawlai circle in particular which is very much a major part of it. Why Mr. President? Is this selective omission? From all this we can conclude that if the said person speculates that SKRS is conniving with the present CEM, then it is also true that the FKJGP President is conniving with the Ex-CEM or else this desperate attempt to cover-up wouldn't even arise when everyone knows even within his organization that the notification is not in their favour. Clearly a situation, as Brecht had once quipped in one of his plays, may be developing in our land where an empowered new elite impatient for instant conformity with a dominant conceited idea might verily recommend that people be changed if they do not listen to big brother without demur.

Yours etc.,
Baniaineh Wanshong,
Via email

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

CONGRESS TOP LEADERSHIP DIVIDED OVER CASTE RESERVATION ISSUE

The Congress party is divided over the issue of reservations. As the RSS backed anti reservation movement of Hardik Patel is gaining momentum, it has the tacit support of a large section of the upper caste particularly the Brahmin lobby in the Congress. The over 130 year old Congress party has always been known to be an upper caste party with a brahmanical mind set. It was because of this mind set Ambedkar formed his own party, it was the Congress who stalled Jagjivan Ram from becoming prime minister of India forcing the dalit leader to walk out of the Congress and form his own party the CFD. The last time the country witnessed the anti reservation movement when V P Singh implemented mandal and the then Congress PM Rajiv Gandhi surrounded by upper caste leaders like Arun Nehru and Arun Singh unleashed a violent anti mandal movement in which several of youth congress boys were injured and Rajiv Goswami burnt himself to death. The youth congress was then headed by Manish Tewari, a Brahmin youth from Punjab. The BJP also known for its upper caste ideology realizing the need of the hour tried to counter the mandal uprising by the temple movement. But at the same time it started to promote OBC leaders. Kalyan Singh, Uma Bharati and even Narendra Modi were born in post mandal era. It was only after Sonia Gandhi took over as the Congress president that some realization dawned upon the leadership who fielded a whole lot of backward candidates in UP. But it was too late by then as there was total polarization of the OBC and the dalits behind Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mayawati. The recently the flag of revolt hoisted was by Janardhan Diwedi who opposed the caste reservation. He had only supported that there should be economic reservation for all. This triggered a furore within the party forcing the Congress president snubbing him. But poor Diwedi is not the only one in the party who is a votary of economic reservation. The party's Brahmin lobby is also supporting it. Anand Sharma in his off the record briefing just this week came out openly in support of Hardik Patel. Manish Tewari too has come out openly opposing caste reservation.

LC GOYAL ACTED AT THE INSTANCE OF NSA AJIT DOVAL

The so called NAGA (accord) is just an MOU. It does not have the cabinet approval or the signature of the home minister. Sources in the home ministry claim that it was when the home minister Rajnath Singh raised the issue with the PM in the cabinet, it led to the sacking of the home secretary LC Goyal. LC Goyal's exit from the home ministry is said to be the result of the tussle between the home minister Rajnath Singh and the NSA Ajit Doval. Rajnath Singh has won the first round by ensuring that Goyal who was working on behest of Doval and was keeping the minister in dark about the decisions that were taken by the ministry, should go. The final breaking point came when Rajnath Singh was not informed of the so called Naga accord. He raised the issue with the PM in the cabinet and demanded the resignation of Goyal.

CONGRESS ORGANISATIONAL ELECTIONS POSTPONED TILL NEXT YEAR

Rahul Gandhi's appointment to the top Congress

post has been deferred to early next year. The organizational elections which were to be held in September this year are likely to get an extension and may now be held sometime next year. The membership drive has been suspended and so the status quo remains. Sonia Gandhi will continue to be the Congress president. The thinking in the party is that when the next round of elections take place in West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Punjab, Sonia should lead the party.

NEERAJ SHARMA IS A POWERFUL EMPLOYEE AT AICC OFFICE

Neeraj Sharma is just an ordinary employee of the AICC but enjoys more clout than many Congress secretaries sitting in 24 Akbar Road. Neeraj entertains more visitors than his boss Randeep Singh Surjewala. Neeraj Sharma's power lies in the fact that he has always been the part of some powerful general secretary's staff. In the last ten years when the UPA government was in power he was attached to the then minister for health Ghulam Nabi Azad who was also the general secretary of the Congress. Azad hardly came to AICC thus leaving everything for Neeraj to enjoy. After Azad he was in the staff of Ajay Mankan, the party head of the communication department. Surjewala who succeeded Mankan got Neeraj as part of the Mankan legacy. His clout can be accessed from the fact that he can get chairmans made in any Congress ruled state. Mostly those who visit him are brahmins. Big shots are seen visiting him too.

SHAKEEL AHMAD WORKING FOR NEUTRALISING OWAISI IN BIHAR ELECTIONS

Shakeel Ahmad the Congress general secretary in charge of Punjab and the party spokesperson is the man to watch. Though he is looking after Punjab he is totally focussed on Bihar. Shakeel Ahmad has always been famous as a Lalba but in the last Lok Sabha elections when he was denied a ticket by Lalu from Madhubani, he had turned against Lalu and had been advocating for an alliance with Nitish Kumar. But now he has again changed track and is again back to Lalu court. He is the Congress spokesperson sitting in Congress office has however predicted a total sweep for BJP and defeat for the Congress JD(U) and RJD alliance. Meanwhile he is also engaged in a badminton diplomacy with Asaduddin Owaisi. Owaisi is planning to field candidates in Bihar which is expected to cut into the muslim votes thus damaging the Nitish led alliance. It is alleged that Owaisi is being funded by the BJP to damage Nitish. But for the last several months Congress has put Shakeel Ahmad to work on him. Shakeel plays badminton with Owaisi and perhaps is brainwashing him against putting up more muslim candidates in Bihar.

SEARCH IS ON FOR NEW WEST BENGAL CONGRESS CHIEF

Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are in a fix as the demand seeking the replacement of PCC chief Adhir Choudhury in West Bengal has intensified with assembly elections scheduled in 2016. The top leaders of the state have been very restless. They have met both Rahul and Sonia in the last several months demanding the removal of Adhir Choudhury. The allegation against Choudhury is that he has failed to take along everyone in the state and nobody in the state is ready to work with him. Practically every top leader of West Bengal has met the party high command and they all wanted the top post. Now the party high command does not know whom to choose. (IPA)

"I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it."

--- Harry S Truman

The Shillong Times

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Heat on Greenpeace

THE Modi government has cancelled a licence that allowed Greenpeace International's Indian unit to receive donations from abroad. The environmental group has however said that it would not be deterred by the attempt to end its campaign. The licence has been cancelled on the charge that the NGO worked against the country's economic development. As a result of the cancellation, it cannot receive funds from abroad accounting for up to 30% of the overall cost of its operations. In April, the Centre had suspended the Group's FCRA licence for 180 days and frozen its 7 bank accounts. The allegation against it was that it had opened five unauthorised accounts to use foreign donations. The money was allegedly used to obstruct development projects. In May, Delhi High Court allowed Greenpeace to use two of its accounts to receive and spend domestic donations. Greenpeace has now stood up against the latest official offensive, launching a new creative online campaign.

The main objection to Greenpeace's operations is that it meddles in the country's internal affairs, taking a hand in activities stirring up terrorist and communal disturbances. US ambassador to India Richard Verma made an irresponsible remark saying that the NGO had the right to engage in India's internal matters instead of denying the allegation. One may doubt very much if an NGO like Greenpeace can obstruct development projects. But it can perhaps be a front for foreign interference with foreign funds. The NDA government's attack can then only be commended as an outside body does not have the right to muzzle dissent in Indian democracy.

LOOKING BACK

February 05, 1988

Sarkari Commission favours use of local language

The Sarkari Commission has recommended that the work of the Union and State Governments, which directly affects the local people must be carried out in the local language.

The Commission, in its report, has observed that this is even more important in a welfare state. "It is necessary that all forms, applications, letters, bills, notices etc are available in the local language as well as the official language". This is of equal relevance to State Governments which have sizeable linguistic minorities concentrated in certain areas. The Commission says effective steps should be taken to uniformly implement the "three language formula" in its true spirit in the interest of the unity and integrity of the country. The Commission has recommended that the code of conduct evolved to safeguard the minorities be strictly implemented.

It is a matter of concern that the post of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities has been allowed to remain vacant for a long time. This situation needs to be rectified, the Commission has observed.

As the politicization of the language issue had often tended to threaten the unity and integrity of the country, there is a need for creating appropriate forum at various levels to defuse any potentially explosive situation and evolve a positive approach. The inter-governmental and zonal councils can play a useful role in this connection.

The Commission says Article 351 states that in the process of developing Hindi, it is neither desirable nor necessary to replace commonly understood terms by difficult Sanskritised words.

The growth of the official language can best be fostered by following the com-

mand of Article 351 in letter and spirit. It would be against the mandate of the constitution, if in the process of developing the official language, the forms, styles and expressions of various regional language, including English, which have become assimilated into Hindustani, are sought to be discarded.

Earthquake greets new Ministry

An earthquake lasting about 12 seconds rocked Shillong and its neighborhood soon after the swearing-in ceremony was over. VIPs and other dignitaries who were at the Raj Bhavan Banquet Hall, were panic stricken. Many guests ran helter skelter for safety.

According to the Central Seismological Observatory, the tremor was recorded at 8-21 PM and its epicenter was located about 110 km south west of here. The observatory said that the tremor was of moderate intensity. Some cracks developed on a minor of buildings here owing to its impact. No major damages were, however, reported so far.

An earthquake of severe intensity rocked Nongstoin and its surrounding areas at about the same time. No damage to property or loss of life was reported from any part of the town so far.

Priest among 3 killed in Punjab

A priest was among three people killed by terrorists in Punjab during the past 24 hours. Security forces arrested 15 people, including two terrorists, in the state.

Terrorists strangled to death a priest at Dhanpur village under Chhehrtia police station in Amristar district last night. In another incident, scooter-borne terrorists stabbed a petrol pump salesman at Phagwara in Kapurthala district last night.

Educating Young India: The Missing Sheen

By Debasish Chowdhury

Since the beginning of its civilised existence, mankind has reverentially bowed before its teachers. Devoting a day in a calendar year exclusively to commemorate the services teachers render in the progress of the society they serve in particular and mankind as a whole in general, however, is not an old phenomenon. Nations across the world do it these days and India too is no exception. Since 1962 India has been celebrating September 5 as its National Teachers' Day. The date, as we all know, was chosen to honour the request of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the 'Philosopher Statesman of India' who rose to become the second President of the Republic.

It may be worthwhile to note that since 1994, World Teachers' Day is celebrated by about a hundred nations across continents on October 5, exactly a month after India celebrates her. October 5 was selected to commemorate the event of signing of the UNESCO-ILO joint Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers on that day in 1994. The world teachers' day envisages spreading the message of collective appreciation of the society to the contribution that teachers make towards uplift of society through education.

India's schooling setup, without debate, is a rather gigantic one. The seventh All India School Education Survey (AIES) conducted with reference date as September 30, 2002 reveals that about 6.0 million teachers in India impart education to about 200 million students studying in various schools distributed in about six lakh villages and five thousand city centres spread across the country. With more than 1.45 million schools imparting only elementary education as per 2014-15 records, it needs no elaboration as to why it is counted amongst one of the largest of its kind in today's world.

India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the cohort of the 6-15 years age group of its 1.3 billion plus population today stands at 91.3. A slight extension in the cohort size to make it cover the 6-17 years age group, however, contributes to a drop in the GER to 84.5 only. The Gross Enrolment Ratio or GER as we call it essen-

tially is a statistical measure and is the accepted Education Index the United Nations (UN) uses to determine the number of students enrolled in schools at several different grade levels. Put simply, this index is a measure of the number of students who live in that country to those who qualify for the particular grade level under consideration. The GER at the age group of 18-24 (the relevant age group eligible for higher education sector) records a steep fall to only about 20.0 or so and is indicative of a massive drop out figure that certainly is most unwelcome for any nation desiring to evolve as a knowledge hub.

A look at the flash statistics released by the Unified-District Information System on Education (U-DISE) also reveals a few more interesting features worthy of mention. According to the records released, Punjab, one of the rather well off and affluent of the states in India, has the lowest GER for girls in the primary and upper primary levels while Meghalaya, one of the tiny and relatively less affluent far eastern state of the country tops that chart with the highest GER for girls in the same category despite ethnic conflicts and militant activities which adversely impact education. Tawang, a hill district of another backward north eastern state of India namely Arunachal Pradesh, according to the survey, happens to be the district to record the highest GER for girls.

The survey reveals that the tiny states in India's north east, despite being branded as lesser developed have done much better than what the better developed states can claim as far as educating the girl children are concerned. These statistical figures bring to fore the wide divergence in the societal perception of the people living in different corners of this great land.

The progressive fall in GER from the primary to secondary to the higher education level is indicative of, in addition to the contentious social issues, a growing shortfall in the available infrastructure and faculty typically required to serve its 200 million plus strong student contingent. Records reveal that almost 30% of schools in India are without permanent structures; about 14% of them have no drinking water facility and about 60% of them have no separate us-

able toilets for girls. Almost 22% of the serving teachers in these schools are professionally untrained and about 7% of the schools fall in the single teacher category with the enrolment figure in each one of them standing below 50. Only 52% of the schools are under direct control of the concerned government while 21% of them are run by various local bodies. Of the remaining schools, 10% fall in the private aided category and the rest 17% are private unaided type wherein the applicable fee structure, by and large, is an exclusive prerogative of the concerned management.

As the management varies, the pay package of the teachers and the support facilities available at these schools too vary. And, often, they vary wildly. Even in government managed schools, the facilities available are often far too less than what is actually required. The U-DISE report reveals that the pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) in government run schools is effectively less than half of that in the private schools be they aided or not. The government school teachers are often on ad hoc or contract appointment and as such, remain busy looking for better rewarding engagement elsewhere. Absence of a teacher due to sickness or other reasons may virtually render some of these schools totally non-functional for prolonged periods. Communication support available for reaching rural destinations are often inadequate and is a serious handicap. All these factors contribute collectively towards building a frustrating educational edifice that in turn contributes significantly in enhancing the dropout rate. The impressive dimension of the setup notwithstanding, the concern to ensure quality and access, as such, remains formidable challenge.

Last year, on the occasion of teachers' day, the Prime Minister took part in a televised countrywide interactive programme with students. Among the many things that the PM spoke during the two hour long session were the needs to restore in society the dwindling respect for teachers and to transform India into a teacher exporting country. Belying the high hopes generated, a comprehen-

sive policy decision on education somehow did not figure in his discourse that day.

A year down the line as another September dawns things have hardly improved. A trimmed educational budget in a country that spends far lower in education in comparison to the developed and even some of the neighbouring developing nations, hardly augers well for its teachers and the setup as a whole. Reclaiming for teachers their lost glory may be a pet theme for everyone occupying the seat of power at all times but except for public display of empty concerns peppered with hollow praises, none seems to have taken the task with the seriousness it deserves.

In an age and in a society steeped deep in the spirit of consumerism, respect for teachers, at least for that section of them who struggle to hold on to their scruples, is hardly of any concern. The call to respect teachers on one hand and the innovative idea of the HRD Ministry to deploy them to peddle insurance policies door to door on the other is at cross purposes. The deep-seated hurt the teachers experience too often these days essentially is a consequence of the ugly side of a reckless lifestyle typical of any consumerist society and as such, can hardly be wished away.

As regards exporting teachers, our wise PM surely is aware that the teaching emissaries from India, in all ages and at all times, have immensely contributed to her pride. From Atish Dipankar down to Swami Vivekananda (Swami Vivekananda was invited to teach in Columbia University, an offer he declined to accept) to even Dr Rajan, our RBI Governor in contemporary times represent only a tip of the huge cluster of teachers who, through ages, by their erudite scholarship had kindled the lives of students they taught the world over. Incidentally, Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, whose birthday we commemorate as our national teachers day, also is a venerable member of that erudite galaxy.

History would testify that producing in bulk such embodiment of excellence can neither be regimented nor has it ever materialized. Even if we consider it worth giving a try, a thorough overhaul of our entire educational setup seems the minimum we must first ensure. Are we indeed serious enough to take the call?

(The author is **Sikkler of Examinations, Sikkim University, Gangtok**)

TO THE EDITOR

Manipur imbroglio

Editor,

Appropos the editorial titled, 'Manipur's congenital disorder' (ST Sep 2, 2015) the situation in Manipur is a total collapse of law and order in Churachandpur, one of the biggest district of Manipur where eight people including a minor aged 12 years old had died. As pointed out in the editorial, the people both from the valley and hills have suffered from continued bandhs, strikes and harassments of people (including non-tribals living in Manipur) for two months. The protest is led by the Meitei based Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System (JCILPS) seeking for the implementation of the Inner Line Permit System (ILPS) in Manipur and to pass the mentioned bills in the Manipur Assembly. This deadlock between Meitei civil organizations and the Government resulted in formation of ILPS drafting joint committee having representation from both to draft the bills. The committee was headed by Th. Debendra Singh, as Chairman, Minister of Revenue, Law & Legislative Assembly and members in-

cluded Dr Ng. Bijoy, and RK Anand, both MLAs with Mr. M. Yaikul Meetei, IAS, Special Secretary (Home), Govt. of Manipur as the convener.

After the Committee considered the recommendations and also the points raised by the JCILPS, the controversial bills namely the Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh amendment) Bill, 2015, and the Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015 were passed in the Assembly. This was vehemently opposed by the Hill people or non-Meiteis (Kukis, Nagas, Zomis, and others) from all the districts. They felt that the Bills would impinge on the traditional tribal rights and land ownership rights which is rightly so if the Bills become Acts. The protesters questioned why it was not called the Manipur Valley People Bill, 2015, Manipur Valley Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh amendment) Bill, 2015, or the Manipur Valley Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015 as there was no representation from the Hill people in the Committee. The Committee also did not take

into accounts the existing 371C section of the Constitutions of India which has special provisions with respect to the Hill areas of Manipur vide the Manipur Hill People Administration Regulation Act of 1947.

This is one reason why the protesters felt let down by their elected representatives in the Manipur Assembly and Union Parliament which has resulted in burning down of their residences in Churachandpur and in other hill districts, though not reported in media. It may be mentioned that the tribes of Manipur are not protected by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution as other tribes in Arunachal, Assam, Mizoram and Meghalaya are. The above Act is the only instrument for protection of the hill areas which has historically belonged to them. The Bills passed recently will create a divide between the valley and hills in Manipur. Now the death toll of civilians in Churachandpur has reached eight (including a minor). The Government has totally mismanaged the crowd by using bullets instead of adopting other mob control mechanisms.

The protesters feel that passage of the Bills without any discussion or debate on the floor of the house is undemocratic and unparliamentary. The protesters composed of civil organizations from the Hill people (Kukis, Nagas, Zomis, and others) have given time to the Hill Areas Committee of the Manipur Assembly to solve these anomalies within a given 10-day deadline. As mentioned in your editorial, it is important for those who rule the state not to take hasty decisions to appease a section of the people. This raises the question whether Manipur is only for betterment of the valley people? These incidents remind us that we have to hold on to our rights over land at any cost. The protesters have requested the Union Government to find a solution and settle the present imbroglio as this is a manifestation of the age-old political grievances of the tribals in Manipur. In the past the Hill people have not been vocal when funds for health and social developments were not equitably allocated for the development of the Hill areas. But this time they will not remain silent as their rights over land are being infringed.

Yours etc.,
Hmunshel Jasha
NEHU, Shillong

NEHU: Sinking into Oblivion

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

The bubble has burst and the word has gone out. There is a general phenomenon which states that 'for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction'. However, here is a case of no action but of a resounding reaction. More so, as I went through it there is a realization beyond doubt that these are not the words and thoughts of one person alone, rather of a multitude that looks up to us for a solution. Well, if not a solution, at least a voice. Overall, any right thinking person will not begin to even imagine defending oneself, rather try to rise above it, collectively and individually. The lines of Patricia Mukhim in her article "No point in having silent academics," (ST Sep 4, 2015) are a 'painful truth' and the more painful they are, the truer they sound. In relation to the article, I would like to add to the discourse through the following pointers -

Firstly, teachers are measured by what they shape. University education is considered to be the bedrock of higher education. It is supposed to model and shape responsible citizens who must contribute to the growth and development of the economy. However, there is a dysfunctional trend to this end. In general, the students that we shape do not fit into the market. Well, in some cases they cannot even find their market. There is a lack of interface between the society/employment sectors and the university. In general, we do not understand the demands of the market and hence do not model and shape our students appropriately. Teaching is confined to the four walls and we are actively disengaged from the things that happen outside Umshing. Sometimes it appears that salary has taken prominence over service delivery. Hence, this 'interface' is a 'must do' and a 'must find' so as to find synergy and a win-win situation.

Secondly, there is a phrase these days in academia which is gaining traction. Teachers and the public in general say that there is not a problem of unemployment, rather a problem of unemployability. In one single view this statement throws all the balls into the students' court. But is it supposed to be so? Well, if it is so then this is professional deception to oneself. This presents as a nadir, as professional deception is the worst form of deception, the lowest of the low. The crux of the matter is that if our students are unemployable (and they cannot fit/find their market) we are equally to be blamed. On second thoughts, we should take the majority of the blame. The university is a medium for value addition, excellence and social change. That way this medium has performed below its potential in time. In a nutshell, we are in need of a serious shake up so that we can catch up on what we have missed and ignored.

Thirdly, organizations are measured by what they propel. The bottom-line is that there is a serious problem with the way in which we view NEHU (and this also explains the reason why I have been using the term 'organization' in all my earlier discourses concerning our university). In general, most of us call it an 'insti-

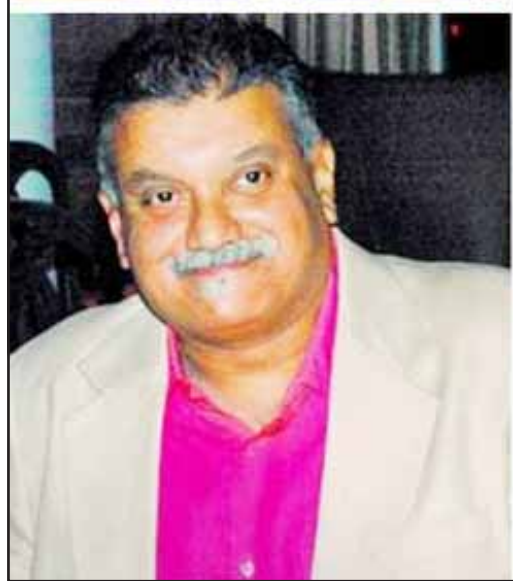
tution' and here lies the problem. An institution is nothing but a build-up and scale-up of physical infrastructure. It is an addition of material assets and dead assets. The people are never at the center of bodies which are referred to as institutions. As such, physical infrastructure becomes the basis of awe and grandeur. On the contrary, people are at the center of organizations. The bodies which are referred to as such are known and mentioned because of the contributions of people. In a university (as an organization), teaching, research and extension are the face of excellence and physical infrastructure ceases to be the hallmark of greatness. Here, physical infrastructure simply facilitates. The bottom-line is that we will not be able to propel and change anything until and unless we lay importance to the soft infrastructure of knowledge and skills.

Fourthly, NEHU is a ship without a full-fledged captain. It is crippling without a full-fledged leadership. As weak as this argument seems, those who know will agree that leadership is everything. It defines every organisation. It defines strict performance of duties and responsibilities by all stakeholders. It checks on the quality of physical infrastructure being put up. In the absence of leadership, people will listen to any one with guts to step up onto the microphone. This only adds to the plethora of problems and even worst results in anarchy. As such, though things look rosy from the outside, internally the university is burning to ashes. There is turmoil, frustration and in some cases anger. Teaching and staff posts are vacant for long and everything is moving on contractual basis. Promotion cases are not being heard and there are no signs of a solution. This is where we are in need of a full-fledged leadership. Someone who is willing or forced to be accountable must step in. Of course, that is at the fancy of the central government.

Lastly, HASA is a time bomb. It is just a matter of time before it explodes. In most likelihood that time shall be as and when the new Vice Chancellor comes in. Concerning this subject-matter, there are three parties in general - for, against and the fence sitters. Although the numbers 'against' is small, yet still they are there. There is deafening silence on the HASA issue for now, but the two groups are training their guns at each other. That way it is just a matter of time before the impasse of earlier years continue. Be that as it may, HASA continues to appear in our package. Increasingly, we are being viewed as greedy and irrational by our colleagues across the country irrespective of the arguments that we may give and the papers that we may fling. In addition, the center may continue to taper a matching amount concerning HASA from source. As such, there is no need to mention the effects that this will have on the growth of the organization. Overall, this issue will again put our organization in bad light and there is a bigger catch this time around. In the earlier years HASA was an organizational issue and that way it was fought at the local level. This time if indications are anything to go by, it will be fought at the 'society at large' level. If that be so, then by all means, the worst is yet to come.

Guwahati had never been in such a limelight as in recent days just because of Indrani -- Bora, Das, Khanna and Mukherjee -- for her diabolical character. Who could imagine that a lower middle class girl from a sedate city could be in media for a week for the alleged killing of her daughter Sheena Bora born out of wedlock with her first husband Sidharth Das, thereafter changing husbands for better future or making more money out of honeytraps. The last victim is (Pritam) Peter Mukherjee, the former CEO of Star TV Network. It is just as well that the venue of the great drama now unfolding is Mumbai. Bollywood story writers may already have latched on to the juicy ingredients of murder, love, and incest, multiple husbands, celebrity high society shenanigans. Why would someone who had everything, money, fame, a prominent and top-earning husband, would ever commit such a ghoulish crime is beyond comprehension. It cannot be the concern for social mores since the Mukherjeas were not particularly conservative in their own life styles. Nor could it be about her step son romancing her daughter from a previous marriage. Nobody would have raised an eyebrow if Peter Mukherjee's son from a previous marriage had married his current wife's daughter from her own previous marriage. Why murder your own daughter? That is the question which remains unanswered. And why would the previous husband collaborate in such a crime, as is being claimed in the media reports. A permanent member of the high-society in Mumbai for several years, the Mukherjeas never gave a hint of their murky past. Was it the illicit money stolen from the companies they had headed which led to the murder of the young Sheena?

The Mukherjee couple was considered successful whom the high and mighty of the land would have loved to court till a few days ago. Now, they were condemned goods. Chasing financial success -- which in our permissive times equals social success -- exacts a terrible price on most people. We can point to a whole host of well known names in every walk of life who have broken all manner of moral and legal rules to attain the illusory peak of monetary success. But the question that must be asked: Is it worth it? Why not play it by the rules, regardless of the success or failure it might entail. Anyway, watch the Mukherjee story unspool, bit by shocking bit. Even the best Bollywood script writer could not have conjured up the twists and turns emerging about the double life of the Mukherjee, murderers by night and respectable citizens by day. It is a mesh of deceit,



Murder mystery of love, money....

By Shweta Patwardhan and Sanchet Barua

falsehood, greed and insecurity, which also reflects the casual approach of the Maharashtra police in general and the Mumbai police in particular in tracking down a young woman who was reported missing in 2012 and never heard of again. It is also a tale which makes it abundantly clear how the various characters in the plot not only failed to protect the helpless victim, but have willingly or unknowingly participated in covering a crime so macabre.

While the spotlight continues to be on Indrani Mukherjee, a media baron in her own right, who is former Star CEO Pratim, alias Peter Mukherjee's second wife, the role of many others including Peter needs to be thoroughly probed. Mumbai police commissioner Rakesh Maria has claimed that it was an open and shut case, which proved beyond any doubt the involvement of Indrani in her daughter's ghastly murder with the help of more than a few accomplices. However, it is unclear why the cops are silent on the facts that have



Indrani Bora with SRK

emanated from the detailed interrogation of the various people quizzed so far. There have been reports that due diligence was never carried out by the police in either Raigad or Mumbai in the matter and even now it is doubtful that the officers working on the case have done the "nishaan dehi" (reenactment of the entire sequence of crime by involving the arrested and detained persons in the exercise most imperative to build up a fool-proof case before the trial court).

In fact, there are many loopholes in the investigations that need to be plugged by the police before proper charges are initiated. Indrani Mukherjee has so far denied having killed her daughter and through her lawyers is trying to send out the message that the police was coercing her to make a confession. Confession before the police, unless corroborated by a lot of circumstantial and other evidences, is not sufficient. There have been reports that the DNA samples of (Contd on P-VII)

Of poison-filled living and...

With the pollutants in the atmosphere rising each day, so are the ways these can hide their way through our everyday lives. Read an expose on the Environmental Protection Agency of the US, and how it can also contribute to pollution due to the chemicals it approves or sometimes ignores. Or, do you fancy a thriller on the death of a mother and her daughter and a psychologist's journey to unlock the mystery? There's this and more on the IANS bookshelf this weekend. Read on!

1. Book: Poison Spring: The Secret History of Pollution and the EPA; Author: E.G. Vallianatos with McKay Jenkins; Publisher: Bloomsbury Press; Pages: 284; Price: Rs. 399

When one orders a meal in a restaurant, one may not find Kelthane or arsenic listed on the menu, but do we know that they're very much present as a part of our entrees? As one reads this, there are many gallons of toxins being dumped into the water we drink, and in the name of fertilisers, there are countless chemicals being added to the soil where our crops grow and the air we breathe.

While, some of these 'poisons' are approved, many are ignored by the EPA, the authors of this book note. So there's more to pollution than just chemicals and toxins, there are the protection agencies.

2. Book: Close Your Eyes; Author: Michael Robotham; Publisher: Sphere; Pages: 392; Price: Rs. 399

As a mother and her teenage daughter are found murdered in a farmhouse, clinical psychologist Joe O'Loughlin is reluctantly drawn into the investigation. A former student of his, calling himself the 'Mindhunter', then leaks details to the media and jeopardises the police inquiry - also agitating the public.

With no shortage of suspects, and tempers, Loughlin finds links between the murders and a series of brutal attacks where the victims have been choked unconscious with the letter 'A' carved on their heads.

As the case becomes more complicated than ever, Loughlin's fate becomes intertwined with the unpredictable killer. But who is the killer?

3. Book: Sculpt and Shape: The Pilates Way; Authors: Yasmin Karachiwala and Zeena

Dhalla; Publisher: Random House India; Pages: 198; Price: Rs. 250

How important is exercise in your life? If your answer is in the negative, then here's a book to inspire you into staying fit.

Do you know how Katrina Kaif manages to stay injury-free? Or how Deepika Padukone maintains her washboard abs? They both say its Pilates.

The authors, who are star trainers, are here to bring the Pilates method, which has revolutionized fitness around the world, to India. The book will show you how to change the shape of your body, by letting you know more about your posture and ways to improve it.

Along with secret fitness techniques from the B-town stars, here's an interesting read on practical tips and techniques on nutrition, breathing and everyday living that are essential to shaping one's body not just on the outside, but also on the inside.

4. Book: The Art of Hearing Heartbeats; Author: Jan-Philipp Sender; Publisher: Speaking Tiger; Pages: 325; Price: Rs. 350

One morning, Julia Win's father disappears leaving no trace, a day after her graduation from law school. Few years later, Win's mother finds a piece of the unsolved puzzle - an unmailed love letter to a Burmese woman, Mi Mi. Win decides to travel to the village where Mi Mi once lived. As her journey takes her to the small mountain village of Kalaw, she meets a man who claims to know her father. Intrigued by the uncanny knowledge about herself that the man has, she meets him everyday - and discovers more about her father that she never knew. Here's the way of hearing heartbeats, far away from the person.

From Bookshelf

By Veturi Srivatsa

Kohli goes by gut feeling....

From whichever angle India's Test series victory in Sri Lanka is seen, a new name crops up as a game-changer, making it a truly collective effort of the team.

The series was gripping right through and the credit for much of the entertaining stuff must go to the Sri Lankan authorities for providing great pitches which gave both the teams enough to seize the opportunities.

The beauty of the contest was when both sides were in with a shout to win the last Test. If the Indians refused to get frustrated by the aggressive defiance of Angelo Mathews and debutant wicketkeeper-batsman Kusal Pereira, the Sri Lankans kept pace with the run rate for a final flourish post-tea. The Indians knew they had a trump in the second new ball while the Sri Lankans looked up to their captain to at least force a draw if not a sensational victory.

Naturally, in all this, the Indians see Virat Kohli as the man who delivered what he promised - or what he said would be his approach in his first full series as captain and overseas at that.

To execute his plan, Virat needed men who work on his wavelength. The contribution of everyone was a must if his five-bowler-plan had to work. No one had taken it more seriously than the bowlers, who contributed crucial runs in the lower order, enough to buy 60 wickets, which an Indian team has done only the second time in a three-Test card.

Yet, the figures show five mainline batsmen scoring hundreds in the six innings, none more precious than the one with which makeshift opener Cheteshwar Pujara carried his bat through in the first innings of the last Test. Come to think of it, his wait for a Test would have been much longer than eight months if regular openers Shikhar Dhawan and Murali Vijay had not been injured. Likewise, Ajinkya



Rahane's century in the second Test came in an unfamiliar one drop and not at No.5, where he got most of his runs, after the experi-

ment with Rohit Sharma failed to come off as No.3 in the first Test.

The other two batsmen to score hundreds were

Kohli and opener Lokesh Rahul, who also brought off a diving one-handed catch as makeshift wicketkeeper in the second innings of the

second Test to dismiss Angelo Mathews, the lone batsman to score two hundreds in the series.

Rohit Sharma seemed to be the whipping boy of the experts. The young man disappointed many with his shot selection after getting in. His supporters might argue that his 202 runs in the series is second highest aggregate after his captain's 233 in six innings. But, it is no consolation getting an odd fifty to retain a place in the top order, more so when equally capable batsmen are sitting out.

The other Indian batsman to get a century is skipper Kohli in the first innings of the first Test. Dhawan's and his hundreds had gone waste at Galle, where the Indian let slip an opportunity to win by a couple of sloppy sessions in the field in Sri Lanka's second innings and, more so, another while chasing a reasonable target.

Now the Indians would be ruing the Galle mess-up as (Contd on P-VII)



By George Friedman

Civilization is a thin layer over humanity's beastly savagery. But truly, we didn't have to have Hitler to learn that. We humans have always sensed what is beneath our surface. The question is how the world changed as a result of Hitler's decision to invade Poland. The first outcome, obviously, was that he destroyed Europe's hegemony over much of the world and its influence over the rest. Within 15-years of the end of the war, Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands lost their empires. A handful of European nations had dominated the world. By the end of the war they had lost the will, the energy and the wealth to maintain their power. After half-hearted and doomed attempts to resist, these countries willingly participated in the dismantling of what they had once thought of as their birthright. This changed the shape of the world, of course, but the change was less the result of the world's resistance to Europe than a result of Europe's exhaustion. After the war, Europe faced the task of rebuilding buildings. The ambition to rule had been exhausted. However flawed or wicked that ambition might have been, there is still something sad in the loss of all ambition, beyond the desire for comfort. The will to dominate, seen in its most extreme form in Hitler's appetites, chills the blood. The loss of any transcendent ambition merely cools it. Europe has lost its recklessness, which is on the whole good. Yet it has gained an excessive caution that makes it difficult for Europe to make up its mind over matters small and large.

The world is certainly a better place without Hitler's reckless impru-

dence. It is probably a better place without British or French imperialism, although when we look at what they left behind, we wonder if the wreckage of empire is worth the wreckage of the post-imperial world, whoever we blame for that wreckage.

Hitler clearly didn't want this outcome. I think he was sincere when he said that he would leave the British Empire intact, along with its navy, if the United Kingdom accepted German domination of the European mainland. He wanted peace with the British so he could crush the Soviets. But the British as a nation could accept that deal only if they trusted Hitler's promise. However sincere he was in 1940, Britain couldn't bet on the endurance of his word. As a result, Hitler in due course committed suicide in Berlin, and Britain presided over the dissolution of its own empire -- the only thing that would have disgusted both Churchill and Hitler. Churchill's imperialism and Hitler's racism met on that point. There was another thing Hitler cost Europe: the metaphysical sensibility. It is startling, the extent to which Christian Europe has abandoned Christianity for secularism.

The decline of church attendance is the outer husk of a European sensibility that, at the highest levels of thought, contemplated the deeper meanings of things. It was not Hitler who destroyed the European metaphysical sensibility. In many ways it destroyed itself from the inside, with a radical scepticism derived from the Enlightenment that turned on itself. But Hitler provided a coup de grace to that sensibility by appropriating figures like Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner to his own political ends, thereby delegitimizing not only them but also the tradition from which they emerged. Hitler, in his own strange wanderings in the depths,

Pondering Hitler's legacy



made such wanderings no longer respectable, and indeed, suspect. There is a saying I once heard: "German philosophers go down deeper, stay down longer and come up dirtier than any others." I don't know about philosophers, but Hitler, the would-be philosopher, certainly did, and it cost Europe the jewel of its intellectual heritage.

It is said that Napoleon called the English a nation of shopkeepers. He obviously meant that as an insult, seeing shopkeepers

as people of limited imagination, ambition and wit. There is some truth to the saying about the English, although George Orwell was enraged at the trivialisation of their achievements. To the extent to which the English were suspicious of the wholesomeness and usefulness of French and particularly German philosophy, Napoleon was right. But if he was, then Hitler achieved something extraordinary: He made all of Europe into nations of shopkeepers.

After the war, the obsession of Europeans was to live. Then it was to make a living. Napoleon's insult was that there was more to life than simply making a living. What Hitler achieved was what he would have been appalled by: shopkeepers ruling Europe. But Europe is obsessed with making a living and suspicious of profound thinking. It has seen where that got it and it doesn't intend to go there again. The best minds get MBAs. The broad public

sleeps late on Sunday. The train wreck that Hitler made of Europe created secularism not only in relation to Christianity, but in all attempts to recreate the depth of European culture.

Of course in all of this, perhaps the most important thing that Hitler did was unleash the United States, a country where earning a living is the definition of life. Hitler believed that his defeat meant the triumph of Bolshevism. It really meant the triumph of the

United States and its culture, which it distributed in Western Europe through occupation and in the Soviet bloc through imitation.

The United States redefined European culture. As I have written in Flashpoints: The Emerging Crisis in Europe, it was not Coca-Cola but the computer that was the carrier of American culture. The computer had nothing to do with metaphysics or with the true or beautiful. It had to do with the narrowest form of instrumental

reason: It simply got things done, and in doing so, it justified its existence. The computer dominated the world - and Europe - and with it came a mode of thinking, contained in programming, that was so radically different from what European culture consisted of as to almost be from another planet. Of course, Europeans helped found the culture, but they bequeathed it to their heir, the United States. Paradoxically, the United States remains the most religious of countries, with church attendance at its height. Religiosity and instrumental reason are compatible in the United States -- a point to ponder.

Hitler respected Josef Stalin. He understood the radical ideologue who was ready to kill. He had little respect for the United States. He understood Stalin, but he couldn't fathom Roosevelt. But as I sit here looking toward Berchtesgaden, the birth place of Hitler, I must recall that it was the 7th Infantry Regiment of the Third Division, US Army, that captured the town and Hitler's home. The Americans occupied the area until 1995, using it for military purposes.

This was the most important thing Hitler achieved, and the last thing he expected. Hitler drew the Americans into the heart of Europe and left the Europeans completely vulnerable to the emerging, and quite strange, modes of thought that a nation that holds shopkeepers in great regard can produce. Hitler destroyed the dams that Europe had built around itself. He crippled all of Europe, including the Soviet Union. He could not imagine the need to cripple the Americans, nor could he have had realised the need. Hitler will be remembered not only for great evil but also -- and more important, in many ways -- for the manner in which almost all of the consequences of his war were unexpected. INAV

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, September 6, 2015

A good and productive year unfolds as Sun trine Pluto on your solar return chart. This is a time when introspection helps you renew your energy and consider priorities and goals that are important to you. This will help you build on a firmer foundation. There would be an upswing in your image too. Rewards come in as appreciation and financial gains. Take steps to enhance your relationships both at work and at home. With your efforts you can expect a new vibrancy to the domestic environment. In matters of the heart you are urged to open up and communicate more.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

Good luck in finances and opportunities is encouraging. You take a stand and are likely to protest against domination by people at work. You may have to face egoistic people. Personal relations are difficult and sensitive at times as both partners seek freedom, independence and space. Rather than control others, take time to transform yourself. You initiate a wave of forceful energy to achieve success in an important venture. Deep personal relations are likely to get closer. Restlessness worries you and a new health regimen such as regular exercise; a more structured and productive use of your time could help.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

It is a gentle, considerate, and sensitive vibration that surrounds you during this phase. You have the desire for love, harmony and a peaceful life. You are diplomatic, warm and sensitive. This period brings for you socializing, romance and stability at work place. Love, friendship and relationship are emphasized. There are strong chances of materialization of a friendship into a long-term relationship. Students will complete their studies and enter the professional world with ease. You would make best use of your knowledge and skills but wisdom would influence you more as compared to knowledge. This is a good time for teachers as well as those in the hospitality and finance industries. People in marketing and sales would work hard to meet professional commitments. Health remains good.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You are sociable, friendly, and have a positive vibration that reaches others around you. Kindness and optimism endears you to people and you need space and contact with others in order to feel content. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from people around. Financial benefits may come your way. Self-confidence and action are highlighted. You tend to instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. You will be responsible, hard working, dutiful, and serious when it comes to finances. You are blessed with good mood and health and would want to indulge in sporting activities.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Your personality will be sparking which is sure to attract new circumstances and people into your life. You are loving, stable, and harmonious in professional and personal relations. You are more willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations. It's a good time to join organizations and groups and to attend meetings or social events. You are able to find creative solutions to problems now. Flexibility is the key to success under this influence. Students of Management and Law would get better results. Good support from family members will be forthcoming.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

As self-confidence and action are highlighted, your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. A new project or goal begun now has a good chance of being successful and long lasting. You are practical, trustworthy, hard working, and helpful. This period influences your finances and material aspects, suggests that you are considerably more goal-oriented related to earn. It's an excellent period to make a lifestyle change. You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. Your partner and you complement each other in different situations.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 24)

You would work very hard to meet professional goals. There is intellectual stimulation and an ability to adapt to most situations. This phase brings financial gains from banking, investment, the hospitality industry and those who are in the teaching profession. You can be successful in the entertainment industry or in any field that requires a lot of imagination and

vision, particularly performing artists. Good financial growth is ensured. Good relations with people of the opposite sex. On the family front you will get full support from your life partner and family members. Cooperation and harmony in relationships satisfies an instinctive need. Spending time with nature and in a related activity is rejuvenating.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Your personality sparkles, which is sure to attract new circumstances and people into your life. This period brings some changes towards professional goals and new interests develop. You connect with well-known personalities, fun loving people, artists and those in the entertainment industry. Strong existing relationships are likely to grow and transform. Your finances could also improve this phase as long as you employ strategy. Meditation and introspection is therapeutic and revealing as you intuitively get to the bottom of things.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You are diligent and pedantic at work and specialize further in your field of activity. You are on the threshold of a creative and inventive work that brings you name, fame and exposure. You would express your adaptability and persistent energy in professional projects. You would be dynamic, forceful and assertive in professional ventures to establish a position of authority. Meditate on the constant changes happening around you and centre within to benefit from it all. Good health and energy enables you to participate in sports activities. A pleasant surprise awaits you.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You proved to be a jack-of-all-trades, active and determined. You are more willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations during this period. You would have gains from property, and assets. Domestic and career needs are fulfilled. Good time for teachers, salespersons and those in the service industry. You can be successful in the entertainment industry or in any field that requires a lot of imagination and vision. You may especially enjoy experiencing different cultures and ethnic styles. You would be more accommodating and compassionate in relationships and not take things personally. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at work.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You are practical, hard working and helpful in personal and professional matters. You would find it easier to express your unique individuality, if this involves changing careers or jobs, also in a new hobby. You are able to find creative solutions to problems now. Stars favor people in the field of law and justice. Excellent professional opportunities for students specially those who have completed their education in hotel management, fashion designing, arts and crafts, music, singing and finance. Health remains good as you pay due attention to your diet as well as your exercise regimen.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

Self-confidence and tremendous efforts are highlighted in order to attend professional goals. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation with people from other countries. Your financial situation looks promising if you manage it well personally rather than trust upon others. You need to be careful in your interpersonal dealings and you must avoid confrontations with people in authority. Sports persons and lawyers can explore excellent work opportunities, as they would present an exceptional impression of their work. Overseas travel is likely as you engage in various activities and meet new people.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You will attract new people into your life. This will give a boost to your career and your ideas and thoughts will be well-received. You are successful in any field that requires creativity, imagination and vision. As you take on a dreamy and philosophical outlook, which opens up your heart to new experiences. Strong existing relationships are likely to grow and transform. You have to give a little more importance towards your health and a routine check up. Also make sure that you do not get caught up in arguments, a simple and straightforward approach is all that is required to resolve matters.

Kohli goes by gut feeling....

(Contd from P-VI) they had dominated the match, barring that blip in the last three sessions of play. Of course, if only the umpires had been a little alert or if there was DRS in operation, it would have been a 3-0 series washout for Sri Lanka.

The gut feeling of a captain may not necessarily come good always. Kohli thought Harbhajan's experience would be handy on the Sri Lankan pitches, not realising that they have undergone a sea change and the veteran off-spinner is no longer as potent as he was five-six years ago.

Kohli quickly brought in Stuart Binny to replace him as an all-rounder and the Bengali did fairly well to justify his selection, with his bowling in the second Test and batting at a critical juncture in the third.

Just to prove that there is no permanence about batting position, he made Binny bat ahead of debutant Naman Ojha and promoted Amit Mishra ahead after touting Ravichandran Ashwin as an all-rounder he is looking for. Mishra also earned the right with his dotted batting and in the last innings Ashwin proved his batting credentials with a timely and important fifty. Ojha looked competent as a wicketkeeper also, catching efficiently and also stumping one.

Kohli's handling of bowlers may not have inspired confidence in the purists who go by a set format of giving bowlers enough time to settle down to a line and length

instead of bafflingly frequent changes. The Indian captain seems to go by his gut feeling rather than any conventional wisdom.

If he gives Ashwin the new ball, the next time he will bring in Mishra first, giving the impression as if he has forgotten Ashwin. He will have a healthy minor competition between Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav with Binny acting as a buffer.

Under the previous dispensation, a leg-spinner was seen as superfluous or redundant when an off-spinner and a left-arter were around. Some felt Mishra was shabbily treated. Now he has been reinstated to his rightful position and he has done exceedingly well to finish with 15 wickets behind man-of-the-series Ashwin's 21. He looked as confident while batting and twice he was unlucky to get out when going great guns.

If Ashwin has gone back to basics to reinvent his bowling, Ishant Sharma has found a new approach to rattle the batsmen. His aggression, not his antics for a senior cricketer in the side, has helped as Kohli acknowledged. Even to psyche himself, he could do by making the ball talk but by verbals. Getting disciplined far too often by ICC is not good for him and the side, even when provoked by the opposition.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal. He can be reached at v.srivatsa@ians.in)

Murder mystery of love, money....

(Contd from P-VI) Sheena Bora have gone missing and therefore the defence will have a field day at a later date by asking the prosecution to produce a body or establish that the victim (Sheena) was indeed murdered.

Peter Mukerjee, who headed such a powerful media group and later founded another, seems to have come out as a gullible man who lacked all inquisitive traits associated with anyone connected with the press in any manner. He evidently had no nose for news going by the corollary that he could not make any sense of the sordid goings-on in his own life unless, however, he has wilfully chosen to play an ignorant fool to hoodwink the police and the media. What is confounding and incomprehensible are his conflicting and repeatedly revised versions to TV channels even before being questioned by the police. And why are Maria and his team allowing him to do so? Peter's statements so far show him in nothing but a dismal light.

His Doon Schoolmates, like everyone else, are as dumb-founded by his gross or put on ignorance and believe that he should be grilled thoroughly to ascertain his role, if any, in the commissioning of the crime or covering it up. Given that he believed his wife, who comes out as a calculating and ambitious woman, who could go to any length, was he subsequently aware of any foul play regarding Sheena? If yes, then is he not guilty of suppressing infor-

mation about the murder most foul and thus liable to be prosecuted?

The most important aspect of any crime is the motive. The police appear to be working on some theories and in order to make their case airtight will have to establish a clear motive. One possibility as of now is that since Sheena was in a relationship with Rahul, Peter's son from his first marriage, Indrani was perhaps petrified that her daughter would spill the beans and while it would cement her (Sheena's relationship) it would ruin her (Indrani's) own with Peter, thus leading to the end of the woven story. The second theory the police is working on is that Peter also had a fling with Sheena and after Indrani, who has had troubled liaison with several men, herself discovered it, she decided to kill her daughter, who, according to unconfirmed reports, was expecting at the time of her murder. The third theory, which is very weak is that property or the money received by Indrani during the INX liquidation deal, was in Sheena's account and she was refusing to part with it. Despite the fact that the cops claim that they have an unassailable case and may have decided to turn Indrani's driver and accomplice into an approver, the findings so far are substantially inadequate to secure a conviction of the accused persons. More convincing evidence needs to be dug out. A scenario that no one killed Sheena should certainly not emerge after the trial. INAV



"Inspiration may be a form of superconsciousness, or perhaps of subconsciousness - I wouldn't know. But I am sure it is the antithesis of self-consciousness."

—Aaron Copland

The Shillong Times

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Conflict avoidance

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi in his address to a global conference condemned non-state actors holding sway in various areas. He urged the adoption of stringent measures to stop bloodshed and violence incited by them. He laid stress on dialogue as the remedy of all ills blighting the world. He was evidently referring to organisations like the Islamic State and the Taliban. They are bigots who have no use for secular democracy.

Similar enemies of the people create trouble in India as well. The example of a Kerala academic writing on the Ramayana comes to mind. He was gagged and muzzled because of his religion. The Maharashtra police have not arrested the assassins of rationalist thinker Narendra Dabholkar and CPI leader Govind Pansare. The murder happened over a year ago. It was public pressure which forced two persons associated with the Bajrang Dal and Sri Ram Sena to be arrested for making inflammatory statements following the murder of Kannada scholar M.M Kalburgi. The Modi government must emphasize that it will not tolerate bigotry and violence.

The BJP should keep a strict check on the fundamentalists in the Sangh Pariwar. The Congress has an equal measure of responsibility for protecting secularism. The worst offenders are the Bajrang Dal and the Sri Ram Sena. In Maharashtra, the BJP government plays a supine role in checking fundamentalism. Crimes against artists, writers and intellectuals are rampant. The Constitution of India puts the greatest emphasis on religious tolerance and the importance of dissent and debate.

LOOKING BACK

February 07, 1988

We had no business to lose

We had no business to lose, said Anand Amritraj after Yugoslavia beat India in the crucial doubles match of the world group Davis Cup tie here today.

Talking to newsmen after the match, Anand said "We expected to win the match. The defeat has put us in trouble."

Anand, who has been playing for the country for nearly last two decades, said he was very disappointed with the outcome of the match. "It was crime to lose the first set". You cannot lose like this on grass".

He admitted that the Yugoslavs never allowed them to get into the rhythm "Bobo (Slobodan Zivijovic) players so well that he made me and Vijay's life miserable" he added.

Andand said he has never seen Slobodan play so well in doubles. He served well and it was difficult to return his services. But "we had" our chances and failed to take advantage of them, he added.

Andand said that "if we had won the first set, the outcome of the match would have been different, now Ramesh and Vijay will be under tremendous pressure in the reverse singles tomorrow."

He said he did not know how much Vijay has been drained out after the grueling four hour encounter today", but there is no doubt that Vijay will be under considerable pressure tomorrow".

He said even fifth set when "I broke Slobosan's service, I was hopeful that the result will be in our favour, but then it was not to be."

Yugoslavia's non playing captain Radmilo Arsenulic told newsmen that he was

happy with the result but added that final outcome of the tie will be known only tomorrow. "We are not taking chances", he added.

Asked what prompted him to play Goran Prpic in place of Bruno Oresar in the doubles, Radmilo said after seeing Goran playing during the practice session "we found that he was better doubles player because he had good service and also better return.

Slobodan Zivijovic who was also present said he was surprised the way "we won the first two sets so easily but then we went down as Indians took advantage of our slackness."

India's hopes Recede with defeat in doubles

India's hopes of moving ahead into the second round of world group Davis Cup receded when Slobodan receded when Slobodan Zivijovic and Oran Prpic waged a grim battle against Vijay Amritraj and Anand Amritraj to take the doubles here today.

The 7-5, 6-3, 3-6, 9-7 verdict after an epic 210 minutes fight put the visitors 2-1 up and in a very commanding position. With Zivijovic, ranked 22nd in the world, playing Vijay Amritraj in reverse singles tomorrow, the odds are much in the Yugoslavs favour.

The doubles was most crucial for the Indian, finalists in 1987 Davis Cup. After Vijay's victory over Bruno Oresar and Ramesh Krishnan's fall against Zivijovic, India had a good chance if they had won the doubles today.

Livelihood beyond extractive mining

By H H Mohrmen

Post the NGT ban many individuals, organizations and even government and semi-government agencies painted a grim picture of the state. These prophets of doom predicted that the coal mine areas would plunge into chaos because the ban has denied large sections of the population their livelihood. The soothsayers had also predicted that there is no livelihood alternative to the people in the area beyond extractive mining of coal, limestone or other minerals.

People refused to look for alternative livelihoods other than mining and are harping on the same issue that the NGT or the Court has no authority on their rights to land. They are still claiming that the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution guarantees the tribals their rights over the land and that they can do whatever they like with the land they own. And that includes polluting rivers, destroying forests, destroying river banks, sand and stone quarrying etc. all of which have adversely impacted water sources which supply water to towns and cities. And now even the two Autonomous District Councils, of Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills are dancing to the same tune and had publicly declared that they are going to appeal against the Hon'ble High Court order which prohibited mining of limestone and sand and stone quarrying in the state.

The two ADCs should have learned their lessons from the previous Supreme Court order related to timber ban in the state. In the timber ban case the two ADCs did approach the apex court against the ban but everybody knows what happened. The ban continues. This time too, it is difficult to expect a different order; therefore this again is going to be a waste of public money because the Councils will have to spend a lot of public money on litigation and conveyance.

There are also two questions pertaining to the ADCs move to appeal to the Supreme Court against the High Court order. The first question is, what is the mandate of the ADC with regards to forests? If the duty of the Council is to protect the forests then isn't it true that the High Court order is only helping the Council

in its mandate to protect forests and rivers which is the remit of the District Councils? The ADCs in Meghalaya had failed in their duty to protect the forest and rivers in the first place; hence this court order has not come as surprise to the people here. But the ADCs instead of welcoming the court order had in their wisdom and possibly provoked by some over-zealous lawyers decided to appeal against the order.

The second question is, if the argument is that people have lost their livelihoods because of the court and the NGT order then what did the ADCs do to compensate those who lost their livelihood to timber ban in the nineties? Did the ADC provide the affected people with any relief? Or did the ADCs ever extend their support to those farmers who lost their crops due to natural calamities and pest attacks? The answer to all the queries is in a resounding 'No.' So why intervene now? Is it not that livelihoods of people is only a camouflage for vested interests?

The ADCs should stick to protecting customs, traditions, forests and rivers and let the state government deal with the livelihoods issue. When we talk about livelihood, the circumstances that we are facing now demand that we work hard to come up with a solution that will help create alternative livelihoods especially in the coal mine areas. The ADCs should also pressure the government to come up with its own mineral policy for sustainable use of our mineral resources.

There is no denying the fact that the NGT ban on unscientific rat hole mining has its adverse impacts and people did lose their livelihoods but humans are endowed with wisdom and talent to overcome challenges that we face in our lives. And many a times it is the people themselves who come up with solutions to solve their own problems.

The recent story that was reported in the vernacular daily regarding Norly S Rynghlem and his wife Stianly Sariang of Wapung village is an inspiring story of people who dared to turn a new page in their lives. The husband and wife duo were involved in coal business but when NGT banned the transport of coal from the

State, instead of lamenting about their loss, they looked for an alternative livelihood. With the support of the Floriculture department of East Jaintia hills district, the family was able to venture into the new business and now they are even exporting flowers outside the State. It is also ironic that it was from the same Wapung village that commercial mining of coal started in the late sixties and early seventies. No doubt the family is not earning from floriculture business as much as they earn from coal, but here is an example of how government can intervene to create livelihoods in the areas affected by ban on coal mining.

It is indeed very difficult in ordinary circumstances to see beyond what meets the eye and this is especially true when we lose something that we are used to. But the situation demands that the government explore new ideas and come up with livelihood options for the poor people in the coal mine areas.

The state government flagship program would come handy here and the Integrated Basin Development and Livelihood Promotion program (IBDLP) will be of a great help. As per records collected the maximum numbers of partners registered in the two Entrepreneur Facilitation centers (EFC) in East Jaintia hills district are farmers who wish to start livestock business. This comes as no surprise because both Khliehriat and Saipung blocks are areas affected by coal mining so agriculture and aquaculture is the last thing that comes to the mind of the farmers. The silver lining is the fact that as per survey conducted by ILRT there is a 40% shortfall of the supply of pigs, chickens and fish to the state. This information can help the government design livelihood interventions in the area and also address the shortfall in supply of meat in the state.

The Shillong Times recently carried a story about the illegal business of supplying cattle from India to Bangladesh. It was also reported that the Border Security Force confiscated about one lakh

cows in a year on the Indo-Bangla border. Considering this fact one can estimate how big this trade is. Umkiang and Ratacherra were some villages from where this business is operated. Now if the government were to legalise this trade then people can start earning by exporting cows legally to Bangladesh. Villagers in the different parts of the state can also earn their livelihood from rearing cattle because cow rearing is not new to the Khasi-Pnar people. They have been doing this since time immemorial but the only difference is that all along it was done in a small scale for producing manure and to plough the fields and not even for milking.

The other good news is that the Narpuh reserve forest is also recently being converted to Narpuh Wildlife Sanctuary and here again there is a huge livelihood option for the people in the East Jaintia hills district. The government can use IBDLP program to venture into the area by converging Wildlife Department, DRDA and other line departments to introduce to the people livelihood activities by conserving the forest. Through IBDLP, villagers who live on the fringes of the Narpuh wild life sanctuary can be taken for an exposure trip to Kaziranga or the Manas national park to help them see that they can also earn by preserving the forest and protecting the animals in the sanctuary. Ecotourism is the word and the answer for the people in the area and there is ample scope for starting a business in this sector. Starting ecotourism business in the area will also help people realize that their livelihood depends on how best they can conserve the forest. There is another livelihood avenue for the people in the area. The huge Narpuh Wildlife Sanctuary can also be a resource for apiculture business for the farmers in the villages on the fringes of the sanctuary.

There is no dearth of alternative livelihoods. The people and the government only need to look beyond extractive mining and exploit the available options creatively. NGT ban on coal mining is not the end of the world; people need to look for different livelihood option available in the areas. If the government is planning to intervene it need not look any further because the resources and manpower are available in here.

What's in a name? Quite a lot, actually

By M J Akbar

A name is a tricky thing. You never know when you might have to live up to it. Political parties, wisely, choose to be safe rather than sorry. Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress or Samajwadi Party are minimalist definitions of maximum objectives. You might wonder what precisely is Marxist about CPI(M), but that is a trivial quibble. Wisely, there is similar plain-speaking when a moniker is needed for those fluctuating realities called alliances. National Democratic Alliance and United Progressive Alliance are both a reasonable statement of intent.

The fault line in Bihar's recently cobbled "Grand Alliance" between Nitish Kumar, Lalu Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Pawar and Sonia Gandhi is obvious: it was too grand for its own good. It had so many artificial legs it could not walk.

Memory is short, but not that short. The starting point was a "grand merger" of what is nostalgically called the old "Janata Parivar", with Mulayam as its patriarch. It was announced to the wild beating of drums, and collapsed even before the echoes had faded. A less than sublime alternative

2: Watch the opinion polls, but not quite in the way they are advertised. Leave space for scepticism when seat projections are announced. The world's most sophisticated psephologists are in Britain, and they got this summer's general election so wrong they are still picking up little pieces of ego lying in television studios. Opinion polls are meant to reflect opinions of voters, but quite often indicate only the bias of analysts. What you should note carefully, however, is the graph of support for any political party through the many polls that are done in an election season. The periodic fluctuations may be slight, but they will register. There will be upward mobility on one side, and downward slide on the other. The party that inches up has the winning breeze on its tail.

3: Watch the language. Not your own, which one hopes will always be calm and collected, but that of political leaders. Leaders who start to lose their cool are suffering from heat on the ground. Nitish Kumar got irritable and cantankerous at a public meeting; the clip showing this went viral on social media. This dangerous invention called a mobile camera has removed deniability as an option.

Memory is short, but not that short. The starting point was a "grand merger" of what is nostalgically called the old "Janata Parivar", with Mulayam as its patriarch. It was announced to the wild beating of drums, and collapsed even before the echoes had faded. A less than sublime alternative was offered: they would contest the Bihar elections together. Then, on an otherwise calm day, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar announced the allotment of seats: 100 each to the Big Two, 40 to a meekly quiet Congress, and three left to any ally who might care to pick them up.

was offered: they would contest the Bihar elections together. Then, on an otherwise calm day, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar announced the allotment of seats: 100 each to the Big Two, 40 to a meekly quiet Congress, and three left to any ally who might care to pick them up. No one thought Mulayam or Pawar were worth consultation. Talk of putting a cat among pigeons: this unleashing a lethal carnivore into a coop of some very furious birds. At the moment of writing anger management is underway. Mulayam has asked for 10 seats from the Congress list, which is as wily a finesse as there ever was.

We shall see what happens, but as far as the voter is concerned, the message is clear: this is patchwork, not unity. It cannot offer the basic requirement of good governance, stability. For those who want to check the direction of electoral behaviour, here are some relevant indicators.

1: Watch the migration. There is no perfect distribution of seats in either a single party or alliance; but note on which side the turbulence ebbs, and where it induces a switchover. Frontline leaders have begun to exit the principal parties of the "Grand Alliance".

4: Watch the eyes. The size of crowds at a rally of course matters. Voters do not generally go to jeer an opponent; they go to cheer their man. The numbers, mostly made of the young, at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meetings were massive, but that was only a part of the story. The real story is in the eyes. Their eyes were alive with belief; the spark was contagious.

5: Watch the marginals. Of course you need to be a bit of a political junkie to get into such detail, but this is where true revelation lies. Check what is happening in those constituencies where the past difference between victory and defeat was 5,000 votes or less. A swing of 1% will be sufficient to change the result. When the force is with you, a seat that would have been lost by 5,000 votes, will be won by 3000.

I could add a sixth, but this would be entirely for candidates: Watch your pocket. Yes, you need money to fight an election, but money does not win an election. Candidates under pressure begin to chase a chimera with their wallets. All that happens is that lots of hangers-on benefit; ground reality remains unaffected. People do not vote for one day's high jinks, they vote for a better life. And make sure you represent an alliance with a simple name

TO THE EDITOR

Playing politics with real issues!

Editor,

The sudden exit of Ardent Basawiamoit MLA of Nongkrem constituency and his team of MDCs' from the ongoing tussle over the Urban Development affairs can be termed as a 'short fuse'. In fact, ever since the Meghalaya High Court put a question mark over the authority and powers of the Rangbah Shnong and the Dorbar Shnong, it is the public that is being taken for a ride with different groups hijacking the issue for their political gains in 2018. The fact is, the Hon'ble High Court had only wanted to put things in the correct perspective by giving an opportunity to society to introspect and possibly bring in new changes in the working of the Dorbar, rather than creating complications. Unfortunately the political parties, pressure groups and a section of leaders within the Committee of the Headmen are playing ping

pong without any light at the end of the tunnel. So the question is why is the District Council and the State Government playing footsie in all this 'tamasha'? Aren't these MLAs' and MDCs' accountable to the people for sleeping all these past 43 years?

Yours etc.
Dominic S.Wankhar
Shillong-3

Mawpat Sacred Forest

Editor,

The statement of two Myntiris from the Kharlukhi and Langstiem Kur(clan), who now claim that both of them including Latho M Syiem, Syiem of Myllem Syiemship, were forced to sign an agreement handing over the Mawpat Forest to the KHADC is shocking. All three including the Syiem of Myllem should be sacked and forthwith removed by the other 46 Myntiris representing the different KUR (Clans).

No doubt the intention was noble and that is to retain the green cover, however the decision made by three individuals in connivance with the KHADC is anti-tradition as

such a decision should have been taken with the consent of the Durbar Hima (as per the Myllem Syiemship Act) which states that it includes the Deputy Syiem, Basan, Myntiri, Bakhrav, Syiem Raid, Lyngdoh Raid, Bongteh Raid, Rangbah Shnong, and village elders and u Khun u Hajar of the Syiemship. It is also shocking to learn that a former Syiem allotted and built a residence for himself without the consent of u khun u hajar ! But KHADC which has the Chiefs on a chain (read Appointment of Chiefs Act 1959) failed to bring transparency to the functioning of the Myllem Syiemship, past cosmetic, politically motivated photo sessions of clean lewdness was also a drama as clean up of the Myllem Syiemship administration was not done due to obvious reasons of financial impropriety.

The Myllem Syiemship collects revenue to the tune of Rs 2.5 crore per year. Why is the KHADC not mandating the Syiem Myllem and his 49 Myntiris to be transparent before the citizens? The ruling Syiem

clan including the 48 ruling clans of Myllem Syiemship must come clean and explain the reasons for not taking consent of u khun u hajar prior to signing any documents with authorities such as the KHADC who themselves are yet to punish the forest officials who shaved clean hundreds of hectares of District Council Forests under their control. What stops the KHADC in the future from selling this forest? This decision must have the backing of the official Dorbar Hima and its citizens to enforce the green cover. The Grand Council of Chiefs and the Federation of Khasi States must explain why the traditional Dorbar Hima is not being convened annually as done by other Syiemships. The Acts and Rules passed by KHADC must empower the people not just a few.

Yours etc.,
Dapbor Nonglait, &
Lapynshai Mawbanang,
Viamail

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

"I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing."

—Socrates

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 30 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

Cultural pollution

THE Narendra Modi government has decided to launch a drive to fight cultural pollution. At a meeting with the RSS last week, the Union Cultural and HRD ministers decided to start a countrywide movement in order to wipe out such pollution. Every area of public discourse that has been westernized and where Indian culture and civilization need to be restored will receive their attention, said Union Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma. Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani has lent her voice to the demand. The two ministries involved will prepare independent roadmaps for the proposed cultural cleansing. They will deal with school curricula, art and cinema, science and technology as well as libraries. Institutions like the National School of Drama will go for revamping. Emphasis will be laid on India's cultural heritage. An attempt will be made to revive interest in Sanskrit. The pride in our ancient language will be boosted.

There is nothing wrong with refurbishing the country's national heritage. The glory that was India is still the pride of the nation. Sanskrit is a great language and should not be treated as a dead letter. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen who is held in the highest esteem abroad is a great champion of discovering the enormous knowledge in Sanskrit literature and science, especially medical science. But all this should not mean shutting one's eyes to the wisdom embodied in western culture. The modern and scientific temperament produced by the west should be imbibed in India as well. Admiration for India's heritage should not shut out the enlightenment spread by western culture. The term 'cleansing' reeks of a fascist orientation.

LOOKING BACK

February 09, 1988

PM rules out compromise on Sicaheh

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today ruled out any compromise on the Indian stand on the Siachen Glacier and said the country was strong enough to meet the mountain pressure on the northern border.

The Siachen area is part of India and our position is very clear on this issue, he told the newsmen after dedicating to the nation the 345 MW Salal Hydro Electric Project near Udhampur.

Mr. Gandhi, who also addressed a public meeting later at Reasi, about 120 Km from here, said pressure was mounting on the northern border but "our forces are strong enough to meet any challenge".

He described as "baseless" the opposition charge of malpractices in the assembly elections in Tripura.

Answering another question, Mr. Gandhi, who is also the Congress (I) President, hinted that the Jammu and Kashmir unit of the party would soon be reconstituted.

Dr. Abdullah and Union Energy Minister Mr Vasant Sathe were among those present at the dedication ceremony.

The Prime Minister commended the efforts of engineers and workers complementing the project by utilizing indigenous technology despite geological problems faced at the time of execution.

The Prime Minister today discussed the situation on the northern border, especially the Sicaheh glacier, with senior army officers of the Northern Command at Udhampur, 70 kms from here.

GOC-In Charge Northern Command Lt. Gen. B. C. Nanda is reported to have briefed the Prime Minister on the security arrangement along the border with Paki-

stan and China and on recent incidents of clashes in the glacier area.

Rs 185 cr, NEC plan outlay

The Planning Commission today approved Rs. 185 crore for the 1988-89 annual plan of the North Eastern comprising all the seven states in the region.

The plan outlay is higher as in the current financial year it stood at Rs 168 crore.

The allocation was approved at a meeting between Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Mr. P. Shiv Shankar and NEC Chairman and Assam and Meghalaya Governor Mr. Bhisma Narain Singh.

Minister of States for Planning Mr. Sukh Ram, Planning Commission members Mr. Abid Hussain and Dr. Y.K. Alagh, Planning Commission secretary to NEC Mr. R. K. Tikku and other senior officials participated in the deliberation.

Seminars on problem of flood

A two days seminar on the problem of flood and erosion in Assam and its solution began here today.

Inaugurating the seminar state Flood Control Minister Mr. Shamshing Hense hope that the seminar would help remove the agonies of floods faced by the state's people.

Criticising the centre for its alleged apathy to solve the state's flood problem, Mr. Hense demanded sufficient funds to undertake permanent measures to solve the problem.

He said the Brahmaputra river erodes large tracts of cultivable land every year but the Centre had not taken any steps to tackle the problem.

Issues before the people: Sense vs Nonsense

By Toki Blah

I am a citizen of Meghalaya and developments in the state, for the last 6 months have left me and almost everyone of us, a totally confused lot. The latest puzzle to land in our laps is the bickering between MUDA and the KHADC. Let us for once accept the truth and the truth is that we as a society are scared and suspicious of almost everything on Gods Earth. We are scared of the Thlen; of 666 (God alone knows what it is); then initially of the EPIC; then of Adhar Nos; of the Municipality; of outsiders; and most intriguing of all, suspicious and fretful of our own elected Government! Fear makes us unable to reason out things and we become vulnerable. It's the sum total of Meghalaya's socio political history - opportunistic politics and school dropouts take advantage of this vulnerability to lead society by its nose. Coming back to the topic in hand, among the many other things that scare us is the recurrence of an earthquake of 1897 scale. There is justifiable fear that the highest casualties then would result from collapsed buildings. Coming up with disaster management plans supported by stringent building bye laws for safe, secure quakeproof structures therefore makes a lot of sense. Bickering over whose building bye law should apply where is sheer political nonsense. Sadly most of us, even those who should know better, are enthusiastically rooting for nonsense.

Bah Fabian Lyngdoh in his brilliant article "The fundamental purpose of the Law", ST 2nd Sept 2015, has sought to identify the basic social fulcrum that maintains balance between 'individual freedom' and 'social order'. He calls it the Seat of Justice and the fundamental purpose of Law is to regulate this balance. In Meghalaya this hypothesis goes a yon bit further. The perpetual search for the last 67 years is for a fulcrum to balance the exercise of power between the Autonomous District Councils and the State Govt. Both are creatures of the Constitution; both with the avowed objective of securing the best services for the people they serve; both however managed by power hungry politicians and from there springs the tragic saga of our state. To frighten, hood-

wink and misinform the common man is a time tested political strategy for grabbing and retaining power. We in turn receive it as manna from Heaven. "Halleluia, Praise the Lord. Stoke up the cauldrons of fear and may the electorate never learn otherwise". In this current tussle between KHADC and MUDA, there are questions that people have been reluctant to ask, but let's ask them anyway. Why can't a uniform building bye law serve both Urban and 6th Schedule areas? Do different building technologies apply for one and not the other? We need an answer. If a broad constitutional dispute exists between KHADC and the State Govt on jurisdiction over 6 Schedule areas, should this dispute be settled through a Political rally or through a designated court of law? If the MUDA byelaws encroach upon KHADC jurisdiction why shouldn't MUDA be sued?

Interestingly within the ongoing political imbroglio no one has cared to explain how they plan to convince future earthquakes, when they do occur, where to strike; which category of houses to destroy, which to spare. None have cared to explain how they propose to educate quakes to differentiate between MUDA and 6 Schedule area structures and which category of buildings will be immune to quakes? One fails to come across any Constitutional or Heavenly assurance on this one and the ongoing political drama suddenly shifts into the realm of the absurd when 5 yr term deities (Lei san snem) proclaim authority over nature. Let's not waste time over quake cognizance for either MUDA or KHADC bye laws. It's nonsense. More to the point, whose bye laws are acceptable to MECL and PHE? No one builds a house to live in perpetual darkness or without piped drinking water.

Satire aside, are people really serious about this whole brouhaha of 6th Schedule area development being strictly the sole responsibility of our Autonomous District Councils? Does it imply that the State Government as pointed out by Fabian Lyngdoh, should have nothing more to do with the development of 6 Schedule areas? Are people ready for this and convinced that the time has come for ADCs to take over the planning, construction and management of our

basic infrastructure facilities in all 6 Schedule areas? Should the State Govt withdraw funding roads, bridges, irrigation projects, livelihood projects, fishery, horticulture and agri projects, schools and their establishment, hospitals etc and leave these crucial infrastructural development activities to the tender mercy of the ADCs? Are we absolutely sure and serious about this? If support and promotion of tradition and culture is the basic argument, one can point out that Govt through Tourism and Arts and Culture, provide as much if not more than KHADC. Constitutionally the secondary role of ADCs to Govt is not likely to change. This is Constitutional reality and no amount of dreams or emotional IOA wishful thinking will make it go away. The sooner we accept it the sooner we all can go back to our normal daily lives.

On the flip side there is however an unanswered question hanging in the air. Question is, if MUDA has the technical expertise, the financial and human wherewithal to provide meaningful building services; If electricity and PHE water connections are available only after MUDA clearance, why are people so gungho about KHADC supremacy over 6th Schedule areas? Labour cess and permission fees are applicable to both KHADC and MUDA alike so they can't be the cause for this support. It makes no sense. There definitely must be more to it than meets the eye. If the truth be told people are wary, sick and apprehensive of MUDA because of the notorious reputation it carries. It's a rogue department that Urban Affairs has failed to control. Its an office that measures public service by the amount of harassment, intimidation, extortion, torture and pain it can inflict on the innocent public. People generally avoid having anything to do with MUDA because of the unnecessary nuisance involved. If Govt is really serious about MUDA, then clean up the rot and overhaul its present work culture. People want service. They don't like being burdened with unnecessary hassle, red-tape and greasy palmed babus.

Aside from the ongoing political brawl over building bye law jurisdiction, there is also the still pending question to the High Court ruling over the legal status of the Rangbah Shnong. The need is for legislation to provide for a uniform modern system of grass-roots governance that is complementary to tradition. Common sense dictates we put our heads together for a solution. Nonsense however won the day and here we are, like cats and dogs, fighting it out in the open. Shamelessly we fight in the name of Tradition. Poor Tradition! Does it really matter who makes the laws for our grass-roots institutions as long as governance is ensured and tradition is not threatened? Why should tradition be a static concept that cannot be empowered, improved upon or made relevant to meet present day requirements in governance? Rigidity is so comforting for some diminutive minds that anything suggesting change is frightening and traumatic. Meghalaya has to provide itself with an answer as to whether it wants to live in the past or the future. Leading lights of society seem to prefer the dark mystical past of their imagined golden age. Grab the past and simply leave the future to take care of itself. Pray our children forgive us for this perverted sense of history.

In conclusion one comes away with a very depressed feeling. One feels sad to realise that even after 43 years of statehood and 67 years of cultural empowerment under the 6th Schedule, we have not been able to do away with that "Standstill" mentality. We feel comfortable and safe to remain where we were; to move forward only when urged by demagogic nonsense. To question; to ask and to be curious is considered uncouth, uncivilised and impolite. If we look at the mirror we see timid frightened creatures more at ease with an imagined comfortable past than excited by unknown adventures of the future. Immobile by mental inertia, our institutions, value systems and social makeup are on the verge of collapse. Governance and administration is at a standstill, moving only when spurred into motion by an exasperated and bemused judiciary. Everything else is mute and silent while the only voice heard comes from an empty vessel called politics. This voice in turn tells us progress and development and any attempt to prepare for the future, is a threat to tradition and culture. An unquestioning society says Amen to that!

Autonomous District Council; the duration of the Behdienkhlam festival in Jowai for three days four nights and the disappearance of the lawchibdi clan from the social setup in Jowai. As a research scholar, he should base his writing on facts and not jump to conclusions. Such write-ups raise several questions about the credibility of the writer. For the information of the public a separate Autonomous District Council for the Jaintias was established in 1964 under the nomenclature of Jowai Autonomous District Council which later changed to Jaintia Autonomous District Council. The Behdienkhlam festival in Jowai was held for four days three nights (this year from July 8- 11) and the lawchibdi clan used to hold the office of patorship in the past. The present pator is not from the lawchibdi clan. Last but not the least, fish is never used as symbol by Christians.

TO THE EDITOR

Media falling from grace?

Editor,

To be informed about all kinds of happenings around us is not always healthy. For healthy thoughts healthy materials are important. However, in this age of a fast-paced digital media we inevitably run the risk of being deluged by negative information. Visual materials that we often get bombarded turn out as yummy feasts for our leering eyes. The recent outbreak of the saga of lust, conspiracy, and betrayal of Indrani Mukerjea has flabbergasted many. But what is worse here is that the way the national media is leeching onto it, 'Voyeuristic media' (ST, Sept 4th). For over a fortnight they have been harping on it. How can they be oblivious of other topical issues and news that matter the most and keep digging into the privacy of others which only contaminates the psyche of the general masses? Does it not send out the wrong message to our tender youths?

It is observed that some of TV channels are so morbidly obsessed that they work up their extra sweat to give twists and turns to stories. Well before the trial begins in the court of law --- the media anchors threateningly pose as heartless judges by falsely convicting the innocent souls. Again, they could even be too soft on a dreaded criminal while too hard upon others, especially those who lack a glamour quotient. Frankly speaking there is huge discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, creed, race and religion. Could we forget the recent subversive posture of the mainstream media? With all impunity they showered a whole lot of sympathy upon the murderous terrorist Yakub Memon. How does one, who had allegedly orchestrated diabolic bombings in 1993 that killed over 250 innocent people, merit so much of importance? Does it not embolden others to follow in Yakub's footsteps who might later pose a terror threat to the Nation? Again, what makes the mainstream media judgmental on every crucial issue and deliberately influence the unsuspecting citizens to form biased opinions? Sometimes it appears that certain media barons have ulterior motives best known to themselves.

Have we ever seen the American media taking the side of the terrorists? If such case ever happens they will be pulled up and immedi-

ately tried for treason! After the devastating jolt of 9/11 the US government stopped at nothing to enhance its security arrangement and the intelligence network. Without seditious interference from within everything is implacable there now. But, in India it's quite unthinkable. Yes, it's loud and clear through the social media that the majority of people are exceedingly unhappy with the prejudiced attitudes of some of the Indian media. Their credibility and journalistic integrity is suspect, especially now when the terror modules are roaring with a vengeance. Ordinary citizens are aware of the realities. They strongly feel that the country's security and peace is far more important than the freedom of speech which might hurt the nation.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwali,
Shillong-2

Facts are sacred

Editor,

HH Morhmen's write-ups (ST July 13 & Aug 31, 2015) are anomalous and misleading. The writer cites 1972 as the date of establishment of the Jaintia Hills

river. Spraying of pesticides across the paddy fields adjoining the river is rampant, thereby leading to contamination of the River. Futher, the upstream is the source of drinking water supply of Jowai town. This is not a coal mining area but it has become a death threat to

fishes and human lives due to the toxic condition of the water. The documentary by S N Lamare has been shown to the public but that is useless if the river upstream is not shown as well.

Yours etc.,
Stelin G. Laloo
Jowai

Cleanliness an issue for India

By Barnes Mawrie

The old saying "cleanliness is next to godliness" seems hardly audible to the Indian ear where the opposite seems to be truer. Perhaps it is because this saying originated in the Christian world and not in India. But this is where ideology plays a great role in shaping the worldview, habits and behaviour of people. If the western society has scrupulously been upholding a great standard of cleanliness, it is largely because of this ideological impact enforced by Christianity. It is logical to conclude that if God is the purest being and heaven is an immaculate home, then cleanliness is a divine virtue which should be aspired for by believers of every religion. India unfortunately lacks such an ideology that is so fundamental to a civilized existence.

Recently a UN Agency has warned Svizera an Indian Pharmaceutical Institute that supplies cheap tuberculosis drugs to developing countries for not meeting the required standards. It is evident that much of criticism made by UN observers are on cleanliness or hygienic issues. If exported goods are treated so unhygienically, what better treatment do we expect of domestic consumption goods? I think we need not justify ourselves on this because all of us are aware of the dismal condition of cleanliness and hygiene in India. In most parts of our country the streets and market places are littered with wastes and foul odour hangs in the air. When the monsoons especially come the city streets are flooded due to lack of proper sewage system and a pandemic situation is created.

India has been blessed in many ways. We are one of the oldest civilizations in the planet. We have a rich philosophical and scientific tradition as well as a renowned religious history. Our country has rich resources and unlimited talents. Indian doctors, engineers and scientists are found all over the world. However, one thing our great nation is still in deficit and that is a sense of cleanliness. No matter how poor and undeveloped a country may be but when it is clean it commands respect. Similarly, a house may be poor and thatch covered but when it is clean and tidy, it hides away all poverty and inspires reverence. On the other hand, we may have a palatial mansion with marbles and tiles, yet if there is no cleanliness in it, there is only shame. Consequently, what is the use of having a great, rich and resourceful country but when it is unable to maintain a certain standard of cleanliness. All the good that we have is forgotten and we become a victim of ridicule and insults.

Our present Prime Minister, Mr. Modi has struck the right note when he launched the national Swachh Bharat campaign at the start of his office. The ideology and relevance of such a campaign are doubtlessly admirable but the intention and commitment are still yet to be seen. Imagine if all over India the roads and public places are spick and span, our rivers are crystal and clear, our markets clean and ordered, our homes and compounds clean and tidy, our railway stations kept immaculate, what a great achievement it would be? In my opinion that would be the most significant and most memorable victory that any government could

achieve. We Indians need to change our mentality and cultivate a more civic approach. We need to go beyond personal cleanliness to collective cleanliness. It is a characteristic Indian mentality to clean one's house but to dump the garbage on public roads. The attitude of "sarkar-ka mal" must be replaced by an attitude of "hamara desh/gaon". Such a change of mentality can result when all units of society - families, schools, colleges, churches/temples/mosques and universities - take to heart the task of conscientization and education to cleanliness. Let the adults of today nurture the dream of "clean India" for their posterity not by empty words but by a resolute action.

Yours etc.,
Stelin G. Laloo
Jowai

“However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at.”

--- Stephen Hawking

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 30 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

Economics of infertility

IT is quite a revelation to know that infertility has become such a huge problem in Meghalaya judging from the infertility medicines procured by the Health Department of the Government in 2010-11, 2011-12. While the number of capsules ordered and delivered for curing male infertility in 2010-11 was 5000 the figures shot up to 20 lakh capsules in 2011-12 with an amount of Rs 7 crore being paid for the same. From the figures shown in the RTI answers it appears that East Garo Hills has the largest number of infertile males at 4 lakh capsules followed by South Garo Hills at 3.5 lakh and West Khasi Hills at 3.48 lakh. The figures go to show that the further away the district is from the state capital the higher the corruption. If there is such a high degree of male infertility then the National Family Health Survey (2012) which has red-flagged Meghalaya as the state with the highest fertility rate at above four children per woman would need to be countered by the Meghalaya Government. All surveys including those done by a group of scholars titled, "Fertility at District Level in India: Lessons from the 2011 Census," (Frontline Aug. 11-24, 2012) have found Meghalaya along with Bihar to have an average fertility that is even higher than five children per woman. It is also intuitive that men in the most backward districts of Meghalaya are being projected as the most infertile. Surely this calls for new survey as it clashes with all past surveys which have also shown Meghalaya as a state with the highest decadal growth and with the lowest condom use.

Meghalaya has a pathetic record in drugs procurement. A former chief minister was known to have encouraged the procurement of expired medicines as a means of making money. That Rs 21 lakh was wasted out of the Rs 7.21 crore spent on procuring the infertility healing capsules is not a default but a meticulously orchestrated system. This is not the first time that there is a scam in medicine procurement by the Health Department and it will not be the last time. In the late 1980's the Massar Committee had submitted a report regarding a Health Department scam at that time. There was naming and shaming as well but the whole thing was hushed up. Then, there was no RTI to find out the sordid details of the crime trail. Now officials and politicians cannot get away so easily. We can only urge for a more transparent system of drugs procurement in the State!

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1988

Terrorists among seven killed in Punjab

Seven people, including terrorists, were killed when security forces arrested two extremists in Punjab during the past 24 hours.

An official spokesman said terrorists Narinder Singh last night entered the house of one Chanchal Singh in village Chhit of Gurdaspur district and killed his son Baldev Singh. However, Baldev Singh escaped, while three daughters of Chanchal Singh tried to overpower the terrorist. In the ensuing scuffle Narinder Singh's pistol went off killing the terrorist on the spot.

The spokesman said terrorists killed Mukhtiar Singh at Ghatipur under Verowal police station unit Amritsar district last night.

A report from Amritsar, quoting CRPF control room, said terrorists shot dead one Bir Singh at village Balsemai last night.

An official spokesman said terrorists forced their entry into the house of one Kripal Singh at Dayal Bhangur village Balsemai last night and opened fire, killing his two daughters Gurpreet Kaur (25) and Ajit Singh (22) on the spot.

Kripal Singh was seri-

ously injured in the firing.

The spokesman said terrorists went to the house of Surjan Singh at village Sathiala in Amritsar district late last evening and gunned him down and his son Sukhwinder Singh.

More than 100 people were rounded up during the combing operations in Jalandhar and Kapurthala districts till last night to search killers of four members of a marriage party in Kapurthala district on Sunday night.

Security forces launched a house-to-house search in Nirankari colony and Bhagatpur in Phagwara and adjoining villages and took about 40 people into custody for questioning. The combing operations, launched early yesterday, were in Phillaur, Nakodar and Nawanshahar tehsils in Jalandhar district also.

The curfew in the 300 meter wide belt along the Indo-Pak border in Gurdaspur district has been extended till March 13, according to an official spokesman.

A Jalandhar report said district police arrested two terrorists identified as Balbir Singh and Kuldip Singh and recovered one country-made pistol and six cartridges.

Little hidden faces

By Bhogtoram Mawroh

The latest Census of India (2011) revealed that Meghalaya has recorded a decadal population growth of 27.82%, which is the highest among all the other states in India. A common contention is that this increase is primarily due to the phenomenon of illegal immigration. However, a probable factor for the rapid population could be the high total fertility rate (TFR) of Meghalaya (almost 3% or about three children per mother), which is the fourth highest in the country. This, in my opinion, could very well be the cause of the rapid population growth.

Depending on the context, an expanding population can have tremendous political, social and economic implications, not always disadvantageous. But the fact that the state has been categorized in the least developed category (Dr. Raghuram Rajan Committee Report) does not allow many positives to be gained from this increase. And with a large proportion of the state's population living in poverty (Meghalaya Human Development Report - 2008), it only gets worse. However, my concern here is not to go in to the macro understanding of how this rapid increase in population affects the state's polity, society and economy. Instead, I wish to bring in to attention the plight of a certain section of the society, whose present as well as future is at jeopardy due to the high fertility rate. This is the child population of the state.

The child population (0 to 6 years of age) constitutes almost 1/5th of the total population of Meghalaya. Generally, it has been observed that poor households in developing countries tend to have larger families due to the fact that children are the only important economic asset that is available to the poor families. Since they start earning income from a very early age, having a larger family in this sense is intuitively beneficial for the poor families to improve their economic standard. Lack of awareness due to low education is also a factor. The most significant implication of this set-up is the

concern that, the majority of the increase in child population is taking place among those groups of the society who are unable to ensure the proper care and development of a child. This adversely affects the present as well as future of the child. I will try to elucidate by narrating my own personal experience from my PhD field study.

A couple of years ago, I was staying in one of the villages that I had selected for my study. The headman of the village was quite gracious in accepting me as his guest and he also offered his help in introducing me to the households for their personal interview. It was quite late in the evening and I was about to finish my interviews and retire for the day when the headman took me to a house. The house looked dilapidated and in need of urgent repair. It had no electricity and the single room was lit by the light of a kerosene lamp. It was quite dark when I entered the house to interview the family. The whole family (both parents with two young girls - less than 15 years old) had just returned from the forest after another day of hard work. Their hands and feet were covered with mud and dirt; their clothes were torn and tattered.

During the interview, apart from asking questions on domestic water collection and use pattern (my research problem), I also inquired about the various problems being faced by the family. Of the various issues that were discussed I was very much concerned about the education of the young girls. The family informed me that the girls were presently attending the morning classes in the village school. But for higher classes they would need to go to another school which is more than two kilometers away on foot. I tried to persuade the parents to continue sending their children to school by apprising them of the various opportunities that higher education provides for the building a better future. They seemed convinced but I also realized that it would be very difficult for the family not because of the lack of effort but because of the circumstances of their lives.

Let me describe in brief the daily routine of these small girls. They have to wake up very early in the morning; help in the household chores; go to school; after coming back join their parents to work in the forest; come back in the evening; and again help in the chores, before going to bed. In between they would squeeze some time to play with their friends. In most of the poor households I have visited, this story repeats itself. Sometimes I would not find the parents but only the children left behind at home doing the household chores. Apart from working at home, children would also work outside their homes. On the way to the village, I would regularly come across women breaking stones in the quarry. The smallest of their children would be playing nearby in the dust while the elder ones would be helping their mothers.

In many instances, I found that the collection of water for domestic purposes - an important household activity, is often undertaken by children - often shared with elders but sometimes solely by them. Some domestic activities like washing could be done at the source itself, and many children would spend a substantial amount of time washing clothes and utensils at the source. Since poor households have little water storage facility the children have to repeat the task of water collection daily. This consumes a lot of time which is spent not just in making the trips from home to the source and back, but also in waiting in a queue. Particularly, when nearby sources dry up in the winter months, children have to travel farther distance and wait longer at the source.

These and the other physically strenuous activities that a child undertakes, apart from physical exhaustion and the danger of injury, severely hamper their play and recreation time. As a result, children have hardly any time or inclination left for studies.

These factors combined with the highly deplorable state of education system in the rural areas, makes certain that many of the children from poor families would perform badly in their academic life as well. As such, most of them will be unable to go for higher quality education because they do not have the required grades to make it to those quality institutions. It is undoubtedly very difficult for such a child to compete with children from well-to-do backgrounds who are able to attend regular schools and also have ample time to develop their other faculties. Success stories from humble backgrounds are not unheard of. But a single child left behind is still a failure.

Having a good start in life is very important for a strong future. But for these children born in poverty there is no escape from the cycle. For many, the only options available are to either stay back in the village and continue with the occupation of their parents, or migrate to the cities and engage in menial jobs. Finally, they will be subsumed in the growing mass of poor and wretched people living on the margins. Remembering those shy, happy faces it is painful to imagine such a future for them. But it is a future that awaits thousands of our children.

In the evenings, while walking around the village I would find smaller children running around and playing among themselves. I would take their pictures with my camera and show those to them. Upon looking at themselves, some would burst in laughter while others would blush in shyness. To me these pictures reveal the joy, innocence, and free spirit of a child; their laughter borne out of a happiness that is not tampered with any regret of the past or the worry of an uncertain future. But amidst all this joy, are hidden many painful truths as well: the truth of their hard life, the inevitability of their difficult future. In conclusion I would like to say that the state of the children today is an indication of our future tomorrow. If they lose their childhood today we lose our future tomorrow.

(The writer is a PhD scholar and also a guest lecturer in the department of Geography)

TO THE EDITOR

Postal Department frauds

Editor,

It is learnt that the huge fraud involving several Saving Accounts of local public amounting to Rupees thirty seven lakhs has surfaced in Williamnagar Post Office but the Senior Superintendent of Meghalaya Division Alice K Vezo has not made any spot inquiry till date. A similar fraud had taken place in Meghalaya Secretariat Post Office amounting to Rupees thirty five lakhs. This office is located very near to the Office of the Senior Superintendent of Post Offices Meghalaya Division Shillong but here also Ms Alice K Vezo has not made any spot inquiry. This was followed by another fraud in NEIGRIHMS Post Office amounting to Rupees twenty lakhs. This too is located very near to the Office of the Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Meghalaya Division Shillong but no spot enquiry has been made as yet.

Two years ago a similar fraud had taken place at Laban Post office amounting to Rupees twenty lakh. Again no spot inquiry was conducted to identify the culprit and fix responsibility. All the above instances clearly prove that the officers of the Postal Department are totally negligent in handling public money. It is also clear that the Inspectors of Post Office

who were responsible for the occurrence of fraud in the Post Offices under their jurisdiction are continuing in their posts even when they have failed to supervise the post offices under their control. Major frauds involving public money is not taken seriously by the officers of Postal Department. It is a fit case for the Hon'ble High Court of Meghalaya to take suo-moto cognizance and issue notices to the Officers of Postal Department to explain their negligence in the Court of Law and awarded befitting punishment for criminal negligence.

Yours etc.,
Dr Ratnadeep Swaroop,
New Delhi-110001
Camp: Shillong

Hawker's menace Vrs Citizens' rights

Editor,

Apropos the letter of B Mawroh of NEHU (ST Aug 29, 2015), I would like to point out that across the world there are people who peddle their goods in public places for sale in order earn their livelihoods, but without disturbing others. But in Shillong, of late, the hawkers have dominated the scene in Police Bazaar-Mawlong Hat- Bara Bazaar area up to Garikhana and are sitting on the public foot path, disallowing the general pedestrians from walking on the foot path thereby forcing us to walk on the already congested road, risking ourselves of being hit by vehi-

cles. I was born and brought up in Shillong and I am now facing great inconvenience in walking through such commercial areas of Shillong. The other day a friend narrated to me that due to the rush in Khyndailad, by mistake one of his feet landed on the vegetables laid on the foot path. Suddenly the hawkers sitting there shouted at him and abused him with filthy language. My friend being a gentleman had no words to argue with a woman hawker other than to say sorry for what had happened.

Another incident happened last year where a vehicle coming out from MUDA parking lot slightly dashed against a hawker selling food items at the exit of the parking lot. Immediately a crowd of about 20 persons started creating violence in Khyndailad. Thanks to the CRPF present at the point, the situation was promptly controlled. Here I would like to point out that the hawkers in Shillong have crossed the limits of liberty and decency. They are of the view that they are the only community who prevail over the general citizens of Shillong. I feel enough patronage is being extended to these hawkers so now there is no room left to condone their actions than to whisk them away from public roads and public foot paths. I congratulate Peter Dkhar, the DC and his team for taking the initiative of saving the citizens of Shillong from the tyranny of the

hawkers.

Yours etc.,
Khatarbor A Kyndiah
Shillong-2

MUDA and Article 14 and 39 of the Indian Constitution

Editor,

So MUDA is in the news again! A month ago around ten staff were appointed in MUDA. Just after a month of joining service, three among the ten newly appointed staff got their promotion. Hats off to MUDA! The Department is doing yeoman's service to the privileged few. Why this is so? Some of the staff of MUDA had joined service since 1992, and many more had been employed since 2004, 2007 and so on but they remain stagnated. Though some of the staff have been regularised they have been deprived of their increment and revised pay scales which are due as per the rules. Most of them have been appointed first on contract basis for a period of one year with a fixed pay. But just after a year MUDA allowed them to draw the pay scale applicable to their respective posts.

At the time of the implementation of the 4th Pay Commission, it surprised the staff that instead of paying them the revised pay scale which is their right, the MUDA authorities issued an order saying that the revised pay cannot be given for the non-sanctioned posts due to financial crisis. It is therefore

The common man's theory of Inflation

By Phrangngi Pyrtuh

Headline inflation which has been high in India was attributed to the downfall of the UPA government besides corruption and scams. Concerted efforts and protests against high inflation by civil society and organizations do not fall on deaf ears. And public opposition to rising prices are common in most parts of the country. It is both a social and political issue. The question on regulating inflation is how much of it is within the domain of public institutions?

Headline inflation is not as low as it used to be but there is an impression that either the NDA government or the RBI or both have somehow reined in inflation. Yet no one is happy. The corporates and bankers are running out of patience while the prices of essential goods are moderated only when monsoon plays supportive role. The RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan in a recent event in Mumbai attended by bankers and executives explained his new found theory of inflation from the perspective of the common man. He made an important revelation on why the RBI refuses to lower interest rates even though the inflation index showed otherwise in recent times. This was a reconciliatory move by the RBI Governor who has been facing flak from the corporate world and from bankers and even from the Government. The interest rate is never seen to have any impact on the common man but the RBI governor has tweaked it to give it an impeccable theory which is difficult to ignore.

According to the Rajan average inflation from 2006-2013 was as high as 9% which has subsided to as low as 3.78% for July 2015. Normally such low figures are positive signs for economic actors to act, prop and wheel the economy along a certain direction. The monetary policy for instance would consider such a situation a fertile ground for easing interest rates allowing banks to cut interest rates and thus increasing borrowing.

The banks and corporates have been lobbying for lower interest rates ever headline inflation falls. They have been left utterly disappointed as the RBI Governor refuses to budge and maintains a stoic stance via-a-vis interest rates. The Governor attributed inaction from the apex bank to a perception of the common man that inflation is still high or is bound to resurface sooner. This the Governor attributed to the long period of high inflationary pressure which has made a false but serious impression on the common man that inflation is still high despite the stats mentioning otherwise. And if the consumers continue to subscribe to this view it will ultimately affect their demand for goods and services by saving more. So there is no sense in lowering interest rates.

In the past the media has made news of supposed skirmishes and differences on key issues between the Finance ministry Arun Jaitley and the RBI with the latter's contention that interest should go down, going by data on inflationary figures. The Finance Minister has repeatedly asked

for interest rate cuts citing falling demand and weak growth. Each time the RBI refuses to cut rates the media highlights the differences between the two policy makers. This was all put to rest at the Mumbai gathering. The Governor made it very clear that for inflation to come down India needs a long period of low inflation which should change the perception of the common man.

Previously the Governor proposed that the Indian Parliament could set inflation targets for the RBI to follow. The apex bank wishes to hold itself accountable to the elected representatives of the people. The Indian Parliament is already responsible for fiscal management where targets are set according to the Fiscal Responsibility Budgetary Management (FRBM) with marginal success and in all likelihood may do the same on the monetary front for Inflation Targeting. There is much debate on whether this is feasible or if such a move is counterproductive. Any false move to target and control inflation may increase unemployment according to one theory spurring recessionary fears and exacerbate pessimistic expectations. Ironically the Governor at the Mumbai meet was referring to the very same pessimism but justifies the apex bank's reluctance of lowering interest rates on behalf of the common man.

While the Governor may have his own theory there is no denial that the RBI and the Government tend to look at inflation figures differently. The RBI has for so long regarded the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as the benchmark for any decision making. The government has been highlighting inflation as measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). The WPI has for a long time been considered as headline inflation rate which generally shows a lower inflation rate as it is closer to the producer price index. While internationally consumer price index is the standard measurement of inflation, India despite having multiple consumer price indices chose WPI as the standard headline inflation. This is also necessary to build its case against the insistence of the RBI to maintain status quo over interest rates.

If the Indian Parliament set inflation targets for the RBI to follow there may be no way out for the latter to offer resistance which it has been doing till date. The RBI is an institution which is neither prone to pressure or appeasement. It is well aware of the dangers that runaway inflation can cause on the economy and society. A coordinated effort between the Government and the RBI is the need of the hour. One is an expert on monetary policy whose expertise is invaluable, the other is the policy formulating authority whose policies have far reaching consequences. By offering fig leaf to the Indian Parliament the RBI would have to bow down to its dictates. If it leads to a peaceful coexistence and collaboration between the RBI and the Indian Parliament then such submission is applauded but if it leads to the subjugation of the RBI as the monetary authority it may not augur well for the country's monetary policies.

shocking to learn that with time several staff members were appointed from time to time. So where is the question of financial crisis? Is this purely a case of discrimination?

MUDA has also denied and deprived all the facilities that have been granted previously like Dearness Allowance, Maternity Leave, Earned Leave etc. Instead, those who want to avail such leave, especially Maternity Leave have to go on Leave Without Pay.

In fact the Minister concerned who is a woman herself should have understood the issue better than anyone else. So this is how MUDA is treating its employees!

Your's etc.,
Alexis Dohling
Shillong-14

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

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big differences."

--- Winston Churchill

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Bihar elections

THE Election Commission has announced the date of Bihar polls. The country is poised for a significant political event as Bihar plays a key role in defining national politics. It has seen prolonged lawlessness and sluggish development although the last decade was marked by accelerated growth. Since 2012, political instability has overtaken the state sapping good governance. The state needs a decisive verdict in Wednesday's poll. It means much in the BJP's reckoning. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been deeply involved in the run-up to the elections, addressing rallies and announcing a substantial package. The BJP in the state has put up nobody yet for the Chief Minister's office. The Prime Minister is in focus and a victory for the BJP will be a victory for him and will also strengthen BJP president Amit

Shah's position in the party. The NDA government in Parliament will also be better placed to go ahead with reforms. The BJP's election prospects in UP in 2017 will receive a boost.

On the other hand, the grand alliance against the BJP is going all out to stop the BJP's triumphal march. An Opposition win will give it a boost in Parliament and set an example to other parties for united opposition to the BJP in other states. Nitish Kumar got a drubbing in the Parliamentary elections and his Party is weak. A defeat will further weaken it. But if he wins, he will pose a challenge to Modi. Though Lalu Prasad is tainted, his party's success will show up the strength of the Muslim-Yadav alliance. A win for the Congress, however marginal its position in the state, will enhance its national image.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1988

Captain Sangma quits Shillong

Captain Williamson Sangma who has been at the helm of affairs of Meghalaya for over 15 years, leaves Shillong for Tura on Thursday marking the end of an eventful era of the State.

He has already handed over the reins of power to the younger Sangma, and will hand over his official vehicle and vacate the "Rock side" bungalow making room for his successor to move on. At Tura he wants to relax for sometime at his Hawakhana residence. Since the day he relinquished office Captain Sangma's face has betrayed his feeling of melancholy deep within. At the public appearance and at party gatherings Captain Sangma was withdrawn man with few words.

Among his partymen, Captain Sangma has not lost a wee bit of affection and respect. In fact, senior party leaders, including the new Chief Minister, are always alert not to do anything that will hurt their patriarch in any manner.

In keeping with the mood, the new cabinet under Mr. P. A. Sangma has some words of affection for him. In an official resolution adopted at the first formal meeting of the cabinet of Feb 8, Captain Sangma was described as "genuine nationalist" who "effectively articulated the aspirations of the people of the region, particularly those belonging to the scheduled tribes". The cabinet palced on record the distinguished service he has rendered to the state and hoped that he would be available for serving the nation for many more years to come.

Dev defends disturbed area notification

Declaration of entire state of Tripura as a 'disturbed area' enabled voters to exercise their franchise freely easily in the recently concluded assembly election, Minister of State for Communications Santosh Mohan Dev said. Mr. Dev, who was Con-

gress (I)'s campaign manager for the elections told UNI that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gave his decision to this effect instilled confidence among the voters, particularly women, who turned out in large number for the polls.

Apart from this Mr. Gandhi's personal appeal to the women voters swung the outcome of the elections in the party's favour, ending the ten-year Marxist rule, he said.

Mr. Dev, however, made it clear that the army was not deployed near the polling booths as alleged by former Chief Minister Nripen Chakraborty. The army's role was only to prevent extremist elements from disrupting the smooth conduct of the elections held on February 2 he asked how army personnel could be deployed in booths all over these state in such a short span of time.

Mr. Dev said for the first time in ten years, the Congress(I) contested the polls as a united party with the sole purpose of dislodging the Marxist government.

Meghalaya NCC Cadets excel in Delhi

During the recent Republic Day celebrations at New Delhi, two Meghalaya NCC Cadets excelled and were selected as the best from the North Eastern Region, Corporal Gopa Sharma from Laban Bengali Girls High School and Sergeant Dhan Bahadur Thapa, from St Edmund's College were declared the best turned out Cadets.

Company Under Officer Jyoti Wahlang from Lady Kean College and Sergeant Thapa were selected to be part of the Republic Day marching contingent on Raj Path, CUO selected as part of the Guard of Honor at NCC Rally for the Prime Minister.

Sergeant Amrit Marbaniang of Shillong College who had been selected as part of the NCC International Youth Exchange Programme, spent three months in Canada.

Why is Govt stalling the Social Audit Bill?

By Patricia Mukhim

Sometime in 2010, Dr Mukul Sangma who was then the Chief Minister for the first time, initiated the framing of a bill for social auditing of all government programmes, projects and schemes in the State. His contention was that politicians always faced the rough end of the stick for schemes that were poorly implemented or were unnecessarily delayed. In Meghalaya, people have the habit of equating the government with politicians only. Since bureaucrats are faceless and are hardly seen or heard people tend to blame politicians for all the ills of governance.

Accordingly a group of people led by former civil servant and former Vice President IFAD, Mr Phrang Roy and which included academics from NEHU and civil society activists, met several times to come up with a Bill that would have empowered citizens to seek accountability not just from their elected representatives but from the bureaucracy which is actually the implementing agency. The group worked pro-bono and gave their time and energies to study the model of social audits in Andhra Pradesh which is said to be working very efficiently insofar as monitoring of the NREGA is concerned. In Meghalaya too the social audit on NREGA unearthed several irregularities and FIRs were filed against some Rangbah Shnong who could not give a proper account of the implementation of the 100-day employment guarantee scheme. In the case of Meghalaya the fault cannot be laid entirely at the doorstep of the Dorbar Shnong which were roped in to implement the Scheme. They were not capacitated to become implementers and had no training in accounting procedures. At that time the Freedom Project, an NGO played an active role in the social audit of NREGA in Jongksha and adjoining villages. They trained the women of the villages to ask the right questions and get the correct answers from the Village Employment Councils. Some women were threatened by the Rangbah Shnong and office bearers of the Dorbar Shnong but they persisted with their questioning. In

the process the women felt empowered as they could now hold the leaders of the traditional institutions (which are considered holy cows and beyond questioning) accountable. But the men heading an institution that is inherently patriarchal, as it comprises only male members, were not happy with this development. They felt threatened by this new-found power of women. They still feel threatened by "Ka 'iar kynthei" as they commonly refer to women who dabble in politics.

One of the reasons why the Government Committee for drafting a Village Administration Bill headed by former CM, DD Lapang fizzled out is because some women in that Committee demanded equal power sharing in the traditional institutions. Naturally this was seen as sacrilegious especially by those who are loudest in defending the status quo of "tradition." A certain Rangbah Shnong who headed the working committee was one day summoned by the traditionalists and told that he should quit the Committee and go along with the VAB enunciated by the District Council. He developed cold feet and did accordingly. So the Government appointed Committee does not have a draft bill today. But now the Government cannot be accused of drafting a VAB without consulting the stakeholders since one of the major stakeholders (Rangbah Shnong) popped out.

Now coming back to the Social Audit Bill one is tempted to ask Dr Mukul Sangma why he has the jitters now about taking the Bill to the cabinet and sharing it with his cabinet colleagues. Is he waiting for an opportune time? When will that opportune time come? Like Narendra Modi, Dr Mukul Sangma too made many promises of good governance when he first assumed the power of CEO of Meghalaya. He spoke like a CEO and we used to hang on to his every word because we never heard that sort of corporate vocabulary from politicians ruling this state. Most of their speeches were and are boring, pedantic and predictable. It is a pain to have to sit through a meeting and listen to such speeches. Dr Sangma was (at the time) young, dynamic

and a breath of fresh air. We had high hope that he would usher in change in certain sectors of governance. We believed he would come down heavily on cabinet colleagues who were not performing or under-performing. We thought he would haul up officers who did not come up to scratch. Alas! Five years down the line we are back at square one. Perhaps even worse we have slid down a peg or two. I had written in these columns that the roads of Shillong today are as bad as those in Nagaland. Perhaps we are competing with states that have the worst indicators. We have not heard Dr Sangma taking a meeting on Roads and Bridges and pulling up the PWD Minister and his team in that Department! Dr Sangma perhaps feels he does not need the votes or the support of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and that if the MLAs/Ministers who belong to the region don't care a damn about governance in their areas then why should he have sleepless nights over that.

There are some who allege that Dr Mukul Sangma is diverting all development schemes to his constituency of Ampati. I would not like to comment on this 'gossip' unless an RTI proves that gossip to be true. But the point is that a CM cannot treat one part of the state as deserving of his priority and leave the other regions to stew in their juices. This is not what leadership is all about. Bad governance is reeling its ugly head in Meghalaya and we see it in various sectors. We still do not have a Health Policy hence the Health Department is functioning like a rogue elephant where procurement of medicines and equipments has become the only priority and as expected has turned into a scam instead of a life saver.

In Education we see no light at the end of the tunnel. There is no initiative to make education more market oriented and to rejig the outdated curriculum. Skill development in Meghalaya is at a nascent stage. Quite a number of young people are churned out for the service industry but that's not the only skill required. In fact the skills taught

should also be culturally sensitive. Tourism is opening up in Meghalaya and it is important for Dr Sangma's Government to move away from implementing projects to facilitating entrepreneurs who have a passion for the trade. Government has already messed up enough by creating concrete structures in places like Jakrem and Mawlynnong. Those in charge of Tourism have been blinkered by a lack of understanding of what village life is all about. Many of us cringe when we see how the hot springs of Jakrem have been turned into taps. We see consultants roaming the corridors of the state secretariat. Why can't we have the best consultants in tourism if we are paying good money? The Orchid Restaurant in Nongpoh has gone to seed. There is not one good, classy, clean café or dhaba or paid toilet for visitors. One hears that the Bamboo Hut people would be taking over the Nongpoh facility. We hope they meet with visitors' expectations.

So the point of this article is that the citizens of Meghalaya are not brainless dimwits. Many of them have creative and imaginative ideas provided government allows them to participate in the planning process. And because they are enterprising and intelligent they are also the best people to monitor and audit schemes articulated and implemented here. An entrepreneur in Tourism would be best placed to socially audit the implementation of Tourism schemes in Meghalaya and find out exactly where the revenue leakages have occurred or where resources are better spent. Retired doctors can audit health programmes and medicine and equipment procurement etc. A retired engineer can tell us exactly why the roads are so badly constructed.

I am aware that some senior bureaucrats are not happy with the Social Audit Bill and have rejected it outright on the plea that it won't work. They would have said the same about the Right to Information Act too, I am sure. For bureaucrats, knowledge is power and withholding knowledge from the common man is their source of power. Would Dr Sangma bow before that superior might or does he have the interests of the people at heart? He has to take a call on the Social Audit Bill without waiting for people to become adversarial.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Social evils in Tura Town.

Last Sunday (6th Sept) while I attended church a friend informed me that a motor cycle belonging to our pastor had been stolen by unknown persons. Intercessory prayers were made for the forgiveness of the thief/thieves and for blessing him/ them abundantly. This is the second time that the burglar broke into our church compound. Earlier a thief broke open the main door of the church and took away some valuables including money from the offering box. We read in the newspapers that burglaries take place regularly in Tura town. The thieves target churches, school offices and private residences in the dead of night to steal bikes and smaller cars.

On several occasions, I have come in contact with scraps dealers looking for old newspapers in my locality. They don't dare to enter my house because have three ferocious dogs. As a member of the Development Committee and a senior citizen of the locality I have told them not to disturb me time and again because I sell off my old newspapers to the local grocery store. I suspect that these are people who are

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

WHEN VIRBHADRA MET ADANI

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Virbhadra Singh's recent meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's favourite industry boy Gautam Adani in Delhi has raised many an eyebrow. The information was given by former CM Prem Kumar Dhumal's youngest son Arun Singh Thakur on Facebook. He said the Congress leadership, especially vice-president Rahul Gandhi, had been "cursing" the businessman for past several years and told Virbhadra that nobody could "save" him now. The CBI and Income Tax department are probing a disproportionate assets case against Virbhadra. A few days later, the Himachal cabinet refunded Rs 280 crore upfront premium to Adani Power Limited for the power project that had been awarded to another company.

RAHUL PICKS GHULAM NABI OVER JANARDHAN

The Congress Working Committee that met in Delhi on Tuesday may have deferred the date of Rahul Gandhi's coronation to god knows when. But Rahul continues to be the most powerful leader in the Congress, more powerful than even his mother. Sonia will only be the titular head of the party, while Rahul will be the remote control. The first and most visible impact of the CWC and Rahul's powers were evident on the very first day. Going against the traditional way of the CWC briefing, which is generally conducted by the general secretary of the organisation, Rahul jazzed up the whole affair. Dwivedi, who is the general secretary in-charge of the CWC, and who had been doing the briefings of the CWC was conspicuous by his absence. Instead, it was Ghulam Nabi Azad who came to brief. Dwivedi has been sidelined for quite sometime now, particularly when he spoke against the party line on Dalit reservation. He should thank Sonia Gandhi for allowing him to continue as general secretary, but the party has gradually ceased all his powers. It is Rahul Gandhi and his coterie who want him out. He was not even active during the Parliament protests led by Rahul as he refuses to accept Rahul as his leader. Rahul demonstrated his power at the first opportunity he got. It was Azad who came to brief.

MEET LALIT MODI'S DELHI MAN

What is the Samajwadi Party MP Naresh Agarwal's connection with the now infamous Lalit Modi and his family and relatives? If anyone happens to visit Naresh Agarwal's house, most often one would spot two persons hanging around. One is Sunil Gupta - the liaison man of Lalit Modi and his uncle Umesh Modi; and the other is Taj Hasan, the special commissioner of police in the economic wing of the police station at Mandir Marg. The question being asked is: why are these two men permanent fixtures in Naresh Agarwal's house? The buzz in the power circles is that Naresh Agarwal is the man who looks after the interests of Lalit Modi and his near and dear ones in the capital and it is through this special CP Taj Hasan that Agarwal manages things of economic offence for the Modi family. Meanwhile, Naresh Agarwal has admitted that he knows Sunil Gupta for the last 20 years. But has declined that he has anything to do with Taj Hasan. Though visitors to his Tughlaq Lane residence have seen the special CP at his house a number of times, he denies every-

thing. RAHUL SCANS UTTAR PRADESH FOR 2017 POLLS

Although it is clear that Rahul's ascendancy has been put on hold, the race for the Uttar Pradesh PCC is hotting up. The latest to join the race is the erstwhile UPA minister Sri Prakash Jaiswal. Jaiswal met the Congress vice president early this week along with other UP leaders. At the meeting, he tried to pitch in by putting his case strongly. He gave explanations to negate the charges against him. The charges against him are that he was against Rahul and got posters put up in Kanpur, his hometown, that said: "Rahul hatao Priyanka lao." But in his meeting with Rahul, he said he had no knowledge about the people who had put up these posters. Meanwhile, he too, like the present PCC chief Nirmal Khatri, belongs to the caste, which has never voted for the Congress. Jaiswals are of vaish community and the banias in UP are traditionally the RSS BJP supporters. They are basically anti-Congress. Pradeep Mathur, the other strong contender for the post, was heard telling Rahul the Congress could win the elections in UP. He even gave a few points. Since Mulayam is losing in UP and Narendra Modi has lost his magic, the voters are now looking at the Congress and if it goes alone in the state it can easily sweep the elections. All that Rahul should do is to tour the entire state and should make the beginning from Mathura, his hometown.

ASSAM CM, SPEAKER LOCK HORNS

The chief minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi is nervous. After the split in Assam, a tussle of sorts has broken out between CM Gogoi and the speaker Pramod Gogoi over the issue of disqualification. While the speaker is adamant that those MLAs who were busy in the anti party activities and were supporting Hemanta Biswa Sarma should be disqualified, the chief minister Tarun Gogoi is apprehensive. When Rahul Gandhi asked him why the government is not moving to disqualify Sarma's supporting MLAs and those who owe allegiance to him, Gogoi told him that the disqualification would bring in by-elections and if the party loses then it would not send the right signals. The speaker is however adamant on disqualification. Out of the total 75 Congress MLAs, four have been suspended and six have been served show-cause notice.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN

Prithviraj Chavan, the former Congress chief minister of Maharashtra, had his gaddi blown away by the saffron storm. Most Congressmen, however, were delighted by the turn of events. Chavan was not exactly popular with the state leaders. His exit, it was hoped, would breathe life into the party. But thanks to the antics of Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, the leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, the Congress remains a divided house in the state. Vikhe-Patil created a flutter of sorts when he hosted a reception for the Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Maharashtra CM, Devendra Fadnis. Disgruntled Congressmen have also alleged that they have often heard Vikhe-Patil requesting the CM for a private chat in his chamber. Vikhe-Patil's smooth ties with the CM have left many Congressmen red in the face. There are reports that 10 Janpath has also been approached to sort out the problem. Clearly, Chavan's replacement is far from an ideal choice. The party's hunt for an able leader continues in Maharashtra. (IPA)

stealing from the church. I therefore request the local administration to take note of such social evils and to eradicate them once and for all.

Yours etc.,
W G Momin,
Tura.

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

TO THE EDITOR

Ill informed news report

Editor,

Apropos the news item in your esteemed newspaper dated 2nd September, 2015 where it was indicated that walls were broken and grills were missing from the perimeter wall of the Hon'ble Chief Minister's bungalow on Tuesday 1st Sep, 2015, it may kindly be noted that the same are not "broken nor missing," but have been removed to facilitate the cutting of an old rotten tree that had the potential to collapse and cause injuries to the security personnel performing duty at the CM's residence and other individuals residing within the said compound and passers-by. In this regard, the Forest Department was consulted and the said three were brought down by the Forest staff sometime during the last week of August. It was during such time, that a small portion of the wall near the tree had to be broken down and a few iron grills placed on top of the said wall had to be temporarily removed to prevent massive damage of the wall and grills from the falling tree.

The PWD has since been requested to repair the broken portion of the wall and grill and as per communication received from

their end the work on the same will commence as soon as the weather condition permits. Further, it is requested to kindly cross-check with the authority concerned prior to publishing of similar news captions/photographs, etc in future concerning the residence/office of the Hon'ble CM, as some articles/photographs may have adverse ramifications on the security point of view of the CM and his immediate family. Your kind cooperation in this regard would be highly appreciated.

Yours etc.,
S. A. Rynjah, MPS
Addl. Supdt. of Police
(Security),
Meghalaya, Shillong, &
Chief Security Officer,
CM Security, Meghalaya
Police

Indiscriminate intrusion

Editor,

On several occasions, through this news daily, one has pointed out the inconveniences faced by citizens due to indiscriminate intrusion by hawkers who set up their wares in every vacant space, footpaths and public place. Be it Police Bazar, Motphran, Civil Hospital, or for that matter any footpath or open space, hawkers are seen opening shops and making the movement of people difficult. At times pedestrians, hawkers, vehicles all seem to be colliding

"People who get nostalgic about childhood were obviously never children."

—Calvin and Hobbes

The Shillong Times

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Heat on Khaplang

THE National Investigation Agency (NIA) has declared a cash reward for information on S.S Khaplang who has been included in a list of wanted terrorists. The list includes Lashkar-e-Taiba leaders Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ul-Rehman- Lakhwi. It comprises 38 banned organizations. The NIA's decision comes 3 months after a militant ambush killed 18 soldiers in Manipur on June 4. The Khaplang faction had also unilaterally walked out of a 14 year old cease fire agreement with the Centre. Furthermore, the faction refused to accept the pact made between the NSCN (IM) led by T. Muivah and the Centre. Naga Civil Society Groups were upset over the blow to peace efforts.

It is felt that the NIA has tried to pre-empt a meeting between the Khaplang group and a delegation from a traditional body, Naga Hoho and the Eastern Nagaland People's Organization, which is aimed at bringing the NSCN (K) into a cease fire agreement. The rebel group has a peace pact with the Myanmar government. It is however said that the NIA's announcement might end up unsettling the Naga political issue. Even the NSCN (IM) has criticized the latest move. A senior leader of the organization said that S.S Khaplang and his group were also fighting for the people and could not be treated as terrorists. But this view is hardly tenable. The NSCN (K) has in the past granted asylum to many Manipur rebel groups and the Paresh Barua- led ULFA faction as well as the NDFB (Songbijit) faction which are responsible for terror acts in Assam.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1988

Rs. 130 crore for 88-89 State Plan

The Planning Commission today approved an allocation of Rs. 130 crore for the 1988-89 annual plan of Meghalaya compared to Rs. 110 crore for the current financial year.

This was decided at meeting between Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr. P. A. Sangma and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Mr. P. Shiv Shanker here.

Minister of State for Planning Mr. Sukh Ram, Meghalaya Community Development Minister. R. C. Laloo, State Planning Board chairman Mr. D. D. Pugh, Planning Commission members Mr. Abid Hussain and Mr. Hiten Bhaya, Planning Secretary Mr. H. S. Baujal and Meghalaya Chief Secretary Mr. V. Ramakrishna also participated in the deliberations. Mr. Sangma said his Government would give top priority to the development of agriculture, horticulture rural water supply schemes and construction of roads in the State.

Speaking to newsmen after finalizing the plan, he said education, animal husbandry and communications would also be treated as priority sectors under the plan.

Woman jumps from running train, survives

A woman who jumped off a running train and fell into the Ernakulam backwaters but miraculously "floated" safely to the shore.

Police, who were alerted by local people about a "dead body" floating in the backwaters on Wednesday evening, fished out the woman in an unconscious state.

The 45-year old woman, who has set out to visit her daughter at Kottayam, Padi got into the wrong train. When she realized her mistake she jumped out of the train.

She has been admitted to the general hospital here.

Police said the woman may have "floated" because she fell into some flossam and weeds which acted as a raft.

Indian film enters Berlin Festival Competition

Buddhadeb Dasgupta's "Phera" and thirty other films from around the world are in the running for the golden and silver "Berlin Bears" at the 38th Berlin Film Festival.

After a seven-year absence from the competition section of the festival, India is participating this year as the festival throws its spotlight on "cinema in India."

Thirteen other Indian movies are to be screened in the experimental and Avant Garde section of the current festival.

The Americans too are coming to the festival in full strength with eight movies in the main festival, including three in the competition section.

Richard Attenborough's "cry of freedom" about popular black leader Veve Biko, who was tortured to death by South African police in 1975, is expected to be the most important political film at the festival.

Tripura MLAs take oath

The newly elected members of the Tripura State Assembly today took oath at a simple ceremony at the lobby of the Assembly building.

Pro-tem Speaker Rasik Lal Roy administered the oath to the members who included Chief Minister Sudhir Ranjan Majumder.

While a few members belonging to tribal community took oath in Kokborok, the principal language of the tribes in the State, the rest took oath in Bengali.

Former Chief Minister Nripen Chakraborty and Deputy Chief Minister Dasarath Dev were among the opposition Left Front leaders who were administered oath today. Notable among the absentees were former Maharani of Tripura Bibhu Kumari Devi and Sarajit Datta of the Congress (I).

Khasi Peoples' Parliament: 'Dorbar Ri'

By Fabian Lyngdoh

As far as my knowledge goes there is no tradition among the Khasis pertaining to a 'Dorbar Ri' (People's Parliament) to deliberate issues concerning the whole tribe, but there was only a mythological dorbar in which not only human beings but also animals, including u Thlen (serpent) attended and participated on equal terms with men. As to the need for unity and regulation of the tribe as a whole, sufficiently powerful religious and moral codes and social norms have been devised and operated through the kur (clan) and other social institutions. The highest political dorbar among the Khasis is the dorbar hima in each and every hima. That is why the signing of the Instrument of Accession by the President of the Federation of the Khasi States on the 8th August, 1947 had no significance at all until each of the chiefs of the Khasi States signed it individually on behalf of their own respective States.

After independence of India, new constitutional provisions were made in the form of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution for the administration of tribal areas in the then State of Assam. The Sixth Schedule provides for protection of traditional leadership institutions and land management systems; it guarantees preservation of traditional customs, laws and institutions of the tribal societies under the regulation and control of Autonomous District Councils. It was assumed that through such protective mechanisms and the constitutional mandate to make laws and implement them in accordance with the Constitution of India, the tribes would be able to protect their customs and traditions and would also develop in their own way and at their own pace. The 'White Paper on Indian States' published by the Ministry of States, Government of India, declares that it was considered desirable to preserve some of the tribal traditions and customs of the Khasi States; so accordingly, under the Constitution of India the Khasi States have been included in the Sixth Schedule.

In the year 1950, the

Khasi States were merged with the State of Assam, and by the merger the Khasi chiefs lost whatever ruling power they had over the territories under them, while on the other hand, large measure of local autonomy has been conceded to the District Council. Consequently, the United Khasi-Jaintia Autonomous District Council (UKJHADC) came into being on the 27th June, 1952. The traditional chiefs of the himas/elakas are to continue as usual but subject to the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. The District Council passed a law in 1959 to regulate the appointments and successions of chiefs and headmen as well as their removal and suspension, and all orders passed by the Council in these regards are final. Thence forward, the chiefs are to carry out all the orders issued to them from time to time by the District Council. It was also provided that the chiefs should conduct themselves in accordance with the established customs and usages approved by the District Council and in accordance with the rules, laws and regulations that the District Council may issue from time to time. On the 1st December, 1964, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was bifurcated and the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was created not on grounds of distinct ethnic identity, but for administrative expediency.

For the first time in the history of the Hynniew Trep tribe, a People's Parliament for the whole tribe was constituted on 27th June, 1952, in the form of an Autonomous District Council. This is the constitutional 'Dorbar Ri' (People's Parliament) of the Khasis which is legally authorised to protect and regulate the traditional institutions in all 'ki hima' under its jurisdiction, not by the authority of selective clans, but by the authority of the jaidynriew (tribe) through the elected representatives of the people. Hence, the District Council is not a foreign authority, but a Khasi 'Dorbar Ri'. There was no traditional 'Dorbar Ri' among the Khasis in the past, and there can be no other 'Dorbar Ri' in the present except the Autonomous District Council.

At present in the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council there are twenty nine elected representatives and one member nominated by the State Government who are authorised by law to deliberate and pass resolutions on issues pertaining to the interests of the tribe. In the KHADC for example, all the inhabitants of the East Khasi Hills District, Ri Bhoi District, West Khasi Hills District, and South West Khasi Hills District are represented in this 'Dorbar Ri' by their respective MDCs.

The District Council was constituted precisely for balancing the interests of the tribe with the basic constitutional tenets of the Indian Republic. It is the doorway through which the Khasi traditional institutions can have a legitimate link with the Indian Republic, and it is also the doorway through which the Indian Republic can legitimately accommodate the Khasi traditional institutions. No other agency can stand as a legitimate doorway to link the Indian Republic with the Khasi tribe other than the District Council. The Chief Executive Member (CEM) is the leader of this honourable 'Dorbar Ri' and he has a great responsibility towards fulfilling the given mandate.

A casual gathering of few thousand people without 'ka sad ka sunon' (perpetual succession), in any private or public place cannot make a 'Dorbar Ri'. One MDC represents and deliberates on behalf of not less than twenty thousand citizens in the KHADC. It is a foolish ignorance for anyone to consider a casual crowd listening to the lectures of few individual speakers at the podium as a 'Dorbar Ri'. For a CEM of the District Council to convene such a casual gathering and to pass political resolutions outside the District Council is an insult not only to the honour and dignity of the Autonomous District Council, but it is also an insult to his colleagues who represent thousands of citizens from their respective constituencies. Resolutions passed by such a gathering, even though it is convened by

the CEM of the District Council, are worth not more than the resolutions of ordinary NGOs.

Constitutionally, the Grand Council of Chiefs and the Federation of Khasi States are only NGOs, and their meetings cannot be called 'Dorbar Ri,' and their resolutions cannot have legal authority. Constitutionally the Khasi States have become subordinate bodies of the District Council which is a real constitutional 'Dorbar Ri.' Hence to treat the meetings of a non-statutory association of syiems and sirdars as a 'Dorbar Ri' is an insult to the constitutional status and dignity of the District Council. The present Khasi chiefs are not representing the people, not even their own clans. It seems that the Syiem of Hima Myllem was not deputed by his own clan, and does not represent his clan as used to be the Khasi tradition, and as still being practised in Hima Khyrim. The syiems today can be elected by a majority of the myntris whether they have the general will of their clans or not. This is a new tradition established by the British. According to the Khasi tradition, the jait syiem is appointed by ki bakhrav, and can be removed by ki bakhrav, but the person who represents the jait syiem as a syiem in the dorbar is deputed by the jait syiem itself according to the line of ka sad ka sunon, and ki bakhrav have nothing to interfere unless there are serious reasons to do so. I do not mean to point out whether the traditional or the British system is better, but just to point out the originality of the tradition.

If the MDCs feel that their resolutions in the House need to be authenticated by a crowd, then they are not the representatives of the people. If the people, including the MDCs cannot realize, or refuse to recognize the constitutional status and dignity of the Autonomous District Council as a legitimate 'Dorbar Ri,' in which every Khasi inhabitant of the 'Ri Khasi' is represented by his or her MDC, and if the meetings of a casual crowd in market places and playgrounds are still preferred and given more importance than to the sessions of the Council, then it is really the time to abolish the District Council. The wise say that 'if everybody says you are an ass, then it is the time to bray.'

TO THE EDITOR

Pathetic roads!

Editor,

The pathetic road construction by PWD contractors along National Highway 44 which connects Shillong to Jowai onwards speaks volumes of the disgusting practices inherent in the PWD. People curiously remark about the kind of road engineers and monitoring mechanism that the department has. Unfortunately we all know that none of the contractors have any sense about what road construction is all about. It is disgraceful that the PWD Minister who is a contractor has failed to monitor and call for accountability within his own Department, yet we want tourists to visit this state amidst the 'rock and roll' roads that greet them. Perhaps a PIL is the only route for putting the PWD in its place.

Yours etc...

Dominic S. Wankhar

Shillong -3

Remembering those without Hope!

Editor

As I was scanning the papers this morning, various news articles on the 'World Suicide Prevention Day' caught my attention and since the global topic of 'suicide' and 'awareness' seem to be trending on the internet as well, I am reminded of a certain personal incident I experienced a few years back.

Coming from a personal perspective, as someone who has lost an integral part of one's life to suicide, reality is painful. I was in my teens when I had to face this bitter reality. They say when a person dies they take a part of you with them but when someone takes their own life away, they rob everything from you. What remains is just hurt, bitterness and guilt, a huge amount of guilt. For someone so young to have taken this gruesome step was unacceptable. For someone so young to be sent to a rehab facility, and yet, commit this step while still under rehabilitation is disheartening. It was baffling for a 19 year old to understand these things and although counsellors have tried to give their reasons, they've failed to answer one basic question, "How could someone, anyone, be without HOPE?"

I recently came across an article on identifying someone who suffers from 'Soul Loss', a concept foreign to me but as I go deep into the subject I've come to realise

that probably, people with suicidal intentions, or as I would put it, people without HOPE suffer from Soul Loss. Now, 'Soul Loss' is defined by the article as a loss of meaning, direction, purpose, a disconnect with one's soul. It says the soul connects us innately, to our own values and essence and the values and essence of others too. I've come to understand that these value systems hold us integrally as a person, they bind elements necessary for our soul to persist, for it to survive, against all odds. Though the article gives its insights on the idea of not treating soul loss with pain medication or treating it as mental illness (as may have been then and still diagnosed today), it also says that this concept is sadly however not applied globally.

As someone who has gone through such a terrible episode, I feel there's so much that needs to be done in suicide prevention and a single-day awareness is not really enough. With suicide and depression rates going up a notch (or two) every year, I think awareness should be part of the educational curriculum. Shouldn't we be spreading awareness on how to help someone who is showing signs as such?

Shouldn't we counsel those who've lost someone on how to cope with such a loss? Shouldn't we have facilities like a call centre or a care centre to treat such broken souls or to help those on the verge of such reckless actions?!

I think it all comes down to one fundamental truth... We cannot treat such people with clinical drugs but we can help them get through it by being there for them. It takes love, compassion and a lot of sacrifice but doesn't the idea of mending someone's soul sound amazing? As the world evolves into understanding and hopefully accepting this foreign concept, I do certainly believe that someday, people can acquire such care facilities free of costs wherein they are not kept in isolation, not discriminated, not treated with clinical drugs but treated with 3 vital harmless drugs: Love, Care and Compassion.

Perhaps, we are yet to discover that the cure to all this is not Science but LOVE after all.

Yours etc.,
Gladiola Nongrum
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.

India should take advantage of SCO membership

Big scope for collaboration in oil resources

By Nitya Chakraborty

The next summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is scheduled at Tashkent in the middle of 2016 with India and Pakistan joining as full members of this emerging powerful regional grouping. India is now advantageously placed to pursue its programmes at both political and economic levels at the SCO forum which has got six members- China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, apart from the two new members India and Pakistan. The last summit at Ufa in Russian Federation in July this year set the stage for the entry of India and Pakistan to the SCO after a long wait as observers and 2016 summit opens up immense opportunities to India to expand its economic and trade relations with the four central Asian countries apart from Russia and China.

Significantly, it was Russian President Vladimir Putin who gave full backing to the new membership and in his summing up remarks he said that the upcoming accession of India and Pakistan into the SCO, would help the organization to face current challenges and threats to the security in the region. For the first time in its history since the setting up in 2001, the SCO opened its doors for new members. The anxiety of the Russian and Chinese leaders to broaden the SCO forum and make it more representative is clear from the fact that other countries of the region, were also encouraged by upgrading their status. For instance, Belarus's status has been raised to an observer from earlier dialogue partner and four more countries- Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Armenia and Nepal have been given the status of dialogue partners.

That way the expansion of the SCO forum has taken note of the latest developments in the region and the efforts have been to accommodate the countries in the region which can play an useful role in transformation of the Eurasian continent into a region of peace and stability while ensuring economic progress and cooperation. Iran has also evinced interest in membership and Russia has shown interest in Iran but indications suggest that at the 2016 summit, this may not be possible and Iran has to wait for some more time. However, Iran has emerged as a very important player in the region and both Russia and China are interested in involving Iran in the activities of the SCO. That way, the initiative can be taken at the Tashkent summit for taking Iran as a dialogue partner.

The SCO has strict membership rules for new members. The SCO at its 2010 summit approved rules on accepting new members. According to the rules, the SCO new members must be Eurasian nations, have diplomatic relations with all current member states and have either observer or dialogue partner status. However, the rules stipulate that the would be member countries must not be subject to UN sanctions and not be involved in any armed conflict. That way, it will take some more time for Iran to be considered for SCO membership as per rules though the major members are interested in Iran.

Though both China and Russia are at pains to explain that SCO is not a par-

allel block of the non west countries having military ambitions, Russian President Putin is in favour of giving the SCO a pan Asian dimension including Iran and once Iran is included, the grouping will get additional muscle in terms of both economic and military power. Interestingly, the upcoming entry of India and Pakistan in SCO is also set to change the balance of power in the SCO, the organization dominated by China to a great extent. The present economic crisis in China may compel China to operate at a low key and this may help India in focusing on the issues which are of urgent importance to the economy and security of the country.

For India, SCO membership offers the country a big opportunity to have a bigger say on issues like combating terrorism and participation in major oil and gas projects in central Asia. India is having good relations with the central Asian countries and these have been further strengthened after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in July this year. The full membership of SCO will enable India to deepen the economic relations with these four countries of central Asia who are full members of SCO.

Both China and Russia have invested heavily in the resources rich region of central Asia. India is also talking with a number of CA countries for investment in oil and gas fields. The SCO Business Council, Interbank Consortium and the Energy Club are steering the course of collaboration and cooperation among the member states of SCO. India will get full facilities after 2016 and that will help India in getting favourable terms from the resources rich central Asian states. Though the global oil prices are low at present, and India is saving a lot of foreign exchange these days due to cheap imports, this situation may not last long and India has to work for its energy security which means arranging secured oil production from the oil fields where it will have stake.

Russian President Putin is working for a massive expansion in connectivity in the region and he has specially mentioned linking Baikal Amur mainline TransSiberian railroad with Western China - Europe Transport Corridor. Simultaneously, Chinese President has underlined the need for Old Silk Road project which has got big interest for India. Following the setting up of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank of BRICS, the funds will be available for big projects in the region and the Indian companies can take advantage of that by bidding for major projects in the region. SCO membership may step up business opportunities as SCO and BRICS will act in unison and India can help many developing countries in setting up projects with aid from AIB or NDB.

That way, SCO membership is a major opportunity for India and India has to take full advantage of this delayed membership by interacting with the other full members in a decisive manner so that India's political and economic interests are served best. The global situation is also favouring India much more compared to the other Asian countries and this opportunity should not be allowed to be wasted. (IPA)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career options in Indian medicine

Many students and in fact parents of many students want their sons or daughter to become doctors in life. Whenever we talk about doctors the first thing that comes to our mind is MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) doctors. In spite of preparing for different medical entrances many students fail to crack entrance and get admitted into medical colleges. Some people may afford the fee of private colleges but poor people can't think of the same easily. Like MBBS doctors there are traditional Indian Medicine system which includes Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, etc. There would be demand in traditional medicine as they have less side effect. People are becoming more aware on health and life-style which would increase the demand of Indian medicinal system. Students may try to join courses related to these systems and make their future bright. Following are the Indian Medicine -

Ayurveda: Ayurveda means "the science of life" (ayur means "life" and veda means "science" in Sanskrit). Ayurveda is a discipline of the upaveda or "auxiliary knowledge" in Vedic tradition. Ayurveda has its prime origin from Atharva-Veda and apart as a supplement of the Rig-Veda. Dhanvantari is worshipped as the God of Ayurveda. The aim of this system is to prevent illness, heal the sick and preserve life. The Ayurveda has its origins from the India and extended its wings in various parts of the world.

Unani: Unani-tibb or Unani Medicine also spelled Yunani Medicine (Arabic, Hindustani, Pashto and Persian) is a form of traditional medicine practiced in middle-east & south-Asian countries. It refers to a tradition of Graeco-Arabic medicine, which is based on the teachings of Greek physician Hippocrates and Roman physician Galen, and developed into an elaborate medical system in middle age era by Arabian and Persian physicians, such as Rhazes (al-Razi), Avicenna (Ibn Sena), Al-Zahrawi, and Ibn Nafis. Unani medicine first arrived in India around 12th or 13th century. The Unani System of Medicine is included in the Central Council of Indian Medicine as per IMCC, Act 1970.

Siddha: "Siddhargal" or Siddhars were the premier scientists of ancient days. Siddhars, mainly from Southern India, in the state of Tamil Nadu laid the foundation for Siddha system of medicine. Siddhars were spiritual adepts who possessed the ashta siddhis.

Sowa Rigpa: It is a centuries-old traditional medical system that employs a complex approach to diagnosis, incorporating techniques such as pulse analysis and urinalysis, and utilizes behaviour and dietary modification, medicines composed of natural materials (e.g., herbs and minerals) and physical therapies to treat illness. The Sowa Rigpa System of Medicine is included in the Central Council of Indian Medicine from the year 2012 as per Gazette Notification No. 2345 dated 16.12.2011.

Central Council of Indian Medicine: The Central Council of Indian Medicine is the statutory body constituted under the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970 vide gazette notification extraordinary part (ii) section 3(ii) dated 10.8.71. Since its establishment in 1971, the Central Council has been framing on and implementing various regulations including the Curricula and Syllabii in Indian Systems of Medicine viz. Ayurved, Siddha and Unani Tibb at Undergraduate and Post-graduate level. Now, all the Colleges of Indian Systems of Medicine are affiliated to various Universities in the Country. These Colleges are following the minimum standards of education and Curricula and Syllabii, prescribed by Central Council. We shall more about this in our forthcoming editions.

(For further details and career information interested students/individuals may call 98640 55558 or feedback at bkranjan@gmail.com).

By Debdoot Das

Shaking off the age-old perception that it is a game of the elite and not suited to Indian climes, rugby seems to be slowly getting a foothold in the country and may well be on course to soon emerge as a popular sport for the masses.

Rugby aficionados say the game introduced by the British masters of colonial India in the late 19th century is gradually spreading to tier-II cities and even rural areas.

"The last few years have been very good in terms of development, there's been quite a lot. Earlier it was restricted to the major metros but now it has spread to tier-II cities and into rural India also. So we have about 22/23 states actively playing rugby," Nasser Hussain, general manager of Rugby India, the game's apex body in the country, said.

Already there are around 40,000 rugby players, and the number is set to increase, specially after the game's introduction in the schools through the School Games Federation of India (SGFI).

"A lot of the players are school kids. It was introduced last year in the School Games Federation Of India (SGFI), with which close to 90 to 95 percent of the country's schools are registered," Hussain said.

A look back shows Indian rugby is steeped in history.

The earliest mention of rugby in India can be traced to a couple of matches played in erstwhile Calcutta and Madras during the visit of the Royal Navy frigate HMS Galatea 1871. The first recorded match was played on Christmas day 1872, at Calcutta Football Club (CFC) between England and a combined team of Scotland, Ire-



Rugby catching popular imagination

land and Wales, according to rugby's equivalent of the FA Cup.

RFU, however, opted to present the Calcutta Cup to the winners of the annual contest between England and Scotland. And the tradition continues till date.

When the game revived in India, the RFU reciprocated by presenting to the CFC (now called CFC - Calcutta Cricket and Football Club) in 1924 an exact replica of the Calcutta Cup.

This tourney was titled 'The All India & South Asia Rugby Cup' and has since been played.

Post-independence, the Indian Rugby Football Union was formed in 1968. Thirty-one years later, it got membership to the sport's international governing body - the International Rugby Board (IRB).

India still, however, doesn't have a ground dedicated to rugby. But

Hussain, also a former India captain, said they are content sharing the grounds with other sports.

"We do not have a dedicated rugby field. But we are not looking for it either. There's no need for a dedicated ground, there's not so much training that we have to use it 365 days a year."

India recently hosted a pre-qualifier for the Olympics at Chennai's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. "It's a football field used for the Indian Super League (ISL) and the I-League. Any football field would be ok for a rugby tournament," Hussain said.

Though leagues like the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Pro Kabaddi League have been stunning successes in India, Hussain said their first priority is to create awareness and reach out to the masses before jumping into such a venture.

"We are in discussions. Something is in the pipeline, though nothing concrete as yet, but we do not want to jump into it. If you look at it, besides cricket, kabaddi was a success and football debatable. The other sports did not take off," he said.

"We would rather look at a slow, gradual growth rather than something that happens overnight."

Elaborating on the 'how to get to the masses' strategy, Hussain said India is implementing the 'get into rugby programme' that has been initiated globally. "We are going out to most of the schools and districts and states where the sport is new."

The Rugby India board has decided to pump in money for development rather than splurging on marketing or promotions, he said and hoped the viewership generated from the Rugby World Cup later this year can be leveraged and "tied to the development of the sport".

Another challenge is to draw sponsors, despite rugby's huge following as one of the biggest sports in the world. "It is surprising a lot of corporates support rugby globally, but when it comes to India they don't acknowledge it."

With rugby set to be part of Olympics next year, the authorities are looking for a long-term partnership rather than "just a short add on sort of thing".

(The writer can be contacted at debdoot.d@ians.in)



the Rugby India website. The match proved so popular that it was repeated a week later.

However, the game was on its decline in India by 1877, and CFC members decided to close down the club. But to immortalise its name, they withdrew all the money from the bank in the form of silver coins, melted it and presented a trophy of high workmanship called the Calcutta Cup to the game's international parent body - Rugby Football Union (RFU) - for awarding the winners of

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'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambani

Sunday, September 13, 2015

New beginnings are in the offing as there is a New Moon on your solar return chart. Your creativity would be peaking which will open you to novel vistas and areas. This phase helps you bring forth innovations with a new found clarity of thought and you would be able to garner support for your ideas. Domestic projects that provide an outlet for your creativity will be more appealing now. You could get emotional at times try and remain objective specially when taking decisions. Romance is highlighted and you would be at a special point in your relationship ready to make a long term commitment. Synergy and cooperation are available to you in the family. **Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

This phase brings excellent results towards personal growth. A personal relationship has the qualities of love, balance and freedom something that you have been searching for. You do not need to over analyze personal relationships but rather respond with your heart: as a new understanding blended with maturity develops around you at home and at work. Those in sports, law and justice would benefit from this planetary alignment as they are infused with positive energy and gain recognition for their talents and hard work. **Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

This phase promises communication and intimacy with loved ones and family. You focus on enjoying romance, and having fun, as you express yourself creatively. Your attention turns to domestic matters and towards building, renovation, decorating and purchase of household goods for your home which figures strongly now. Personal relationships are warm and comfortable as you spend wonderful time with your family. Social, romantic or financial opportunities arise this week. Avoid arguments and confrontations with senior colleagues and those in authority. This can also produce an event that requires you to take charge and show your responsible side. You feel fresh and re-energized after a long walk or light exercises. **Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

Favorable results in communications, finances, and family and investments related matters are on the cards. You successfully perform tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony with people around you. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored. You instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. You come across as especially agreeable and your good nature is bound to attract some attention. Take care of your health and adopt a regular routine of healthy eating to avoid stomach disorders. **Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

You would attend to children, family and loved ones with devotion and care. You feel emotionally attached with loved ones and family members. It is time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and those with similar interests and hobbies. It's time to get in touch with exactly what pleasures and comforts you. Short romantic trips elevate you and you enjoy the company of your loved ones this week. You are ready to perform and express yourself creatively and you would interact with people in business and this brings good results and monetary gains. This is a very significant period, when you are inspired creatively and emotionally. **Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

This is going to be an adventurous phase for you. It is the time to turn your attention to your creations, love affair, children, and hobbies. Pleasure and amusement play an important role in your search for freedom of self-expression now. An overseas trip brings new opportunities and chances are you may find yourself in a new atmosphere or a new environment than usual. You take overseas projects in hand and enhance your funds from them. You exhibit individualism and brilliance in handling business ventures and collaborations. **Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**

This period brings joy, understanding and harmony in personal and professional relationships. It's a good time to travel, learn and do things that you normally don't do. It's a time of creativity, drama, and passion. You are more communicative and busy than usual and this boosts your confidence level too. Remember, domestic relations cannot be resolved through discussion and analysis alone but through love, acceptance and freedom. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

The planetary configuration brings a pleasant atmosphere at work and you enjoy the company of your loved ones. You express yourself with charm and grace, whether it's through what you say or what you write. You instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. In fact, it's a great time to open up conversations, as you are more rational when it comes to personal matters now.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This period would bring favorable results in domestic and professional life. You might make short frequent trips and visiting religious places. Communications too is highlighted. Your beloved one would be supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships and feel more comfortable. This is the best time to use your technical skills as this promotes your business and career prospects. There may be a development of romance at your work place.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

This period augments your professional prospects as you communicate cleverly and interact in more positive way with people around. Your romantic affair gives you a big boost of confidence, and your personal magnetism runs high. You express true feelings, ideas and plans without being afraid of consequences and try to please your loved one. You enjoy every moment, whatever it brings and follow your truth and intuition to feel more integrated with your loved one. You tend to get mentally stressed and anxious causing health problems; detach yourself from problems and view them from a different perspective. Meditation and daily prayers would help to overcome from the recently generated problems.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

People notice and admire you for your pleasant and cheerful personality and this brings financial growth. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for the planetary placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits. Problems in your life may be overcome by bravery, self-assertion, and directness. You will have the ability to build on financial and monetary pursuits and good returns from overseas business are on the cards. You have to be very careful and try to be friendly, cooperative and helpful to resolve the issues related to your married life. You need to conserve health and energy to meet domestic responsibility.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

This period may put on lot of pressure on you. A positive and creative approach brings gain and resolution in old conflicts and work situations. You need to view professional and business problems from a balanced perspective. Draw from past experience and get on with your life rather than getting in the quagmire of repeating old patterns. Emotive issues can crop up. However later on the dust will settle down and you will look ahead with a lot of hope. This is a time to do what you can to build trust in your family life and a strong foundation within yourself. It's a great time to open up conversations with loved ones, when it comes to matters related to love, family and romance.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

In this phase money and domestic issues will take centre stage. Your main concentration would be to make domestic relationships and the home environment harmonious and peaceful. You are proud of your ideas, and very good at expressing them smoothly to family members. You tend to entertain them with your conversation and your sense of humor. There is strength in your feelings of love and the power of attraction, which may open the door to a new romantic relationship. You are feeling inspired creatively and romantically and you express your love quite openly now. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional and your ideas are original and progressive when it comes to professional growth. You are more likely to pay closer attention to your physical appearance and mannerisms, aiming to improve and enhance your image.

Portraying fourth estate

(Contd from P-VI) to write a column about a fictitious do-gooder she names "Azaad" because she anticipates getting fired by the new editor.

The column becomes famous and the circulation jumps so readers want to see Azaad in flesh-and-blood. She then must find a man who would fit into the image of Azaad. She chances upon a tramp from nowhere and coerces him into role-playing. The film offers an unusual take on journalism. The columnist Suhasini has no clue that the editor (Manohar Singh) is using her and Azaad to become the dictatorial PM one day.

Madhur Bhandarkar's Page 3 (2005) is an excellent example of this scenario - the good, bad and the ugly. One reason could be that from a print media which dominated the scene till well into the late 1980s, the journalist in Bollywood is today largely a TV talking head. With mushrooming channels (many reportedly suffering huge losses) the competition to get there first often means throwing ethical standards to the wind.

Although there are many current issues affecting the industry, such as the struggle between print and online media, few films have shed realistic light on journalists and the profession.

Madras Cafe (2013) directed by Shoojit Sircar is a more realistic portrayal of the profession. It is perhaps the only film in recent times to feature a war correspondent. The film is set in the late 1980s and early '90s, during the Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war followed by the assassination of then-PM. Rajiv Gandhi.

Major Vikram Singh (John Abraham) is an Indian Army Special Officer appointed by RAW to head covert operations in Jaffna shortly following the Indian peace-keeping force's forced withdrawal from the city. During his investigation, he meets Jaya Sahni (Nargis Fakhri), a London-

based British war correspondent, who wants to investigate the truth about the civil war. The two uncover a conspiracy to assassinate 'a former Indian prime minister'.

Jaya is a no-nonsense, committed war correspondent assigned to cover the Sri Lankan civil disturbances. As she joins in the investigation where Vikram has disguised himself as a journalist, there is a sharing of views but no romance, thankfully, rather admiration between two professionals for each other.

No One Killed Jessica (2011) adapted from the true story of the brutal murder of Jessica Lal in a Delhi bar demonstrates the brass reality of a television anchor played with hard-hitting sharpness by Rani Mukherjee.

One can observe that in recent years on celluloid stories from Bollywood at least, the poorly paid, ill-dressed, paan-chewing jholawalla hack has morphed into a slick, loud-mouthed, man or woman, some of them even belonging to the 'system', in keeping with the changing morals of real life ideology.

The media plays an important role of functioning as a communication line with the masses. The ideas presented in journalism films reach a mass audience and can influence viewers' perception of the media to some degree. The media is constantly evolving, and as the industry continues to change, so too will perhaps the image of journalists in film.(TWF)



"The best thing to give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity."

—Francis Maitland Balfour

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Education Policy

UNION HRD minister Smriti Irani has said that the Centre would settle on the new national educational policy only after taking into account the views of all state governments, academicians and child specialists. She is to be complimented on her democratic attitude. In the recent past she had been adopting a somewhat dictatorial attitude on education emphasizing the RSS point of view. All state governments have been requested to forward their views in writing and then her ministry will be in a position to formulate a comprehensive policy. There is a demand to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act to enable yearly examinations and detention of poor performers. The first part of the new education policy will be out in December. The HRD minister will visit certain institutes across the country to assess the needs of parents and students before she draws up a pan-Indian education policy which will take into consideration the federal structure of the Indian government.

It may be recalled that Rajiv Gandhi had drawn up a new education policy but it did not create a new system. Technological inputs suggested by experts like Sam Pitroda had not borne fruit on Indian soil. However, it is good that Irani has taken a pragmatic stand. She has however to shed her anti-West bias. Underrating western knowledge will be retrogressive. It is all very well to revive the glory of Sanskrit but discarding western knowledge through English will make education unemployable. Infrastructure is of course the key element in the proposed setting up of new colleges and university campuses.

LOOKING BACK

February 14, 1988

Shillong Tura helicopter service from March 1 likely

Meghalaya Chief Minister Purno Sangma has said that a helicopter service between Shillong and Tura is likely to be introduced from March 1 next.

He told the correspondent here today that he had already taken up the matter with the Helicopter Corporation of India for an expeditious action in typing up all loose ends of the scheme.

The Corporation is presently working out the broad details, including the airfare per passenger.

The Shillong-Tura, Guwahati-Shillong flight works out to Rs 700 per passenger one way. The fare will be subsidized by the Union Home Minister and the State Govt by about 50%, Mr. Sangma said.

According to the arrangements, the chopper will be stationed at Shillong and refueling will be done at Guwahati. Each flight will carry an optimum load of 17 passengers.

Heroin worth Rs 3.5 Crores recovered in Delhi

The Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB) officials have recovered 3,186 kg of white heroin worth Rs 3.5 crores in the international market from a commercial office in South Delhi.

An NCB spokesman said today that with the help of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence Bureau two people had been arrested in this connection under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act while B. D. Tandon from whose office in Nehru Place

the narcotic was recovered, jumped from the balcony of his office during interrogation Tandon was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Science where he succumbed to injuries this afternoon.

"Indira Gandhi best Indian Political leader."

Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the best Indian political leader in the post-independence period while Mr. V. P. Singh is the best alternative to Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, according to a survey.

The survey, conducted in eight cities and towns in the country, showed that 56 per cent of the 1010 respondent supported the "Dynastic rule of the Nehru Gandhi family".

The survey was conducted by the Marketing and Research Group MARG on behalf of monthly magazine "Gentleman", on four themes Politics, economy, society, and the future.

While the Soviet Union is the most liked country Pakistan is the most disliked. Drug addiction is seen as the most serious social problem facing India.

On the future, a majority of those interviewed said by 2000 A.D, there would be a nuclear war. India would become a global power, and its population will exceed one billion. While the gap between the rich and poor will widen, the next generation will have more opportunities and a better future, the respondents said.

Favoritism in appointment to government jobs

By H H Mohrmen

I empathize with the youths who had cleared the test for the post of Gram Sevikas conducted by the District Selection Committee but were not appointed. Because of that the young men and women had to unnecessarily suffer for no fault of theirs. The youths had protested and even went for a hunger strike to demand their rights. Unfortunately they had to resign to their fates and all their efforts to clear the DSC test and all the agitations they had endured has gone in vain.

They youths gave up the fight for their rights when the Minister in Charge, Community and Rural Development citing a Supreme Court judgment on a special leave petition in the case of Arup Das and others versus the State of Assam and others of January 27, 2012 as a reason for the government not being able to appoint them. But the fact is that there is also another side to the story. In fact there is more to the appointment in the government departments than meets the eye.

The ruling categorically states that the District Selection Committees (DSC) and Public Service Commission (PSC) should not make any recommendations for appointment beyond the number of posts made public in the advertisement. Acting on the judgment the Commissioner and Secretary to the government of Meghalaya, Personnel and Administrative Reforms (B) Department as per letter No: PE (AR) 17/2012/27 dated Shillong, the 18th July 2012 directed all departments that filling up of vacancies should only be done on the recommendation of the DSC and the PSC and that the number of vacancies in the respective departments are to be informed to the respective DSCs and PSC.

But my more than one year experience in filing RTIs for those candidates who had cleared their DSC selection tests reveal something else. When the candidates who had cleared the test conducted by the DSC West Jaintia Hills District in 2014 requested me to seek information regarding availability of vacancy in the various departments by using

RTI, skeletons started coming out of the cupboards of almost all departments in West Jaintia hills district. More than one hundred RTIs were filed in the entire West Jaintia hills district in twelve months (perhaps a record of sorts). To our surprise we found that there were so many vacancies that not only the entire merit list but still more vacancies were available for the DSC to make call for fresh advertisements. The numbers of vacant posts far exceed those advertised by the DSC WJH because departments did not inform about the vacancies to the DSC. Only when RTI was filed did the vacancies start to appear from the cupboards of various departments. The question is what happened to these posts earlier? Why were the vacancies available not communicated to the DSC in the first place?

The Department's reply to the RTI application revealed that some government departments in West Jaintia hills had not informed about the vacancies to the DSC and in some cases the posts were kept vacant without intimating the concerned authority for years together. This was done to facilitate a system of nepotism where top officials and politicians would fill up the vacancies with their favourites. Hence ad-hoc appointments continued in spite of government directives. The RTI no doubt helped bring to light these vacancies, but there are some departments which we suspect have provided us incomplete and wrong information.

In more than twelve month of bombarding the various departments with RTI applications more than fifty posts in various grades from almost every department have appeared. To our surprise there are cases where some of these jobs had been lying vacant (on temporary appointment) for more than five years without intimating the DSC.

Now is there any punitive action against officers who choose not to inform about the vacant posts in their offices to the DSC? No doubt now the district administration can find out how many ad-hoc appointments have been made from the district database but again the ques-

tion is what if the department chooses not to inform of the vacancy? The RTI findings have only proved that this practice is prevalent in WJHD and the Secretary of the DSC can do nothing to compel the officer to report about the vacant posts.

There are also departments which continue to appoint people to the vacant posts without the recommendation of the DSC despite the directives from the department of Personnel. The department of Personnel and ADMV Reforms (B) vide its letter No. PER (AR)153/93/Pt.I/121 Dtd. Shillong, the 23rd May 2013 on the subject of Banning of ad hoc/temporary appointment in Government Department/Offices, had banned any kind of appointment without the recommendation of the DSC or the MPSC as the case may be. But sad to say that there are departments in West Jaintia hills which still made illegal appointment despite this ban.

There is also a peculiar case and perhaps fishy appointment in the fisheries department of West Jaintia hills district. The funny case reveals that in spite of the fact that the number of vacancies of field demonstrators had been informed to the DSC, the department later withdrew the posts. And when information was sought as to the reason for withdrawing the posts, the District Fisheries Officer's reply was the he is the final appointing authority. The officer did not deny that there are few posts of field demonstrators lying vacant in his office. Now a layman like me was made to understand through many government's order and directives that all appointment to government offices can only be made on the recommendation of the DSCs or the MPSC but how can the directors make arbitrary appointments? Os this not nepotism? How can the Director appoint personnel by transferring them from one district to another when the post is to be appointed by the respective DSC where the office is located? The question then is whether the recent appointments made in

the District Fisheries Office West Jaintia hills are legal?

The District Fisheries Department is not the only department which continues with this practice. From the RTI findings we have learnt that the office of the Assistant Director of Information and Public Relations, Jowai also still continues with this practice.

There are also alleged illegal appointments in the office of District Medical and Health Officers without the recommendation of either the DSC or the MPSC. What about these sort of appointments which deny the qualified candidates the right to even apply for the job? The government should stop this kind of appointment once and for all because it is illegal and it is against the fundamental rights of the citizen to equality as prescribed in the Constitution.

There are also department in West Jaintia hills like the office of the District Agriculture officer which as per the Department's reply to the RTI application is still entertaining appointments on compassionate grounds although the same was stopped by the government.

One may ask how this is related to the candidates who had cleared the DSC selection test. The fact is that I would not be surprised if illegal ad hoc appointments are still prevalent even in the Department of Community and Rural Development (C&RD). And these kind of illegal ad hoc appointments patronized by politicians is denying those candidates who had cleared the tests conducted by the DSC their right to job.

In more than one year of campaigning for those who had cleared their DSC examination in West Jaintia hills I had also become wiser. I realized that the introduction of database through which all the government accounts are channelized can also be used to check the illegal appointments in any government department. When this practice was brought to the notice of the then DC Jowai, P S Dkhar he used the database office to force certain departments in Jowai to comply and inform the vacancies to the DSC. The government can come up with a directive giving the DC the authority to stop payment to any department found making illegal appointments. This will stop ad hoc appointments without the recommendation of DSCs of MPSC.

TO THE EDITOR

Facts are sacred

Editor,

I read the report of an event held at U Soso Tham auditorium on 30th August 2015, where Onam celebrations were organized by the Malayalee community in Meghalaya, in which I was also felicitated. I was really disturbed that an esteemed newspaper like yours does not share the information in full and also put words in the mouths of people who never said so. This I can say with authority as I was present in the hall when the Hon'ble Governor spoke after felicitating us. As a leading and model paper we expect just and unbiased news from your newspaper.

Yours etc.,
Sister Xavier Chirayil
Shillong

Social evils in Tura

Editor,

I find it rather amusing and ironical (letter to editor dated 11th Sept 15) the views of W G Momin on social evils in Tura. He mentions about the incident of theft at the local church and how they

prayed for forgiveness and blessings for the thief and yet generalises about a particular section of people who go about their duty of collecting scrap by branding them thieves without any concrete proof to the point of unleashing ferocious dogs if they ever dared enter his home. If Mr Momin and the local congregation prays for blessing the thieves abundantly, his prayers are surely being answered and the thieves are doing pretty well. Mr Momin I presume portrays a different face in church and a rather different one at home. I pity the pastor who has to deal with such kind of a flock on a daily basis.

Yours, etc,
P Tariang
Shillong

Indo-Canadian project

Editor,?

It has been exciting to observe a long term Indo-Canada partnership slowly developing in different areas of economic developments, such as agriculture, strategic alliance, environment protection and nuclear deals for civilian purposes. Such long term economic tie ups will bring both these countries

together in major development platform and establish peace and property in the Indian subcontinent as well as add new dynamics to the Canadian economy. The revamped Indian foreign policy and new outlook in dealing with overseas relations has been a master stroke of the newly elected central government and Prime Minister Modi must be commended. It is exciting that major G7 member nations are now working towards building new and dynamic relationships with the Indian government including Canada under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Canada, the second largest country of the world after Russia; being a resource rich nation has ample opportunity to expand her trade and commerce in areas of agriculture, forestry, environment, nuclear power, mining, security, information technology, automobiles, telecommunications, electronics, aviation, naval and space technology, tourism, education and research with India. However, no such initiative of strategic partnership and civil nuclear cooperation from Ottawa or New Delhi has been noticed over the past few decades. There is

tremendous opportunity for Canadian investments in the Indian construction industries, banking sectors and in expanding maritime trade and commerce. The heavy economic dependence on USA for both exports and imports have harmed Canadian economic growth for decades and the nation is in dire need of finding new international markets for Canadian goods and products and in joint investments that could benefit her economy which is hit by global recession, to grow at a higher rate. Canada being a pioneering nation in providing social services to her population, there is great opportunity for India to lean from the Canadian experience and implement such programs for the common people in the future. We sincerely hope that new Indo-Canadian trade and commerce initiatives are soon tabled both in the Canadian and Indian parliaments for immediate action. Some progress in this direction is being initiated by the foreign offices of both nations. The future has huge opportunity and the bridge has been built for the future to roll into positive direction.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
TIJ4B3

A debate between sentiment and logic in Bihar

By M J Akbar

The Bihar Assembly election has become a powerful debate between sectarian sentiment and economic logic. The bookends of sentiment, caste and community, are familiar. What is the logic?

Everyone agrees that this election is about development. Development is impossible without good governance. Good governance needs stability. Evidence proves that Nitish Kumar cannot possibly lead a stable government. He has cobbled an opportunistic mismatch with Laloo Prasad Yadav and Congress, with a history of mutual character assassination and barely concealed resentments at both the personal and base-support levels. The BJP-led NDA is evidently on firmer ground, and gives more reason to believe that it is ready to govern. QED: Quod erat demonstrandum, or proof through demonstration.

Voters are responding hugely to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's consist-

phrases, jokes and mannerisms echo through a canyon of lost time. His humour is as flat and heavy as bread without yeast.

The only comic role in this election drama is being played by pseudo-liberals desperate to revive, through occasional op-eds and drawing room conversation, the fading relevance of caste and creed simply because their standard-bearers have nothing else in the armoury of ideas. They are insisting that Bihar remains where it was two decades ago, only because Narendra Modi is fighting these elections on the basis of economic logic.

It is not as if the old parameters are totally dead; but they are no longer decisive. Their market has shrunk. The mainstream is shifting. A shrinking stream tends to consolidate around the bank on the far side. This is another phenomenon we will witness in this election.

Moreover, the absence of credibility at the core always encourages fragmentation at the edges. Voters that Nitish

Bihar's youth are voting heavily for logic. This is not surprising. They will, after all, be the biggest losers if things remain what they are. Their lives are at stake. Their future is linked to the state's economy. For those born between 1990 and 1995, five years adds up to a quarter or fifth of their lives. The next five years are also the most crucial part of their future, for this is when job-anxiety will peak. If Narendra Modi is their lodestar it is because he speaks the language that they want to hear. Even rebels - in-house heartburn cases who thought they could bully their way to preferment - have begun to concede that the youth vote in Bihar has shifted overwhelmingly towards Narendra Modi.

ent message of "development for all", backed by specific schemes aimed at the development of Bihar. The "Bihar Package" was a game-changer because it burst the old and stale bubble of caste and creed as the critical variants in electoral preference. Roads do not have a caste. Electricity does not have a creed. Poverty does not have a religion. National initiatives like the Jana Dhan Yojana and insurance initiatives aimed at social security for the impoverished add to the demonstration effect.

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Kumar and Laloo Yadav took for granted on the assumption that they would never go to the BJP, are now travelling away from them in the other direction. In other words, their core voters do not believe in the leadership of Laloo Yadav and Nitish Kumar anymore, and hence seek other leaders. No one purchases an illusion. The process will intensify as we get closer to polling day. Even the AAP mascot Arvind Kejriwal, who grandly volunteered to campaign for Nitish Kumar and Laloo Yadav has now discovered that he has better things to do.

Obviously, my view on the Bihar elections will be treated as partisan, and as a member of a political party I am ipso facto partisan. All you have to do is take a trip to Bihar and see the churn for yourself; or, more accurately, hear the churn. Indian democracy is famous for the silent voter. Bihar this time is quite vocal. No one shouts, for there is no need to; voices are generally raised in either excitement or anger, and the public mood is cool. People know what they want, and are waiting to express their preference when the ballot opens. The mood is not argumentative but calm.

What is exciting is a status reversal that may reflect something deeper than the possibility of a mere change of government. The debate is no longer being controlled by the hierarchic elder. It is being shaped by the young. The young are tired of gimmicks. They want a life.

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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RSS Modernity

RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat who had taken a bigotist step on the reconversion issue has now expressed a view which has showed his organisation's move towards modernity. It is significant that he has called for a reassessment of Hindu religious values which went against scientific approaches. He was referring particularly to women's status in society. One may doubt if this call for modernity was actually necessary in view of his attitude that Indian society as always rejected conventionality. He said it had always accepted good things from all over the world based on eternal life values stressed the broad outlook enshrined in Hindu Philosophy. The Hindu life view, he felt, looks at men and women as two expressions of a single element, emphasizing unity. The Indian family system has survived numerous challenges which was a testimony to the power of Hindu society.

Bhagwat's statements are highly commendable. There are two ways of looking at the Hindu way of life. One is the highly emancipated view of society rooted in the Vedas and the Upanisad. The other is a narrow view based on the rigidity of Hindu social values evolving in subsequent periods especially with the invasion of Islam and Christianity. However, it would be wrong to equate Christian conversion with the assimilation of Western values. Western society had moved increasingly towards equality, especially gender equality, after the European renaissance. It is unfortunate that Bhagwat reaffirmed the jaundiced view of the RSS on westernisation. Women's emancipation and empowerment do not clash with westernisation which may help remove some of the rigidities in the Indian view.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1988

PM's statement 'untrue': Nripen

Former Tripura Chief Minister Mr. Nripen Chakraborty today denied that the promulgation of Disturbed Areas Act and the deployment of army in the State were made with the consent of the State Administration.

Commenting to Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's reported statement in this regard Mr. Chakraborty said "it was one of the many untruths". The Prime Minister took the measures only to win the election, he alleged.

Reacting sharply to the reported statement of Minister of State for Defence Mr. Santosh Mohan Dev that the army and the intelligence agencies had been asked to probe the "Link" between the CPI (M) and TNV, Mr. Chakraborty asked the Minister to publish a genuine list of Congress (I) and TUJS supporters killed in TNV attacks.

Central agencies to assist NE

States in the north-eastern region will be assisted by the Central agencies to draw up action plans for effective and efficient utilization of Central assistance particularly in the small scale sector.

Industry Minister Mr. J. Vengala Rao informed the conference of Chief Ministers and Industry Ministers of the north-eastern States that the assistance by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), was 78.56 crore in 1986-87 as against 4.80 crore in 1985-86.

The conference felt that bank or institutional credit was not a constraint in this region for development of small scale sector. What was needed was the development of entrepreneur culture, formulation of appropriate project profiles, technical training and introduction of front-line technologies and official release here said.

The meeting was attended, among others by Minister of State for Chemical and Petro Chemical Mr. R.K. Jaichandra Singh, Minister of State for Indus-

trial Development Mr. M. Arunachalam, Secretary, Chemical and Petro Chemical, Mr. H.K. Khan and Secretary Industry Mr. Otima Bordin.

Centre accused of flouting Sarkaria Recommendation

Baratiya Janata Party president Mr. L.K. Advani said today that it was shocking that the Union Government had shown conspicuous contempt for the Sarkaria Commission's report in making the latest gubernatorial appointments.

Speaking at a meet the press programme of the Trivandrum Press Club, Mr. Advani said the Sarkaria Commission had recommended that the constitution should be amended to make it obligatory for the Central Government to council the State Chief Ministers before appointing anyone as Governor. It also recommended that Congress men should not be nominated Governors in States held by non-Congress (I) parties.

He said, he did not know if the Chief Ministers of Kerala and Karnataka were consulted when new Governors for the states were appointed. But the fact that in both these states were in the hands of on-Congress (I) parties and that the new incumbent belonged to the Congress (I) indicated that the Rajiv Gandhi Government has already thrown overboard some of the wholesome recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission. The Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh today asserted that he had personally contacted the Chief Ministers of the six States were Governors were appointed yesterday.

In a statement, he said the Chief Ministers had assured that "They would give their full cooperation."

The Home Minister was responding to criticism that the Centre had not consulted the state of Bihar, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan in making the appointments.

Employment Diversification and Women in North East: Time for Serious Reflection.

By Bhagirathi Panda

When it comes to women and their status in the North Eastern Region (NER) of the country, the commonly held perception is that they are relatively better empowered vis-à-vis their counterparts in rest of India. In the situation and process of overall women empowerment, economic dimension of empowerment is an important component. Further, within the economic dimension of empowerment, employment aspect constitutes a vital element in it. When we analyse this aspect with available credible data, the situation speaks contrary to the commonly held perception about women's empowerment in NER.

A sub characteristic of an evolving economy in general and its rural economy in particular is the process of structural transformation in its income and employment space. In the literature of development economics this is called as 'employment diversification'. To be specific, as forces of development get consolidated, more and more people leave agricultural sector and join the non-farm/non-agricultural sector in the rural economy as source of livelihood and employment. In the context of the NER this is happening because of, (a) the waning land-man ratio (read this with the very high magnitude of landlessness in NER and Meghalaya that Patricia Mukhim brings out in her article in ST dated 28th August 2015), (b) the inevitably declining elasticity of job creation in agriculture sector because of mechanization and modernization, and (c) the high rate of population growth in the NER during the last four decades.

Dissecting the rural employment space with respect to gender is an important way of understanding this structural transformation process. Analyzing this situation in NER with the help of National Sample Survey (NSS) data for four periods of time i.e. 1993-94, 1999-00, 2004-05 and 2009-10 shows the declining gender gap (calculated as the differences in the percentage shares of rural non-farm employment for both the genders at a given year/ NSS round). A striking feature of NER is that this gap over the period 2004-05 to 2009-10 has

abruptly been reduced to 1.9 percentage points from a high of 10.9 percentage points. One of the reasons for this, is the remarkable increase and growth in female employment in the construction sector of rural non-farm employment (RNFE) resulting in a situation that could be termed as feminization of employment in construction sector of RNFE in NER. During this period of five years, female employment in the construction sector in NER has increased from 7.8 per cent to 47.7 per cent, a phenomenal increase of almost 40 percentage points. For the country as a whole this has increased by 18.7 percentage points. In terms of annual growth rate over the period 1993-93 to 2009-10, female employment in construction sector in NER has experienced the highest growth rate of 18.2 per cent as against the national annual growth rate of 11.6 per cent. Employment through MGNREGA and other public works programmes of central and state governments could be one of the important reasons for such a staggering rise in female employment in construction segment of RNFE. As the jobs created through MGNREGA and other public employment programmes are casual in nature, this also means that the construction sector has experienced increased casualisation of female employment. This finding of ours when read with another important finding based on the works of Lahoti and Swaminathan (2013), adds further credibility to the above explanation. For the purpose of their study, Lahoti and Swaminathan, divide the country in to six regions i.e. the North, the North East, the Central, the East, the west and the South. Their study reveal a positive 133.4 per cent increase in female casual employment in non-agricultural sector in NER over the period 1983-84 to 2009-10 against 84.5 per cent for the males. This extent of increase in casual employment for the women workforce in NER is the second highest among all these six regions of the country for which the data are analysed.

Additionally, for the year 2009-10, the percentage of female casual employment in NER was highest at 11.6 per cent among all these six regions of the country. Data

also reveal that during the period 1983-84 to 2009-10, female employment under self-employment category both in farm and non-farm sectors in NER has experienced high negative percentage falls (-59.5 and -32.8 percents respectively), where as female employment under contributing family work both in farm and non-farm sectors has undergone highest positive per cent rise (95.5 and 125.9 per cents respectively) among all these six regions. Conversely, male workforce employment under self employment category in the non-farm sector in NER has undergone highest increase by 56 per cent. This trend is indicative of a situation of distress push and helplessness for the women workforce.

Again, NER is the only region where during the period under discussion female employment in the regular wage/salary category has experienced a negative per cent fall. The implications of a significant per cent rise in contributing family women workforce in farm and non-farm sectors and a fall in the regular wage/salary employment category is that the distress factors are more at play when it comes to women's employment diversification in NER vis-a-vis the other regions of the country.

When we decompose the sectoral space of rural non-farm employment in NER with respect to gender we get insightful results. The males continue to be employed dominantly in the subsector of public administration, education and community service (i.e. the services sector) all through the period 1993-94 to 2009-10. Share of male employment in this subsector was as high as 32 per cent in 2009-10. However, during the same period, female employment in this sector fell to 17.1 per cent from a high of 41.5 per cent in 2004-05. Another revealing trend seen with respect to female employment in rural non-farm employment space is that excluding the construction and trade & hotel sectors, the other five sectors i.e. mining & quarrying, manufacturing, electricity & water, transport, storage and

communication, finance, interest & business, etc. have witnessed negative annual growth during the period 1993-94 to 2009-10.

From these entire developments one thing that emerges clearly is that when it comes to women's employment in NER, they have been driven out of relatively high-end remunerative jobs in the long run it is more damaging and detrimental to democratic governance. Such is the situation and the state of affairs in Meghalaya where progress is heading toward unfavorable development be it law and order, social development, financial affluence and many more. But in the absence of relevant Index Number such as Price Index, Consumer index, HDI (human development index), etc that can measure the changes taking place in the life of an individual, the impact of such negative development is hardly felt by the general public and less reflected except when that situation turns into an uproar and directly affects some aspect of our daily lives. Market Index Number is a sensitive indicator which responds directly and inversely towards any changes whether in government policy or political and social behavior, but since we are still far away from that standard, we will never understand what is good policy and what is bad.

There are plenty of reasons for this. It may be that the State's statistical estimations are either unrealistic or exaggerated just to impress national expectations but never to serve as feedback for administrative strategy or to explain the status of our own development and growth. But even if it does, who cares for such negative development other than what affects them directly. In a dependent state like ours, where 90% of financial assistance is from the central government, the repercussion of such negative impact is designed to hit back at the centre while the attitude of the state government here is reduced to an opportunist manager who dares to exploit every resource in aberrance, devoid of moderate conscience. Had the state possessed some form of autonomy in financial resources like other industrialized states in the country where revenue from multiple sectors is not constrained, then the reflection and repositioning against any negative development and decline would be felt. This would be riposted to the extent that paying income tax is no longer an issue under coercion but the pride of every individual just like in the earlier days when people contributed to the 'Siyem' to run the affairs of the 'Hima' in the form of 'Ka Pynshok'.

Here and there people are grumbling and expressing dissatisfaction at the present condition but cannot express precisely about who to blame. Even those in governance and administration face conflicts of interest. Lack of coordination seems to confront everyone down to the lower ranks. Funds are being diverted from every Head of Accounts to Meghalaya Basin Development rendering other departments bankrupts and paralyzing them, will not serve any purpose. Such arbitrary executive direction in financial matters is dictatorial in nature and very dangerous because it leaves other sectors deprived. Is there no other alternative to challenge this silent and unscrupulous looting? Here is a silent form of tyranny and should we allow it to continue? Where are those watchdogs of society?

The public too are fed up with frequent rallies and meetings, except those who are subsidized to attend, and this is the reason

The Silent Crisis

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

Call it by any term or define it by any logic but the reality is true as rain water in summer or PHE water in winter piercing through PWD roads quietly down to the gravel and pebbles of the foundation of sustainability. Crisis in simple term is a situation without a solution, it occurs quietly unnoticed and in the long run it is more damaging and detrimental to democratic governance.

Such is the situation and the state of affairs in Meghalaya where progress is heading toward unfavorable development be it law and order, social development, financial affluence and many more. But in the absence of relevant Index Number such as Price Index, Consumer index, HDI (human development index), etc that can measure the changes taking place in the life of an individual, the impact of such negative development is hardly felt by the general public and less reflected except when that situation turns into an uproar and directly affects some aspect of our daily lives. Market Index Number is a sensitive indicator which responds directly and inversely towards any changes whether in government policy or political and social behavior, but since we are still far away from that standard, we will never understand what is good policy and what is bad.

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The public too are fed up with frequent rallies and meetings, except those who are subsidized to attend, and this is the reason

that insignificant organizers of various public meetings or rallies prefer Motphran as the venue because they are running out of supporters. The outcome from the recently held KHADC rally 'Ka Dorbar bah' (massive rally) at Polo ground with only few hundred supporters attending in spite of a wide and expensive publicity campaign clearly explains the sentiments of the people towards meaningless initiatives by public leaders. Going by this yardstick it may also be considered that the electorate has lost faith in the present Council and if election is held now, the 'None of the above' button in the voting machine will secure more votes than any prospective candidate. Another question that needs to be asked is the source of funding for such events and who benefits the most. As far as I know, only bus owners have benefitted from this programme because the cost of hiring busses for carrying the crowd is Rs.2000 per bus per locality within Shillong city (excluding those outside Shillong) but most of the busses had to return empty.

In the political arena all is not well within the government. Disgruntled dissidents are like cowards living in uncomfortable zones yet awaiting the day of deliverance which can only happen if fresh elections are held. But is there any hero here who can come out of that situation and maneuver an option that will lead to a fresh electoral battle? I am sure there is none; all are egocentric and will not give up their employment so easily until the end of the five year contract similar to the tribal MLAs of Manipur who are facing public boycott. They have been told to resign as public representatives but they are yet to comply to the demands of the electorate. Two and half years have elapsed without any significant and concrete development except confrontations, clashes of legislations or fulfilling High Court actions and direction.

Toppling any government these days is difficult because one has to deal with and overpower the barons of illiteracy. Then only change will happen!

The situation today is that local representatives from Garo Hills are reluctant to reside in their home town and were missing when calamity struck the region. In other districts like East Jaintia Hills, the overall situation is not conducive for normal living due to high rates of crimes since no robust steps are taken by the law enforcement agency. People are enslaved by a bleak future of uncertainty. But why don't they raise questions and demand good governance from their legislators?

A simple order by the High Court has shaken every strata of governance; it has confused and shaken the traditional institutions to the point that those who attempt to champion their cause are facing sleepless nights. It is here that transition in local governance (I prefer local governance to traditional governance) should take place meaningfully to suit the needs of the future generation as well embracing wide spectrum of society with generosity and wisdom like European nations dealing with migrants in an effort to end the Syrian crisis.

Judging from every angle, I have one suggestion to make. If no significant development can happen in this term, then why waste so much public funds to cover the expenditures of more than one hundred legislators (MLAs & MDCs) and other jobless appointees? Is not a single person enough to handle the affairs of Meghalaya? It is ironic for me to refer to President's Rule since a hope keeps resounding every day from patriotic Khasi songs played through loud speakers of every Dorbar Shngong and on vehicles for public mobilization.

TO THE EDITOR

On organic farming

Editor,

The news report regarding a program where the State Chief Minister launched a scheme on organic plantation of Agar and Bamboo under Ranikor Block (ST September 9, 2015) is interesting. While I have heard of organic farming of fruits, vegetables and other field crops and of the health benefits of the produce, the concept of organic plantation of Agar or Bamboo and its benefits are new to me. The internet could not provide sound information on this either. Nevertheless, it seems that the craze for organic farming is gaining momentum in the State with a report sometime back stating that the Chief Minister announcing that his Government aims to convert all forms of farming in the state into organic farming.

Undoubtedly organic farming has its advantages as it improves soil condition, enhances biodiversity, conserves water, increases food nutrient density, and reduces toxic loads in food. It can arrest environmental deterioration which input-intensive

prevalent agriculture is often believed to cause. The quality of organic farm products is held to be superior to those produced under existing farming conditions. But it has its disadvantages too. Organic farming is labour-intensive, inadaptible with some crops and local conditions, susceptible to wide-ranging damage during disease and pest outbreaks etc.,. But the biggest challenge towards expansion of organic farming is to make it economically viable because of the low yield. The premium price of organic products to compensate for the low yield will shrink the market demand. This would discourage farmers from readily shifting to organic farming. A massive dose of subsidy will reduce the cost but will not increase the yield. This also puts food security at risk. On the other hand poor yield during the transition period (from inorganic to organic) requires huge compensation to be made to farmers to sustain them. This may be another barrier towards expanding organic farming. At the end of it all we cannot be sure if the produce is really organic unless proper monitoring and stringent certification processes are ensured.

Overall, unless there is more research on organic cultivation to substantially raise yields closer to that of prevalent cultivation it may not be a viable option for farmers.

On the other hand, going by the statement of the All Meghalaya Farmers Union in their memorandum to the Chief Minister (ST 29th August 2015), agriculture in the present form is no longer remunerative due to low productivity. Whether what the Union stated is true and whether it has the credibility to speak on behalf of the farmers of Meghalaya has to be ascertained. However, the mainstream media reported the same sentiments expressed by millions of farmers across the country where a large number of them have abandoned farming because of the overwhelming problems they face. Experts fears that the trend might continue with the availability of other income sources and tolerance level of farmers reaching its peak. A sizeable percentage has shown increasing apathy towards agriculture. Many don't want their children to become farmers. The disillusionment is however largely because

of economic considerations, though, many would prefer to remain in the profession provided the problems they face on the ground are addressed.

While farmers in Meghalaya may not face such a situation because of government efforts to improve agriculture here, nevertheless, the statement of the 'Farmers Body' cannot be overlooked. Any disillusionment towards the profession here can adversely affect the economy, employment opportunities and livelihood security of almost 70% of the state's rural population who still depend on agriculture for their mainstay. The state which is already reeling from unemployment problems cannot afford this. Moreover, a prosperous agricultural sector in the state is absolutely essential for maintaining food security. Thus while the plan of bringing in large scale organic farming in Meghalaya may need further thinking, the present state of agriculture needs to be assessed too for determining the approach to rejuvenate it so that it continues to be a rewarding profession for those involved in it.

Yours etc.,
K.L.Tariang,
Via email

"Silence is golden when you can't think of a good answer."

--- Muhammad Ali

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 37 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

World Bank verdict

THE World Bank recently ranked the countries of the world on the 'ease of doing business' in those countries. India is ranked 142 among 189 countries. Among the states in India, Gujarat is ranked highest in terms of ease of doing business, while Meghalaya is ranked amongst the lowest three with Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. The rankings are based on certain parameters such as time taken to start a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency. Economies are ranked on their ease of doing business, from 1-189. A high ease of doing business ranking means the regulatory environment is more conducive to the starting and operation of a local firm. The rankings are determined by sorting the aggregate scores on the above 10 indicators after giving equal weight to each topic. The rankings for all economies are benchmarked to June 2014. These are globally accepted parameters and they ought to be in place if this country wants to ensure that its economy grows to a respectable figure. As can be expected, Singapore is ranked highest in terms of ease of doing business, with New Zealand coming second and Hong Kong third.

Meghalaya is known for its lethargy and inordinate delay in project clearance. The single window agency which is meant to speed up clearances for infrastructural projects that are sought to be implemented in the State rarely meets. It is chaired by the Chief Minister ostensibly so that projects are not held up but that is precisely what is happening since the CM is hardly able to give time to vet the number of projects that land up at his table. This has been the grouse of many serious investors seeking to do business with Meghalaya, especially those not used to the rigmarole of having to pay speed money. The State is today in a very precarious position financially. If it cannot attract investments in key sectors its economic ranking will slip even lower down the scale. This cannot bode well for the State and its people. Investment in key sectors of the economy means employment generation and growth of ancillary businesses which will ensure a robust turnover within the State. But for this the Chief Minister and his team have to have a long term vision which is sorely missing at this point.

LOOKING BACK

February 17, 1988

Congress (I) activist among 6 killed

Terrorists gunned down six members of a Congress (I) activist, during the past 24 hours in Punjab.

Security forces, mean while, arrested a close associate of dreaded terrorist and "panthic committee" member Gurbanba Singh Manochahal in Amritsar.

A Congress (I) activist was shot dead by terrorists in Kotkhal locality under the Amritsar sadar police station tonight. Police identified the victim as Gurdip.

Terrorists shot dead two persons in Batala village under Beas police station in Amritsar district tonight.

Police identified the victim as Mohan Lal and Ram Murti.

Terrorists shot dead Baldev Singh, a road ways employee in charge of a bus stand, at Bhatinda today. The assailants escaped after committing the crime.

District police cordoned off the area to apprehend the culprits, suspected to be hiding in the locality.

Terrorist stormed into a house in Amritsar district and shot dead one Vinod Kumar and injured another person this morning. They managed to escape.

In another incident in the district, terrorists shot dead one Rajpratap Singh at Alidan village last night.

A gang of terrorists in-

jured six members of two families at Chachoke and Mauli villages near Phagwara, in Kapurthala district last night. The injured, including three women, have been admitted to the civil hospital.

An Amritsar report said Kashmir Singh, a close associate of Gurbanba Singh Manochahal, the self-styled chief of the "Bhindrawale Tigers Force of Khalistan" and a "panthic committee" member, was arrested after an exchange of fire with the security forces in Amritsar city today.

Superintendent of Police (Detective) Mr. Rajinder Singh told UNI that the police recovered a 12 bore gun from his possession.

District level pan-

nning being considered

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi today said the Centre was seriously considering a proposal to introduce district level planning during the eighth plan. Addressing the valedictory session of the four-day District Collectors workshop on "responsive administration" here, Mr. Gandhi said there was a consensus among collectors about district-level planning for the effective implementation of various developmental programmes.

Saudi Arabia Must Deal Seriously With the Diplomatic Scandal

By Kanwal Sibal

The scandalous case of a Saudi diplomat and his accomplices allegedly sexually abusing two Nepali maids has again raised the difficult question of how to reconcile the principle of diplomatic immunity with the victim's right to justice. The purpose of the 1961 Vienna Convention, which governs diplomatic immunity is to allow diplomats to discharge their legitimate official functions without being subject to jurisdiction of a country where they are posted. The idea is to protect the diplomats from being subject to pressure or restrained from performing their duties by host governments, or coerced in any manner. The laws are not uniform across the globe, their application can be arbitrary, punishments can vary and the justice systems are not always independent. Some countries allow physical mutilation or lashes even for what are considered relatively minor offences elsewhere.

Today, public opinion generally finds it difficult to accept unequal treatment before the law for a crime committed. Diplomatic immunity, therefore, at times becomes a controversial concept.

It is important to understand that the way international relations are structured, diplomats represent the sovereignty of a state to which they belong. Diplomatic immunity is therefore accorded to the "state", as it were, not the individual per se. If a foreigner was not a state representative, there would be no immunity for any infraction of the law.

It also needs understanding that when a diplomat commits a crime, he may have immunity in so far as the laws of the host state are concerned, but he is answerable to the laws of his country. It would be expected in such cases that the individual concerned is tried and condemned in his own country as required under law.

Even for diplomats there is no total immunity. For civil wrongs they are liable. They have to pay traffic offences and they can be sued in property cases and so on. In this background, the Saudi diplomat's offence was by no stretch of

the imagination a part of his "official duties", and therefore it is punishable under law, if proved.

The Saudi government has three options in this case. They can make their own internal investigation through their Ambassador or by sending a team from Riyadh to look into the case. If their internal enquiry reveals that the diplomat is guilty, they can decide to waive his immunity and let the Indian police deal with the case under Indian laws.

In the case of the egregious crime that the diplomat in question is accused of, countries, which believe in the rule of law and have a vocal domestic public opinion to contend with, could decide to waive immunity. This is rare, but conceivable. In the case of Saudi Arabia, this option is difficult to imagine.

If waiver is not given, countries with a strong commitment to justice would normally subject the offending person to the rigour of their own law, for which they would be ready to entertain all the evidence available from India as part of a legal process. This option is available to Saudi Arabia. Whether this would be taken is a moot question.

The third option is to deny any guilt on the part of the diplomat concerned and blame the local authorities for violation of diplomatic immunity by forcible entry into the residence of the diplomat (the place of residence is also inviolable under the Vienna Convention). The Saudi Embassy has done this.

In view of this the government would have no choice but to declare the diplomat *persona non grata* or discreetly seek his removal from India.

This may not satisfy public opinion at home, as it would appear that the diplomat concerned has got away with an unspeakable crime. The government would come under criticism - wrongly - for not enforcing the law.

In actual fact, in these circumstances, the government has no choice but to adhere strictly to the Vienna Convention. Violating it has long term implications for the safety of Indian diplomats

and the sanctity of the Convention to which all countries are attached.

Of course, it is open to governments in such cases to make an issue of such an incident, even when diplomatic immunity is accepted, and seek condign action against the accused in his own country and follow the progress of the case.

Such a course has to take into account the overall relationship with the country in question - in this case Saudi Arabia - and decide whether to close the matter with the withdrawal of the diplomat or pursue it.

All said and done, the reprehensible conduct of an individual Saudi diplomat cannot hold in hostage the entire relationship with Saudi Arabia, which has many dimensions and has been transformed in recent years to the point that the two are now strategic partners. No disproportionate view should be taken in such cases.

In any case, this incident, which has been widely reported internationally, even in the Arab world, has certainly damaged the image of Saudi Arabia, already not very savoury as regards the conduct of its diplomats abroad.

From our side, it would be necessary to identify the accomplices of the diplomat and deal with them under our laws if they are not entitled to diplomatic immunity. A view has been expressed that because Nepali maids are involved, we have also to satisfy Nepal with the way we have dealt with the case, and this makes the case more delicate for us diplomatically. There isn't much merit in this view. Nepal is as aware of the provisions of the Vienna Convention as we are, and the limitations that this imposes on us. Just to satisfy Nepal we cannot violate the Convention.

In fact, the local police have opened themselves to criticism for violating the immunity of the Saudi diplomat's residence and rescuing the maids. To that extent, Nepal would not only have no reason to complain, it should actu-

ally appreciate the action of Indian police authorities.

Now, it is true that the police did breach the Vienna Convention, knowingly or unknowingly, by entering the premises of the diplomat. But this action has to be seen against the reason for doing so and so a balanced view has to be taken of the incident. If the alleged enormity of the cause wasn't there, the police would not have intervened at all.

It should also be said, that unlike in the Devyani Khobragade case, where the US State Department authorised police action against the Indian diplomat in New York, and that too after several diplomatic exchanges between the US government and us - and to that extent it was pre-meditated action - in the Saudi diplomat's case, there was no green light given by the MEA to the police. Furthermore, the diplomat was not arrested, handcuffed and taken to the police station and subjected to a search. There was no assault on his person. Only the maids were rescued.

The other question that has been raised is the publicity given to the incident and whether this was wise. Well, we have seen that on women's issues, rapes and other sexual crimes, public opinion in India is highly sensitive and the media plays them up, sometimes disproportionately.

If the government, for reasons of our relations with Saudi Arabia, had tried to actively put a lid on this, it would have been accused of insensitivity to such issues, of succumbing to pressure by Saudi Arabia to suppress the incident, of attaching importance to political considerations at the cost of unfortunate victims of such terrible sexual abuse.

In any case, even if the government wanted to be more discreet, the involvement of the NGO and the Nepal Embassy would have made it impossible to deal with the matter "discreetly".

All in all, this has been a most unfortunate incident. The most practical outcome would be for the Saudi authorities to publicly state they intend to seriously deal with this incident and punish the guilty in accordance with their laws.

Courtesy *The Wire*
(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary)

TO THE EDITOR

Are we awake?

Editor,

I am a Class IX student of Sherwood School. This Monday, as my friends and I were walking to our tuition classes after school, we found a big branch of a tree which had fallen due to the rains and it was obstructing the road. The pedestrians had a problem walking; the cars could not move, yet, no one stopped to remove that branch from the road. It would have taken just two people to do so. The other day we had a programme in School where we were encouraged to be the change. So I thought we would remove the tree to prove a point. But since we were girls we could not move that heavy branch. We tried again and again but had to give up. But I saw children having problems walking; I saw cars being held up because the tree was blocking the footpath and the side of the road. We couldn't give up! But what really annoyed me was that there were so many big, burly men around who just sat in their cars busy with their phones, or chatting and exchanging gossips like old women! It infuriated me. We couldn't move the tree but we went up to one of the men and told him that the tree needed to be re-

moved. He took one of his men and removed the branch. We made sure it was done. Frankly, I don't understand this mindset. We blame others for lack of development and lack of cleanliness. But to reach to the king in a game of chess, we've got to get past the pawns. First, we have to start with ourselves. We have to be alert and aware of everything that is happening around us. This is our country and if we want to live in it and make it 'liveable' then I don't think any of the people need to be reminded of their duties by a Class IX student. So I ask the people of this place, "Are we awake?"

Yours etc.,
Eusebia Kimde S
Sangma,
Viaemail

Whither Pine Mount School!

Editor,

My entire family has been educated in Pine Mount School. It was one of the best schools in Shillong. The dedicated teachers gave their best to nurture the students who are the future. The education we got here helped us in our careers. The teachers made all out efforts to enable students to score extremely well in their I.C.S.E. However things have changed drastically since the past one year.

Teachers remain absent from school for long periods of time as a result of which the syllabus is not completed before the board exams. This year only 3-4 students scored over 90% marks, whereas in previous years the number was higher. Even when the teachers are present they do not attend classes regularly, which is typical of a government school. In some classes there are no teachers for particular subjects. If children do not understand something and ask the teachers to explain they are taken to the Principal. She in turn pulls up the students. This reflects her incompetence. These teenagers should be treated with care because suicide cases are rampant today.

I would also like to point out that 1700 children were made to pay Rs 250 for an Identity Card which was handed over to them on August 8 last. I really don't understand why an ID is required half way into the session. Moreover, making an ID costs Rs 70-80 so why are parents charged Rs. 250? During the parent teachers meeting the Principal said she would charge a development fee as the school does not even have money for purchasing chalk etc. As far as I know

government schools do not charge a fee as such so are they authorised to charge development fee?

I urge upon the concerned authorities in the Education Department to conduct surprise inspections so that Pine Mount school can be restored to its past glory.

Your etc.,
B Lyngdoh,
Shillong
Viaemail

MUDA ban on garbage disposal at Umshangling

Editor,

I extend my gratitude to the Secretary, Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA) who vide an order issued on Aug 21 last has banned the disposal of garbage at Umshangling village, which is 2 kms from Nongpho. The dumping of garbage by Nongpho Town Committee has been causing immense hardship to the inmates of Shantivan (a home run by the sisters of Mother Theresa for leprosy patients, the old and the terminally sick who number around 250) and for the village Umshangling which houses the people who have been cured from leprosy at Shantivan. Besides illness which is a daily companion to all the inmates of Shantivan

RAHUL STILL NOT READY FOR TOP POST

Congress dilemma sees no signs of abating

By Amulya Ganguli

There was an English monarch in the 11th century called Ethelred the Unready. Being 10 years old, he sought advice from those around him, mainly to fight the Vikings. But, the counsellors usually gave him what turned out to be the wrong advice. The phrase, unready, in the king's name implied "badly advised".

Ten centuries later, there is another would-be king in one of England's former colonies who is thought to be unprepared for his coronation even by his dotting mother and fawning courtiers.

Hence, the decision to extend his mother's term at the helm for another year. It will not be till well after the middle of next year, therefore, that Rahul Gandhi's name will be considered for the Congress president's post. But, the delay is unlikely to improve his prospects.

For one, there is little likelihood of the crown prince maturing over the next 12 months to enable him to switch from his carping one-liners - suit-boot ki sarkar - to a detailed exposition of how the Narendra Modi government's quest for industrialization is harmful for the country and the reasons why his own agriculture-driven economic model holds all the answers.

For another, the delay of a year for a change of guard will make it even more difficult for the Congress to explain what nearly two decades of Sonia Gandhi's presidency has achieved for the party. Not only has it slumped to its lowest ever Lok Sabha tally, there are now doubts about the eligibility of her chosen successor as well.

It is clear, therefore, that Sonia has brought the 130-year-old party to its nadir. There is now no certainty about either its next president or about its outlook unless Rahul's claim that he is "left of the left", which is echoed by finance minister Arun Jaitley's charge that the Congress has positioned itself to the "left of Marx", is taken seriously.

However, what these attempts at humour and sarcasm underline is an absence of an identifiable ideology. Does Rahul's criticism of Modi's pro-market policies mean that the Congress is against economic reforms? If so, does he want a return to the licence-permit-control raj?

But, it is probably not Rahul's ideological vagueness alone which led to the reluctance of a party as scyphantic as the Congress to demur to his elevation to the president's post, but also the belief that his woolly thinking cannot be the basis for the party's revival at a time when it faces crucial elections in Bihar, Assam, Tamil Nadu and elsewhere.

If the Congress stumbles yet again as it has al-

ready done in the Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bengaluru civil elections, there may be virtually an irreparable setback to its hopes of recovery. What is a good sign, however, is that the Congress appears to have finally recognized the deficiencies of the heir-apparent. So has his mother, who must be deeply disheartened by the obvious collapse of her dream of extending the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty's hold on the party.

A stage has now been reached when Sonia will not be able to step down in the near future even though she is not in the best of health. Nor will it be politic to search for someone other than Rahul to be her successor unless it is Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra, who is favoured for the top post by large sections in the party.

But, such a step will be too severe a blow to Rahul's prestige and too disruptive organizationally to be a feasible proposition. Yet, it will be politically fatal for the Congress to allow things to remain as they are where the party's weakness is compounded by uncertainty about the leadership.

The reason for bringing the 130-year-old organization to its present sorry pass is undoubtedly the failure of the so-called high command to prepare for the future both in terms of choosing Sonia's successor and determining the party's economic outlook which appeals to the aspirational generation.

The mistake which the high command, comprising mother and son and a few confidants, made was to believe in the aftermath of its return to power in 2004 that the party could forge ahead with Rahul as the president after Sonia stepped down, with pro-poor policies.

On both counts, the former Grand Old Party took the wrong turn in 2010-11 when it was riding high. By persuading the government to take its "foot off the accelerator of reforms", as then finance minister P. Chidambaram subsequently said, the leftists in the Congress allowed Narendra Modi to grab the headlines with his promise of economic growth.

Now, in following its massive defeat in the last general election, the Congress is grappling with its other mistake of having reposed too much faith in Rahul's ability to live up to the challenges of rebuilding the party and delineating an economic outlook in sync with a globalized world.

The best course for the Congress will be not only to make the high command more broad-based but also to let its members to speak more freely than what they may have done till now and not cow down those who, like Shashi Tharoor, express views which are different from those of the mother and the son on, say, the disruption of parliament. Only the restoration of internal democracy can revive the Congress. (IPA Service)

and Umshangling, they have been deprived of the most essential commodity that is necessary for life - fresh air. The stench that comes from this "temporary" dumping area is so unbearable that even a pig will refuse to be reared in that locality.

Initially, in 2008, when the sisters and the undersigned protested against the dumping of garbage in their locality, they were told that it was a temporary arrangement. But for all practical purposes the temporary has become permanent. The Solid Waste Management Plant which was sanctioned in 2008-2009 to be built at this "temporary" dumping pit at the cost of Rs. 6 crore is yet to see the light of day even though long six years have passed. Someone will definitely have built some other plant for himself / her-

self with that amount.

I am overwhelmed by the kind thought that your correspondent has for the health and well being of the local people and commuters of Nongpho if there is a ban on dumping of garbage at the present site, but I am utterly surprised at the insensitivity of the same person at the suffering of the people of Shantivan and Umshangling village. He definitely knows how to add insult to injury. I hereby request the Ri Bhoi Deputy Commissioner to execute the ban if she has not yet done so, which will be greatly appreciated by the inmates of Shantivan, Umshangling and thousands of their well-wishers.

Yours etc.,
Fr. James Mani,
Director,
RRTC, Umran

"Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation."

--- Oscar Wilde

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 38 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2015

Nepal Crisis

CONSTITUTION making in Nepal continues to limp. The Constituent Assembly is putting the draft Constitution to the vote on Sep 20. But the country has been in turmoil. The divisive issues are federalism and religious identity. When monarchy was abolished 7 years ago, it was agreed that Nepal will stop having Hinduism as an official religion. But there has been recently a demand for a return to Nepal's Hindu status. The amendment for revival in the Assembly was rejected on Monday. The victory of secularism however led to angry protests from some people. To this was added an agitation for secularism. The Assembly had rejected the demand to divide Nepal into 14 provinces, some on an ethnic basis. This decided to have 7 provinces only. Violent clashes killed several police personnel and civilians. The Madhesis are boycotting the vote. These elements have become assertive because of the persistent clashes between the democratic parties, the Communist party of Nepal and the Maoists. Lack of governance rocked Nepal during the earthquake.

The ruling coalition can garner enough votes to adopt the Constitution by Sep 20. But the adoption of the Constitution has missed deadlines several times and many Prime Ministers have come and gone. There is need for a broad consensus. Delhi has been advising Kathmandu to exercise caution and restraint. But the Indian government should not try to play big brother especially because of the RSS nexus with the Hindu revivalists in Nepal.

LOOKING BACK

February 18, 1988

AASU blames Rajiv

The All Assam Students Union (AASU) today strongly criticized the Centre and the State Government for their 'failure' to implement the Assam Accord.

Announcing resumption of their agitation at a mass rally here, AASU leaders alleged that Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has signed the Accord only to put an end to the six year old movement on foreign nationals issue and not for the welfare of the State. The AGP Government, which came to power with a commitment of implementing the Accord, had also failed to take bold steps in this direction, they said.

The leaders cautioned that they would not remain silent spectators but fight for implementation of every clause of the Accord.

Criticizing the way of functioning of the State Government, AASU general secretary Mr. Atul Bora said the AGP had come to power to provide a clean administration but hardly any success could be seen, AASU adviser Mr. Sasdhar Kakoti said that not a single foreigner had been deported since the inception of AGP Ministry and infiltration of "foreigners" from across the border was continuing every day. There was no difference between the present and the previous Governments as both of them functioned only in circulating fingers about the expulsion of foreigners from the State, he said.

Mr. Bora said at present two Governments were functioning in Assam one led by Chief Minister Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and the other by bureaucrats.

Govt. to hold special HSLC test

The State Government had decided to offer a fresh chance to those students who could not sit for the HSLC selection test last year. According to an official press release, the State cabinet has decided to hold a "special test examination"

for these students who are about 1200. The test would be conducted on completion of the HSLC final examination which slated for March 10 next.

Earlier, a delegation of parents, guardians and teachers met the Chief Minister in this regard.

Earthquake rocks Shillong

An earthquake of moderate intensity was felt at noon on Wednesday lasting about twenty seconds.

According to Seismological Observatory Centre the epicenter was traced about 155 km from here and its magnitude was 5.0 on the Richter Scale.

There was, however, no report of loss of life or property.

This is the second tremor felt in Shillong within the fortnight.

Lt. Gen. Sharma next Army Chief

Lt. General V.N. Sharma, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, has been appointed as the next chief of the Army Staff.

He will take over from Gen. K. Sundarji on the latter's retirement on April 30 next.

Gen Sharma is presently General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Command.

Born on June 4, 1930, Gen Viswanath Sharma is the senior most officer in the army. He would be retiring in 1990 after holding the post of army chief for about two and half years.

He took over command of a corps in Western Sector in 1984. Later, he was appointed commandant, College of Combat. He took over as General Officer Commanding-In-Chief, Eastern Command June 1, 1987, and is presently the senior-most army commander.

Gen. Sharma was awarded the Param Vishisht Seva medal for distinguished services of the most exceptional order in March 1986.

Mizoram for example

By T.P.Khaund

A silent revolution is taking place in the remotest countryside of the remote State of Mizoram, 'half hidden from the eye', that has the promise of changing the rural canvas of the State. A bold attempt at socio-economic resurgence is being made through the State Govt's flagship project, the New Land Use Programme (NLUP in short), an innovative, people centric development initiative possibly not experimented elsewhere in the country.

This multi-disciplinary programme has, as its core objective, financial empowerment of the people by providing them sustainable land-based livelihood means plus non farming income boosting activities at micro and cottage level. It envisages weaning away farmers from the wasteful traditional subsistence farming known as Jhum (slash and burn method of cultivation), improving both production and productivity levels and, very importantly, preserving the fragile ecology and environment. NLUP is a well drilled attempt to achieve inclusive growth in harmony with nature. It embodies a new concept of socio-economic development with technically appropriate and institutionally effective intervention and, at the same time, sensitive to the cultural and social ethos of the people.

The concept and design of the NLUP are unique. The project has been designed to address multiple economic and environmental issues with a totally new approach. It lays emphasis on involvement of the community in planned growth process and development of the traditional village institutions to enable them to play their role effectively as catalyst for progress. It also seeks to provide to the beneficiaries proper and adequate service facilities, such as credit, inputs supply and market linkage for sustained development. While the primary objective is economic empowerment of farmers and improvement of rural economy, NLUP also takes care of problems such as food security, product market linkage and value addition, opening of new employment opportunities, strengthening community bonds, maintenance of ecological balance through regeneration of forest and water sources and prevention of soil erosion.

The project aims at assisting farmers to take up such sustainable livelihood activities that will create productive assets, and improving income level of

both rural and urban poor through on-farm and off-farm activities. It envisages providing assistance to 1,20,000 families in identified areas of livelihood activities with focus on land reclamation, promotion of agro-horticultural and plantation crops, animal husbandry, fishery and micro enterprises and regeneration of natural resources, particularly forests, and preservation of bio-diversity.

The project is expected to help farmers progressively discarding jhum practices for permanent occupation which are more profitable, eco-friendly and are in tune with their culture and tradition. While the farming community in rural area is the primary target, the project has a provision to cover urban poor for livelihood activities in the animal husbandry and industrial sectors. One of the unique features of the programme is the integrated land use planning at the village level. The plan will ensure that 60% of village land is earmarked for rain forest, 10% for community reserve forest for protection of catchment areas water supply sources and another 10% as fuel/ timber reserve forest to meet community's consumption and 15% for cultivation. The remaining 5% will be earmarked for human habitation, roads, industrial area etc. A significant component of NLUP is comprehensive land survey and land settlement to ensure that land really belongs to the tiller as against the traditional community ownership system which has been widely abused by vested interests. Mizoram is, thus, the first State in the North East to undertake land reforms and land settlement in tribal areas. The other notable feature of the programme is a calculated component related convergence with Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) like MNREGA, PMGRY, National Bamboo Mission, Technology Mission etc. Such an arrangement not only eliminates possibility of duplication and cross-purpose working, but also reduces need for additional fund.

There is a built-in mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability involving third party independent monitoring and through State, District and Village Level Monitoring Committees with total community participation. The beneficiaries are paid through and into their bank accounts which means financial inclusion in real terms. The State Bank of India has given "viewing rights" to the Implementation Board to closely monitor fund flow and payments made to the recipients. NABCONS, an agency under NABARD with proven efficiency, has been assigned the task of undertaking mid-term appraisal.

The project is estimated to cost Rs.2873.13 crore over a period of five years. Almost the entire cost will be borne by Govt. of India in the shape of grant. The beneficiaries will contribute to the tune of Rs.346.15 crore which will make them truly involved participants in this great endeavour.

A 3-tier management system has been put in place for planning, implementation, review and monitoring of the programme components. The NLUP Implementation Board at the highest level comprises of all Ministers and MLAs, bureaucrats, NGOs, experts in different disciplines, representatives from Planning Commission and select Central Ministries and prominent citizens from the intellectual circle and is chaired by the Chief Minister. Similar Committees have been formed at the district level headed by the concerned Deputy Commissioners and the district Officers of concerned line departments and progressive farmers/NGOs as members to supervise and monitor the project implementation, organize training and demonstrations etc. The key implementation agency at the grass root level are Village Level Committees headed by the Presidents of the Village Councils and include prominent citizens of the village.

NLUP was formally launched on 14th January, 2011 which was declared by the State, Govt. as State Farmers' Day highlighting the crucial role of the farming community in the overall scheme of development. Actual implementation was preceded by formation of a comprehensive land-use plan at the village level identifying the types and quantum of land for a variety of productive use and a household survey for selection of beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are families which have had no access to any institutional finance and a little over 50% of them are daily wage-earners.

The Bible says: "where there is no vision people perish". But Mizoram has a vision backed by firm commitment of the State Govt. and the people. Chief Minister, Lal Thanhawla, whose brain child the NLUP is, succinctly puts it: "We have a vision for inclusive growth and financial inclusion. We are committed to transparency and promotion of all round development of the poor families". Mizoram is poised to usher in a brighter tomorrow for its nearly 1.2 million people. And in so doing, will set an example for others to emulate.

The writer is a retired IAS Officer currently serving Govt. of Mizoram as Principal Adviser

I wish to inform about an incident that took place on Sept 9, 2015. I boarded an SSTS bus from Police Bazar to IGP Point at 5 pm. As far as I can recall a report had appeared in 'The Shillong Times' earlier this week which stated that coupons can be bought from the Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (M.U.D.A) office in lieu of cash payment for SSTS buses. After reading this article, I bought twenty coupons costing Rs.5 each. Unfortunately, on producing the coupon to the bus conductor of the SSTS bus (No. ML 01 6558), the very same day, the bus conductor refused to accept the coupon on the grounds that the coupon was 'outdated.' He also remarked that the coupon should be 'torn' and 'thrown away.' Will the MUDA authorities please clarify why this sort of injustice should happen and why outdated coupons should be sold to the unsuspecting passengers? Should MUDA not take action against the person who sold the outdated coupons?

Yours etc.,
Tushar Bhattacharjee,
Via email

MUDA selling outdated bus coupons!

Editor,

Yours etc.,
Raghav Jhunjhunwala
Shillong -1

choices, both financial and social, to augment their income. Already more than 15% of the beneficiaries have confirmed that their income has enhanced by 10 to 20 percent. Besides, it gives them the required exposure on project management and market integration which leads to capacity building at the lowest level. In terms of physical achievement, about 40% of the nearly 80,000 families engaged in shifting cultivation have, in the meanwhile, discarded the wasteful practice in preference to permanent vocations. That, by any standard, is a significant achievement.

New Land Use Programme has attracted international attention. When on 29th December, 2012 the State Govt. had made a presentation before a distinguished gathering of top officials of Govt. of India, captains of industries, agriculture experts and representatives of international agencies, the programme caught the imagination of UN agencies. The India representative of the Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) while appreciating the objectives of NLUP said that these were similar to those of FAO and other UN agencies and added that these bodies would like to be partners in that unique development initiative in Mizoram. Sequel to that was the launching of UN Joint Initiative Project on Eco-system Based Livelihood, in which FAO, ILO, IFAD, UNDP and UNIDO that would address some critical issues related to livelihood and gender mainstreaming. The joint endeavour is expected to evolve the most viable models for better management of natural resources, preservation of bio-diversity, creation of job opportunities, both farm and non-farm for women and youths, preservation of indigenous knowledge for resource management and raise productivity level.

The question many people are asking is whether MUDA has prepared a comprehensive city plan. If so then why do we not see things happening concretely? Such an important and mega plan should be made known to the public. After all it is the public that is going to be affected by such a plan either for good or for bad. How can the Government be so secretive about such a plan?

Small minds, small plans

By Barnes Mawrie

"New Shillong" that is the word that has caught the imagination of many Shillongites who are looking forward to some respite from the cramming congestion of the present city. Images that flood our minds when we think of New Shillong are those of good four-lane roads, multiple access roads, well planned buildings, exquisite public parks, spacious parking lots, good water supply etc. However, frankly speaking Shillongites will be disappointed sooner or later since those things will remain only in imaginations. I happened to reach Umsawli a few weeks ago and what I witnessed is a lacklustre New Shillong. New Shillong as of now is only a few sporadic constructions that are springing up. There seems to be not much of planning either. I wonder when this ambitious project will be completed. Take for example the State of Andhra Pradesh which is progressing towards making the twin cities of Vijayawada and Guntur into the State capital, a massive plan is in place to make these cities one of the best in India. There are plans of good highways, abundant water supply, non-stop power supply etc. Given the dynamism of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, we can be sure this project will see the light of day soon. Here in Meghalaya instead, the concept of New Shillong has been the talk

of over two decades but without much materialization. It looks like people of Meghalaya are doomed to be contented only with empty dreams and wishful projects.

It appears that MUDA has not planned for a four-lane road connecting old Shillong and New Shillong. This is evident from the fact that buildings are already mushrooming on the road to Mawdiang-diang. There are even hotels constructed close to the present road. Perhaps some regulations are already formulated for the road expansion, but they are not being implemented as it happens with many other policies in Meghalaya. It is high time that the MUDA minister and her team start acting upon it. Waiting for buildings to crop up along the road will not only slow down construction but it may prove more expensive in terms of money and time. More houses are going to appear in the coming years and soon it would be too late to think of a four-lane road. As it appears today, there seems to be no plan for a four-lane road or else the Government would have already notified the people not to build houses close to the road. If they are however thinking only of a two-lane road, then I say they are planning only for the present and not for the future. Having witnessed the traffic situation in our old Shillong, not to think of wider roads in New Shillong would indicate a complete lack of planning and good will. I have seen a few "new" cities like New Delhi, New Kolkata, New Bhopal

etc and what impresses me about them is good planning in terms of wide roads, ample intersections, fly-overs, good drainage system, water supply, electricity, disposal system etc. These infrastructures came up much before residential complexes cropped up. None of these things are visible in the so called "New Shillong".

In my opinion the New Shillong construction is going in the wrong direction for the reason that roads and other basic amenities should have come up first before the buildings. What we see at present is a reverse process where buildings are coming up before even roads are thought of. This would be like a stupid man who builds a tiny garage when he had made up his mind to buy a bus. Having wide roads first would have facilitated the whole process of developing the city. With the various new constructions in the offing a lot of building materials need to be transported to the location. As of now the narrow weak road leading to Umsawli is bearing the brunt of heavily loaded lorries carrying building materials to the site. This is destroying the only road used by our villagers in the Shilliang-Umkhen Region. It is also posing a danger to the villagers especially children, who live along this road.

The question many people are asking is whether MUDA has prepared a comprehensive city plan. If so then why do we not see things happening concretely? Such an important and mega plan should be made known to the public. After all it is the public that is going to be affected by such a plan either for good or for bad. How can the Government be so secretive about such a plan? In many countries I have seen mega plans of public interest (roads, railways, airports, shopping malls, hospitals, public parks etc) being publicly displayed on bill boards. In this manner every citizen is aware of what is being planned and done by the government and he/she is able to voice his/her opinion. Here, instead, it looks like the Government is very clandestine about the whole issue of "New Shillong". This will only generate suspicions in the minds of the public about the project on the whole. In my opinion, MUDA should make public the New Shillong City Plan. This should be displayed in newspapers and bill boards. The Government is not going to lose anything by doing this; instead it is going to gain more admiration and trust from the public.

Not to be pessimistic, I believe we have a dynamic Chief Minister in the person of Dr. Mukul Sangma who gives the impression that he is intent on doing something positive. "New Shillong" is an urgent need as we are inching towards a traffic standstill in our old city. Looking at the traffic condition growing from bad to worse, the only immediate solution is to relieve the city through its expansion. New Shillong is without any doubt the need of the hour.

TO THE EDITOR

Illegal land grab by S P Mahanta

Editor,

I am Tushar Nath Bhattacharjee of Sydney, Australia, whose property in Lachauimere, Shillong has been illegally possessed by Shree Prakash Mahanta, former Additional Advocate General of Meghalaya until he was made to resign by the Meghalaya Government for the second time in May 2013. I thank you for the report in 'The Shillong Times' (ST Sep 12, 2015) regarding the illegal possession of our parental property in Lachauimere and subsequent reports on the orders passed by the Meghalaya High Court. The property belongs to me and my two sisters Sujata Bezbaruah and Sabita Goswami, all of whom are senior citizens of aged 77 years, 84 years and 82 years respectively. I believe the case has generated considerable public interest in Shillong because of the high profile of the perpetrator S P Mahanta who is both

wealthy and powerful. His method of acquiring our parental property has been judged to be illegal by the Appellate Court of the District Judge B Giri on May 6, 2013. After that the then Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya, Justice P.C. Pant, in his order dated June 23, 2014 corroborated the order passed by the Appellate Court of District Judge B. Giri. But S P Mahanta continues to illegally occupy our parental property in defiance of the judgment of the Highest Court of the State. He has used various Petitions like Revision Petition and Review Petition to prolong his illegal possession, although every one of them has been rejected by the High Court of Meghalaya. His Review Petition was rejected by the full Bench of Meghalaya High Court on September 11, 2015.

One can make his/her own assessment of the standard of honesty and ethics of S P Mahanta, who together with his wife Venetta Kharsynthiew illegally occupied our parental property from July 10, 1993 till date i.e. for 22 years, in spite of the Appellate Court and the High Court orders that occupation of the property is illegal. It

appears that an ordinary person is readily punished by the Law when he or she commits an illegal act. But when a wealthy and powerful person, particularly a powerful lawyer commits an illegal act, it is very difficult to punish him/her for the illegal actions. In our case we are still fighting for justice for over 11 years since we filed the Title suit 10(T)2004 on 7/4/2004.

It is worth mentioning that advocate SP Mahanta is the younger brother of the son-in-law of my eldest sister Sujata Bezbaruah who is one of the aggrieved persons in this case. S P Mahanta took full advantage of this relationship to gain the trust of our family and then misused that trust. In fact, our trust on S P Mahanta was totally misplaced.

Yours etc.,
Tushar Bhattacharjee,
Via email

MUDA selling outdated bus coupons!

Editor,

Yours etc.,
Raghav Jhunjhunwala
Shillong -1

"I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter."

--- Walt Disney

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 39 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

Banning NSCN(Khaplang)

THE NDA government is out to put down the NSCN(Khaplang) faction. It has now banned the group for 5 years. The decision was taken as the outfit was responsible for killing 18 army personnel in Manipur. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) declared a reward of Rs 7 lakhs for information on S.S. Khaplang and Rs 10 lakhs for information on his deputy, Niki Sumi. The NSCN(K) had antagonised the Centre for working out of the ceasefire talks. Another reason the Centre had turned the heat on the NSCN(K) is that it is against the NSCN(IM)'s recently concluded pact with it.

The NIA had previously declared Khaplang a terrorist. The announcement, however, met with lukewarm response in Nagaland. Naga civil society groups had opposed it as did senior leader of the NSCN(IM) who said that the Khaplangs were freedom fighters. It is reported that there were differences of opinion within the government on whether to declare the NSCN(K) an unlawful outfit. Both the NSCN(IM) and NSCN(K) had been banned in the past and the NSCN(IM) had to hold talks with the Centre in Bangkok, Amsterdam and Osaka. But Isak Swu and T. Muivah later came to Delhi for negotiations. That applied to the NSCN(K) also when it initiated the ceasefire. The interlocutor for Naga peace talks, R. N. Ravi is said to be in favour of renewed talks with the NSCN(K) which may be because the Khaplang group has a pact with the Myanmar government. Delhi is not anxious to ruffle feathers in Yangon.

LOOKING BACK

February 19, 1988

Karpoori Thakur cremated

Hundreds of thousands of people including opposition and ruling party leaders, bade a tearful farewell to Lok Dal (B)'s "mass leader" Mr. Karpoori Thakur, whose body was consigned to flames on the banks of the Ganga with full state honours this evening.

Amid chanting of vedic hymns and "veer Kharpoori zindabad" Mr. Thakur's eldest son Ramnath Thakur lit the pyre. Bihar military police sounded the last post, reversed arms and fired seven volleys in the air.

Mr. Thakur, 68, former Chief Minister of Bihar, died of a massive cardiac arrest here yesterday.

Rape charges against Assam Police

The Assam Police authorities have not yet denied the charge of rape on some tribal girls by a few policemen at a village in the district of Kokrajhar.

The Home Minister Mr. Bhrlgu Kumar Phukan, in an oblique reference to this allegation while addressing the senior police officers last week wondered how policemen got themselves involved in serious complaints of criminal offences.

Earlier, the Home Minister in an informal chat with the newsmen said that allegation was not confirmed during the preliminary inquiry, but a detailed report was being awaited. Meanwhile, more than five thousand tribal women held a massive rally in front of Deputy Commissioner's office at Kokrajhar and demanded punishment of the culprits. The All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation, who sponsored the rally, sent a memorandum narrated the incident and sought Centre's intervention to protect the dignity of the tribal womenfolk.

According to the memorandum, seven tribal girls were raped in front of their parents by some policemen belonging to the Assam Police Task Force in the mid-night of January 27, at Bhimka Maligaon under the Bishmari forest area. The

police party was allegedly conducting search operation. The victims have been named as Swila (17), Tharli (15), and Lalita (13) three daughter of Govind Basumatari, Habebala (13) and Dabri (12) daughter of Denka Basumatari Jaimati (15) daughter of Rupnath Naryani and Shova (15) daughter of Hemanta Basumatari.

The memorandum also alleged that the parents were severely beaten when they tried to resist the policemen from committing the crime.

Third workshop of DMs in Imphal

The third workshop of district magistrates to be held in one of the north-eastern states is expected to take up new subjects like arms licensing and the public distribution system.

According to Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances Ministry sources, the workshop is expected to be held in Imphal next month.

A total of five workshops are scheduled under the present plan, of which two have been held so far. After these are over, their recommendations will be sent to the concerned officials in Delhi and then to a meeting of Chief Secretaries before being submitted to the Chief Minister.

Minister of State for Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances Mr. P. Chidambaram told reporters today that an attempt would be made to arrive at uniform model for district administration which could be adopted by as many of the 439 districts in the country as possible.

There was sharp division between the 8 district magistrates and collectors who attended the Bhopal meet and the 9 who attended the Hyderabad workshop on the separation in developmental and regulatory functions.

The Bhopal meet felt that there should be a separation of regulatory and developmental functions, while the Hyderabad meet did not agree.

Judiciary: equalizing the power equations

Patricia Mukhim

The Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA) is unlikely to have succeeded in making the high and mighty of this State dismantle their illegal floors which are reaching to the skies, had the judiciary not intervened. In fact, these money bags who unfortunately include our legislators, have been mocking the system for a very long time and we ordinary, powerless citizens have had to shut up and bear these insults with stoic silence. The system is such that the more powerful you are the more empowered you are to break all the laws. Laws in Meghalaya and in this country are meant only for those without clout. If you are powerful, you have it all. I am yet to hear of a powerful person in Meghalaya being punished for breaking the law. There are several cases in point but one or two stand out very blatantly.

One is the case of the Shillong South legislator Sanbor Shullai whose wife owns buildings which defy the MUDA building laws because they go beyond the stipulated number of floors allowed. Shullai was until the other day the Deputy Speaker of the Meghalaya Assembly and his wife like Caesar's should have been above board, not above the law. But this was not to be. A picture of the seven storied building appeared in the newspapers and only then did MUDA act. The question to MUDA officials is whether or not they should inspect all the buildings they have given permission to, after the completion report is submitted, so as to ensure that the building bye-laws have been strictly adhered to. If they have been turning a blind eye all these years to all the buildings that have defied the laws, what is the reason for doing so? Could it have happened without money changing hands? Why has MUDA not zoomed in on its own corrupt engineers and officers? Should they be allowed to continue in their posts? Such venality deserves punishment. And that punishment must be the same for all, no matter how high and mighty and influential a person might be.

The case of Sanbor Shullai and his wife's micro-mini skyscraper is

interesting. MUDA tried unsuccessfully to serve a notice to the building owner. They refused to accept the MUDA notice and also returned unopened a letter with registered acknowledgement attached. On Wednesday MUDA sent its officials to put up the notice at the said building. It is learnt that the MUDA officials One wonders what the response of Shullai and his wife would be thereafter and whether they will follow the instructions or wait for the High Court to come down heavily for violating the law. What is the capacity of MUDA to enforce its own laws? As of today it appears that MUDA is being driven to act only by the High Court directives. Can an Agency prescribe laws without the ability to implement them and also to take punitive action in case of violations?

The second case of abuse of the law pertains to a senior lawyer who was, until some time ago, the Additional Advocate General of the State. Meghalaya has the unique ability to zero in on tainted individuals to head its institutions as if there is a dearth of people with integrity. This senior counsel was accused of grabbing a certain property and building on it. The land, located in Shillong's premier location - Lachauviere has been under his illegal possession since 1993. The then Chief Judicial Magistrate had ruled in favour of the litigant Tushar Bhattacharjee presently a resident of Australia and his two sisters some years ago. Bhattacharjee has been pursuing the case for 22 years which is clearly a very long time to get justice. The High Court of Meghalaya upheld the CJM's verdict. After several revised petitions before the High Court the senior advocate is told that he can prefer his appeal to the apex court. The point is whether the apex court can give a different judgment on a case that is evidently clear is that of illegal occupation of a plot of land belonging to someone else. That the Government of Meghalaya should appoint as it counsel someone who clearly has no respect for the law is something deserving serious enquiry. Isn't there a check on the antecedents of a person who would be representing the interests of the Government of Meghalaya and by extension that of its people?

After all the Government is not just the body of politicians and bureaucrats and their interests. The Government represents, or should represent the interests of 30 lakh people of Meghalaya. Such a person is expected to have impeccable credentials and no vested interests whatsoever. No wonder the Government is so ill represented in court and invariably loses every case filed against it.

It is not without reason that late Justice VR Krishna Iyer along with Justice P.N. Bhagwati, had thrown open the doors of Indian courts to public interest litigations (PILs). The duo were instrumental in reinventing the Supreme Court as an activist institution in the post-Emergency era. In December last year the Supreme Court set up a two-judge special 'Social Justice Bench' to exclusively hear cases concerning social issues particularly those related to women, children and underprivileged saying that specialized approach is needed for dealing with these matters. The Bench assembles every Friday at 2 pm. The Supreme Court feels that several cases relating to social justice are pending for several years and is of the view that these cases should be given a specialized approach for their early disposal so that the people of this country enjoy the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution. The bench will deal exclusively with social matters, including the right to food and medical assistance. The move is designed to ensure that these cases can move quickly through the apex court.

The range of issues identified includes access to food for drought-hit people and prevention of premature deaths caused by lack of nutrition. The right to health figures on the agenda with the mandate to make access to medical care a reality irrespective of people's financial capacity. In Meghalaya access to health care is a huge problem. Meghalaya's

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) for 2013-14 is 291.37. The MMR is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes). MMR includes deaths during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy. The highest MMR is recorded in South Garo Hills at 521.61 and East Garo Hills at 508.22 deaths per 100,000 live births. These statistics may not be very accurate since they record only institutional deliveries (delivery in hospitals, mostly government run hospitals). Government of India statistics show that Meghalaya has the lowest percentage of institutional deliveries at 51.134% in 2012-13. Whichever way we look at health indicators in Meghalaya we see an under-performing state.

Anemia among mothers and malnutrition among children is quite high in the State, according to official sources. 47.2 per cent of women suffer from anemia and 64.4 per cent of children suffer from malnutrition as per NRHM figures, with Vitamin A deficiency being very high. According to WHO, Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children and increases the risk of disease and death from severe infections. In pregnant women VAD causes night blindness and may increase the risk of maternal mortality. Experts add that Vitamin A deficiency also affects the cognitive abilities of children.

The recent Socio Economic and Caste Census showing that in rural Meghalaya 76% of people are landless is bound to lead to further deterioration of health due to poverty, malnutrition and poor access to health facilities. All these statistics actually make a cogent case to be taken to the Social Justice Bench, because, leaving it to the Government means things will remain the same forever. In the Health Department it has been 'business as usual' and will continue to be so. After all employees of the Department get their salaries no matter how poor the health statistics of the State are. Justice for the poor can only come from the Judiciary.

A cerebral exercise on a matter of words

By Iamon M Syiem

'Freedom of speech' - but are we really free? Should we be allowed to be free anyway? Does that freedom refer to our opinions and our ideas or does it include our language, the words we dress our thoughts as well? Every time I walk the street or round the corner of my workplace and felt the spit of four letter words and obscene slangs slide down my sensitivity like phlegm from an irritated soul, I ask myself, should words like that be free to hit the public domain? Now words have meaning and if they don't, one can be free indeed to throw them anywhere. But must we endure being reminded of all the basic bodily functions that humans go through in the privacy of our bathrooms and bedrooms? Just when we leave these personal and private places to embrace that larger social space out there where minds spark each other in creative interactions...just when we engage ourselves in intellectual exercise, follow the exciting contours of a thought...just when we respond to the beauty of a leaf reflecting the sky in the drop of rain in its heart and the laughter of the wind on a child's happy face...just when the past, the present and the future converge in one dreaming moment of hope...just when the lilt of some soul song release love, the eternal fragrance, to embrace and emancipate a suffocated humanity... that sacred place is once again invaded by the pro-

communication from humans to machines that we alienate even ourselves from our own selves? In a technological world, we are increasingly relating to the things we create, instead of to the creative beings that create them. In a socio-techno world our language has become increasingly functional and material. We can only pour out and respond according to the measure of what we have. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks..." Our capacity to give is enabled by our capacity to take in, and what we take in is what is out there. Our language has become mechanical. We get across the message but we forget the vehicle of words. We forget that words are like living seeds, creative energy with the power to penetrate the spirit of humans and extract that divine spark that takes them to that level beyond the material. There is no greater poverty than an impoverished spirit and a sadly neglected brain. The paucity of meaning is reflected in the limited use of language. Profanity becomes symptomatic of a social malady, a serious indicator of the increasing loss of communication and meaning between the self and the 'other'. Something more is breaking down, our ability to connect meaning within ourselves and our social experience. We are left with a fragmented universe and we further reduce it with a limited vocabulary.

Maybe one could argue mankind has freed himself

The paucity of meaning is reflected in the limited use of language. Profanity becomes symptomatic of a social malady, a serious indicator of the increasing loss of communication and meaning between the self and the 'other'. Something more is breaking down, our ability to connect meaning within ourselves and our social experience.

fane.

Profanity has always coloured our language and our cultures, I suppose, since humans related to each other and to the harsh natural environment they found themselves born into. Perhaps profanity saved us from knocking each other unconscious every time our toxic emotions overflow and our words can't adequately explain that hateful feeling. So profanity is given meaning by its very usage. But never mind its original use; one can do a research on that. The point is, profanity has become a pattern of speech, replacing conversation, the dance of words between humans who are hardwired for communication beyond the functional level of articulating basic needs. Like a high powered car crawling at 20 miles an hour on dirt roads and potholes of neglected highways of communication, we do not maximize our potential to use language as a powerful tool of influence. We leave it to the poets, the writers the scientists, the lovers, to reach for words that translate their experience into meaning and thereby enrich our lives.

There was a period in the 'civilizational' process, perhaps in the age of Enlightenment when language blossomed like everything else. Have we then reached the 'age of disenchantment' or has Time rushed us to that place where we cannot touch our thoughts in laces and satin of words. Has Science so shifted our

from the wrappings of culture to reveal his authentic self, back to primal expressions. We permit ourselves to explicitly give voice to our emotions be it anger or frustration, never mind if toxic flow damage the social body. Is it selfishness, a total disregard for others or is it a cry of help, a need to be heard in an alienated society? If we can determine it is the individual who suffer from maladjustment, we can perhaps address the challenge of integrating the individual back into society through our collective wisdom. What is more serious however is the question of a dysfunctional society, call it a moral and cultural meltdown (and profanity is one symptom of displacement). How do we start dealing with this worrying condition?

Yet I am permitted to hope. Society has always been resilient. Despite political, economic and socio-cultural upheavals worldwide, forces of integration will be at work still. There will be a redefinition of values, what we hold dear - life or peace or cooperation or in the words of this generation 'whatever'. As long as individuals are aware of the need for each other for the purpose of survival if nothing else, they will work on and redefine their patterns of communication, of which language is a major component. In short they will have to mind their words.

(The writer teaches Sociology in St Edmund's College)

TO THE EDITOR

Why is the Apex Court's judgment flouted?

Editor,

On December 6, 2007 the Supreme Court upheld the earlier judgment of the Delhi high court asserting that school teachers cannot be deployed for election duty on teaching days. Dismissing the appeal of the Election Commission, a two bench judgment approved the High Court ruling. St Mary's and other schools had challenged in the Delhi High Court the practice of the EC using teachers for election duty on the grounds that it was hampering the academic interests of students.

This is considered a historic judgment. However, The Election Commission of India and

the State Election Commissions continue to flout this judgment. Is it not contempt of the highest court of the land? In the last Parliamentary Elections teachers were deployed. Presently in Garo Hills teachers have been given orders to perform election duty in the upcoming GHADC election. This is a clear violation of the Apex Court's judgment. Though the election is for a day but a day or two prior to and post election date teachers have to be absent from school duties. You can imagine a school with half of the teachers absent from school for three to four days. It adversely affects the normal function and discipline in the school. This is a real concern as these are days when teachers have to complete the syllabus before the final examination. The worst sufferers are class X and class XII students as they ready for their Selection examinations. The Election

Commission is requested to exempt teachers from election duty as per the Supreme Court of India's ruling.

Yours etc.,
Albert Thyrniang
Tura, West Garo Hills

Mawpat Forest land!

Editor,

After going through the articles and letters on the issue of the Mawpat-Mawlai Forest land, I may mention here that making any agreement with KHADC on the issue would pave the way for deforestation in the said forest. Going-by the track record of the KHADC one should understand how this organization under the pretext of protecting the tribals, has been resorting to all types of activities disastrous to the environment and later leaving us tribals high and

dry. Some members of the Syiem clan want to have an agreement with the KHADC with the ulterior motive of usurping the forest land by a group of Bakhraw Batri (reflecting caste system amongst tribals). They want to dispose it off by dividing the land into plots. Some members of the Syiem clan want to use the land for their own interests only, while some others are opposing all the above attempts, but want to let it remain a forest land. It is difficult to judge who is right and who is wrong here but may I suggest that the State Government should acquire the entire land and declare it a Reserved Forest. This will end the controversy once and for all.

Yours etc.,
B K Lyngdoh Thabab,
Shillong-8

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

"He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery."

--- Harold Wilson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 40 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2015

SC on Meat Ban

THE temporary ban had been imposed in Mumbai on the sale of meat in deference to a Jain festival. The Supreme Court has asserted that every order of prohibition has to honour the spirit of tolerance. And a ban cannot be forced on somebody's throat. The spirit of tolerance has to be inculcated in a very subtle manner. All decisions of this nature should be guided by understanding at a mature level. The SC judges supported the lifting of the ban by the Bombay High Court. Earlier, the Bombay High Court had said that the state placing sudden restrictions on eating habits of citizens was not justified.

Advocate Munish Singhvi who appeared in the Supreme Court in support of the ban pleaded that some compassion should be shown for living creatures. The Supreme Court rightly contended that compassion for living creatures does not have to be only on a few days around festivals. This should be throughout the year. The ban on the sale of meat cannot be defended especially as it is also sold as packed food. Hinduism does not forbid eating of meat and so the ban on the sale of meat is not prompted by it. It is in the interest of the Jains who are against meat eating and therefore stopping its sale for a couple of days cannot be opposed as such. Previously, there used to be a meatless day every week in certain parts of the country though for some reasons, chicken was excluded. However, compassion for living creatures cannot be a religious issue. The Supreme Court was right to say that it should be forever or never. But a ban of this nature can create sectarian discontent.

LOOKING BACK

February 19, 1988

Plea for subsidy on air flight

The Assam Government has urged the Centre to provide transport subsidy on air lifting of electronic components from airports of Bombay, Delhi, Madras, and Bangalore for the rapid development of electronic industry in the north-eastern region. At present the subsidy was allowed from Calcutta and Guwahati only, according to State Industry Minister Mr. Digen Bora.

The Government has also requested the Centre that central investment subsidy be raised from 24 per cent to 33 per cent and the limit from Rs. 25 lakhs to Rs. 50 lakhs as recommended by the State Government. Mr. Bora who addressed the conference of Chief Ministers and Industries Ministers of the region recently at Imphal, said the problems of the region must be tackled sympathetically. The backlog of centuries of underdevelopment of the region must be removed with an accelerated plan of development so that the region occupies as pride of place in the country's industrial map.

The north-eastern States received few industrial licenses and letters of intents, he said. Of the total 680 licenses issued in 1986 Assam's share was only 5 whereas Maharashtra received 96 Gujarat 86 and Uttar Pradesh 69, he said.

Violence continues in Darjeeling Area

A GNLF militant was killed in an encounter following a series of ambushes on the security forces on the ninth day today of the forty-day "Gorkhaland" band. Additional Superintendent of Police Mr. G. M. Reddy and Additional Superintendent of Police Mr. Raj Kanojia escaped attempts on life when the militants ambushed security forces at four places in Soom tea estate near here, Deputy Inspector General of Police Mr. R. K. Handa said.

Mr. Handa said the militants also ambushed a police party escorting passenger buses in Kalimpong and set ablaze half dozen Government buildings including some offices of the Rammam Hydell Power project at Lodhama near here.

GNLF activists exploded 25 bombs in different places of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong subdivisions damaging some Government buildings. More than fifty activists were arrested from Kurseong, Darjeeling and Soom tea estate to raid the GNLF hideouts.

The security forces returned more than sixty rounds killing one hardcore Gorkha volunteer cell member on the spot. No one was injured on the security forces side.

After the encounters the security forces recovered huge arms, ammunition and explosives, unearthed four gun making factories and a training camp and arrested 20 hardcore elements.

The Gorkha National Women Organization, the Women wing of the GNLF, however, alleged that security forces raided the houses of innocent people and burnt down some houses in the Soom tea estate.

Seminar on problem of flood

A two days seminar on the problem of flood and erosion in Assam and its solution began here today. Inaugurating the seminar state. Food Control Minister Mr. Shamsing Hense hope that the seminar would help remove the agonies of floods faced by the state's people.

Criticising the centre for its alleged apathy to solve the state's flood problem. Mr Hense demanded sufficient funds to undertake permanent measures to solve the problem. He said the Bramaputra river erodes large tracts of cultivable land every year but the Centre had not taken any steps to tackle the problem.

Rising Intolerance In Sub-continent Democracy under serious threat

By Amrita Banerjee

The recent killing of two journalists in Pakistan, the assertion of living in constant fear by Bangladesh's 22-year-old blogger Shammie Haque after four of her colleagues were hacked to death by suspected Islamists and the brutal murder of renowned scholar MM Kalbargi herein have sent shock waves across the sub-continent and raised a question: Are we as nations becoming more and more intolerant day by day?

Remember, the essence of democracy was lucidly summed up by Voltaire, 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it.' Arguably, free speech is too important to be restricted; however it might be used and abused. It is a test of any free society that we allow open debate and freedom of thought which we disagree with or even detest.

But today with increasing attack on writers, rationalists, free thinkers and secular bloggers, it seems as if the freedom to think what one likes and say what one thinks has become another empty ritual to which we just pay lip service.

Take Bangladesh. Constitutionally, a secular nation, it has witnessed a series of attacks on outspoken rationalist writers in the last two years. A blogger was hacked to death on 5 February 2013; only a week after the movement against Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and activists who were allegedly behind the genocide, rapes and arson attacks during the Independence conflict was launched.

In the first eight months this year, four more bloggers were killed in similar attacks while a female blogger continues to live in perennial dread after she received numerous threats of rape and death.

Unfortunately, all the four bloggers were associated with the Ganajagan Mancho, which forced the Sheikh Hasina Government

to crackdown on Jamaat-e-Islami by demanding capital punishment for 1971 war criminals.

In Dhaka, media freedom has always been under threat but surely the religious opposition to free-thinking remains the most serious challenge, leading many to leave the country forever. Writer Taslima Nasreen has been living in exile for decades and is scared of the radicals back home.

Pertinently, one needs to recall why Bangladesh was formed in the first place. Ironically, its liberation from Pakistan in 1971 was an act of defiance to preserve political and cultural rights which the so-called Islamic Republic of Pakistan was trying to suppress by imposing Urdu and not recognizing Bengali. Sadly, today in spite of a secular Constitution, the country seems to be following what it left behind in 1971: Pakistan.

Notably, the al-Qaeda had claimed responsibility, for the killing of secular bloggers in Bangladesh whom it described as 'blasphemers'. Equally worrisome, is that there are other softer versions of Islamism that are rising in Dhaka. For instance, the Tablighi Jamaat and another radical group Ansar Bangla Team have also found major traction in society.

Under pressure from these groups, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina even reacted by arresting some atheist bloggers to appease these extremist elements sending a chilling message that those who hold independent views are in grave danger. Since then, writers and bloggers with free thinking views have been harassed, threatened, and killed.

Significantly, the situation is no different in Pakistan. The shooting of two journalists in Karachi within 24 hours last week brings back bitter memories of last year's incident in North Nazimabad area when two Express media groups were gunned down while sitting inside their news van. One of Geo TV's leading anchor Hamid Mir was also at-

tacked in Karachi last year.

The story of Malala Yousafzai, who was shot by the Taliban in Swat Pakistan for wanting to go to school, is famous world-wide. Indeed, it is tragic that Pakistani courts seldom punish attackers and the masterminds are never apprehended or brought to book.

Undeniably, these brutal and cowardly murders are a reflection of embedded intolerance in many Muslim societies and are a reminder that it is not easy to profess atheism when you belong to a Muslim country. True, one can disagree with the approach some atheists take in matters of faith, but it is utterly disconcerting to note that the space for such ideas is shrinking in Islamic nations.

Today, systemic intolerance and human rights abuses against all minorities; Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists as well as secular Muslims and women are on the rise. Religious extremist groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan call for public killing of atheists and demand passing of blasphemy laws.

Also, the extremists in Bangladesh like their counterparts in Pakistan not only strongly principled but also willing to kill anyone who opposes their philosophy of a distorted view of Islam. Moreover, they are willing to die for their cause. Succinctly, their philosophy makes them powerful and dangerous.

India, like her neighbours in the East and West also seems to be in the throes of what Salman Rushdie rightly calls a 'cultural emergency.' Writers and artists are being harassed, sued and arrested for what they say, write or create. Be it famed painter late M.F. Hussain who was exiled, denying Salman Rushdie the right to travel to India after the publication of 'The Satanic Verses'. What to speak of the ar-

rest of two young women after they questioned on Face book the shutdown of Mumbai following Shiv Sena's Bal Thackeray's death. Or the thrashing of women at a Mangalore pub and the murder of the three elderly rationalists --- Pune's Narendra Dabholkar, Kohlapur's Govind Pansare and Dharwad's MM Kalbargi --- within two years is alarming.

Besides, under the Indian Constitution freedom of speech is qualified, subject to what the Government deems 'reasonable' restrictions. Wherein, the State can silence its citizens for a number of reasons, including 'public order,' 'decency or morality' and 'friendly relations with foreign nations.'

Meanwhile, our courts do little to rein in Government authorities. Undeniably, India cannot hope to be a true cultural capital of the world, let alone a truly free society, until it firmly protects the right to speech. Indians must understand that free speech: The right to think and exchange ideas freely is at the core of democracy which we cherish. If the former is weak, the latter cannot help but be so as well.

Clearly, there is one common thread vis-à-vis these unfortunate incidents in the sub-continent three countries: Shockingly, neither of these outrageous attacks on freedom of expression has attracted much interest from the civil-liberties lobby in Dhaka, Islamabad or New Delhi.

Certainly, these cases are symptomatic of the way the struggle for free speech has changed in recent times. Whereby, there is an urgent need now to stand up for free speech as an indivisible right. Nowadays, the danger is not just that we might lose the free-speech wars, but that we risk surrendering our most precious liberty without a fight. --- INFA

(The writer is from School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

TO THE EDITOR

The times they are a changing!

Editor,

I was amused to read about the protest march by our traditional heads (SKNSKBH) against the Governor. They did a silent three rounds (lai sien lai wat) of the road surrounding Raj Bhavan. Reading between the lines this three round business shows implicit faith on supernatural intervention to make the Governor sign the VAB. This faith can even create mountains out of Khasi molehills! His Excellency must be shivering in his shoes! But what if the supernatural refuses to intervene? What if wrong rituals displeased the almighty? But not to worry! Even veteran dramatists mess up their lines not to speak of bumbling greenhorns. The mistake can be redeemed simply by a few eggs (don't forget they must be desi) to be smashed against a wooden board, a few betel nut leaves, some lime and some grains of rice on the 21st when the sit begins. This is bound to attract divine attention not to forget intense media coverage.

It's also so encouraging to see our traditional heads stepping out of tradition to embrace the modern. Rangbah Shnongs of the past were dry and conservative. They were so old fashioned; so conscious of prestige and honour that they even discouraged

getting mixed up in party politics, resorting to pressure tactics and took offence when called NGOs. Today our Dorbar chiefs are more up-to-date. Keeping up with the times! They take out processions. They declare sit-ins when they don't get what they want. Don't be surprised if next they call for a Raj Bhavan gherao. Who will dare arrest them? They are above the law. Our traditional institutions have suddenly become pressure groups led by media and power hungry individuals! Let's wish them luck!

Yours etc.,
KM Jyrwa
Via email

Cong vrs Cong

Editor,

After the fiasco of the Lapang mission for regime change in Meghalaya, another attempt is in the offing to destabilize the Mukul front and this is no longer the Lapang battery. It is a new front comprising firebrand MLAs like PNS, HDR, and few under-dog MDCs who desire to upgrade themselves from Nursery to KG. This conglomeration of petty minded politicians supported by a hoard of power hungry Rangbah Shnong are the ones who organized the public rally at Polo Ground. It was a copy-cat version of Ardent's style of trumpet blowing. While observing this political drama, I may mention here some of the facts collected from political sources about the men and their moves.

Mr PNS has been in the Legislative Assembly as MLA for two terms but is yet to enjoy his dream minister-

ship. This deprivation has provoked anger and vengeance against the regime. Realizing the political threat that he may be sidelined and even lose the blessings of Mukul in 2018, he and his cohorts are now ganging up to show strength against the establishment on the pretext of demanding for the absurd VAB and opposing the MUDA byelaws, expecting that a miracle may happen and that Mukul would try to pacify him. He is wasting lakhs of hard earned money of the KHADC to organize the rally at Polo on September 7, 2015.

Mr HDR had enjoyed maximum power during 2008-2013 when he was given PWD, Home, etc where he had made a killing. Suddenly, now he is left high and dry with the penniless District Council Affairs and some tiny departments. His cherished dream of becoming the CM by fluke, coupled with his anger of not getting plum postings prompted him to join the Lapang battery in the war against Mukul and now in order to fish in troubled waters he is supporting the PNS bandwagon.

And then comes Antonio War. This Laitumkhrah youth was elected to the KHADC as MDC mainly by the blessings of the PG Marbanian family. However he has remained an underdog for more than ten years now. These days he has become over-smart and is also attempting to upgrade himself from being MDC to being an MLA. He intends to

contest the next MLA election from Malki-Laitumkhrah constituency against the three-time undisputed champ and giant killer - AMP, not realizing that the mighty AMP has the capability to dry him up and pin him down till he forgets to contest the next MDC elections.

Yours etc.,
Bayantimai Lakiang,
Shillong -1

Know your strength!

Editor,

The restlessness of the KHADC these days in pursuing the draconian law (Village Administration Bill) exhibits the narrow mindedness of the CEM and his group and their ignorance of law or their evil designs to gain cheap publicity and to garner votes. By so doing they have confused the general public and created instability in the society. Every educated person in the country is aware that the District Councils exist and function under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India. The 6th Schedule is only a fraction of the vast Constitution of India which is considered one of the longest Constitutions in the world today. Any bill passed by District Councils has to obtain the assent of the Governor of the state who is the constitutional head. The Governor has the power to summon, prorogue and even dissolve the District Councils. Para 12-A of the 6th Schedule

Where I belong....

By Pauline M

Without belittling the discrimination that the "dkhars (non-tribals)" have gone through over decades in Shillong, I would like to draw a little attention to us, another group of under-dogs, positioned a little above the dkhars but way below the "locals"; we the in-betweeners, the mixed breed.

I am the child of a mixed marriage. My mother is a Khasi and my father, a dkhar.

When anyone asks me what I am, my prompt reply has always been, "I am a Khasi." This "sentiment", however, has not resonated or been accepted by the local community. For them, I was and am a "khun dkhar (child of a dkhar)".

When I earned good grades in school, they said it was expected because I was khun dkhar, little admitting that I had many classmates who fared better and were Khasi.

When I attended Sunday Service in English, they said it was expected because I was khun dkhar, whereas like a lot of other young people all I wanted to do was explore the world.

It was strange. Almost like growing up with an identity crisis. At home we lived like any Khasi family would...we spoke in Khasi, ate our syrwa (soup) and tungtap (chutney), dressed in dharas during special occasions, took our mother's family name and followed all the customs and traditions that our mother passed on to us.

Even stranger was that our father followed them too. He spoke in Khasi, ate what we did and never brought any tradition or custom from his community into our upbringing. We never even learnt how to speak his mother tongue. And none of this came from any decision that my parents conscientiously made. It just was.

And yet out of home, it was starkly different. I looked dkhar and so was advised not to go out late in the evenings, not to get into arguments or pick fights with the locals even if I was right. I was never made to feel safe, comfortable and "local". I had to speak in fluent Khasi to get the shopkeeper to be just a little more approachable, for the taxi driver to be a little less abrupt.

Then there was the additional anxiety and concern about our father's safety whenever agitation against non-tribals raised its ugly head. His extended

enshrines upon the State Government to overrule the laws of the Councils in case they come in conflict with state laws. By convening the public rally the CEM and his group are trying to take things outside the purview of law. They want to incite further confusion in the minds of the citizens. The District Councils were given an inch but now they want to take a yard. They want to overrule the established norms of administration and to undermine the state government and the state legislature.

The activities of the District Councils at present are highly unconstitutional. The VAB should be viewed in the wider perspective so that it does not infringe and nullify the Fundamental Rights as enshrined in the Constitution of India. We would urge upon the Governor of Meghalaya to issue a word of caution to the CEM of the KHADC to remain calm and act as per law

family left Shillong, one after another, unable to deal with the discrimination and live in fear. All of his siblings moved. He was left alone and yet he stayed on because for him this was home.

Non-tribal men have often been accused of marrying tribal women for financial benefits and in many cases this may stand true. It was not so in my father's case. My mother inherited nothing having gone against her parent's wishes and married a Dkhar. He did no business that benefitted by her surname, none of his children got into colleges under the "reservations quota". Though we never discussed it, I assume his choices must be driven by something as simple as attraction and love for my mother; for Shillong; for the Khasi culture. Or maybe this is where he felt he belonged. I have met many Indophiles from across the world who have chosen to make India their home and everything Indian, part of their lives. They live across the country...Goa, Pondicherry, Pune, Darjeeling, adapting the local language, cuisine and customs. Maybe my father was like them. Maybe this was his calling.

As for me, I lived out of Shillong for 23 years, 15 years working in a metro. I lived in the same apartment for those 15 years. It was always sparsely decorated and people who would visit would often wonder why. Money was not an impediment. Those who were close enough to me to dare ask were promptly told "This is temporary, Shillong is where home is."

I recently made a permanent move back to Shillong. As a Khasi and as a "khun khatduh (youngest daughter)," I grew up knowing that it was my responsibility to look after my parents in their old age and run the family home. My mother taught me that and my father reminded me of it often.

One would think that a life-altering decision like that would be proof enough that "I am a Khasi" but no, just yesterday someone at a Public Office remarked saying, "You khun dkhars are lucky. You earn in your father's land and then come to your mother's to save on Income Tax."

Yes lady, I left behind my apartment, a seven figure salary, a uniformed chauffeur driven car, a personal secretary, my colleagues, my much-loved friends...an entire life, just to avail of the income tax exemption! Oh, and I don't even have an income currently.

Leaves me wondering if I should change the title of this essay from "Where I belong" to "Where do I belong?"

(This essay reflects the personal views of the writer and not of any community or group)

otherwise the KHADC should be declared a disturbed council that ought to be suspended or dissolved. In order to avoid such unpleasant state of affairs the Chief Minister should take note of the high handedness of the present CEM. If required the incumbent should be replaced. Lastly, we also urge the MLAs to discuss this issue in the Legislative Assembly in order to maintain the status and dignity of the State Legislature as laws duly passed by the Assembly cannot be rampantly disgraced and spoken cheaply of by dignitaries like the CEM, but to be complied with and implemented in the right spirit.

Yours etc.,
T L War & VR Lyngdoh
Thabab,
Shillong-8

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.

Much joking and rib-tickling go on about the 'den', a man's preferred refuge in the house. But have a heart; men too need their cosy nook and seclusion to let the hair down and let loose the creative juice, discovers Pramita Bose

Male of the species has been possessive about his cave since his early wandering days. And a spill-over is still quite in evidence. Today perhaps the cave has been replaced by lavishly-decorated cosy corners in urban apartments, but the basic need is the same: a den of his own to unwind. Some man-caves exude attitude, while others are soulful to a fault. To each his own.

"A male-only space of concrete or a plot of land is a great place to grow your kind of trees, fruits and flowers without barging into the female domain. You may dangle a 'Do Not Disturb' board outside to convey the message clear and loud, warning trespassers!" says Palash Sen, popular musician and front-man of Euphoria music-band. But the thorough gentleman and family-man that he is, Sen generously adds an extension to his 'me' time with 'our' pastime.

"With my hectic schedule creeping into my free time, I guess every single moment spent with the near and dear ones is priceless. In absence of that opportunity, I usually love to be surrounded by my old pals or indulge in nostalgia with an acoustic guitar. After all, music gave me the identity I am known for," confesses the artiste.

Multifaceted Shantanu Moitra composes music, cooks and goes on treks too to be on his own. Armed with a funny bone and a witty sense of humour, the adventure-freak enjoys his 'alone' time inside his car when in town. Not only is it his favourite mode of conveyance but a trusted alter-ego as well. "My Audi car with its Q5 model has been a constant source of



remained a close companion along a considerable part of my journey. Its unique features creates an ambience suitable for my concentration," believes the tunesmith with hits like Parineeta, PK, etc. under his belt.

Fashion designer Nimish Shah's private den has a boyish charm. Designed by his brother, the penthouse has a soothing interior décor. Embellished wooden panels, a large LED TV, a beautiful kitchenette with mini-bar, a study with a cute cupboard and other bric-a-brac in the room. "I am basically a lounge lizard who wants to work

A den of my own

peps me up to deliver the best shot," explains the couturier. Nicely furnished with curvaceous ottoman couches and shapely benches apart from a large coffee-table, carpets with

painted walls, the space evokes a quirky sense of funky as well as the traditional.

For reclusive Bollywood singer-scorer-songwriter Mithoon Sharma, his music-room is his sanctuary in serenity. Done up according to his devotional streak, his recording-studio attached with a song-writing suite is his own realm. "I have a place to pen down my lyrics alongside with a piano to practice the notations. It's here that I find my 'true self' and my creative calling," he reflects. "A musical environment is infectious with its purity. It effectively cleanses your heart," opines the soft-spoken pianist.

Not much of a social butterfly, the Tum Hi Ho hit-maker prefers to spend time with a dedicated team of musicians or with the movie directors he is presently working with. His pious bent of mind prompts him to begin his day with morning prayers

as he believes "art is not only a result of man's efforts but also a blessing from the Almighty above."

Sought-after bestselling author and columnist Chetan Bhagat says that the restroom is his pet site to mull over ideas and issues for his books and commentaries. "Silence works best for me and the loo is one place where you can detach yourself from even domestic disturbances," he says frankly.

Model-cum-actor Abhinav Shukla employs his electronic engineering background to create a work-station in a little nook of his house with lights, battery packs and small chargers. "It's a do-it-yourself niche for me where I prepare electrical circuits and put all my academic knowledge to use. It's my favourite hobby," he confides. "Another cubbyhole is meant for hitting a punching bag to sweat it out and blow off steam to induce a cathartic effect," Shukla adds.

Television actor and host Karan Tacker and presenter of the reality show The Voice India, chooses his bedroom to reinvigorate himself. "It has to be my bed kicking off with the morning breakfast followed by catching up on quality cinema as am a quite a filmi person and a couple of my favourite sitcoms too," chips in the 29-year old. Not ruling out the male bonhomie from his roster, Tacker too 'bromances' and bonds well with his mates over a tippie and good music. "But the best is when I snuggle up under a blanket in my comfy clothes. Honestly, my room is the finest spot to spend my time. Physically and mentally I have to feel at peace to recharge the exhausted batteries and get ready for a busy grind ahead which this room provides," he says. So now you know why a man jealously guards his den. (TWF)



Mithoon Sharma in his music room

energy and enthusiasm for my creativity. It has

from his comfort zone and relax at the same time. It

graphic prints and black & white photographs strewn across the massive

Debunking myths on food, capturing war legacy

Embark on a journey to beat the eating habits associated with modern lifestyles and debunk the myths and misconceptions on food. Also to read is the legacy of the Great War and a heartwarming tale on how a pet dog can influence a man's life. Here's what the IANS bookshelf has to offer this weekend. Happy reading!

1. Book: The Baby Elephant Diet: A Modern Indian Guide to Eating Right; Author: Ravi Mantha; Publisher: Rupa; Pages: 188; Price: Rs.195

With the advent of modernity and changes in what one eats, obesity and lifestyle diseases like diabetes and heart-related illnesses are fast becoming global pandemics. Our health depends 80 percent on what we eat. But do we really know what not to eat?

Embark on this journey with the author Ravi Mantha, to find out healthy ways of eating, customized to Indian settings. The author who is a foodie besides being a health-guru is here with some easy tips on what to eat and what to consume in less. This baby elephant diet, is not about becoming slim, but staying healthy.

2. Book: Good Hope Road; Author: Sarita Mandanna; Publisher: Aleph; Pages: 386; Price: Rs.595

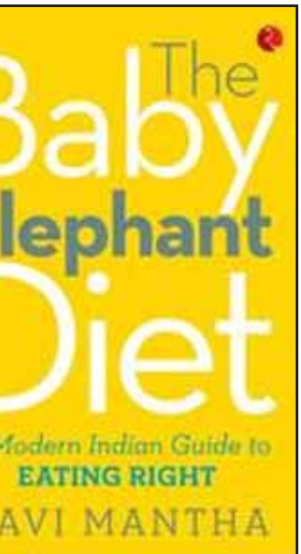
Coming from the author of the critically acclaimed novel Tiger Hills, this novel is set at the outset of the Great War. James Stonebridge, a New England Yankee and Obadaiah Nelson, a Louisiana native, were among those Americans who

were filled with idealism and romantic notions. Despite their backgrounds, these two men form friendship that helps them endure the horrors of the war. Here's a book capturing the legacy and life

of the World War I, and the determining spirit people kept in life.

3. Book: Waiting for Doggo: One Man, One Dog, One Big Love; Author: Mark B. Mills; Publisher: Headline Review; Pages: 213; Price: Rs. 350

Here is a heartwarming story about two people in love - Clara and Daniel -



and their Doggo. The time comes when Clara has to leave Daniel and Doggo alone. Clara leaves a note to Dan saying, "I'm going away. A long way away. I can't tell you where..", her last words to him.

The book now revolves now around Dan and Doggo, who "haven't hit it off" according to Clara. Through the narration of Dan, one can read throughout the book on how a pet can influence a person.

4. Book: The Future Of (Almost) Everything; Author: Patrick Dixon; Publisher: Hachette India; Pages: 344; Price: Rs. 399

To survive and prosper in business and to shape your future, Patrick Dixon has come up with ideas that will help you motivate customers. Dixon wants to live in the future and see tomorrow as history. He wants to be a part of the change in which our values shape the world. He wants us to think globally as the world will be even more connected than now.

From Bookshelf

Former Bagan footballers excited about visit Brazilian legend to Kolkata after 38 years. Debdoot Das tries to find more about it.

A date with Pele



Pele in action in Kolkata

With the legendary Pele set to revisit the football crazy city next month, former Mohun Bagan footballers who turned out against him on a slushy September afternoon here 38 years back, are overcome by nostalgia, relieving the sweet memories of their confrontation with the Samba magician.

It was a rain-drenched September 24, 1977, when Pele and his New York Cosmos club set foot on the hallowed cricket venue Eden Gardens -- then also used as a football stadium for vital matches - with over 80,000 raucous fans cheering every move of the then 36-year-old



Shyam Thapa with Pele in Kolkata

Brazilian.

The match, however, produced a surprising result. After conceding a goal, Mohun Bagan rallied brilliantly to lead 2-1 for a substantial part of the game. But Cosmos finally managed an equaliser and the match finished 2-2.

Bidesh Bose, a fleet footed left out during his playing days, said playing against Pele was a dream-come-true.

"It was like a dream. I had just got into the Mohun Bagan team and was a jun-

ior in the side. Before the game the thought of playing against Pele didn't let me sleep," a nostalgic Bose said.

He recalled that Pele played the exhibition match overruling objections from his management which was unhappy with the slushy conditions. "I was awestruck. I thought for a moment how do I play against someone like him. Pele here was standing right in front of me. But unfortunately he could not give off his best due (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career options in Homoeopathy

We have published on Indian Medicine as career options. This time we are going to publish career options related to another alternative medicine which is known as Homoeopathy. Homoeopathy is a system of alternative medicine created in 1796 by Samuel Hahnemann, based on his doctrine of like cures like, according to which a substance that causes the symptoms of a disease in healthy people will cure similar symptoms in sick people. There is no doubt that many of us had visited homoeopathy doctors when we were small.

The history of Homoeopathy in India is linked with the name of Dr. Honigberger, a French man who brought homoeopathy to India. He was attached to the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He arrived at Lahore in 1829-1830 and was later invited to treat Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, who happened to be seriously ill of paralysis of vocal cord with swelling of feet and native physicians were unable to improve his health in 1839.

Homoeopathy today is a rapidly growing system and is being practiced almost all over the world. In India it has become a household name due to the safety of its pills and gentleness of its cure. A rough study states that about 10% of the Indian population solely depend on Homoeopathy for their Health care needs and is considered as the Second most popular system of medicine in the Country. It is more popular amongst children in our region as many child are taken to homoeopathy doctors.

Students willing to make homoeopathy as a

career can take up education at first degree and post-graduate degree levels. The first course, which gives a Bachelor of Homoeopathic Medicine and Surgery (BHMS) degree, is available in many colleges affiliated to various universities. An aspirant must also have qualified 10+2 examination



in science with Biology as an optional. Homoeopathy, like any other regular medical course, requires five and a half years medical training. This also includes one year of compulsory internship.

CCRH/CCH: Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) was established as an autonomous organisation in 1978, under the Dept. of AYUSH, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India. Primarily a research body, CCRH has a multi-dimensional approach to research and its varied research activities include 'Survey, collection and cultivation of medicinal plants', 'Drug standardisation', 'Drug proving', 'Clinical verification' and 'Clinical research'.

Central Council of Homoeopathy is a statutory body of Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Department of AYUSH and it deals with the colleges in different parts of the country.

Aspirants should not feel frustrated if they don't get into MBBS or BDS courses as alternate medicine also gives opportunities in the society and research in the field might bring more scopes in the future. We need strategy to be successful in life and everything is possible with authentic information and proper planning.

Opportunity for Law Graduate: Centre for Social Justice has announced the Young Professionals Programme for Legal Empowerment (YPPLE). YPPLE is designed to strengthen the capacities of young legal professionals to research issues of access to justice, and design interventions using law as an instrument for social change at the grassroots level. Those interested must send their applications latest by 20th September, 2015.

(For further details and career planning interested may call at 98640 55558 or email at bkranjn@gmail.com)

By Bhavana Akella

Spread across the dusty old Khajuraho town in Madhya Pradesh, its temples don't just represent architectural finesse and stand as chronicles of time, but also contribute to a large extent to the way India is perceived by the rest of the world - as the land of the Kamasutra, although the book was written much ahead of time.

As one visits these temples, one is overwhelmed by not just the exemplary Indo-Aryan medieval architecture but majorly by the bold sculptors of that time, who challenge even the present day's world with their erotic carvings, meant for "educational" purposes, as the local tour guides term it.

Mahatma Gandhi was also known to have found these images "deeply distressing" and wanted the temples cleansed of these "indecent and embarrassing" representations. Khajuraho, however, has continued to remain as the



abode of these erotic carv-



Kamasutra land

To settle the differences between the different sects of Hindus, the locals say.

Apart from these temples, the town doesn't have many tourist attractions - apart from the spectacular sunrise at around 5.50 a.m. So what is drawing so many visitors to this rocky plateau, surrounded by emptiness? "People are fascinated to see that Indian society

was so advanced back then in the 9th century itself, which the sculptors depict through their artworks. It shows the society was open to discuss sexuality and that sex was also one of the ways to reach divinity," Fahim Khan, a tour guide trained by the Madhya Pradesh government said during the author's visit to the town.

Lucas Hellmann, a resident of Cologne, said his interest in the text of

Kamasutra drew him all the way to visit the temples.

"I have always wanted to know the origins of the world famous text - Kamasutra. It is interesting to know that these temples represent the text through sculptures so beautifully. And I never thought holy temples could be the place for such representations," Hellmann said.

The erotic carvings of the temples, as one would notice, take a lot of detailing. There are women who are shown bathing and the water droplets, clearly seen, along with the garments which can be seen as transparent. Another woman who is shown troubled by a thorn in her foot with exasperating facial expressions. Then, there is the sensuality of a celestial nymph putting her make-up on.

Not to be missed are the

yogic Kamasutra positions in which the sculptures are shown engaging in plural congresses (orgies), standing coitus and many soldiers engaging in bestiality with their horses.

One can also find representation of homosexuality - and women indulging in self-pleasuring activities. All of these are on the spires of the temples, before one enters the holy sanctum.

These temples are some of the very few places in the country that bear significant representation of sexual pleasures.

No wonder, many foreign journalists in their articles have also termed these temples as the reason for the birth of the Kamasutra.

The sculptures also depict the class-divided society, where if a king indulges in a sexual activity with a woman from a lower class, the woman is shown as a minuscule. And nowhere is the woman shown taking charge or initiating the sexual activity - something unlike what the Kamasutra describes.

A must-see is the light and sound show at these temples, which happens in the evenings, voiced by Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan, unveiling the history behind the temples.

All in all, the bookshop owners in the town expressed extreme happiness, with copies of Kamasutra selling like hot cakes.

(The writer can be contacted at bhavana.a@ians.in)

Getting there

By air - Four Air India flights a week from Delhi via Varanasi

By train - Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi on all days of the week except Wednesdays.

Accommodation: Lodges ranging from Rs.550 (\$8) to Rs.1,500 per night (exclusive of taxes)

Three to five-star hotels ranging from Rs.3,500 to Rs.8,000 per night (exclusive of taxes)

Eating out: Many restaurants and cafes in the town serve Mediterranean, European, American and Indian cuisines

Nearby attractions: Raneh Waterfall, which is active only during the monsoon (June-August), about 20 km from Khajuraho.

A date with Pele

(Contd from P-VI) to the ground conditions. But we did see flashes of his brilliance," Bose said.

It was in the 17th minute of the match that Cosmos broke the deadlock as Pele split open the Bagan defence with a crisp pass, and Carlos Alberto tucked the ball in.

"He dragged us towards him and then shifted his position, he broke open the defence with a brilliant pass. Before that he was shouting something to Alberto, maybe suggesting he move forward," said Pradip Choudhury who along with midfielder Gautam Sarkar was given the task to mark the Brazilian legend.

There were chants of 'Pele', 'Pele' in the stands but the maestro found it difficult to showcase his skills on the ground. At halftime Bagan led 2-1.

"We were able to bottle him up, but the conditions were unplayable too. But we did see sights that left us mesmerized, the way he was receiving balls, his runs, his shifting. He showed us glimpses of his class," said Choudhury, who played as a central defender.

Bagan were well served by their goalkeeper Shibaji Banerjee, who pulled off some brilliant saves. Shyam Thapa and Mohammad Habib had scored for Bagan.

Apart from Alberto, Cosmos' Italian world cupper Giorgio Chinaglia also got onto the scoresheet.

"The match was a turning point too, it helped us regain confidence and we did not have to look back as a team after that. We won the triple crown in domestic football that year," Banerjee fondly remembered.

"My father had warned me against Pele's free kicks. He told me 'let the ball come to you' and that is what I did. You won't probably believe but there were nine men in the wall! I also remember diving in front of Pele's boots to collect a ball. I only survived because of him, if he had not

jumped he could have landed on me and broken my neck," Banerjee said.



Pele in action for Cosmos in Kolkata

"Thirteen years later, he met our coach P.K Banerjee and said he remembered me and compared me to former England goalkeeper legend Gordon Banks. I will fondly remember playing against him and Pele will be in my heart till I die," he said.

All three yesteryear stars are hoping against hope that they get to see Pele in person again. Pele is scheduled to kickstart a weeklong (October 11-17) trip to India from Kolkata, where he would watch Indian Super League side Atletico de Kolkata's (ATK) first home match against Kerala Blasters FC on October 13 at the Salt Lake Stadium.

A meeting with cricketing legends Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly is on the cards. While Ganguly is the co-owner of ATK, Tendulkar co-owns the Kerala franchise.

He would also interact with students and educators from NSHM Knowledge Campus, participate in a conversation with Ganguly as well as attend a gala dinner, that includes a charity sports memorabilia auction.

(The writer can be contacted at debdoot.d@ians.in)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, September 20, 2015

Energy, drive and determination would be the key as Sun semi-sextile Mars on your solar return chart. Professionals flourish and would win accolades as they come in for recognition. The more you reach out to people the more interest will be generated and more recognition will come. Financially this is a good phase and you can look to ways to enhance your funds. Friends will cooperate as 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. Overseas travel will be excellent.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

This period highlights higher education, spirituality, and children. Personal relations improve with patience, love and care rather than through discussion and criticism. You are inspired creatively and emotionally. Your energy increases for work projects, technical education and religious activities. You further your business by expanding in related fields of activity with good chances of foreign collaboration. You would have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

You can be unreflective in personal relations, but need to be loving and caring as family and children need your support and care. You are most likely to express your social, romantic, and artistic qualities. You would be able to resolve delicate business matters, conflicts and family issues with love and care. You are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine good luck and good management. You would please others with your conversation and would give a new approach to communication-related projects, learning, or self-expression.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

This is a good time for family, business and trips. You are active, skillful and gentle while achieving success at work. You may find it difficult to make decisions or choices as you are analytical and see both sides of every situation. It is a good time to look at your own patterns of thought and behaviour to make healthy relations with children and you need to take care of your studies. A clear and logical approach brings you closer to your goals. Artistic self-expression is important, possibly through music, design and writing. A strong desire for companionship and sociability dominates. Yoga and meditation are recommended.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

Personal matters and ambitions are best attended to and fulfilled as you are at your dynamic best, blessed with confidence and style. You extend your hospitality to family and friends as you entertain and organize get-togethers. Your efforts have paid off as you strike a balance with love and harmony at home. You feel that you are now closer to your children. Business partnership and professional collaboration would be financially supportive. Good planning and management lead to progressive and productive ventures. Health needs care and stress needs to be avoided.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

You would benefit through siblings, communications, and short trips. Personal matters and ambitions are best attended to and fulfilled as you are at your dynamic best and blessed with confidence. You have much-needed energy for new money-making projects, or for stepping up existing ones. You may willingly play a supportive role in the family, offering more compassion and selfless love. You are likely to have increased opportunities for travel and new learning experiences. You enjoy talking about what interests you, and you find great value in the exchange of ideas.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

This is a period for money, finance and communication. You can use the power of words to attract what you want to know with greater ease. Responsibility and maturity are themes when it comes to your family and romantic life. This may also be true of relationships with children. Friends and lovers take priority. People at work might be surprised by your ability to assert yourself and your needs. An excellent period begins for love, intimacy, and rewards. You are likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in friendship, or with groups of like-minded individuals. Try to avoid conflicts and

arguments. Exercise patience in driving.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

You're feeling brave, independent, and eager to begin new projects. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional and your ideas are original and progressive now. 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. This is a rather happy, goal-oriented time on the professional front. This is a time to follow your dreams and ideas, and to plant a seed in the form of a wish for the future. You possess extra charm in your professional life. Be careful with money matters. You feel fresh and re-energized.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

Public relations work, promotions, and other such endeavors are favored now. It's a good time to travel, learn and do things you normally don't do. It's a favorable time for your own creations, ideas and for you to apply them in your profession. Financial gains are stronger than any other time. It's a time of creativity, drama, and passion. You are more communicative and busy than usual. This is a great time to present your ideas and to improve your communication skills as you would be in association with younger and talented people and this boosts your confidence level too. Remember, domestic relations cannot be resolved through discussion and analysis but through love, acceptance and freedom.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

Intimacy, spirituality and higher learning are very important to you during this time. You feel emotionally attached with loved ones and family members. Romance, creativity, pleasure and self-expression are on your main agenda. 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. You will seek chatty and vibrant friends who stimulate your curiosity and mental abilities. It's time to compromise and negotiate with family and children. This is a very significant phase, when you are inspired creatively and emotionally.

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. Money matters are especially important to you in this phase. On a more practical level, you may be dealing with joint finances and shared resources. Give to a partner exactly what you would like to receive. Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy. 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. Instead of having cocktails and drinks have whole fruits and vegetables to feel energetic.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

You need the energies, companionship, and support of a loved one. You focus on balancing your personal interests and objectives with your social life. Social interactions of a personal, one-on-one kind are emphasized. Your popularity is increasing in business ventures, and is reinforced by your own ability to cooperate and harmonize. Perhaps you are socializing more than usual on the job. You have good team spirit right now, and you are more tactful and obliging with your co-workers. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for research and meditation.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

This is a memorable time for communication, phone calls enjoyment and finance. This is a strong period for discovering what gives you the most pleasure. You enjoy feedback from others more than usual, but you do prefer to be the center of attention. It's a generous, pleasantly emotional, and creative phase. You could seek distinction and strive towards perfection in your work. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored at this time. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, especially in the company of a loved one this week. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities or a structured exercise routine.

“However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at.”

– Stephen Hawking

The Shillong Times

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KSU on right track

North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) has been without a full-fledged Vice Chancellor (VC) ever since the previous VC, Prof AN Rai left his job half way in June 2013 to join as Director, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Bangalore. AN Rai's tenure at the NAAC however was short-lived as he quit in April this year after the Chairman Dinesh Singh, former VC, Delhi University was asked by the NDA Government to put in his papers. Rai and Singh were both appointed by the UPA Government. Since June 2013 NEHU has been running on an ad-hoc basis because an acting VC cannot perform various statutory duties. As a result normal academic and administrative activities have suffered. Major decisions on vital issues have been left pending. The NEHU Teachers' Association (NEHUTA) had made a representation to the Ministry for Human Resources Development (MHRD) in November last year asking for appointment of a regular VC but to no avail.

When the NDA Government took over in May 2014 there were great expectations that it would work differently and fill in vacant posts in different strategic institutions of the country including in universities with individuals having excellent track records. This expectation is belied. Whenever and wherever the Modi Government has appointed people to head institutions, those appointments have drawn flak because of various reasons. The appointment of Gajendra Chauhan, a small time actor as Chairperson of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune has brought the Institute to a standstill as students have gone on strike for nearly two months. Prof XP Mao, President, NEHUTA has expressed grave concern over the inordinate delay in appointing a VC which in turn has led to several irregularities. The acting VC cannot take major financial decisions even while promotions of the faculty members has been kept on hold for over a year. Several other important posts in the university are also being clubbed together and vested upon one or two individuals, further affecting normal functioning. While one individual is functioning as Controller of Examinations and Registrar apart from teaching in his parent department, another individual is holding dual charge as Deputy Registrar as well as Finance Officer. Dr Mao rued the apathy of the Centre towards the affairs of NEHU - the North-east's first and oldest central university.

The intervention by the KSU - a students' body is appropriate. We can only hope that the Centre does not ignore the pleas of the students' body and that a person with sound academic credentials is appointed at the earliest. After all, there is no dearth of such individuals befitting the stature of a VC of NEHU in this country.

LOOKING BACK

February 19, 1988

Shillong Customs collectorate in a flux

The Shillong Collectorate of the Customs & Central Excise has been going without a collector for about six months after the last incumbent was transferred to Delhi. The Collector C & E, Mr. D. K. Acharye, has been holding additional charge of the Shillong Collectorate for the present.

It is surprising how Shillong Collectorate which has jurisdiction over the entire North-East, has been left without a Collector for such a long time.

Jobless Agri, Graduates pleas with Shylla

The unemployed agricultural graduates of Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills have urged the State Govt to take

steps to employ them under Rule (3) of the employment. They met the Minister of State for Agriculture Mr. H. S. Shylla this week and pleaded for waiving the provision for qualifying through the MPSC. They told the Minister that unless this was done their chances of being employed in the near future would further recede.

The graduates expressed dismay over the lack of decision on the part of the previous Govt and said that they felt “cheated” by the erstwhile Govt.

Welcoming the Chief Ministers priority on agriculture and horticulture, they hoped that under his, “dynamic leadership” would take a prompt decision on the matter.

Stirring Young Minds

H.H.Mohrmen

There is this good and promising trend in the colleges of the state these days that apart from textbook teaching, colleges now also organize workshops and panel discussions on pertinent issues that are widely debated in the community. Gone are the days when colleges are but portals for study and the teachers and the students had just one goal and that is to finish the prescribed syllabus by hook or by crook. The end of the jug and mug system of teaching is at hand. Now students question and even give suggestions and comments at the workshops and panel discussions organized at their respective colleges.

It was an honour to be invited to share my thoughts in two panel discussions last week organized by two prestigious colleges of Jowai and Shillong. The first panel discussion was organized by the Khasi department of the Thomas Jones College, Jowai on September 15. The theme of the discussion organized by this young but promising college of the town was on marriages in the Khasi -Pnar society. The topic had three sub-themes: early marriages, mixed marriages and the Adam's rib variety (shyng krung).

It is indeed true that in a community like ours where love marriage is practiced, early marriages or to be more precise, teenage pregnancy is a major problem. There are many reported cases of babies being found abandoned and meeting with untimely deaths. What is not being reported are stories of thousands of young mums who are denied their youth; whose studies had to be abandoned and whose future is jeopardized because of the unexpected pregnancies. Their families accept the unfortunate experience even if those involved are minors. They conclude that there is nothing else they can do. This is not good for the society and it is bad for the young mothers who are not mature enough to shoulder the big responsibility.

Dr N Nongpluh of Norman Tunnel KJP Assembly Hospital, Jowai shared the most alarming information in the panel discussion when she informed that there are growing numbers of young women who seek medical help to abort unwanted babies. I am not trying to

be moralistic and judgmental here. I don't even know what I would do if faced with a similar situation in my life, but I believe there is a way out of this. And Dr Nongpluh further clarified that this happened despite the fact that young girls today are aware about i-pills and other contraceptives. It is only natural to fall in love and in my opinion it is improper for elders to lecture young people and forbid them from falling in love. How can we stop something which is naturally ordained? How can we preach to young people not to start having affairs while they are in college? What about us? Did we not pass that same path while we were students? Even my college going children have boyfriends and girl friends so, trying to prevent our youths from having love affairs is not being realistic on our part. Denying the truth is not going to help either. Teenage pregnancy is a reality and a major problem, so what is the solution before us. The only solution is to introduce sex education in schools and colleges to teenage pregnancy. And whenever pregnancy occurs can we encourage young, pregnant women to offer their babies for adoption? Teenage pregnancy is not peculiar to our community only; it is a huge problem in the west as well. But in the area where adoption is culturally acceptable there is also a system in place that teenage mothers can offer the babies for adoption. But I have my doubts if this is going to happen here because culturally the Khasi-Pnar people don't usually give their kids up for adoption. In fact it is matter of shame for the kith and kin if one of their own is offered for adoption. In such a situation the only recourse available is to introduce sex education.

The second sub-theme was mixed marriage. This is not unusual. The Khasis have since time immemorial had the practice of 'tang-jait' wherever a Khasi man married a non-Khasi woman. There are many 'Kurs' in the Khasi community which originated from 'tang-jait.' Note that I did not use the hyphenated Khasi-Pnar in this context because there is no practice of 'tang-jait' among the Pnar people, not that they do not enter into marriage with their neighbours, the plains people. The Pnar people did marry non-tribals and there are many instances of member of the royal family of the Jaintia kingdom marrying members of other royal families in the area.

The resilience and tenacity of the illegal liquor sellers, bootleggers, moon-shiners, or whatever fancy terminology you decide to use. Despite the frequent raids by the cops and Excise personnel earlier, the bootleggers are back, faster, higher, stronger not giving a hoot about the authorities or the law. But frankly, I'm not surprised anymore because that is the ever-turning circle for as long as I can remember. These people always tend to get a heads-up before any raid and by the time the cops or the Excise personnel bumble their way to the clandestine sites, the wrong doers are nowhere to be found and the place is as clean as a whistle (anyone else here strangely recalls Macavity?). If rumours are to be believed, these people (here in Keating Road) selling illegal liquor claim to have impeccable connections with everyone - right from the almighty 'Seng Bhalangs', to the higher ups in the Police department, Excise department, the DC's office, and even among the hallowed haunts of Ministers and MLAs. To the uneducated observer... who knows it might be true. 'Seng Bhalangs' - for obvious reasons, of course. Keating

I therefore think that it is difficult if not impossible to find a true blooded Khasi-Pnar, if there is such a thing.

In fact I caused quite a stir in the discussion when I declared that I could very well be a dkhar or at least certain percentage of dkhar blood might be flowing in my vein. I said that 'rmen' in War Jaintia dialect means non-tribal or people from the plains 'dkhar' and my original surname 'Myrmen' mi-rmen (not Mohrmen) literally means 'maybe they are dkhar.' Who can really claim that he or she is true Khasi-Pnar by blood or that only pure Khasi-Pnar blood flows through his or her veins?

Who are we to question mixed marriages? Do we really have the right to question a practice which has been a tradition since time immemorial? And since our ancestors were liberal enough to allow mixed marriages, how can we with all the education we have say that it is wrong? It confuses me sometimes to hear people shouting at the top of their voices trying to discourage mixed marriages when these same people quote scripture to say that marriages are made in heaven and what God has united let no man divide.

Then there is also a good chunk of the population in the State who claim that they love the jaibynriew from the bottom of their hearts and vow to give their lives for it, but they don't know which creation stories to believe. We all know that two creation stories are not the same, even in the H y n n i e w t r e p Hynniewskum story. There is a variation between narrative of the Khasi people with that of the Pnar. In the H y n n i e w t r e p Hynniewskum story there is no Adam and Eve so where does Adam's rib come in?

The other panel discussion was organized by Department of Social Work of St. Edmunds College, Shillong on September 16. The topic of the discussion was the Importance of Indigenous Knowledge in tribal society. Well, study of the indigenous knowledge is getting popular in countries where there are autochthons like in

Meghalaya. New studies like Agro-ecology, Nature Spirituality and other such studies are getting popular. In Meghalaya's context there is a new interest in the study of tribal medicines and this can be seen from the mere fact that tribal medicine practitioners are no longer called quacks, but Traditional Medical Practitioners or Herbal Medicine Practitioners which indicates the growing acceptance, recognition and respect of the practice even by educated sections of the population.

But indigenous knowledge also includes knowledge about the community's culture, farming or agricultural practices and other aspects of our society. We have our unique way of life in the way we eat, we live and even our attitudes towards the other communities and the environment around us. The Khasi-Pnar people are known to be hospitable and their relation with the environment is similar to that of a fish and water. They understand that one cannot live without the other. They live in the environment and are part of the environment. They also understand that the two are inseparable from each other because they are interconnected. Indigenous Khasi-Pnar knowledge is one which understands that the people have a deep connection with nature which they call home.

In farming and agricultural practices we notice that the farmers are gradually losing native seeds after the state government introduced genetically modified seeds of different vegetables and crops. But there is a new trend these days wherein farmers are beginning to develop native seed banks and in some cases, farmers have begun sharing local seeds among themselves instead of depending on seeds supplied from outside. For many decades the state government introduced and encouraged farmers to use chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, but the same government now encourages them to go back to organic farming.

To borrow from Dr S Lamare Principal, St. Edmund's college's statement, the study of indigenous knowledge is important because we need to be firm in our roots. We need to understand ourselves; where we stand as a community on various issues. Only then can we move forward!

still some sense of pride, dignity and responsibility towards the society by the officers in the Excise Department, Police and our honourable MLA. Let's hope they find the tricks to outsmart the tricksters...or perhaps we should elect one of the tricksters to represent us...or are they already? Well that's food for thought. Or should I say, drinks for thought?

Yours etc.,
Leonard Wankhar
Shillong-1

Open Public Toilet

Editor,

Come winter and I shudder to think of the ammonia-stench that emanates from the parking space in Rynjah just outside the walls of the Dispensary. Now that the rain is soon going to stop washing down the place, we, the commuters through that road will have to wade through the puddles of urine that collects and flows down the road. With the heavy traffic, pedestrians will get a splash onto their clothes, cars that park or pass by will carry that stench all over the place. It has become the open pub-

Where are the sunflowers?

By Goirick Brahmachari

As a student at Assam University, Silchar one thing that bothered me most was the mundane, non-political structure of the student life that we were forced to live with. We have had our share of protests over lack of water supply and bad quality food at hostels. We did break a few glass windows of the Administration building, and fought verbally with the then Registrar, but all of that was never really for the greater common good. These were just instances of individual anger to meet basic needs, corroborated with fellow hostel mates and classmates. Most of us were naïve enough to pride on being *apolitical*.

I think the protest for better a road that runs from Silchar to Irongmara was probably a political protest. But most of us were not very serious and so across the two years of my Assam university life, much of the road remained same.

I do not blame you when you pride, like I use to, and call yourself *apolitical*. I understand the mistrust the word has created for years, thanks to the corrupt practices of every politician across party lines. So much so, that the term itself has become a synonym for hypocrisy, nepotism and spreading rumour. But I must tell you this, that politics does not mean joining a political party. Politics does not mean spreading rumour. Politics does not mean you have to raise a slogan or bear a torch.

As a basic exercise, we all, including me, must recollect the correct meaning of the word. And, to make you feel better, I would define it as a social science that deals with polity or nation state, something that makes us think beyond our own lives-something that makes us study history, economics, sociology and science and inspires us to make this world a better place to live in.

I believe every individual is political. You, who are reading this now might laugh out loud and say, *I have absolutely nothing to do with politics*. But this denial itself makes you a part of the larger political system. What we do not realise, is that us being apolitical helps the people who are in power. Also, those instances in your life when you have stood up for your rights or for the sake of others, whoever it may be, (your family, your brother, friend, or your partner) you were political. Politics in that sense is the essence with which we can love each other, even if we are strangers. Politics is what makes you cry when you walk by the slums of Kali Bari Chor and makes you angry when you see people fighting in the name of religion or language.

Politics is in Rabindranath's poetry, in Nazrul's songs, in Ghatak's frames, in Pink Floyd's Animals and in Bob Dylan's Harmonica.

If I had a time machine, I would have taken you to the 1960's- The decade of protests and love-the decade of a mass uproar for

love. From America to Kolkata, university students were jailed for writing poems, for painting on the walls, for saying what they wanted to say. It was when those rich white kids left their rich fathers and married poor Afro Americans from the west coast and the Delta- When Rock, the music form was born, when documentaries were invented and science ensured we had electric guitars (even if the moon footage was staged).

The Hippie and the student movements across the world brought in half of the issues we study in social science and humanities today - Economic equity, gender issues, civil rights, free speech, environmental concerns, the concept of welfare state and even, new styles of poetry (Beats in Greenwich Village and then in San Francisco, Hungry Generation and other young writers in Kolkata). The entire world was brought to a standstill through the rage of university students. To quote Mr. Ginsberg, I am talking about those "...who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war..." Howl, 1965-66.

Around the world, from Cambridge to Berkeley to Jadavpur, students were thinking the same thought, talking the same words, singing the same songs but they did not know about each other for long. These events happened mutually exclusively. Back home, at Silchar, it was mostly the college and university students who participated and died in that historic protest against language politics on 19th May, 1961 and helped in protecting the rights of people who spoke Bengali in Assam.

Where is that anger now? Why do you think our universities do not speak? How long can we be numb about things that affect people around us? How long can we scream against the Assamese or the Khasis or the Muslims and shy away from our own mistakes? How long can a simple break up turn into religious or racial conspiracy?

I am not asking anyone to start a march right now, neither am I asking anyone to begin sloganeering at every small incident that affects us. All I am proposing here is that we need to be more politically conscious and take politics seriously.

To sum up, university life is an experience that changes how we look at society and life in general. How we accept each other's culture and deny what our parents/ relatives had taught us since childhood, about other communities. It is an experience through which taboos and stereotypes are broken. It teaches us the essence of politics and pluralism, the ability to be inclusive and liberal, the externalities of which may even transcend beyond your own self and reach our friends and families.

I will conclude with the hope that we all will try and perceive the term *politics* in its original form, rather than the distorted form that it has become today.

Your etc.,
C. M. Pyngrope,
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.

lic toilet for all taxi drivers and men some of whom do not even care if they were relieving right in front of kids or women. If you were to halt there, in half an hour, a dozen or more would be lining up against the walls.

I am not going to fix responsibility on anybody here but I earnestly call for some action from the authorities concerned to make this place a liveable one. There is no drain and even if there is, where would it lead to but to the residential areas. Besides, the dispensary where all

the poor patients from this side of town avail treatment is definitely affected by this callous act on the part of our fellow citizens. Perhaps a decent public toilet would help the drivers particularly, who have no place to relieve themselves during their daylong business.

"In my opinion, there is no aspect of reality beyond the reach of the human mind."

- Stephen Hawking

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 43 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

Campus besieged

THE University Grants Commission (UGC) has laid down safeguards for campus security but they seem to be as stifling as prison walls. Barbed wires, high walls, surveillance cameras and police patrol have been recommended to restrict students' movements. The UGC instructions are said to be in the best interests of students. Strangely, journalism courses have been specially insulated from elements which are supposed to promote terrorism. Students' attendance will be checked keeping an eye on a student's movement and whereabouts. The guidelines have naturally aroused the indignation of students and teachers. They feel more unsafe than safe. What is apparent is that the UGC is out to subvert the autonomy of academic institutions.

However, the UGC is the only body taking such an authoritarian attitude. The West Bengal Governor has asked the State government to draw up a code of conduct for its universities to tackle violence on their campuses. The UGC primarily doles out funds to the universities but these grants are not always easy to secure. The body is therefore incapable of discharging its primary responsibility. The safety of campuses can therefore be only a matter of secondary importance to it. There is accordingly a case for abolition of the body. The West Bengal Governor's instructions to the state government also clash with the treasured values of autonomous running of academic institutions. These institutions should be free from an atmosphere of strict regulation. But that is exactly what is happening and it militates against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plan of minimum government and maximum governance.

LOOKING BACK

February 20, 1988

Red alert in Punjab

In a switch of tactics terrorists exploded bombs in four district courts killing nine people and injuring fifty while five others were gunned down elsewhere in Punjab during the past twenty four hours.

Terrorists in a coordinated action after a long time, set off blasts in Amritsar, Patiala, Hoshiarpur and Gurdaspur official spokesman said.

A bomb was found in a container hung on a cycle parked inside the district courts complex at Jalandhar this afternoon.

Army experts have reached the site and security forces cordoned off the area.

A powerful bomb ripped through a soda water factory in front of the court of the additional district and sessions Judge at Patiala, killing three people and injuring one.

In Hoshiarpur, three people, including a woman, were killed and six injured in an explosion. Those injured were identified as Bishaa Nath, Tejpal, Soha, Inderjit Singh, Rama and Vishva Mittar.

Terrorists shot dead two persons this evening at Gaggar Bhana and Dyal Rajputan villages under Mehta and Sarhali Police stations respectively in Amritsar district this evening. Victims have been identified as Durga Das and Kulwant Singh.

An official spokesman said a powerful bomb exploded at the district court complex in Gurdaspur City this afternoon, killing two people and injuring 23. Five of the injured were reported to be in serious condition.

One person was killed and thirteen were injured in a bomb explosion in the Amritsar district court this morning. The victim was identified as Tarlochan Singh, a driver.

The injured were identi-

fied as advocate Mr. P. P. Sarpal, Ms. Saluinder Kaur, court clerk, Mr. Jagdish Kumar, Mr. Jaspal Singh, Mr. Harkishan Singh, Mr. Aksha Kumar, Mr. Sadhu Ram, Mr. Darshan Singh and Mr. Ram Singh.

Fifty people were rounded up for Questioning in connection with the Amritsar bomb explosion.

Four terrorists gunned down the gunman of the State Bank of Patiala branch in Patiala today. The terrorists went to the bank on the Sirhind Road and opened fire, killing Nasib Singh on the spot.

Some terrorists attacked the residence of the station house officer, Raikot in Ludhiana district last evening, killing one person on the spot.

Security forces in Punjab and Haryana have been put on alert in the wake of the bomb explosions in four district courts in Punjab today.

Union Home Secretary Mr. C. G. Somiah said "I have spoken to director General of Police Mr. J. F. Riberio on telephone and directed that the security forces be put on alert."

Security forces have been asked to take all precautionary and protective measures.

The district courts will be provided adequate force to ensure security.

Top Home Ministry officials today reviewed "The new kind of threat" that had appeared in the State.

Besides keeping up the "Special alert", the authorities in the State had been asked "To take all possible steps to trace the culprits".

Home Ministers Mr. Buta Singh also spoke to Punjab Governor Mr. S. S. Ray and asked him to take all possible steps to ensure security of the people.

Senior officials of the Home Ministry were in constant touch with high officials in Punjab.

The Future We Want for Meghalaya

By Phrang Roy

The indigenous peoples of Meghalaya and Nagaland will be hosting the International Mei-Ramew gathering (also internationally called the Indigenous Terra Madre 2015) from 3 to 7 November 2015 on the overall theme: The Future We Want: Indigenous Perspectives and Actions. The gathering will bring together delegates from more than 52 countries and representatives of over 100 indigenous communities around the world making it one of the world's most representative indigenous meetings to date. As representatives of so many indigenous peoples are about to gather in Shillong, I congratulate the leadership of the United Democratic Party (UDP) for organizing this introspective-interactive session on its 18th Foundation Day to reflect on the policies that will be needed for a brighter future for our people.

As Khasis, Garos, Hajongs and all the other tribes of Meghalaya, we are a part of the 5000 distinct indigenous cultures with a global population of about 300 million people. We are to be found in 75 of the 164 countries of the world. We make up only 4% of the world's population but represent 95% of the world's cultural diversity, a fact that we tend to forget. Our traditional territories occupy only about 22% of the world's land surface but these areas hold about 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity. Until recently, this contribution of indigenous communities has been ignored and even ridiculed as a sign of backwardness. However, as the international community searches for a meaningful way forward from the our evolving crises of food security, climate change and unsustainable development, many scientists and policy makers are increasingly turning a thoughtful gaze towards indigenous peoples and their culturally rooted agro-ecological practices. Indigenous peoples hold unique knowledge and wisdom which has enabled them to sustainably manage resources and to respond to their ever-evolving opportunities and threats. UDP will do well to make this its core strategic thrust and framework.

We have traditionally been attached collectively to our ancestral land and territories. We have organized our society at the level of the community and have made decisions on a consensus basis. In short, we have been holding a very different worldview - a worldview places emphasis on relationships rather than services, on the sacred rather than the materialistic aspects of life. It is therefore not surprising that we are often seen as misfits in a more self-centred and competitive development paradigm of mainstream societies.

Our rural peoples have been responsible custodians of our biodiversity, wise knowledge holders of diverse plants, animal behavior and smart researchers of climate smart agro-ecological approaches for advancing health and well being. Their understanding of ecology has developed over thousands of years of interaction with nature while our recent western theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches are based on our recent events. For example, the discovery of the existence of tropical forests is only a few centuries old and the recognition of their global importance is of an even much more recent date.

Our rural people have their own ways of monitoring climate and weather changes that many of us who have professional degrees and who tend to migrate to urban areas, seem to have forgotten. For example, the people of Nongtraw village in Sohra Sub Division monitor climate or weather changes by the movement of schools of worms from and to the river. The indigenous pastoralist communities of East Africa predict a likely drought by studying the innards of a slain camel. The Inuits of Canada foretell climate change from the changing rhythms of a sledge. Dr. Daphne Miller, a Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco who will be coming to Shillong to speak at the International Mei-Ramew, in her bestselling book, *The Jungle Effect*, showed that indigenous communities can teach the world some of the healthiest diets of the world and about health and well being in general.

In preparation for the International Mei-Ramew 2015, we have been frequently visiting many rural areas especially the 41 villages that will be co hosting the Interna-

tional Mei-Ramew gathering. Three issues have consistently emerged from these meetings and they are the following:

- the sacredness of their lands, shifting cultivation and the nurturing and controlling role of women especially of the Kur land in Lynggam and West Khasi Hills;
- the dramatic loss of soil fertility with modern cultivation practices;
- the yearning for the peace and harmony of the past when governance for the good of all was the primary concern of their local chiefs and headmen.

The future of our rural people will very much depend on the future of our food system. For too many years, we have been asking our local communities to improve their livelihoods by changing their farming practices by increasing the productivity of their lands through a chemical based modern agriculture system. In doing so, our extension workers have rather naively ridiculed the shifting cultivation and the other traditional food and agriculture systems of our ancestors. Today, the world has come to realise, except for big corporate bodies, that the modern system of food production that is based on chemicals is not sustainable. Look at what has happened to Punjab. Einstein noted: "We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." Prince Charles also said: "We have to realise that in food production we are dealing with living organisms be they farm animals, plants or the soil".

The future of our food will therefore have to be based on a very different paradigm that is more embedded on the diversity of our cultures, species, economies and landscapes. This is an area where all of us can unilaterally play a proactive role for the future of our own people. Our rural people must become important partners in search for diverse and environmentally sustainable local food systems. We need their knowledge as much as they need our research support for new chal-

enges. We need to have a greater appreciation and respect of the traditional learning processes of our rural community members that is based on observation, reflection and learning through trial and error and not only on academic memorising. This must be part of our new approach to education where our school programmes must have a compulsory inclusion of local agro-ecology along with the learning of modern science. Dr. Francisco Rosado May, a Mayan Professor of Agro-ecology from an Inter-cultural University in Mexico who visited Meghalaya and Nagaland in August 2015, as part of the pre events of the International Mei-Ramew, said that his University teaches students both modern agronomy and also traditional agro-ecological practices of local communities. He said that 95% of his students, on completion of their studies return to rural areas. This has helped the Government to find extension workers and researchers who are very comfortable with their own rural areas. Perhaps this is the future of our rural communities and of our rural youths.

I see a lot of opportunities for Meghalaya to move forward using an agro-ecological framework and to create platforms to promote sharing, learning, research and collaborative practice. The challenges are of course many given the influence of market forces, media, peer pressure and the vested interests of the more privileged. But a beginning can be made and we should with some luck be able to crack the hurdles as they pop up.

But to build a genuine partnership based on agro-ecology, we will need to respect the ancestral lands and territories, the traditional organizational structures and the local cultural identity of our people. We need to face the causes of the growing landlessness in some of our areas. We need to have the courage to use the constitutional authorities vested on us to consider declaring some areas as traditional local food sovereign areas similar to the international initiative of indigenous community conserved areas (ICCAs).

(The author is Chairperson, North East Slow Food and Agro-Biodiversity Society (NESFAS) and former Assistant President IFAD. This paper was presented on the 18th Foundation day of the UDP on September 11, 2015)

TO THE EDITOR

Of mixed breeds

Editor,
This is with reference to the article written by one Pauline M. 'Where I belong...' (ST September 19, 2015) where the writer gave a few clues about the ugly truth of harassment that half-breed Khasis suffer in the Khasi society. But at the same time, I would like to remind Pauline M and others that there have always been Khasi people who understand and recognise the truth that Khasi society and culture since time immemorial has always had a relationship with the non-tribals, either by blood or otherwise. There are those who value, love and respect individuals irrespective of whether one is a pure Khasi. At the same time I never cease to be amused at the hypocrisy of those who despise and ill-treat the so-called half-Khasis. As per my observation, I have seen and know people who have such hatred and jealousy in their hearts against half-Khasis but nonetheless are ardent church-goers and preachers of the good news. They also forget that

many of the Khasi clans have their origin from non-tribal women (dkhars). The prefix "khar" in many clans provide enough evidence for this fact. Those who deny this would be hypocrites. Such people may be shocked to find in their own blood a genetic link to their non-tribal (dkhar) ancestors, if a DNA test is to be done. Yet they continue with their prejudice even after knowing these facts suggesting a distortion in their reasoning process. Many Khasi words too like 'ka mula, ka dorbar, pyn budnam, ka miej, ka duitara (do tar, meaning two strings), ka jaka', etc. have been borrowed from the 'Dkhars'. The custom of "tang-jait" still practised to this day speaks volume of the facts stated above, whereby a Khasi man marrying a non-Khasi woman adopts a new clan name with or without the prefix "khar". There are good number of such clans which have just come up in the past 10 years or so. It is time that we learn and accept these facts and shed hatred and prejudice from our hearts. Let us learn to protect our culture without hating others.

Yoursetc.
Name withheld on request

Relocating wine stores

Editor,
The recent Government of Meghalaya's stand on liquor sale through the Excise Department is indeed a welcome move. Finally Meghalaya will witness change in the manner liquor stores and bars are licensed keeping the educational, religious and medical institutions in its ambit. As everyone is aware, the localities in and around Laitumkhrh are locations of many educational institutions, religious places of importance and hospitals too. Yet there are wine stores, bars and pubs galore. The 200 meters distance set out by the Govt. will finally clean the areas within and around Laitumkhrh which indeed has left many dumbstruck by the manner in which the wine stores and bars have mushroomed there. Sometimes it is difficult to understand how the District Administration gives licenses for wine stores and bars despite the existence of strict rules that

they should not be in the vicinity of educational institutions. We hope that the 6 month deadline that the Govt. has set for the existing wine shops and bars will be strictly followed by all. In fact the areas within and around 200 meters distance of Laitumkhrh should be declared as a "no liquor zone" as they house as many as 8 major schools, 4 major colleges, 4 specialty hospitals, 4 major religious institutions and many more. If such rules are adhered to, then Jingkieng Nongthymmai, Nongrim Hills, Laitumkhrh, Dhankheti, Lachumiere & Malki should be 'No wine store zones' of Shillong. But how and in what manner such rules be implemented, and whether those with political clout will have their way yet again, only time will tell. As concerned citizens we hope the Govt. is serious on its commitment.

Yoursetc.,
Firstly Lyngkhoh,
Shillong-1

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

Shillong as a Smart City: Ideological and practical weaknesses

By Phrangngi Pyrtuh

Urbanization is synonymous to modernization both regarded as by-products of the Industrial Revolution. Urbanization is a modern phenomenon and post the industrial revolution is a result of the pursuit of material wealth and higher living standards. Cities are no longer living organic entities but have become the source of capital generation. Since capital and wealth is bestowed in few hands only, investments and its return are shared/ distributed by those controlling the flow of capital. In the future, cities are going to become the mainstay of capital/investment growth. The rural sector will assume the residual benefits accruing from the metropolises.

The smart city concept of the NDA government endeavors to usher a new era of urban planning through nodes of autonomy and self regulation. The invisible hand of the market is the guiding tenet underlying the Smart City concept where the needs and requirements of urban governance is left to market forces. The Smart cities model replicate the operation of market forces for efficiency and productivity within the domain of democratic management where major decisions are left to the representatives of urban local bodies. Shillong for all the hype the Smart city generated is ill-suited to meet the demands of the model.

After the initial jitters and much skepticism Shillong was rewarded with a place among the 98 cities declared for the Smart Cities mission. A financial bonanza of Rs 500 crore spread over the next five years awaits the city. The buzz surrounding the financial package notwithstanding, there is a mellowed response to the project if not met with a sense of déjà vu. At the moment Shillong is ill prepared to opt for any kind of reconstruction or modernizing agenda. There are formidable hurdles which require time consuming efforts for resolution. Some of these issues need legal and institutional change which does not happen overnight. These are well known to the public such as the recent issue leading to the MUDA-KHADC slugfest, the building by laws, the lack of representative urban bodies to oversee the projects etc. Ceteris paribus (all things being equal) more money allotted to Shillong will cause more problems than solution. The absence of elected urban bodies pre-empt all chances of success. It must be mentioned that even the JNNURM scheme was allotted to Shillong after making certain exemptions. The results for such exemptions are there for everybody to see. No one has benefited from the scheme. Some have blamed the failure of the JNNURM, Shillong Master plan etc on groups who opposes land acquisition et al. Even in a scenario where there are no opposition from such NGOs, there is no guarantee of success and the scheme would have gathered dust anyway unless we have proper mechanism of accounting and check the leakage of public money.

Coming back to the Smart city/Shillong theme, the Urban Affairs is certainly going to execute approved projects without finding solutions to the obstacles already mentioned. Instead temporary solution would become the norm and would be necessary in order to avail the financial manna. It is expected that the Urban Affairs will learn from the fiasco surrounding the JNNURM project which

has left a bitter taste in the mouth for most Shillongites. Crores of money disappearing without trace and incomplete projects uncertain of their existence or utility eg the Nongmynsong housing project etc! The only hope left for these floundering projects is only if the NDA government reworks these incomplete JNNURM projects under AMRUT.

Experts have already expressed doubts on the financial viability and sustainability of the Smart Cities mission. Though the objectives seems novel with focus being on promoting mixed land use, creating walkable locations, preserving and developing open spaces, promoting a variety of transport options amongst others, the Smart City model is technology driven and will become an important indicator for service delivery, efficiency, security etc. Some of these objectives have been vaguely mentioned in the Shillong Master plan which is itself in limbo. The presumption is that the Shillong Master Plan would occupy an important place in the Smart City plan.

The Smart city concept is a people's driven agenda on what they want their city to become etc which is totally absent in the case of Shillong. For Shillong at least its residents have no say at all during the drafting of the Smart City Plan (SCP) which was sent to the Union Urban Ministry in order to qualify for the elimination stage of the 2 stage competition. All we know is that the Government constituted a 16 member State Level High Powered Steering Committee with departments such as PWD, PHE etc as members. It is now imperative to put the details of the SCP under public domain though the point of this exercise maybe too late since Shillong already figures in the Rs. 48,000 crore project.

The Smart city model is at best an oxymoron for Shillong. We will get the funds but will it make the city smart or the people living in it smarter? If the recipient of the project which in this case refers to the people of Shillong, feel alienated from the scheme of things the Smart City is at best superfluous. The only beneficiaries of the project are those who are going to control the flow/diversion of funds which going by the JNNURM experience may become unaccountable to the last paisa. It would not surprise anyone if those running the JNNURM schemes gets the same deal this time round.

The outcome of the Smart city project takes at least a minimum of 20 years to become visible. There are endless challenges for urban planning and management in cities all over India. The increasing population, the endless migration from the rural areas, landlessness and increasing inequality in cities etc are formidable problems which are beyond the realms of Smart cities. They requires long term perspective planning which is absent for Shillong.

My take is that the Smart city will exacerbate the situation of traffic problems, shrinking public places such as parks and pedestrians, increasing air, water and garbage pollution and what have you. Shillong needs to belong to the people if things are to change. I am definitely not optimistic when I say that 10 years down the line the Smart city tag will remain a euphemism of all that is wrong with the ineptness of our institutions, our policy and decision making abilities. The Smart city would instead become the Achilles heel for the city. The fall of Shillong is inevitable if we continue to ignore the signs.

“Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

- Francis of Assisi

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 44 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Coal mining: Private vrs Public interest

CHIEF Minister, Mukul Sangma is repeating in the Assembly what he had stated in the March session which is that he would seek the invocation of Para 12A(b) of the Sixth Schedule so that laws made by Parliament would not apply to Sixth Schedule State like Meghalaya. This statement contradicts what he had stated publicly not so long ago. Sangma had then stated that coal is available abundantly in Meghalaya but that did not mean that it should be extracted and exploited relentlessly without any concern for the environment. In fact that was also the time when the deaths of nine miners inside the coal mines of Garo Hills had occurred and the State had been hauled up for its slow response to the issue and for not investigating the deaths with urgency. Those who heard the CM's statement at the time appreciated his foresight because it was evident that coal mining in Meghalaya was not environmentally sustainable. That was before the National Green Tribunal banned coal mining in Meghalaya. At the time there were several reports of rivers having turned toxic and devoid of marine life. Forests had been brought down by twisting the laws and redefining the very nomenclature of what actually constitutes a forest. Environmental NGOs protested loudly against the callousness of the coal mafia. But their pleas went unheard. It was only after the Dima Hasao Student's Union of Assam took the matter to the Supreme Court that the NGT was told to take a call on the issue. The students' body pointed to the toxicity of the rivers that had hitherto been their source of potable water. The NGT took serious note of this petition and banned coal mining in Meghalaya almost immediately in April 2014. Naturally this has had a cascading impact on the State's economy. Meghalaya lost about Rs 600 crore as revenue from coal mining and transportation. Meghalaya had drafted the State Mining and Minerals Act but had failed to implement it because it did not fall in line with the Central Mining laws which are more stringent and which also allow for corporatisation of mines which the mine owners here were wary about. Mining in Meghalaya is a private business and the mines belong to tribals so there was no question of paying income taxes or of filing any financial returns which would become compulsory once the mining activity is centrally regulated. The CM has admitted publicly that his wife owns coal mines too. He would therefore not want to bring any law that would jeopardize her income from that source. This is where a clash of interests prevents the implementation of any law. Why should mining in Meghalaya be governed by a separate law? The central mining laws have very clear directives about environmental protection measures to be undertaken by the mining companies. These companies are also subjected to the Companies Act 2013 as well as the provisions of the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules 2014 which came into effect from April 2014. This rule stipulates that every company, private limited or public limited, which either has a net worth of Rs 500 crore or a turnover of Rs 1,000 crore or net profit of Rs 5 crore, needs to spend at least 2% of its average net profit for the immediately preceding three financial years on corporate social responsibility activities. We are well aware that the private mine owners have not paid a single penny towards CSR activities till date. The profits raked in over the decades has not been put into any productive use such as setting up schools, hospitals or even reclaiming abandoned mines which have become huge dangerous craters that would result in a holocaust should an earthquake of high intensity strike us. These issues don't seem to be important to the CM but he is in a hurry to resume mining activities. This limited vision is not what Meghalaya requires from its leader. Has this young leader lost his imagination and creativity? Is the financial burden bearing him down? Meghalaya deserves better!

Ethics and Economics

By Paramjit Bakshi

Going through the back issues of the ST which had piled up, during my prolonged absence from the city, two things struck me. First, that the problem concerning the traditional institutions still lay unresolved. This was expected. Hardly anything gets resolved here, smoothly and quickly. The second thing to catch my attention was completely unexpected. Apparently the government had spent seven crore rupees on buying drugs for male infertility. Ahem. Well, all of us can easily figure out, what that the real issue in this case was. Some unimaginative character, could not devise a more ingenious way, to siphon out the welfare manna. So he blended sex, money and power –the three elements driving most human activity, into one lucrative and juicy scam.

On the subject of juiciness, let me introduce - The Kamasutra - a book in our imagination, both juicy and scandalous. This perception is coloured by the editions, available at most bookshops, containing explicit artwork of couples, engaged in erotic postures. “The Complete Kamasutra”, translated by Alain Daniellou, unabridged and with commentaries, is more than five hundred pages of text without a single picture. Juiciness aside, the reason d'etre for mentioning this book, is its brilliant introduction, which offers a simple perspective to analyse, our everlasting liaison with corruption and economic stagnation. It enlightens us at the very outset, that life necessitates three kinds of activity. The first is the pursuit of money and material things, or *artha*, fundamental for survival. Beyond that we also need healthy erotic practice, or *kama*, to facilitate transmission of life from one generation to another. The third, ignored by most, is *dharma* or the discharge of moral and social commitments to ensure harmony and cohesion, rather than strife and turmoil in society. “The Kamasutra” rather than being a mere sexual manual thus formed, with the *Arthashastra* and the *Dharamshatras*, a trilogy guiding us to fulfilment, joy and peace.

In Meghalaya we have, as indicated by the census, our libidos intact, but do suffer deep rooted ethical and economic challenges. Instead of harking at every scam, or screaming about economic neglect, we need to rationally examine our

predicament. For many years I was involved in imparting life skills to students in an institute. The one question I asked every batch was – “do you think honesty is a good policy?” Invariably eighty to ninety percent of the youth did not think it was. One well understood their sceptical response. In their own neighbourhoods the young see corrupt people doing amazingly well. They see dishonest politicians, government servants, suppliers, contractors, and businessmen all cashing in on the good life. They notice them owning multiple houses, swanky cars, going abroad and being treated with respect by everybody including the guardians of law. Even many religious leaders, in the words of Abdul Hameed Adam, “give the rich respect and glory as their prize, (and) fob off the poor with promises of paradise”. The young see honesty and hard work leading not to prosperity, but to servitude and misery. Thus when they hear moral lectures from priests, parents and teachers, they see through our hypocrisy, and choose a path of easy money and moral apathy. Since the rot here runs so deep, that even the so called protectors of society, are busy filling their pockets they cannot imagine a world any different. They remain unaware, that the ethos of Meghalaya is not the only one which operates in the wide world. And unless we make them see this aspect of global reality, their attitudes will hardly change. Of course exposure to the outside world is important, but even everyday examples can be used, to make them see things differently.

One developed simple ways of doing this. For instance one would ask them whether they brushed their teeth daily. Of course all of them did. When asked which brand of toothpaste they used, the majority invariably replied, “Colgate”. I would then tell them that this brand of toothpaste sells globally. It sells because the company consistently gives us a decent product at a fair price, unlike the majority of our politicians who sell only hollow promises. The manufacturers do not pack just a few tubes with the good material, and the rest with spurious stuff, as petty government suppliers often do. Our faith in the product makes us buy the product regularly, and this enables the company to make handsome profits year after year. In fact this one company probably makes more money, than the combined income of all the dishonest people we see around us. And there are

literally thousands of such honest businesses in the country and in the world. So if one wants to get rich or to make it big, honesty is the only policy. Of course there are cases of corporate dishonesty, but this is rarely done by visionary founders of large companies, but mostly by fly by night operators and ambitious employees who in spite of their MBAs remain ethically illiterate. Since these dishonest corporate houses eventually collapse, the fact remains that the world runs because of honest people, and capability without integrity is of little value.

Insofar as our economic stagnation is concerned, the root of the problem lies, in our hypocritical attitude to honest money making. One needs to relook at our egalitarian mindset, which looks down upon honest wealth generation, yet allows people, in the garb of social or government service, to become rich clandestinely. The concept of “ease of business” is unknown here. Anybody wanting to start a legitimate business has innumerable hurdles to cross, irrespective of whether he is a local businessman, or an outside investor. Innumerable sanctions have to be got from various authorities, ranging from the headmen, municipality, district council, state government agencies and all these are not just time consuming but often require greasing the palms of many individuals. In addition to this, often some NGO's have to be constantly humoured and entertained. If you consider that all legitimate businesses carry inherent risk, and then add all these factors, do you think any youngster in his right mind, would ever want to start a business here. He would either pay to get a government job, or start a NGO, or become a militant, or a budding politician, a government supplier or a contractor where all that is required is proximity to the powers that be, and one can make loads of money without much investment, risk or fear.

The two cities one visited this time were Ahmedabad and Bangalore, and coincidentally both went through a spot of trouble, during my sojourn there. Ahmedabad saw a spell of violence and subsequent curfew in some parts, as fall-out of a rally organised by the Patels, demanding reservation. In Bangalore, Malleshappa Kalburgi, a scholar and academic of repute, was killed by motorcycle borne assailants. However, neither of these incidents are characteristics of these cities. Both cities individually, have GDPs which are at least fifteen times, the SGDP of Meghalaya. The first has been ranked third amongst the list of fastest growing cities by Forbes, whereas the second is known as the Silicon Valley of India. Sadly Meghalaya from being the God given Scotland of the East, is joining sister hill states, in becoming the Scamland of the East. Neither money driven militancy nor politically motivated agitations have helped the situation, but have only taken us further away from prosperity, towards misery and adversity. Our economy is in shambles, and like other North-eastern states, we are now on the threshold, of tearing our social structures apart, with two thirds of the state already lawless. It is useless for us to expect the politicians to correct this problem, because the majority of them have no moral authority, left to do so. And sadly very few of us, even have the integrity to advocate ethical behaviour in our homes, or in our localities, far less in the entire state.

Having lived here long enough, one is aware that most of us, who are critical of scams, will jump at the chance to scam some money ourselves. We, the electorate, are as corrupt and hypocritical, as the elected. However what is truly sad, is that our youngsters, devoid of opportunity and correct guidance, are following with increased gusto, the paths we have unthinkingly trodden so long. The bankruptcy of ethics is more alarming, because even the best of us have chosen to be, silent bystanders in the ongoing plunder of our meagre resources, by people who employ power, deceit, or violence to do so. Hakim Momin Khan Momin, a nineteenth century Urdu poet wrote a poem, which in its translation, went like this- “There are some who remain silent, but are sunk in deep surmise. Yes, they will speak the truth, but when the price of truth is on the rise.”

Well the price of truth and honesty in Meghalaya is at an all time low. Not surprisingly, so is our economy.

(The writer can be contacted at bakshi03@rediffmail.com)

TO THE EDITOR

Old habits die hard

Editor,

In My Letter to the Editor, “The times they are changing” (ST 19th Sept 2015), I had made an erroneous prediction. I had predicted that the Rangbah Shnong (SKNSKBH) in their 21st sitting would next decide to gherao the Governor for his failure to accede to their demands on the VAB. The refusal of the Governor to sign the VAB has definitely annoyed this divine body (dorbar blei) of traditional heads. Refusal is taken as an act of ‘Contempt of Dorbar’ or being dorbar as the locals call it. In true Rangbah Shnong style they decided to show their displeasure by calling for the Governor's exile from Meghalaya (shah beh shnong u Lat). Old habits die hard! They have called upon the President of India to immediately remove Mr V Shanmuganathan from Shillong Raj Bhavan. One dreads to think what if the President also refuses to heed. Can we expect Parliament to be moved next for impeachment of the President? A most logical step if the President of the Union of India refuses to

listen to our traditional heads!

There is now a call for doing away with the 6th Schedule and for including Meghalaya under Art 371 of the Constitution. This again will most probably be construed as anti traditional as the traditional heads of Meghalaya have already decided that only the Autonomous District Councils are empowered to deal with tradition. No matter that the ADCs have for the last 60 years done nothing of the sort. No matter that the ADCs are proving day by day to be irrelevant white elephants. Our Rangbah Shnong have already decided that the 6th Schedule is over and above the Constitution of India and woe betide anyone who says otherwise. The genius advising both the SKNSKBH and the KHADC is a specimen deserving recognition! Will he/she kindly step out into the limelight?

Yours etc.,
KM Jyrwa
Via email

Choosing our parents!

Editor,

A news item on vindication by Supreme Court of Dr. Mukul Sangma's tribal status and another article “Where do I belong” (ST Sept 19, 2015)

reiterates once again the adage that “... one cannot choose his or her parents!”. It is the subsequent social, cultural and traditional environment in which one is brought up and groomed, particularly in case of a mixed marriage, which basically influences the child in later life. This is when one is in a position to make a conscious choice to move ahead in life, irrespective what surname is conferred on oneself. There are hundreds born out of wedlock between an indigenous woman and non indigenous man and vice versa who have served the society and the state at par or with better commitment and sincerity, as with their peers belonging to indigenous parentage. Yet at times they face social strictures and discrimination for their advent to this world through a mixed marriage. Moreover, there are many from non-indigenous parentage that have been residents of the State for generations who have contributed significantly and assimilated totally with the aspirations and concerns of the local indigenous community, without hopes of any returns or dividends, like

using names of their spouses for economic and commercial gains. So to paint all in the same brush shall be a travesty of natural social justice.

Thus to take on an individual socially or even politically on his or her parentage is sacrilegious to say the least. My submission is beyond technicalities but on mere humanitarian angle. Dr. Mukul's late mother although belonging to the non-indigenous community had totally identified with the indigenous community to which her husband belonged both in deeds and thoughts, including in the upbringing of her children. Similarly, Pauline M's father as per the writer's version was not a parasite on her mother merely because she belonged to the indigenous community. There is also something called ‘love’ which has no barriers and which brings two people together in matrimony till death parts them. There are feelings and emotions bound by love and children from such union do not deserve pettiness, personal vilification and character assassination for not “choosing ones parentage” according to wishes of others. The cynics have to wait till medical science makes such a breakthrough!

Yours etc
Naba Bhattacharjee
Shillong-4

Labour's Corbyn faces mutiny threat from army

Anti-Nato stance may see hardliners' opposition

By Arun Srivastava

Emergence of leftist Jeremy Corbyn on the political scenario of Britain has not only unnerved the social elites, rich and conservative Britons, but it has also invited the ire of the armed forces. The serving army general warned that Corbyn could face a “mutiny” from the military if he became the prime minister. Though the Ministry of Defence has condemned the incident the remark has come as rude shock for the people of Britain as how could a general of a democratic country use this language? A Ministry of Defence source said it was unacceptable for a serving officer to make political comments about a potential “future government”.

The unnamed army commander said any attempt by Corbyn to take Britain out of NATO, scrap Trident or cut the size of Britain's forces would be fought by means “fair or foul”. The general added that a Labour victory under Corbyn in 2020 would result in “mass resignations at all levels” and there would be the “very real prospect of an event which would effectively be a mutiny”. While Labour refused to comment on the views of what it described as an “anonymous general”, in private leaders described the remarks as “pretty outrageous”. It is beyond comprehension how a serving officer could threaten a coup against an elected government?

Local newspapers quoted right-wing Tory MP Daniel Hannan describing the general as an “idiot”. “We're not Bolivia for God's sake,” he said. The general who served in Northern Ireland in the 1980s, claimed that the armed forces would take “direct action” to prevent a Corbyn government from downgrading it and went on to say that his victory had been greeted with “wholesale dismay” even among Labour-supporting soldiers. “There would be mass resignations at all levels and you would face the very real prospect of an event which would effectively be a mutiny,” the general said.

He also said; “Sentiments are running high. The Army just wouldn't stand for it. The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul, to prevent that. You can't put a maverick in charge of a country's security.”

Interestingly some Corbyn detractors have not been opposed to this view of the general though they describe it unwise. They hold that it did reflect broader concern among service chiefs about the direction Corbyn might take the Labour Party. It does show the level of concern in the armed forces, which in itself is alarming.

The MoD sources hold, “It would be fair to say that these remarks are not helpful. No one thinks that it is a good idea for a senior serving officer to undermine a potential future government.” Surprisingly the Ministry of Defence ruled out an inquiry on the grounds that it would be almost impossible to identify the culprit. There are still around 100 serving generals in the army.

Mr Corbyn also faces

opposition from his own front bench over his positions on defence, particularly on whether to back air strikes against Isis positions in Syria. Lord Falconer, the shadow Justice Secretary, said he would be prepared to back a bombing campaign as long as it had proper military and legal justification.

Significantly for Labour to advocate pulling Britain out of NATO in the name of peace is also not enough endorsement inside the Labour party. It is widely held that NATO is Europe's peace framework: the military and diplomatic hardwiring that stops old blood lands in Central and Eastern Europe from fearing new wars. It is argued that NATO is not a capitalist vampire, but the architecture that underwrites the stability of the EU.

People nurse that Nato works because people believe in it as a guarantee from the strong militaries – above all the US, UK and France – to keep the region stable. Central Europeans passionately believe Nato is responsible for maintaining peace in the Balkans, that it keeps Greece and Turkey from each other's throats, that it stops old rivals such Hungary, Romania and Slovakia from vendettas over one another's territory. Above all, NATO keeps the Baltic states safe from Vladimir Putin's “interventions”.

There is general feeling that taking the UK out of NATO would be disastrous. It is alleged that Corbyn's thinking on NATO sounds like the views of a man who has spent too much time watching and appearing on Russia Today.

Three years back while participating at the Hiroshima remembrance parade Jeremy Corbyn had wished that Britain should abolish its Army in a “wonderful” move to help peace. He had observed then that Britain and other countries should follow the lead of Caribbean outpost Costa Rica and scrap their Armed Forces. Following this Tories said the radical view proved why the new Labour leader was a threat to the nation's very security. Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson broke ranks with his new boss to defend Britain's nuclear deterrent and membership of NATO.

After this the former British army officer, Colonel Bob Stewart had slammed Jeremy Corbyn's support for the IRA; “people who have been instrumental in the deaths of so many of my soldiers when I was in the army”. On that occasion Corbyn had said it would be wonderful if every politician around the world instead of taking pride in the size of their armed forces favoured reduction of the army strength. A fortnight back Corbyn admitted he “couldn't think” of a situation in which he would deploy British troops. In a televised Labour leadership debate he said Britain was “quite a small country” and questioned whether it could afford a “global reach”.

Nevertheless on October 20, hopefully hundreds of thousands of people will be marching through the streets of London, protesting against libraries being closed, hospitals being cut back, schools being cut back, young people being denied opportunities, cuts in social services. (IPA Service)

*"If you want to make God laugh,
tell him about your plans."*

- Woody Allen

The Shillong Times

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Outlook in Athens

THE election results in Greece have put an end to prolonged suspense. Syriza has been voted back to power. The Greek electorate has once again reposed its confidence in former Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras who has been the main protagonist of the Greek drama. He has seered the country in its negotiations with creditors. Greek voters have gone for the status quo. The old coalition consisting of Syriza and the right wing Independent Greeks continues to be in power. Tsipras had lost his majority in August and resigned. More than a third of the left Syriza MPs had revolted against the bailout conditions enforcing austerity in the country. These dissidents have been defeated. Tsipras faces daunting challenges. The government has to convince Eurozone creditors that it is fulfilling the bailout terms. The result will be mounting austerity in Greece with further cuts in pensions and wages, doubling the income tax and scrapping fuel subsidies to farmers. Tsipras will also have to work with the EU to recapitalize Greek banks and lift capital controls. More than fifty percent of the State electricity network will have to be privatised.

The development in Greece runs counter to the verdict of 60 percent of the people in the referendum rejecting the bailout. Tsipras had to accept conditions laid down by Germany and France. It meant rejection of Syriza's original agenda. Now, voters have set their face against the anti austerity move and it will push Syriza towards the centre. Greece has finally opted for business as usual at the cost of sovereignty.

LOOKING BACK

February 21, 1988

20 killed in violence in Punjab

Twenty people, nine of them belonging to a family were killed since last night as a spate of terrorist violence swept Punjab for the second successive day.

Most of the killings seventeen took place in Amritsar district while one person each died in Patiala, Gurdaspur and Sangrur.

The worst massacre was in village Sahra in Amritsar district where a group of terrorists forced their entry into the house of one Keval Singh and eight members of his family. Before leaving the terrorists set a blaze the bodies.

Later the terrorists gunned down three others in the same village, officials reports received here said. Eight of the 12 victims at Sahra village identified as Kewal Singh his wife, three daughters and three sons.

In the second incident, the terrorists shot dead two people at Bhaini Gillan sadar police station. The victims were identified as Bansarsi and Naraina.

Firing indiscriminately terrorists shot dead two people at the bus stand at Chetanpura on the outskirts of Amritsar city. The victims were identified as Gurwant Singh and Dharmvir Singh.

Police today recovered the bullet ridden body of one Mewa Singh from Behal village in Amritsar district. Terrorists shot dead one Prem Kumar and injured his mother at Lalru in Patiala district last night.

One of the victims of the bomb blast in Gurdaspur succumbed to his injuries in a hospital. He has been identified as Ashok Kumar. Terrorists shot dead former municipal committee president last night.

Meanwhile, Gurdaspur town observed complete hartal in protest against the bomb blast in the district

courts yesterday, in which three persons were killed and thirty injured.

Security forces rounded up 15 people for questioning in connection with the Gurdaspur blast. The district police also arrested two brothers on the charge of harbouring terrorists. Jalandhar police arrested two harbourers and recovered two pistols and eight cartridges from them. They were identified as Sarabjit Singh and Jodha Singh.

Independent MLA says he was offered money

Mr. Chamberline R. Marak who created history by winning by draw of lots has stated he was offered handsome sum of money for joining the ruling coalition in Meghalaya, he said that he was also offered high post both of which he said he spurned. Mr. Marak, however did not mention who or how much money was offered to him.

He explained that he had declined such offers because of his live for the Regional Democratic Front which belongs to the people of Meghalaya. Some of the prominent leaders of the HPU he alleged, had swung towards the Congress (I) just for the sake of power, position and money after having committed themselves to support the RDF on Feb 11.

Another tremor rocks Shillong

A tremor of moderate intensity rocked Shillong and its neighbourhood at around 2 PM on Saturday. It lasted for about ten seconds.

There was, however, no loss of life or property.

This was the third tremor felt here since February 6 last.

Whither the Khasi Hills?

By Fabian Lyngdoh

The title of this article is adopted because it is more or less in continuation with the spirit of the article, 'Whither the Khasi Hills? A Study', written by David Roy Phanwar sixty nine years ago. 'Ban pynneh ia ki riti ki distur' (To preserve traditions and customs), is presently an emotionally charged concept, the critics of which may be easily branded as traitors. But wait! Let us examine what are these traditions and customs that almost all local politicians and so called leaders of the jaidbynriew invoke to further their interests?

The migratory process of the various sections of the Khasi society was still in motion, and the society's political formation had not yet properly formed and settled up to the period when the British entered into these hills. But the identity and cohesion of the society was maintained by a deeply structured and well organised matrilineal clan institution with avunculate leadership called the 'kur'. The kur was the core of customs and traditions of the Khasis; it was the first social institution around which every other social institution revolved. The kur was a religion binding on all its members; it was an independent economy in which all members were socially and economically secured; it was a political institution, through which every clan member can have political relations with the society, and it was a sociological member of society through which all clan members could have a social identity. But today, the kur has lost all these traditional characteristics.

The present Khasi society is no longer a web of social relationships between 'ki kur'; all individuals, men and women have become full-fledged members of society apart from the kur. In this new situation, the maternal uncle lost his controlling authority because his role and status as the priest and as the manager of kur economy has become irrelevant, and the Khasi society now rests on the economy of each nuclear family. 'Whither the Khasi tradition?'

The Khasi society is a unique cultural system, and not a unique ethnic community. As pointed out by various thinkers, more than half of the clans emerging from the Khasi society, originated from non Khasi mothers as well as from non-Khasi families which have become assimilated into the Khasi culture. The concept of 'u Thawlang' is related to a Khasi father who was instrumental in the creation of a new Khasi clan from a non-Khasi mother. Every Khasi kur is a 'meikha-pakha' but not every Khasi father is u Thawlang. The uniqueness of the Khasi society is not based on supposed genetic purity but on its ability to absorb and assimilate genetic variations into a cultural unity. The definition of who is a Khasi, lies more in the field of cultural anthropology than that of physical anthropology. But if we go on preaching the divisive idea of 'khun shityngka' (pure Khasis) and 'khun shipiiah' (hybrid Khasis) when the so called 'pure Khasis' are practically no more in existence today, then 'whither the Khasi Hills?'

The 'tri-raid' or 'tri-bam lang' (community land) which guaranteed economic equality and social justice to all the inhabitants in the raid or hima is practically converted into private lands in the possession of the rich. If there can be a great number of landless families in the land of 'Justice', and that this injustice is being maintained in the name of tradition, then 'whither the Khasi Hills?'

There were strong oppositions by the local leaders in 1878 and in 1903 to the introduction of election for the appointment of the Syiem of Hima Sohra. But these oppositions were put down by the Crown and the decision of the Governor General-in-Council was upheld and thus the appointment of u Roba Sing as the Syiem of Hima Sohra through election was confirmed, and the same process was introduced in other himas too. The British administration recognized the syiem alone as chief of the hima (state) through the issuance of the sanad, and completely ignored the existence of the dorbars in the raid and the hima. The British authority turned a deaf ear to the oppositions of local leaders in 1917 against this sanad-innovation, which still continues even today. 'Whither the Khasi tradition?'

The hereditary chiefs and bakhraws in the raids and

himas today are said to retain legitimacy under constitutional protection on the ground of customs and traditions. But the question is: how can the present institutions at the village, the raid and the hima level be traditionally legitimate when the kur itself which is the basis of all customs and tradition has lost its traditional structure and functions considerably? The society has already lost the traditional principles of the ancestors; what are being preserved today under the Sixth Schedule are only the customary practices sans tradition. 'Whither the Khasi Hills?'

After independence, The Federation of the Khasi States appointed a Standing Committee to act for the time being as the Interim Government which consisted of the following main officials: 1) Mr. Alimuddin Ahmed as the Chief Judicial Officer, given power by the High Court of Assam to be the Sessions Judge and who was also given the power to try and pass the sentence of death; ii) Mr. Ajra Singh Khongphai as the Judicial Officer of the Original Court was given the power to try civil and criminal cases as First Class Magistrate, and iii) Mr. Wilson Reade as the Treasurer. 'Whither the Khasi tradition' if such were the incumbents of the high offices of the government of the Federation of the Khasi States?

Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, on the other hand, through the forum of the 'Khasi Jaintia Federated National Conference' sought to unite the Khasi States and the British areas in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills into one State called 'The Khasi Jaintia Federated State.' There had been a tug of war between this forum and the Federation of Khasi States for the legitimacy to control the administration of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Ultimately the 'Khasi Jaintia Federated State' proposed by Nichols Roy took the form of the 'United Khasi-Jaintia Autonomous District,' and the 'Khasi Jaintia

Federated National Conference' took the form of the 'United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council' (UK-JHADC) in June, 1952, with Mr. Fredishon War as Chairman; Mr. Jo Singh Rynjah as Chief Executive Member; and Mr. Rostanwel War and Mr. H. Enowel Pohshna as Executive members. This set-up had some semblance of the 'dorbar ki bakhraw.' But if a non-statutory body (FTD) constituted by a casual crowd in the playground can be greater than this constitutional dorbar, then whither the Khasi Hills?

With the partition of India in 1947, the Khasi chiefs and other leaders of the Federation of Khasi States sat in council to decide whether to join India or Pakistan, or to stand for independence. After thoroughly discussing the matter and weighing the pros and cons they came to the conclusion that it is impossible to go for independence as the Khasi States have no sea route for foreign trade; they cannot make their own currency as they had no 'Gold Reserve'; and they were not in a position to mobilise even a battalion of military force. With regard to the option of joining with India or Pakistan, they all felt safer to join with the Indian Union than with Pakistan. Hence they resolved to join India. But today some self-appointed prophets are confusing the people by preaching independent or semi-independent status for the Khasi States which their predecessors had admitted impossibility or failed to achieve.

The truth is that the Khasi society has lost track of most of its good traditions, and what are left are only visible customs. A custom that has lost its tradition but stubbornly remains becomes a redundant appendix that creates more harm than good to the organism. The society needs to revive its good traditions and to establish new customs which are in line with the traditions as well as relevant with the emerging circumstances that the society is now facing. The Khasi society has to be rebuilt on the context of cultural identity, and not on genetic constitution. The idea of a pure Khasi tribe is a false notion which, even if can be proved true, would only disqualify every member of this tribe and also declare its dissolution.

TO THE EDITOR

Belongingness a human quest!

Editor,

Pauline M's write-up "Where I belong" (ST September 19, 2015) triggers a thought and makes me wonder if there is anything more important in this earth than the sense of belonging and of being accepted as a human being. Yes! A human being blessed with flesh and blood, a mind to think and understand, a heart to feel and a soul pure and pious. What are we but gifts and blessings from God? We may differ in the colour of our skin, our stature and height, caste and creed but our blood still wears the colour of red. Why is it then that we are making our lives so difficult and complicated every single day? Why this thirst, hunger and lust for power and control? Why this glaring demarcation and divide amongst human beings? Why these barriers which set apart one individual creation from the other? I look back at words like demarcation, divide, and barriers and realise that they are all man-made. They are the constructs of a mind that weaves a fabric of different hues and make; sadly through a fabric that fashions a wedge and one that diminishes the essence

of mankind. We are all born free yet the moment we step into this earth we are brought face to face with the stark realities of distinctions, divisions and inequality. Talking of inequality takes me to a conversation I had with senior professor, I respect and adore. She said that it is easier to do away with natural inequality especially in this age of science, progress and development but difficult to do away with man-made inequalities. It is indeed so true for how many of us would give away an opportunity to a less fortunate person and how many of us in the highest of positions and social standing would offer our seat to a less fortunate person? The crux of the matter remains in the fact that we need to wipe out and do away with practices of inequality and the evils that prevail and come along with it.

The mantle of goodness and piety must be worn by all especially the elders so as to set good examples for our younger ones. Today is the age of competition, a world where we have no time for one another, an era of selfishness and the survival of the fittest. Therefore it becomes even more essential for us to introspect on our behaviour and attitude towards life and people in and around us. At the end of the day, whether we are Khasi, Pnar, Bhoi, War or even Dkhar there is but one unifying factor and that is being human.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Home for the elite

Editor,

Apropos to Paul Lyngdoh's Assembly question regarding the misuse of Meghalaya Houses especially in New Delhi which is a fact, I have personally come across friends and relatives who had gone there a number of times for medical purposes. Each time they are told that some Tom, Dick and Harry with connection to some VIP has booked the rooms or rather pre-booked them. The Meghalaya House at Vasant Vihar which was built to be made available to the common people of our state is another centre that occupies 'bureaucratic space' for the son and daughters of officers. Tehn there is the controversy about the OSD Mr M. M. Purbey who has been a permanent fixture. What is the point of having this person when we already have the Principal Resident Commissioner and the Joint Resident Commissioner to assist him? Such people tend to become a liability rather than an asset. Another factor is the method of allotment of tenders by the

PWD department at Meghalaya House New Delhi for repair, renovation work etc. Why is the same contractor by the name of Khurshid getting all the contract work? It is time to stem the rot. The GAD Department should initiate investigations into the function of the state guest house.

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

Limestone ban flouted

Editor,

Banning of limestone by the Hon'ble High Court has come as a blessing to the Mother Nature. But in some villages like Mawlong, Ichamati there are many violating the order, still many trucks are carrying limestone to dump at Beltoli near the gate of the B.S.F Camp near the fencing of the India - Bangladesh border with the intention of showing to the Forest Department that they have an old stock of limestone and to request the department to grant permission to export to Bangladesh. The reason for open violation of the order of the High Court is because no authority is taking the responsibility to check these violations and punish for defying the order of the Hon'ble High Court.

Yours etc.,
J Keniar Warjri
Ichamati, Mawlong

Energy sector in India to get a boost

US officials press more reforms

By K.R. Sudhaman

As India and United States went into nitty gritty to push bilateral trade five fold to \$500 billion in the next five years, Indian trade and industry minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the steps taken by New Delhi to improve ease of doing business, a major concern voiced by Washington in stepping up US investment for mutual benefit.

Sitharaman was however candid in pointing out that if United States had concerns on market access Indian companies too had similar market access concerns in agriculture, processed foods and pharmaceuticals that needed to be ironed out. Her forthright assertion made US side agree to look into India's concern.

The incongruity in US visa regime was yet another thorny issue that hindered promoting bilateral economic cooperation, Sitharaman said.

These issues came up at newly reconstituted India-U.S. Strategic and Commercial Dialogue which was launched in Washington on Tuesday, amidst a sharp exchange of criticisms between Indian Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker.

US Secretary of State John Kerry and External Affairs Minister, who co chaired, highlighted the priority areas in bilateral ties. A significant aspect of strategic dialogue was the decision to further cooperate in counter-terrorism activities.

"This is a very busy time for India and US relations. Its important that we set timelines to achieve our targets," she said, thanking Kerry for very fruitful discussions between the two countries ahead of Prime Minister Modi's visit to the US in the next few days.

India's energy minister Piyush Goyal, who also attended the meeting, said US would start LNG supply to India from 2017, and providing much needed relief. Due to short supply of natural gas in India, several gas based power plants and fertiliser plants, though ready have not been commissioned.

Eighty per cent of India's petroleum requirements were imported. The two countries have also agreed to further cooperate in shale oil and gas exploration on which United States had tremendous expertise.

With both countries pursuing green energy, Goyal pointed out that India has scaled up its renewable energy target to 1.75 lakh MW of new capacity addition by 2022. Of this Solar power will account for one lakh mw, wind energy 60,000 mw and the remaining small hydel and biomass power generation. These involve and investment of \$175 billion and offered great opportunity for US companies to invest in India.

Elaborating on the thorny issues Sitharaman said India needed a clearer "understanding of the U.S. commercial law regime with respect to insolvency and contract enforcement...We understand and appreciate U.S. concerns on market access, but a similar acknowledgment and appreciation of India's market concerns on agriculture, processed foods, pharmaceuticals and... textiles, must also garner similar attention from your side to enable us to better appreciate

reciprocal dialogues and fair and balanced outcomes for both countries." "On totalisation we expect to see a much better response on our longstanding demand for an expeditious conclusion of the totalisation and social security [issue with the U.S.], which we are unable to conclude simply because of an incongruity social security regimes in the U.S., which surely calls for a reconsideration." Earlier setting the tone for a dialogue U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said "In today's era foreign policy is economic policy and economic policy is foreign policy," adding generous words of praise for India's growing world in global affairs, especially its rescue efforts in Yemen, which had saved the lives of numerous American citizens.

India's External Affairs Sushma Swaraj similarly echoed positive sentiments regarding the expanding scope of bilateral cooperation which, she said, now extended economic engagement into the realms of "investments in technology, defence and security cooperation... civil nuclear cooperation, science and technology, air and space, energy and trade."

Kerry said the two sides had "a very robust discussion regarding counter-terrorism, the Indian Ocean, maritime security, South China Sea, the South Asian challenges of the moment, as well as our challenges on a global basis for nuclear non-proliferation and climate change."

Kerry described India has one of the "most important partners in the world, the largest democracy in the world. Together we're the oldest and one of great common values and common commitment to the fraternity. And I think we have plans to advance our relationship to a USD 500 billion goal of economic exchange."

Ease of doing business is key to boosting Indo-US bilateral trade and achieving it to USD 500 billion, US Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker said. But at the US-India Business Council meeting, several US participants did admit that there were action on part of Modi government on several issues raised by them eight months ago. But at the same time they expected more action on this front in the coming months and years. The list given by them is no different from what was provided to the Indian government in the past but the difference is there is not some tangible action on the part of Indian government.

Trade ties between India and the US have never been better and the two-way commerce has nearly tripled in recent years with India becoming the fifth fastest source if FDI to America."The (Narendra) Modi Government has streamlined bureaucratic decision making processes, raised Foreign Direct Investment limit in insurance, defense and railroad infrastructure and establish commercial court that speed up the resolution of business disputes," Pritzker said, adding that the US commends Modi and his team for this progress.

The US-India CEO Forum has come out with 17 recommendations. They pertain to ease of doing business, infrastructure development, innovation and entrepreneurship, standards and global supply chain. (IPA Service)

“Ignorance is the curse of God; knowledge is the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.”

- William Shakespeare

The Shillong Times

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Mainstreaming health care

THE National Health Profile 2015 reveals the appalling state of health care in India. India has a population of 1.26 billion but it has only 20,306 hospitals and 675000 beds. Not even 1/3 of them are in villages where 70% of the population lives. True, state-funded hospitals are coming up but these are not keeping pace with the population growth. Across India, there is only one government hospital bed for 1833 people. All this is due to the distorted view of policy makers who think that health spending is a dole. The government spends but does not get returns, which makes it a non-productive form of expenditure. India's health spending as a percentage of GDP is less than in some of the poorest countries of the world. Total investment in health care in India was 4.1% of GDP in 2012. The Indian government spent just a little over 1.16%. It is 2.9% in China and 4.1 % in Brazil. States in India provide as much as 67% of health care expenditure. That accentuates the disparity between developing and underdeveloped states in India. UP has one government hospital for 250,000 people. Kerala has on the other hand a hospital for 27500 people. It is a disincentive to the private sector which provides 80% of outpatient and 60% of impatient care. The requirement will double by 2022.

The stress should be on improved access, affordability and quality of health care. The government cannot do it by itself. Adding hospitals and beds is not enough. The regulatory system to enforce quality control and ensure affordability has to be strengthened. That alone can enable people to reach out to Medicare centres which are nearby and inexpensive.

LOOKING BACK

February 22, 1988

Pressure on Nepal to introduce visa system

Nepalese Government is under pressure from an influential political lobby in Kathmandu to introduce the visa system between India and Nepal and to treat the border between the two countries as a practical border, it is learnt.

For the time being authorities in Kathmandu have succeeded in beating back this pressure and maintaining the status-quo so far as the two-way travel between India and Nepal is concerned.

It may be recalled here that the issue of open border between the two countries has been revised in Kathmandu several times in the past. The hard-cone section in the administration there had been, from time to time advocating the introduction of visa system for the citizens of India and Nepal for entry into each other's country and abrogation of the open border between the two countries.

An official committee appointed by the Nepalese back to go into various aspects this issue, known as the Gurung Committee, had inter alia recommended the introduction of permit system for the citizens of the two counties for travel between India and Nepal to be gradually replaced by visa and passport. The committee was of the view that the border between the two countries should not merely be an "ornamental border on the map" but it should exist in reality. However, for some good reasons, the Nepalese Government did not implement the recommendations of the Gurung Committee, but reports from Kathmandu indicate that a powerful lobby there is continuing its camping in favour of a "harder line" on the border and vise issue.

1 killed in road accident in Williamnagar

In a fatal road accident, a telephone supervisor was knocked down by a police jeep at Williamnagar on Saturday. According to reports available here, the deceased Mr. D.N. Chauhan was about to start his scooter when the jeep (MLP 125) came from behind and knocked him off. His son who was also around escaped with minor injuries. The man was rushed to the hospital where he expired in the evening.

Reports said that the jeep sped off after the accident. No arrest has been made so far.

When Tradition clashes with liberal Democracy

By Patricia Mukhim

The Khasi society was not a democracy however hard put we are to argue that it was, merely because the British told us so. A liberal democracy is a system that includes and accommodates people by virtue of citizenship and not by ethnicity. In Meghalaya today our traditional institution are paranoid about including non-Khasi, non-tribals in the scheme of governance. It is that paranoia which made the Rangbah Shnong repeatedly oppose the elections to the Shillong Municipality – an institution that has now reached a point of collapse, since it is nobody's baby and is run by a bureaucrat who is just a part timer in that institution. Ever since Meghalaya became a state it was felt that the Rangbah Shnong would become stakeholders in the Shillong Municipality after they are elected from their respective 'Shnong' (localities), by a party-less election. But then there are localities in Shillong city with a substantial chunk of non-tribal population. If an election is held it is possible that a non-tribal would be elected. This is problematic since we are talking here of a traditional system of governance where only the indigenous tribal is allowed to contest. But Meghalaya is in India and India is not Africa where the population is largely homogenous. But even there the traditional system of governance has transited into modern democratic politics after a lot of adjustments.

In Botswana for instance the chieftaincy was accommodated by giving them a role in land allocation without being the final determinant, or in district development councils as members, but not as the final authority. So they are, in a sense being accommodated. But as pointed out by scholars it is also important to note that even with customary institutions, the people running them are actually the modern elite. The current generation of chiefs in Botswana have degrees, and many are lawyers before they are chiefs. They have modernized their role to ensure that they understand the intricacies of modern society. In the case of Meghalaya, however, there is a resistance to grapple with the realities of modern governance which involves above all a spirit of accommodation. A Rangbah Shnong/headman is elected to gov-

ern and to deliver the public goods. He is not, as is the practice with the Syiem or the Dolloi a religious head. In a modern, liberal, democratic set-up it is not possible to mix religion with governance because we are not a theocratic state but a secular, democratic republic. Our Rangbah Shnong however, are ambivalent about what they actually want to be. Again that ambivalence springs from the paranoia that ceding any space to non-tribals in grass-roots governance would result in their usurping the larger political space. This is discussed behind closed doors and not publicly. That is the reason why they are averse to the Government's Grass-roots Governance Bill but are in support of the District Council's Village Administration Bill since the District Council ostensibly stands for tribal interests only.

The framers of the Sixth Schedule left certain ambiguities when they bestowed upon the District Councils the power to appoint chiefs and headmen. We are aware that the relations between the Rangbah Shnong, the Syiems (chieftains) and the Councils are not harmonious. The Councils have no role to play in how the Rangbah Shnong runs his affairs because they have no resources with which to fund the Dorbar Shnong or the Syiem. On the contrary the Councils get a substantial revenue from the Syiem who collects taxes from markets, and other sources. If the Syiem is paying revenue to the Council then he also has certain leverage and is not a vassal of the Councils. As far as the Rangbah Shnong are concerned they are a stand-alone institution who would rather owe their loyalty to the Syiem rather than to the Councils by virtue of tradition.

The District Council itself is a creation of the modern state, hence its claims to be the defender of the rights of only a section of the population is itself problematic. Yet Meghalaya has succumbed to ethno-centric politics to the point where the names of non-tribal voters have been removed from the voters list while electing the Councillors. Earlier there were non-tribal representatives in the Khasi Hills District Council but that was done away with. Now the same is sought to be replicated in Garo Hills. I am aware that such a statement from this writer will be construed as anti-tribal but that is immaterial. The District Councils were created at a time when the tribals were a minority

within Assam. Isn't it a contradiction in terms that that today when Meghalaya has a majority tribal population, the minority non-tribals have no representatives from their communities? Some will brush this off and say, "Why can non-tribals not be represented by a Khasi MLA? Or why should the non-tribal be represented in the Councils? The same could have been argued by Dr Ambedkar when Mr JIM Nichols Roy made a case that the minority tribals needed a separate institution to safeguard their interests. The non-Khasi, non-tribals too have their cultures.

The non-tribal residents of Meghalaya may be Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Sikh, Nepalese etc. but it would be wrong to assume that they have a solidarity group elsewhere which will represent their interests. They live here and their interests are here. Their cultural affiliations are amongst their own kind in Meghalaya. And the large majority of them want to be stakeholders in the governance process but have been treated as pariahs ever since Meghalaya was created. They are kept outside the governance system and it is assumed that the State Government would take care of their local governance needs. How is this possible? How can such a system be allowed to carry on without being challenged?

The Meghalaya Governor's predicament is exactly that. He cannot pass a Bill for grass-roots governance which seeks to represent just the indigenous ethnic community. That would be unconstitutional. And because of that the Rangbah Shnong now seek his ouster! How pathetic is that! Who will entertain such a plea? Not a President in his right mind.

Tradition is deadweight. The problem is that those who create institutions very soon get stuck in entrenched beliefs even while governance is supposed to be an evolving process. In other parts of the world traditional institutions have changed over time and adapted to new situations. A complex process of integration, articulation and compromise involv-

ing continuous political renewal is what works best. For example, the current Botswana president and another traditional leader have decided to temporarily suspend their rights as chiefs of their communities and pursue elected political positions. Initially this caused a furore in the country because, as was mentioned earlier, chiefs in Botswana and Malawi are not supposed to be partisan, but rather neutral players who can deal with people on the basis of their needs as opposed to their political alignments. Soon afterwards, another chief followed suit and resigned; he gave his chieftaincy role to his sister and entered elective politics. Luckily he joined the ruling party, so he was elected. Although this is a new development, it also means that chiefs still command sufficient authority and respect to make people vote for them.

By contrast, there was a recent case of a young chief who decided to go back to his community traditions and force circumcision on people, only to find himself in direct confrontation with national law. After he reintroduced the local customary law of discipline—flogging—and prevented churches from operating freely, the chief's people challenged him with a court case.

In Botswana the modern constitutional state and the traditional chieftaincy system are cleverly and intelligently integrated and intermingled. But this arrangement is starting to run out of steam. Over the last couple of years there have been some serious problems between the political elite and the customary chiefs. Has the system that has run Botswana since 1964 now reached a point where it is exhausted? Have the current political elite misunderstood their role and function in terms of maintaining the delicate balance between the various actors? There is a lot of talk of the need for discipline, which has caused a furore. A number of retired members of the political elite and customary chiefs have tried to offer their good offices to negotiate a reconciliation between customary chiefs and the current political leadership. But there appears to be a stalemate between the two systems. As a result governance suffers.

Meghalaya is in exactly the same position. It is important for us to learn from the histories of other countries as well and not to remain insular and regressive.

Political delicacies

By Nora Chopra

RAHUL GANDHI IS ON VACATION AGAIN AFTER VISITING TEMPLE

Rahul Gandhi who after doing all the temple hopping and invoking the Hindu symbol saying the farmer has two mothers one the regular maa and the other dharti maa, has suddenly gone abroad. He even said he has changed. Earlier he used to think like an army man but now he has changed. He now thinks like a family man like a parivar. But soon after that he has gone on a seven day vacation. He flew off to London.

IS CONGRESS VICE PRESIDENT OPTING FOR SOFT HINDUTVA?

Taking a leaf from his father Rajiv Gandhi's book of politics, Rahul Gandhi on Monday adopted soft Hindutva. He launched his election campaign from the temple town of Mathura in the run up to the Bihar elections where he visited the Baanke Bihari temple. This is being seen as the Congress move to woo the upper caste Hindus. This is also in line with the Gandhi family adviser AK Antony's prescription to win election after the Congress lost the 2014 election. The wise man of the Congress Antony was tasked to find out the reason for the party's losses in elections. Antony however in his report said that the erosion in the Congress rank and file is because it is seen as going out of its way in appeasing the minorities. The Congress should resist this and try to get rid of this perception of being a pro minority party. But what perhaps the wise man Antony forgot was that in 1989 the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had started his campaign from Ayodhya where he talked about establishing Ram Rajya. Rajiv Gandhi's advisers had told him to open the gates of the disputed mosque the Babri Masjid. To counter the Ayodhya visit of Rajiv, BJP's temple movement and V P Singh's mandal agitation started. That was the end of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh.

CONGRESS LEADERSHIP WITHDRAWS GHULAM NABI FROM BIHAR CHARGE

In a surprise move, the Congress leadership which had given charge of the election in Bihar to senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has suddenly decided to withdraw him.. Azad who is famous as the man with a Midas touch for he has hardly lost an election for which he was in charge, has now been withdrawn from the charge of the state which is due to go for a month long election. Sources say that Azad has been withdrawn from the charge of Bihar just because he is a Muslim. In keeping with Antony's prescription, there is realization in the Congress leadership that the party should not be seen as to be appeasing the Muslims.

By projecting Azad as the man leading the party in Bihar elections, the leadership felt it would not be sending the right signal. It would again be branded as the pro muslim party. The same reason is being cited within the party circles for not having an alliance with Sharad Pawar's NCP in Bihar. The NCP in Bihar is led by Tariq Anwar.

CONGRESS KISAN RALLY IN DELHI A FLOP SHOW

The kisan rally of the Congress held in Delhi's Ramlila Ground on Sunday last week was dominated only by Bhupinder Singh Hooda's Haryanvi pink pagri but in Delhi where the rally was held, the tri-coloured topi wearing crowd was conspicuous by its absence. Delhi PCC chief Ajay Makan, the organiser of the rally had got the tri-coloured topis made for his Delhi crowd but he failed to mobilize the Congress workers. This failure is being seen as a result of factionalism and infighting. Most anti-Makan factions chose to stay away from the rally. Another visible feature of the rally was that Janardhan Diwedi who had always presided over such Congress meetings and rallies, was replaced by Makan. Makan conducted the rally but his presentation was no match to an experienced Diwedi.

RAKESH MARIA CROSSED HIS BRIEF

The Mumbai police commissioner Rakesh Maria was shunted out in a huff because he had jumped his brief. He had started to probe the money laundering case of Peter Mukerjee. If the probe would have proceeded further, many powerful cabinet ministers whose funds were parked with the Mukerjeas, would have been exposed. GOVT PANEL FOR BANK CHIEFS FAVOURING PRIVATE SECTOR

The grading system used by the sub panel for the selection of public sector bank's CMDs is not consistent with the one used by the public sector banks. There is a clear preference of recruiting private sector applicants. The cut off age of 55 virtually makes most of the executive directors of PSBs ineligible for selection. The advertisement also says that the salary package for CMD will be flexible and fixed by the government. The advertisement also says that the prospective candidates must have at least 3 years of board level experience. This makes most of the GMs ineligible. Also given that most PSB candidates become board members at the age of 54, the clause is highly discriminatory. The bank officers are so upset that they have petitioned the prime minister on this matter and have also approached the High Court for intervention.

CONGRESS LEGISLATURE PARTY LEADER TAKING FAVOURS FROM BJP CM

While the deputy leader Vijay Vaghatkar is absconding, Congress legislative party chief RM Vikhe Patil in Maharashtra assembly is seen by many as submissive to chief minister Devendra Phadnavis. Almost every week he visits Phadnavis to request for some job done or some transfer-postings. He also calls Phadnavis "sir", leaving many congressmen wondering how he can take him on in the assembly.

MUKUL WASNIK IN RAHUL GANDHI'S HIT LIST

The Dalit general secretary of the Congress Mukul Wasnik is perhaps on his way out. Mukul is one of those general secretaries who are on Rahul Gandhi's hit list.. Congress which is always ready to pay its tributes or pay its condolences at the drop of its hat failed to pass even a one line condolence when Mukul's father passed away last week. Nor did anyone representing the AICC go there, except for Imran Kidwai who is a personal friend of Wasnik. This has sparked the rumour that now it is Wasnik's turn to be shown the door. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

Kudos Meghalaya Police!

Editor

The actions taken by the Sadar Police, Shillong of arresting four women and a policeman among the 33 persons arrested and fined for drinking in public places and creating nuisance at Police Bazar and also the arrest of young people along the stretch of Mawdok - Sohra road recently, needs to be appreciated and commended by all. Open drinking is a common sight today in and around the city. Young people, with their prevailing misconceptions of life, "Live Fast, Die Young," care less about themselves or the society around them. You'll see them in their cars, bikes lining up in Golf links, Upper Shillong etc., enjoying life? This is an urgent call and needs to be addressed with tact, wisdom and love. Arrest, fines and lock-up will help to wake them up, but what I feel is lacking is counseling, guidance and love. Police can perhaps set up a counseling cell to help our young members in this ever growing problem.

Yours etc.,
R N Rymbai,
Shillong- 8

North East neglected

Editor

Several talents and legends from the North East have made the nation proud. Unfortunately a vast majority of them have not yet been recognized for their exceptional contribution by the Central Government. In other words they have fallen through the cracks. The number of recipients of Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of the nation is particularly ill represented with outstanding indi-

viduals from the North East. The only recipient of the highest civilian award from the region has been Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi leading national activist and ex chief minister of Assam. I request the Central Government to kindly consider the list of following legends from North East for bestowing posthumous Bharat Ratna over time including Dr Bhupen Hazarika (Assam), Binny Yanga (Arunachal Pradesh), Rani Gaidinliu (Manipur & Nagaland), Laldenga (Mizoram), Sachin Deb Barman (Tripura) & King Palden Thondup Namgyal (Sikkim) for their extraordinary contribution to the nation and the society.

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

Where's our scholarship?

Editor,

Scholarships are given for a purpose. For most students scholarships mean that we get we can actually buy books and other things necessary to our education so that we

would not have to depend on our parents. But with the kind of system in place in Meghalaya's Education department scholarships seem to benefit the Government more than the students. It's been over a year since I applied for my Post-Matric Scholarship but till date the amount due to me has not been disbursed. It is more difficult for us who are studying outside Shillong. How is it that students from other states are paid much before us? Are people in the Department hoping that we will forget about the scholarship we applied so that it goes into their pockets? Why make us wait for more than a year to even get the scholarship which we deserve? The Meghalaya Scholarship Portal is not helping at all. Even if we want to give feedback or to contact any of the officers in charge we cannot do so. At least help us in getting what is rightfully ours and do something about students who are studying outside Meghalaya so that we do not end up in frustration. A proper site to check the status of our scholarship and also to get our renewal forms as soon as possible would be of great help!

Yours etc.,
Heather Phanwar,
Via email

By Jyotshna Pandit

Junk food has been in the news over the last one year, and certain schools have banned sell of such stuff from canteens. Dieticians have opined that junk food is harmful for not only children but for adults as well. Could this long debated subject be real, like alcohol and drug addiction? And could this lead to obesity? According to a new study, that is likely to be true. Conducted by a team of international researchers, the findings were presented at a recent neuroscience conference in Amsterdam. Employing brain imaging techniques, the researchers discovered that food cravings can lead to brain and behavioural changes in obese people, indicating that the tendency to over-eat may be 'hardwired' into the brains of overweight patients. For this study, a total of 42 healthy-weight and 39 obese participants were provided with



buffet-style food. They were then put into MRI brain scanners and shown photographs of high-calorie food to stimulate food craving. The researchers found that food craving was associated with different brain connectivity, depending on whether the individual was obese or of normal weight. Among normal weight individuals, the stimulus from food craving was linked with a greater connectivity between the ventral putamen and the orbito-frontal cortex of the brain. These

parts of the brain, according to the researchers, are involved in flavour evaluation and are known to be linked with emotion and reward motivated decision making. The researchers claim this indicates that normal weight participants usually consider how good the food tastes as well as evaluating factors like the nutrition value and their hunger levels when shown visuals of food.

In the case of obese participants, food craving was linked with greater connectivity between the dorsal

caudate and the somatosensory cortex. The dorsal caudate processes reward motivated behaviours and the somatosensory cortex assesses the food's energy value. According to the researchers, the involvement of these two brain networks implies that for obese people it is difficult to turn down unhealthy food. The lead researcher, Oren Contreras-Rodríguez states

leaving you more vulnerable to illness. It can interfere with calcium absorption, increasing the risk of bone diseases like osteoporosis, and increase the risk of tooth decay. The first thing you need to do is to clear out your cupboards and fridge of any junk food. Go for a comprehensive shop and stock up on fresh, natural, unprocessed foods. Your shopping trolley

and grainy bread, plus protein such as fish/lean meat/poultry or tofu, and some sugar-free yoghurt. Start cooking healthy meals at home, and make sure you have healthy snacks on hand ready to go.

The best way to curb sugar cravings is to eat protein with each meal. Protein helps to balance blood sugar levels and hence curb sugar cravings. Make sure

smoothie (almond milk, protein powder, LSA - ground linseeds/sunflower seeds/ almonds, berries or banana), hummus with veggie sticks or rice crackers, trail mix of nuts, seeds and dried fruit; small tub of yoghurt with some fruit, sandwich with chicken, tinned salmon/tuna, or turkey; lamb cutlets with steamed veggies, grilled fish with salad, or a veggie frittata with a green salad.



in a press release: 'The findings in our study support the idea that the reward processing following food stimuli in obesity is associated with neural changes similar to those found in substance addiction.'

To ensure that you live a long and healthy life you will need to make some changes to your diet. Eating too many of these types of sugary, junk foods can lead to the development of type-2 diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease. Too much sugar in the diet can also suppress immune func-

tion, leaving you more vulnerable to illness. It can interfere with calcium absorption, increasing the risk of bone diseases like osteoporosis, and increase the risk of tooth decay. The first thing you need to do is to clear out your cupboards and fridge of any junk food. Go for a comprehensive shop and stock up on fresh, natural, unprocessed foods. Your shopping trolley

should be made up of lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, some wholegrain cereals (oats or natural muesli, brown rice, quinoa, wholemeal pasta)

you have some healthy protein with each meal and as snacks, such as: eggs or baked beans on toast, yoghurt and nuts and seeds with natural muesli, fruit

To ensure that you live a long and healthy life you will need to make some changes to your diet. Eating too many of these types of sugary, junk foods can lead to the development of type-2 diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease.

Have you noticed that a significant percentage of parenting time is spent screaming at your children to stop screaming?

Ironic, that. Researchers say that even very young children are now learning curse words, because parents break their own anti-cursing rules. "You're three years old! Stop (bleep) swearing!"

My gently religious family has always been totally non-cursing, with words like "silly" being considered highly risqué, and "poopyhead" causing people to faint.

Not so in the outside world. I was shocked recently when I did some broadcasting and my loose-tongued co-presenter was told that almost all curse words were now allowed after 9 p.m.

This is bad for everyone, because researchers say that English-speaking societies are running out of swear words. They lose their power now. We live in a world where kindergartners greet each other with: "Good (bleep) morning, you (bleep) stupid (bleep)."

Scientists say curses are important because they evolved to alleviate physical and emotional pain. Still, I do think some people should never use bad words because they just sound wrong in their mouths.

Like weather forecasters. "A (bleep)-load of rain fell this morning, and the humidity level will rise to a (bleep) of a lot by noon." Just doesn't work.

One suggestion someone gave me is to use swear words from other languages. In the US TV show "Firefly", actors used real swear words, but only in Mandarin and Cantonese. Guys, there are a lot of people who speak Chinese on this planet, or hadn't you noticed?

Still, it's true that non-English speakers have some curses. In Hindi, people insult each other by saying: "You are the hair growing on my flank area." In Mandarin Chinese, people say, "You son of a rabbit." (Sometimes you hear parents curse lazy children with this phrase without realizing the irony.) I had an Italian friend who used to say "Maladicta" when I trod on his toes. It sounded very "swearly"

Curse words for classy families

but he's literally just saying "Bad word."

Some years ago, I had to train a foul-mouthed newspaper reporter for a job on live radio. We wrote a list of words that sounded like curses but were safe for broadcasting use and taped them to her microphone. The top three most satisfying ones were Pool, Cow and Folicle. The next time something bad happens, try shouting "FOO!"



at the top of your voice. It works really well.

If you want to be really classy, I recommend making all dramatic announcements in Latin. Here are some useful phrases to get you started. At the bar: "Di! Ecce hora! Uxor mea me necabit!" ("Dear God, look at the time! My wife will kill me!") On the street: "Recedite, plebes! Gero rem imperialem!" ("Stand aside plebians! I am on imperial business.")

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

The most horrible curse in Latin is this one: "Utinam logica falsa tuam philosophiam totam suffodiant." ("May faulty logic undermine your entire philosophy.") Ooh, now that's nasty, right?

One place where you can easily express things in an impactful way without using bad words is the Internet. Or as I sometimes write to my children: "Do not make me use CAPITAL LETTERS."



The men's final at the US Open tennis championship this year was a weird five-cornered contest. It was Roger Federer versus Roger Federer versus Novak Djokovic and Novak versus the spectators.

One of the players did not particularly seek spectator love but received loads of it anyway. That would be Federer. The other played in surly expectations of some coming his way but did not get almost any. That would

be Djokovic. Interestingly, all of this was extraneous to their individual genius for the game.

At 34, Federer displays astonishing athleticism and carries his record-breaking 17 Grand Slam titles lightly. At 28, Djokovic too displays extraordinary physical agility albeit with a few trademark tumbles and already has 10 Grand Slam titles. It

Should Novak Djokovic go for more spectator love or titles? Mayank Chhaya tries to find out

Winning the hearts of fans



is not inconceivable that he might at least equal the Swiss legend's record if not surpass it. He is just four titles away from matching Rafael Nadal and Pete Sampras. Not a lot of people readily recognize that the Serbian has firmly planted himself among the exclusive club of historic greats even though the grudging or even resentful response from the New York

spectators may not have risen up to that.

The final on September 13 had Federer playing not just Djokovic but himself, the burden of being arguably the greatest player in tennis history. That might either explain or confuse the fact that he had 54 unforced errors and 23 break points of which he converted a measly four. Those two statistics alone should make one wonder if he is nearing the limit of his genius. But then one saw his remarkable half-volleys and sneaky returns to Djokovic serves and changed the mind about whether he is approaching his natural end as a player.

He has of course promised to return next year. The tennis half-volley is like the cricket half-volley in that

both have the player hit the ball almost immediately as it pitches. Since the ball is not allowed to rise to any level it cannot really do whatever it is that the other player (in tennis) or the bowler (in cricket) might have intended it to do. It is a delightfully rude way to treat a serve.

Federer's sneaky shot has him come inside the baseline just as the opponent is about to hit a second serve. The trick is to wait until the opponent tosses the ball. Once the ball is tossed the opponent is pretty much committed to it and cannot really change much. Federer is supposed to have invented it and hence it has been called SABRE or Sneaky Attack by Roger Federer. All this endears Federer even more (Contd on P-VII)



Novak Djokovic kisses the championship trophy after defeating Roger Federer, of Switzerland, during the men's championship match of the US Open recently in New York. (PTI)

To suit the present times, mythology has its own interpretations by present generation writers. Read this unknown side of Shakuntala, a little different from what the Mahabharata had to say. Also to read are tales on the Allahabad of yore and of underage CEOs who are raising their ideas into careers. Here's what we have for you on IANS bookshelf for this weekend. Read on!

1. Book: Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged; Author: Utkarsh Patel; Publisher: Rupa; Pages: 273; Price: Rs. 295

This is the story of Shakuntala, not as told by Vyasa, but by a corporate professional turned mythologist and author for the present-day generation. Everyone knows Shakuntala as the woman who met Dushyant, their marriage and their separation due to a curse.

Shakuntala, as the author says, was a very heroic single mother who brought her child up to be a great conqueror - the mother of the man who gave this land its name - Bharata. What the author also relates, from a feminist perspective, is the unknown side of Shakuntala - that the one immortalized by Kalidasa is very different from the that of the Mahabharata - a strong, fiery woman who stood up for her rights when she was spurned by her beloved. According to the author, Shakuntala is one of the most powerful yet underrated female characters of the Mahabharata.

2. Book: Allahabad Aria: Stories about Allahabad; Author: Neelam Saran Gaur; Publisher: Rupa; Pages: 180; Price: Rs. 195

Who doesn't like to reminisce of travels or of old cities one has lived in? To rekindle such memories you may have, here's an interesting share of a mischievous diarist's writings on crazy escapades of diplomats, jurists and the leaders of

Retelling Shakuntala's tale, Allahabad memories.....

the industry during their student days in Allahabad city in Uttar Pradesh.

One can indulge, through this book, in a modest jeweler experiencing the warmth of family bonding through meetings of allies at the Kumbh Mela; or of a telegram that becomes the last testament of love from a man who has lost his speech.

Here is a chance to relive the nostalgia surrounding this beautiful city's monuments, forts and river banks.

3. Book: The Underage CEOs: Fascinating stories of young Indians who became CEOs in their twenties; Author: Ganesh V; Publisher: Collins Business; Pages: 224; Price: Rs. 250

Coming from a marketing professional and writer, the author, through this book relates some inspiring stories of young Indians who flew out of the usual ways, to own their companies in

From Bookshelf

their twenties. Featuring in this book are the young fellows who have set up ways to transform lives of the un-

derprivileged children in Jharkhand, or protecting priceless online data, and some showing the world ways to engage children in practical education and farming in homes. Here are these inspiring young achievers showing that age is just a number and that ideas can be pursued and be made into careers.

4. Book: The Success Sutra: An Indian Approach to Wealth; Author: Devdutt Pattanaik; Publisher: Aleph; Pages: 150; Price: Rs. 399

Here's a mythologist and leadership consultant, who was also formerly the Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group with ways to the success sutra. With people chasing Goddess Lakshmi for success and wealth, here is the author with his insights on business and creation of wealth and success.

Packed with insights on how individuals can create success by taking the path of strategic thinking and decision-making. This is the book after the author's acclaimed bestseller Business Sutra, with many lessons on creation of success.

By
Zeenat Zafar

Until some years ago, in-cinema advertising was believed to be in decline. But digitisation and the boom in multiplexes have given the medium the cont. It is Friday night. Parking lots in multiplexes are full, as they are usually on weekends. Movie buffs are trying hard to find a place for parking. When fans throng multiplexes, can advertisers be far behind? Until some years ago, in-cinema advertising was believed to be in decline, and given only the fourth or fifth preference after television, print, radio, and outdoor advertising. But digitisation and the boom in multiplexes have given the medium new wings to soar. For instance, thanks to digitisation, operators know that the Friday night show patrons are mostly office-goers. So they can now market the time for some targeted ads. Says Shirish Shrivastava, VP Sales, INOX Leisure, "Morning shows cater the student population; it's the family audience for afternoon shows; and working people fill up the evening slot. Thus, segmented advertising is possible."

According to FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2015, revenues from in-cinema advertising are growing at a steady pace, and were an estimated Rs. 490 crore at the end of 2014. The report projects it to reach Rs. 1,382 crore by end-2019. "The in-cinema advertising industry is growing at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 25 per cent," says Shrivastava. The company currently operates 97 properties with 377 screens across 52 cities. From Rs. 49.5 crore advertisement revenues in financial year 2013-14, INOX closed the last financial year with Rs. 82 crore in advertisement revenues, and enjoys footfalls of around 50 million a year. "Much effort has been made to educate clients about in-cinema advertising.

Ads as money spinner for film industry



ing. We don't use print anymore, and now with the technology, all advertisement links are centrally put in a server and I can monitor them sitting at the head office. If there are four screens, they can run four different advertising content," he says. Cinema Advertising is the second fastest growing medium in the country after digital, though on an extremely small base, says Ajay Mehta, head of Interactive TV, part of the WPP Group. "Its potential is huge. In India, cinema advertising is about one per cent of the total advertisement expenditure, whereas in countries like UK, it is closer to two per cent. Due

became the third-largest multiplex operator next to PVR and INOX. In June this year, Mexico's Cinepolis launched its Cineplex in Bengaluru's ETA Namma Mall. With this launch, the operator crossed the 200-screen mark in India. In January this year, Cinepolis fully acquired Essel Group's Fun Cinemas for an undisclosed sum. Last year, INOX bought 100 per cent equity in New Delhi-based Satyam Cinemas. PVR acquired the Cinemas properties in 2012 and has bought DT Cinemas as well. These acquisitions are a testament to the growth of the exhibitor industry.

"While China has 26,000 screens, India has only

would get released in smaller towns with a time lag of weeks, which meant that the hype of the movie was fading and people had watched it from pirated copies," says Mehta.

"Before, there was a projector room. Now with the advancement in technology, I can digitally transfer advertisements and control 10 to 12 screens through a laptop," says Bhasi.

"While television provides you the audio and visual experience, in-cinema advertising uses all the senses - smell, touch, taste, sound, and sight. It is like a whole experience zone. For instance, if it is a new cookie, we can provide free samples, if it is a new prod-

ment and during intermission, we screen advertisements. If you take the total duration, it will be 18 to 19 minutes. If you make the list of top 500 brands, at some point or the other they would have advertised with PVR, FMCG, two-wheeler, fashion, footwear, electronics, among others fall under large categories," explains Dutta.

Also, the length of the movie decides the advertisement timings. "Local retailers too advertise. For instance, we see more jewellery commercials in the South," says Shrivastava. There can be weekly, six month or one-year deals with clients and cinema advertising is said to be

'STAR - GAZING'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, September 27, 2015

Mercury is forming an angle of 40 degrees with Mars on your solar return chart is indicative of a mixed year. Your efforts may be misplaced at times. The focus should be on cultivating and nourishing your inner foundations that support you and your growth as you re-establish control in your work arena. Make your practical and logical approach work for you instead of against you. Personal relationships require a depth of understanding and can be strengthened. Be sure to invest in solid plans and not in fly-by-night schemes. Enhance your skills and knowledge in this phase.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

Though mixed results are indicated it will be an overall happy one. Try to keep harmony and patience in all communications and dealings in family. Although you will remain extremely busy still you will keep pace with personal and professional life. Be careful of letting yourself get too overwhelmed by what is going on around you. There will be gains both material and in terms of stature too. Your health will require attention and you should try to have a proper diet. Keep a distance from those with negative thoughts otherwise you will not be at ease. An affair also awaits the unattached. You enjoy romantic outings with your beloved.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

Works relating to the arts and fashion work will take priority and you may decide to expand your profession in these areas. You will have good personal and professional relations as your interpersonal skills shine. By engaging in the activities that you enjoy the most, you will most certainly create new bonds with the people that you meet in these arenas of your life. You may get a chance for an overseas trip. The health of a family member may demand your attention but it may be a passing phase. There are chances that some events may cause stress but this too is a temporary phase.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

You will have good chances of professional and monetary gains as you get more involved in the work at hand. Your career will improve your position and you will be expected to use your skills to the best of your ability so bring forth your experience and knowledge to make the best of this opportunity. News of possible profits through investments could come your way. Fuse together your desire for new friends with your passion for familiar activities. Issues related to property and assets may crop up so take care that your money does not get held up. You will enjoy good health during this period.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

The burden of work continues so do not let your mind wander in other directions and new projects and areas as this will dissipate your resources. With the requisite concentration you will achieve your goals and also earn accolades from seniors and peers alike. Your spontaneity and ability to take decisions on the spur of the moment will take you up the ladder. There is no need to hesitate, simply take action. Your discerning thinking will help you resolve some financial problems. Do not try to speculate in any way as it may not prove to be good. You will resolve some pending domestic issues with support from family members. Simply let things go at normal speed and do not push matters or exhibit your haste at this time.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

The position of stars is indicating mixed results. Some unusual circumstances may draw your attention. Unattended dues may demand your time and energy. Some of you may also consider taking loans. If there is something you need to achieve go ahead and take the initiative and stop waiting for others to catch up. You will find people to support you wherever you go. You will take up a cause which is close to your heart but at this time you may not get a good response. Your thoughts and ideas will waver as you jump from one idea to another and you will feel an element of uncertainty.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

Look at all pros and cons before you reach a decision in any situation as there may be misunderstandings which will affect your working. Once you avoid confrontations things will pick up speed. You are then ready to put your novel ideas into practice and they then gain acceptance too. No doubt a lot of efforts will be required to be put in but they will not go unrewarded. You take considered and wise steps to maintain harmony and affection in your family relations. Your children

will prove to be helpful in taking away your stress and strain of mind. You may be in a state of mind where religion and matters of spiritual interest pique your interest and draw you. You will be keen to go on a pilgrimage or to a place of worship. Matters of romance are likely to be postponed.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

The planetary configuration indicates that your thoughts and courage will lead you to adventure. Your confidence will be high and you may believe that you can achieve anything and everything. Your luck may give you some sudden profits and monetary gains. You may finalize some new contracts and may renovate your existing home or office. A property deal now may be profitable in the near future. You may have to undertake a journey in connection with your work and the results will be fantastic. Family and domestic affairs will give you happiness and joy as you enjoy a number of social activities. Your health may give some trouble so keep a close watch on it.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

Financial and other monetary matters will get solved and you may expect a rise in your career. You will also enjoy a phase that gives you plenty of good money making ideas. There are strong chances of financial gains. If you go for a new big project then you will have a better chance in the near future. You will be feeling more expansive than usual and your imagination and intuition are operating at a high level. This is a good time to look within and make use of untapped abilities; this will change your attitude towards many things. At the end of the day you will realize that it was worth waiting for.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

You may have some mixed results so it is best to avoid deals and investments during this period. You could be beset with negative emotions and a pessimistic outlook. You need to be extra careful while getting into new associations or taking up new assignments. People can exert undue pressure on you. However your courage and strength will help you in your professional life. New contacts made during this period will provide a springboard to further your career and social life. Romance is in the air and it will bring increased bonding with your loved ones. This is a good period to rejuvenate and regroup your thoughts and energy.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

You will put your efforts on in the matters of your career and profession and these efforts will pay off. Just as you are full of dynamism there is a positive energy around you and this will further help your efforts and take you to new heights in your career and related matters. The environment at home and your relations with family members remain amiable. There are good chances to have dealings in property matters and or in real estate business. A long pending matter will get settled. Romance draws you and you add a special intensity to existing relationships and an ongoing affair can convert into wedlock. With good health on your side you take a step ahead in all types of successful events.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

During this period you will be in the need of some peaceful environment at home and at work so take measures to have the same. Do not want to appear to be too ruthless in the way you handle a particular issue, but you do want to achieve your goal. You are wise enough to settle matters in your favour and there are chances for improvement in your business or professional life. Long distance journey will be there and it will also prove quite helpful. There may be some unexpected expenditure so think wisely. Your health related problems will keep you alert.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

Your stars indicate that you will enjoy good results in fields related to finance, profession and health. This configuration also indicates a powerful and magnetic personality with which you shine at public gatherings. You will get good financial returns. Besides handling professional assignments you will also attend to your personal relations. Romance is also indicated for the unattached as you strike an immediate chord with someone you meet. Those in a relationship will find a closer bonding with their beloved.



to the rapid growth of multiplexes and digital screens and the consolidation in the exhibitor space, we expect cinema advertising to keep growing," says Mehta.

"Last month alone, 7.8 million people watched movies in PVR cinemas across the country. We are seeing 60 million footfalls a year," said Gautam Dutta, CEO of PVR. With 474 screens and 106 properties across 43 cities, PVR is the largest cinema exhibitor in India.

The consolidated advertisement revenues of PVR in the last financial year were Rs. 177 crore.

In the first week of this month, Anil Ambani-led Reliance MediaWorks (RMW) completed the sale of its multiplex business to Carnival Cinemas for Rs. 700 crore. With this, Carnival

5,000 to 6,000 watchable screens," says Shrikant Bhasi, chairman of Carnival Group. The Salman Khan starrer Bajrangi Bhaijaan was released in 3,500 screens, and the box office collection was around Rs. 400 crore. If there were more screens, the collection would have been huge, he adds.

At present, Carnival operates 360 screens, and will add 100 more in a couple of months. "There are no proper theatres in so many places," Bhasi says, stressing the need for more theatres.

"Digital cinemas have eliminated the role of prints and reduced material costs. This means that a new movie gets released in a large number of cinemas even in smaller towns on the same day as in Delhi or in Mumbai. Earlier, movies

uct, we can set up an experience zone, where audience members can experience it," explains Shrivastava.

From on-screen advertising, exhibitors now look for off-screen space too. They make use of food and beverage counters, kiosks, lobby floor, corridors or washrooms to display products. With more eyeballs watching cinema, from lump sum deals it is shifting to pay per contract.

"Advertisers do ask what if a movie bombs? We have this 'pay for eyeball' thing. So if 10 people are watching, pay for those 10 people. Now, many luxury brands like BMW, L'Oréal, Lufthansa, and Jaguar have entered the cinema advertising space," says Dutta.

Depending on the length of the movie, advertisement duration also increases. "Before the movie's com-

cheaper compared with television. "For 30 seconds, it can be from Rs. 3,600 onwards," says Bhasi. Interactive is the first company to monitor in-cinema advertising through its proprietary tool CAM (cinema audit and monitoring).

"Measurement is important. Advertisers want to know their ROI and need footfall and audience data. We are trying to address this through various tools like CAM," says Mehta. Piracy is a huge challenge, he adds. "If piracy can be addressed, cinema advertising would grow at an even faster pace," Mehta says.

However, Bhasi feels cinema is an experience and it is not only about the story. "Now people know the story and they visit theatres for the big screen movie watching experience," he says. (INAV)

Winning the hearts of fans

(Contd from P-VI) to the crowd often much to Djokovic's chagrin who still plays a classically competitive game. Federer plays with the assurance of someone who has already accomplished absolute greatness while Djokovic plays as someone trying to get there and even succeeding handsomely but without much love from those who come to watch.

It is a dynamic which has been commented upon by tennis writers. It is not something that Djokovic can do much about. It is entirely possible that if and when Djokovic surpasses Federer's record he may still not inspire the kind of warmth that his Swiss rival has enjoyed. It has to do with Federer's overall demeanor which is one of amiability efficiently hiding absolutely fierce determination to not give anything away at all at any point of any game. In contrast, Djokovic comes across as someone who might suddenly just chuck it all out of great annoyance. He may not necessarily do it but that is the sense he conveys.

There is nothing to suggest that Federer is planning to retire anytime soon, at least not for a year having committed to return to the 2016 U.S. Open. What makes Federer perhaps even more formidable in his approaching twilight period is that he is now enjoying the game for the sake of it and does not mind being inventive as evident in SABRE and half-volleys. He is more aggressive than before. In comparison, Djokovic is entering a period of consolidating his greatness by adding more titles to his name. While ten Grand Slams are plenty for anyone, he cannot but be mindful that there are three others ahead of him, one of whom is six years older and seven titles greater.

Winning those seven titles is likely to be his focus rather than garnering some unconditional love from the average spectator.

(The writer is a Chicago based writer. The views expressed are personal. He can be contacted msx@outlook.com)

“Continuous effort - not strength or intelligence - is the key to unlocking our potential.”

—Winston Churchill

The Shillong Times

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Debate or Diktat

UNDER the Prime Ministership of Atal Behari Vajpayee, a sustained effort was on to distance the RSS from the BJP which is his political arm. Policies of the previous NDA government chalked out by the BJP were divorced from RSS ideology. Narendra Modi's NDA government was also during his first year steered on apparently secular lines. But in the past few weeks, the RSS has been voluble with Mohan Bhagwat, Naresh Sharma and Smriti Irani launching a crusade against westernisation and western knowledge. Use of the term 'cultural cleansing' upset rationalists. RSS ambivalence, however came to the fore at the centenary celebrations of its ideologue, Deendayal Upadhyay. Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh advocated debate and said that irrespective of how many ideologies there were showing difference of opinion, there should be debate on them. Democracy thrives on dissent and debate. Speaker, Sunita Mahajan believed that a strong opposition was a necessity in democracy.

Union Minister for Culture, Mahesh Sharma denied that there was a move to saffronise India and said that his organisation respected Jawaharlal Nehru who contributed to the freedom struggle and the making of modern India. Union Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley said that after independence there was a political party(INC) and a Prime Minister(Nehru) who had a tall political stature. In view of the worldwide ascendancy of Communism, Nehru's exceptional personality alone could create a parallel thought, he said. All this marks a healthy departure from ideological diktats. Few would question that RSS ideology should figure a free debate but that it should not demand coercive conformity.

LOOKING BACK

February 23, 1988

Pranab expelled from RSC

Dr. S. S. Mohapatra today questioned the authority of former Finance Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherji to disband the Rashtriya Samajwadi Congress and expelled him from the party "on the instructions of majority of working committee members."

Dr. Mohapatra, RSC general secretary, told newsmen Mr. Mukherji had no constitutional right to dissolve the party and decide to merge it with the ruling Congress (I).

He claimed that the decision to disband the party could be taken only by a national convention of party workers and not by a few members.

Mr. Mukherji meeting was attended by only four of the party's thirteen working committee members, he added. Dr. Mohapatra said he would convene a meeting of party worker her in March to decide the RSC's future course of action.

Meanwhile the West Bengal Pradesh Congress (I) today formally released a tour programme of former Union Finance Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherji to campaign for the Congress(I) candidates in the three-tier panchayat poll slated for Sunday next.

PCCI (I) secretary Mr. Pankaj Banerjee said Mr. Mukherji's campaigning for the party did not mean his admission in the organization.

Thomas Cup battle promise to be grim

The qualifying rounds to decide the Asian entrant for the elite Thomas and Uber Cup badminton championship final round being at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here

tomorrow with the hosts' men's team having its best chance to make the grade in recent times.

Japan with the formidable pair of Sumko Kitada and Kimiko Jimmai seems clearly ahead to grab the place from the zone in Uber Cup but the Thomas Cup battle will be a grim one between Japan, India and Thailand.

Both the Indian teams have been undergoing strenuous training under coach T.P. S. Puri for two weeks. The men's team-Prakash Padukone, Syed Modi, Partho Ganguly, Harjit Singh, Vikram Singh and Ravi Kunte is one of the most experienced teams India has ever entered.

Banari sworn in amidst protest

Former Intelligence Bureau Director Mr. Hair Ananda Barari today assumed the office of Governor in Haryana, despite Chief Minister Mr. Devi Lal's last minute efforts to scuttle his appointment.

Mr. Barari was administered oath of office by Punjab and Haryana High Court Chief Justice Mr. V. Ramaswamy at an impressive ceremony at State Raj Bhavan here.

Marbaniang, Mawlong vie for speakership

The ruling UMPF has nominated Mr. P. G. Marbaniang as its nominee for the post of speaker, while the opposition RDF had decided to put up the former Speaker Mr. E. K. Mawlong as its candidates.

The two candidates are expected to file nominations on Tuesday and the election, if necessary, will be held on Wednesday.

The Future We Want - Version 2

By H H Mohrmen

The state of Meghalaya is to play host to the Indigenous Terra Madre 2015 also known locally as International Mei-Ramew Festival which will be held in Shillong, Meghalaya from the 3 to the 7 November 2015. The theme of the celebration was spelt out by Mr Phrang Roy in his paper at the UDP 18th birth anniversary on September 11 (which was published in the ST editorial page on the September 22) is "The Future We Want: Indigenous Perspective and Action." How I wish that this was the theme of Meghalaya four decades ago after we attained a separate state. Meghalaya would have indeed been a shining outpost if our leaders during the separate state movement had known what future they wanted for the state.

How I wish that this same theme has some influence on the decision making of the present state government too. Do we ever ask ourselves what is the future we want for the state of Meghalaya? And do we even try to look at the answers to this question from an indigenous perspective? I was asked to share my thoughts on the issue of the environment at this same gathering, and reminded everyone present that protecting the environment is not only a duty but a spiritual call for any Khasi-Pnar. To the Khasi-Pnar nature is his mother and it is the mother of all his fellow-creation too. Khasi-Pnar people also know that humans are not pre-ordained to lord over the creation but they are equal partners, keepers and co-dwellers with their fellow creations of this common home they called earth. In the Khasi-Pnar system of belief Nature is a living entity and they personify it in many ways and forms.

But this government under the leadership of Dr. Mukul Sangma seems to miss this very important point and is hell bent on continuing with its policy to encourage extractive mining in the state despite knowing very well that it destroys the environment. Dr Sangma's statement in the hallowed hall of the Meghalaya Assembly only

confirmed that the MUA government's one policy is to vacate the ban on coal mining in Meghalaya without any concern whatsoever for the environment. The Government is not interested on the issue of reclaiming the dead rivers or preventing other rivers from getting polluted. Neither is this Government interested in protecting the forests and land from total destruction but to lift the ban on mining in the state. On this issue, the Government is talking more like a mining lobby than a Government which is responsible for plan a sustainable future for the state. What kind of future does the MUA government under Dr Mukul Sangma want for Meghalaya? Can we as citizens ask this question loud and clear?

The State Government's two-pronged approach to vacate the mining ban is a very dangerous proposition. The public was not taken into confidence by the Government in redrafting of the Policy and neither did it seek the opinion of the public before approaching the central government for invoking para 12A (b). Stake holders were not involved in redrafting the mining plan with inputs from the Central Mining Planning and Design Institute, Coal India Limited and Directorate General of Mines and the Government is also yet to put the draft mining plan in the public domain. The entire process has become a one-sided and an all-government affair.

But the most dangerous of the two moves that the Government has is making it to invoke paragraph 12A (b) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution so that application of central laws in the state relating to mining may be rescinded through presidential notification. What does this mean to a layman like you and me? In simple words it means that even if the State Government's present regulation is flawed, the public have no other institution to approach for redress of their grievances. If there is rampant destruction of forests and if all the rivers are polluted, public will have to keep mum and curse their fate because Central Government's rules and regulation with regard to protecting of the forest and

environment and mining regulation will not work anymore. All the powers with regards to mining will rest with the State Government and with the kind of Government we have, we already know what future is in store for Meghalaya. This is a police state in the making. Is this the kind of future Dr Mukul Sangma dreams for the state?

Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that it was the National Green Tribunal which has come to the rescue of the rivers of Meghalaya. Not that the State Government did not know that the rivers in the coal mining areas are polluted, but it chooses to ignore the fact till somebody from the neighbouring state lodged a complaint with the NGT. Invoking para 12A (b) means even the right to approach the NGT will be denied to the citizens of Meghalaya.

The other pertinent question is whether the Government is serious and is sure that the Policy and regulations that it brings to the table are adequate and is going to address all the issues and concerns with regard to protection and conservation of the environment; what is the need of invoking para 12A (b)? Invoking para 12A (b) is like Brutus' last stab that killed Caesar. Dr Sangma has stabbed Mei-Ramew to death even before the festival begins. Does Dr Sangma want to be remembered as Meghalaya's Brutus who strikes the last blow that killed the environment in the state?

Is this looking at the future we want from an indigenous perspective? We all know that the State Government is investing money to host the ITM 2015. Is this not going to be a futile exercise? Will it not just become an event for Dr Mukul Sangma to showcase his oratorical skill to an international audience? What is the use of holding the international festival in Shillong when the same does not have any influence on the Government's policy?

Perhaps, by November Dr Sangma will come up with road map of the future he wants for Meghalaya from an indigenous perspective, but where is the action? Action should start from today and the Government's action is not going to help protect the environment which is a prized treasure to all the first nation people of the world.

Now that we all know Dr. Sangma's two pronged approach to lift mining ban, I for one am eagerly waiting to hear what he will say at the ITM. What is the Future he envisions for Meghalaya from an indigenous perspective? And what will his Government do to achieve that goal? It is not every day that he will get an audience from as many as 52 countries listening to him. Added to that there is a possibility of international media houses waiting for his sound bites. Perhaps Dr Sangma will talk about promoting tourism and what not, but what tourism are we talking about when the license to slaughter the nature had already been issued? Dr Sangma may try to be politically correct and talk about his pet program the IDBLP and the MLAMP but again if nature dies, all these programs will also go down the drain? In trying to please the mining lobby, Dr Sangma is like a knight wielding a double edged sword which will hurt more than help him. Dr Sangma may have been able to please the mining lobby, but he has disappointed the larger section of common people who care for the environment and the young generation and his own children who will inherit the world from us. Dr Mukul Sangma knows the kind of legacy he has left behind and history will not treat him kindly either.

The Government's current policy on mining is unsustainable and it will only expose the Chief Minister like a lame duck to criticism from every corner. Dr Sangma's critics who have all along maintained that hosting ITM 2015 is a waste of public money are already training their guns at him. Dr Sangma has a gigantic task before him to prove that hosting the ITM is good and a worthwhile venture for the state when his action has already proved that he is not concerned for the environment which every indigenous group hold dear to their heart.

Islam and Burra Sahibs in 1965 Pakistan

By M J Akbar

There is a small but significant question about the 1965 war that no one has asked and, therefore, no one has answered. Why did Pakistan codename the first part of its dual campaign after a small, rocky island off the coast of Spain and still in the possession of Britain? Why was the August 1965 assault, in which Pak-trained fighters posing fraudulently as "Kashmiris" attempted an insurrection in the Valley, called Operation Gibraltar? It seems odd, if not downright idiosyncratic. Except that it was not deception; it had a meaning that would resonate among militants in Pakistan.

Gibraltar begins life in history as the launch-pad of a Muslim Arab victory that changed the history of the world. Like so many Spanish place-names, it is a distortion of Arabic. The island was named by Arabs after Tariq ibn Ziyad defeated the Visigoth king Roderick, and laid the foundations of Muslim rule on the Iberian peninsula that would last till the middle of the next millennium. The Arab success was swift and stunning. As the iconic historian Edward Gibbon wrote in The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, if the Arabs had moved west from west instead of turning east, Britain could well have fallen and minarets might have risen instead of spires in Oxford and Cambridge.

I cannot be very certain about the ambitions of General Ayub Khan, who was dictator of Pakistan then, since he was widely considered a realist, but the name certainly reflected the fantasies of his young foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was the principal architect of Pakistan's invasion of Jammu and Kashmir in 1965. Perhaps Ayub Khan was a realist only in comparison to Bhutto. Even after the comprehensive defeat of Pakistan in 1971, Bhutto was still talking of a thousand-year war with India.

Pakistan activated a two-stage plan in the autumn of 1965. The first, through Operation Gibraltar, was designed as a mirror of 1947-48, when trained irregulars, commanded and accompanied by regulars and officers, were sent to create an alibi uprising. The second stage was called Operation Grand Slam, which was to be conducted by formal troops of the Pak army. After some tense fighting, both were reversed, and Pakistan ended up losing ground across the line and an international reputation for foolhardy failure that it has not quite erased. But is there a clue in the name of the second stage as well?

Yes. Grand Slam is, as everyone knows, a term

from bridge: the ultimate contract, and therefore the highest form of victory. By the ceasefire, there was nothing grand left about the mission, and the contract ended in shambles. But the name offers a hint about the mindset.

The Pakistan elite till the mid-Seventies, when General Zia ul Haq led the coup d'etat that overthrew Bhutto, was a combination of Islamic tendency and Burra Sahib behaviour. The bureaucrats and officers were Anglicized children of the British Raj, who ruled the country without much interference from the elected class, who might have brought the flavours and biases of the land into the higher echelons of Karachi, Rawalpindi [which was home to General Headquarters] and Islamabad. This conclave of privilege lived by the rules and etiquette of club life, spoke good English, and considered itself a benevolent necessity that was doing its patriotic duty by keeping the geographical unity of Pakistan intact. It paid occasional homage to Islam, when considered politically expedient, but not much more. Bhutto had the gall to tell the fundamentalists who objected to his preference for whisky, that he was only drinking alcohol and not the people's blood. This class was socially, culturally and strategically attractive to its mentors in Washington and London, particularly in the Pentagon and Sandhurst.

That Pakistan is gone. It disappeared in stages, rather than overnight. Zia set the course during his long decade; he turned the annihilation of Pakistan in 1971 into a reason for reaffirmation of Islamicization, rather than its abrogation. His successors lost direction as new tides of religious fervour began to envelop the public discourse and then the polity. General Pervez Musharraf tried to reverse this process, but with the weakness of a dilettante. His heart lay in preservation of personal rule, not in bringing the nation back to its senses. He was the Bahadur Shah Zafar of the Grand Slam Sultans. The deluge did not wait for his departure; it came while he was in power.

Delhi has to deal with a radically different power structure in Islamabad. Those who claim office in Pakistan, even by democratic elections, know that survival is possible only through compromise with fundamentalists. That is one of the critical hurdles to any form of a peace process.

I cannot think of anyone in our country who would miss Bhutto, but spare a thought for Ayub Khan and his predecessors. It is no surprise that the General understood war By much better than his arrogant civilian deputy.

offer digital infrastructure and free wifi for IT enabled services which would benefit the citizens and institutions. Smart cities aim at bringing better drinking water supply, stable electricity supply and proper drainage amongst others. But are these possible? Won't the commercial sectors be the major beneficiaries because it is said that the private sector would be given priority in this project which is also promoting the 'Make in India' agenda of the Govt. This would also mean that migration from the neighbouring states would increase to fill up the job vacancies. The question is whether we really need a smart city. What we need are better health facilities,

more schools and colleges in different districts of the states because the migration of students from Jaintia Hills and West Khasi Hills to Shillong city is massive. We also need one more college in South West Khasi Hills (Mawkyrwat), West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin) and other districts as well in order to control migration of those looking for quality education.

Yours etc.,
Ribor Kharsynnig
Shillong - 14

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

TO THE EDITOR

Irresponsible dumping of garbage

Editor,

The road leading from Shillong Commerce College to Bajoria School has become a garbage dump. Ironically the Municipal authorities don't seem to notice this and even if they did they do nothing about it. I take this road regularly towards Polo and enjoy the ride after office hours on the way home. But of late the place stinks. Last year, I remember, the Police had registered a non-FIR case against some people who were caught dumping garbage alongside this beautiful road. Besides, no effort is being made by PWD (or other concerned authorities) to clear the shrubs and lantanas that have taken over the small park installed midway. Such irresponsible acts deserve condemnation by all. This is a common practice everywhere nowadays. Forest areas, roadsides, drains, etc have become a dumping place. There is no sense of shame or guilt on the part of the offenders.

I think the Municipality and the Urban Affairs Dept need to do a mass awareness campaign across the city and suburbs

on this dumping menace and also bring in some stringent punishment on the offenders. Let us be responsible for a cleaner Shillong and cleaner environment.

Yours etc.,
RN Rymbai,
Shillong-8

Database of Indian flora

Editor

The electronic database of Indian flora as developed by the Botanical Survey of India is an excellent electronic archive?. This will not only help in the process of popularizing plants among the general public, students and kids but, would also contribute significantly in making people aware of the need for successful plant conservation. The electronic database generation also has far reaching impacts as this will be available to researchers and plant enthusiasts across the nation and overseas. Future cooperation and collaboration with botanical researchers, academics, universities, research institutes and botanical gardens across the nation and the globe will be well facilitated through such initiatives. Furthermore, quick check and references would be possible for doubtful identification of plant species in legal cases by the BSI, the

customs and forest departments and the judiciary for preventing illegal trade on vulnerable ornamental and medicinal plant species. Commercialization of several potential plant species could also be explored by referring to the database and the current status of the plant resources of the mega-biodiverse country could be estimated by the simple click of the mouse without spending hours in the library and botanical archives. In short, the e-flora opens up new opportunity for plant research and conservation in the nation and should be appropriately funded and supported in future to develop into a premier global resource showcasing plants from the entire Indian subcontinent representing divergent plant habitats and ecosystems.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu,
Lethbridge AB
Canada

Smart city not a priority!

Editor,

The UP minister, Azam Khan while criticising the

"All things truly wicked start from innocence."

—Ernest Hemingway

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 50 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

Labour and Nukes

SO far the difference between the Labour and the Conservative parties in the UK seemed marginal. The new Labour party leader, Jeremy Corbyn took a striking attitude opposing atomic weapons. Corbyn has been trying to infuse new thinking in the Labour party on such vital issues as nationalisation of industry and steering away from the US on foreign policy. He thinks that Britain should get rid of these weapons of mass destruction and scrap the Trident nuclear programme. Britain has been a nuclear power since the 1950s and both Labour and Conservative governments have consistently supported atomic weapons. Since the 1990s, the country's nuclear deterrent has consisted of four Royal Navy submarines armed with Trident missiles. Corbyn wants the Trident issue debated at the next Labour party conference.

Labour Centrists senses that the party might face electoral oblivion under Corbyn. John Mc Ternan, a former aide to Prime Minister Tony Blair said that nuclear weapons were hugely supported by British voters. A unilateral approach to the issue would jeopardise Labour interests. It may also open a rift between Corbyn and Labour law makers who support nuclear weapons. The divide between pro and anti-nuclear forces had long been there in the Labour party since Prime Minister Clement Attlee made Britain the world's third nuclear power. It is heartening that the British Parliament will decide next year the replacement of the Trident system which has made the UK subservient to the US. Britain does not really need nuclear weapons and scrapping them would be in sync with Conservative Prime Minister Davis Cameron's cut in the Defence budget and policy of non intervention in global conflicts. But the persistence of cold war tensions clouds all thinking on a unilateral decision on an issue like nuclear power which is considered by many as vital to the national interests.

LOOKING BACK

February 23, 1988

President stresses on higher economic growth

The budget session of Parliament opened here today with President Mr. R. Venkataraman in his first inaugural address under scoring the need for a higher economic growth to match the basic needs of the people.

He said drought had tested the resilience of the nation's economic growth and the strength of the Government's purpose. The People are cooperating magnificently with the Government, the President said adding: the nation's economic performance is a tribute to the soundness and strength of our development strategy.

The President, who ceremonially entered the Central Hall followed by Vice-President Dr. S. D. Sharma, Lok Sabha Speaker Mr. Balram Jakhar, Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mr. K. L. Bhagat, began reading his address at 11'o clock.

In a passing reference to the imposition of Presidents Rule in Tamil Nadu, Mr. Venkataraman said elections in that state were proposed to be held at an early date.

Regarding the Sarkaria Commission's report on Centre-State relation, the President merely stated that the views of Parliament, States and members of the public would be taken into account before arriving at decisions.

Referring to Indo-Pakistan relations, the President repeated the charge made by his predecessor, Glani Zail Singh in the inaugural address last year that Pakistan continued to assist terrorist and secessionist element in India.

Is this the path of friendship and cooperation? The President asked and said: my Government still believes the reasons and good sense will prevail and the Pakistan government will make a fresh assessment of its policy.

About the irritants in Sino-Indian relations, the President said India attached importance to building friendly relations with China. Outstanding issue, he said, had to be resolved in an amicable manner consistent with India's national interest.

The President paid tributes to the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka saying it had done an outstanding job in the most difficult circumstances.

He said the Government of India was firmly resolved to secure the full implementation of all provisions of the historic Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. "We are ensuring that the objective of achieving a durable solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka is realized in full measure."

High level inquiry into rape charges

The Assam Government has ordered a high level inquiry into the alleged rape of some tribal women in Kokrajhar district by state police personnel.

The Lower Assam Divisional Commissioner has been entrusted with the job of conducting the inquiry. Disclosing this Assam Chief Minister Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said today, that a few tribal organizations were leveling such charges against the Assam Police personnel for some time.

Issues plaguing Tourism in Meghalaya

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

The tourism sector has the peculiarity of belonging to many but is being owned by none. It is like a child of many fathers and arguably is being left to be fed and cared for by none. Firstly and from the academic standpoint, the subject matter called 'tourism' is related either directly or indirectly to anthropology, sociology, history, geography, culture, business studies and so forth. Contemporarily, if we include tourism management into the mix of things then this in itself involves innumerable nuances. As such, tourism studies are multi-disciplinary and this is good. It adds richness and variety but at the same time it presents a challenge as far as 'unity of direction' is concerned. Secondly and from the grass-roots standpoint, the projects of the PWD and PHE departments, the interest shown by MUDA these days in construction matters, the rulings of the Hon'ble High Court, the investment policies and plans of the private parties/government, mining and quarrying practices, safety and security concerns and so forth all have an impact on the shape and outcome of tourism.

The above two factors can work as a synergy. They can do wonders for the growth and development of tourism. They can function as a base for employment and self-reliance. However, they can pose a number of serious challenges because of the duplicity of command (as there are multiple decision making points) and lack of coordination (amongst the multiple decision making points). Subsequently, a number of issues have crept in as far as tourism Meghalaya is concerned. Well, some of these are not new and are briefed as the following pointers –

Firstly, branding of tourism destinations is relatively a recent concept (as compared to manufacturing). However, marketing is not. The crux of the matter is that in the absence of branding, effective marketing suffers. Branding gives a 'unique identity' and 'differentiation' to the destination and 'distinguishes' it

from the available competition in the clientele's mind. It represents value, utility, strength and reputation. It is an 'absolute competitive advantage' and highlights this 'advantage' as a 'unique selling point'. Tourism Meghalaya has to search and find this 'advantage' and 'point'. This issue requires a lot of deliberation. However, for a start they can be built upon the natural breath-taking beauty and splendour combined with relatively better infrastructure.

Secondly, if Meghalaya is to be presented as a holistic tourism destination then there must be a concerted effort from all the stakeholders towards an even spread of tourism resources and attractions. To date, around 45% of the tourism spots are confined to east khasi hills district alone. The share of the other districts is poor with only west garo hills district coming close with 16% share of the tourism spots. This unbalanced distribution presents a major challenge and it is difficult to believe that the other districts lack potential for adequate attention and development. This is more of a community involvement and community-based tourism issue and hence calls for such areas to scan on the feasibility of a tourism-based economy.

Thirdly, we talk about the 'four P's' in marketing. Be that as it may, when it comes to tourism the 'fifth P' is crucial. In fact, it is critical. It is the pivot around which the entire tourism activity revolves. This 'P' concerns 'people'. As such, hospitality and presentable behaviour is at the center of everything concerning tourism. The clientele now are more demanding and have huge expectations. They are more health and hygiene conscious. We have moved from the agricultural economy to the manufacturing and further into services. Now at present we are in the experience economy. This 'experience' is at the heart of success or failure of tourism. There is a common saying that 'people will hardly share good news, but they will always talk and share bad/depressing news'. Further, there is a saying that 'good news is shared with seven people but a bad news with twenty-five'. All of this calls for adequate attention

on the experience factor of the clientele. Giving them a great tourism experience is the key to having them back and even in more numbers.

Fourthly, at the top of the clientele segment are the foreign tourists. This is primarily because they normally do longer stays and that way spend a lot more as compared to domestic tourists. Not to mention the fact that the more the foreign tourists, the more is the visibility, value and reputation of the destination (and this is not a colonial mindset but rather a purely business mindset). However, the one thing that such tourists always look for is an airport. In general, it is a factor which determines if a foreign tourist visits us or not. Hence, absence from the airport map of the country is equivalent to losing foreign clientele. In relation to this, I have a question to the government. When you look at the tourism statistics of the country, do you ever wonder why other destinations which are equivalent (or even less) to Meghalaya have more foreign clientele? The answer is simple and the deciding and differentiating factor is an infrastructure called 'airport'. This is a serious issue and it is high time that we wake up to it.

Fifthly, 90% of the tourism business the world over is micro and small in nature. This is more so in the case of Meghalaya. Entrepreneurship enabled services are at the center of tourism Meghalaya. As sweet as that sounds, there is sourness to it as well. As stated earlier, the tourist these days are more demanding and conscious. This is where our entrepreneurship fails to meet expectations of the clientele. At the outset, we fail to provide the goods demanded. Then our service quality requires a serious look-in. In general, the clientele that visits and interacts with our entrepreneurship find our performance as being average. Well, in some cases it is below average to the

extent of leaving the tourist miffed. As such and as a case in point, the clients that go to Sohra/Mawlynnong normally do not eat at such places, forget about staying back. They pack food from elsewhere. Well, one way of looking into it is that these places are not far from Shillong. However, the right way of looking into it is that those places have failed in terms of provision of goods and more importantly the quality of service. Considering the fact that entrepreneurship is a scope for employment and self-reliance, there can be no other issue more serious than this.

Sixthly, our tourism development should be based on the platform of sustainability. This is more so as our tourism is predominantly nature based. It takes many lifetimes to nurture nature and just a single lifetime to destroy it. Hence, sustainability should be at the center. Our destination planning and development will have to be sensitive to the environment and its 'carrying capacity'. We do not want to end up like another Goa. Equally, there is a realization that we still have potential and can serve far more clientele than the ones visiting now. Amidst all this, we must also respect and resign to the fact that tourism is not a panacea. It is not a magic wand. It will not solve all of our economic and social problems. Not all areas of Meghalaya can be promoted as a tourist spots. Nonetheless, tourism as an economic sector has a huge scope and potential for encompassing a sizeable chunk of the population into meaningful activities and livelihoods.

Lastly and going back to the first two paragraphs, in case of tourism spots which are feasible for promotion, tourism planning and development cannot be secondary to the activities of PWD or other departments. For such spots, the planning and development of that area should be tourism-centric. The needs of tourism must determine and direct the flow of activities of the other departments.

(The Author is Assistant Professor in Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, NEHU, Shillong and can be reached at benjamin21in@yahoo.co.in)

Real Issues not highlighted

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

Day by day we read in newspapers the insignificant development and controversies in our state and government. These reports reveal a sense of hopelessness and discouragement among many especially the upcoming generation and the helpless common people. It is the desire of the people and the electorate to have a stable government that will complete its term. That desire develops from the expectation and hope that something better and meaningful would happen to make everyone live a purposeful and vibrant life without any dearth of opportunity and running their daily business without any constraints. But such expectations of the people from a stable government have made those in the government feel complacent and secure and also the right time for them to make laws suitable for their stability and a secured future. No wonder the Holy Book has foretold this type of situation 4000 years before the birth of Christ by Solomon who through the Spirit of the Most High God said, "When the righteous are in authority, people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2).

By saying this I am not against any proposed law or legislation or any person, but I just want to make a point that everyone including the person on the street deserves the same care and concern from a responsible government as those EX-MLAs or sitting MLAs who may not make a comeback in case fresh elections are held. In reality, if measured by any humanitarian and social and economic standards or by the concept of modern management system known as Performance Management System, before enhancing allowances or packages, employees have to be assessed whether they qualify for that salary enhancement. I am sure the MLAs both sitting and defeated would not qualify. One may post lots of queries on this issue. For instance, is it justified for anyone with a service of five years to enjoy the benefits of a lifetime? What actually necessitate such move or what was the noble and significant contribution that they have made as representative and legislators? For some with a short stint in power yet who have accumulated substantial wealth, is this pension benefit useful or an extravagant waste? The list can go on and on. Most of the wealth that people have collected through their sweat and brow is being drained out for lack of super speciality hospitals like CMC, Appollo, etc. Health expenditure by people of the state is a major issue that the Rs 2 lakh insurance is just not sufficient. Sickness is unpredictable and people succumb to it. Those who survive have to spend all their savings in medical care. It is sad that health services in Meghalaya still falls short of our needs. Most students are pursuing technical education outside the state. This is another example of wealth drain. Are not these the concerns of the stable government? Health is wealth and technical education is an asset but does our government believe in these statements? Employment in organised sector and other professional sector is not happening, whereas, women's employment in construction sector is increasing. This shows the attitude of the government towards its own people.

The situation that we are passing through now is dismal except for those who made significant personal achievements in life. Others are seemingly affected by the NGT ban on coal mining. But strangely, those

who can access and manage the State's resources, assets and facilities deliberately re-direct every opportunity towards themselves and their families including their circle of influence. For instance, PWD is now owned by few persons who are either legislator-cum-contractor or close to influential ministers. But if central funds are curtailed in this department, the only option is to increase vehicles registration fees and a hike in road tax.

While students and those with specific reasons are facing hardship and problems outside their home town because of non-accessibility to the facilities built on the promise made for people's interest and welfare, others despite having capability and substantial resources enjoying preferential benefits at the expense of others. This refers to the state of affairs of our Meghalaya houses outside. As for me and some of my colleagues, we are strangers to such facilities because we don't feel a sense of ownership of these facilities. We thank the generosity of good friends from other states for hospitality when in Delhi or Kolkata.

Few legislators can see and pursue what is going on within the government and what direction it is heading, but others are enjoying in the ocean of administrative and legislative ignorance. The funny and shocking development is when we see the HSPDP leaders sometimes on the roof of a vehicle, followed by motor cycle riding activists and what not! Thanks to former DC of East Khasi Hills D.P Wahlang for abolishing horse carts in the city otherwise horses too will not be spared to make agitations or protests impactful. The HSPDP leadership is making relentless attempt to break one rock after another without any result, from Langpih border issue to MUDA bye laws and now Article 371 like Muhammad Bin Tughluq who thought that by shifting his capital he would solve the issues of his countrymen. While the party is busy trying to crush solid rock, supporters are dying in the spheres of incompatibility in a situation where their own leadership too has no solution and goal. On one hand their enthusiasm is genuine but their zeal and aspiration to do something for the community is shattered by their own intolerance and pride – two qualities that disqualify leadership.

It took me to a new level of thinking when I learned from one Pastor who visited South Korea recently how in that country, if a person lost a job or suddenly becomes jobless, cops will immediately come for enquiry. This conveys to me that the type of governance of that country is people-centric and is connected to the real development and involvement of every individual to live life purposefully and meaningfully. A motherly attitude is the primary aspect of good and responsible governance but are our legislators ready for this?

How long will this situation prevail and how many generations more will continue to visit Vellore and other places for treatment? Some people want the VAB passed and others oppose it? Who is right and who is wrong here? Interestingly, one retired Director jokingly said from expelling people, the Rangbah shnong are now trying to expel the Governor. Decisive and strong political will to meet the expectation of the people is still a far cry but for the good of all we need modern people to govern the modern generation. We need clear-sighted people with a vision for the future and who are able to understand the complex issues and also have the capacity to make laws without discriminating anyone.

TO THE EDITOR

Poor water supply

Editor,
It has been observed that the locality of Nongrimma, Laitumkhrar, receives very poor water supply from PHE (GSWSS). As a resident of the above mentioned area request the MLA of the Laitumkhrar constituency to please consider our case since many of the residents of Nongrimma are poor and cannot afford to buy water from private water sellers.

Yours etc.,
Brass Syiem
Shillong-3

Appointment anomalies

Editor,
Appointment for the post of District Inclusive Education Coordinator at the office of the District Mission Coordinator, SSA RI Bhoi District Nongpoh was made without advertisement/interview since 2012. It is a surprise for all interested candidates. Hence the candidates who are eligible to apply for the said post have the right to know as to why this opportunity has been deprived to them. The Higher Authority of Education Department SEMAM (SSA) should take serious action and find out the circumstances leading to filling of the above post without proper advertisement and

interview. In fact, the above post should be advertised and recruitment made as per RTE norms.

Yours etc.,
D. Lyngdoh,
Ri Bhoi District.

No more Block I & II

Editor,
With reference to the boundary disputes between Meghalaya and Assam I wonder why this issue should keep on haunting the society and give sleepless nights to the political regimes of both the states since 1972 till date without any solution in sight. We have heard about meetings, dialogues, etc between the different levels of political and bureaucratic functionaries and the issue has also been made used by political aspirants to get votes. In order to solve the issue once and for all I suggest that the Central Government should acquire the entire stretch of land, say Block I, block II, Langpih, etc. with suitable compensation to the land owners and rehabilitate those affected by the acquisition. The land can then be transferred to the defence establishments. This would end the protracted quarrel between the two states and ensure that people of both the states reap the benefits.

Yours etc.,
Osterley Thangkhiw
Shillong-2

On Pine Mount

School

Editor,
Apropos to the letter written by B Lyngdoh (ST Sept 16, 2015), I would like to state that since the implementation of the RTE Act, Pine Mount School has been classed in the same category like other government schools where education is given free of cost. So, one can very well imagine the standard when one does not have to pay the cost. As it is, today Pine Mount School is to cater only to students from BPL families and economically weaker sections of the society who cannot afford to pay school fees. But since well to do families are monopolizing the admission process they should be able to provide all the necessary stationeries to their wards and be patient to bear with the constraints otherwise they can take their wards to other schools and pay the tuition fees.

Yours etc.,
Everest Khongwar
Shillong-2

Notice to Sanbor Shullai

Editor,
Apropos the news item about service of notice by MUDA for violation of building rules (ST Sept 19, 2015), I would like

to state that initially the land documents for the Raid Laban Social Sports & Cultural Organization (RLSSCO) was in the name of the then General Secretary of the organization, Mr George Arthur Warji. Now it appears that the said land has been usurped by Sanbor Shullai who has constructed a commercial complex at the site. Does this mean the said plot of land has been transferred to Mr Sanbor Shullai? If yes, under what circumstances? For the general public I may point out here that the said land is a government revenue plot leased to the organization under certain terms and conditions. Since the RLSSCO has committed an illegal act by violating the building Bye-laws and also for not utilizing the land for the purpose for which it was allotted to the organization, it is a fit case for the Deputy Commissioner to take action by resuming the said plot of land back to the government under the leased conditions and the provisions of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886 (as adopted by Meghalaya).

Yours etc.,
TR Skhemlon
Shillong-2

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

"The more you like yourself, the less you are like anyone else, which makes you unique."

— Walt Disney

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 51 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2015

To Silicon Valley

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Silicon Valley was a great success. The Valley is home to the likes of Apple and Google. CEO of some of the innovative companies of the world gave him a most warm welcome and promised new investment in Digital India. India is set to connect each citizen to the internet and make the most of it to improve public services. Google confirmed plans to launch free Wi Fi in 500 railway stations across India. Microsoft is committed to offer low cost broad band to Indian villages. Cualcomm has promised to invest 150 million dollars in India startups. A tech savvy Prime Minister, Narendra Modi interacted admirably with the Indian honchos in the Valley. He told technocrats how social media served as an easy text book to him broadening his horizon. He was aware of the Constitution it could make to bridging the gap between governments and people. Twitter and Facebook were indicators of the public mood. Social media could inject warm cordiality in dry diplomatic intercourse. The conditions on internet neutrality are restrictive about India's deal with the Silicon Valley.

Modi's attitude appeared at odds with the narrow chauvinistic attitude informing some official circles in India which attacked westernisation. The Silicon amity went bang against the concept of cultural cleansing. Modi praised California as the state where ideas saw the first light of day. Silicon Valley's creative surge forward is based on tolerance and encouragement of diversity and difference. Modi's ideas can achieve fruition in India if only full marks are given for defiance and dissent combined with individual development. And internet block can only stifle such growth. Modi has not so far supported cultural cleansing but he has not yet condemned it either. A tech savvy Prime Minister knows that the internet is beyond borders. Facebook annihilates distance thwarting globalisation of communication.

LOOKING BACK

February 24, 1988

Opposition rallies demand Rajiv's Resignation

Opposition parties staged rallies in the capital and other cities demanding the resignation of the Rajiv Gandhi government and holding of mid-term poll.

The parties called upon the people to make the "Bharat Bandh" on March 15 a "complete success".

In Lucknow, 100 opposition legislators courted arrest to observe 'Baharat bachao diwas' (save India day-today).

The rallies were organized by the Jan Morcha Lok Dal (A), CPI, CPI (M), Congress(I), Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP).

Speaker at the rally criticized the Rajiv Gandhi Government for its "Failure mainly on the economic front" They also attacked The continuing economic scandals and corruption in high places and sending of army to Tripura on the election.

The speaker included Mr. Madhu Dandavate, Mr. Inderjit Gupta, Mr. B. T. Randive, Mr. Satya Prakash Malviya, Mr. Tridiv Choudhary and Mr. Harbans Singh Bhalla.

Assam SOS to Buta for tripartite meeting

Assam Chief Minister Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta today sent an SOS to Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh requesting him to visit

Guwahati on February 25 for a tripartite discussion with All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the State Government to persuade AASU to call off their proposed oil blockade from February 27.

The Chief Minister made the request after a meeting with AASU leaders here as it was strongly felt that such a discussion with the Union Home Minister would help create atmosphere for proper understanding of the implementation of the Assam Accord and for calling off the agitational programme by AASU, according to an official spokesman.

The AASU has announced to blockade the flow of crude oil outside the state for three days from February 27 in protest against the Centre as well as the State Government's alleged failure to implement the Assam Accord.

The Home Minister had earlier asked the Chief Minister to see that the feeling of the AASU and the general public regarding progress of the Assam Accord had already been communicated to the Union Home Ministry for proper monitoring of the accord implementation.

Meanwhile, The AASU said that their decision to picket at the pumping stations of Oil India's pipeline to prevent the flow of crude oil 'stands'. The Chief Minister, however requested them to withdraw their oil blockade programme.

Snapshot of the floundering economy of Meghalaya

By Sumarbin Umdor

Recently I, along with some other panelists, were invited to speak in a programme marking the 18th foundation day of the United Democratic Party (UDP). Frankly, I was surprised by the decision of this political party to use the occasion to invite social thinkers and academia to deliberate on pressing socio-economic issues facing the state. I was impressed by the large turnout of ordinary party members who had come to listen and take part in the day long deliberation along with the entire party leadership. I was even more surprised to see a number of nontribal party workers among the audience. For a regional party that is out of power and with just 8 MLAs in a house of 60, the enthusiasm of the party workers which was evident that day bode well for the future of thUDP.

Since the topic given to me on the State of Economy of Meghalaya may be of interest to many, I've summarized the same here in this column.

A third world economy: With a GSDP of about 3.5 billion (current US) dollars, the size of the economy of Meghalaya is comparable to Swaziland (not Switzerland) which is one of the smallest economies in the world. Within the country, our per capita income of about Rs. 60000 is roughly one fourth of Goa, half of Maharashtra and one third of Sikkim. In an interesting exercise undertaken by The Economist to compare country equivalent to Indian states in terms of GDP, GDP per person (in PPP terms) and population, the country equivalent to Meghalaya is the Central African Republic (CAR) which happens to be one of the least developed countries of the world. The similarity of this country with the state however goes far beyond GDP parameter. The CAR possesses considerable agricultural, water and mineral resources, but corruption is rife and it undermines the growth of economy, a situation which is also true for our state.

The economy of Meghalaya has seen a rapid transformation with share of agriculture and allied sectors dropping from a high of 40 percent of GSDP in early eighties to 16 percent at present, accompanied by steady increase in the share of industrial and services sectors. However, while the relative importance of agriculture to the GSDP has decreased significantly two third of the population continues to depend on this sector for their livelihood, a pointer to a very low productivity of the sector. Further, aggravating the situation is the low GDP growth rate of agriculture which is little under 3 percent during 2005-14 compared to growth of 10 and 8 percent achieved by Mizoram and Sikkim respectively during the same period.

Jobless growth: Within secondary sector, manufacturing sub-sector has seen a phenomenal GDP growth since the early 2000s' at 22 percent between 2005-14 largely driven by the subsidies and fiscal incentives offered under the Northeast Industrial Policy and also the availability of cheap and reliable power supply in the state. However, the growth in manufacturing has not been accompanied by commensurate growth of employment opportunity for the local population. Given the lack of job creation in other formal sectors, most of the employment outside agriculture is therefore in the low productivity informal sector particularly in informal construction, retail trade, transportation, etc

Power guzzler industries: Most of the manufacturing units that have come up in the state are power intensive industries falling under the extra high and high tension (EHT) category which has totally distorted the demand for power in Meghalaya. The sale of energy to industrial units which was for only 9 percent in 1997-98 today accounts for a whopping 44 percent driven mainly by demand from EHT industries. Still striking is the

fact that the number of EHT industrial consumer at 155 constitute less than one percent of the 3.12 lakhs electricity consumer in the state. Thus the moot question is whether the present industrialization is beneficial to the state? The need of the hour is for a comprehensive evaluation of the NEIIPP 2007 in terms of its impact on the economy and job creation in the northern states.

Crumbling infrastructure and public service delivery: As per Meghalaya Human Development Report of 2008 there has been deterioration in the position of Meghalaya to that of all India average in respect of key infrastructures. But do we really need data to tell us this. The crater size pot hole punctuating our highways and subways bear testimony to the pathetic state of infrastructure which has only worsened with every passing year. If infrastructure in Shillong the seat of government is so bad then one can only imagine the pitiable condition and hardship that the people in rural areas have to bear with.

According to the 'Millennial Survey of India's Public Services' carried out in 2001, Meghalaya was among the worst performer in terms of management and delivery of public services such as drinking water, health & sanitation, education & child care, public distribution system and road transport as judged by the end users of these services. It is unlikely that the state would fare better if a similar study is undertaken now as nothing much has changed in the last 15 years.

Government Finances, a leaky bucket: There has been very little effort by the state government to improve own generation as evident by the low tax

GSDP ratio. Also, very little attention is being given to the huge loss of revenue to the state on account of evasion of taxes. The state government can augment its revenues manifold by plugging the loopholes and leakages taking place through a systematic evasion and fraud committed year upon year without adequate remedial action. But no sincere efforts have been made by the state government in this regard.

The government has not been very proactive in effective and productive expenditure management as can be seen from high revenue expenditure at around 80 to 85 percent leaving very little for capital expenditure which increases the productive capacity of the state. There is a dearth of measures to improve the technical and allocative efficiency in public expenditure. In Meghalaya the execution of public projects is marred by huge delay and cost overruns with the Greater Shillong Water supply Scheme being a not so shining example. What makes the situation worse is that there is no accountability for lapses and misappropriation of public funds.

This culture of impunity in Meghalaya has only emboldened the looting of public money which is evident in the series of scams to hit the state in recent times. The latest is the purchase of male infertility drugs worth crores of rupees in a state with the highest fertility rate in the country. A recent report by anti-poverty organization, 'One' concludes that corruption inhibits private investment, reduces economic growth, increases the cost of doing business and can lead to political instability. It further asserts that corruption is a killer. When governments are deprived of their own resources to invest in health care, food security or essential infrastructure, it costs lives and the biggest toll is on children. It is no wonder then that Meghalaya continues to top the chart when it comes to child mortality in the country.

(The author teaches Economics in NEHU)

TO THE EDITOR

MUDA clarification

Editor,

Apropos the letter to the editor by Raghav Jhunjhunwala under the caption "MUDA selling outdated bus coupons" (ST September 17, 2015), it is hereby clarified to the general public that these coupons have been introduced from the month of August 2015 to help the public who are accessing Public Transport, with change of Rs 5 in the form of pre-paid coupons to ease the problem of tendering loose change. These coupons are binding and act as a mode of exchange just the way cash is and in no way are they outdated unless it is indicated so in the coupon itself. The passengers can always check the terms and conditions which are written at the back of each coupon regarding use of the coupon and validity of the same, if the credibility of the coupons are in question. Hence the public should not take such claims from bus conductors at face value and should report to the office regarding any such claims. They can also call this number 9402193547/9774022721 regarding any inconvenience faced while using SPTS, SSTS and SSPTS modes of transport. As

can be observed there are changes that are being brought about with regards to improvement of operations of Public Transport Service in the city such as introduction of Route no. and detailed routes being pasted on the buses and maxis along with colour codes, uniforms for bus drivers and conductors, driver and conductor's details to be displayed inside the bus and also the introduction of the coupons in lieu of change. In addition to this, there will be additional buses to be added to improve the comfort level. But to make the system an efficient one, active public participation is also required. Hence we request to the public accessing Public Transport Service to report any inconvenience or issues with regards to the service provided. In response to the complaint of non-acceptance of coupons by the bus conductor, the operators of SPTS, SSTS and SSPTS have been instructed to accept the tickets issued by the office and also to observe all operational standards failing which disciplinary action will be initiated by the concerned authority.

Furthermore, the coupons will also be available at Pariat Store (Motphran), Yogomaya Enterprise (Police Bazar), D. Enterprise (NEIGHRMS), ASL General Store (Mawlai, Nonglum), New World Stationary, Shillong Municipal Board

and MUDA office.

With regards to the reported incident this Authority requests Mr Raghav Jhunjhunwala to kindly call the number mentioned so the officials of MUDA can come and verify the coupons procured which are alleged by the conductor to have been expired.

Yours etc.,
Secretary
Meghalaya Urban
Development Authority,
Shillong

M-TABS distracting students

Editor,

My son is a student of class XII. As we all know, the State Govt. is providing M-TABS to all the students of Class XII from the past two years. But is this actually helping the students to excel in their studies? The students use TABs for gaming, chatting (by using wifi), and other useless online activities. Being a parent, I would have never given my child a TAB, as it consumes a lot of their time, not especially in their 12th standard which is the most important year in their life. Giving the TAB after Class XII would have been a better option. This is be-

cause the students would have passed Class XII, and they would need it to go to other states for higher studies.

Many students are seen in markets using their TABs for gaming, chatting, using useless apps. If there had been some kind of a system in TAB which could stop installing these useless apps, it would have been better. Even good students are now addicted to the TAB, and are wasting a lot of their time. This is because the students keep the TAB near them always, and hence, tend to use it more often than needed. There are few students who are using the TAB positively, but 90% of them make negative use of it. Being a parent, I am concerned about the future of my child. The Class XII results of the students of our locality was way below our expectation and my observation is that it was due mainly to the to the TAB. No other State Govt. provides TAB to the students like ours does. I think the Govt. needs to take steps to save the future of the students of our state.

Yours etc.,
Sumit Kumar Pradhan
Shillong-22

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.

Rajan gifts 50 basis points cut for a turnaround

Growth needs reforms and corporate actions

By S. Sethuraman

RBI Governor Dr Raghuram Rajan has effected a hefty 50 basis point cut in the key policy rate (repo) from 7.25 to 6.75 percent with effect from September 29, designed to boost economic recovery, in a welcome surprise for both the unsettled market and a Government pressuring him for rate cuts.

Dr Rajan's announcement in the Fourth Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement (Sep.29) took note of CPI dropping to a nine-month low, tepid aggregate demand, persistent drag from lower exports from weaker global activity and a lowering of business sentiment.

Dr Rajan has himself lowered the GDP projection for fiscal 2016 from 7.6 to 7.4 percent while expecting CPI at 5.8 percent by January next, a shade lower than the earlier 6 percent projection.

The Governor has left CRR unchanged at 4 percent of net demand and time liabilities while with repo rate reduction, the reverse repo rate under the LAF stands adjusted to 5.75 percent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate to 7.75 percent.

In a bleak assessment of external economic conditions, the Governor noted world trade growth has deteriorated further and downside risks to global recovery have increased. This would imply that commodity prices would remain contained for a while. Dr Rajan says more domestic demand is thus needed to substitute for weakening global demand in order that the domestic investment cycle picks up.

The coming Seventh Pay Commission Report could add substantial fiscal stimulus to domestic demand, but the government has reaffirmed its desire to respect its fiscal targets and improve the quality of its spending. Under these circumstances, monetary policy has to be accommodative to the extent possible, given its inflation goals, while recognizing that "continuing policy implementation, structural reforms and corporate actions leading to higher productivity will be the primary impetus for sustainable growth".

In front-loading policy action - as against a mere 25 basis point cut widely expected in the Policy Review - Dr Rajan expected investment to respond more strongly "if there is more certainty about the extent of monetary stimulus in the pipeline, even if transmission is slow". Therefore, the Reserve Bank has front-loaded policy action by a reduction in the policy rate by 50 basis points.

On inflation trends and the outlook for coming months, the RBI statement said the disinflation so far has been broad-based and inflation excluding food and fuel has also come off its recent peak in June. Looking forward, Dr Rajan said, inflation is likely to go up from September for a few months as favourable base effects reverse.

On the assumption that the reported increase in sown area, despite a deficient monsoon, translates into higher production, and there would be only moderate increase in minimum support prices, cereal inflation should remain muted, the policy statement noted. Lower international food prices could have downward pressure on items like sugar and edible oils and thus food inflation more generally.

However, the statement reiterates need for pro-active supply-side management to head off any food price pressures should they materialise, especially in respect of onion and pulses. Taking into account also the rupee depreciation and its

pass-through effects, RBI expects CPI to reach 5.8 percent in January 2016.

On the state of economy, Dr Rajan said while a tentative recovery is under way, it is still far from robust. This assessment somewhat varies from claims by policy-makers of emerging signs of growth heading toward 7.5 to 8 percent. India, however, remains an exception so far to the fallout of adverse global winds on a scale that other emerging market economies have been hit, notably Russia and Brazil.

Referring to China, the review noted since its devaluation of yuan in August, unsettling financial markets across the world, equity prices, commodities and currencies have fallen sharply and led to capital flights. The September 17 decision of the Federal Open Market Committee to stay on hold its first post-crisis lifted financial markets briefly, but overall financial conditions are yet to stabilise. However, Dr Rajan has not taken note of the Fed indication of rate action before the end of 2015.

Reviewing manufacturing trends, RBI said despite some pick-up in consumption of consumer goods, external demand conditions have turned weaker for India's output and exports, this contributed to continuing domestic capacity under-utilisation, decelerating new orders and a rising ratio of finished goods inventories to sales. Weak aggregate demand affects the industrial sector.

In services sector, construction activity is weakening as reflected in low demand for cement and the large inventory of unsold residential houses in some localities. Rising public expenditure on roads, ports and eventually railways could, however, provide some boost to construction going forward.

While a modest pick-up in the first half of fiscal 2016 (April-September) is inferred from soft commodity prices, disinflation, comfortable liquidity conditions and some de-clogging of stalled projects, RBI attributes underlying weakness in economic activity to sustained decline in exports, rainfall deficiency and low industrial production. Given a continuing lack of appetite for new investment in the private sector, banking stresses and waning business confidence, RBI has revised down growth for 2015/16 to 7.4 percent.

Taking an overall view of the state of under-performing economy and disinflation on steady course toward projection, Dr Rajan has given a growth bias to the monetary policy, also a timely move as the economy enters the second half of fiscal 2016 with increased expectations than in the first half, however daunting are the domestic challenges apart from global headwinds.

Governor Rajan has again voiced disappointment that transmission by bank of RBI's policy actions so far (75 basis points cuts till Sep.28) has been only to a limited extent. Fall in the median base lending rates are a fraction of 75 basis points of the policy rate reduction during January-June, even eight months after the first rate action by RBI in January.

Banks have, however, promptly reduced deposit rates significantly. This suggests further transmission of earlier cuts is possible.

In policy guidance, Dr Rajan says RBI stance will continue to be accommodative but the focus of monetary action for the near term would shift to working with Government to ensure removal of impediments to banks passing on the bulk of the cumulative 125 basis points cut effected till September 29. Yet, as usual reminder, he adds RBI would remain vigilant for signs that monetary policy adjustments are needed to keep the economy on the target disinflationary path. (IPA Service)