

"Irresponsibility is part of the pleasure of all art; it is the part the schools cannot recognize."

--- James Joyce

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.258

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2018

Bureaucrats tossed around

THE sudden transfer of the Deputy Commissioner, West Khasi Hills, Arun Kembhavi in a single order appears arbitrary. It is certainly "not in public interest" as the wording of a transfer order normally states. To insulate the bureaucracy from political interference and to put a stop to frequent transfers of civil servants by political bosses, the Supreme Court had in 2013 directed the Centre and the states to set up a Civil Services Board to consider the transfers and postings of bureaucrats. Since the Deputy Commissioners also chair the District Selection Committees, they are under pressure from politicians to appoint the candidates of their choice irrespective of merit. When the DCs decide to make the selection process completely transparent they make powerful enemies. In a coalition government the pressure on the Chief Minister to succumb to such political favours is overwhelming. But can the CM continue to indulge the personal whims of his colleagues or does he want good governance? Clearly he cannot trade off one for the other!

In Meghalaya it is seen that officers who are favoured by any chief minister or the coal mafia tend to enjoy longer tenures than their counterparts, irrespective of their performance. Some officers act as stooges of ministers. They too enjoy indefinite tenures. This has been Meghalaya's bane. Hence some bureaucrats have not only become filthy rich but also continue in the same department for donkey's years. The travesty is that the take home salary of a senior bureaucrat (without paying income tax) is in the range of Rs 3 lakh a month but their performance indicators are abysmal.

The stability of all India services officers, especially in the states, has been a matter of concern for a long time. Frequent and arbitrary transfers of officers before completion of a reasonable tenure on any post is considered as a major reason for the declining standards of administration. This was stated by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) in a note sent to states sometime ago when it directed the states to establish the civil services board. IAS officers like Ashok Khemka, Durga Sakthi Nagpal and Kuldip Narayan, among others, have allegedly been victims of arbitrary suspensions and transfers because they stepped on the toes of the sand or the building mafia!

The important point here is that Deputy Commissioners perform a public duty. They are accountable to the public. When they are punished for carrying out their duties by a vindictive government or by politicians it is the public that must stand up and protest. If the public is not doing that they don't deserve effective and efficient officers.

What is moral? And what constitutes morality? Does one's morals end where another's nose begins? Sizzling questions which strip our probity to the bare bone exposing a potent cocktail of raw naked sexual exploitation and power of the Ugly Vile Indian Male! Else, how could we allow male predators in positions of command and authority who seek sexual favours, politely called the 'casting couch,' in exchange for a role, job or career advancement from females to get away with it. Sic.

All hell broke loose when Bollywood dance choreographer Saroj Khan justified the casting couch asserting, "At least the industry provides employment. After all, it isn't as if women are raped and abandoned. This has been going on since the beginning of time. Someone or the other tries to take advantage of every other girl. Even the Government (sic) does it."

This has opened up a veritable floodgate of accusations against Bollywood. Fed up of being solicited, Telugu actress Sri Reddy marched topless to Hyderabad's Movie Artistes Association offices last weekend. Another Tamil actress tweeted her unsavoury experience with a leading TV channel programming head who had made suggestive comments, insinuating that she'd have to give in to his demands if they were to continue the work relationship.

Cooed Congress ex MP Renuka Chowdhary, "Parliament too is not immune to the casting couch, it happens all the time. It is time that India stood up and said 'Me Too.'" Recall, last year the West was abuzz with the "Me Too" movement by top film and TV actresses and models who squealed on how powerful movie mogul Harvey Weinstein had sexually abused them over 30 years highlighting the pervasive culture in Hollywood and institutional failures, with Governments and corporations failing to respond to women's concerns.

Breaking the omerta code, all four bared the brutal truth around sexual harassment in India. Be it films, advertising, corporate world, business or politics sexual favours are rampant. Women complain of "couch" tactics to land a film, job, election ticket or political office. Not only are they asked to show lot of skin but visit 'bosses' and mai-baaps after work. In the advertising world colleagues' comment that women should wear things

By Poonam I Kaushish

that make them look luscious, some pinch while greeting you.

Exploitation is the name of the game and Swamis too are past masters harbouring a fondness for outright sexual exploitation of hapless women followers who come to them seeking solace from husband, family harassment or a child only to be blackmailed later with their nude photos. Thankfully, three such notorious Babas, Asaram Babu, Guru Swami Nityanand and Ram Rahim are behind bars.

Sadly, in a culture where our male-dominated na-

Not a few women complain that they are viewed as sex objects and mince-meat for male lust camouflaged as human animals. To rise professionally they need a 'god-father' who can make or break them. Comply or reconcile to battling it out at every level.

Clearly, in a society heavily loaded in favour of men, several women who face sexual abuse at work stay quiet in order to avoid further harassment and unwanted attention. Or are hesitant to speak out fearing they will be dubbed 'loose charactered' at best or ostracized at worst. Either which

"Exploitation is the name of the game and Swamis too are past masters harbouring a fondness for outright sexual exploitation of hapless women followers who come to them seeking solace from husband, family harassment or a child only to be blackmailed later with their nude photos. Thankfully, three such notorious Babas, Asaram Babu, Guru Swami Nityanand and Ram Rahim are behind bars."

tional narrative conditions people to think of women as playthings to be enjoyed and destroyed and where women have little or no cultural respect and are always blamed, any wonder anger and indignation is kept behind closed doors.

This raises a moot point: Why are women viewed as sex objects? A plaything of males to satisfy their libido and massage their egos?

Perhaps it has something to do with our patriarchal lineage and misogynistic culture. A culture that believes that women are second class citizens! Cooed another politician, "The more skin women show it is like if there's gasoline, there will be fire. If there's spilt sugar, ants will gravitate towards it for sure." Disgusting, to say the least!

More. When it comes to the paarde-ke-piche-cholike-neeche antics of our men-folk, most claim that given our traditionally open society, sex is a part of our heritage and needs to be guarded with all the vigour at their command. How can you talk morals in the land of Khajuraho?

way the damage is done.

For those who enjoy the ruinous events now unfolding in the country, there is some good news! The end of the tragedy is nowhere in sight. The bad news? It's simply a system's failure! They collectively assert. Who failed the system? Not the politician, bureaucrat or police. All point an accusing finger at each other. Nevertheless, everyone is agreed that there is something rotten in the State of Denmark! And we call ourselves a civilised society!

Alas, policies to deal with sexual harassment are either absent or weak. Till 1997, India had no explicit laws against workplace sexual harassment. In 2013, Parliament passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. This was widely ignored and hardly implemented.

In 2015, when Union Minister Maneka Gandhi wanted to make it mandatory for companies to disclose whether they have put in place a committee to inquire into sexual harassment complaints of women employees, her re-

quest was turned down by colleague Arun Jaitley. Unsurprisingly, surveys have found that sexual harassment is widespread in Indian workplaces.

What next? We need to ensure systematic education of children to make certain they will respect women. Our learning process needs to emphasise the importance of gender equality and eradicate the sick male mindset. A girl's need for employment, fair play, dress, time and place should not be made an excuse to use her. Alongside, we need to change our approach to sexual harassment. Another option is radical feminism to make a social impact.

Also, sexually harassed women must speak up as it will make more people aware and come out in support thereby help in taking collective action. If they continue to suffer in silence, they only encourage men to continue their crime. Undoubtedly, the right groundwork must be laid for women to work in a safe and secure work environment and an orientation session for men and women on what constitutes sexual harassment.

In a milieu which has systematically obliterated morality and where incidents of moral turpitude pervade country-wide tough times call for tough action. Undeniably, we need to cry a halt to women being playthings of voyeuristic men. Time is ripe for a revolutionary change. The Constitution has given equal rights to women. Merely mouthing platitudes of freedom will no longer work. By remaining silent spectators we are only encouraging rowdism and its practitioners to get away.

The strength of democracy and the quality of life enjoyed by the fairer sex is largely determined by the ability of the people, especially males to look at women as equal partners with equal rights fighting for a rightful place in society. Men need to change their moribund mindset and thinking. Will women continue to constitute the weaker gender to be used and discarded? Will the fair sex continue to rot in silence at the hands of lecherous men? Will we break new ground and unshackle women? A time to introspect --- Apradhikaran akhir kab tak? ---- INFA

Wuhan summit creates a new template for economic engagement India can benefit from Chinese economic muscle

By Subrata Majumder

A perpetual border settlement between India and China is untenable. Then, why not use economic engagement to soothe the relation. Against the backdrop of US trade war against China, Prime Minister Modi's reciprocation to Beijing's urge for amelioration of ties is a timely step for his Act East policy, which has been shadowed by China's BRI (Belt and Road initiative). India has declined to be party to BRI.

The informal Wuhan summit has helped to morph Doklam tension into a softer China and its yearn for India's support for its role in Asia Pacific region. A progressive economic engagement is the outcome of the summit. Given the fact both countries are the twin propellers for global growth, inter-dependence between India and China is imperative. China needs India for a bigger market and India needs China for enlarging foreign investment.

China fears a big loss of its export market after USA's double whammy to its ex-

tries for improving the relation, the daily said. "Friction can be handled with deft diplomacy. With the return of frequent and attentive diplomatic exchanges, the two sides can quickly work out their issues," it added.

What has driven China to make a somersault in its anti-India protest? Is it a fear from its own people, who are doing business in India or to find a major alternative market after the trade war was intensified by USA. China's biggest export destination?

Modi was not averse to economic engagement with China. His relation with China was established well before he became Prime Minister. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, he visited China four times. Unlike his predecessor, Modi tried to woo Chinese investment, despite the security concerns. Instead of resorting to a trade war to cut trade deficit, the Modi administration took viable economic steps by enlarging Chinese investment

Chinese companies benefitted from this im-

"Modi was not averse to economic engagement with China. His relation with China was established well before he became Prime Minister. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, he visited China four times. Unlike his predecessor, Modi tried to woo Chinese investment, despite the security concerns."

ports - by raising tariffs on imports from China and culling China's exports to the world by re-joining TPP. China is skeptical about the success of its BRI, whose main aim is to step up exports utilizing the idle capacity, if trade war intensifies.

China is an export base economy. Trade accounts for 37 percent of its GDP. India is emerging as an important global market, driven by high GDP growth and a big pool of middle class and non-aging population. India can be a potential offset for China's loss of exports in the longer run.

Although the Doklam stand-off dumped India-China relation in a damn squib, the relation witnessed chances for resur-rection after 9th BRICS summit in China in September 2017. There was a series diplomatic exchanges between India and China. On December 11, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India. This was followed by the visits of Yang Jiechi, the State Councilor and Special Representative of China on the Boundary Questions. Reciprocating to the Chinese desire for better relation, new Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale - who was the master mind to put the lid on the Doklam issue as Ambassador to China - visited Beijing for talks with Yang Jiechi. On April 13, India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval visited Shanghai. On April 21, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj visited China to take part in ministerial meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Around that time, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also attended the SCO defence ministers' meeting.

These frequent diplomatic exchanges culminated in the Modi-Xi Jinping informal summit, according to Global Times, a leading national daily in China. Such intense series of high level diplomatic exchanges rarely happened earlier, signaling the aspiration of both coun-

proved economic engagement. Starting 2015, Chinese investment in India surged eight times and became the eighth biggest foreign investor in India from the 26th position. Six top brand Chinese smartphone makers, viz, Xiaomi, Oppo, Oneplus, Gionee, Vivo, Huawei, have set up their manufacturing operations in India. During 2016, Chinese companies proposed US \$ 2.3 billion worth of investment in the country.

As a result, India emerged as an engine for the global presence of Chinese mobile manufacturing companies. India accounts for 60 to 70 of the global sales of these Chinese companies. For Xiaomi's smartphones, India accounts for 67 percent of its global sales. For Vivo, it is 73 percent and Oppo 48 percent; for Gionee it is one-fourth.

India's potency sparked after China's lost its vigour as a low cost workshop of the world. According to FDI Intelligence, an outfit of Financial Times, UK, India replaced China as a recipient of FDI in greenfield projects in 2015. FDI in greenfield in India increased by 37 percent in 2015 and surged further by 18 percent in 2016, bringing cumulative growth by over 50 percent.

Interest for economic engagement between the two countries accelerated further after the successful launching of AIIB (Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank) in 2014. It was China's initiative, which led to the setting up of an alternative Asian mega financial institution on the lines of ADB. China is the biggest stakeholder in AIIB and India is the second biggest. It entrusts more power to India in disbursement of loans than ADB.

In summing up, Modi's strategy for economic partnership with China, despite the political differences, is a timely attempt to benefit from the Chinese economic power. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Domestic help: the other viewpoint

Editor,

The news item, "Domestic helps ask Govt. to fix wages, form welfare board" spells out the need for the employers to recognise the rights/uniform wages of their domestic help at a time when prices of all essential commodities are escalating. While the demand for wages seems somewhat on the higher side, the domestic help should also understand that employers want value for money. They want domestic help who are committed to their duties. No employer will grudge a better pay provided there is equal cooperation from the domestic help. Let me list a few grievances of employers.

There are part time domestic help who come for an hour a day but who simply take a day off without informing the employers. This throws everything out of gear for the employers. As employers, we expect those lost hours to be made up by either additional working hours or a deduction of the day's wage. Another

difficulty faced by employers come from live-in domestic help. Besides the demand of Rs. 5000 as salary there are also demands of "periods of rest and weekly day-off". Even if employers are willing to comply with these demands there are quite a few domestic helpers who break the contract and leave after a few months. These sort of helpers create anxieties for the employers and leave them high and dry.

There are instances where the helpers have stolen food items, money, clothes, and valuables from the homes of their employers.

It should be made mandatory for all employers to register their domestic helps in the police station within their jurisdiction. This way neither the employers nor the help will be subjected to any physical, mental or monetary agony. If a rule and law is in place then stringent actions can be taken against the employer and helpers alike. This step would also deter the employers from any mischief (physical abuse and sexual harassment) as they will be restrained by

the rule of law.

These are the grievances that employers face and no one has ever considered a redressal mechanism for them? As of now, the wages of these domestic helpers vary from household to household hence the Union is working towards uniformity in wages. Hence the State Government ought to seek the opinions and suggestions of employers as well before passing any ordinance on behalf of the domestic workers. Most of us are sensitive towards the needs and rights of our helpers provided there is mutual respect and collaboration.

As much as the All Meghalaya Domestic Workers' Union (AMDWU) are working towards safeguarding the rights of their mates, we as employers are anxious to see that the AMDWU also safeguards the interests of the employers and address the deviant behaviour of their members. As of now, many would agree, that the employers are more exploited then exploiting their helpers. The Union must not turn a blind eye to the shortcoming and flaws of their mates.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Misplaced priorities!

Editor,

This refers to the report, "13 school children killed in UP accident" (ST, April 26, 2018). Misplaced priorities have given birth to another tragic incident in which 13 school children have been killed after a speeding train smashed a school van at an unmanned crossing at Kushinagar near Gorakhpur. When will all these unattended railway crossings be upgraded either by employing permanent gate keepers or by building flyovers over the crossings? It is also a matter of grave concern that railway tracks are not being properly maintained. Track fractures are suspected to be the cause of a derailment massacre of a recent rail accident and old ICF coaches have added insult to injury.

The irony is that while the Ahmedabad - Mumbai, bullet train project will cost Rs. One lakh crore; finan-

cial constraints hinder track renewal, replacement of coaches, modernisation of signalling systems and building flyovers over railway crossings.

Then, why on earth must we give priority to bullet trains? Is not it a criminal negligence on the part of the Indian Railways to compromise on safety standards? Is our democracy of the political leaders, by the poor voters and for the super rich? Our government must not ensure speed for the rich at the cost of our lives and safety.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Justice at last!

Editor,

The conviction of the controversial Godman Asaram Babu to life imprisonment will set a good precedence to such criminals in future that nobody is above law. Asaram's power and influence could not save him. More such stringent punishment like death sentence for raping of minors need to be carried out in future,

through fast track courts to serve as a meaningful deterrence to such crimes. It is also to be ensured that sufficient legal protection is provided to the victim and her family so that they need not suffer the same intimidation and torture like Asaram's victim and her family did.

For those who are arguing that death penalty for rapists will lead to murder of the victim after the rape, should explain whether lack of any deterrent punishment is leading to increase or decrease of the crime? Rape is almost tantamount to death for the victim and only a deterrent punishment like a 'death sentence' can somewhat minimise its recurrence.

Yours etc.,
Sadiq Hussain Laskar,
Guwahati

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

"A man is not old until regrets take the place of dreams."

--- J. G. Ballard

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.259 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 2018

NPP gains numbers

NATIONAL People's Party candidate, Marcuise Marak has won the Williamnagar seat in a convincing victory. Marcuise got 9656 votes and defeated his closest rival Sengbath Marak (Independent) by a margin of 4920 votes. The Congress and NPP now have 20 MLAs each since Dr Mukul Sangma has abandoned the Ampati seat and is fielding his daughter from there. Conrad Sangma too has to resign his MP seat and contest the state assembly election within September this year. He is looking for a safe constituency and will contest from South Tura Constituency which will be vacated by his sister Agatha Sangma the sitting MLA. With one more MLA in its kitty the NPP is in jubilant and expects to win the Ampati seat too for everyone loves a winner. Ironically, the Congress candidate, Deborah Marak came a poor third but that too was expected. People voted for change whichever way we look at it!

Leading a coalition government with the BJP, UDP, HSPDP etc, as partners, Chief Minister, Conrad Sangma has begun his tenure in right earnest. His government appears to have set some goals for itself and to list out the priorities for the state. His personal visit to the Umroi airport to check out the reasons for the backlog and later his visit to the Performing Arts Centre in the New Shillong township are seen as pro-active ways of speeding up development. It is pointless having endless meetings in the Secretariat if the Chief Minister and other ministers do not see first-hand what's happening on the ground. Most projects are held up and suffer from time and cost overruns because ministers don't dedicate time and energy to ensure they come up on record time or because they are in collusion with the contractors. This government came to power on the premise of change. It is hoped that this premise remains the abiding goal of the MDA Government.

LOOKING BACK

May 20, 1989

Part IX and Schedule VI

The Constitution (Sixtyfourth Amendment) Bill, 1989, now on the legislative anvil, differs from all the similar proceeding Bills in that the latest one proposes no amendment as such to any of the existing provisions of the Constitution. What it does it to add, after Part VIII of the Constitutions, a new Part - Part IX which is unrelated to any other Part. The new Part seeks to a constitutional status to Panchayati raj institutions and laying down detailed provisions regarding their composition and dissolution etc, their funds and their power to impose taxes, as also the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon panchayats. What strikes us is that the same objective could perhaps be realized by the Constitution, rather than adding a new Part in the body of the constitution, which would have been more in consonance with the Prime Minister's repeated assurance that the basic structure of the Constitution would not be tampered with. It may not have been so even now, strictly in terms of the spirit of the Constitution, but in form it is/

The latest Amending Bill gives a formal recognition to Panchayats as a third tier in addition to the other two, the Union (Centre) and the States. If this is true, speaking of the rest of the country, the north-east region has been enjoying the third tier already in most of its tribal area by virtue of the Sixth Schedule which lays down a similarly elaborate apparatus for an elected district level administration in major tribal belts. Naturally enough, these areas are have been excluded from the operation of the provisions of the 64th Amending bill and this quite reasonably too. At the same time, by the new

Article 241, it has been made clear that "unless the context otherwise requires, "Panchayat" means a panchayati raj institution at village level, or district level, or at district level, by whatever name called". Sixth Schedule calls it "District Council" or "Regional Council" which are no different from the "Panchayats" under the newly annexed Part IX. The new "Part" and the old "Schedule" thus have come to co-exist, although there was scope perhaps of a convenient incorporation of both either under the VI Schedule or under Part IX.

Anyway, Mr Purno Sangma from a Sixth Schedule area and the team he led at the Calcutta conference on Panchayati raj has succeeded in getting exemption from being clubbed together with the rest of the country in this one area. The team moreover proposed that in the tribal areas it should be a two-tier structure of local administration which also would be conceded, if the District Council are equated with the "Zilla Parishad" and the traditional tribal village Councils are formalized and activated to equate with the Gram Panchayats in other parts of the country.

The grass roots of democracy have more securely been preserved in tribal areas through these tribal village councils and the Gram Panchayats could more advantageously be allowed to emulate them between them. Part IX and Schedule IV cater basically the same ideas of devolution and yet there is not even the remote possibility structurally of the one looking to the other for mutual accommodation and enlightenment.

A small news item caught my attention. Mr Arun Kumar Kembhavi IAS, who was serving as the Deputy Commissioner of West Khasi Hills had been transferred and appointed as the new Registrar of Co-operative Societies. I am sure transfers are a routine matter of the government and hundreds of them happen on a routine and regular basis. But for each officer to be able to discharge his duty to the best of his ability would require a minimum time frame for it. If officers are transferred too often, the functioning of the department is affected. This results in the public suffering and also a wastage of public money. Public money is our hard earned money levied by the government by way of taxes and hence it is our right to demand that the government has to be held accountable for misusing public money! But when an officer of the caliber of Mr Kembhavi is shunted around in a not so routine and regular manner, one is forced to think that something must have gone alarmingly awry with the system.

My first encounter with Mr Kembhavi, goes back a couple of years. As he walked into my office room at IIM, Shillong, I thought he was another student who wanted to discuss something. When he introduced himself as the Deputy Commissioner of Jaintia Hills, I was mildly surprised, as he had absolutely no airs about himself. He wanted to discuss what could be done to develop the district and how could IIM Shillong help in this endeavour. Starting from health to

Square Pegs in Round Holes

By Sanjeeb Kakoty

education, environment to tourism, development issues to social problems afflicting the young, we discussed a wide range of subjects and bounced ideas off each other. That was the first of many meetings. It was obvious that he was an idealist and was committed to ensuring a Transparent and Effective Administration. We often spoke of how a good education can empower the individual and how a good education system can transform the society. Not surprisingly, he soon he came up with a scheme to transform education in Jaintia Hills. He worked hard on creating a detailed plan that won national acclaim and soon he roped in no less a person than Prof Nirupam Bajpai to collaborate with the project. Since not many people, in this part of the world would know he is, I am copy pasting Mr Bajpai's profile as given in the Wikipedia:

"Nirupam Bajpai, a US-based Indian educationist and economist, is the Senior Research Scholar at the Earth Institute of the Columbia University and the Senior Development Advisor and Director of its South Asia Program. He is the founding director of the Columbia Global Centers South Asia, an office he held between July 2010 and August 2014, and is the author of a number of publications, including India in the Era of Economic Reforms.

Bajpai, after graduating from Lucknow and securing a PhD in economics in 1988, moved to US in 1992 where he worked at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology before joining Harvard Institute for International Development of Harvard University in 1995. He worked at Harvard University till 2002 during which time he also worked at the Kennedy School of Government of the University and led the Harvard India Program. In 2002, he joined Columbia University and is associated with the institution since then, working in various capacities. He has been a part of the team under Jeffrey Sachs who served three successive Indian governments from 2002, two of them led by Manmohan Singh and one by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as advisors on rural health and education services. The Government of India awarded him the fourth highest civilian honour of the Padma Shri, in 2008, for his contributions to society."

Thanks to Mr Kembhavi, the highly credentialed Mr Bajpai came to Jowai on his own, to initiate the start of the programme. I also invited him to come and interact with the students of IIM Shillong. He seemed keen to help and was full of ideas and resources to help our state. To cut a long story short, it was at this crucial juncture that Mr Kembhavi was transferred out of the District and that was the last I heard of that particular project. He was then shifted to the West Khasi Hills.

Assuming charge of West Khasi Hills as the DC, he started working with his characteristic vigour once again. Ensuring transparency in recruitments and making the

administration responsive to the needs of the public were his signal achievements. At his initiative, IIM students went to West Khasi Hills to take part in Career Counseling and interaction sessions with high school and college students.

He was discussing with me the prospect of sustainable development models such as community managed tourism, community managed resource management, producer companies etc. Before any of this could take roots, he has once again been shifted.

I write this letter not to question the prerogative of the government to transfer its official. What I am trying to put across is the need to acknowledge the importance of district and block officials as the proverbial last mile that is so crucial to ensure proper governance. Unless we use the pool of scarce idealistic and competent officials properly, we can never hope to transform our state. Mr Conrad Sangma's pedigree and education gives him the ideal combination to take governance to the next level. If he allows political compulsions to take governance a level down instead of a level up, history will conveniently forget the political pulls and pressures that forced his actions but hold him personally responsible for them. This is the sad fact of life that any leader would ignore only at his own peril.

(The writer teaches at IIM, Shillong)

Victims of a rat race

By Ananya S Guha

There cannot be toying with education. The fate of 3 million children seemed to be hanging in the balance after the CBSE question papers were allegedly leaked. Though there have been leakages in the past, there have been a recent spate of leakage of question papers for ALL INDIA recruitment exams as well. Where exactly are the sources of such leakage is the paramount question. And moreover they point towards a heady corruptibility among the echelons. The fact that two teachers and a private tutor were arrested may not answer all the questions. Again, the Jharkhand connection mentioned in the news has not been established. Doing away with preparing three sets of question papers and having only one seems also to have dubious implications. The question is whether in such situations the papers will be reprinted. Or, as some have suggested, will they be sent online after computer print outs? Is that also safe and protected? Moreover computer connectivity can be disruptive and fail, especially for schools in rural and interior areas.

Many say these series of events are a systemic failure. They are not. The existing system has been continuing: print the papers and send them, with a high level of confidentiality. The point is that the trust has been

course would be to sack the teachers. What will the future action be? Can we revert to the zonal setting of question papers? Can we think of online examinations in schools? Once again the systemic part comes in. Or are we then looking at an overhauling of the education system, because of the fear of recurrent leakages?

That brings us to the role of tutorial homes. Why do we need parallel institutions, the school and the tutorial home? Often the same set of teachers move between the two. Such duplication has caused irreparable harm and put innocent children in the rat race for marks and suicidal habits.

Education is for learning, lifelong. Many students do well later in life given the aptitude for the disciplines they choose. Education at school does not test or even tries to test such aptitudes. In the process, with this fierce illogical competition for marks the love for learning, that it is a treasure box of surprises is totally lost. Parents compete in this rat race calling other parents rats. The learning environment in a classroom is supposed to be pleasurable but becomes a torture for some 'weak' students.

True, action will be taken against the perpetrators. Action will be taken against negligence. But what, will be done to assuage the feelings

The fact that two teachers and a private tutor were arrested may not answer all the questions. Again, the Jharkhand connection mentioned in the news has not been established. Doing away with preparing three sets of question papers and having only one seems also to have dubious implications.

broken leading to a glaring breach of confidentiality. Many of the panel discussions on television focused on revamping the examination system. That is not the point of debate. The point is corruptibility and corruption. Many complained of cheating. The children have not cheated; those three teachers did by opening the packets ahead of time and circulating them on the internet. So much for the use of technology in education! Yes parenting is a relevant point here because the parents themselves played stellar roles in buying the question papers.

The moral then seems to be just one goal - performing well in examinations at any cost. Peer pressure, and pressure on parents seem to take a toll. For what? For admission to prestigious institutions say some. But for class ten examinations you can remain in the same school, which many do.

Let us not bring affordability into higher education in this discussion. The focal point is corruption and tainting a sacrosanct process - that of examinations. It is not money also, because the papers were sold for a few thousands of rupees. It is the culpability, the treachery and the palpable dishonesty which have taken precedence over commitment to a cause, that is education; to help a few perhaps known people.

Many other questions arise. Why were not safety measures taken? However look at how 'safety' was annihilated. Two teachers took it on themselves to open the packets forty minutes ahead of time, flouting all rules in the most gruesome manner. What were the authorities of the school doing? Were they in cahoots with the teachers? Immediate action of

of children and parents, who feel cheated, what will be done to regain the authenticity of the examination system, which as it is, suffers from writing from rote and memory? Question setting is an onerous responsibility, but question stealing is a criminal act. When the Bihar incident was shown a couple of years back on television everyone laughed and mocked Bihar and Biharis. Now it is happening in the heart of the country. Educationists must bow their heads in shame and say sorry to the students. Say it is a big shame, a slur on our community, instead of mouthing platitudinous hogwash on rigmaroles like "Teacher's Day".

In conclusion we can have no right to education until and unless the classroom is free from tension and false sense of competition. And the lesser parents intervene as if they are redoing their studies, the better.

What has taken the cake also in education are the hundred questions one school printed in Haryana for parents to answer. Are we admitting parents or their children and wards? These questions smacked of class if not caste bias. Imagine asking questions as to one does an 'unclean' profession. What is so clean about professions in the corporate sector? Some of them have cleaned us and our banks of money and blissfully living abroad. Unless we understand that education must be made accessible to all and must be common to all, commonly shared the dream of 'Education For All' will remain in the backwaters. Way back the Kothari Commission had advocated substantial GDP for education. It has gathered dust and so has education.

TO THE EDITOR

Mounting attacks on journalists

Editor

Apropos to the editorial, 'Power of the written word' (ST, April 27, 2018) by Patricia Mukhim, there is no doubt that honest journalists are being attacked across India without meaningful provocation while performing their regular duties and serving the public with sincerity. This is a highly condemnable action and the guilty should be arrested and booked by the law of the land. It is also quite unfortunate and unacceptable that there has not been any major protest among the ordinary citizens regarding such an alarming trend across the nation targeting journalists; and possibly each and every political party in India is directly or indirectly behind such wrath expressed against helpless journalist victims. This is not a stray incident but a regular occurrence in various parts of the nation. In some instances journalists have been murdered for their honest services in keeping the public aware of the social prejudices, political and administrative corruptions as well as serious challenges faced by the nation in specific areas. But the other question is to ask is why the journalist world has been so silent regarding this incident across the nation.

There is a global trend where a section of journalists too are becoming increasingly corrupted and serving as undercover agents for various political parties and industrialists or other interest groups and benefit largely from their association. Many famous journalists in India had held office of profit through their nexus and covert support of corrupt political parties at the highest level including

assemblies and parliament. To answer why the general public is not responding to such heinous actions by goons is possibly because people have lost their age old trust and bond with the media too. Many ordinary citizens believe that a section of media has been sold out and are serving as an extended hand of different interest groups and not public interest solely. Of course the crime of a handful should not be imposed on vast majority of dedicated and sincere journalists working to serve the nation to the best of their ability. It is also true that that special trust and empathy between media and ordinary citizens has also been breached by some journalists and media houses. It is a time of serious and honest introspection to look at the democratic structure and future of the nation and also find a democratic way of protesting against such atrocities.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada

Neglected road at Khlieh Iewduh!

Editor,

As there is urgent repair work being carried out by the Public Works Department in Shillong, I take this opportunity to impress upon our government and the concerned authority to take a considerate at the approach road to the parking lot at Khlieh Iewduh. This road receives least attention yet it is the road that is used all through the week by vehicles of all types ranging from two-wheelers, cars, SUVs, buses and trucks and pedestrians, both young and old. The road wears a dilapidated look filled with potholes making vehicles plying along this road

screech endlessly. The road is used by people from all parts of the state for trade and commerce. It is an important road as it is only through this road that all essential and food products are brought to Iewduh, which is one of the oldest and biggest markets in the state. The condition of the road is such that goods laden trucks/buses may turn turtle in one of the potholes and collapse on pedestrians or the smaller vehicles parked alongside or plying through this road.

This road has been woefully neglected because it is not used by the elite, government officials and higher echelons of society. Roads used by our government officials are being black topped and repaired even when they are still in good condition. However, for the well-being of the common people of the state can the authorities concerned repair the road before the onslaught of monsoons? If this stretch is left orphaned the rain will only make it worse. I request the newly formed government to be considerate and sympathetic towards the difficulties faced by the common people and ease their movement along this stretch of road. Is this asking for too much?

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Viaemail

Secularism is integral to our Constitution

Editor,

In the article, "Are we girls or play things?" (ST, May 1, 2018), Poonam I Kaushish said, "Thankfully, three such notorious Babas, Asaram Bapu, Guru Swami Nityanand and Ram Rahim are behind bars." It is because of the secular nature of our Constitution that has made it possible to send those Babas behind bars. It is perfectly constitutional if

Ram occupies our private space but it will be against the spirit of our Constitution if an Asaram starts enjoying the public space. Unfortunately, some people have been trying to banish the word ~ "Secular" from our Constitution by spreading half-truths. They argue that since this word was not there in the original Constitution, it should not be a part of it.

It is true that this word was not in the Preamble when the Constitution was adopted and enacted on 26 November 1949 or when it came into effect on 26 January 1950. It was incorporated by the 42nd Amendment Act in 1976. But in no way can it be suggested that the ideals of secularism was not part of our original Constitution. This is a totally false propaganda based on half-truths.

Indeed, Article 25 to Article 30 of our Constitution are the embodiment of the spirit of secularism. While Article 25 has given every citizen equal entitlement to freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion; Article 25 (2) has brought religion under the control of the State and not vice versa as for example Article 25 (2) (b) has given the State the power to throw open Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

So, we need to highlight the fact that "secular Hindutva" is totally an antithesis of the secular ideals of our Constitution. And the spirit of secularism has been a part of our Constitution since it saw the light of day. As a matter of fact, every inch of our Constitution is secular.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

"No person has the right to rain on your dreams."

--- William Wordsworth

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.260

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2018

Rise in moral policing

A couple is thrashed in Kolkata on Monday evening after boarding a train merely because of the 'intimacy' they exhibited. This is not a solitary case. In Uttar Pradesh anti-Romeo squads roam around and physically assault couples who are seen hanging around near college campuses and other public spaces. The anti-Romeo squad has the sanction of the UP government and has come in for all round condemnation but UP, CM Yogi Adityanath is not ruffled. The problem is that this sort of moral policing has the propensity to be copied by people of similar mindsets elsewhere. Two adults have every right to demonstrate their affection in private or public. Those who feel offended usually look away. But certainly no person has the right to police such behaviour as it does not break any law.

Modernity is unfortunately equated with westernisation. And westernisation sanctions a range of behaviours which may appear unacceptable to some in India. Hence the couple in Kolkata was punched, kicked and slapped inside the station once they disembarked from the train. Authorities of the Kolkata metro have stated that they are against any form of moral policing. In the age of social media the pictures of the couple being attacked by an unruly crowd, went viral. Bangladesh writer Taslima Nasreen tweeted about the incident saying, "Scenes of hatred are allowed. Scenes of love are considered obscene." There have been protests by young people across Kolkata on Monday. These days it is common to see young couples embracing or holding hands in public. No one balks at such behaviour any longer because we have all learnt to lower our standards of behaviour and to accept the new morality. In any case, 'freedom' today has acquired a whole new meaning. It includes the freedom to do anything that does not violate the law. And while embracing or walking hand in hand in public may upset people with sensitive morals, it does not attract punitive action from the guardians of law. Moral policing does not have the sanction of society. It is an act of impunity and it has no place in a civilised society!

LOOKING BACK

May 20, 1989

VP Singh worst political coward

Minister of State for Power Mr Kalpnath Rai has lambasted Janata Dal leader Mr V P Singh for speaking "tongue in cheek" about Mr Rajiv Gandhi not having "opposed the emergency" and "for not backing Mrs. Indira Gandhi during the Janata period." In a statement released here today, Mr Rai asked how could a person in service take to politics. "Mr Rajiv Gandhi lived with her (Mrs Gandhi) and

gave support to her. He did not run away from the country or shift his own residence to enjoy cosy family comforts," he said.

Mr Rai said that in reply to criticism by AICC(D) General Secretary Mr V N Gadgil of his (Mr Singh) shifty character, Mr Singh had made the tall claim that he stood by Mrs Gandhi during her crisis period of 1977-1980.

Why resort to a culture of intimidation?

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Rajasthan to Tripura, the entire country is the home of various people's groups and ethnicities. This is the type of nationality that comprises 15 major recognized spoken languages and six prominent religions besides numerous indigenous religions and faiths. Interestingly, each and every ethnic group has its own understanding with varied perception from one to the other on the existence of life and the universe. These cultural and religious differences have many a times led to various types of conflicts and confrontation over the years and throughout history. Apart from this internal conflict and instability, external invasions and occupations have further polarized the sentiments of the people to a great extent. From Alexander to the Mughals and subsequently to the British or the European, all have exerted their strength and pressure on the people who dwell in the plains and ravines of this land. But the major factor that has allowed and attracted these foreign invasions and polarization is the fragility of people within the sub-continent.

Because of these cultural differences, the attitudes and behavior of the people too are not aligned toward a common goal. Superstition and spiritualism are also other factors that contribute to the growing weakness of the inhabitants in nation building. The effort and tendency to exert religious and caste supremacy in this sub-continent is very strong and when these things are predominant then people tend to forego other aspects on how to build a strong and vibrant nation. This is true even these days because there is a strong wind of voices that echo for a Hindu Rashtra. Any sign of disrespect and dissent against this ideology will be subdued instantly through brutal atrocities. And this has become their mission rather than the well-being of their fellow country men and women. Indian people in fact owe a lot to the British for the modern education system that they have introduced in the country. Today Indian intellectuals and professionals are actively engaged in various development programmes

around the globe. And for this we should be thankful to the Christian missionaries for their willingness and sacrifice to establish educational institutions in this sub-continent.

Now when we are in a better position to govern ourselves, a new kind of threat has shaken the sentiments of the whole country. These threats are the crimes, atrocities and harassment to the people of the society by their own countrymen. The brutal rape and murder of minor girls and women, the killing of people in the name of cow vigilantism or gau rakshak, vandalism, etc are nothing but clear messages of intimidation. When Indian males are only sexual predators, then the behavior of these people are more like beasts that would devour any female they come across. And those who commit these crimes are acting right under the patronage and moral support of their ideological and political masters it would appear. When a citizen fails to feel safe and secure in his or her own home and place, then the only option for him or her is to seek external assistance. This is such an unwanted situation where it exposes the weakness of the community. In this modern generation, government is established with the mandate to allay such fears from the general citizens. Government should find out why in India sexual predators are running riot and are not being reined in despite stringent laws.

Such kinds of atrocities and intimidations will only fuel the fires of hatred and bitterness in the community. It estranges people in the neighbourhood and thus breeds social gaps and hatred. So why dwell on the same nature of intimidating and harassing people? The tactics of intimidation are often used by the mafia cartel pseudonymously to eliminate traces of evidence in order to sustain their evil and illegal objectives. So why do we have to adopt their principles and culture? The

converted people and established their faith and doctrine. Had the Mughals penetrated the foothills of the Himalayas, then for sure most of the tribal people would have embraced Islam as their religion. But the question remains as to what has prevented them from entering the hills of these tribal people? The Khasis in those days were not aware about Christian principles but even then, they practiced honesty and righteousness. I strongly believe that these qualities have qualified them for Divine favour and protection.

Thank God that our forefathers were people who believed in the existence of one God who is also the Creator. They sincerely and honestly worship Him in word and deed and religion was in the heart and home not in the congregation of the community. And those were the days when honesty and righteousness truly reigned in the land. They strongly believed that anyone who uses hidden tactics to scare and intimidate innocent people will receive upon themselves double the consequences. These things are told from generation to generation to remind each generation to shun evil and at the same time to encourage their children to be honest and truthful. But we seem to have lost track of these things in this present generation. People now rely more on physical strength and dubious tactics. But how long can we survive on these strategies? We need more mental and intellectual strength along with good moral intentions in order to build a strong and vibrant nation. The concept of modernization means improving on traditional wisdom and values. But for many of us modernization is merely the possession of new thing and adopting a different behavior and lifestyle.

There is a tremendous scope in our society if we follow our forefather's footsteps rather than adopting a different culture which we are not destined for.

The country is undergoing a bitter experience of playing a dangerous game with our democratic institutions. Notwithstanding the motion by political parties to impeach the Chief Justice of India was declared 'neither tenable nor admissible' by the Rajya Sabha Chairman, the damage done to institutions and inter-relationship between different organs of the government cannot be erased.

The incident has given rise to statements by parliamentarians, discussions between political parties, signature campaigns, veiled threats, and public debates spoiling the image of the judiciary on which the trust people repose on the judges depends. Several petitions are filed in the Supreme Court overlapping one another making it difficult to keep track of them.

Five charges against the CJI were mentioned in the motion, moved by seven political parties and signed by 71 Opposition members of Rajya Sabha, surrounding alleged bribery, misuse of power, and abuse of power as master of roster. The chairman, who is also the Vice President, held the charges were based on mere suspicion and conjecture.

The unusual press conference addressed by the four sitting judges of the Supreme Court on 12th January against their chief, seems to be the visible starting point for the present controversy over impeachment. The Congress immediately seized the opportunity to exploit the differences within the judiciary for its own political advantage -- a natural and instinctive reaction of a political party eager to catch every opportunity to project its potential power in and out of power over institutions. It circulated a draft proposal for removal of the CJI -- a move provided in the Constitution, but not used.

An NGO based in Pune moved a petition in the Supreme Court seeking framing of guidelines for removal of any judge of a constitutional court in Parliament with the intention of ending the "chilling effect" of prolonged discussions on the judges and "assault on the judiciary" and introducing definite guidelines in the matter. Public discussion about the functioning of judges, it was said, would cause irreparable damage and injury to the independence of the judiciary.

An attempt to institutionalise the functions of the CJI was made following the press conference of four judges to avoid the possibility of "selectively allocating sensitive and nationally important cases to preferred Benches". The objective of trying to codify the manner of allocating cases was intended to "mend fences within the Supreme Court". Meantime, the CJI as part of his normal functions published a subject-wise roster exercising his power of allocating cases.

A PIL seeking a check on the authority of the CJI as "Master of Roster" came before the Supreme Court on 13 April pleading that the authority should not be reduced to an "absolutely singular and arbitrary" power. It was taken up although the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in November 2017 had already declared that CJI had absolute administrative authority as "master of roster" to allocate cases and constitute Benches. Another judgement on 11 April on a petition to evolve a set procedure for constituting Benches and allocating cases reiterated the position that the CJI had the "exclusive prerogative" in the matter.

All petitions seeking clarification of the Supreme Court on the administrative authority of the CJI as the master of roster and the procedure and principles to be followed in preparation of the roster are being heard despite earlier judgments on the issue. The matter is exceedingly important for justice system as well as to maintain the democratic

Impeachment Politics Challenge to Judiciary

By Dr S.Saraswathi

The country is undergoing a bitter experience of playing a dangerous game with our democratic institutions. Notwithstanding the motion by political parties to impeach the Chief Justice of India was declared 'neither tenable nor admissible' by the Rajya Sabha Chairman, the damage done to institutions and inter-relationship between different organs of the government cannot be erased.

The incident has given rise to statements by parliamentarians, discussions between political parties, signature campaigns, veiled threats, and public debates spoiling the image of the judiciary on which the trust people repose on the judges depends. Several petitions are filed in the Supreme Court overlapping one another making it difficult to keep track of them.

Five charges against the CJI were mentioned in the motion, moved by seven political parties and signed by 71 Opposition members of Rajya Sabha, surrounding alleged bribery, misuse of power, and abuse of power as master of roster. The chairman, who is also the Vice President, held the charges were based on mere suspicion and conjecture.

The unusual press conference addressed by the four sitting judges of the Supreme Court on 12th January against their chief, seems to be the visible starting point for the present controversy over impeachment. The Congress immediately seized the opportunity to exploit the differences within the judiciary for its own political advantage -- a natural and instinctive reaction of a political party eager to catch every opportunity to project its potential power in and out of power over institutions. It circulated a draft proposal for removal of the CJI -- a move provided in the Constitution, but not used.

An NGO based in Pune moved a petition in the Supreme Court seeking framing of guidelines for removal of any judge of a constitutional court in Parliament with the intention of ending the "chilling effect" of prolonged discussions on the judges and "assault on the judiciary" and introducing definite guidelines in the matter. Public discussion about the functioning of judges, it was said, would cause irreparable damage and injury to the independence of the judiciary.

An attempt to institutionalise the functions of the CJI was made following the press conference of four judges to avoid the possibility of "selectively allocating sensitive and nationally important cases to preferred Benches". The objective of trying to codify the manner of allocating cases was intended to "mend fences within the Supreme Court". Meantime, the CJI as part of his normal functions published a subject-wise roster exercising his power of allocating cases.

A PIL seeking a check on the authority of the CJI as "Master of Roster" came before the Supreme Court on 13 April pleading that the authority should not be reduced to an "absolutely singular and arbitrary" power. It was taken up although the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in November 2017 had already declared that CJI had absolute administrative authority as "master of roster" to allocate cases and constitute Benches. Another judgement on 11 April on a petition to evolve a set procedure for constituting Benches and allocating cases reiterated the position that the CJI had the "exclusive prerogative" in the matter.

All petitions seeking clarification of the Supreme Court on the administrative authority of the CJI as the master of roster and the procedure and principles to be followed in preparation of the roster are being heard despite earlier judgments on the issue. The matter is exceedingly important for justice system as well as to maintain the democratic

principle of separation of powers.

Article 124 (4) of the Indian Constitution provides for removal of a Judge of the Supreme Court only by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting has been presented to the President in the same session for such removal on the ground of "proved misbehaviour" or "incapacity".

Parliament may by law regulate the procedure for the presentation of an address and for the investigation and proof of misbehaviour or incapacity of a judge. The Judges Enquiry Act of 1968 regulates the procedure.

The role of Parliament is not unlimited as a judgement of the Supreme Court provides that the independence of the judiciary as mandated by the separation of powers doctrine is part of the basic structure of the Constitution. A ruling of the Supreme Court given in 1992 directed the Speaker and the Chairman "to act with utmost care, circumspection, and responsibility" and to keep equally in mind "the seriousness of the imputations, nature and quality of the record before him, and the indelible chilling effect on the public administration of justice".

A group of five Supreme Court judges attempted to codify the broad duties of the CJI particularly in allocation of cases after 12 January press conference of some judges. But, no conclusions were reached.

In Britain, both Houses of Parliament have power to petition the Queen for removal of a judge of the High Court or Court of Appeal -- a power that can be traced to 1701 Act of Settlement incorporated in the Supreme Court Act, 1981. However, it has never been used in England or Wales.

In the US, the Constitution provides that federal judges are appointed for a life term serving during "good behaviour". There is no provision expressly for removal of judges, but they fall in the category of "civil officers" and as such can be removed or impeached for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes, and misdemeanours". Fifteen federal judges have been impeached and only eight convicted.

State judges can be impeached and removed by State legislatures on proved charges of "high crimes" or "gross immorality". The US Supreme Court has enormous powers of review and interpretation that it is generally looked upon as the "safety valve" or "balance wheel" of the Constitution. Supreme Court has grown really supreme in importance.

Impeachment of a judge is a very serious matter and should not be part of party politics. The very effort to muster support for and against on party basis makes it a political issue far removed from law and justice or the qualities expected of judges and judgements. The grounds on which impeachment can take place under the Constitution in India are not political and hence, how party alliances are formed and negotiations take place for support for impeachment are inexplicable. Still, the issue is totally politicised in India.

Impeachment is not a way of settling political scores. In the present political environment in India, where everything is politicised and viewed from political spectrum, judiciary has to keep alert to jealously guard its independence. It requires inner unity to collectively withstand intrusions from power politics. The challenge today is not for any individual judge but to the institution of judiciary. Differences within the judiciary can best be sorted out within, without opening them for public discussion or political interference. ---INFA

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

TO THE EDITOR

Irresponsible statements!

Editor,
The statement of first time MLA from Nongstoin, Macmillan Byrsat about the transfer of West Khasi Hills DC Arun Kembhavi sounds absurd and hollow. The allegations that advertisements for vacancies are put up online and therefore many people miss seeing those adverts is pathetic since every job seeker in government today is expected to be tech-savvy. His observations there are childish and not expected from a people's representative. I have known and met up with Mr Kembhavi during his stint in West Jaintia Hills and everyone and everywhere has commended him in all spheres and in the initiatives he has taken in his official capacity. I do not wish to take sides here but when we have officers who are working for the betterment of a section of society who are underprivileged it would have been wise and mature of the local MLA to exhort and encourage the bureaucrat instead of talking nonsense. Initiatives to bring about transparency and accountability are perhaps not the norm for such representatives and those

with selfish interests which is why they do not wish to have such performing people in their midst. The ultimate victims of such political interference and immature statements are that those who are marginalised and from difficult backgrounds will suffer most.

Yours etc...
Dominic S. Wankhar
Via email

Uranium mining!

Editor
I happened to read the news item regarding Morning Star Sumer's presentation on the dangers of uranium mining at the United Nations (ST April 30, 2018) This is good news but it should not stop there. In this century the sun no longer rises in the east. It rises in the west. Eight high net worth individuals (all from the west) own half of the world's wealth. 55% of the world's wealth comes from Christian and Jewish countries whereas only 3% comes from Hindu countries. Think about that! Had Kashmir been of the same value system as the West it would have

been liberated long ago.

As for the dangers of uranium and coal mining I know a thing or two about it as I have friends from a group that received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1985. Studies show that waste produced by coal plants is actually more radioactive than that produced by their nuclear counterpart. When Yasser Arafat died of poisoning in 2004, pathologists found his blood contained polonium 210 and uranium 235/238, the by-products of uranium mining. I wondered then whether it could have been smuggled from Jharkhand or Meghalaya. World bodies have the knowledge and the will to do something for this region. More importantly, Gita worshipping, monolithic culture rulers cannot even comprehend the matter.

I wish this group and their future programmes the best.

Yours etc.,
Lucas Brahmjee
Research scholar
Haflong,

The obsession with white skin

Editor,
This refers to the report, "I'm proud of my exotic brown colour : Diana

Hayden" (ST, April 27, 2018). Hats off to former Miss World, Diana Hayden for pointing out that she is proud of her exotic brown colour and that she turned down a fairness cream advertisement because it went against her beliefs. This is a fitting reply to Tripura chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb who had reportedly said that he failed to understand the process of judgement of the crowning of the Miss World contest in 1997, in which Diana was crowned. His comments showcase our double standard. We can simultaneously worship a dark goddess and show our disrespect to a dark woman!

I remember an incident in which an actor, Tannistha Chatterjee had been publicly humiliated on a TV show for her dark skin colour a couple of years ago. She had been ridiculed with repeated questions ~ how she being a Brahmin, could be so dark. She walked out of the show and articulated loud and clear against our casteists and racist mindsets in a Facebook post, "Why does dark skin still lend itself to jokes in India," in which she wrote that a regressive arithmetic ~ upper caste = fair skin = touchable and lower caste = dark skin =

untouchable ~ was deeply embedded in our mindsets.

It explains why repeated attacks on Africans have been plaguing our country. All these underline the need to censor fairness cream advertisements that associate dark complexion with ostracism and fair complexion with popularity. Repeated audiovisual propaganda by the celebrities through such advertisements consolidates the myth of equating beauty with fair complexion and nurtures apathy against dark complexion. They make us forget how popular and powerful a dark man in the White House was! One of the advertisements of fairness cream tries to brainwash impressionable minds into believing that so long as a man remains dark, girls will only force him to work but do not let him come closer to them. Such advertisements are as harmful for our society as it gets. It promotes apartheid and lowers dignity of labour at one go. This is to broadcast hatred against dark complexions and blue collar jobs.

In fact, any such advertisement that corrodes humanity and fraternity needs to be nipped in the bud. The advertisers should learn a

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.

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

--- Les Brown

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.262

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2018

The Shopian Tragedy

STONE pelting on a school bus in Shopian has rightly aroused indignation in Kashmir. A child has been injured and the major parties along with separatists have been equally strident in protest. Questions arise about the justification of stone pelting as a mode of protest, especially on a school bus as it is a common occurrence in the valley. This is hardly the way to take on the Indian Armed forces who can answer stones with bullets. It is an unequal battle which even the protestors should know. Some tourists have also been injured in the last few days. The day after the school bus atrocity, stone pelters threw stones at vehicles to define the shutdown against the previous day's killings of a civilian and militants in the same district. It may be recalled that even a journalist was found involved in stone pelting.

As a result of the attack on the school bus, there has been opposition to the amnesty announced in January by the Jammu & Kashmir Government to those who had been prosecuted for stone pelting. Some 4,000 individuals accused of stone pelting were covered by the amnesty over a period of 2008 to 2014. One hopes that the State Government will not abandon the scheme under pressure. That has been a positive step and should initiate a dialogue on stone pelting in Kashmir. It is only sensible to argue that violence in the State can be snuffed out only through dialogue. Kashmiri youth are getting increasingly involved in violence. Stone pelting is the least lethal expression of it. Both the Army and the protestors share the responsibility for killing and injuring civilians. The Centre alone can prevent the situation from flaring out of control.

LOOKING BACK

May 20, 1989

HSPDP favours pact with like-minded forces

The General Council of the HSPDP has expressed its desire to enter into electoral understanding with "like minded regional parties and individuals" in the ensuing Parliamentary elections. In its meeting held in Shillong last week, it resolved to join hands with other regional parties and sponsor common candidates. A group of PDIC activists also attended the meeting as fraternity delegates. Mr D R Nongkynrih, a PDIC MDC addressed the general council meeting.

The meeting urged the Election Commission to hold the by-elections to Mawkhar, Pariong, and Baghmara Assembly constituencies, which were long overdue. The party reiterated its stand on the Sixth Schedule and

demanding deletion of paragraph 12 A and the re-extension of the provisions of paragraph 12 to Meghalaya "so as to enable the Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya to retain their original status and position."

The General Council also urged the Centre to further amend the Sixth Schedule in order to provide direct funding to the District Council and thereby fulfilling the constitutional obligation for the development of scheduled tribes, "socially, economically, politically, and administratively according to their own genius" and for the preservation of their customs and practices.

Inter-Korean Summit

No more war, time for peace

By Sabina Inderjit

The idiom 'well begun is half done,' perhaps fits best for what the world witnessed last week. The two Koreas seeking to put the past behind and give peace a chance. The big step literally, was taken by North's Chairman Kim Jong-un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in blurring the military demarcation line, dividing the two countries, long apart since 65 years.

Indeed, April 27 inter-Korean Summit at the border truce village of Panmunjom is history in the making, at least for the people of the Korean Peninsula, who till a few months ago were living under the fear of a 'nuclear war', given Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump's now infamous ranting. "With two crazy guys threatening each other, of course I am happy if they talk. Don't you see it is we who will get the first hit if they press the button," is what I remember a young woman telling in Seoul in early March, when news of the two leaders willing to meet started hitting front page headlines.

While the big question remains on the success of Trump-Kim Jong-un summit expected later this month, it seems the Korean leaders' dialogue has laid a foundation for future, more than just good will. Unquestionably, other than getting a commitment from Kim Jong-un for 'complete de-nuclearisation', which was a pre-condition for talks, Moon has given his people reason to believe there will not be another war, and the peace treaty finally will be signed since the 1950-53 Korean war ended. One more issue to discuss will be of "re-unification".

Of course, it is going to be a long haul and the only way out is to negotiate, emphasised Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-Wha all through in the run-up to get Kim to the dialogue table and put a halt to provocations. That has been achieved pretty fast to a large extent with the historic summit and the credit must go to Moon as he has been 'consistent and persistent' with the goal he spelt out when he took over the presidency: "Will do everything I can to build peace on the Korean peninsula". This is clearly visible by the moves he has made since i.e. getting the North Korean team (with Kim's sister) to participate in the Winter Olympics, sending special envoys to

Pyeongyang and getting a North Korean leader to be the first to step across the DMZ line, followed by the first ever meeting between the two leaders in over a decade.

However, Moon seems to be magnanimous in passing on the credit to the US President and flattering him by declaring post-summit that Trump "should win the Nobel Peace Prize". There may be takers, and Trump may himself work for it. I do recall Foreign Minister Kang disagreeing with me that Trump's outburst were muddying the water and making it difficult for S Korea to pursue its goals. On the contrary, she explained Obama's years had been of non-action termed 'strategic patience' but Trump has changed all of this by demonstrating the will to resolve the issue once and for all.

At the same time, an additional factor for Kim to come out an engage has been the pressure by the international community together to implement the UN Security Council's sanctions. Apparently, old ally China enforcing the sanctions would have hit North Korea the hardest, as it not just shares the border, but it is the most important economic partner of Kim's regime. At the same time, China is also the largest trading partner of S Korea and Seoul is the third largest trading partner of China and 30,000-odd people are flying between two countries daily! And, perhaps this also explains the recent surprise visit by Kim Jong-un to Beijing to meet up with President Xi Jinping prior to the inter-Korean summit and the upcoming one with Trump. Besides, China too has ensured it wasn't left out and re-injected itself into the negotiation process, which was seen to be slipping out of its control.

Further, it's obvious that after having proved to the world his military capabilities, which may at the end fail as rumours suggest the programme collapsed, Kim needs to turn his attention on economic development. As of now his regime has had limited ability to engage economically with the outside world.

"The number one job for a political leader is to feed the people. If people are

starving, to develop nuclear weapons simply doesn't make sense. And while N Korea is toying with nuclear tests, the poverty levels are extreme and human rights' situation is pretty bad." A top business editor of Chosun daily Woosuk Kenneth Choi couldn't have explained the prevailing conditions in North Korea better to a group of journalists from across the globe attending the World Conference of Journalists hosted by the Journalists Association of Korea early March. He recalled how a film, which went viral, showing last November's incident where doctors who operated on a soldier, who had escaped from the DMZ line and defected, found many parasites in his body, one 27 cm long worm, had shocked the S Korean youngsters.

They couldn't believe a leader would have his people starve. "While no one wants a war in this country (my son is in the army), if there was one, we would blow them apart, our economy is bigger, 50 times richer, our human resources are bigger and we will win but there will be a heavy cost..." Fortunately, a month later these thoughts would have become passé. However, the talk of 'reunification' has at a section of the younger generation wary.

"S Korea is richer, it has nice apartments, assets etc and if a beggar comes and says give me this and that, an obvious response would be stay away from me", said Choi. While there was much fanfare for the Winter Olympics, the younger people were peeved that they were actually subsidising the North's team-- \$3 million were spent on it! Choi also confirmed what I had gathered during the week-long visit that the educated youth don't have jobs and sense an insecure future. "They don't want to pay for peace from their own pockets."

South Korea has indeed shown remarkable economic growth, rising from the ashes of a war to take centre stage globally. Statistics provided state: 50 million people have GDP exceeding \$24,000, which is 11th in the world; it is 7th among world's 10 economies in terms of foreign reserve--\$355.8 billion; its exports are 75% in the world worth \$59.6 billion and has a total trade of \$ 1.08 trillion (8th

globally); OECD ranks it as top five post secondary graduation rate in the 25-34 age group and 65% highest post secondary graduation, with Japan, Canada, Russia and Ireland following. Bloomberg accorded it the most innovative country in world status in 2014, which was confirmed by a visit to the Samsung Innovative Centre, the Sejong city, soon to become the new administrative capital of S Korea and Incheon' first free economic zone, among others.

The concerns are not limited to the country alone, but the world too. If Trump chooses to carry out his threats of surgical strikes, Choi cautioned the global economy would be hit hard as 80% of DRAMs produced in world is controlled by Korea, and "if we go down we wouldn't be able to supply these...the banking sector will collapse as it needs to be refurbished now and then; we are also the 6th largest producer of cars...war would wipe out 2% of the world's GDP... it is suicide..." For the time, there can be sense of relief, and all eyes would be how the Trump-Kim summit pans out.

But till then the focus remains on what steps the two Koreas take following their joint declaration. Moon said: "...It is necessary to make it possible for the two Koreas to live together peacefully without interfering with each other or damaging each other." Whereas Kim Jong-un said: If all North and South Koreans can travel freely on the path I took today, if Panmunjom becomes a symbol of peace, not of painful division, the two Koreas with their one blood, one language, one history and one culture will prosper for thousands of generations."

The big question is unification. Will the older generation get to see a 'united' country back in their lifetime or will the North eat into the South's pie of development, as feared by the younger generation? It will be in place to look at Germany's example. It took the East and West long years to unite, the differences still remain but nevertheless the united country became again a global power. --- INFA

Middle class obsessions

By Avner Pariat

One of the obsessions that many well-placed, comfortable, fully employed people have in this town revolves around the issue of Labour's rights. And by this I mean that they love to decry and condemn Labour's demands and aspirations as being unrealistic, and worse, exploitative. Calls for a fairer wage are immediately scorned, sick leave is seen as impossible for poor people, basic protections are not for basic wage earners.

These people seem to forget that they are also part of this pool: they provide labour albeit better paid and skilled. They don't seem to understand that supporting the demands for a better system of employment is good for everyone including themselves. That being said maybe it is highly unlikely that a person from an Indian middle-class background would feel empathy for a low income hawker or domestic labourer.

On one hand though, they might share my view

help redress that problem. And employers need not be apart from this change, but an integral part of it. I don't know why we must always follow the idea and model that Management MUST fight Labour. In this state and in our particular milieu I do not see why we must perform this age-old battle. In Germany, union representatives are required to be part of board meetings. This is probably one of the main reasons why German industry is still (compared to the rest of Europe) productive and efficient. We need to talk to each other not whisper bad things about one another. What is the point of speculating? The government keeps asking militants to "come to the table" but continually ignores legitimate and legal demands!

Some might feel that empowering Labour in this way will result in rampant misuse of power from their end. But let us not forget that unions have responsibilities to their members AND society at large. Unions can

The system they follow is actually driven by a market that they respond to and which adjusts itself according to demand and ability to purchase their services. Right now many helpers and workers might indeed abscond from work (I can attest to this personally) and not be held accountable but a union can ensure that they are penalised for repeated offences.

that it is not fair to equate the rights of a daily wage earner with that of a film maker. Their burdens are vastly different, and so is their income, the former deserves much more attention and protection. We must not kid ourselves into a false sense of solidarity without acknowledging the complications that are there. However, what I do believe in is very simple: that the more fortunate should support and foster the chances of those less fortunate than themselves. And I do not mean this in any way to imply "charity," which I dislike. That sense of social justice is something which unites me with other people all over the state, country and world who are endeavouring to fight for a better tomorrow. Everyone must get a chance at this. Then again maybe this way of thinking is outdated and a bit silly.

Jennifer Dkhar recently stated how employers, like herself, face hardships when it came to her encounters with domestic help. Many of the grievances she expressed are commonplace and she articulated them plainly. However they are slightly misinformed and indicated a misunderstanding about the role of collective bargaining power. Labour is not here to replicate the exploitation it has endured but to safeguard against it. As I mentioned earlier, many people who enjoy the benefits of casual leave, travel allowance, reimbursement, and a large steady payslip might not understand why people need to make 5000 rupees per month but I assure you that one cannot live on such an amount. Yes, there can be scope for antagonism between help and employer. But the role of unionising is not to disrupt but to create a system of balance which, sadly, does not exist at the moment.

There is no denying the rampant abuse that the domestic helpers and others within the labour force have endured over the years. Many continue to roil in the pits of poverty with no way out. Associations/unions can

help ensure that dereliction of duties is thwarted. When one joins a union or association, there are certain rules that govern how the members should behave. Working people are not going to suddenly inflate their expectations unreasonably. The system they follow is actually driven by a market that they respond to and which adjusts itself according to demand and ability to purchase their services. Right now many helpers and workers might indeed abscond from work (I can attest to this personally) and not be held accountable but a union can ensure that they are penalised for repeated offences. A proper system of unions can help ensure the smooth and effective dissemination of services. It is not against negotiations and finding a middle-ground. Right now, many workers are left to fend for themselves and that is why there is so much wastage in terms of time and low efficacy. Low wages might seem good to the employer but they don't guarantee longevity of service and a quality of work. This is one of the main reasons for the lackadaisical attitude many working people are wont to show. After all would any UGC sanctioned teachers or professors do any of their work if they did not obtain HRA, HAKKA (or was it HASA) etc and their pay did not commensurate with the times? Why do we continually deny these others who make next to nothing, a slight increment in the standard of their living?

It is just chaos that exists here currently and we as the end-user/consumer lose out a lot because of this. The government must, as Dkhar, observes listen to the "other side" as well and I can assure you Labour is sensitive to this side. If that were not the case then those unpaid security guards would have all destroyed their places of work a long time ago, the Nazareth union members would have turned away the sick and ailing, MeECL would have shut down. No! In spite of the low and inhuman salaries, these people still perform their duties to the 'T'. I have an immense respect for them.

TO THE EDITOR

Suggestions from a concerned citizen

Editor,

One of the most disgusting sights one usually witnesses on roads, is the littering of the streets by irresponsible passengers who throw empty water bottles and empty potato chips containers into the streets from a running vehicle. I am sure every responsible Meghalayan would feel extremely upset with such uncivilized behaviour. Two reasons could be leading to such behaviour: the first could be because these persons are insensitive to public welfare and are irresponsible by nature or secondly because they find no place provided for the purpose. But for no reason at all, should one dispose of waste from vehicles onto the streets. This is a despicable act unbefitting of an Indian with a civic sense. However, I would like to offer a suggestion to MUDA if they accept it. Probably it would reduce such littering if MUDA and the department of Public Transport work towards making it mandatory for

vehicles especially public transport, to have attached close to the passengers' seat a waste box which could be easily detached. Thus the driver could empty it after every trip or at the end of the day. The drivers themselves ought to be told to instruct their passengers to use the waste box. MUDA could facilitate the project by inventing and supplying those waste boxes at a low price. I feel this could be a workable solution to end the problem of littering from running vehicles.

Yours etc.,
Barnes Mawrie sdb,
Via email

Making a mockery of the disabled

Editor,

This refers to your report on 'Regional Centre for PWDs' (May 4 2018). The meeting of our Chief Minister and the Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India was indeed a matter of 'Aache Din' for the Disabled. On April 10, last, I had written a letter to the Ministry of Social Justice

and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, with a copy to the state chief minister. In the letter I mentioned that an amount of Rs 1,06,513/- as Full and Final Instalment of Grant-in-Aid for the Year 2015-16. Your paper had reported that on March 26, 2018 the Secretary of the above Department had met with the Chief Minister to discuss the implementation of the ambitious programme Divyangjan in the State. This gave a ray of hope to this School for Children and Young Adults with Autism, Cerebral Palsy,

Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities established in 1986. The School had been receiving the

Grant-in-Aid from the Ministry since 1990-91. The Grant had been coming regularly in the months of November and March every Financial Year till 2013-14. The Grant for the Year 2014-15 was received on the 29th November 2016 and the Grant for 2015-16 arrived only on the 27th of March 2018. Our Expenditure in the Year 2015-16 was Rs. 26,46,778/- and 75% of this was Rs. 19,85,083- the permissible Grant as per

DDRS. Our proposal and the expenditures have always been within the parameter of the DDR Scheme.

The sanctioned amount of Rs. 1,06,513 is only 4% of the expenditure and we see no justification for this sanction. Hence we are returning the amount of Rs. 1,06,513 by Cheque No. 189513 drawn on State Bank of India payable to the Ministry. As Secretary of Dwar Jingkyrmen School, I have today removed the Notice Board in our School which had the following words:- "This School is Under the Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities". Isn't the above Ministry making a mockery of the present dispensation's much published nomenclatures like 'Divyanjan' (Divine Angel) and 'Deen Dayal' (Soft hearted for the downtrodden) or are these strictly for the organisations with preferential affiliations?

Yours etc.,

Sajjad M Ali, Secretary,
Dwar Jingkyrmen

Press freedom & democracy

Editor,

Apropos your editorial, "Whither press freedom!" (ST, May 4, 2018), it is said that every cloud has a silver lining. When press freedom is going to touch the nadir, a special court in Mumbai on May 2, had sent gangster Chota Rajan to jail for life for the murder of the journalist Jyotirmoy Dey. The news came out on May 3 which was the World Press Freedom Day! It is a significant coincidence that highlights the need for speedy criminal justice delivery system to save our democracy.

Our position in press freedom has gone further down to 138 among 180 countries. India has continuously been sliding down from 133rd position in 2016 to 136th in 2017 to 138th in 2018 on the World Press Freedom Ranking Index of the international free speech advocate Reporters Without Borders. Freedom of the Press is now in great danger. Journalists like Gouri Lankesh, Shantanu Bhowmik and K.J. Singh

have been murdered in different parts of our country a few months ago. There was a dastardly petrol bomb attack at the residence of the editor of the Shillong Times, Patricia Mukhim a few days ago. It will be a bad day for democracy if the Press has to work in a reign of terror.

In a political IPL match between the ruling and the opposition parties, the media cannot take the role of cheerleaders of any one team in a democracy. Indeed, the fourth estate must be the third umpire to help the umpires (voters) on the field. The fact of the matter is that dissent, debate and dialogue are central to democracy. On the other hand, democracy is the lifeblood of our Constitution and nation. So, those intolerant forces that are hell bent on gagging the voice of democracy are actually anti-national forces masquerading as nationalists. We must remember that democracy cannot survive without a free press.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Discovering new worlds

City college helps set up community libraries in two villages



Wonder world: Children in front of a library and (below) students take a break from textbooks

In an age where digital information takes precedence and books take a backseat, the communities at Dewlieh and Diengsong under Khad-ar Shnong-Laitkroh C&RD Block on the Shillong-Sohra road have embraced the classic method of acquiring knowledge and information through book-reading. The initiatives of the Social Work students, in collaboration with the National Service Scheme (NSS) of St Edmund's College, started the community libraries in these two villages. This project was the outcome of the assessment made through a survey conducted during special camps organised by NSS, which has been closely associated with the two communities for the past two years conducting various programmes and other activities.

It is difficult for the people to gain access to different book materials for various purposes, mostly educational, as transportation is difficult. In recognition of the needs of the people, especially of the students, the idea of setting up

the libraries was developed. Under the theme 'Inspire a Child, Share a Book', the young social workers had sought assistance from different book publishers, sellers, schools and fellow students and the positive responses from them made the project a reality and a success. Thus the two libraries were opened on April 4 and 7 at Dewlieh and Diengsong villages, respectively.

Shaiphar Dohling, a school teacher and secretary of Dewlieh, emphatically mentioned that the project would benefit the children who are in the school system and those outside of it. While thanking the team for its contribution, he stated that "even though it may be a small gesture for you, yet it is a great thing for us". Prof G Kharkongor of the NSS who guided the Social Work students said these students had undertaken a survey on the availability and accessibility of basic textbooks for students in the rural areas. He pointed out that the intention of the project is to inculcate the

habit of reading among children in the two villages where time is available and children have not been attached to gadgets like cell phones. The range of books includes fiction, books on general knowledge, science, literature, history and environment. An enthusiastic Debarstar Khongrymmai, a school teacher of Upper Primary School, Dewlieh shared his appreciation for the work, which is the "first of its kind in the village that would greatly help the students. He also stated that the children are excited in getting a variety of books to read and for them; it is a great goal that has been achieved. Moreover, he mentioned that even as a teacher he sees the collection of books as an enhancement to his teaching career.

Sketcy Mary Dohling, another teacher of the school shared her thoughts on the usefulness of these books as there are hardly interesting books that help motivate the students to learn. She also expressed the drawbacks of not having enough books for the Upper Primary School students and she was, therefore, "very happy for the library which will provide more knowledge for the teachers as well as the students". Interaction with the students of the school was flooded with innumerable *khublei* and remarks of how they were "very happy" and excited about their new library.

On a similar note, PN Syiemlieh, Chairman of the Managing Committee of Diengsong Lower Primary School, who inaugurated the library, thanked God who has blessed them through the various activities of the NSS, St Edmund's unit, over the years by bringing about several changes in their community.

"There are no words that will be enough to show our gratitude for this initiative," said Syiemlieh while expressing his great appreciation for the library in his village. He believes that the library will quench the thirst for learning of the students and lead to further growth in education performance.

Kynjaimon Khongsit, an Assistant Teacher at Diengsong, expressed her gratitude to the team for their provision of the library in the village.

"We are so blessed to have received the library in the presence of our Sordar and we hope that this library will be a great blessing to the entire village as a whole," she concluded.

The headman (Sordar) of the village, S Diengdoh, was also appreciative of the noble gesture. He commented, "I am so happy that you've encouraged us through the opening of this library" and he assured that the library would be used meaningfully.

However, Star Mary Diengdoh, a school teacher and an active worker in the village shared how they had been facing problems with insufficient books in the community but with the opening of the library these problems will be eased.

"Having the library near the school premises will also help students not to waste time in the absence of a teacher because they can read in the library for at least half an hour," she concluded.

Dewlieh village is located in between Shillong and Sohra highway ie near old Sohra (Sohra rim), 39 km away from the village headquarters in Shillong.

It has a population of 148 and 28 houses with Laityngew as its sub-centre, 3 km away from the

village.

Dewlieh is an area with no road connectivity. People have to walk approximately 3,000 steps after reaching the Sohra highway to reach the village.

The people here practise farming and craftmaking as their means of livelihood.

Parallel to Dewlieh is Diengsong village that falls under the Diengsong Elaka of Laitkroh Block with a population of around 480 people and 80 households. It is adjacent to Ladmawphlang, Mawmihthied, Nongtraw, Dewlieh and Tyniar.

The only connectivity to this village is also through 3,000-odd steps from the Sohra highway. The main sources of income of the people are through the selling of agricultural products, broom grass cultivation and daily wage labour. The children perform songs and dances at the opening function of these community libraries and were seen to be very excited and took time to sit and open and flip through a few books.

The success of the initiative is a combined effort of the communities and the support and help from agencies like New Book Centre, Don Bosco Book Depot, Ri Khasi Book Agency, Eriben Higher Secondary School (all from Shillong), St John Bosco Boys' Higher Secondary School (Sohra), the Social Work students, a few students from other departments along with a few teachers from St. Edmund's College (Shillong) who have generously contributed to the library.

(Contributed by Danny Kharkamni, Larisa Dohdong, Riwaka Shullai and Intijungla Imchen, all students of BSW, St Edmund's College)

Incredibly annoying modern life

A man raised by wolves in a forest says he misses his old life. Living as a wolf cub in a Spanish wilderness was much less stressful than modern life, Marcos Rodríguez Pantoja told the BBC recently.

Journalists expressed surprise at his declaration, but I totally get his point.

Last week, my book ran out of batteries!

I know Socrates is looking down at me from heaven and laughing, waving his "always on" scroll.

Meanwhile, at home, my child is outraged. Why? "My snacks are so crunchy I can't hear the TV," she complains, furious.

This is literally the worst thing that has ever happened to this child. I mean, how is she going to cope with real life, during which massively tragic things happen, like they forget to put mayo in your sandwich, a devastating incident that totally spoiled this columnist's day yesterday?

I told her that in my day, the only TV was a window facing a brick wall and the only snacks our fingers. She said brick walls were probably better than what was on TV these days and she's probably right.

Back at work, I was moaning about my dead e-book when a colleague told me about another tech problem. The trend spreading across Asia is to have a Roomba machine, a wheeled disk that quietly vacuums your floors in the middle of the night.

Unfortunately no one told these machines that a) Koreans and Japanese people often sleep on thin mattresses on the floor; and b) sucking up hair on the floor is not a good thing to do if it is still attached to a human's head. On one recent occasion, firefighters had to be called to remove a ravenous Roomba vacuum cleaner from its Korean owner's head.

THE FUNNY SIDE

Nury Vittachi

East Asian owners are junking their cleaning robots for superior technology: Broomsticks.

Police officers in Odisha recently demonstrated how they use pigeons to get messages across a vast portion of the state in just 20 minutes. During floods and power cuts the police pigeon service is the only functioning communications system.

So, basically, if their conversations are anything like mine, you send a bird across the state with your message, such as 'LOL' and 40 minutes later, you get the bird back with a message saying 'LMAO' (Laughing My Ass Off). Oh well, at least no one can complain about information overload.

A colleague showed me an angry text that had been sent by a young person from an aircraft recently. "There's so much leg room in business class that I can barely reach the touch screen TV," she complained. What suffering!

The odd thing is her inability to realise how the rest of us, sitting in economy class seats with our noses mere millimetres away from the seat in front, will take her message. Where's her brain?

Uh-oh. I would canvass readers, contributors and colleagues for more examples to fill this column with, but the main functional section of my own brain — which is housed in a smartphone in my right hand — is about to run out of batteries. So I have to stop here. Socrates! Stop laughing!

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



By Ranjan K Baruah

Make a quality choice for future

In today's section we are focusing on quality assurance and how it can be a career for our students. This is relatively a new term for many but as people are concerned about quality, so it is bringing more opportunity for young people here.

Quality assurance (QA) is a way of preventing mistakes or defects in manufactured products and avoiding problems when delivering solutions or services to customers; which ISO 9000 defines as "part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled".

We are all concerned about quality whether it is food or any other service, we need quality everywhere. It is important for all. A student is concerned about quality education while a business person is concerned about quality business and consumer looks for quality services and products.

In business, engineering and manufacturing, quality has a pragmatic interpretation as the non-inferiority or

superiority of something; it's also defined as being suitable for its intended purpose (fitness for purpose) while satisfying customer expectations. Quality is a perceptual, conditional and somewhat subjective attribute and may be understood differently by different people.

Consumers may focus on the specification quality of a product/service, or how it compares to competitors in the marketplace. Producers might measure the conformance quality, or degree to which the product/service was produced correctly.

There are many aspects of quality in a business context, though primary is the idea the business produces something, whether it be a physical good or a particular service. These goods and/or services and how they are produced involve many types of processes, procedures, equipment, personnel and

investments, which all fall under the quality umbrella. Key aspects of quality and how it's diffused throughout the business are rooted in the concept of quality management. The main terms associated with quality are as follows:

Quality Planning: Quality planning is implemented as a means of developing the products, systems and processes needed to meet or exceed customer expectations. This includes defining who the customers are, determining their needs, and developing the tools (systems, processes, etc.) needed to meet those needs.

Quality Assurance: Quality assurance is implemented as a means of providing enough confidence that business requirement and goals (as outlined in quality planning) for a

product and/or service will be fulfilled. This error prevention is done through systematic measurement, comparison with a standard and monitoring of processes.

Quality Control: Quality control is implemented as a means of fulfilling quality requirements, reviewing all factors involved in production. The business confirms that the good or service produced meets organizational goals, often using tools such as operational auditing and inspection. QC is focused on process output.

Quality Improvement: Quality improvement is implemented as a means of providing mechanisms for the evaluation and improvement of processes, etc. in the light of their efficiency, effectiveness, and flexibility. This may be done with noticeably significant changes or incrementally via contin-

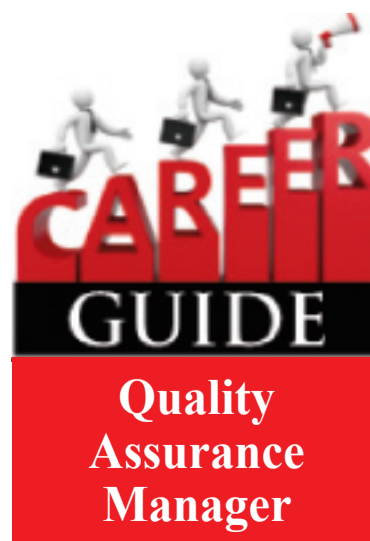
ual improvement.

Scholarships Update:

The Oxford and Cambridge Society of India (OCSI) announces Scholarships for 2018-19 sessions to graduates from Indian Universities who have obtained admission in either Oxford or Cambridge. OCSI Scholarships are part-cost awards for Undergraduate, Second Undergraduate, Graduate study and Research in any subject available at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, UK.

OCSI is a not-for-profit alumni organisation based in New Delhi. The scholarships offered by OCSI are Equal Opportunity, i.e. the decisions made in awarding these scholarships are not based on race, colour, religion, disability, age (except for maximum age criterion), sex or ancestry. Aspirants may apply before May 15.

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



'HOPE MY FILMS INSPIRE CREATIVITY'

Babatdor Dkhar recently sat down with filmmaker and musician **Wanphrang Diengdoh** for a tête-à-tête at a cafe in town. His works include 19/87 (co-directed with D Lyngdoh), Where the Clouds End, Between the Forest and the Song, My Name is Eeooow (editor and co-writer), Because We Did Not Choose and an array of music videos. His films have been screened all over the country and elsewhere and have received numerous awards and recognitions. He is the vocalist and bassist, and engineers the recordings for his politico-punk band **Tarik**. Their last album titled 'Folktales from the parking lot and Foreign monoliths' was released in 2015. Diengdoh is in the process of shooting his first full-length fiction film set in Shillong after a decade of doing non-fiction. He is also writing the music for the film.

Excerpts:

BD: Let us discuss the elephant in the room. In your most recent interviews in public profiles you've spoken about Khasi new wave cinema. Can you elaborate on that?

WD: Most of my works are always films that put a spanner in the works. They force the viewer to actually stop and take a look at what is going on in the society that they exist in. What I am trying to do or the kind of films or music that I am doing seeks to examine society... I feel that it is also important to show how things are as opposed to just merely depicting the pastoral and the beautiful landscape that we want to exoticise and fantasise that we live in.

BD: Are you making your next film with an audience in mind?

WD: Most of my films are situated here. Here as in this place that I come from. But having said that I don't think that they are restricted to the people here, in the sense that someone from some other part of the country can access them and also take away something from them even though they do not live here. I think that the universality of the film is perhaps what makes my works accessible to a wider range of audience.

BD: Your last film was a documentary called 'Because We Did Not Choose'. It's been doing really well in a bunch of places and we hope that you can get a chance to watch it. The medium of filmmaking, because of the resources or the lack of them in this region, what are the challenges that you have faced

or the challenges you will come across when you make your next film?

WD: That's a pretty universal trait of any filmmaker. One would always have to go through this rigorous process of how one secures the funding for their film and sometimes the fact that you work with limited resources allows you to be creative as far as your work is concerned because you have to work with so many restricted and forced situations where it is only your creativity that can overcome those limitations because you don't have any other choice apart from being creative about it.

BD: Do you hope that your films could be the start of a filmmaking, literary, creative renaissance here in the region?

WD: I just hope that it inspires people to create more content; be it writing, films, photographs, painting and to also break away from the stereotypical representation of this place. This idea of exotic, pristine hills on high-def drone footage which is cringe-worthy for me...

BD: Which I agree to...

WD: ...You know what I am talking about right. It is also about what is the reality of the space we come from? How do we document this reality? How do we allow people to engage in this reality and question themselves? Because if art has to function as something that makes people more aware of where they live and who they are, I am hoping that my works can inspire that in people.

I do not make films to make you feel good. I make films that aim to make you uncomfortable so that when the credits finally roll in and you step out of the hall, then you start talking about the film. A good film begins when it ends. The act of provocation is also very important for the artist.

BD: Is that your approach to your next film? Are you going to borrow from your documentary film making process?

WD: It's all about a creative treatment of a reality to arrive at some kind of a truth. So whether you choose to do the fiction form or the non-fiction form, as long as you are able to address some kind of a truth, for me that is most important.

BD: What is your creative process?

WD: Well I haven't been sleeping to be honest. I've not been sleeping well

and I think that a certain re-arrangement of your senses also allows you to look at things differently. I was bingeing quite a bit. I've practically been in a state of complete solitary recluse for lack of a better word and I think that being able to put myself in those kind of extremes has also churned out a certain kind of content. I do not endorse this kind of a behaviour for everyone who is doing my kind of work but I think that putting yourself in situations that challenge the everyday convention of a healthy lifestyle also allows you to churn out a certain kind of content.

BD: That's very honest, most people in the creative field won't be that transparent with their opinions. How important is identity in your films?

WD: As far as my personal position of how I understand the world is concerned, it is very evident in my films. But it is not for me to force that opinion down people's throat. It is always about telling a good story first. That is most crucial for but if people want to read these films a certain way and call this film coming from an 'abc' or an 'xyz' ideology I can't really stop them from doing that because once the film is out, it is no longer your child. People will read things differently and you cannot stop them from doing that. However, when I speak of identity issues in my film, I am not saying that we are all the same. There are certain things that definitely set us apart from people from everywhere else. For me it is important to celebrate those differences. To be able to be present here at this point of time and be lucky enough to document this amalgamation of these different cultures is an absolutely amazing experience for me.

BD: That feels like a more nuanced answer of what Khasi New Wave is all about. Am I correct when I say that?

WD: Yes you are right and the politics of a film is very important.



BD: How so?

WD: I still believe in the insurrectionary power and subversive power of the visual medium. It is crucial that the artist has to be provocateur otherwise your art work might as well be mere wallpaper. The functionality of the film is also crucial.

BD: I want to talk about the starting point. How do you write and what influences your writing?

WD: I don't think I have a particular process. I would say that a large part of my works have been informed by the people that I meet everyday. I am really fortunate to be in this place because Shillong as you know is not a place that is arranged according to class. You could be living right next to a really filthy rich business man yet at the same time, your next door neighbour could be a butcher.

The social mobility also allows for a huge amount of cultural interaction from these different spheres of life that people come from and I think that has also informed a lot of my ideas. Secondly, I have always been fascinated with dreams. For example, 19/87 was about a Muslim tailor with the gift of prophecy, similarly in *Where the Clouds End*, there are a lot of images there that are quite surreal and I think that that is what art is supposed to be as well. Sometimes art is not meant to be a tool for us to understand everything in life but perhaps something to make things much more complicated because life is complex. It is imperative for me to put these ideas on screen. And also sometimes, just observing things around you. I enjoy observing things a lot and perhaps if you've lost one sense, everything becomes much more appealing to you as well.

BD: Literally

WD: Yeah well...

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, MAY 6, 2018

Professionally mixed outcomes are foreseen as Moon apogee on your solar return chart. You would be rapid, decisive and exhibit your skill with flair. You may even look at long distance obligations. You show love and attention in personal relationships and get support and love in return as you fill energy in your interactions with loved ones. This year you take benefit from some short term financial gains. Your keenness for learning, investigation and enhancing understanding will be fulfilling. You may be more disposed towards spiritualism. Public relations will augment career matters. Romantic bonds will strengthen. Wedding bells might ring for the single.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You are able to integrate forces, resources and professional aspects to achieve success in important business ventures. With the expertise that you possess in your field, you achieve goals and targets on time. This is an exceptionally exciting time as challenging professional and business opportunities are offered to you. Deep personal relations and business partnerships are likely to get closer. Personal relationships gain a romantic and exciting quality. Tackle sensitive subjects and difficult people and get your point across. You are individualistic brilliant and daring in professional aspects as new projects get under way. You could be impatient in love and relationships as you are overflowing with energy.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You would be more accommodative and compassionate in professional and personal relationships. Friendship, cooperation and synergy are available and you enjoy the association of your loved ones. An opportunity for career advancement, a promotion or gainful business opportunity may be offered. You win debates, competitions and sports with your dynamic energy and power. Your personal charm and charisma take you through complicated situations. Even though possibilities and horizons open up, you tend to think negatively and imagine the worst. You may feel oppressed by too much work. It is the best time to share and delegate work and not to carry the entire burden yourself. Guard against over indulgence in food, drink or work.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would be most successfully doing tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. Emotional attachments and relationships are rewarded with reciprocity. Some interesting people are drawn to you and invite you to work with them. Your position of power and authority is maintained despite many changes all around. You can draw correct conclusions from previous knowledge of people you meet again personally when making important decisions. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

There is good luck attending to material matters, as there is increase of wealth and monetary gains. This is the right time to share your loving and personal relationships and share thoughts and ideas and spend good time in the association of your loved one. Practical details are to be dealt with clarity and efficiently. You may be involved in meetings with business associates as financial and business dealings would bring good results and gains. You can count on your professional and personal partners, as they stand by you through thick and thin. You will work in free and unrestricted space. Physical energy and good health allow you to tackle busy schedules.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. Economy at home and management of business and work are important issues of the week. You connect with new people and discuss important business matters. Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and profit. Your professional skills, wisdom and craft are appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. You could be attracted to new people and ideas as you are open and receptive. But you must conserve your financial resources for priorities that have to be met at the end of the week. You would be able to complete work assignments and personal business with good energy and support.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

The unpredictable is likely to happen that too when you least expect it. Surprises are in store for you in professional and personal matters. It would be best to be open and receptive in personal relations and family situations. A flexible approach in

the work area is recommended. New people may come into your life and influence your decisions and direction. Creative opportunities should not be ignored as it is likely to bring substantial professional material gain. While you work on one project another suddenly gains more importance and demands more attention. A financial windfall is possible as some dues come to you after a period of time. Don't be thrown by new developments.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This phase opens up a world of romance and love in personal relations. You are gracious with family and children. You would express yourself in a gracious and exalted manner and influence people in authority. There could be alteration in ideas or plans, increase and decrease in finances and fluctuation in business. You can be lead away by enthusiasm unless careful inner balance is maintained. You may handle more than one project at the same time with expertise and success. Commercial transactions and business deals could be conducted effectively. Money matters take priority as some unexpected expenditures have to be met. End of the phase brings fresh energy, love and romance in important relationships.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

Good luck in finances and opportunities is encouraging. You are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine good luck and good management. You share some memorable moments with a loved one. You are in touch with an innocence that comes from life lived fully, which also has a quality of wisdom and the acceptance of the ever-changing wonders of life. You would express your views and comments without fear of losing a contract and manipulate well to turn things in your favor. Luxury shopping may make a hole into your pocket but makes your family happy and cheerful. You are restless and may incorporate changes albeit small ones in your lifestyle and image.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with controversial and professional matters. You are likely to meet high profile people and share ideas and spend some time in their association. A stimulating project should be taken as a challenge which would further your business prospects. Your associates and co-workers form a cohesive team with you. A wonderful professional opportunity takes you towards success. Good planning and management lead to progressive and productive ventures. You are able to achieve a lot at home and at work with your youthful energy.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

The planetary configuration indicates that there is conflict within and discord outside. You may be divided about business and professional matters and finally come to terms on a compromise which might be the best thing to do at this time. You may disagree on a point of view with your partner but the love between you allows peace and acceptance. Emotions and mood can swing to extremes and it is important to achieve equilibrium. You are stronger and wiser after having gone through trouble and difficulty. It would be wiser to face difficult people and situations rather than escape as there would be victory and success in professional ventures. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You have the ability to stand alone. You are independent, creative, original, ambitious, determined and self-assured. Adopting a realistic, practical and disciplined approach towards life would bring harmony at home. This period proves to be good for the people in show business and in a creative line. Your ability to express yourself and to solve problems is enhanced. Students in music, singing, fashion design and beauty culture will get success and good results. Professionally huge expenses as well as financial gains from foreign business associates are foretold. You feel touchy and sensitive with your romantic partner.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. Your suave ways go down well with many. You stand at crossroads while making an important decision whether it is professional or personal. It would be better to listen to our own good judgment and do what is good for you especially as people around you could be judgmental or manipulative. Do not forget to share your feelings with the one who loves and cares for you. You are fortunate as things turn out well in difficult situations at work and home. Your financial situation looks promising if you manage it well personally rather than trust upon others. A relaxed and light attitude would help to overcome negative thoughts.

BD: I am going to get back to the elephant in the room which is Khasi New Wave and your next film. Do we even have a title for that?

WD: There is a title.

BD: Can you tell us what is it? You can hold on to that if you want to.

WD: I don't want to divulge any of that information. It's not because it's a big secret. The title is a very simple term but loaded with a lot of connotations and it is a word in Khasi. I love the fact that the title or that word means something in so many different contexts. It would mean something on the streets with the street lingo, it would mean something else in a slightly formalised setting, it would mean something else in an academic setting but I am quite excited about it.

BD: For people who are not too familiar with the film making world, what is your advice to them?

WD: Technology has really democratised how one can make films. So you can make films on your cell phones, you can even edit them on the cell phone itself. So what was impossible 20 years ago because you had to buy an expensive camera, you had to buy expensive microphones, you had to buy and editing system has now been made possible by the advent or the arrival of really user friendly technology. This has created an entire spectrum and an entire genre of content on the online realm. And of course, the visual medium has also changed after the arrival of the internet. And this is what I always tell young people, who want to make films. Just go for it. Make your film, make the biggest mistakes while you are making your film, that's the best way to you go about learning your craft. Make that bad shot, heck make a bad film even. But learn from it. You can afford to make those mis-

takes now.

BD: I am going to throw you a curve ball. Are you competing against anything or anybody?

WD: I don't believe in any kind of competition whatsoever. I am a firm believer that good work will stand the test of time.

BD: Before we wind up, I would really love for you to explain your goals, your dreams, what you hope this project of yours would become.

WD: I just hope we are able to inspire an entire generation of people who want to make interesting things here. That would be amazing. I also would want to inform people that sometimes it's also important to take a step back and reflect on what is going on in your life or what is going on around you. We live in an era where we can be so easily self absorbed, we can so easily cut ourselves off from the realities of our world and just live in these bubbles of our own and not be aware of what is going on around us.

If you look at the kind of apathy that a lot of young people go through in this place, if you look at the kind of desperation, if you look at the kind of anger, if you look at the kind of resentment in this place and try to understand where all of this is coming from you understand that sometimes we are completely removed and deprived from a reality, there is no room or space for young people to express themselves and I think if we are able to inspire an entire generation to do things and it could be anything, it does not have to be a film or academic work, I would say we have left something interesting behind. I think it is important that we somehow shed some hope in these very hopeless times.

(Because We Did Not Choose will be screened at NEHU on May 10)

Success is a choice

By Imitoshi Ao

"We should not give up and we should not allow the problem to defeat us." ~ APJ Abdul Kalam

Problems are everywhere and everyone has them and the only way is to not give up. Most of us give up because we are afraid that we will not succeed and due to this fear we let our problems defeat us. We should not let our fear overrule us but instead we should let our hopes and our dreams take over.

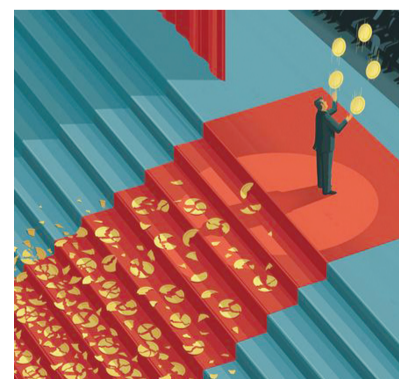
Do not think about your frustrations or about what you tried and failed in but think about your unfulfilled potential and what is still possible that can be done. Problems and failures are a part of life. As Truman Capote said, "Failure is the condiment that gives success its flavour."

Everything in life happens for a reason, success or failure, but the only thing you need to do is keep editing and adjusting your attitude and you will find that your failures will turn into success and you will sail through life as a ship sails in calm waters. You have to motivate yourself and let that fire burn within you.

Do not wait for others to motivate you and light that fire under you because chances are that it will burn only very briefly. It is your choice to want to succeed and in order to do that

you need to motivate yourself.

Work hard, work smart and have self confidence, believe in yourself and you will find that you will surely succeed. Make this your fuel to run your vehicle of success and even if you fail due to a few mistakes do not carry them around with you and feel let down and give up but instead make these mistakes as your stepping stones to do better and achieve more.



Life is not perfect nor is the moment so never wait for the perfect moment which will never come but take that moment and make it perfect instead.

Aim for the stars with your feet on the ground and you will find that success will touch your feet. Every morning when you wake up you need to tell yourself that you will succeed today and that you will give it your best.

Forget about what happened yesterday and focus on today. Say to yourself — "To succeed is my choice and I will succeed today".

Most people say success knocks only once on our door but achievers say knock on the door until success opens the door. Success is very similar to a person in a boxing ring, defeat is not declared when you fall down but it's declared when you refuse to rise up. If you let failure dictate your life then you will always fail but if you refuse to give up and rise up success will follow you everywhere.

Always end the day with a positive thought no matter how hard things were today as tomorrow is a fresh opportunity to make it better.

Even the worst of situations will always have something positive. Never feel sad about losing anything in life because whenever a tree loses a leaf, a new one always grows in its place. Never focus on the problems you have because it will bring more problems but focus on the number of opportunities you have which will bring more opportunities. Choose to succeed in whatever you do today, tomorrow and always and never give up no matter what the odds maybe or what failures you go through because to succeed is your choice. MAKE IT HAPPEN!

(The author is a motivational speaker)

“Choosing goals that are important to you is one of the most essential things you can do in order to live your dreams.”

--- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.264

SHILLONG, MONDAY, MAY 7, 2018

Medical college in Meghalaya elusive

THE state of Mizoram will be opening its first Medical College in August this year. The College will accommodate 100 students of which 85 seats will be reserved for Mizo students. Note that Mizoram's first Medical College will be headed by Dr L Fimate who has previously served as the Director in RIMS for nearly six years and was head of the Forensic sciences in RIMS and J.N. Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal. The Medical Council of India has permitted the setting up of the college. This Medical College was personally initiated by Chief Minister, Lal Thanhawla keeping in mind the rising number of medical aspirants in the state. In comparison, Meghalaya's proposed medical colleges have run into controversy from day one. The firm with which the state government wants to tie up in a private-public partnership (PPP) mode is allegedly tainted and has evaded income tax payments. The question remains as to why Meghalaya invariably ends up doing deals with dubious firms. Why are the best firms unwilling to invest in the state? The answers are not far to seek. Most companies today do not want to be bogged down by the licence-permit raj which still operates in Meghalaya despite the liberalisation era of 1991. The single window concept for speedy clearing of all investment proposals is headed by the Chief Minister and it is obvious that no project is allowed entry without deal making.

Instead of concentrating on setting up one medical college and getting it up and going, the Mukul Sangma Government decided to set up two – one in Garo Hills and another in Khasi Hills. None of them has taken off as a result. When the state is divided by regional loyalties and the need to appease different groups for the purpose of vote banks, nothing can be achieved. A Medical College has to be a viable enterprise and must maintain certain standards apart from getting the right faculty. Even the North East Indira Gandhi Regional Institute for Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGHRIMS) located in Shillong finds it struggling to recruit and retain faculty. All these should have been given thought to before announcing and implementing ambitious projects. Moreover, a medical institute is a progressing institution and should have been located outside Shillong city where the scope for expansion is possible. Why have the College at the TB Hospital? All these decisions make us wonder at the logic of it all and reasons that prompt such decisions? Are they in public or private interests?

It was a May Day afternoon and the students of some schools in Jowai town assembled at the District Library Auditorium to join the District Administration of West Jaintia Hills District in observing the Civil Services Day 2018. Surely it was a government function like any other except for the fact that unlike before when students remained silent listeners while the people on the dais hold forth like jugs full of knowledge and pour their wisdom on to the reluctant audience, this time students too had their say.

Every session of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, has school students from Shillong witnessing the debates but schools from outside the state capital never had that kind of opportunity. Schools in and around the state capital are fortunate to have this exposure but for students of some schools in Jowai it was a rather unexpected experience on that particular day when they were part of a mini assembly in that they were able to participate in a mock parliament of sorts and question the Government on various projects and point out its flaws.

At least for that one single day the students of schools in Jowai had the experience of how the Assembly functions. After the different department gave their presentations, in the later part of the program during the interaction session the students were given the opportunity to question the officers and seek clarification on their doubts vis-a-vis the presentations. And surprisingly the questions did come thick and fast.

The credit goes to the Jaintia Hills District Administration which came up with the novel idea following the theme of the Civil Service Day celebration this year - "Improving Service Delivery through Innovation." In fact that was what had happened. This is of course another very far-reaching innovation that the district administration has introduced in the district.

That it is different from the usual functions organised by the Government was evident from the very fact that the program started almost on the dot (which is a rare case

in government events and functions). The reason this was possible was because no politician was involved in inaugurating or gracing the function, hence there was no delay in the starting the meeting. Sometimes it looks like the delay is a carefully calibrated act to forcefully impose the politicians' self-importance on the less-important people who have to wait for the 'very important person (VIP)'.

The DC in charge DM Wallang during his speech categorically stated that it is for the first time that the office of the DC has organised such a programme, because the District Administration wants to do something different to commemorate the day. The DC's office instead of organising usual meetings followed by a banal oath taking ceremony came up with an innovative idea to observe the day.

The program started with a presentation from different departments on the works in progress and those completed. Each department came prepared with power point presentations, but the interesting part was the interactive session where students were allowed to question the officers on their presentations, on the progress of some works and the achievements of the various departments.

The presentation which received maximum numbers of question is the MGNREGS and it was a pleasant surprise to see that students have questions for almost all presentations and the interaction was jovial and informative. Students, particularly those from the rural areas were obviously very interested with the hundred day wage scheme which had brought change to their villages. The Department of Environment & Forests was questioned on conservation and wildlife issues. Other departments too were bombarded with questions. For instance there were questions on lack of civic sense amongst the people which makes Jowai town littered with garbage.

When the SP West Jaintia Hills, Vivek Syiem recalled his experience as

the SP Shillong in which he said that the CCTVs installed in the city helped the police not only to get clues to crimes but that it has also helped the police to catch those who litter in public places. And as expected, pat, came the question back to the SP, where a girl student asked him why CCTVs were not installed in Jowai to catch those who litter?

A girl from the Jowai Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Jowai questioned the authorities on why there was no attempt to repair the leaking roof in her school which makes it difficult for the students to sit in the class when it rains. Initially there was a passing of the buck amongst the government departments, till the District Education Officer put her foot down and promised to look into the school's grievances.

Now this is a very important exercise. In fact I consider this to be democracy at work when those who govern and the governed interact to get public works done. When a girl student was able to get the district school authority to instantly promise to repair the leaking roof in the school, then I consider that empowerment. It must have taken the school principal months to move from pillar to post to request the higher authorities to repair the leaked roof, but the student did that in one moment only.

In many cases democracy fails because the citizens of the country or the state do not ask questions either because they are plain lazy or because they are afraid to ask questions for fear of being reprimanded by those in power. One thing that this particular event has achieved was to instil in the young minds the courage to ask questions. They have demonstrated that it is not only alright to ask question, but that it is the right of every citizen of the country to question the powers that be.

It is my expectation that next time the District Administration will do this on a larger scale where not only students are involved but even the public who are interested in knowing about the development in the district will have the opportunity to engage in making democracy work. If and when that happens it will

also be the day that the Government has achieved its goal to reach out to the last man in the queue.

Engaging the public in such activities also helps strengthen democracy in the state because when citizens are able to be involved in the system they become part of the system. The other side of that is when they feel aloof, feel left out, and the citizen does not feel that they belong to the system. Many times people look at government departments as something which is outside of themselves and they don't feel part of it. In such a situation they do not consider themselves as being part of the wheels of progress.

Such programmes not only ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of the various government departments but the most important thing is that it creates community ownership in government initiatives. People will no longer consider anything that government has constructed or initiated as 'that which belongs to the government' (sarkari) but instead will feel that they are part of the project and own every government initiative.

If the government agencies are able to engage the public in this kind of programmes then the public will come to know about all government's schemes and they not only become empowered but RTI itself will die a natural death. When all the information about the government's schemes and project in the district are available to the public, where is the need to file for RTI anymore?

I call this event a Mini Assembly not only because people like MLAs have the opportunity to ask important questions, but it also makes people feel important. Hopefully this program is replicated in other districts too that the maximum number of people are engaged in the process. The reason is that much of the confusion and conflicts can be avoided if an opportunity like the one mentioned is created where people can avail themselves important information because as we all know information is power.

A mini Assembly in Jowai

By HH Mohrmen

Ecological harmony as understood by India

By Salil Gewali

The initiative by the Deputy Commissioner, West Garo Hills –Ram Singh to prohibit the use of bottled water ("West Garo Hills DC prohibits the use of bottled water at Govt events" ST, 3rd 2018), is an outcome of a great awakening indeed. A long journey of 1000 miles starts with one small step. Frankly speaking, the understanding that most of us have about "environment" can be described largely as being paradoxical. A proper understanding of the ecology that we are part of and the degradation that is happening to it, should make us "aware" of the contribution that we make towards its overall degeneration. If we dig deeper we can well realize that due to our own acts of commission we are being caught off balance!

Of course there are endless causes for environmental degradation, but the major causes is large scale deforestation, commercial mining (for our state I call it senseless-mining), rapid industrialization and urbanization. One would be amazed to know how each individual is responsible for polluting the environment by mere use of, say a plastic bag, or even "using bottled water" or by consuming items in pouches which are done purely for our personal convenience. So when we try to understand who is responsible for the environmental degradation, it would be a good thing to turn inwards and rectify things at our end as well.

recently wrapped in hard plastic paper. The ferociously intoxicating "zarda" is being sold as "Tulsi" which in fact is a name for a sacred herbal plant. This all shows how the government itself is blind and deaf to the thunder of obnoxious decadence! Look at how we all, and the government system, are culpable for contaminating Mother Earth and also the environment of our inner physical being. One wonders when we shall resolve to change our lifestyles, our practice, our greed-guided consumerism which are only standing out as the formidable threat to the whole ecosystem!

Incidentally, for information, modern science has only begun to talk about the Environmental ecology and ecosophy, but it has badly missed evaluating the "mental ecology" and "spiritual ecology". The latter two are far more significant, inherently with us, and subtly enduring and which we carry along even after the death. Very interestingly, this vast discipline had been studied with one-pointed determination in India since past 7000 years ago (even longer perhaps). Indeed, this knowledge has extensively been adopted by the Western knowledge seekers. The 'Laws of KARMA' give a partial insight into this universally holistic study. In order to comprehend better the Indian seers constructed the special "BOAT" – named Yoga/Meditation. They realized that each being, after

The first step is to control the MIND and turn it into a "slave", unlike what we are doing today – which is turning ourselves into a slave of the mind which is normally chaotically littered with material desires, and as result, the vision remains unclear. It only forms opinions, often considered as "true", based on personal likes and dislikes which need not be flawlessly right.

Mostly we tend to argue by saying, "What's the big deal about one plastic bag today" or "it is only one plastic spoon, what harm would it cause?" At an individual level, it does not seem to make much difference but the challenge here is that there are too many people who think "it is just this one thing today". For example, there could be instances wherein when stuck in a traffic jam, one might have felt out of sheer frustration, "Why does everyone have to take out a vehicle?" This is a thought process that most of us have, where the cause of the problem is largely shifted to others while completely failing to realize that we are also to blame for the problem. A little introspection and a question to the self about why I am taking out a vehicle might make better sense. According to some sources, nearly 12 million tonnes of plastic are consumed every year in India. There are certain uses of plastic that are unavoidable, but something like a plastic bag has alternatives and we could do well by avoiding it.

Equally harmful and sometimes more dangerous, are the items marketed in pouches which decorate each individual grocery/pan/ shop. Countless fancy items, plastic toys, chips and cookies all are attractively packed in the plastic itself. Regrettably, we easy-going-parents, instead of buying nutritious "grains/chanas/badam" and dry fruits for our kids, rush instead to buy cheesy and fizzy chips, while we gorge ourselves with Rajnigandha and varieties of addictive gutka and zarda for our freshmen which were till

having taken the birth on this planet, must endeavour to bring physical, mental and spiritual dimensions in "complete HARMONY" and "sail through" the worldly sufferings. The first step is to control the MIND and turn it into a "slave", unlike what we are doing today – which is turning ourselves into a slave of the mind which is normally chaotically littered with material desires, and as result, the vision remains unclear. It only forms opinions, often considered as "true", based on personal likes and dislikes which need not be flawlessly right.

Once the MIND is controlled it obviously helps open the doorway to the ultimate TRUTH as it is and also helps feel the ultimate bliss. This discipline alone can make one capable of realizing that all individual objects in the universe are "non-separable", they are intrinsically interconnected, ecologically interdependent and supremely divine. The material manifestation is only the physical projection of the ALL-KNOWING-ENERGY.

This grand KNOWLEDGE of SUPREME ECOLOGY of INDIA deeply inspired Erwin Schrodinger, best known as the father of Quantum Mechanics. He proclaimed thus: "Vedanta teaches that consciousness is singular, all happenings are played out in one UNIVERAL CONSCIOUSNESS and there is no MULTIPLICITY of selves." This knowledge of Vedanta of the East helped the Nobel laureate Schrodinger in conceptualizing his "Schrodinger Wave Equation" based on the "Dynamic Unity of all Entities" in the universe.

TO THE EDITOR

One car per family

Editor,
With the increase in population, there is a drastic increase in vehicles on road. In order to achieve better lifestyles, people indulge in buying more cars than they require. It is a matter of social stature these days without giving a single thought to the consequences of their action on the environment. Roads cannot accommodate the number of vehicles these days and that is the reason why it takes an hour or so to reach places we can easily reach in about 20-30 minutes because of the heavy traffic congestion.

Keeping in mind the end goal to handle this issue, Government authorities should implement laws like "one car per family" which will not only reduce traffic but also help in decreasing air pollution. Also, frequent use of public transport should be encouraged. For that, Government authorities must see that public transportation is properly maintained and are decent enough for people to use daily. Schools should also provide buses and make it compulsory for every child to travel in it. Implementing this will not only control traffic problems, but it might also encourage people to go

for eco-friendly ways like cycling which will benefit them physically. One car per family is an efficient way to improve traffic and quality of air.

Cities like Mumbai and Delhi face problems like unauthorized parking due to lack of space where the vehicles cover half of the road when parked and cause disturbance for the other vehicles to pass thus leading to traffic and noise. There is a substantial increase in air pollution because of harmful carbon emissions from vehicles. It can have hazardous effect on human health like heart and lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and respiratory infection. According to WHO, nine out of ten people are subjected to high level of pollutants from the air they breathe. The people of Shillong should be seriously thinking of this issue.

Yours etc.,
Ankita Joshi,
Via email

Marxism needs to be revived!

Editor,
From May 5, 1818 to May 5, 2018 - yes, Karl Marx is now 200 years old!

Can I use the verb "is" instead of "would have been"? Perhaps, I can because Marxism is very much alive and kicking in welfare states! A modern welfare state with mixed economy is now trying to amalgamate capitalist laissez - faire liberty into socialist endeavour to ensure equality. Such amalgamation is necessary to create a level playing field with the help of subsidy and positive discrimination in favour of the needy. This helps welfare states climb up the ladder of human development index. Archaic capitalism has indeed been discarded by the welfare states. These countries have graduated from police states to welfare states by giving top priority to human development, welfare of the people and happiness.

So, a welfare state ~ even the United States of America cannot deny the contributions of Marxism in its policy of social security like subsidised/ free health care, education and handsome allowance for the unemployed. A welfare state which ensures freedom of an individual and at the same time guarantees his or her social security is a synthesis ~ of the thesis of capitalism and antithesis of socialism. As a matter of fact, a truly welfare state is more inclined

to a socialist state than a caged police state.

It will indeed be a heaven on earth if we can translate the words of Karl Marx ~ "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" ~ into action.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Remember History, don't repeat it!

Editor,
This refers to the recent controversy over Jinnah's Portrait in Aligarh Muslim University. Whether the University should hang the portrait of a person credited for partitioning the country is a disputable issue, but the manner in which the entire situation went berserk almost leading to a communal strife in the University campus is horrifying. Wouldn't the matter been resolved peacefully by writing a petition to University authorities to remove the Portrait of 'Father of Pakistan' from its wall?

Of late it is seen that every small issue is turning out to be a matter of big communal ruckus! One question is moot here; why didn't the same issue matter

over the last 7-8 decades and why these weeds of communalistic or nationalistic issues sprout out just before impending elections? The same people need to answer the reason behind presence of temple of Godse or preserving monuments of Colonial British regime.

As a nation we need to be progressive. We cannot live with the memories of 1947 partition and its cause and effects forever. Let's learn from History and try to move forward to a Vibrant era where "History is not repeated" but only remembered.

Yours etc.,
Sadiq Hussain Laskar,
Guwahati

Mapping biodiversity resources

Editor
Through your esteemed newspaper, I would like to draw the kind attention of the State Government to the need for extensive surveys in collaboration with Zoological, Botanical, Geological, Anthropological and Archaeological Surveys of India, State Security Agencies and the army where needed for identifying rich natural resources, unexplored or under explored

biodiversity hotspots, forest and wildlife, valuable minerals trapped in little known or least explored territories of the state. Modern satellite imageries provided by ISRO and other international space and remote sensing agencies could help both conservation of forests, wildlife, biodiversity of the state; and help in tapping additional natural resources for the state through this aerial and comprehensive coordinated ground level surveys. It can open up new potential tourist sites, ecotourism, opportunities for building infrastructure to better connect the state; and enhance security management of the state with under explored terrain. An updated natural resource and biodiversity map of Meghalaya will be greatly beneficial for making long term future plans and economic programs for the state.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB
Canada

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.

“First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.”

--- Mahatma Gandhi

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.265

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 8, 2018

Plastic waste: Our fatal flaw

PLASTIC waste is ubiquitous. Plastic bags have made it easier for people to fling their garbage from running vehicles thereby turning roads and streams into veritable garbage dumps. Why is plastic going to be the nemesis of humankind if things are not quickly reversed? Firstly, plastics are made to last forever yet 33% of plastics comprising water bottles, bags, straws, cups, spoons etc., are used and thrown. Plastics as we are well aware are non-biodegradable. Burning plastics releases highly toxic air yet people continue to burn plastics out of ignorance. Toxic chemicals are used to make plastics and to give them the strength and flexibility. Studies have shown that those toxic chemicals leach out into the blood and tissues of humans and animals. This results in cancer, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruptions amongst others.

Only 8% of plastic waste is recycled; the rest end up in landfills and is burned or becomes litter. While big brands such as Marks and Spencer's, Reebok et al have started giving paper carry bags for a while now, other smaller stores continue with their use of plastic bags. The reason why big brands have stopped using plastic bags is because they have to adhere to international standards which are stringent and they would have been fined heavily if they were to still use plastic carry bags. Hence while it is easier to extract compliance from big brands, India has not been able to curtail or stop the use of plastics by many of its food manufacturing companies that use plastic and aluminium coated wrappers. In the polluter pays principle it is the manufacturer of plastics that should be made to pay for recycling or safe disposal of plastics – a technology we are yet to develop. Meghalaya is a small state that cannot afford landfills. It has to devise means to develop waste recycling plants at the community level. Now that some wisdom must have dawned on the ministers of the new Government after visiting Kerala to see its waste disposal system, we hope to see some action soon on this front. If not Meghalaya will be buried under plastics! For starters, Government should just ban plastic carry bags!

LOOKING BACK

May 15, 1989

Nepali refugees are our own

The relief camps for Nepali refugees at Barapani and Rajabagan will be dismantled on January 20. The action in part of the process of encouraging the displaced people to go back to normal life, according to Mrs. M. R. Mawlong, Deputy Commissioner East Khasi Hills District. About forty percent of the inhabitants of these two camps have

already left, but at the request of the remaining inmates, the date for dismantling the camp has been postponed to Jan 20. Referring to the demolition of the Barapani relief camp that was completed on Friday, Mrs. Mawlong said that the process for helping the inmates to return to normal life started in July last year.

Jinnah controversy Making a mountain of a molehill

By Poonam I Kaushish

Question: Name the latest con word that can divide a nation on communal lines?

Answer: Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founder and hence responsible for India's Partition.

Question: What is it about him that our politicians have retouched his portrait with a fresh coat of stereotypes and suspicions about Indians Muslims?

Answer: Vote bank politics. Whereby, all communal-sectarian additions, subtractions and divisions put together provide manifold hope for our polity and is their bread and butter to power. Never mind that in the process they debauch everyone and everything many times over, conveniently, forgetting that Jinnah was once a nationalist and rose to become an important figure in the Indian National Congress.

The controversy has its genesis in the BJP's Aligarh MP writing to the Chancellor of renowned Aligarh Muslim University last week raising objections to Pakistan's Qaid-e-Azam's portrait inside the Students Union Hall hanging there for decades to be removed. The MP questioned this seat of learning's patriotism and claimed that the portrait's presence was proof that AMU was harbouring anti-national elements. Earlier the Hindu Yuva Vahini had demanded RSS shakhs on the campus and accused it of producing jihadis.

Adding to the fracas, UP Chief Minister Yogi asserted, "Jinnah divided the country; there is no question of celebrating or eulogizing him in India. His photo might be coming off for good." Added Union Minister Naqvi, "the issue would be resolved with a sensitive approach." Countered the Congress, Pakistan's Qaid-e-Azam was a freedom fighter and we should respect him just as Shaheed Bhagat Singh is respected in Pakistan. And NCP Chief Sharad Pawar dared Yogi's Maharashtra counterpart Fadnavis to demolish the Jinnah House, once the Mumbai residence of Pakistan's founder.

Questionably, why should the university which started in 1875 be forced to disown and distort its own history? How does AMU become 'anti-national' by keeping Jinnah's portrait merely as a sign of its past? Is it the Saffron Sangh's modus operandi to effectively erase historical data which it does not agree with and inert their own narrative

in its place? Since AMU is a Central University why has the HRD Ministry not removed it till now?

Is the NDA trying to tell us that a portrait in a university tantamounts to being anti-national? Is it trying to light up strong Hindutva policies by reigniting old communal passions? Does this have a more vote-winning potential? Should this become litmus of one's patriotism? Is this the Sangh's way of teaching us a lesson in rashtra preem and desh bhakti? Replete with 'It's my way or highway' attitude.

Undoubtedly, one can argue that universities and other educational institutions are established to impart learning and skills to students and arm them with the requisite knowledge to prosper later in any sphere

At the other end, undoubtedly, the Hindutva Brigade's ball game seems to be of using Jinnah's portrait as an issue to demonize AMU, 'fix it' to draw battle lines on a campus ideologically far-removed from the Sangh, consequently vilify Indian Muslims and paint them as divisive, having affiliations with and sympathies for Pakistan and resort to majoritarianism.

We now have a game which plays out the politics of communal polarisation for consolidation of electoral gains ahead of the Kairana Lok Sabha by-poll and multiple elections in various States along-with sustaining it till the next Lok Sabha election next year. "Jab apni sarkar hai, toh darr kis baat ka?" is the popular sentiment.

This once again brings to the fore the fault-lines running deep within our society. A part of an epidemic of ho-

"Our leaders need to realize history is to help society identify and assert itself in a pluralistic democracy. A history which makes it a composite whole today with people having a tendency to hold on to their past."

they desire. Further, as these institutions are heavily subsidized it stands to reason that the students study and not create nuisance, fan hatred or ignite communal fires.

Certainly, at one end it betrays a new fragility in our national ego, which thrives on a virulent anti-intellectualism. Educational institutions, it seems, must conform to prescriptive nationalist histories or pay the price. It is conveniently forgotten that the portrait was put up long before Indian and Pakistani histories were bifurcated. Thus, to erase this past is regressive.

Added a historian, "AMU is also a historical artefact, a realisation of the Aligarh Movement in concrete, literally. Like most of India's artefacts, the University tells us about the long journey the idea of India has undertaken with all its complexities and contradictions. The past is not an annoying neighbour you decide to stay away from."

liganism, a growing trend of reacting to ideas that one does not like with physical force. Not for them the fact that the University has a historical tradition of conferring honorary life membership to eminent individuals. The first ever to receive the honour was Gandhiji and Jinnah in 1938.

Other recipients are Ambedkar, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, Sir CV Raman, Jayaprakash Narayan, Mother Teresa etc. Conveniently forgetting that Modi had inaugurated the Bombay High Court museum, showcasing Jinnah's Barrister's certificate along with Gandhiji's! The saffronites didn't protest then against the judicial preservation of history.

Besides, the Hindutva Brigade needs to jog its memory, of ex-BJP President Advani calling Jinnah "secular" on his visit to Pakistan in 2005. Further, he quoted Sarojini Naidu who called Pakistan's Qaid-e-Azam an "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity.

far in terms of use of technology, so much so that it has come to a point now that doctors recommend "technology detox" for people who have no control in their use of it.

Yours etc.,
Ankita Joshi,
Viaemail

Of media trends

Editor
One aspect of global media that strikes me strongly and which emanates from various media outlets across the planet is the overwhelming coverage on negative politics, terrorism, violence, death, destruction and hopelessness. I sincerely believe that media also carry a broad responsibility of building a holistic image of a nation or a region. A newspaper builds a nation and communicates to the world the health of the nation. Will any foreign tourist or foreign direct investment reach a country if that is based on the negative criticism originating from different media sources? This has long term damag-

My respectful homage to this great man." Predictably, all hell broke loose in the Saffron Sangh and Advani was removed as President only to be reinstated two years later.

Alas, the idea seems to be to distort history by projecting Jinnah as the sole villain of India's division and for the death of thousands of Hindus and Muslims. Said a senior BJP leader, "What is it that the university is trying to assert by not removing Jinnah's portrait? Statues of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bhagat Singh were demolished in Pakistan."

True, since 2014 the BJP-led Government has been on a name changing spree Delhi's Aurangzeb Road into ABJ Kalam, Mughalsarai station renamed Deen Dayal Upadhyay etc. But there is only one little hitch. The fantasy of India as Akhand Bharat with a clean slate to make it a playground for Hindutva fascism is threatened by the country's plural history and syncretism.

Rightly or wrongly, the country seems to be in the grip of self-styled chauvinism and cultural dogmas wherein celebrities, films and now students are fast becoming soft targets with knee-jerk reactions taking over debates and calibrated decisions and no writer, thinker, historian or social scientist can honestly do his/her research objectively.

Our leaders need to realize history is to help society identify and assert itself in a pluralistic democracy. A history which makes it a composite whole today with people having a tendency to hold on to their past. A blanket condemnation of anything one does not like or approve of is saying goodbye to another's viewpoint and the idea of democracy. Life is lived in the slim strip called the "official." Pertinently, a nation is about its people. There simply is no way to erase the remnants of the long journey India has undertaken before it turned into a republic. We need to obfuscate the issue as it exaggerates the world creating a demonology of its own that sees every act of defiance as a monster. As philosopher-poet George Santayana said: Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. What gives? ----- INFA

ing impact on the minds of our younger generation too who are growing up to believe that there is nothing for them other than violence. If media becomes so overwhelmingly negative in its approach it will have detrimental and negative impact on the society at large too. A blood stained body lying on the ground in a pool of blood with bomb spitted body parts scattered everywhere can certainly win a Pulitzer award but can never build a nation. I sincerely believe that there are other positive things happening in a nation that do not get adequate coverage. Responsible and balanced journalist is also necessary for a nation to make progress.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB
Canada

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

Why is the judiciary slow in convicting rape accused

By Jenniefer Dkhar

It is horrifying to pick up a newspaper every morning or switch on the news channel these days because what would be staring at our faces is molestation, rape and murder. There never seems to be a day when news of rape and murder do not occur. Every single day is a day of pain and loss of respect and dignity for the victims and a day that reiterates the loss of humanity. We are exchanging our piety and goodness with acts of monstrosity to the extent that our men do not hesitate to even rob the modesty of a nine month old child. What is even more tragic is when the violators are usually people known and related to the victim; a cousin, an uncle, a grandfather and a father. Can this be an act of a sane human being? Isn't this an act of the devil incarnate?

Almost every corner of the country is plagued with this disease called Rape - an act that constitutes control, dominance, authority, strength, and the power to humiliate, hurt, defile and defame the victim. There are men who rape to gain sadistic pleasure while the victim is in agony, pain, anguish, torture, vulnerability, and suffering. While the victim is writhing in pain the rapist undergoes an erotic experience.

One fears that rape and sexual violence, in a way only accentuates stereotypical views about women who are usually projected as objects which can be used, abused and subjugated by men. However one also attributes the abundance of atrocities on women and girl children to the degeneration of a human being's consciousness and a disintegration of man's moral and ethical values, an exaggerated sense of masculinity, command, power, supremacy, low opinion that men have on women. How far can men degrade themselves? How low can these men stoop that they are ready to bargain their pleasure for a girl's morality? What could be more painful and frightening as a human being, as a woman and as a mother to live in a society that is no longer safe and secure?

What are we as a community and inmates of this world doing to bring about a stop to this sin? Sadly, we are doing nothing much! Because if we are, then perhaps many victims would have been granted justice and the crime itself would have decreased. Alas, this is not to be as with every passing day more crimes occur. Crimes take place every day while criminals are not punished. How many victims have been granted justice? In most cases, we hear of the victim committing suicide due to embarrassment, social stigma and denial of justice. How often has there been a rapist who has paid dearly for his crime? While we appreciate protest marches and candle light vigils held by the criminals are still at large in most cases. While the victim will have to live with this scar for life or even commit suicide or be murdered, her violator would either be at large or would still be alive and kicking and going about his daily life like before. Why is this so? Isn't this because our legal system was, has and perhaps is still very liberal with the perpetrators of such devilish acts. At times there are no arrests made and

even if the culprit is arrested the process is usually slow paced. Meanwhile the perpetrator gets bail, goes home live a normal life with no remorse for the heinous crime he had committed. He may commit many more heinous crimes and offences. After all why and who should he fear? The law is too lethargic and slow to convict and punish him.

What is alarming is that this failure in our system may encourage evil-minded men to perpetrate similar crimes without any inhibitions and fear. Instead of the law taking immediate severe action to curb such crimes and act as a strong deterrent against such menace to the society the inaction and slow pace of court trials would only further exacerbate such crimes. In this entire process, it is the victim who is the ultimate sufferer while the criminal is the one who is free. Is this fair? The failure of our legal system to deliver justice to the victims and pronounce judgement on the perpetrator appears as if they are challenging the very laws of the land; the system altogether.

One strongly believes that low conviction rate is one of the root causes of rape. Therefore there is a need to increase conviction in rape cases. For this to occur, the law and the courts have to make rigorous changes to the existing rape laws. Only then will rape laws act as deterrents. No criminal should get away with a meagre punishment of imprisonment and minimal fine. No resourceful and influential criminal should compensate for the crime by paying a huge amount of money to the victim and be acquitted, free from blame or even pardoned. The court of law must comprehend the truth that these criminals are without any conscience, scruples and moral values and will not be deterred until and unless they are awarded punishment equivalent to the pain and stigma that the victim goes through throughout her life.

In a country like ours, the law of the land gives that freedom to the accused to defend himself but what is important is that the intensity of the case must be recognized so that no accused escapes scot free and no victim is denied justice. Hence no compromise must be made on the basis of how influential both politically and financially the accused may be. Sadly what is prevalent in our society today is the presence of a disparity and partiality.

Today talks are doing the rounds of death penalty to anyone who rapes a girl below 12 years of age. First of all, I am of the opinion that the idea of putting an age limit is so out of place. A rape is a rape; be it of a 9 month old child or a 99 year old woman. If at all death penalty is the answer let it be irrespective of the age of the victim..

As a woman, as a mother and as a responsible member of the society, I urge upon my fellow human beings to be more conscientiousness and to guide our boys and girls to take the path of righteousness and virtue. It's about time that we bring about a revolutionary change as far as this heinous crime and sinful act is concerned. We can no longer afford to simply read and watch the news of rapes and murder as mere events and thank God that it is not happening in our homes.

TO THE EDITOR

Road building without specifications

Editor,
Most roads in Shillong are just enough for one vehicle. The moment two vehicles cross each other then both of them have to move to the side which is not black-topped. The problem with road making is that it is the contractor who finally builds and completes the process while engineers are hardly seen supervising the work. The contractor has paid everyone down the line from the minister to the PWD engineers, the moment he/she wins the bid after tendering for the same. Then the contractor also has to think of the profit he/she has to make. So only the amount remaining after keeping all the above expenses under consideration is used to build the road. No wonder it takes only one monsoon for the roads to be washed away. And as citizens we keep mum after watching this happen day in and day out. We are all allowing corruption to thrive because of our studied silence.

Some roads like the one from Gora Line to Spread Eagle Falls has become so horrible that some vehicle is likely to turn turtle someday soon.

And why is the repair work being undertaken during the rainy season? Why was the road left unattended to during the dry season? That must be the worst road in Shillong city today and it falls under Laitumkhrak constituency. No surprise! Who will police the Government with all its mercenary ministers, officials, contractors and wheeler dealers? The Mukul Sangma Government has passed the Social Audit Act. Are the rules in place and is there an office we can visit to lodge our complaints to? Your newspaper had mentioned that even CAG reports don't really matter to the Government, hence hundreds of crores of rupees are lost due to several acts of omission and commission but no action is taken to find the guilty, much less to punish them, for, if that were to happen, then half of the government would be in jail. I call upon all citizens of Shillong city to take their

responsibilities as citizens seriously and start filing PILs and also use the Social Audit Act.

Yours etc.,
S D Bamon,
Shillong -3

Technological dependence

Editor,
We cannot think of a world without our phones, laptop, internet, etc. What would happen if all this crashed today? Hard to envision, right? I guess we have all at some point wondered when we have become so fixated with our phones that a single day without it is hard to imagine. So much so that it has altered our lives adversely.

In this day and age, we are surrounded by technology. From YouTube playing our favourite music to a text received on WhatsApp, from an office to a house, from a building to a road, we use technology frequently. Ever since technology began incorporating itself excessively into the society, it has affected humans physically and mentally. First of

all, there is an undeniable decline in physical wellness. We now spend time mostly watching television or binge watching T.V series or movies online rather than indulging ourselves in some physical exercises or even taking a walk. Although, it is not only in the area of physical fitness that we have turned out to be frail, we cannot manage ourselves without technology like we used to. We are consistently losing skills of how to do things manually.

Technology in the past meant progressively advancing towards making our lives easier. But if you think of it today, the first few things that pops up in your head are computers, cell phones, tablets, internet and other various social networking sites which are slowly harming our brains and our bodies. The quick pace of technology as a result has had a major impact in running us and our society.

Okay, I concede the fact that when we talk of technology, we cannot miss the benefits it brings with it. But we also cannot deny the fact that we have gone too

"If one advances confidently in the directions of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

--- Barbara Sher

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.266

SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2018

Let justice be done

THE Supreme Court (SC) has done well to transfer the Kathua rape and murder case to Pathankot in Punjab. A series of unprecedented outrages have happened in the past few days. In the Kathua case, lawyers are known to have made every effort to prevent the charge-sheet from being placed in court. Communal slur has been made much of in the incidents. There have been demands that for CBI to take over the case as it can hopefully catch the culprits. A minister of J&K was a victim of stone pelters except that the stone hit his car. With the SC decision, the trial will now be held on a day-to-day basis and in camera in Pathankot in Punjab. Apparently, no trust can be placed in the police. The chief Minister of J&K, Mehbooba Mufti has said that if the J&K police cannot be trusted, then you could not have trust in any state organisation. Many questions have been raised against officers of the Crime Branch which is a shameful procedure, according to Mufti. If the CBI was given the job of investigating the Kathua case, it follows that the police chiefs in J&K are prejudiced on account of religion. The SC ruling is a morale booster for the people who consider the CBI to be a tool in the hands of the BJP government at the Centre.

The rank communalism showed by two BJP ministers aggravate polarization in J&K. Youth have become militants and gun-toting militants. They also receive the support of the local people as do the militants. In Shopian, an academic who was a professor at a university was killed. It is a disgraceful occurrence. Violence must end in J&K. the central government should go all out to take a firm step to reach out to the valley in the coming Ramzan season.

LOOKING BACK

May 20, 1989

3 killed in renewed violence

At least three people were killed and 12 injured during the past fortyeight hours in escalating violence by Bodo extremists as the 300 hour Assam bandh called by the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) entered its sixth day today. Official reports received here today said one Javed Ali died of gunshot injuries early today after an extremist gang raided the residence of Ghanashyam Das at Ramphalbil in Kokrajhar district.

Two others who tried to resist were admitted to hospital with gunshot

injuries, the report said.

In another incident on Friday, Bodo ultras attacked a group of six Bodo youths at Samthaibari in the same district, killing one and injuring another.

They also kidnapped four others. On the same day, police recovered recovered the body of one Gopal Oraon bearing multiple injuries from the Kokrajhar police station area. Oraon had been missing since May 17 after he had gone to the forest to graze buffalo, reports said.

Collective responsibility for prosecution in criminal justice

By FabianLyngdoh

The rationale of the government to exercise control over the citizens of the state in return for commanding obedience is based on its responsibility to guarantee the safety of the individuals and the security of their means of living, and to provide necessary conditions for every fulfilment of life. This is done by upholding social control, deterring and mitigating crime, and imposing penalties for the commission of crimes. Therefore, crime is legally defined as an offence against the State. In the Khasi traditional concept, a crime committed on a person is an offence against the Kur (clan); and a crime relating to social customs and public property is an offence against the community.

India inherited the adversarial system of justice from the British colonial government. In this system, the prosecution is the legal party in a criminal trial, and the prosecutor is the chief legal representative of the prosecution who represents the government in the case brought against the accused person before the court. The accused is assumed to be innocent and the burden is on the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that he/she is guilty. The role of the court is primarily that of an impartial referee and mediator between the prosecution and the defence; to see whether the prosecution has been able to prove the case against the accused beyond reasonable doubt.

In the Khasi traditional system of justice, spiritual authorities are invoked to be present in the 'Dorbar' (council of elders) for witness and guidance. What the functionaries of the Dorbar do is simply to execute the form of divinations through which the spiritual authorities would reveal the facts, or to introduce the kind of ordeal that the accused or disputants have to undergo to prove their contentions. It is called 'Bishar-blei' because judgment is made not on the basis of human argument, but on the revelations of spiritual authorities through divinations and ordeals called 'ka kheiñ ka bishar' (calculating and judging). An accused who is convicted in the 'Dorbar' is handed over to the 'Syiem' for inflicting necessary punishment. The authority of the 'Dorbar' depends on the coercive authority of the political institution, as well as on mutual submission to sacred and spiritual authorities, as governed by cultural traditions.

The concept of the right

of an accused to a 'fair trial' has inherently occasioned the modern criminal justice system with many loopholes. Though the investigation made by the police is the foundation of the criminal justice system, it is not trusted by the court. The recorded statements of witnesses during investigation would indeed have greater probative value, but they cannot stand prima facie as evidence in the court of law. This is based on the presumption that the police might have used questionable means or third degree methods to extract statements during investigation to put forward false evidence before the court due to extraneous influences such as corruption or political pressures. It is unfortunate indeed that our legal system is such that even the actions of the law-enforcement agency of a state cannot be trusted. There is indeed a possibility that if statements extracted forcibly and maliciously are accepted as evidence, innocent persons might instead be implicated in the case and get punished through wrongful conviction, while the guilty might be laughing away in freedom to commit another crime.

However, even if a charge-sheet was submitted after fair and proper investigation, but if the prosecution machinery is indifferent and inefficient, the painstaking efforts by the police may be rendered useless. In the adversarial system, the accused might be represented by competent lawyers even though the burden of proof lying on him/her is light. On the other hand, the prosecution, on whom lies the heavy burden to prove the case beyond reasonable doubt, might be represented by incompetent and irresponsible persons. In such cases, the defence party would most likely succeed in creating reasonable doubt in the minds of the court, and the accused could be acquitted, or the case drag on forever. What justice is there if an accused is convicted only after his death? What justice is there if an accused is ultimately proved innocent after languishing for thirty years in detention as an under trial?

Independent witnesses called upon to make statements in support of the prosecution and to assist the court to dispense

justice are expected to cooperate with the judicial system only on grounds of personal democratic responsibility without decent remunerations. Therefore, they should be kindly requested as they become part of the state's legal agency with no personal interest in the case. But, it is sometimes reported that prosecution witnesses have instead been dealt with harshly and disrespectfully by the police and the court as if they are the co-accused. On the other hand, the expenses of the defence witnesses are lavishly borne by the accused. This situation discourages possible witnesses to come forward in support of the prosecution.

Accused persons who are rich and powerful sometimes pressurise the victims and their family members to come to a compromise to dismiss the case. But, as crime is an offence against the state, it cannot and should not be resolved by a compromise or a private settlement between the two parties - the accused and the victim. The only permissible compromise in crime is the Presidential pardon which is the prerogative of the head of the state, on behalf of the people, to forgive someone who is convicted of crime and pardon him/her as an act of grace on humanitarian grounds and political morality, and in the interest of public welfare. In the traditional Khasi society, an act of pardon relating to a crime committed against a person, can be granted only by the clan of the victim; and pardon for a crime relating to social customs and public property can be granted only by the Dorbar.

A pertinent question haunts our justice system: As crime is an offence against the state, once the police have carried out the investigation and submitted the charge sheet in the court of law, it is the responsibility of the government on behalf of the society to pursue the prosecution. The charge sheet is a document of accusation prepared not by the victim of the crime or the family members of the victim, but by the law-enforcement agency of the state because criminal case is in the nature of 'the state versus the accused.' But it is unfortunate that the victim of crime or his/her family members, however poor, still have to bear the burden of proof and cost of prosecution without any compensatory benefit other than a sense of revenge on the criminal. This fact deters

many poor victims from seeking justice under the law.

Every crime committed, amounts to the failure of the government to maintain the social order and to safeguard the security of individuals, which are its fundamental responsibilities. In principle, the society has the right to accuse the government in the court of law, for every unresolved crime. But, a rise in crime rate also indicates the decrease of the 'we-feeling' among the citizens as members of a common society. Why adjudication process drags on and on, sometimes without conclusion even after the death of the accused as well as the victim, and why there is low level of conviction rate is because we the citizenry as a whole, perceive the criminals only as enemies of the victims and their family members. We fail to perceive criminals as the enemies of our common collective living.

Among the Khasis, the idea that a crime committed on an individual is an offence against the Kur, and not against the society still lingers in their collective conscience. In the rural areas and perhaps in the urban areas too, all the clan members and relatives of the accused would always stand in his/her defence in a Dorbar even if there is strong evidence that he/she had committed the crime. It is only when there is a charge of 'Nongshohnoh' or 'Nongaiksuid' (sorcerers), whose victim might be anyone without consideration, that the clan members of the accused would stand aside and let the community take its own action.

The level of perception of criminals as common enemies in any society is positively correlating to the degree of the 'we-feeling' prevalent in that society. In our modern society today where cultural traditions are no longer the bond of union that nourishes the 'we-feeling', the principles and ideals of democracy as enshrined in the Constitution should be the new foundation on which a healthy 'we-feeling' is to be built. The law-enforcement machinery of the government alone cannot deal with the rise in crime rate unless the democratic ideals of the Constitution are socialized and ingrained into the minds and hearts of the citizens.

Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance 2018

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The recent spate of violence against children has repeatedly shocked the conscience of the nation. In the past few years' crimes against children have grown manifold and in many cases the perpetrators themselves are found to be minors.

While commentators across the country have attributed it to a number of reasons there is no doubt that the fast changing crime landscape requires a change in the legal provisions of the country as well. In the aftermath of a number of gruesome incidents responding to the public sentiments the government of India has recently notified the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance 2018 to tackle growing incidences of crime against children.

While in initial stage it was directed at protection of girl child alone, within a span of short time the government has made it gender neutral thus pushing the ordinance into a progressive narrative in line with gender equality of protections of rights of both the girl and boy child. One of the first changes that the Ordinance has brought in pertains to the enhanced punishment in case of rape. According to pre-ordinance provisions under the Indian Penal Code 1860 a person

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012. Previously under the POCSO, 2012, for rape of minors (below 18 years), the punishment was at least seven years or life imprisonment, along with a fine. For rape of minors below the age of 12 years or for gang rape of minors, the punishment was rigorous imprisonment of at least ten years or life imprisonment, along with fine. The Ordinance amends these provisions stating that for all such offences, the punishment which is higher between the POCSO, 2012 and IPC, 1860, will apply.

Apart from changes in the IPC, 1860 and POSCO 2012 the Ordinance has also effected comprehensive changes in the Code of Criminal Procedure CrPC 1973 thus ensuring that the general judicial structure in dealing in crimes against children are strengthened. Under the original provisions of CrPC, 1973 it was stated that an investigation into rape of a child must be completed within three months. The Ordinance reduces the time for completion of investigation from three months to two months. Further, the Ordinance extends this timeline to all offences of rape without demarcating age the age of

The ordinance also increased three new offences related to rape of minors and increased the penalty in one of the offences. For a rape committed against a child below the age of 12 years the punishment has been set as rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death.

found guilty of rape was given minimum sentence of seven years to maximum sentence of life imprisonment along with fine. Under the new ordinance the minimum sentence in the case of a rape convict has been increased from seven to ten years. The ordinance also increased three new offences related to rape of minors and increased the penalty in one of the offences. For a rape committed against a child below the age of 12 years the punishment has been set as rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death. In the case of gang rape against a child below 12 years of age, punishment has been fixed as life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death penalty.

The ordinance has also classified punishment for rape committed against a child below 16 years of age. For rape against a child below 16 years of age previously, the punishment for rape was imprisonment of ten years extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine. Under the provisions of the new ordinance this has been enhanced to a minimum rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years, extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of victim. In case of a gang-rape committed against a child below 16 years of age the punishment has been fixed as life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of victim.

The Ordinance has also effected amendments to

the victims. It also states that any appeal in the case pertaining to these provisions would be disposed off within six months from the first date of hearing.

To further tighten the provisions, the Ordinance has amended the anticipatory bail provisions that were a part of CrPC 1973. Under the new rules no anticipatory bail will be granted to any individual accused of rape charges under the provisions listed above. The provisions of free medical treatment to be given by the Government for all rape victims has been extended to minor girls under the age of 12 and 16 who are victims of the heinous crime. Previously under the Evidence Act, in determining whether the act was consensual or not, the past sexual experience or character of the victim is disregarded. This provision has been extended to the rape and gang-rape of minor girls below 12 years of age and below 16 years of age. These new provisions enacted under the Ordinance would undoubtedly serve as a great deterrent and protect children from heinous crimes if coupled well with social conditioning. In the light of changing social landscape these are indeed steps in the positive direction.

However, the Ordinance is only as effective as the manner in which it is implemented and if the judicial system itself rises to the occasion. Rape is committed with impunity because very often the rape accused gets out on bail or gets off with a lenient order from the courts or because many don't complain or file FIRs since the accused is a family member. Early disposal of rape cases could be a deterrent and stringent punishment are perhaps the only two deterrents.

(The views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Overcoming the drug menace

Editor,
This letter is in response to the news reports captioned, "James seeks MLAs help to contain drug abuse" and, "Paul blamed illegal liquor, drugs", published in your esteemed daily recently. It's a pity that the Home Minister of the state is so helpless. He is seeking the help of the MLAs to contain the deadly menace of drug abuse as if the state police/CID has no role to play in the matter. Drug abuse and drug selling are rampant in the city. Trafficking is done openly in different parts of the city which could not have happened without the connivance of the concerned police stations. It is a matter of quid-pro-quo between the police and the sellers, the victims of which are our young boys and girls. The statement of Mr. Paul Lyngdoh, who is also a former minister, is pathetic to say the least. He is a powerful leader in his constituency with the support of his many young followers. Yet, in spite of his knowledge about drug trafficking and sale of illegal liquor in his constituency he has not done a thing to stop the menace.

I have to cross a stretch of the road starting from Lower Jail Road bridge to Polo Bazar in course of my morning walk. Opposite to the 'Sharma Medical' in Lower Jail Road, I see booming business in the sale of illegal liquor and drugs. Just in the corner in front of a shop (Opposite to 'Sharma Medical' with a bill board, which reads "Vodafone Super net 4G) a man and a woman sit with an innocent looking thermocol box and young boys, both tribals and non-tribals, can be seen buying small packets of the deadly substances. Few steps ahead alongside the stalls selling chicken there is another lady with a thermocol box engaged in the same trade right from morning. This stretch of road is some 400 metres away from the Pasteur Hills Beat House. It also falls under the Dorbar Shnong Lawmali.

Organizations like KSU and FKJGP often take aggressive postures for the protection of interests of the indigenous people but they are so indifferent to a menace that is destroying a section of our youth!

Yours etc.,
T. Synrem
Shillong -2

Suggestions to overcome traffic jams

Editor,
I have been reading suggestions given by many concerned citizens, the traffic department and most recently by the Chief Minister and his cabinet ministers. The suggestion for fly over, skywalk and different other ideas are very much needed, but it has to be followed up in earnest and implemented by authorities even if it takes time. But the need of the hour is immediate solutions to ease traffic congestions to some extent so I would like to suggest some immediate solutions from my point of view which are as follows:-

1. Check all the documents, like Registration, Insurance, Pollution Certificates of both the private and commercial vehicles.
2. Check all driving licenses.
3. Check permits of all commercial vehicles (Light and Heavy).
4. Remove all self-made taxi stands.
5. Remove all hawkers and workshop from PWD roads.
6. Have Odd and Even

numbers plying on alternate days.

7. If the Police and Enforcement department of District Transport Office starts checking regularly then 40 percent of the vehicles will be "OFF THE ROAD" because most of the vehicles are running without proper documents.

The time taking solutions are as follows:-

1. Have arterial roads connecting Laitkor, via Risa Colony, Motinagar, Lawjynriew.
2. Arterial roads to Upper Shillong via Lumparing, Law Sohtun and if possible have a bypass from Mawlai to Upper Shillong via Umlingka. Laimer, San mer.

A humble request to the Traffic Police Department is not to allow the drivers of vehicles to stop or park wherever they like. This includes Government, Defense, Public, Police and Commercial Vehicles.

Also please check overloaded commercial vehicles plying to different destinations via Upper Shillong and Laitkor roads, because due to overloading these vehicles go slow and create a long line of vehicles following them which causes a traffic jam.

Yours etc.,
K M Warjri
Shillong-2

Wanted better examination centres

Editor,
I am a student of Class 12 who appeared for my final exams in the assigned center, St Margaret's Higher Secondary School Shillong. I am forced to present before you the problems faced during the entire duration of the exams in this school. Every day before we are allowed to go to our assigned halls we have to face the hostile behavior of the School Principal. A continuous disruption of silence takes place during the exams as the Principal runs regular classes for the rest of the school even during exam days. Sports practice, March past and other school activities created a constant disturbance during our examinations. From the very first day, the principal took 30 minutes of our time in holding the assembly. No regard for time was shown. Every day our examination time is wasted in prolonged assemblies after which we have to listen to her unsolicited advice,

comments and insults both during the assembly and in the examination hall.

During one of the exams the above Principal who uses vulgar language came to the hall and screamed at a student during the exams for something to do with her hair band. And for such a little thing a punishment was given. Even after completion of our exams, students are made to sit in the hall for more than an hour. This also disturbs others. No external observers were found to be present on campus to make a complaint for the harassment taking place.

I humbly plead that necessary action be taken and just as students of past years as well as myself who underwent this rigmarole the students of tomorrow should not be victims to such circumstances. Future MBOSE students must not be victims to such type of reckless, irresponsible behavior.

Yours etc.,
ND Sangma
Via email

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

“ Nature study will show you how full of beautiful and wonderful things God has made the world for you to enjoy. Be contented with what you have got and make the best of it. Look on the bright side of things instead of the gloomy one. ”

--- Robert Baden-Powell

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.267

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2018

Off with the Iranian deal

EVER since he took office as President of the US, Donald Trump had been threatening to walk out of the Iran nuclear deal. It has finally happened. French President Emmanuel Macron's efforts to persuade Trump to abide by the agreement have failed. Trump felt that his predecessor Barack Obama was ill-advised in signing the treaty. It was a one sided deal, according to him. Trump says that Iran had agreed to give up its nuclear programme which was for peaceful purposes only which was not to be relied upon. Its stockpile of uranium showed it had a secret mission to manufacture a nuclear bomb. It is true Iran has been forced to cripple its nuclear programme. The high degree of surveillance by a large corps of inspectors and other restrictions severely compromised its intention to go nuclear surreptitiously. The IAEA also monitors Iran's uranium mines to prevent them from producing lethal nuclear weapons. These restrictions prolong the period Iran should have to take to make a bomb. Before the deal was struck, Iran had about 3.5% (low enriched) uranium which was later enriched to make the weapon's raid (90% or more). The stockpile was enough for making seven nuclear bombs. A heavy water nuclear reactor is underway at Arak. But it is now inoperative.

The reason western powers signed a nuclear deal with Iran must have been that its nuclear design was under control. Besides, Iran supplies a great deal of oil to developed and developing countries. It is much preferred to a source like Saudi Arabia which has a tyrannical monarchy. The US decision will of course significantly affect its role in Syria where it is in league with Russia. The US will now slap stiff sanctions on Iran which will alienate the US further and increase its hiatus with the western powers. The President's own men had tried to persuade Trump from dismantling the Iran deal. But Trump has dismissed those suggestions. Mike Pompeo and John R Bolton have been appointed as they are hawkish. The decision made by the US also casts a shadow over the expected talks between Kim Jong -un of North Korea and the US President in the near future.

Karnataka election

Dress rehearsal for 2019

By Dr S.Saraswathi

The entire nation's political attention is concentrated on the election in Karnataka as if it will decide the fate of India for the next five years. The two main contenders to power in the State are two national parties -- a phenomenon unknown in southern India.

It is only after 2014, when a strong BJP wave across the country elevated the party to its present status, State Assembly elections have been arousing nation-wide interest. Even by-elections are keenly contested and intensely watched. All regional parties are following every move of those in the fray in Karnataka which seems to be a trial run for approaching Lok Sabha elections. Speeches and campaigns are indeed conducted like a dress rehearsal for the parties for the final drama in 2019.

Karnataka has been a stronghold of the Congress until the victory of the Janata Party in 1985. The State does not consistently support any particular party and does not normally go with the predominant national mood. When the Congress was in power at the Centre in 1994, Janata Dal won Karnataka Assembly; in 1999, when the BJP led NDA won Lok Sabha, Congress won most of the Lok Sabha seats in the State. In 2004 and 2009 when UPA defeated NDA at the Centre, BJP came to power in the State. In 2013, Congress won the Assembly and replaced BJP government, but in one year, Karnataka saw the emergence of the BJP in 17 out of 28 Lok Sabha seats. The State has even preferred Congress for the Centre in 1984 and the Janata Party for the State in the next year.

Because of the Karnataka election, the Union Government has not been able to frame the Cauvery Water Sharing Scheme within the deadline given by the Supreme Court. And the Congress government of Karnataka on its part has not been able to take the risk of releasing 4 tmc ft water to Tamil Nadu as directed by the Cauvery Tribunal for

fear of losing votes for the party and cites water shortage in the State even for drinking purposes as its defence. The arch enemies in the field have a common interest in taking no action with regard to releasing Cauvery water pending elections!

Retaining power in Karnataka is a life and death question for the Congress, for losing it will mean getting restricted to one State and one Union Territory --- Punjab and Puducherry. For the BJP, winning Karnataka and thereby regaining a lost foothold in the south is necessary to sustain the Modi wave and to break the prevailing notion about the BJP as a party of north India.

Hence, both national parties are deploying maximum energy and electioneering talent to outdo each other. Since February end, several Central leaders of the BJP have visited the State. The Prime Minister has a programme of addressing some 30 rallies within a week in May. The Congress president is also holding road shows and rallies in different regions of Karnataka. The rallies to some extent display the changing mood of the people ahead of Parliament elections.

The Congress has a habit of playing regional politics in southern States. Few may remember that at times it included two-language formula as its election promise in its manifesto in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, it allows State party leaders to wave the flag of Karnataka, promote State identity through Kannada language and opposition to Hindi, and champion State rights in federal set up. The State Cabinet has already approved a tri-colour State flag, a cultural policy to promote Kannada language and culture, opposition to use of Hindi name boards in metro trains and stations. The strategy of the Congress seems to be to oppose the nationalist stress of the BJP and assume a

posture of unity with the local masses by vociferously supporting their parochial interests.

Neither the Congress nor the BJP has touched the crucial State-level issue of sharing Cauvery water in their election manifesto. No plans to improve the condition of the river or to rejuvenate it are mentioned. But, both have centred their focus on the farming community with schemes to enhance funds for agriculture, and promises of farm loan waiver, infrastructure plans, education, sports and culture, women's empowerment, social welfare schemes, and special programmes for development of Bengaluru.

Both the BJP and the JD(S) have a common objective of defeating the Congress -- a reason strong enough to form an alliance. But, it has not taken place pre-poll. On the contrary, both Congress and BJP accuse each other of having a secret understanding with JD(S). This does not prevent Modi and Deve Gowda from praising each other's statesmanship and efficiency. It is part of the politics of keeping the doors open for post-poll alliances which may be necessary in case of fractured verdict.

Even parties willing to form post-poll alliances for government fiercely fight one another in elections to increase their individual strength which will improve their bargaining power in post-poll scenario. Such fights do not preclude accusations and complaints against each other. Doubtless, they confuse the voters not knowing the combinations that will finally form the Government and the Opposition.

As conditions stand in the week preceding polling, it is clear that the JD(S) will have an important role in the case of a hung Assembly. Its State president maintains that the party will not remain just a "king maker" as predicted in some reports, but will become the "king". Its role depends on the speed of Modi wave and the vigour of the new Congress leader more than

its own acceptability.

The mood of the people is not clear despite lavish gifts like separate religious identity to Lingayats. What is clear is that election is no longer a simple traditional caste fight as Lingayat (identified with Yeddyurappa), Vokkaliga (associated with Deve Gowda) and so on. Wishful thinking of non-political reformists that political divisions within castes may gradually weaken their social unity and lead to disintegration of castes is falsified in real life as there are no cases of disappearance of castes due to political divisions.

The case of Lingayats may become another instance to prove that solid vote banks made up of castes is an illusion of politicians and not a reality. The energy, time, and money spent on building block votes of castes may be more usefully diverted to get block votes territorially by area development schemes cutting across caste lines.

Hectic campaigns by top level leaders, fierce propaganda, charges and counter-charges against one another have reached a new high setting model for future electioneering in other States. This new momentum, triggered in UP and intensified now in Karnataka is going to be the factor deciding the outcome of this election surpassing record of work and package of promises. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan are bound to undergo the trend-setting experience of Karnataka Election.

It is difficult to believe that voters will have 2019 election in mind in making their choice this year for the State. But, the winners in 2018 State elections will get a splendid opportunity to build their goodwill and popularity with the people. --- INFA

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

Rahul Gandhi takes a bad song to make it better

If PM claim 'unprecedented', there have been many this year

By Sushil Kutty

The cat (Rahul Gandhi) is among the pigeons (BJP). The day after Rahul said he is ready to become "Prime Minister", sitting PM Narendra Modi spoke of the "impudence of the immature", of the "naamdar with the temerity to betray his own alliance". Is the BJP rattled? Did Rahul unleash a masterstroke on Modi? For, once again, after taking the lead in setting the agenda from the day (May 1) Modi addressed his first election rally in Karnataka, the BJP is not setting the terms of rhetoric.

Asked point-blank at a meeting with prominent Bengaluru citizens if he is ready to become PM, Gandhi replied, "Well, it depends on how well the Congress does in the election. I mean, if it emerges as the biggest party, yes." But is that what got PM Modi's goat? Maybe this is what got Modi's hair up: "I'm pretty convinced that Modi is not going to be the PM. I can see it in his face. He knows it."

The media was not in the building when these critical words of consequence were spoken. But by the time the Congress president left the building a video was already made. And out in public domain the next day (May 8, 2018). Rahul in the video proclaimed he could angle for the post of Prime Minister of India if the Congress emerged as the party with the most Lok Sabha seats in 2019. By evening, those who don't like Rahul (of whom there are a legion) went to town with "Is he qualified?"

Somebody retorted with "What qualification? All you need to become PM is be an MP." Gandhi is already an MP and if the people of Amethi keep faith in him, with him, he will remain an MP come post-polls mid-2019. But those who consider Rahul short-term comic relief and nothing more, they wouldn't relent. "He jumped the gun. Nobody can nominate himself PM candidate," they spoke with a conviction born of not ever bucking convention.

"No man or woman who became PM has done such a thing, unprecedented," they ruled with a headmaster's shake of head. But then, isn't this a year of the 'unprecedented'? The press conference of the four senior most Supreme Court judges; the impeachment motion against a CJ and, now, Rahul Gandhi declaring that he "will be PM" without first sounding alliance partners - all of them "firsts", unprecedented!

Of course, Rahul nominated a couple of caveats to go with his big hope: One, the Congress wins the most number of parliamentary constituencies in 2019. Two, the Congress along with its allies overshoots the BJP's total number of seats. With that, all of a sudden, people got to know that these are a few of Rahul's favourite things!

"Suddenly" because it looks like Rahul Gandhi has broken free of mum Sonia Gandhi's sari-pallu, become his own man. The last time there was a whiff of 'Rahul for PM', Sonia sat him down and told him that 'politics is poison', better left to trusted non-family Congressmen. Now, politics has potential. And it is not a nightmare to be ambitious!

I&B minister Smriti Irani whose ambition is to beat

Rahul Gandhi in Amethi says she's okay with Rahul's proclamation because everybody has the "right to dream" and Rahul Gandhi can dream, too, but, but...what does he have to show besides the "pathetic 40% attendance record in the Lok Sabha" and "no questions asked"? That heard, Irani will have to be a really good 'bahu' to beat Rahul in the Gandhi pocket-borough. With Rahul saying he wants to be PM who in Amethi will want mere MP Smriti Irani?

Arnav Goswami, who sits on the laurel that he's the only journalist who got Rahul to answer questions one-on-one, looked like he couldn't believe his ears after hearing Rahul's declaration of intent. Speaking in his best-man voice, the anchor who shouts questions on behalf of the nation, expressed disgust that 'Rahul for PM' has left the "nation distraught". Asked how's that possible when the people have the choice to reject Gandhi, Goswami shifted gears and corrected to likely alliance partners Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav, Mamata Banerjee and Chandrababu Naidu are distraught.

In that too he is wrong. The likely allies must be more likely angry, pissed off. Mamata and Mayawati must have also had a good laugh, giggling like school-girls at the thought of "PM Rahul". And Naidu Garu must have shaken his head, like being bothered by a mosquito, and must have debated whether to place a call to Telangana counterpart K Chandrashekar Rao who has been hectically travelling to cobble up a Third Front.

Rahul Gandhi's big hope rests on these and other regional eminences, a highly disparate group of individuals, ambitious politicians, a couple of them likely harbouring dreams to at least become deputy PM if not PM. Not Mayawati, though. She has set her eyes on becoming PM and probably has already bought a handbag to go with the salwar-kameez on inauguration day - the first Dalit PM of India, unprecedented! But Behen Mayawati will face stiff competition from Mamata Didi who is convinced that not just the people of Bengal, the people of all-India need her calming hand!

Trouble for Rahul is that not just the BJP and Modi (and Goswami), there are lots of people in the country who think he's not qualified for the job, is "immature", lacking the mojo to steer a country like India to heights unprecedented! The dynast-tag that 10, Janpath bestows on Gandhi is also a cross to bear.

But for some to say that Rahul is "half-Italian" (as one female RSS voice went on and on) is so much hoo-ha. Born to a true-blue Indian father, Rahul is every bit Indian as Modi is. He speaks Hindi and English, doesn't break into local lingo on the election campaign, has a dimple on his cheek and carries a stubble well. Besides, unlike an Italian, he is janeoudhari and goes to the gym. Yoga is for the old and the pot-bellied!

Point is, if Rahul Gandhi wants to become PM, who are we the people to stop him? Unless we really want him stopped! Rahul's innermost desire is out in the open now, and 'Hey Jude, if he wants to take the song and make it better', what's the complaint all about? (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Sorry plight of NEIGRIHMS

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily we want to bring to the notice of the people of the North East and the citizens of Shillong of the very poor administrative capabilities in NEIGRIHMS leading to its all-round deterioration and drop in the quality of medical care to patients. Why is it that patients of the North-East still rush to AIIMS, New Delhi or CMC Vellore or other private hospitals like FORTIS, APOLLO, MEDANTA etc., when NEIGRIHMS exists in Shillong? Why is it that the MCI has been forced on various occasions to derecognize courses run by NEIGRIHMS? Why is it that machines costing crores that have been procured are still in packed condition and rotting in the stores of NEIGRIHMS? Why is it that fingers are being pointed out by vendors who tender for contracts/purchases that the same are fixed by the Procurement Officer of NEIGRIHMS despite the 'e-tendering' software being in place? Why is it that the Earnest Money of tenderers who do not qualify for a bid not returned to them? Why are there irregularities in civil contracts in terms of measurements, quality of work and use of inputs like steel! cement / aggregates?

Why is it that NEIGRIHMS treats politicians /government and judicial officials as VVIP patients and leave poor patients to wait and suffer?

The answers to all the above are because the Governing Council and Executive Committee which have representatives from the North East are either not bothered or are presented with doctored information & statistics by the NEIGRIHMS administration at the various meetings held. Presumably the members of the Council and Committee are persons who seek re-employment and have the least idea about medical care, planning, development, financing and the administration of such institutes. Perhaps they just DO NOT CARE for NEIGRIHMS and the sick of the North East.

If the various departments of NEIGRIHMS were fully staffed with full-time and not CONTRACTUAL doctors, Senior Residents and Junior Residents, this sorry state of affairs would not have set in but perhaps the administration including the Director of the Institute thinks it best to run the Institute on ad-hocism and dispense favours to a not very qualified human resource.

The following is the most recent glaring example case of the total lack of

administrative capabilities on the part of the Director and his team at NEIGRIHMS. About 20 or more Group A Faculty Posts for various Departments were advertised last year with last date of filing applications being May 2017. Till date the interviews for these advertised Posts have not been held. Numerous doctors with DM, MCH, MD, MS degrees and with impeccable work experience and credentials who had applied for the posts made enquiries in July and August 2017 and the Institute's Administration stated that the file for the same was being processed and the matter was with the Union Health Ministry. As nothing happened, further enquiries were made in September 2017 and the reply given to them was that the Interview dates were being announced shortly.

Since nothing again happened for over four months, in October 2017 enquiries were once again made and the administration of NEIGRIHMS informed that as Ms S. Swaminathan, Chairperson of the Interview Board for Gr. A Faculty Posts and the DG, ICMR had been selected as Dy. Director of the WHO, an alternative Chairperson was sought for and the Union Health Ministry had been briefed on the issue. From October 2017 till February 2018 nothing happened.

Enquiries from the NEIGRIHMS administration revealed that the matter is still being examined by the Union Ministry. On enquiring from the Ministry at New Delhi we learnt that the Director, NEIGRIHMS had not taken up the matter with the Union Health Secretary.

If the posts have been sanctioned, funds exist, the constitution of the Interview Boards finalized, why is it then necessary to seek clearance from the Union Health Ministry for convening the interviews? This is baffling and defeats the philosophy and ethics of delegation of both administrative and financial powers. The Governing Council and Executive Committee may like to immediately review the status of this matter.

As the Head of the Institute, it is the bounden and sole duty of the Director, NEIGRIHMS to ensure that the vacant Faculty Positions are filled up at the earliest. If need be he should have taken up this matter with the Union Health Secretary but this was not done. If the Ministry did not react, the Director should have taken up the matter directly with Union Health Minister, JP Nadra but this was not done.

Now on enquiry from NEIGRIHMS the applicants have been told that as elections were declared in

Meghalaya and as the Model Code of Conduct has come, into effect, the Interviews cannot be held and the same will be held only after the election results are announced. May we point out that this stand taken by NEIGRIHMS is totally wrong. The Institute should through the Union Health Ministry moved the Election Commission of India (ECI) and seek exemption to conduct the Interviews for the Gr. A Faculty Posts. This is a routine matter and in such cases the ECI gives instant approval. We understand that even if the ECI were to now give exemption for the conduct and appointment of the Gr A Faculty posts, the Chairperson for the Interview Board has not been named till date and thus the interviews cannot be held. This clearly shows how inefficient the Director and his team at NEIGRIHMS are. They do not have the administrative skills and capabilities nor are they aware of Rules & Regulations. They also do not have the quality and acumen to manage NEIGRIHMS.

For how long will the people of the North East tolerate the inefficiencies of this Institute? It is the duty of the Director to ensure that NEIGRIHMS runs like clockwork, effectively and efficiently. The recent Budget speech of the Finance Min-

ister shows that there are 15.2 doctors for every 1,00,000 population in the North East the ratio is 9.5 doctors for every 1,00,000 population. This ratio is made worse when Institutes like NEIGRIHMS cannot fill up Faculty positions for more than 10 months.

The writing on the wall is clear. The call to the Director of NEIGRIHMS is also clear. Either you and your team perform or move out. Do not let NEIGRIHMS go to seed because of your callous attitudes. Do not let the poor and less unfortunate patients be forced to suffer indefinitely. The Governing Council and EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of NEIGRIHMS had better wake up to these realities and not function in a state of limbo. Urgent affirmative action is required and sought for.

Yours etc.,
Applicants for various FACULTY GR A Posts in NEIGRIHMS.
Names withheld on request

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.

"Our dreams are a second life. I have never been able to penetrate without a shudder those ivory or horned gates which separate us from the invisible world."

--- Amos Bronson Alcott

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.268

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016

THE BJP came to power on the premise of giving citizenship to Hindus who are persecuted in other countries, but more so in Bangladesh, from where people have constantly flowed in to the North Eastern states of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur to an extent. The above three states share a porous border with Bangladesh. India is not a Hindu nation and it is surprising that a plea be made to accommodate Hindus persecuted elsewhere, in this country. India already has a burgeoning population whose basic needs are yet to be met. More inflow of migrants from other neighbouring countries will only exacerbate matters and disrupt the human development indices. Land is a scarce resource in the North Eastern states. In Assam there is already a resentment brewing against Bangladeshi Muslims who have allegedly infiltrated into the state from across the border incessantly for decades. These Bengali speaking Muslims have allegedly managed to procure papers to prove their citizenship. In a country where corruption ensures that Aadhar cards and even voter ID cards are made at will if one has the wherewithal and if politicians assist in this nefarious game, ensuring that infiltrators are detected becomes a huge challenge.

It is good that the Government of Meghalaya has rejected outright the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. There can be no two ways about it. The BJP has an agenda to consolidate Hindu voters and is undertaking this present enterprise mainly to build its vote bank and to ensure that it returns to power in 2019. It is observed that politicians across states nurture people of dubious citizenship merely to ensure their own victory. Many constituencies in Meghalaya too have this dubious distinction. We only need to study the electoral rolls to know those constituencies and who the benefactors of these dubious voters are. Such MLAs have been voted in repeatedly. This is a dangerous trend and if not checked it may lead to another bout of ethnic cleansing.

LOOKING BACK

May 20, 1989

3 accused remanded in Indira Gandhi assassination case

Additional Metropolitan Magistrate Mr J M Mallick today remanded to judicial custody till June 3, the three people arrested in connection with the second chargesheet filed in the Indira Gandhi assassination case. Atinderpal Singh, Dallip Singh and Jagmohan Singh were produced before Mr Mallick in Tihar Central Jail here.

Mr Mallick also issued warrants for the production of the fourth accused in the case S.S. Mann on June 3. Atinderpal Singh complained to the magistrate that he was being tortured in the jail where upon Mr Mallick directed the Tihar Jail Superintendent to get him medically examined.

MDA Govt not in the 'business as usual mode'

By Patricia Mukhim

It is interesting to listen to a Chief Minister who knows his onions as far as governance and politics is concerned and who is also acutely aware of how the two intersect. At a recent function inaugurating a first ever World Bank project called the Community-Led Landscape Management Project in Meghalaya (CLLMP) when Conrad Sangma was asked to light the inaugural lamp with three wicks, he invited the World Bank Representative, Piyush Dogra, Meghalaya Chief Secretary, Y Tshering and lit one himself, leaving out his ministerial colleagues. The reason for doing so was symbolic Conrad said. The Project would require the active partnership of the three key players- the political leadership, the bureaucracy and The World Bank. Conrad is widely travelled and knows a thing or two about every aspect of governance. Even about the Basin Development Project, Conrad mentioned that he had visited the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia as part of a parliamentary team and seen how the rivers draining into the basin were drying up and what was done to regenerate them by the use of technology.

The Chief Minister said technology is integral to governance and if western countries can use technology why not us? With Artificial Intelligence (AI) real time monitoring is possible and also strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation need to be demonstrated. Indeed, at no time have we witnessed Climate Change as we are today with freak storms and hailstones that are the size of tennis balls causing mass destruction of crops and homes.

Conrad is perhaps the first chief minister who wants change and wants it now. He is a man in a hurry and he has to be because of the humungous developmental backlog. Unlike his predecessor, Dr Mukul Sangma, however, Conrad is determined to take all his colleagues in the Government along in this new journey that he has undertaken in the last two months. It is intuitive that Piyush Dogra should end his speech with this quote from an African proverb, "If you want to run fast, run alone. If you want to run far, run together." Dr Mukul Sangma ran fast and ran alone most of the time. This was what alienated his

cabinet colleagues. Conrad Sangma cannot afford to do that although on most occasions he will be tempted to sprint instead of walk since there's so much to do and so little time... In fact, while speaking at the same meeting the brand new CM said, "Officials are there not for a 9-5 job. We are here to bring change; let's not lose time; time is precious. Let us set targets and goals and have clear timelines. Above all, monitoring of projects is important." Well said! This has been Meghalaya's biggest setback.

All our projects/programmes have a tendency to not take off or to drag endlessly. And no one is penalized for such delays because for previous governments, outcomes were not an important part of the Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) of officials. Non-performers and laggards got the same credits as those who showed results. Clearly, Conrad Sangma needs to change the rules of the game. Just because he is young and the officers he works with are senior in age does not mean that he should tolerate incompetence. In fact a huge reshuffle of the bureaucracy is overdue. Meghalaya is where it is today because the same set of people have been manning the same posts in the most unimaginative manner. Some of them have stopped innovating because they have reached the 'Peter's Principle' (risen to their level of incompetence) and cannot improve further.

The World Bank is known to keep its project partners on their toes. They will monitor the Project meticulously. Hence the CLLMP will need all the resources at the command of the C&RD Department. The Project requires institutional competence within the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA). I am not so sure that, that core competence is available. The problem with MBDA is that it is seen as a Government-led project. Hence the entire ambience is "Government" in nature. Projects require a different approach and working environment and different timelines. There is no hierarchy! Those working with people have

to be on the field everyday and not just on some days. They must know the language of communication which is familiar to the community. Many Government officials are so used to talking down at people and blaming them for non-cooperation when they have not been able to demonstrate what the outcome of their participation in a project is. People will cooperate when they see benefits accruing. If it's all blah... blah... blah... they switch off. There are, as it is, too many Government projects and competing loyalties. One more only adds to the woes of the community often derisively referred to as "beneficiaries." Sorry, until people become stakeholders and own the World Bank Project we are unlikely to see outcomes. Period. And I am aghast that communities participating in government programmes should still be called 'beneficiaries.'

Conrad Sangma has got the nuts and bolts right. He spoke of work plans for each department and said each minister will visit the districts, meets the public, meet officials and other stakeholders, not for finding fault but to enable a course correction in case programmes and policies are not implemented in the right spirit and there are handicaps to their fruition. The concept of 'working together' is a new one in Meghalaya and in government. Officers love to work in silos and to lord it over their departments. Hence collaboration is not part of government dictionary. The MBDA project sought in vain to bring this convergence but was caught between a hard place and a rock. One wonders if the MDA Government can shake up this system because convergence suits the people who are the key players in governance. Let people be reminded that governance without 'people' is simply a government. People's participation is the sine qua non of governance.

Sometimes jargons and hi-falutin words borrowed from the development sector are sought to be implanted with flourish by those in government. Most people are not impressed. It is what we see in the field and the transformation of communities from recipients of government doles to

active implementers who know book-keeping and are empowered enough to speak their minds, share their indigenous knowledge and tell the Government what it needs to know, which proves that a project is actually working. This is a giant step! It is easy to use words like 'Community-led etc., etc., but are communities really allowed to lead? Those in Government believe they have a patent on all wisdom. That unfortunately is not the case. Let me ask the Horticulture Department one question. The Khasi Mandarin (orange) has been afflicted by disease and pests for several years now but growers are at pains to find a cure. The Department is promoting chemical pesticides but growers in Nongwar and other villages in East Khasi Hills refuse to use chemicals because they are aware that that bee population is on the decline due to several reasons but one of which is the use of chemical pesticides. Moreover, the people of Nongwar are also promoting a sacred grove nearby which they want to keep as natural as possible! So yes this is a challenge that the State Horticulture experts must be able to research and arrive at an answer soon.

Growers are running out of patience because the previous government had been talking loudly about going organic while officials make deals with fertilizer and pesticide suppliers. Khasi mandarin is sold in Big Bazar, Delhi @ Rs 950 per kilogram.

One gathers from the pithy statements of the CM that he will not tolerate a "business as usual" attitude which is the enemy of governance. And since knowledge resides also in communities it is important for the MDA Government to constitute a think-tank where this "Community" can have its say. Let us remind ourselves that Government is only the facilitator. If Community owns a project/programme/scheme they will learn to be accountable and transparent in their dealings and produce results. This of course means an end to the rent-seeking regime.

Government is only the facilitator. If Community owns a project/programme/scheme they will learn to be accountable and transparent in their dealings and produce results. This of course means an end to the rent-seeking regime.

Divisive politics in Assam creates new rifts Selective citizenship remains contentious

By Barun Das Gupta

BJP's divisive politics in Assam is ripping open old wounds and creating new fissures - between Hindus and Muslims, between Assamese and Bengalis, between the Brahmaputra and the Barak Valleys.

It all started during the Lok Sabha election campaign of 2014. The BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi promised to deport all illegal immigrants from Bangladesh living in Assam if the BJP came to power. The BJP did come to power - at the Centre in 2014 and in Assam two years later, in 2016.

But then the BJP did a volte face. It decided to grant citizenship to all non-Muslims who had come to Assam from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971 (the cut-off date, as per the Assam Accord of 1985). It was only the Muslims immigrants from Bangladesh post 1971 who would not be granted citizenship but be deported to Bangladesh. (Whether it is at all physically possible or not is a different matter. Bangladesh has declared many times that no Bangladeshi is living in Assam or anywhere in India illegally and that the country will not accept anyone sought to be deported as 'Bangladeshi').

On coming to power, the Modi Government introduced the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which seeks to grant citizenship to "illegal immigrants" who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The AASU is now up in arms against the Assam Government and Bhattacharya has now turned a critic of his erstwhile friend - the present Chief Minister.

The inclusion of Afghanistan and Pakistan are just an eyewash. The real intent is to make non-Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, post-1971, Indian citizens. The requirement is that the person should have been a resident of India for the last 12 months and for six of the previous 14 years.

Immediately there was strong opposition from the Brahmaputra Valley, which is predominantly Assamese-speaking. The opponents pointed out that Para 5.3 of the Assam Accord of August 15, 1985, signed between the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), one the one hand, and Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, on the other, states:

"5.3. Foreigners who came to Assam after 1.1.1966 (inclusive) and up to 24th March, 1971, shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964." (As is obvious from the text, the Accord makes no distinction between illegal immigrants on the basis of their religion.)

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 will, in effect, make the Assam Accord just a scrap of discarded paper as far as the most relevant part of it, namely, the detection and deportation of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, is concerned.

After decades of hostility and ill-feeling, the relationship between the Assamese and Bengalis started improving and a relationship of amity and cordiality between the two major linguistic groups started to grow. The ill-conceived Citizenship (Amendment) Bill threatens to undo all that. The

Assamese-speaking people see in the BJP's move an attempt at reducing them into a minority in their own land, by making lakhs of Bengali Hindus from Bangladesh Indian citizens.

For the same reason, the Amendment Bill has received widespread support, cutting across party lines, from the Bengali-speaking Barak Valley. The Bengali Hindus are happy at the prospect of their tribe increasing in population percentage vis-à-vis the Muslims. According to the 2011 Census, Hindus constitute 50.1 per cent of the population of Barak Valley, Muslims 48.1 per cent and the rest other religions.

In the prevailing situation, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has been caught in a bind. The AGP is the successor party of the original All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) which, along with the AASU, spearheaded the anti-Bangladeshi agitation of 1979-85, which ended with the signing of the Assam Accord.

In the 2016 Assam Assembly polls the BJP won 61 seats in a House of 126. As it fell short of an absolute majority, it had to form an alliance with the AGP, which won 14 seats. Now there is a strident demand in the Brahmaputra Valley that the AGP quit the alliance against this 'betrayal' of the Assamese people by the BJP. The AGP's quitting the alliance will reduce the BJP into a minority and its government will fall. On the other hand, the AGP ministers in Assam are in no mood to give up power. If

the AGP comes out of the coalition government, there is the possibility of a revolt in the party, with one section joining the BJP.

Faced with this dilemma, the AGP has taken a strange position. It says it will quit the alliance only if the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is passed. The party is now facing criticism and ridicule. Its critics point out that once the Amendment Bill is passed it will make no difference whether the AGP remains with the BJP or parts company with it.

The present Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal, is a former leader of the AASU. Samujjwal Bhattacharya, once Sonowal's close friend and co-fighter, is now the adviser of the AASU. The AASU is now up in arms against the Assam Government and Bhattacharya has now turned a critic of his erstwhile friend - the present Chief Minister.

The present situation in Assam is very fluid and volatile. New fissures have appeared. Old animosities have been revived. The two major valleys - Brahmaputra and Barak - are divided on the question of granting citizenship to Bengali Hindus from Bangladesh. Even some Bengali Congress leaders of the Brahmaputra Valley, like former minister Ardhendu Day, have gone against the party stand on this question.

Meanwhile, the police arrested six BJP supporters on May 7 at Belsor in Nalbari district, for pasting posters, written in Arabic, asking people to "join ISIS". There are both Hindus and Muslims among those arrested. At whose behest they were working is not known but their role was that of agents provocateurs. The situation in Assam is volatile, indeed. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Baseless allegations

Editor,
Apropos the letter by one N D Sangma in your esteemed newspaper (ST May 9, 2018) captioned, "Wanted better examination centres." I wonder why N D Sangma a Class 12 student realized the handicaps in writing her exams just two weeks before the upcoming results of HSSLC. Why did the student not make this allegation immediately after completing the exams? Is this merely an excuse in case she fails to make the grade? I am a proud parent who had sent my ward to this renowned school from Nursery to Class 12 and she too appeared the same Class 12 exams. In all these years, I have never come across any misbehavior from the principals, teachers, students or any staff of the school. Since the principal and the school have performed well they earned the tag of, "Best school in Shillong." That explains the delay on the first day of the exams as they held an Assembly and the Principal took the opportunity to

advise her own students and others for their betterment. The school is well known for its discipline and students are expected to follow them, including us parents.

I am disappointed that ND Sangma who was in the school appearing in the exams for a mere 10 days' to level baseless allegations on the Principal and the school. Students are supposed to concentrate on their studies and not to make wild allegations.

Yours etc,
C Khyriem,
Via email

Cooperation of students

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily I wish to draw the attention of fellow students that our cooperation with matters pertaining to the exams conducted by the MBOSE is paramount. The board has assigned almost all students to write their board exams in different institutions and it is upon

the respective schools to carry out these examinations. We must understand that all secondary and higher secondary schools have their own administration and their own way of running things. We as students, have the responsibility to cooperate with the school. As per the letter written by ND Sangma, "Wanted better examination centres" (ST May 9, 2018). She makes a valid point that schools do not have the right to use the time provided by the Board to write our exams, for other purposes. I concur with what she had said but we must take into account that schools have rules and regulations which we must all respect and follow.

I can vouch that the principal has already made it known to the students the required dress code prior to the examinations and if a student were not to follow the rules, the school has the right to act accordingly. It may be difficult for students from different schools to cope with the guidelines of another school but effort must be made on both sides

to make the transition smooth. It is my plea that students and schools endeavour to understand the norms of the Board so that future students can write their exams without any hassle.

Yours etc.,
Insa R Phanwar,
Via email

Rise of the drug mafia

Editor,
Apropos the letter, "Overcoming the drug menace" (ST May 9, 2018) by T Synrem, I wish to echo similar concerns at the Home Minister's expression of helplessness in tackling the increasing problem of drug abuse in the State. In the news report a few days ago, the East Khasi Hills, SP Davis Marak reported that in the last six months they have managed to arrest three big drug mafia and they are further conducting raids hoping to catch the main persons involved in drug smuggling.

It is worrying that the drug mafia is targeting the

Yours etc.,
Anil Singh Roka,
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.

“Not Chaos, not the darkest pit of lowest Erebus, nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out by help of dreams - can breed such fear and awe as fall upon us often when we look into our Minds, into the Mind of Man.”

--- Søren Kierkegaard

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.269

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MAY 12, 2018

Karnataka Polls

ELECTION to the state of Karnataka scheduled for today May 12 is unprecedented in terms of the noise it has generated. The two main parties in the fray the Congress and BJP are fighting a do or die political battle. Personal attacks and verbal jibes seem par for the course. Political retorts have reached their nadir. Never before have state elections been fought as if they were of national importance. First it was Gujarat and now Karnataka. In Gujarat the BJP tried to retain power; in Karnataka it is trying to wrest power from its arch rival the Congress. For both the Congress and BJP, Karnataka appears to be the yardstick for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections!

The current Chief Minister of Karnataka, Siddaramaiah is trying his utmost to hold on to this chair, while the BJP has projected BS Yeddyurappa as its CM candidate. Unsure of a victory, Siddaramaiah is contesting from two seats. As incumbent CM he faces the anti-incumbency factor. Hence the Congress Party is trying to rake up religious issues to pacify the Lingayats and cut into the BJP's vote banks. Not to be left behind the BJP too is wooing votes on the basis of religion. Interestingly Congress President Rahul Gandhi has been taking pot-shots at Prime Minister Narendra Modi by stating upfront that he would become the prime minister in 2019. These claims and counter-claims about who deserves to be in the hot seat in Delhi in 2019 have only heightened the atmospherics in Karnataka even while real issues are left unaddressed. Karnataka is not exactly in a happy situation as far as law and order is concerned. Bad roads dot the Bengaluru landscape and have taken the sheen off the Silicon Valley of India. Meanwhile the BJP is leaving no stone unturned and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed a total of 15 rallies over a period of five days in the state. It could be anybody's game and poll pundits are finding it tough to predict who will take the trophy this time.

LOOKING BACK

May 20, 1989

Women and local bodies

Meghalaya has been kept out of the purview of the recent Constitution Amendment relating to panchayati raj system in the country. This has been so done not because the Centre does not want Meghalaya to have autonomy and power at the local bodies but because Meghalaya by long tradition has its own local self administration through the Syiems, the Dollois and the Nokmas. In fact, the Centre is keen to strengthen the local bodies for making them more meaningful. Although there is no clear enunciation of the extent of financial power and administrative authority that would be devolved on these local bodies, it is expected that the local bodies would be granted an annual grant-in-aid for carrying out small development jurisdiction. The Centre will allocate 80 per cent of the financial requirements of these bodies leaving the remaining 20 per cent for the State Govt to cover.

One of the notable facets of the exercise is that the Centre wants to involve the women folk with the running of the local bodies. For the rest of the country, it will be mandatory for every panchayati raj institution to reserve 30 per cent of the elected seats for women. Notwithstanding the intrinsic values of such an idea, critics of the government have described it as a populist step for wooing the womenfolk in

this election year. In a country where women constitute nearly half of the population, it is unfortunate that the management of public affairs have all along been a male dominated affair. Our women folk are no way inferior to the men folk. And to reserve seats for women is a belated acknowledgement of this fact.

In Khasi Hills, women who enjoy a unique status in their own right, ironically do not find a place in the traditional durbars or public bodies. By sheer weight of tradition the women may go unrepresented in the local bodies, unless of course there is a change in the outlook. Meghalaya Chief Minister has recently suggested that there should be a wholesome debate in Khasi Hills as to whether or not the women should be associated with the local bodies. For a society which is witnessing unmistakable metamorphosis in the recent years, it should not be a big deal to grant this bit of "liberty" to the womenfolk for taking active part in our public affairs. After all, aren't women from the same society being elected to the Assembly and the District Council for taking up for more responsible assignments?

Trump's actions are pushing for a Mideast war Iranian leader warns against US-Saudi-Israel axis

By John Wojcik

While President Donald Trump has pulled out of Iran nuclear deal, a leader of the secular left in Iran says Trump is stepping up plans for an attack on that country which could trigger a devastating regional war with horrific implications for world peace.

In an exclusive interview with People's World, Navid Shomali, international secretary of Iran's Tudeh Party, charged that John Bolton, Trump's national security advisor, is assessing military options for an attack on Iran. The administration has already laid groundwork for a potential attack with false claims that Iran has violated terms of the nuclear arms reduction deal it struck with the U.S. and European countries. Israel has also said it has "proof" that Iran is violating the terms of the 2015 nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Bolton, Shomali noted, "was one of the chief architects of the invasion of Iraq during the presidency of George W. Bush." During the past 20 years, he said, "Bolton has continually advocated military action against Iran with the aim of regime change."

In his many appearances on national television, Bolton has called for an attack on Iran—up to and including a full-scale invasion—and for the installation of a new government there. More than once he has said that after toppling the Iranian government, the U.S. should invite surviving members of the American families held hostage in Iran during the Carter administration to the country so they could be part of a triumphal victory "celebration" at the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

Shomali had no kind words for new U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has been showered with accolades in the media. Even reporters on the liberal MSNBC network have been thanking Pompeo for, unlike Rex Tillerson, inviting them onto his plane as he travels around the world and for restoring what they call "protocol" to the State Department.

"Mike Pompeo also belongs to the reactionary, right-wing tea party faction

and subscribes to the notion that military confrontation can be the preferred option in the advancing of U.S. interests," Shomali said.

He charged that Pompeo's trip to the Middle East, almost immediately after he was selected to head up the State Department, had the purpose of firming up an alliance involving Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Trump administration. That alliance has as its purpose, Shomali said, the scuttling of the nuclear arms reduction deal with Iran.

Shomali warned in the interview that the threat to peace involves more than just an attack on Iran. "It is no accident," he said, "that the provocative missile attack on Syria happened right after Pompeo's talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu." The Tudeh Party leader warned that the Trump administration poses a graver threat to peace than any prior U.S. administration, "even more than during the darkest days of the Bush administration."

When it comes to the fight for peace and the struggle for democracy and justice in his own country, Shomali said that the Iranian government too is pursuing dangerous policies with its interventions in other countries and that it is taking an economic path at home that not only thwarts human rights but hurts the wellbeing of the Iranian working class and its allies. He says that an attack on Iran by the West, however, would give the government an excuse to levy even more repression against its own people.

According to Shomali, the fact that Pompeo traveled to the Middle East on his first international assignment following his confirmation shows the clout and significance that Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel enjoy as the U.S. partners in the region. The new secretary of state is hostile to Iran and his views on the Middle East are very similar to those of Trump. Following

Netanyahu's claims regarding Israel's access to several documents indicating Iran's violation of its international obligations with regards to nuclear activities, Pompeo stated: "I think the files make very clear that, at the very least, the Iranian regime has continued to lie to their own people." Regarding the reaction of the U.S. administration to Israel's claims, Pompeo said that the administration would "leave that to lawyers" and added that, "Ultimately it would be the president who has to verify this and make a decision about the matter."

It seems that Pompeo's movements and the comments he made were at least somewhat coordinated with the missile attack on targets in Hama and Aleppo, Syria on the evening of April 29 and the subsequent theatrical press conference at which the Israeli prime minister claimed to have new information about Iran's violation of its obligations under the terms of JCPOA. In Saudi Arabia, Pompeo claimed that the U.S. and their reactionary Arab kingdom allies in the Persian Gulf "have got a common challenge in Iran" and that "Iran destabilises this entire region," the Iranian leader said.

The issue is that the new secretary of state, rather than being an expert and careful evaluator of all aspects of the situation in the Middle East so as to be able to give advice to the president about the best course of action, is parroting the same line as the president—thus proving that he has not been appointed to ensure an effective and helpful foreign policy that is tailored to and cognitive of, the volatile international situation.

The fact that only hours after Pompeo left Israel the provocative missile attacks on Syria took place speaks volumes. The U.S. administration is now completely controlled by warmongers and advocates of "regime change." By the standards of so many other countries and observers, it bears resemblance to a war cabinet—a hawkish administration at the very

least.

As Shomali sees it, Germany, France, Britain, and much of the EU are against any tearing up of the JCPOA and will certainly oppose the Trump-Israel-Saudi axis in imposing more sanctions, as they are aware that Iran has fully complied with the terms of the deal. Besides this, these main economic players within Europe are keen to exploit lucrative Iranian markets and hence won't be inclined to blindly follow the whims of Donald Trump. However, these countries are tied to U.S. policy in certain respects through NATO. In order to keep Germany, France, and Britain onside, the Islamic Republic of Iran has two options available.

The Islamic Republic's "open-door" economic policy has so far been very attractive to the EU—therefore, the regime will try its utmost to further placate the EU countries with even more economic inducements to major businesses and corporations from the EU. This is aligned with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's neoliberal economic plan to grow Iran's economy on the basis of further exploitation of Iran's cheap and non-unionized labor and its natural resources by means of incentivizing EU capital investment with lucrative profit margins.

The government may also opt to eliminate its offensive military capabilities in the region by quickly and fully withdrawing the Revolutionary Guards Corps units it has in neighboring countries and all of its military hardware from across the region.

This costly policy of deploying Iranian fighters in other countries has always been against the national interests of Iran and against the interests of the Iranian people. The policy has now become a major factor increasing the possibility of a direct military conflict with Israel, especially in relation to Syria and Lebanon. (IPA Service)

(The writer is editor in chief at Peoplesworld.org.)

Listen to the grievance of students!

Editor,
Apropos the letter "Wanted better examination centres" (ST, dated 9th May, 2018) by ND Sangma, a class-12 student, I must confess that I was appalled after going through her sorry plight. I also felt the necessity to congratulate the girl for the bold initiative she has taken to make public the alleged unruly conduct of a responsible public figure. If even 50 percent of what has been alleged is true then it is really a serious matter and must be investigated by the Education Department. Unprovoked misconduct must be condemned by all right-minded people so that the evil perpetrators get no room to hide. I have come across many such people in my life who, unable to be in terms with their own lives, start targeting innocent and vulnerable people to vent their personal anger and that way achieve some sort of satisfaction. Interestingly, I have also noticed that these sort of people are very careful not to confront the powerful! Last but not least, I assert that the girl must not be left unheard.

Yours etc.,
Sonie Kharduit
Shillong-3

Yours etc.,
Partha Sarathi Gupta,
Via email

Rate Rise To Boost Savings Oil, \$ Surge = Wage, farm crisis

By Shivaji Sarkar

The world economy is in turmoil as crude touches a high (since 2014) in the wake of US rejection of the Iran nuclear deal. The Rupee is on a roll to touch one of the lowest marks against a surging dollar, a phenomenon that occurs for the eleventh time since 1983.

Undeniably, inflation is set to rise in India. The good news? As interest rate rises it would cause cheer to depositors and the banking sector. This will boost savings which has touched a low of 29% growth in 2016 from a peak of 38.3% in 2007, just before the Lehman Brothers crisis ruined the banking sector. Malaysia and Pakistan have already started gradual increases in interest rates.

Remember, the rupee had touched Rs 58.96 against the dollar in May 2014 soon after the NDA Government took over and now it has gone to a low of Rs 67.43 and is projected to fall further. This poses a politico-economic problem as twin rises – oil and dollar – disturbs businesses and Government and leads to an inflationary situation, trouble for international commerce, trade balance, budgetary projections and possible inequalities.

Pertinently, all this is happening at a time when the UN's Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific 2018 (ESCAP), launched in Delhi and International Monetary Fund's (IMF) latest economic outlook.

The government may also opt to eliminate its offensive military capabilities in the region by quickly and fully withdrawing the Revolutionary Guards Corps units it has in neighboring countries and all of its military hardware from across the region.

Certainly, this not only makes crude more expensive for an Indian but also hits home budgets and might lead to a farm crisis as input costs, particularly irrigation, fertiliser and transport are bound to rise. Consequently, there might be problems for growth, job creation and development funding. Wage rise and many readjustments are a must.

Significantly, the IMF has just projected India growth at 7.4% up from 6.7% in 2018 though advanced economies including the US would have almost 0.2% rise in 2018 at 2.9% and in 2019 at 2.7%. The Euro zone will grow 2.4% this year before falling to 2% in 2019.

The ESCAP projection is 0.4% growth for Asia-Pacific, having 53 States with 60% of the world population, at 5.8% in 2017 against 5.4% in 2016. India and China lead the growth and the Russian Federation which having come out of recession on oil price recovery might add to the cushion.

However, this year growth in Asia-Pacific is set to fall to 5.5% as in half the countries consumption of the bottom 40% grows at a slower pace. As real wages are not rising by rising productivity, consumption would be led with debt and cause financial vulnerabilities.

Social inequalities are also set to rise with higher inflation as economies would be operating below their potential, hit by low wage and job growth. Though e-commerce might meet demand at lower costs, automation may further lower wages. The working classes in the region are in for big trouble. Whereby, it might be an uphill task to contain social discontent.

Further, trade barriers and harsh US measures are likely to further disrupt cross-border production networks. This may affect not only trade but also long-term investments. Even short-term investments like withdrawals by foreign portfolio investors from the

Indian market might cause foreign exchange problems to be further fueled by rising import bills for crude and other goods. Obversely, exports rises would be moderate and are unlikely to offset the foreign exchange.

Significantly, a repeat of the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis is forecast. It might have an adverse impact on India's Look East Policy as countries like Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea and China face financial vulnerability in the wake of rising private debt resulting in asset price corrections, says ESCAP. It might also impact projected Indian investments in building roads in Myanmar and South-East Asia.

According to ESCAP India was hedged as commercial lending rates were not lowered because of banking sector problems. Hence, rising deposit rates would not be much of a problem for Indian businesses and would help individual savers.

While ESCAP has stressed on further tax widening and increases, it has not stated how rising taxes add to citizen's woes as it is inflationary and increases Government expenditures. This leads to a concern of povertisation of the transitional, middle, class, says Jaimini Bhagwati, RBI professor, ICRIER and former Finance Ministry Joint Secretary. Adds ESCAP South and South-West Asia Head Rupa Chanda, the tax increase measurers also leads to problem of attitudes (tax-terror) of tax officers.

Notably, if the Government wants deposits, which had fallen because of lowering of interest rates and taxing individual banks deposits to rise, improve health of the banking sector it has to amend its policies and let the deposits not be subjected to TDS.

This will boost banks, economy and reduce the Government's burden on avoidable costs, processes, and litigation. Since the introduction of TDS on bank deposits, reviews and litigation have increased. If this is done away with individual and bank liquidity is set to rise and Government finances are bound to improve with higher consumption, tax realization and better ease of doing business. Similarly, many unnecessary recently introduced banking procedures also have to be simplified. For a few rogues, all bank clients should not be punished. Tax procedures and banking should create a friendly approach to the Government in the run up to the 2019 polls.

The ESCAP also suggests 'macro-prudential' measures to do away with financial (tax) excess. These, it says, reduce systemic risks and safeguard stability of financial (banking and revenue) system and markets. It sees problem in India's Rs 9.5 trillion NPAs caused by corporate leverage. Its oblique suggestion is not to hit the "micro" individuals --- citizens of institutions.

Another aspect that has to be taken care of is the surging deficits of various State Governments. The Centre's deficit, it finds, is controlled and overall debt is one of the lowest at 60% compared to Japan's of above 200%.

In sum, it finds strengths in the Indian economy but calls for fine-tuning to make the trajectory smoother and faster. The international situation --- oil prices and dollar --- would remain a problem but with some ease of methods and trust in citizens, India can remain the engine of world growth. --- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Height of religious atrocities

Editor,

It is disheartening to read about a sort of religious-ostracisation happening in Tongseng village, East Jaintia hills district. It's an example of an extreme form of religious fanaticism. The small group of believers wishing to profess and follow the Church of Pentecost were made to suffer the worst of human sufferings by another dominant church body, the Presbyterian Church. The village socially boycotted this group, their livelihoods were destroyed, they had no access to public transport owned or driven by those of the Presbyterian villagers. Even their right to government welfare schemes was restricted. All these blatant acts were committed just to punish them for going against the will of the dominant Presbyterian Church in that village. This is indeed the worst crime against humanity and defeats the basic tenets of any religious values.

At the time when people of the state are conscious and are showing great interest in pan India religious freedom, the religious atrocities happening in our own backyard is a cause for

concern. Many national newspapers had a more detailed report on this incident than our very own local newspapers, including the Shillong Times. The news was published in an obituary size layout to everyone's dismay. Whether this is due to lack of investigative journalism, or the inability to prioritise news which focus on such crimes, is worth questioning.

Religious crime is the most dominant underlying cause of many other crimes around the world and worse when it happens through political collusion. Unfortunately it's the least discussed topic. People are often happy to stay blinded by their own faiths even at the cost of the sufferings and death of others of the opposite faith. People within the same village, town, and families are often treated differently just because their faith differs from that of the majority, and the incident in Tongseng village is the exact example of these narrow religious sentiments, further propagated by the intimidation and non-insightful teaching of church leaders. I believe the ethos of any religious teaching revolves around the simplest virtues i.e., unconditional love, compassion, sympathy, selflessness etc. then why

do we have so much difficulty to co-exist and respect others' space? A mere guarantee for religious freedom in the Constitution is no guarantee that we will have a peaceful and harmonious existence unless individuals integrates these values in their hearts and practice them.

The gruesome crime in Tongseng village is no justification for upholding religious values. Religious spiritualism and humanistic spiritualism are two different concepts which people don't seem to have a clear understanding of. Even religious leaders don't care to stress on the humanistic value of a religious teaching. Theological philosophy is often focused more while neglecting the basic values of humanism. People are bombarded with fragmented religious philosophy resulting only in one-sided religious consciousness and hence people tend to defend their religious rights first only to forget the most basic human rights. This sort of crime needs to be condemned at a larger scale and the role of media is immense in this regard in invoking the consciousness of the people to reason, question the wrongdoings and above all demanding penal action on those who are responsible for the crime.

Is India ready for cyber war?

Digital India should invest in undersea sensors & creation of backup or 'dark cables'

By Basant Mishra

Cyber warfare involves an attempted or actual cyber attack but for some in the media it means defacing some websites of important organisations. This is not really the case. In fact, I would term such hackers as 'novice hackers' in some corner of the world, looking to earn some brownie points amongst their non-hacker peers by fear mongering.

Cyber warfare is something quite different. As a researcher, I would argue that cyber warfare involves actions by a state or non-state actor to attack and attempt to damage another nation's computers or information networks through, for example, computer viruses, denial-of-service attacks, physical attacks and sabotage.

However, the main concern of cyber warfare is through attacking the physical backbone of the internet — submarine cables. About 97 per cent of all international data is carried out on such cables, according to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Often, academicians and strategists fail to acknowledge that cutting or sabotaging a Fibre Optic submerged cable carrying internet traffic, with the intent to disrupt traffic and cause losses, is an action of cyber warfare, where neither a DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attack nor a Zero Day vulnerability is exploited, but saboteurs become successful in bringing in an internet blackout in a region or state.

Such a situation needs to be considered very carefully during war time. In the event our neighbours declare a war, it would make strategic sense for them to disrupt our internet cables to get that psychological edge in the war, as it would create mass chaos to our internet-addicted citizens and our internet-dependent or enabled businesses today.

Already, other countries are preparing themselves for such an even-



► The main concern of cyber warfare is through attacking the physical backbone of the internet — submarine cables. About 97 per cent of all global data is carried out on such cables, according to the Asia-Pacific Eco-

nomie Cooperation forum

► India needs country-based DNS name resolution where the websites of banks and e-governance websites keep running in spite of total internet blackout

► The attack on submarine cables would be difficult to manage as satellites could not possibly fill their shoes. The internet would, of course, route around breaks but internet routing cannot create additional capacity where none exists

► A signal relayed by a geostationary satellite must travel about 72,000 km up to the satellite and back to earth, so there is a noticeable time delay. Between the US and Japan an IP-package sent via satellite has an average delay of 650 msec, whereas the delay on a fibre submarine cable is just 120 msec

tnity. The UK and the US military intelligence officials have repeatedly warned that relatively little is being done to guard the safety of cables, and the Russian navy continually conducts activities near them. One of the Russian ships, Yantar, owned and operated by Russia's Directorate of Deep Sea Research, is evoking fear and concerns in the minds of countries.

The attack on submarine cables would be difficult to manage as satellites could not possibly fill their shoes. The internet would, of course, route around breaks but internet routing cannot create additional capacity where none exists.

A signal relayed by a geostationary satellite must travel about 72,000

km up to the satellite and back to earth, so there is a noticeable time delay. Between the US and Japan an IP-package sent via satellite has an average delay of 650 msec, whereas the delay on a fibre submarine cable is just 120 msec. Even differences on this level impose a noticeable decrease in quality that would be visible for normal internet users browsing the web. For other businesses, it could mean chaos. Just imagine doing stock trading on satellite-based internet.

It isn't just the latest Russian incident. For years, countries have worried that a hostile foreign power or cyber terrorist might sabotage undersea cables. In 2013, three divers were arrested in Egypt attempting to

cut submarine web cables.

An entire country, Mauritania, was taken offline for two straight days due to an undersea internet cable cut. The 17,000-kilometre-long African Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable was severed on March 30, cutting off web access partially or totally to the residents of Sierra Leone and Mauritania.

In eastern Libya, the landing station for the Silphium submarine cable was blown up in 2013. Yemen has seen numerous acts of sabotage in recent years while Colombia suffered a major telecom sabotage incident back in January. In other cases, Bangladesh, Kenya and Nigeria have also had their own incidents of telecom sabotage. One of

the estimated 428 undersea cables worldwide is damaged every couple of days. Though so far, nearly all the faults are not intentional.

Cyber warfare between nations carries potentially devastating consequences.

At a time when more than 95 per cent of everything that moves on the global internet passes through just 200 undersea fibre-optic cables, countries like the US, Russia, China and Iran are focusing on these deep-sea information pipes as rich sources of intelligence, as well as targets in war.

The weapons earmarked for the struggle include submarines, underwater drones, robots, specialised ships and divers. This new battle-

field is also a gray legal zone. The current Law of the Sea conventions covers some aspects of undersea cables, but not hostile acts.

In India, the Defence Cyber Agency (DCA), a precursor of a cyber command for cyber warfare, should have both offensive and defensive capacity. The DCA or Cyber command should be given responsibility to protect all submarine cable landing stations. This will make them a military target and justify the 'use of force' that constitutes an internationally wrongful act, entailing the international responsibility of the state and also allowing the victim state to take counter-measures against the perpetrator.

A defence organisation would also be able to act faster than a civil body in restoration of services as it is often less burdened with protocols and bureaucratic red tape.

India needs robust physical protection on submarine cables landing stations. We need India-based DNS name resolution where the websites of banks and e-governance websites of 'Digital India' keep running in spite of total internet blackout. Then, BharatNET (Bharat Broadband Network Limited) or 'InNET' should be kept ready whenever 'Internet' fails. RBI, too, needs to work on its Banking Network, which would run and serve customers even if the mighty Internet fails.

Digital India also should invest in undersea sensors for cables and in creation of backup or 'dark cables' that would not be publicly identified. For this, India can identify Cable Protection Zones, where ships cannot fish or anchor, and can only sail through under supervision by the Coast Guard. It's time to act now.

(The author can be contacted over mishrabasanti24@yahoo.in)

The article is dedicated to late Himanshu Roy, the person who founded the Mumbai Cyber Cell

A special day for the most precious one

We can replace a wife but not a mother' says EM Foster. Thus the second Sunday of the month of May is kept aside as Mother's Day. The day was first celebrated in 1908 by Anna Jarvis in honour of her mother Ann Reeves Jarvis, a peace activist who cared for the wounded soldiers on both sides of the American civil war. Consequently, from that year till this present time the day is celebrated everywhere in the world.

We read in the Bible about the goodness of a mother particularly about the wisdom of Solomon's judgement on the two mothers who came to him fighting for justice over the dead and the living child. When King Solomon threatens to divide the living child into two pieces, the real mother of the child said, 'Please, my Lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!' (1st King 3: 16-27). This is a real mother who is full of love and compassionate towards her children. No good mother in the world would like to see her own children being harm or destroy by others. Such is a mother and we are experiencing that kind love and affection from our own mothers every day.

When Emperor Constantine I, won the Milvian Bridge battle against Maxentius in October 312, his mother Helena came forward and knelt down before her son, however the emperor Constantine took her up and said not the mother should kneel before her son but instead a son should kneel before his own mother. Thus even a great man like the Emperor knew the value of honouring and respecting his mother.

Sometimes it is very unlucky to hear in our villages and localities about son or daughter killing or beating his or her mother which is termed as matricide (if in case of killing) in the US legal system. The act of harming elders, particularly our parents, is condemnable not only to human being and legal system but also to God who clearly commanded us in the fourth commandment to honour and respect our father and mother (Exodus 20:12).

Many more great people in the world



have shown us the great example of honouring and respecting our own mother. Abraham Lincoln the 16th President of the United State once said, "I often remember my mother's prayer. It is still ringing in my ears. The blessing of that prayer has been following me for the whole of my life time."

Personally I feel that a mother is the best nurse in the world. In fact, breastfeeding of a mother is the best food for a child and the touch of a mother when we are sick or not well is better than any touch of the medical people in the hospitals and health centres. Certainly, the first person that the child could recognise in the world is its mother. When the child cries because of some uncomfortable situation the mother is the first one who can stop the child

from crying.

And so Princess Diana once said 'Mother's arms are more comfortable than anyone else'. In the same way, if a child is hungry and asking for food the mother immediately can feel that the child is crying because of hunger. As a result, is mother not a special person? Hence, as we keep the Mother's day let us remember that mothers are special people and let us honour and respect them always for they are the one who shape our lives to be better persons in the society through their good example and good advice rendered to us when we are wrong. Happy Mother's Day, May God bless our mothers.

(Contributed by Aiborlang Nongsiej, Mawkyrwat)

Water-guzzler industry

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi



The world is getting hotter. The gap between the need and availability of freshwater is widening every day.

Despite finding ourselves in such a situation, we continue to propagate practices that waste trillions of litres of water every day. One of these, which I have been focusing on, is the humungous wastage of water in the meat industry. I have given you the statistics of the water that goes into the production of beef and poultry. Now come to pork.

Pigs need vast amounts of water to drink and wallow in. The average water footprint of pig meat globally is 5,988 litres/kg, meaning that much water is used to produce 1 kg of pork on our plates. Despite this, pork production is being increased in India. As per statistics of the Indian Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fishing, the production of pork in India has increased by 21 per cent (81,250 tonnes) between 2015-16 and 2016-17.

More Indian producers have adopted the western industrial method of animal production. This is the format of more animals, faster growth and shorter meat-to-market time.

An increasing number of live pigs are being imported into India, as they are larger than local pigs and produce more meat. These pigs can weigh up to 300 kg and yield about 180 kg of pork per animal. If the average global water footprint of pork is 5,988 litres/kg, it takes about 10-11 lakh litres of water to raise a single such pig for its meat.

Pigs have a high feed conversion ratio, which is the amount of food needed by the animal in order to be ready for killing.

Water is also used in maintaining the farms and cages where pigs are kept in preparation for slaughter. As part of the slaughter process, pigs are usually stunned

electrically, then cut to bleed to death, after which they are scalded in large amounts of extremely hot water to remove their hair and skin. After scalding, the animals are immediately chilled to maintain the quality of their meat, which also involves large amounts of water. The removal of internal organs again requires water for cleaning purposes, as does the cutting stage. This combined 'service water' use is estimated to be about 85,000 litres per pig. More water is used in post-farm activities, which include the stages of pork processing, packaging, distribution and consumer use.

Pigs have a high feed conversion ratio, which is the amount of food needed by the animal to be ready for killing. Water is used in maintaining the farm too

What you are eating is not pork chops but vast amounts of water. While I cannot convince everybody to turn vegan, I think it's only fair for each of us to consider just how much meat we consume every day, and how much we could cut down on. Even one less pork chop, can save more than 900 litres of water.

Let us learn from Cape Town. Cape Town in South Africa is a rich city of 4.5 million people. It has run out of water. Severe restrictions have been put on every resident. From February 2018 not more than 50 litres, for bathing, eating, washing etc, is allowed per person. Water for flushing, showers, gardens, carwashes, are banned. On June 4th 2018, or Day Zero, all municipal water will stop and be rerouted to 149 emer-

gency pickup points, and people will have to queue for 25 litres every day. Water supply will only be maintained in hospitals.

Cape Town is a test case for what happens when climate change, extreme inequality, and political dysfunction collide. It is a forerunner for the cities of India.

Cape Town has highways, shopping malls, restaurants, slaughterhouses, high-rises. As the water diminished, no attempt was made to stop the large water guzzlers — the meat production industry, the bottled water/cola manufacturers. Cape Town's water comes from six dams. Rainfall patterns have changed due to global warming. Most of the dams are now in desertified areas. Theewaterskloof Dam, the biggest feeder, is currently at 12.5 percent of its capacity.

By February 2018 the agricultural sector has incurred \$1.17 billion) in losses due to water shortage. Tourism is in sharp decline. Businesses are relocating, so other jobs are disappearing. Families that can, are leaving the city. A breakdown in the sanitary system is leading to an outbreak of disease and civil unrest. The army has been put on alert.

Is this the first time that a large modern city has run out of water? In 2008 Barcelona came close. Sao Paulo, the large city in the Western hemisphere is almost there, three years ago supplies ran so low that the pipes sucked up mud and the flow of water to homes was cut to twice a week. The government of Indonesia is considering evacuation of parts of Jakarta, which has run out of potable water.

The Earth has run out of miracles where water is concerned. It is time for politicians and administrators to take stock of how much water we have and when will the Earth come to Ground Zero. I predict ten years. In India, Hyderabad will be the first.

(To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org)

“Hatred is corrosive of a person's wisdom and conscience; the mentality of enmity can poison a nation's spirit, instigate brutal life and death struggles, destroy a society's tolerance and humanity, and block a nation's progress to freedom and democracy.”

--- Liu Xiaobo

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.272 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 15, 2018

What's in store for Karnataka

IT has become customary for "national" media of different persuasions to carry out their exit polls and speculate on the election results. With several television media channels leaving no ambiguity about their political leanings, trying to figure out the correct outcomes is well nigh impossible. They have been at it since May 12 when Karnataka went to the polls. Notwithstanding media speculations however, the results should be out by 11 am Tuesday (today) and it should be pretty clear who will be in the driving seat in Karnataka. The problem with campaigning in state elections since 2014 is that Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is an important fixture. Without him and his declamation the BJP does not seem to know what exactly to pitch its poll campaign on. And then there are all-out personal attacks by leaders of the BJP and the Congress which has taken the campaign to a new low.

There are as many views about the probable results as there are media channels. Some give the Congress a slight edge over the BJP; others see the BJP forming the next government in Karnataka. For the Congress, Karnataka is the proverbial cup that must be won at any and all costs because this is one of the bigger states in South India where its writ rules; others are small states like Mizoram and Pondicherry and they don't count much as far as political clout is concerned. In fact, the Karnataka polls are likened by many to a semi-final before the grand finale in 2019 when the Lok Sabha elections will be held. Intellectuals and liberal thinkers who see the BJP's rise as detrimental to India's secular ethos are keeping their fingers crossed that the Party should lose Karnataka so that it takes time to introspect. As if political parties ever concede their errors of judgment!

By evening today both the Congress and the BJP would have accepted their fates and the Janata Dal (S) which sees itself as kingmaker would also know where it stands.

LOOKING BACK

May 15, 1989

Gomango releases stamp on Do Bosco

Union Minister of State for Communications, Mr Giridhar Gomango has said that the Centre had formulated a policy to honour all "great personalities" of the country by releasing commemorative postal stamps on them. Presenting an album of the stamps on Don Bosco in Shillong on Tues-

day, Mr Gomango said the founder of the world wide "Salesian Order" Don Bosco was the "Father and Friend of the Youth" who had dedicated his entire life for the uplift of poor and deprived children Mr Gomango recalled the release of a stamp on U Tirot Singh last year.

India's hostile attitude towards China Harmful to Northeast region

By Dr Kuvezochi Hoshi

Ever since the humiliating defeat of India in China-India war (1962), India's attitude towards China is that of hostility. Nehru's Panchsheel policy (peaceful co-existence with neighbors) was largely blamed for allowing China to take advantage. It permanently bridged the trust, at least on the Indian side. After that war, India's attitude towards the northeast region became fragile. History is clear that in that war, as Chinese intrusion came as far as Tezpur, Nehru literally gave up the entire Assam. (Northeast formed Assam province in British India period). It infuriated the top leaders of the Northeast at that time. It alienated the Northeast region emotionally. Northeast people stopped trusting the mainland Indians. Mainland Indians always suspected the people of Northeast; particularly the Nagas because of the Federal Government of Nagaland's connect with China in 1967.

India's Northeast policy in the past sixty plus years has been largely on military perspective, dictated more by Indian military top-shots posted in the region than politician statesman. China has remained the centre of focus in all the strategic planning concerning the northeast region. Myanmar is our immediate neighbour in the entire stretch of the eastern border. It is only in the north that the northeast region shares its borders with China. All the same, India never trusts China. It blames China for the burning Northeast. In the same vein, India blames the Northeast people because of the region's emotional proximity with China. To mainland Indians, people living in the region are simply 'people of the Northeast' and 'not Northeast Indians. That is because most ethnic people in the Northeast assert their own independence. Naga independence declaration pre-dated India's independence. India's China policy is just two words policy - "Hostile Attitude". This emanates from the fact that after the 1962 war, India developed a highly suspicious nature and became super-sensitive at the very mention of China. The hostility did not result into another full scale physical war but it definitely generated long-standing mutual 'Cold War' between the two giant nations. It procreated inherent, dormant hostile attitude that often manifested in border stand-offs. The latest in case was the Doklam stand-off in 2017. None doubted the military capabilities of

both the nations. However, in the Doklam stand-off, while China expressed confidence of giving another befitting defeat to India, India only talked of giving tough fight to China but fell short of saying, India could defeat China. The three months Doklam stand-off ended abruptly on August 29, 2017 just few days to BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit in China. Although India claimed diplomatic victory, restoration of 'status quo' proved that it was a no win-win for both. Actually, both China and India did not want physical war. The actual war between China and India is economic power war. Both

“The Northeast region has diverse ethnic inhabitants, each indigenous inhabitant harbouring its own political aspiration for independence as in the case of the Nagas and others or autonomy in some others.”

knows very well that victory in physical war will not make either China or India great but economic power will. China is the second largest economy by GDP (Gross National Product) in the world. India emerged as the world's fastest growing major economy in FY 2015 and 2018. The competition for economic power between the two most populous nations has gained momentum. India is a large consumer nation. PM Modi repeatedly said, none can take 125 crore Indians for granted. China is a producing nation. It cannot afford to lose Indian market. That is the equation. There will be no China-India war. It is India that is always making a war cry on slightest provocation. China's economic influence in her immediate neighbors and South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has already taken deep roots. India, though late, finally realized that China's threat is not just at the border. In fact, China cleverly kept India engaged in the border by enacting volatile situation in the border on-and-off, while expanding her economic influence, deep into all her immediate neighbors and South East Asian countries. India woke up as late as in 1990s, only to find herself cornered from all angles. India's obsession with turbulent Kashmir and north-

east took heavy toll, to say the least. India's wake-up call came only in 1991 when the GOI adopted 'Look East Policy' with an aim to counterweight that Chinese influence in the region and beyond. After Modi took over as the PM of India, he took the policy to next level as 'Act East Policy' (AEP). Regrettably, even after almost two decades, the policy failed to take-off, in the sense that northeast region is yet to feel the difference out of the policy. Nothing has changed at ground as a result of AEP. This may be because, northeast occupies just 'special reference' space in India's larger scheme of Act East Policy. If

AEP's focus is truly on NE, it has to start from NE and not Delhi. The power of implementation should be a shared power between the Centre and the NE States.

Though India claims that Northeast region as integral to India, the region has remained her most neglected. The region has been tagged insurgency infested. Lack of peace has been largely attributed for lack of development. The Northeast region has diverse ethnic inhabitants, each indigenous inhabitant harbouring its own political aspiration for independence as in the case of the Nagas and others or autonomy in some others. Ever since India's aggression of Nagaland in 1955, the entire Northeast has remained a military zone. Draconian laws like Disturbed Area Act, 1955 and Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act, 1958 continue to remain in force. Northeast is also cut off from the rest of the world by Inner Line Regulation, 1873. India's Northeast policy is that of reluctance, largely dictated by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). In January 2017, GK Pillai, former Home Secretary, GOI stated that MEA has great reluctance to open up the Northeast. This reluctance policy has deprived Northeast of foreign investment. India on her side failed to humanize the region by systematic economic planning. So far, the GOI's funding of development projects

in the Northeast has been haphazard and half-hearted, abandoning many multi-crore projects half-way. Transparency and accountability for development projects in Northeast hardly exists.

Northeast cannot develop without opening up to foreign investments. It is high time that the MEA review its 'reluctance policy' to that of 'welcome policy'. India's hostile attitude towards China, as far as Northeast is concerned, does more harm than good to India. India can build a diplomatic bridge with China better by opening up the northeast. India should open up to China to invest in the Northeast. China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiatives, rechristened as "Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI)" if extended to Northeast enroute to South East Asian countries is one project that can change the entire face of the northeast by creating another economic corridor. It will not harm but augment the AEP. (BRI is a development strategic program that focuses on connectivity and cooperation between China and Eurasian countries by the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt, SREB as well as the 21st century Maritime Silk Road). India had earlier rejected the proposal fearing China's growing influence out of this ambitious program. India also objected when the land-based BRI made its transit through the Pakistani controlled Kashmir named China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Experts have termed India's refusal to BRI as not in India's interest for the reason that it gave China free hand over the great initiatives. Experts also encouraged that it would help India's interest better if she joins the BRI and play its effective role to check China's undue influence in BRI.

India should stop gambling with Northeast but use the region to her advantage to scale new heights for better diplomatic relationship with China. Northeast is China-friendly, at least in attitude. It can play a useful leveraging role between China and India. This is something worth exploring and exploiting in the larger interests of India and Northeast in particular. (This is a personal opinion and in no way reflect the views of the political party (NDPP) this writer belongs). Phok Town

Mutual consent paramount in adult relationships

Latest supreme court decision is of great significance

By Amritananda Chakravorty

Two recent decisions from the Supreme Court of India have emphasised consent at the centre of adult intimate relationships, irrespective of the marital status of the parties. In both cases, the Court focused on the personal freedom and autonomy of adult persons to live as per their desires with whomsoever they wanted to live with. Neither the State nor non-State actors like family have any right to interfere with such decisions, if made out of free will. In one case, the daughter of a politician from Karnataka was forced into marriage by her family, and she then filed a habeas corpus petition in the Court seeking necessary reliefs.

After hearing her in person, and the fact that she was an adult, the Supreme Court noted that she was at liberty to proceed to anywhere she wished, and

latter was not of 'marriageable age', the Kerala High Court declared the marriage as 'void', and entrusted the custody of the 'adult' daughter to her father, similar to Hadiya's case. Overturning the High Court decision, the Supreme Court categorically held that 'two adult persons have a right to live together, even outside of wedlock'.

Reiterating the judgment in Shafin Jahan vs. Hadiya, the Court emphasised the importance of the right of choice of an adult person which the Constitution accords. At the same time, the Court held that if one of the parties was below the 'marriageable age', the marriage would be at maximum a 'voidable marriage', and not a 'void' marriage, i.e., void at the instance of one of the parties. Thus, allowing the appeal, the Court directed the daughter to live with

“As such, there was no provision for the parties to positively assert that they are expressly consenting to the said marriage, thereby leaving room for immense pressure being exercised by families over their children to agree to marriages against their own choice, particularly in the case of women. Though the Apex Court did not entertain the plea, and limited itself to the question of habeas in the present case, considering the number of cases coming to the Court on matters relating to freedom of choice and marriage.”

directed the family not to interfere in any manner with her life and also to give back all her documents. She was further at liberty to institute matrimonial proceedings against her forced marriage. [X v Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) No 327 of 2018, date of order: 07.05.2018]

In the course of the proceedings, the Petitioner had also challenged the validity of Sections 5(ii) and 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, on the basis that the law did not require the parties to expressly state their consent to the marriage, but couched it in the negative language of parties being incapable of giving consent due to unsoundness of mind, mental disorder or insanity. As such, there was no provision for the parties to positively assert that they are expressly consenting to the said marriage, thereby leaving room for immense pressure being exercised by families over their children to agree to marriages against their own choice, particularly in the case of women. Though the Apex Court did not entertain the plea, and limited itself to the question of habeas in the present case, considering the number of cases coming to the Court on matters relating to freedom of choice and marriage, it would be no time when the Court would have to independently address the issue of express consent in marriage, or read the law accordingly.

In contrast, in another case of an appeal from a Kerala High Court judgment in a habeas case, where the parties were married to each other voluntarily, but at the time of marriage, the girl was 19 years old and the boy was 20 years old, and thus the

whosoever she wanted to. [Nandakumar v State of Kerala, Criminal Appeal No. 597 of 2018, date of judgment: 20.04.2018]

In both these cases, one underlying strand is the issue of autonomy and freedom of adult persons to do as they wish and to be with who they want to be with, which is guaranteed by Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution. But it is these freedoms and autonomy which are increasingly under attack in the recent times, despite all the rhetoric of 'beti bachao beti padoo' of the current regime. In fact, the bogey of 'love jihad' has been raised so insidiously in many cases, including Hadiya, wherein she was in detention for almost 10 months, despite being a major, that woman's consent and will are freely mauled at almost every given opportunity.

If, to exercise the basic rights of choice and intimate relationships, one has to knock on the doors of the highest court of the country every time, then the guarantees of gender justice have only remained on paper for most women in India. In the horrific Kathua rape case, one saw how the gut-wrenching communal battles are being fought on women's bodies, even on a 8 year old's body, which make everyday misogyny and violation of women's consent much more acceptable and a routine affair in the nation's psyche. There is no greater shame than that. One hopes that these recent decisions would go a long way in re-starting a conversation on women's autonomy and freedom in a positive way, and not only from the prism of sexual violence and assault, which have happened in the recent past. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Citizenship Bill vs Rights of Indigenous People

Editor,
In July 2016 the Lok Sabha introduced the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 seeking to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955. This will make illegal migrants from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan who belong to six communities such as Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians eligible for being Indian citizens. Foreigners, who come into India without valid travel documents, or stay beyond their visa period, are considered illegal migrants. But certain exceptions have been made over the years. In Sep 2015, it says illegal migrants coming on or before Dec 31, 2014 are allowed to stay. And this exception was sought again in July 2016. Anybody who is born in India, has an Indian parent, or has lived in India for over 11 years, is eli-

gible for Indian citizenship. Illegal migrants do not fit this category. The Bill seeks to allow illegal migrants to come in and to escape imprisonment and deportation. It also appeals for the minimum years of residency to apply for citizenship from 11 to 6 years. However, it does not extend to illegal Muslim migrants, Jews, and Bahais. Our Constitution does not allow dual citizenship. But Persons of India Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) enjoy certain rights in India, at par with Indian nationals. The Bill now seeks to cancel the registration of OCI cardholders if they violate any law.

Hearing on Citizenship Bill had begun amid protest in Guwahati to present a report before Parliament that seeks to grant citizenship to religious minorities facing persecution and violence for their beliefs. Barak valley supports the bill. The Joint Parliamentary Committee has visited Shillong, where a large number of Hindu Bangladeshis are liv-

ing in Meghalaya. The Government of Meghalaya has rejected outright the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Those Hindus from Bangladesh fleeing to India to escape persecution have been living in NE and Bengal since long without citizenship rights. Are they needed to be protected by law in our country? The Bill may violate the Assam Accord 1985, which clearly states that illegal migrants heading in from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971, would be deported. Section 6A of the Citizenship Act (Amendment) 1985 was the legislative enactment of the legal part of the Assam Accord. The tasks of Foreigners Tribunal Assam detect-delete-deport have identified almost 20,000 foreigners but it becomes impossible to deport them. However deportation has not been discussed between India and Bangladesh at any level so far. The purpose of updating the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) to identify foreigners is yet to be completed. Should we wait for the outcome of NRC

to get the exact figures? Should Brahmaputra valley merely give up and succumb to JPC?

Yours etc.,
Kamal Baruah,
Guwahati

NEIGRIHMS sad state of affairs!

Editor,
It is indeed a very sad situation when your dear ones are suffering and you have to just watch and do nothing about it. I want to highlight an incident that happened to me and my family, when we went to NEIGRIHMS for my mother's operation. The female anaesthetist (consultant) cancelled my mother's case without any proper explanation on the morning of surgery. The same day I saw her outside NEIGRIHMS at 1 pm during duty hours. I also came to know from the relatives of other patients that she cancelled other cases like my mother's. This

is sheer harassment to the patients by this particular anaesthetist and not by the Department. I have seen the Anaesthesia ICU being very busy. In fact the Operation Theatre also runs 24x7. During my stay in NEIGRIHMS I have visited the operation theatre and found very few anaesthetists. It's my appeal that NEIGRIHMS should get more competent anaesthetists to help the needy patients and anaesthetists with a vested interest should be removed.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Healthy lifestyle!

Editor,
Our society has been transforming rapidly over the past few decades; and our lives are being over shadowed with work pressure and job related commitments. Under these circumstances, our traditional lifestyle is being impacted sig-

nificantly. We have to cut corners to accommodate time for our family; hence our cooking time is getting limited and we are getting increasingly dependent on fast foods. This is not good for long term health for us; as well as our family members, friends and colleagues. Time being the biggest limitation to our daily life; it is important to be aware that health is a priority and the need of the hour is to build public awareness regarding healthy eating habits and a holistic lifestyle to cope with the pressures of our modern, busy life.

Sincerely yours
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB
Canada

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.

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

--- Les Brown

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.273

SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

Redefining secularism

THESE days the national debate is centred around the theme of secularism. The Congress-JD(S) alliance in Karnataka is sought to be built around the idea of conserving the ideals of secularism and keeping out right wing ideology. So what really is secularism and what does being secular mean in a country of multiple faiths such as India? The simple meaning of secularism is separation of religion from the state or a government that is not dictated by any religious values. This debate has gained traction especially after Yogi Adityanath the priest of Gorakhnath Math was chosen to become the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. The choice of a temple priest to head a state government has breached the constitutional ideals propounded by the likes of BR Ambedkar who saw the dangers of India adopting the trajectory of Pakistan - a theocracy. Indeed, the essence of the Indian Constitution is violated if any religious leader joins a political party and holds an official position of power.

Along with the onslaught on secularism there are hordes of right wing supporters who believe that the Congress Party that ruled the country for over six decades had practiced the politics of appeasement of those from the minority faiths such as Muslims and Christians. In fact new words have been coined to isolate intellectuals and writers who believe in the ideals of secularism. They are now given a pejorative term "sickular." This word has been generously used by right wing propagandists to suggest that being secular means being anti-Hindu, pro-Muslim and pro-minority. Secular should actually mean that religion should not influence politics. But all this has changed since May 2014 when the cow was considered sacred and beef eaters lynched. Also the political discourse today is tainted with religious ideologies. The idea of a Hindu nation is being actively promoted although Prime Minister Modi came to power purely on the plank of development. The BJP as a political party needs to understand that religious politics will not sustain in the long run. India's lifeblood is pluralism which is guaranteed by the secular nature of the Indian Constitution.

LOOKING BACK

May 24, 1989

Economy poised for higher growth: Chavan

Union Finance Minister Mr S B Chavan today said an integrated view should be taken of all subsidies to find out whether they are reaching the target group and achieving the purpose they are meant for. Inaugurating the annual three-day conference of economic editors here Mr Chavan said such an integrated view would also help remove

inconsistencies and overlappings.

Mr Chavan said he was not against the idea of subsidies. "But the size of the subsidy burden in the central and the state budgets is now so much that we need to examine the structure and direction of these various open and hidden subsidies," he added.

Are we ready for digital well-being?

By Heracles T. R. Kharmujai

We are living in the era of a digital world, a world where digital presence is regarded by the possession of personal devices that augment mobility and communication. The 20th century has coined this concept as mobile computing. Innovations, studies, researches and published articles on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), have often discussed the digital wave and the smart world. The possibility of the same has been witnessed and is available at every individual's palm and finger tips.

The digital era is proposing to support 'communication on the go', a century wherein we all drain out our time and energy in our daily chores and in the extra time we have spared from the busy life schedules we try keep ourselves all charged up not to miss out anything that is happening in Kilobyte, Megabyte, Gigabytes or Terabytes.

If we are to keep a reality check on the evolution of family sittings, group hangouts or individual recreation time, we shall realise that the idea has gradually faded away with the advent of living room settings and the replacement of technologies in it. From the era of radio waves to telecommunication, from television to personal computers and now to personal devices and to the future of Internet of Things we have really come of age in practically applying E.M. Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory in communication. The communication space has been widely explored and the communication space has apparently been downsized and minimised to a six by three inch flat screen.

The arrival of the 'new media' has transformed the culture of communication space. Consumers are segregated into various diasporic groups, within variegated social media and communication platforms like WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and many others applications to express and communicate personal, profession, political or commercial agenda. Now that we have access to the 'new media' the 'digital era' and the 'smart world', the question of concerns is, are we ready to adapt to a digital well-being?

At this point I would like to mention that I am no anti-digital or technophobic person, but instead just putting out an opinion and raising a concern. As we together level up from the

notion of the digital divide to digital literacy and make our individual stance of being one amongst the digital natives this plausible transition is made possible only due to the penetration of smart-phones. According to Statista, the number of smart-phone users worldwide is projected to amount to nearly 2.7 billion by 2019. And 2017 was likely expected to have almost a third of the total global population using a smart-phone. The United States which previously held the top position has a distant leader. China, considering its population growth. Statista records that India, the second most populous country had 199.08 millions smart-phones users in 2015. The projection is that there will be 339.95 millions smart-

The advent of digital era has spontaneously brought in the new media and with it the new media software developers and tech giants like Apple Inc., Google and Windows.

phones users by 2018 and 442.5 millions smart-phones users by 2022. Now the question that arises is, with the increasing number of smart-phone users stepping into the digital age are they going to be ready to adapt to a digital well-being?

The advent of digital era has spontaneously brought in the new media and with it the new media software developers and tech giants like Apple Inc., Google and Windows. Product vendors like Samsung, Xiaomi and Lenovo and others have come out to sell their respective ideas of a better appliance for ICT. The availability of technologies varying in their own unique specifications paved the way for Network Service Providers (NSP) like Verizon, AT&T, Airtel, Vodafone and even BSNL to name a few, all competing to provide better service for their consumers. Now with the stage (digital era) set, technologies evolved (personalised devices) and connectivity (ISP) available, the question that strikes is whether consumers are ready to adapt to the digital well-being?

News articles from around the world have often highlighted on the pros of technology and cons of excessive use of that technology. Simultaneously news on cyber crime- frauds, fake

news and leaks are also doing their rounds, but instead of that we all try to keep an edge and updated in ourselves on mobile application in our daily lifestyles, only to ease out the unwanted long process of getting things done. That's how the concept of online marketplace, banking and allied sectors have come to the picture. Now with multi products and services targeted to a consumer, can he/she adapt to the digital well-being?

The digital era is here and it is presumed to sustain for a long while, hence researchers often debate on the humane nature of the digital ecosystem. At present with the popularity gained on the digital space, innovators, developers and providers are often questioned by the concerned authorities on the

wellbeing of their products or services, thereby bringing to light the advancement of digital inclusion. In short digital inclusion identifies three broad facets- 'access' depending on the availability and affordability for inclusion, 'adoption' characterised by relevance, digital literacy and consumer safety and 'application' based on economic and workforce development, education, health care, public safety, civic engagement and social connection.

Undoubtedly the giant players of ICT have been successful in introducing and innovating, products and services for consumers ever year. But with the simultaneous advancement in science and technology the equation of digital inclusion had gone for a toss. And digital inclusion is addressed on 'access' and 'adoption' only, leaving out 'application' as the consumer's responsibility.

Now coming to climax of this piece, Smartphone addiction is a serious issue and it has been debated and talked about globally. Considering the present scenario if you are to keep your head up, you will notice simple infant's toys are replaced with gadgets, because we absurdly believe that is it the smartest replacement for one. Kids are seen glued to a device once they are done with school routine, because we illogically feel games are more immersed and safe that

way. Young adults, adults and everyone is busy communicating, socializing, and exploring the virtual world, because everything, everyone is live online and perhaps real life seems to exist only when we are exhausted from tapping from one app to another and then another and then to another till we doze off to sleep to hibernate for a brief while until we are back to the race of the digital age. Now with this familiar pop-culture of the digital era will we be able to cultivate a well being in the digital space? Can we adapt to a digital well-being?

Digital well-being is a concern of the hour. We must be conscious of the decision, time and connect we hold on to in a device. It is a slip of that consciousness that leads to the prevalence of smart-phone addiction and similar disorders. The concern of digital well-being has struck the sellers of products and services, and for that very reason we see applications for personal devices like 'Moment' in iOS and 'App Usage' in Android are available for users to keep a tab of their usage and help users to stay away from their devices. I wonder if the same concern of digital well-being will actually strike a chord with the primary users. In the recent 'Google annual developer's conference-I/O 2018' apart from Google bragging about the launch of updates and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their upcoming software, what caught my attention is their initiative on digital well-being, an initiative to combat smart-phone addiction and help users make less use of their device. When Google proudly announced that soon the system will be available for users. I couldn't help but question my conscience; do we really need a system to keep ourselves in tune with reality? Well, smart-phones are really getting smarter with inbuilt AI, and humans born with real intelligence are getting un-smarter and dependent on just a popular device called a smart-phone- waiting for updates, wanting for upgrade, willing to buy an idea (scheme) so that we are not left one step behind. If all that is not an irony of the digital age then I don't know what is. It's time we take digital well-being seriously and take charge of our devices and step into reality for good.

Clothes Maketh the Chief Minister: But no dark glasses please

By Glenn C. Kharkongor

Dashing around the state and on frequent trips to the capital, Meghalaya's current man about town, Conrad Sangma, is also making a sartorial impression. If you have noticed, recent pictures of him in the print media and television offer a peek into his wardrobe. He has a wide range of attire, suitable for each occasion, formal and informal.

The proverb "Clothes maketh the man" is often attributed to Shakespeare, and indeed the line finds its place in Hamlet as "The apparel oft proclaims the man". Not a man to be upstaged, the Bard seems to have stolen the line from earlier classical writers. Even Mark Twain used it often. But it was Erasmus who apparently coined the phrase in stultifying Latin as "vestisvirumfacit". But no problem, plagiarism was widely practiced in those days and no one seemed to mind.

But to come back to Conrad, what snagged my attention was the picture of him published in this newspaper last Sunday. He is standing with the Union Health Minister, JP Nadda, in the Ministry of Health office in Delhi, their palms locked in a handshake, posing for the press. The Union Minister with a well-trimmed moustache, is dressed in a long black kurta. Draped around his neck is a ryndia, perhaps presented by our chief minister. The honorable minister looks quite formally dressed and on his left side is the Manipur health minister

politician.

It's well-established in the scientific literature, and in real life, that what we wear influences other's perceptions of us. A study published recently in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology found some interesting phenomena. This research adds to a new field called "embodied cognition": the concept that we think with not only our brains, but with our physical experiences, including the clothes we wear. If you dress formally at work, you tend to be more formal and professional. According to the authors, the way we see and feel the clothes on our body, influences our psyche, way of thinking and our decision-making. Clothes alter our self-perception and behavior.

In their experiments on randomly selected subjects, the wearing of a doctor's white coat seemed to make people more careful and attentive. People may feel braver wearing a police uniform. But an important question remains. Just because we deliberately choose our clothes in a particular way, do the psychological and behavioral changes last for long periods, or do they eventually wear off?

Conrad has given us the impression of a man in a hurry. He's already here, there and everywhere, in a rush to fix things, make improvements and build constructively. He's a blue collar politician, seeming to get into the nitty-gritty of

The setting is also formal, plush sofas in the background, a vase of fresh flowers on the coffee table and potted money plants on the window sills. A framed picture of Vivekananda adorns the wall behind. The venerable Swami is wearing an achkan and orange turban. Arms folded at the waist, he looks with an erudite gaze at some faraway point on the horizon.

dressed in a long white kurta and looking, well, ministerial, but maybe a bit over-jeweled with a heavy watch and gold rings.

The setting is also formal, plush sofas in the background, a vase of fresh flowers on the coffee table and potted money plants on the window sills. A framed picture of Vivekananda adorns the wall behind. The venerable Swami is wearing an achkan and orange turban. Arms folded at the waist, he looks with an erudite gaze at some faraway point on the horizon.

So the other noteworthies in the room are all primly dressed. But our chief minister has a plain shirt, top button open, cuffs folded to his elbow and, gosh, shirt tails hanging out. Wow! Hmm! Err! So what is this all about? The clock on the wall says it's a quarter past twelve, so maybe he's rushed in from the mid-day sun, having just arrived from hot, humid Guwahati. Just trying to beat the heat, maybe?

Or is it more than that? A careless, untidy lack of dress sense? Maybe something from the grunge culture: edgy young millennial attitude? Or could it be a deliberate statement designed to convey a crafted message?

The American press seemed obsessed with the way President Obama dressed, falling over themselves to praise his dress sense, always appropriate for the occasion. Whether he showed up in a tuxedo to meet the Queen, or in shorts and sandals on the beach, he was uber cool. On the campaign trail, in the Oval Office, and even at the G8 summit, he sometimes appeared in an open collar shirt and rolled up sleeves, conveying the impression of a working man, not a stuffy

work. He seems eager to deliver the unfulfilled promises of previous eras, not just holding the steering wheel but also pulling his weight as member of the work team.

He seems comfortable in any attire, formal Nehru jacket, informal waist coat and short sleeves, or traditional Garo cap and scarf. Whatever be the occasion, being appropriately dressed adds to peak performance. He apparently feels composed regardless of how he is dressed. This conveys confidence, assertiveness, approachability.

Politicians do make mistakes with their clothes. Narendra Modi's Rs 10 lakh suit with his name in the pin stripes was a monumental gaffe. Fortunately, it was auctioned for a good cause. Trudeau was mocked during his recent visit to India, because his family appeared in formal traditional Indian clothing, seemingly just for photo ops.

As politicians gain in self-importance, some tend to overdress, especially with the accessories. A favorite is dark glasses. But many don't observe sunglasses etiquette. It's rude to talk to someone with them on and crazy to wear them indoors. Unless you're a movie actor or rock star, there are dos and don'ts. Unless a politician is in the bright sun, dark glasses are a no-no. They need to maintain direct eye contact with the people.

Let's go back to the picture of Conrad in the ministerial chamber in Delhi. He stands erect, shoulders straight, focus and seriousness in his eye. There is confidence in his stance, he knows what he is doing. Never mind the clothes, the business of his people seems uppermost. He's dressed for

TO THE EDITOR

Controversies regarding Lawsohtun crematorium

Editor, Apropos the news item about the eco-friendly crematorium at Lawsohtun, appearing in *The Shillong Times* (ST May 13 2018), the Executive Committee of Seng Khasi Lawsohtun would like to clarify as follows:

It is true that there have been irregularities in the construction of the crematorium financed by the office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Social Forestry Division, Shillong. First of all, Devistone Swer, Secretary of Seng Khasi Lawsohtun, had constructed the work without the knowledge of the then Chairman of Seng Khasi Lawsohtun or its Executive Committee and made a mess of things, thereby prompting the Sein Raji Jowai, which is the patentee for the

crematorium, to object, thus bringing the work to a halt in 2016. After a fresh understanding was arrived at with Sein Raji Jowai, the work was handed over to expert builders suggested by Sein Raji, until it was stopped again following the discovery of another major irregularity.

This irregularity relates to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Forest Department a copy of which was provided to our organisation by the Divisional Forest Officer, Ms L. J. Syiemiong, on December 6, 2017 since Devistone had refused to hand over the MOA to the Executive Committee. In the MOA, the Seng Khasi Ri Raid Laban Dong Lawsohtun, now Seng Khasi Lawsohtun, was shown to be represented by one Rajest L. Pompyrthat as the Chairman and one Metilda Rynjah as the Secretary. However, there are no such persons in our organisation. The name of our then Chairman is Rajesh K. Lyngdoh and not

Rajest L. Pompyrthat, while the name of the Secretary is Ms Hethilda Rynjah and not Metilda Rynjah.

Therefore, this is a clear case of impersonation punishable by law under the Indian Penal Code 1860, Section 416. In the first instance, someone who called himself Rajest L. Pompyrthat had gone to the Forest Department on the 29th of January, 2015, to pose as our organisation's Chairman/President with a view to signing the MOA. But the question here is how the Forest Department had allotted the work to Devistone Swer and sanctioned Rs 15 lakh to him when the MOA was signed by Rajest L. Pompyrthat, the impersonator? What is the connection between the non-existent Rajest L. Pompyrthat and Devistone Swer?

In the second instance, someone who called herself Metilda Rynjah had gone to the Forest Department on the same date to pose as our organisation's Secretary with a view to signing the same MOA. But though there is no

such person called Metilda Rynjah in our organisation, yet her signature has been verified as belonging to the real Secretary, Ms Hethilda Rynjah, who held office during 2015-16. In this connection, we would like to know why Hethilda Rynjah's signature had appeared before the name of the non-existent Metilda Rynjah? What is the connection between them?

Since both the signatories of the MOA are imaginary persons, therefore, the MOA is nothing but a forged/fake document punishable by law under the Indian Penal Code 1860, Section 468. In view of this, Seng Khasi Lawsohtun had lodged a complaint with the office of the DFO Social Forestry Division, Shillong, and had made a fervent plea for the execution of a fresh supplementary agreement with Seng Khasi Lawsohtun since the above IPC forbids anyone from using a forged/ fake document as a genuine document.

Pending the execution of a supplementary agreement between the Forest Department and Seng Khasi Lawsohtun, the construction of the eco-friendly crematorium at Lawsohtun can never continue.

Yours etc.
Executive Committee,
Seng Khasi Lawsohtun

Need to regulate school fees!

Editor, While the current dispensation led by the NPP and its coalition partners continue to dwell on the Education Policy, it is an important aspect that parents who are the actual stakeholders ought to ask the Government whether has it devised any mechanism to regulate both private and deficit institutions in terms of their fee structure. The fact is in this ever competitive society it has been observed that schools both missionary run-institutions and private ones choose and pick

students according to the income and family background of the parents. The compulsion to get their children educated in these "best" schools force parents to ignore this glaring truth. The right to equality also reaffirms the need that every child irrespective of the background he or she comes from should get an equal opportunity to perform and excel in both academics and non-academics. The KSU has rightly gone ahead to address this growing concern in most schools. Those in authority need to look at the bigger picture rather than having a myopic view. If we want the next generation to progress then change should come from society.

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

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.

“ Negative emotions like loneliness, envy, and guilt have an important role to play in a happy life; they're big, flashing signs that something needs to change.”

--- Gretchen Rubin

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX.No.274 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 17, 2018

Environmental fund deployment

MEGHALAYA has been pulled up yet again by the apex court for not utilising the environment fund amounting to over Rs 420 crore from coal transportation. Apparently the State Government is waiting for the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to frame guidelines on how the funds are to be deployed. As far as the funds lying at the disposal of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) created at the behest of the Supreme Court after its ruling on the Lafarge project in Nongtrai, East Khasi Hills is concerned, it is worth mentioning that several initiatives have been taken for compulsory afforestation, for creating sacred groves and orchards, apart from infrastructure creation such as school buildings, water conservation and distribution, health centres etc., as demanded by the villages affected by the limestone mining activities. However, an area of concern is that propensity to use the environmental fund which is essentially meant to address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, for projects that are otherwise within the ambit of the state budgetary plan. Why, for instance should money be spent on road construction which is essentially the remit of the State Public Works Department (PWD) and why is the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) shirking from its basic responsibility of providing potable water to people in the last village even after 46 years of statehood?

It is patently unfair to meet budgetary shortfalls of different departments through the environmental funds. The coal mining areas of the state face a bleak future after the rivers have turned toxic, the agricultural lands gone barren and forests decimated. The CAMPA funds do not appear to have been judiciously used in Meghalaya. It is also a fact that those who bear the brunt of mining activities have very little or no say in how the funds are used, despite the fact that their areas are critically polluted.

It is important to create citizens' bodies to monitor how the "Green Fund" is spent and to ensure that it does not become trapped in politics. MLAs and potential candidates should not be allowed to influence how the Environmental Funds are used. What bears mention is that Meghalaya has also created a District Mineral Foundation, a non-profit trust run by Government for developing the mining affected areas. Miners have to pay up to 30% of royalty on minerals to this Fund set up after India's Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act came into force in 2015. The question is how is this fund being used up to this point?

TO THE EDITOR

No public servants, these!

Editor,

It is astonishing that some officers who are recruited from among the best, lack a sense of humanity. I was in the DC's office last week to meet some officer for my personal work. With me were about five to seven people including two senior citizens waiting in queue to meet the concerned officer. All of those present there at that particular moment including me have work which would take just two or three minutes only like asking for a signature, submitting documents, general inquiry...etc but for that we had to wait for nearly three hours to get our work done. And the reason we had to wait so long was because the concerned officer was having lunch with other colleagues in the room and busy discussing their personal matters that could be heard from outside, for hours! After the lunch, the officer was still engaged in some personal phone calls (chit chat

and kept us waiting for another twenty to thirty minutes outside. As ordinary people we had to wait to meet such officers till they choose to meet the public. I felt almost like a beggar. I wonder if they need hours for lunch and personal breaks during office hours, at the cost of common people. Then their appointment to the job is questionable! And because of a few lethargic persons the public suffers and the blame goes to the entire District Administration. I know they will try to justify when they read this but the reality is that this happens on a daily basis. Work that can be completed in a day will not be done even in a week or a month.

Are these practices of some government officers justified? Are these people appointed to serve the public or to harass them? Can they treat the common people as they like? I think we should change the system in our country by paying salary to government officers depending on their daily performance reports

There was a misinformation that Meghalaya did not have an Education Policy. The cabinet on 19th January 2009 had approved the policy. The question today, is whether that policy is still relevant. Many confuse between a Policy and a Programme of Action (POA). A policy is a mere statement of intent and a broad vision for the people of the state to redeem their true potential, rich but largely untapped. True there was no POA to implement the policy except in a few cases, that also on an adhoc basis. In chapter 9 of the State Education Policy, 2009 we read, "The existing multi-layered system of grant-in-aid which is highly skewed in favour of the institutions under the deficit system is undesirable and should be progressively abolished by reducing the categories of grant-in-aid. The ultimate goal in this area is to have a uniform system for grant-in-aid." So far there is no POA on this.

Inside the classroom, a dedicated teacher whose only interest is his students, is oblivious of the pay and the perks he receives. It's only when he enters the common room or at the end of the month that he begins to think why parents or the management is blind to the sweat and the services he has rendered. It all started when the private school signed a contract with him with the only condition that his services will be paid at an amount agreed upon at the end of the month. This contract becomes complicated when the school starts getting government grants. Monthly payment or non-payment to the teacher is linked with getting the grant. It's obvious that the management is responsible for breaking the contract and cannot blame the government for non receipt of the grant in time. It may be a crude analogy to compare a domestic worker in the house of a government employee agitating against the government for non receipt of salary just because the government employee did not receive his/her salary on time. The government in its books of account has always treated the grant given to schools as a non-committed expenditure. To the government a grant is only a grant. If it doesn't have the money the grant can be denied, reduced or delayed. The poor teacher is left in the lurch. Either he/she has to choose another school or change his/her profession. The die-hard will take it upon themselves to agitate against the government to release the grant. This is the position of school teachers in the state since its inception.

Funding institutions is an area which has left many lay people confused and mind-

Funding non-government educational institutions

By T. Mark

boggled. We have a multi-layered system of grants-in-aid like deficit grant in aid, deficit pattern, adhoc, improved adhoc, SSA etc. The purpose behind is no doubt to help the schools but one would agree that it has brought unjustified discrimination between teachers in different schools having similar qualification and enough student enrolment. One would agree that government is seen in bad light whenever teachers come out in the streets to demand their hard earned salary which is their due. The public have all the sympathy for them. Nobody thinks of the original contract the management had with the teachers. Who broke this sacrosanct contract? The teachers or the management? Fortunately or unfortunately government becomes the victim in this tussle and is unnecessarily dragged into many court cases involving the teachers of these schools. There are two basic reasons for this. In terms of grant-in-aid, sometime the government has bitten more than it can chew, and in most cases it is due more to reason of politics than of educational priorities or economics and in terms of control it has taken the unnecessary responsibility of approving their appointment. One still wonders if this amounts to abrogating the contract, the management had with the teacher.

The in-thing is the private-public mode (PP mode). One would say it is already in existence in Meghalaya as far as education is concerned. More than 70 % of institutions in the state are non-government institutions. Government should be grateful to these NGOs for undertaking to share the bulk of the burden. One can imagine how much Government would have had to spend in infrastructure and other expenditure in running these institutions let alone salaries. The issue is to examine how government can distance itself from these non-government institutions and also to examine how to streamline funding so that we have only one type of funding and other service conditions in such institutions.

The proposed provincialisation of schools is one attempt where non-government schools become government schools lock stock and barrel. The merit-demerit between government and non government school is public knowledge and it needs no elaboration. Moreover there will be schools which do not want to be provincialised like the

schools run by faith based organisations and the like. Hence there will still be multiplicity of grants-in-aid schools in the state with their inherent problems. The second alternative is to provincialise only the services of the teachers. The common understanding is that all salary and allowances of the teachers will be paid by government while the management of the school is left to the sponsoring body. The moot question is who is the appointing authority? The government or the management? Students of management know that the payment authority is also the appointing authority and the terminating authority. The teachers will be left with a big doubt whether to be loyal to the government or the management. Always a dual loyalty is a divided loyalty and bad management.

The ideal is to have only two types of schools - government and non-government. And for non-government we have only one type of grant. The most important question is how do we bring all schools enjoying different grants at present into one type of grant. Here we need out of the box solutions. One possible solution is as follows:

1. All viable schools be given fixed grant in aid at the rate of the minimum basic pay of the government scales of pay of the corresponding teachers, HSS, SS, UPS, LPS. There is no increment. But whenever government revises the pay scales the same is applicable to non-government schools. Government has to lay down criteria to define the viability of a school.

2. This rate is calculated per teacher and total entitlement should be one teacher to thirty students (1:30). This includes Head and Asst. Head.

3. In addition to this fixed grant-in-aid the school is also entitled to DA as given to government employees from time to time.

4. By this calculation schools which receive adhoc grant will get enhanced grant but schools which receive deficit grant will get reduced grant. How do we solve this problem? The teachers in these schools drawing basic pay higher than the minimum will continue to draw the same rate till they retire or resign. The moment the post becomes vacant it is converted to the grant at the minimum rate. This may take some time but one day all would be under one type of grant only.

5. With Management Information System (MIS) in place it will be easy for government to know the quantum of grant for disburse-

ment and it should be treated as a committed expenditure.

6. There is a small rider to this proposal. It involves schools with excess teachers and unviable schools. Since the school has to be viable, it has to abide by the general rule governing this grant.

The next question is the system of checks and balances and service rules of teachers. There should not be any ambiguity that the grant is given in the name of the school and not the teachers. The management is responsible for the utilization of the grant-in-aid and running of the schools according to government management rules. The contract or appointment letter to the teacher should be duly documented. The government is only to lay down minimum educational qualifications. It will have no hand in approving or disapproving the teacher's appointment. The teachers are the employees of the management and they are accountable to it. The management rules will lay down conditions of discipline, termination etc and if there is dispute, the court will be the final authority to dispose off such cases.

The management is also subjected to management rules of government. One important condition is that the school should have its own land and building and have endowment or reserve funds equivalent to four months salary. The grant may be withdrawn if they violate management provisions. The provisions will also include disciplining their employees and students. The grant may be withdrawn if the school becomes unviable after being given due opportunity to correct itself.

Now that government has shared all the burden of salary, the provision of infrastructure and other requirements of the school have to be provided by the management. RTE rules do not allow school fees but do not prevent parents from giving goodwill donation to improve their schools. However, the management may be allowed to raise funds by donation with the consent of the parents at the parent-teachers meeting. This additional fund could also be extended to the teachers to avail the EPF and ESI schemes as part of their social security service.

(The author is former Director, Education, Govt of Meghalaya)

Two Concepts of Economy

By Avner Pariat

A "dkhar" friend made an interesting remark the other day about Khasi people. He manages a wholesale business because of which he is quite well-traveled, and he is of the opinion that among tribal people in India, Khasis must surely be one of the most well-off and socially mobile groups. I do not dispute this assertion entirely. Yes, on many fronts Khasis have surged ahead of the rest of their tribal brethren. Our progress into Modernity is now well over a hundred years while many tribes still need to play catch-up. The number of young professionals from within our community is now almost innumerable and it continues to grow on a yearly basis. Indices for development are much better in Meghalaya than other tribal majority states/areas. These are all nice things to gawp at and must rightly be sources of pride for future endeavour. However, the true reality about the economic scene is actually very depressing.

Yes, ostensibly tribal people, in this instance Khasis, can now tackle the world at large. There is no bar of entry for them anymore. They have all branches of government within their firm grasp for the most part. Every inch of government service has been captured. We can see that the working staff within the Secretariat is almost entirely tribal. The same is true for other avenues within the governmental system. Bengalis, and to an extent Assamese, who once dominated the 'clerk' and lower middle management positions during the Raj quickly lost them to the aspiring and newly competent Khasis. The final death knell came on the 21st of January 1972.

Anyway, this is one part of history whether we like it or not. The other side of the coin is the fact that Khasi people are not as fortunate as we like to imagine. It is nice for our egos to be stoked but truth be told, the vast majority of our people continue to fester in poverty and hardships which we have forgotten to address in our overall assessment. My "dkhar" friend also fell into this trap. The few families that we see flaunting their wealth openly are not the true reflections of the community. Young nitwit jerks in daddy's BMW do not represent our community. They should in fact be thrown out and their ST certificates torn to shreds. But even these are far from "safe", much of their wealth depends on their affiliations to politics not economy.

In Shillong, in a way, two types of economy can be discerned. There is the "tribal" economy and the "non-tribal" one. These are simplifications of course, but we can look at the differences in terms of banking as I have briefly observed them. The "tribal" economy revolves around different types of personal loans like "car" and "housing". These loans aren't about making back money, they are about using up savings and potential savings accrued over years of service. The "non-tribal" economy in contrast is mostly about servicing commercial loan demands. They are usually much, much larger amounts of money BUT they are meant for earning back cash. There is risk involved but there is also a decent percentage of gain. This is one of the reasons why non-tribals seem to own all the businesses especially large institutions. They risk investment and have access to the know-

how about the banking system. They think about earning, not spending.

It is not that non-tribals are inherently better with money, this is a myth. They might have more experience because of their particular backgrounds but in this day and age, a "tribal" firm can hire non-tribal professionals if the need arises. The real reason for this bad state of affairs is because governments have maintained bad policy (or is it no policy?) when it comes to tribal businesses. Except if they belong to party people, of course. However, we all know that policy is not only for one party. Banks need to be brought in line by the state government. Enough with these silly loans that do not ensure a future only a fancy car or roof! Farmers, masons, carpenters, butchers need capital not just con-men close to politicians. We hardly have a middle-class and the only source of economic power that we, the tribals, have is tied up in land. The hyper commodification of it has had disastrous results in the last few decades and we are now worse for it. Land has become so costly only wealthier sections can now afford any within Shillong. If we continue to give up land/economic power to the banks in exchange for capital for home construction, is that not a threat to the power of the district councils which are supposed to protect the same? I am worried about the absence of any proper regulation in this regard. Is this a future which is sustainable and fair?

It is clear that based on our obsession with getting government jobs that (by extension) we are entirely dependent on Delhi (rural communities much less so but only slightly). This was a particular point of interest for old articles and pamphlets in the 1980s and 1990s. Writers in those days argued for this and that as they envisioned means of promoting self-subsistence among Khasi people but today hardly anything is discussed in this manner. It would seem that our erstwhile fiercely independent spirit has been coaxed into becoming a cheap copy of itself within the regime of modern "development" politics. Yes, earlier opinion-makers might have written nationalistically with bias, they wrote for economic independence BECAUSE they didn't want to be Delhi's puppet. They might have had more pride than sense. Some of those thoughts were very Right wing and perhaps in a way contributed to the insurgencies of the past days. But we cannot deny that they longed to be truly liberated economically. Whether we remained within the Indian Union was an entirely different thing. Today, instead of thinking about how we can be economically strong, our leaders and their political cabals argue about who gets which contract. The priorities seem to have shifted considerably: from people to party.

Independence is a distant pipe-dream for most "tribal" businesses. Actually I should probably refrain from using this term because we don't really have any. Nowadays we have tribal "heh spah" (big wealth) who latch onto franchises and in that sense, they aren't really tribal at all. We need these sorts of businesses to an extent but we also need vibrant, local "home-grown" alternatives as well. The government is not doing all it can to resuscitate the "tribal" economy in the state.

so that they will learn to respect common people better and perform their duties quickly. In fact, no one force such people to take up the jobs they do. If they don't like what they do they should just resign and let some better humans take it. Meghalaya has large numbers of unemployed and qualified youth. Respected, Deputy Commissioner East Khasi Hills District, please considers this letter as a public complaint against the shameful behavior of some public servants in your office.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Dangers of digital connectivity

Editor,

Apropos the article, "Are we ready for digital well-being?" by Heracles T. R. Kharumjai (ST, May 16, 2018), social media is a product of this digital era. Indians, especially a large sec-

tion of our young generation have made it almost as essential a thing in their lives as water. But it can cause a tsunami if it is not properly utilized. We must not forget how dangerous a role Facebook had played in the Myanmar tragedy. As a matter of fact, Facebook has been blamed by the UN investigators for playing a crucial role in the spread of misinformation and hate speech against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar.

The United Nations investigator, Yanghee Lee said, "Facebook has now turned a beast." It was one of the major culprits that made more than 6,50,000 Rohingya Muslims run away from Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Facebook chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg had testified and he apologized. While Rohingyas being marginalised people in Myanmar became the sacrificial lambs for social media, Dalits, women, nomadic/tribal/religious minorities and the blue collar workers have been facing

the music in India because of the hate campaign against them on social media and Facebook.

As a result, many Afrazuls have either brutally been killed or tortured or harassed or intimidated. Moreover, such murders and tortures have freely been uploaded and circulated across social media to instigate a mob hysteria among us and to create a reign of terror in the minds of Dalits, women, religious minorities and the blue collar workers like labourers, cobblers, vendors, hawkers who ensure smooth running of our daily lives.

It is therefore a matter of grave concern when sometimes it is seen that half-truth, post-truth and untruth have been posted on social media to spread hatred for Dalits and minorities. As for example, caste reservation has been projected as the reason for unemployment, totally hiding the fact that caste reservation is effective only in the government sector which is a tiny part of the total job market

and that too such reservation is not more than the proportion of backward castes.

Also, a lot of hullaballoo has been raised in social media against freebies for the poor by hiding the fact that a welfare state is supposed to do a lot more for the masses and many welfare states have become advanced in human development and happiness indices by giving their citizens free education, health care, handsome unemployment allowances and other social securities. All these along with fake quotes and wrong factual claims that have been circulated on Facebook make even liberal upper castes and the rich develop a hatred for the lower castes and the poor after consuming these narratives

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

“Dreams show you that you have the power...”

--- Dr. Joyce Brothers

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.275

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MAY 18, 2018

UK tightens visa regime

HUNDREDS of Indian doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs and other professionals have taken the UK Government to court for denying them the right to live and work in Britain. Converging under the banner of ‘Highly Skilled Migrants’ group, they protested the unjustified refusal by the UK Home Office for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in Britain. Their last protest was in February this year. Indian engineers, IT professionals, doctors and teachers are among 6,080 skilled workers holding a UK job offer were denied visas to the UK since December 2017, according to a data released recently. This data indicates that Indians are likely to be the hardest hit by the UK’s annual visa cap. The Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) acquired the figures via a Freedom of Information (FOI) to the UK Home Office to highlight the “scale of the problem” being created due to the British government’s annual immigration cap for skilled professionals hired by UK-based companies from outside the European Union (EU). The latest UK Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures record Indians as the largest chunk of skilled work visas granted (57 per cent) to nationals from outside the EU, indicating that Indians are likely to be the hardest hit by the visa cap. Meanwhile, the UK Home Office rebutted, stating that while it recognises the contribution of international professionals, it is committed to ensuring that under the country’s immigration system, employers give preference to the UK resident labour market before recruiting from overseas. The situation today is that the demand for entry into the UK far exceeds the monthly available allocation of Tier 2 (General) places, hence priority is given to applicants filling a shortage or PhD-level occupations. Science, engineering and technology are fields that benefit from mobility of talent and collaboration across borders including between India and the UK. The current immigration system will greatly hamper this.

Of the 6,080 visa refusals under the Tier 2 category between December 2017 and March 2018, more than 50% (3,500) were for engineering, IT, technology, teaching and medical roles. Dr Chaand Nagpaul, chair of the British Medical Association Council (BMA), called for a more flexible immigration system since doctors are desperately needed to fill the vacancies in the state-funded National Health Service (NHS). In April this year at least 100 Indian doctors were denied visas after being recruited by the NHS due to the Tier 2 monthly quota being over-subscribed. In other fields too there is a felt need for overseas professionals for the growth and development of the UK economy. This visa cap will have serious consequences claim experts.

Governance failure in Meghalaya

By Patricia Mukhim

The question we all ask is why governance fails in Meghalaya. But that’s a silly question. Governance fails because people running the government want it to fail. It’s as simple as that! Those who want governance to succeed should all get copies of the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on State Finances and the Revenue Sector. We only need to go through the findings of the CAG to see that government itself is the biggest violator of all the norms of good governance. Let me cite a few examples.

Weighbridges that are meant to be installed for raising revenue for the state are used instead by politicians and their business cronies to make money on the sly, never mind if the economy of the state is in tatters. Sample this clear case of mis-governance commonly known as ‘corruption.’ The CAG observation vis-à-vis Transport Department: Delay in issuing instructions for weighing trucks carrying limestone resulted in loss of revenue due to non-realisation of penalty amounting to Rs 10.51 crore on overloading. This is just a pittance. If anyone digs deeper they will find out who actually is the kingpin running the weighbridges across the state. They are sitting in the State Secretariat. Holy cow! How do we deal with that! And what’s more, the police are handpicked to carry out the orders of their masters. So more than policing, police officers posted in the coal and limestone rich areas are doing the rent-seeking for their political masters. This is why our collective faith in the policing system is diminishing by the day. The DGP is unable to stand up to the orders of his minister. Similarly the Chief Secretary is unable to prevent the arbitrary transfer of his young officers! This is the State we live in today. Those who know these dirty secrets find it depressing or opt to work out of the state. Good for them!

In the Forest and Environment Sector the CAG report says a performance review on Wildlife and Forest Management in Meghalaya covering the period 2012-13 to 2016-17 reveals a number of deficiencies in the function of the Department. Encroachment in the Reserved Forests continues unabated. As of March 2017, the total encroached forest area was 8600.51 hectares. To save face and for top honchos of the Forest Department to justify their pay and perks, the Department filed 1223 court cases for encroachment. However, not a single case has resulted in a verdict. Illegal felling of timber and illegal extraction of minerals is widespread. There are 348

unlicensed/illegal saw mills operating in the State. The Department of course makes a show of closing them down permanently but never succeeds because palms are regularly greased. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) which has the teeth of a court has directed a ban on coal mining, extraction of sand from river beds and felling of timber etc. But the Department did not maintain data on minerals transported during the ban period; hence it was not in a position to verify if there was illegal transportation. But we all know that sand continues to be mined; quarries continue to be worked without regulations and coal is still mined and transported because police facilitate this instead of halting it.

Interestingly there is a dual control in collection of royalty on limestone by the Forest and Mining Department without any system for exchange of information between the two. So the transporters/companies have a field day evading royalty. This is how governance happens right at the source of revenue collection.

The CAG found that “the Forest Department did not exercise control and monitor the activities of the field offices effectively. Vital information such as the progress of court cases relating to illegal saw mills, royalty and cess collected by Mining Department was not available with the Forest Department, thereby hindering it in effectively tackling the menace of illegal felling and removal of timber or protecting its revenue interests. The data on encroachment maintained by field offices was unreliable. Moreover the Forest Department did not have a suitable control and monitoring mechanism in place to prevent unauthorized transport of forest minerals. Hence four forest check-gates under-reported transportation of 141.29 lakh MT of limestone resulting in loss of revenue amounting to Rs 99.49 crore.”

The Mining and Geology Department is of course notorious for failing to mop up revenue for the State. There is regular under-reporting of coal exported to Bangladesh. This resulted in revenue loss of Rs 46.41 crore. Wonder how much of that went to the DMR officials manning the check gates. The same Department failed to realize royalty amounting to Rs 51.78 crore on 7.67 lakh MT of assessed coal.

Most importantly the Taxation Department which is the revenue earning

Department of the State is also the Department with the highest leakage. In 2016-17 a test check of 19 units found that there was under-assessment of tax and other irregularities in 203 cases involving a whopping Rs 471 crore. These leakages continue with the errant Departments explaining away their acts of omission and commission. Now the point about CAG reports is that they should be diligently studied by the MLAs especially by those sitting in the Opposition. But we know that hardly happens. Politicians are too busy with their businesses and their selfish interests to bother with the CAG report.

Another reason for poor governance is that there is a huge chasm between the government and the people who should actually be the primary stakeholders in the governance process. We may call ourselves a democracy but people don’t have a say in governance yet. Women especially are nowhere to be seen in decision-making platforms in the villages. When they attend meetings, women are largely silent spectators who leave the decision making to men. And we call ourselves a matriline! And this matriliney is glorified across the world.

Look around the city of Shillong and at the number of women hawkers. They outnumber men. Why? It’s because most of those women who brave the sun and rain to peddle their wares, do so because they have to feed families. Most are single parents. While we are angry at the fact that these hawkers have taken over our footpaths, none of us are angry with the Government which is yet to come up with an Act that gives these hawkers some dignity and a proper place to be in rather than having to run away for cover the moment a storm brews. That the last Government has failed to legislate a law premised on the Street Vendors Act 2014 is not easily understood. What are the sticking points in the Act that the Meghalaya Government fears?

The point of this article is to point out the loopholes in governance that are allowed to continue and why they are allowed to continue. Paul Light of the Brookings Institution lists five categories of causes for governance failure. They are (a) policy (b) resources (c) structure (d) leadership (e) culture. These occur because of multiple causes coming together and compounding the situation. Light details how each type of cause contributed to government failures. His findings paint the picture of a government at high risk for serious, repeated, and

frequent failure in its attempt to deliver policy.

Paul Light writes further, “the first step in preventing future failures is to find a reasonable set of past failures that might yield lessons for repair.” To meet this goal, Light asks four key questions about past government failures: (1) where did government fail, (2) why did government fail, (3) who caused the failures, and (4) what can be done to fix the underlying problems?

The contributors to failure fall into five categories, Light concludes:

1. Policy: Government might not have been given the policy, or any policy at all, needed to solve the problem at hand; or the policy might have been either too difficult to deliver or delegated to a vulnerable or historically unreliable organization.

2. Resources: Government might not have had enough funding, staff, or the “collateral capacity” such as information technology, oversight systems, or technical experience to deliver consistent policy impact.

3. Structure: Government might have been unable to move information up and down its over-layered chain of command, select and supervise its contractors, or resolve the confusion associated with duplication and overlap.

4. Leadership: Government’s top appointees might have been unqualified to lead; could have made poor decisions before, during, and after the failures appeared; or might have taken their posts after long delays.

5. Culture: Government might have created confusing missions that could not be communicated and embraced, were easily undermined by rank corruption and unethical conduct, or were beyond careful monitoring through performance measurement and management.

Paul Light’s paper deserves serious reading by those in the present Government who, hopefully, do not want to repeat past mistakes. But I would stick my neck out and say that a complete reshuffle in the top bureaucracy is called for rather than tinkering with mid-career bureaucrats, especially in Departments where some officials have developed a vested interest by virtue of being there for decades. Isn’t that an important rule of governance? More often these officials are the problem for they have violated every norm of good governance.

The plight of NH 40

By Chanlang bareh

“Toll collections,” are not taxes literally but a charge/rate which we pay to the toll plaza for using the roads which are constructed or maintained vide public-private partnership. It is generally collected on multi-lane highways commonly used by buses/trucks and long distance travels. Road tax on the other hands is a tax paid by the owner of a motor vehicle to the state government via the District Transport Office at the regional level. In Meghalaya, a Road tax is a charge after determining the cost of a new vehicle, adding a lifetime road tax on the showroom price. The road tax is then used to improve the roads and infrastructure facility in the state. The current road tax in Meghalaya falls under the purview of the state’s Motor Vehicles Act of 1998 (2011) Taxation Act.

The question is why should the people of Meghalaya pay a high toll for passing through a NH-40(Umling) from Jorabat to Umiam when they had already paid to the government for maintaining the roads at the time of their

commodities.

Meghalaya roads are the backbone of our economy. The Introduction of the toll plaza on National Highways in the state will further increase the transportation cost to and from the state, which will adversely affect the economy and development of Meghalaya. Prices of commodities will rise with the increase in toll rates.

Our problem is not with paying the toll, but the high cost is what pinches. These private-public partnerships rip-off the general public. Why does the government not perform its duties in subsidising the toll collection, especially since the state falls under the 6th Schedule where the state and local governments can take specific decisions in lawmaking. The Sixth Schedule gives tribal communities considerable autonomy; power to make laws, possibility on the various legislative subjects, for better economic development and most importantly ethnic security.

Adding to the plight is that in Umsning the highway road is not yet adjoined. For whatever reasons, we are still

The toll plaza in Umling, National Highway 40 from Jorabat to Umiam in Ri-Bhoi district, despite its short tenure already shows sign of low maintenance in the area of cleanliness. The toll booth is covered with red 'betel nut,' spit all the way down from the window of the toll booth. A boom barrier, also known as a boom gate, a bar or pole pivoted to allow the boom to block vehicular access through a controlled point is no longer automated, and one has to raised it up physically to allow access for the vehicle.

vehicle registration? Let’s look at the various factors which the Government and the private entity are involved in, in the legal extraction of money from the ordinary citizen. Firstly, the private company is free to charge citizens for using the roads until they have quenched their thirst. There is some free entry facility for two-wheelers, local rickshaw under ‘ML10’ registration and Govt of India vehicles which are usually exempted. That is, as far as my observation goes. By Govt. of India vehicles, I mean public transportation. This again varies according to the different types of MoU signed between NHAI, PWD & other statutory bodies together with private companies. Secondly, I hope the Regional Transport Office has also solved the problems of a free entry for vehicle (commercial) owned by the locals but not registered in Ri-Bhoi, District Transport Office. Now we all know that maintenance is one of the areas where our Govt excels at failing. However, Government is happy to do away with this one and let it fall under the private entity whose aim is to make a profit which is not what a welfare state is for. The toll plaza in Umling, National Highway 40 from Jorabat to Umiam in Ri-Bhoi district, despite its short tenure already shows sign of low maintenance in the area of cleanliness. The toll booth is covered with red ‘betel nut,’ spit all the way down from the window of the toll booth. A boom barrier, also known as a boom gate, a bar or pole pivoted to allow the boom to block vehicular access through a controlled point is no longer automated, and one has to raised it up physically to allow access for the vehicle. Thirdly, the highways are mainly used for the transportation of goods and

paying a high toll on a highway which is not even completed. Let us not mention the other safety amenities and services which the concerned authority set out in place for responses to crisis and natural occurrence. I doubt whether there is an awareness about road safety and regulations conducted in the NH 40 from Jorabat to Umiam in Meghalaya. What if there is a ‘hit and run’ case taking place at midnight or early morning when no one is around? How can you trace the culprit accountable for the accident who escapes without a trace? What answer will the Department in charge give the bereaved family? According to guidelines set forth by the Motor Vehicle Regulation Act, 1988, there should be a provision that ensures proper electronic surveillance on national and state highways and urban roads.

As a regular commuter via National Highway 40 (Umling) from Jorabat to Umiam, I believe paying 65 rupees for a single journey is way too expensive. Even for a small piece of work in Nongpoh, one has to pay the same amount for using a few kilometres of the road. This is only a means to extract money from ordinary people. The recent hike in toll at the plaza also leads to the rise in tourist taxi fare (Tata Sumo & Swift Dezire) which is now in the range of Rs 250-350 from Guwahati to Shillong. This has drastically affected the pockets of regular commuters. When the toll first started, I saw a few locals working inside the toll booth, but after a brief period the scenario changed. This makes me wonder that if the locals can’t get jobs then where are the provisions for creating jobs for them? Don’t they even know to operate the toll gate computers/machines?

TO THE EDITOR

Right to water a human right

Editor,
I have been a resident of Cleve colony for as long as my childhood goes. I am proud of being a part of this community and feel that I am one of the privileged few to have my home in this safe and clean neighbourhood. In all my years living in this locality I have never faced any problems except one which has turned into a major crisis. The water supply to our home has been very inconsistent and what is unfair and unjust is that our neighbours have water overflowing from their tanks throughout the year. Despite several complaints and dealing with our plumber or “nongplie um” nothing is resolved. I continue to pay the water suppliers throughout the year. It also seems that the plumber has complete authority over who gets water and who doesn’t. As one who proudly calls this place home and as

someone who has travelled the world to represent my community and proudly speaking of my people through my work, I take personal offence that when I actually come back home I am deprived of my basic need. They say that access to safe water is a fundamental right and therefore a basic Human Right.

So why is my family and I deprived of that Human Right.

My creative brain cells are drying up. Help!!!

Yours etc.,
Daniel Syiem,
Shillong-1

Impeachment of CJI

Editor,
In the history of Impeachment of judges of the country Justice V. Ramaswami was the only Supreme Court judge to face an impeachment motion before Justice Dipak Misra. In 1990, several media outlets had

reported about his alleged ostentatious expenditures on his official residence during his tenure as Punjab and Haryana chief justice. The BJP and the Left moved a notice in the Lok Sabha seeking his removal from office. A committee formed by Speaker Rabi Ray found him guilty on 11-14 counts.

The impeachment motion was placed in the House on May 10, 1993. Lawyer and Congress politician Kapil Sibal appeared for Justice Ramaswami. The Congress abstained from voting and only 196 votes were cast, which was less than two-thirds of the members present, causing the motion to be dropped on technical grounds. A challenge to the outcome in the Supreme Court was defeated. Now the Congress party-led Opposition party’s efforts to get Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra impeached is aimed to intimidate a Judge and send a message to other judges. It is clear that the Congress party and their allies intend to use impeachment as a political

tool which is a serious threat to judicial independence in a democracy.

Apart from MPs discussing the issue of impeachment publicly outside Parliament, recently there had been a spate of news reports about the Congress’s plans to impeach Justice Misra. A judge cannot work without fear amid such a discourse. Public discussions taking place even before an impeachment motion has been moved is not sanctioned by the Constitution of India. MPs & media need to restrain and restrict their unconstitutional expressions in public exceeding the limit of “freedom of speech” as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Article 121 (Restriction on discussion in Parliament) of the Constitution of India reads as under: “No discussion shall take place in Parliament with respect to the conduct of any judge of the Supreme

Court or of a High Court in the discharge of his duties except upon a motion for presenting an address to the President praying for removal of the Judge ...”

As per Article 121 even parliamentarians are restricted from discussing the conduct of a Judge up to a certain stage. Does the Constitution of India permit legislators, as ordinary citizens outside Parliament and the media to talk about the same issue as and when and in whatever manner they choose to? The Congress party publicly declaring their intention of mustering support of various political groups to initiate removal proceedings has scandalized the courts, calculated to bring the courts of law into disrepute and to lower their authority and further to interfere with justice and the lawful process of the courts. This is an unconstitutional act. Moreover scurrilous abuse of a judge or court or attacks on the personal character of a judge is a punishable contempt.

The Congress party is deliberately trying to

demolish the Institution and independence of Judiciary by casting aspersions on the Chief Justice of India by instigating their favoured judges of in the apex court thereby creating internal rumblings/almost a revolt resulting in open discord amongst Judges in the Supreme Court. The Congress party has inherited the “divide & rule” policy from the British who divided the entire country into innumerable groups based on caste, creed, region, religion and reservations and by defying the ideals and aspirations of the people as enshrined in the Constitution during their misrule for more than six decades. On the latest unfortunate issue of Impeachment of the CJI the party deserves conferment of Ph D on the subject of “dividing and splitting the country. Will Democracy survive in India?

Yours etc.,
Samares Bandyopadhyay
Viaemail

"It is the province of knowledge to speak and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen."

--- Oliver Wendell Holmes

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.276

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MAY 19, 2018

Dubious role of Governors

IN state after state, constitutional proprieties have been trashed by those who should uphold the Constitution. The Constitution demands that the Governor invites the party with the single largest majority to form the government after election results are announced. But this is violated again and again. However this is not a recent phenomenon. It started with the Congress regime when Indira Gandhi was prime minister and has only worsened. In the recently concluded elections in Karnataka which went to the polls on May 12, out of the 222 seats in the House, the BJP won 104 seats, the Congress got 78 and the JD(S) 38 (including one of the Bahujan Samaj Party with which it had a pre-poll alliance). There was one independent candidate and another from the newly-formed Karnataka Pragnyanvantha Janatha Party. Soon after the results were announced the JD(S) and Congress tried to work out a coalition for government formation with the idea of keeping out BJP. But a lot of backstage maneuvers ensured that some MLAs from the JD (S) were whisked away to unknown destinations thereby making it difficult for the JD(S)-Congress alliance to parade the full strength of their MLAs.

Meanwhile, B.S. Yeddyurappa, the 75-year-old Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker, was sworn in as the 23rd chief minister of Karnataka on Thursday by Governor Vajubhai Vala. Vala an appointee of the Modi Government bent over backwards to facilitate government formation by the BJP and even gave Yeddyurappa a long rope of 15 days to prove his majority on the floor of the House. The Congress hastily approached the Supreme Court on the matter on May 16 evening forcing the Court to hold a four-hour midnight hearing. The Court declined to stay Yeddyurappa's swearing-in ceremony and posted the case for hearing on May 18. On Friday the Court asked Yeddyurappa to prove his strength on the floor of by 4 pm on Saturday. The Court has also appointed the senior most MLA as the Speaker to oversee the floor test. Congress has welcomed the Supreme Court decision and stated that the judiciary has yet again saved democracy. The question now is whether the BJP can cobble up the numbers to prove its majority. The Party is short of eight MLAs. What can happen between now and 4 pm on Saturday will be the litmus test for parliamentary democracy in India. Whatever be the result of the floor test the role of the Governor has come under a cloud. Governors have for a long while been more loyal to the Party that appoints them than to the Constitution.

The Supreme Court has asked Chief Justices of all High Courts in the country to set up within two months anti-sexual harassment committees at all High Courts and District courts as directed in the 20-year-old verdict in the Vishaka case against the Government of Rajasthan and in accordance with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013.

It was dealing with a complaint by a woman advocate of alleged manhandling by fellow advocates at the Tis Hazari Court in Delhi for attempting to attend court when lawyers were on strike on 4th May. The apex court wants prompt action and has hinted at Suo motu action if the committees are not constituted.

Sexual harassment has suddenly become the topic of the day since a senior choreographer made a rather shocking statement about prevalence of "casting couch" in Bollywood. The topic, shunned as taboo for open discussion in our country and incidents suppressed by the victims fearing shame and stigma for no fault on their part, has emerged as a serious problem requiring effective solution.

The matter could have lost its significance and ended there but for Congress MP, Renuka Chowdhuri's more shocking comment on the "bitter truth" that no workplace in India is immune from sexual harassment -- not even Parliament. She later amended her statement by pointing out that politics is most transparent and includes a redressal cell. This has reopened the question of workplace safety for women in India among various problems of working women. It has triggered a kind of a "Me Too" movement opening a can of worms hidden in workplaces.

It was in the 1990s, the problem of sexual harassment at workplaces received attention after the incident of rape reported by the chairman of the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan for preventing a child marriage. Rajasthan court did not consider rape as a serious

Sexual Harassment Vishaka judgement frozen

By Dr. S. Saraswathi

crime and a Women's Right Group, Vishaka filed a PIL in the Supreme Court. It opened a new era of women's safety in the workplace at least as the law and guiding principles.

In 1997, the Supreme Court recognised sexual harassment at the workplace as a violation of human rights. It had also issued guidelines on how establishments should set up mechanisms to deal with such offences. It defined sexual harassment, laid down the duties of employers to ensure that work atmosphere was not hostile for women, barred victimisation of complainants and witnesses, and provided standing orders pending a Central legislation in the matter. Known as Vishaka Guidelines, these were in conformity with international law and the resolutions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. But, these did not become rules or evoke compliance.

In December 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act was adopted by Indian parliament. Under this, the employer of any organisation that employs more than 10 women should appoint an Internal Complaints Committee with at least 50 per cent women members composed of a senior woman employee, two other employees, and a social worker to hear complaints. Failure to form the committee carries a penalty up to Rs. 50,000 for the first offence and double that amount for repeat offence.

Where such a committee is not constituted, and where the complaint is against the employer himself, the District Magistrate is authorised to set up a panel drawn from social workers and NGOs to deal with the complaints. Government has also to set up Local Complaints Committee at district level.

However, even the legislation has not been taken seriously. The National Commission for

Women reported in 2014 that one-third of Indian corporations and one-fourth of global companies surveyed in the country were not implementing the 2013 Act. A big increase in the number of sexual harassment cases at workplaces, more than double the number in the previous year, was noted in 2014.

Between 2014 and 2017, a total of 1971 cases of sexual harassment of women at workplace were registered amounting to one case per day on average. Cases reported increased by 45 per cent from 371 in 2014 to 539 in 2017. Maximum number of cases was reported from Uttar Pradesh - 141 in 2017. A survey by the Indian Bar Association mentioned that 70 per cent did not report for fear of repercussions.

The 2013 Act provides for punishment for sexual harassment at workplace ranging from apology and censure to withholding promotions and increments and even termination of service. The Act does not rule out conciliation and settlement of disputes if the victim requests.

It is reported that a large number of companies are not aware of the penal consequences of not constituting committees although the 2013 Act mandates constitution of Internal Complaints Committee to display the penal provisions, organize orientation programmes for members of the ICC, and awareness programmes for all.

Sexual harassment includes physical contact and advances, demand or request for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, and any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature. Its meaning was expanded in 2014 to include threats and skewed treatment within its ambit including explicit promise of preferential treatment as well as threat of humiliating treatment. The new set of rules has been incorporated in the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964.

In this age of tight job situation, harassment of any employee in any form

affecting promotion and prospects is bound to be a serious matter for that employee. So also, exchange of favours between the employer/superior or boss and a woman staff member as part of job assignment is a cruel form of crime against women. Such an atmosphere, wherever it flourishes, must be changed.

The definition of workplace has been amended to include any department, organisation, establishment, enterprise, institution, office, branch or unit which is established, owned, controlled, or wholly or substantially funded directly or indirectly by the Centre, any sports institute, stadium, sports complex or competition or games venue used for training (whether residential or not), sports or other activities, any place visited by the employee in connection with work including transportation provided for work by the employee, a dwelling place or house.

Sexual harassment is the most common offence perpetrated globally against women workforce. The latest crime survey in England and Wales shows that more than 510,000 women -- about 30 per cent of women in the age-group 15-59 experienced some type of sexual assault in the previous year.

In Australia, the Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1984 under which sexual harassment is unlawful under certain circumstances. In Portugal, Belgium, and Peru, sexual harassment of a woman in a public place is an offence. Anything that affects a woman's "freedom, dignity, and movement" is considered as harassment. It may be physical or verbal.

Denial of sexual harassment cases in workplaces is no solution to the problem that affects women's dignity as well as organisational goals. The Vishaka judgement should not be frozen by inaction and indifference. --INFA

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

"Responsibility that comes with Parenthood"

By Tirot Sing Suchiang

I personally believe that a person's morality is shaped by the good and evil influences to which he or she is exposed. A child's most important influences comes from parents. I remember a portion from the Scriptures (Math 7:16,17) which says, "You will know them by their fruits." Good trees bear good fruit and vice versa. You will know the parents from their children, family from their off-springs because children are the reflection of the family/home. Parents must involve themselves in their children's lives enough to ensure that no other influences take precedence. We cannot blame others for our kid's failures. Today more than the parents it is the world that influences our kids. Parents no longer determine what kind of people their kids will grow up to be. We have invested less time in teaching our kids while allowing them to watch unlimited and unregulated television viewing time. We have allowed spiritual, moral and ethical instruction to come from the television, internet, movies, music etc. Though I don't say having a television at home is a sin, but the content of most programmes are designed to negate our spirit.

internet and then wonder why they are so casual about sex and marriage. That is why of late we witness so many sexual crimes (rape, molestation etc). Sexual immorality is one of the sins that invited God's judgment.

If the children become something other than what the parents hoped for it is usually because they have simply learned from those who were there to teach them. Parenting is a full time responsibility; there are no tea breaks from our parental duties; not an hour in a day is to be excluded; no time out if you want to be faithful parents. Some of us compartmentalize our children's life and assign a set number of hours per week to spend on parenting and then fulfill our duties as parents. We call it "quality time," but this whole philosophy is wrong. What about the remaining hours of their lives? Who will have more influence in shaping the child's character? We have to admit that as parents we have failed miserably in our responsibility. Whenever we parents neglect our children they suffer a spiritual and moral famine. Look at this generation now! It is as bleak as it has ever been. Why are we surrendering our most

It is time we take a stand and guard the moral climate of our homes and families. Let us spend more time with our children and loved ones instead of spending time in front of the television, internet, movies etc that devours our precious resources. Instead of feeding ourselves and our children with soul defiling pictures, songs, movies etc., let us promote reading of good books, listening to uplifting music and playing and going out together as a family.

Many years ago we bought a television set with a strong determination and understanding to have control over it. Things went as planned for a while but soon things began to change. Everyone in the family was drawn to it. Television became the main attraction to everyone in our home. I believe there are parents and children who are more interested in the world of television than family values. Television viewing can keep us away from other meaningful activities and pursuits. It is amazing at how early infants imitate us. Shortly after birth an infant smiles back at us. They do not have the ability to screen out the good from the bad. Children who are 3-4 years old are still unable to distinguish reality from fantasy. When it comes to television children believe what they see. They believe they are viewing a realistic representation of the world around them. These are made to appear as factual sources of information about the world outside their home. Children believe what they see, despite what you may tell them. When they grow up and face moral choices, such images resurface and shape their behaviour. That is fearful considering the fast paced and low moral values of most programmes. How many of us parents unconsciously feed our children a diet of crime, sex, violence on television. We give them total access to the internet and videos and then wonder why our children lose respect for God, parents, religion, life, property etc. We allow them to watch naked pictures of adults on television and

precious children to influences that are overtly violent and morally corrupt? We should make a decision to be committed to teaching our children what they need to learn. We cannot rely too much on Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, school teachers, religious leaders, counselors etc., because they are all outside the purview of the family.

It is time we take a stand and guard the moral climate of our homes and families. Let us spend more time with our children and loved ones instead of spending time in front of the television, internet, movies etc that devours our precious resources. Instead of feeding ourselves and our children with soul defiling pictures, songs, movies etc., let us promote reading of good books, listening to uplifting music and playing and going out together as a family. Doing things together helps us relate to each other. In this way our minds will be more creative and we will enjoy life in ways we have never experienced. An old Chinese proverb says, "One generation plants the trees and the other gets the shade." Our generation lives in the shade of many trees that were planted by our ancestors. We derive our shade from our parents and grandparents. Their ideals determine the kind of civilization we inherited from them. Likewise our generation's ideals will shape tomorrow's culture of our kids but the big question is, "ARE WE PLANTING THE RIGHT KIND OF TREES FOR SHADE OR ARE WE LEAVING OUR CHILDREN TOTALLY EXPOSED?"

TO THE EDITOR

Two concepts of health care

Editor,

The tribal and non-tribal economy was well described by Avner Pariat in "Two concepts of economy" (ST May 17, 2018). There are two concepts for healthcare too in Meghalaya - the government employees and the others. While the former go out of the state for all forms of medical treatment and get reimbursed for everything, including the travel and accommodation, the latter don't get even basic cashless treatment coverage. The MHIS, which is touted as a cashless facility is rendered as a pay-first-and-get-reimbursed-later scheme in several hospitals. Many patients are unable to pay for treatment even in government hospitals like NEIGRIHMS, which has started charging patients for some services. The reimbursement and the amount approved for most treatments is grossly inadequate.

While the government employees get their travel and accommodation reimbursed, these poor citizens suffer. Even traveling from their villages to Shillong and staying here is beyond their reach. This is

perpetuating as the government employees do not question the government as to why health care in the state is not improved, and the government continues its tie up with commercial hospitals in South India, enriching such businesses. It's sad that the tax paid by the poor 'others' is used to pay for the treatment of these government employees.

Hope the government will review its health care policy and keep commercial players out, so as to help the 'others' in the state.

Yours etc.,

A concerned citizen
(Name withheld on request)

Kudos to the Umroi MLA!

Editor,

I have been following the deliberations of the Budget session of the Assembly and I am very impressed by the issues taken up by the MLA of Umroi constituency such as unemployment, rat hole mining and various other important issues concerning the state as a whole while others spoke on issues pertaining only to their constituencies.

The point raised by George B Lyngdoh, MLA against the hasty move for lifting of the ban on rat hole coal mining should be appreciated by all law abiding citizens and by those who want to live in a healthy atmosphere. I, for one, am a strong supporter of the NGT ban on rat hole mining of coal and rampant and savage mining of limestone which has been the reason for the loss of forest cover in the state and destroying the environment in a massive way. I could see only few individuals/families benefitting from such commercial activities whereas the majority of the citizens are suffering in various forms, from exploitation, failure of law and order, crime, drugs, human trafficking, deaths from diseases due to lack of safe drinking water etc., You will agree with me if you personally visit Shahlang, Lad Rymbai, Dawki, Ichamat, or Borsora or other coal belts of the Garo Hills. I understand that many legislators are in favour of lifting the ban to generate their income and to please their supporters, but at the same time they should realize that they are 'Legislators' of the State and they are duty bound to protect the larger interests

of the state.

Yours etc.,
Peter L Lamin
Jowai

Whither democracy!

Editor,

India is the largest Democracy in the world where the representatives are elected by the people to work for the people and are of the people. Democracy can also be termed as, "rule by the majority." But the recent incidents that have taken place in our country has altered the definition of democracy. I may be wrong but everyone is welcome to clear my doubts. The recent election results in Karnataka declared BJP to be the single largest party to win the election and the Governor had invited them to form the government and given 15 days time to prove their majority, whereas the coalition of Congress and JD(S) which crossed the halfway mark and wanted to form the government was not given that opportunity. If democracy means rule of the majority then the coalition of Congress and JD(S) should have been given the first chance to form the government as they have the majority. This

principle was followed in the case of Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya where the government was formed by the coalition of BJP and the other regional parties of respective states which had proved their majority in spite of Congress being the single largest party to have won the elections in those states. The same ought to have been followed in Karnataka too. I'm not inclined to any political party and I don't know the scenario of Karnataka politics, but these instances of formation of government in all the different states of our country following different rules leave unanswered questions in my mind. Where is our country heading towards in the fight between political parties.

Yours etc.,
Anil Singh Roka
Viamail

With a Salutation!

Editor,

Your report of May 16 about the Chief Minister's deadline of 45 days to the concerned authorities to finalise the Education Policy was most welcome. I salute you, Mr Chief Minister for the bold command. Mr Chief Minister, Sir, may I please

draw your kind attention to the Meghalaya State Policy for Persons with Disabilities which was drafted in 2007 and circulated in 2009 but had never been adopted as it was not put up to the Cabinet.

I had brought this to the notice of the Department of Social Welfare no less than four times, the last being at the State Co-ordination Committee Meeting on October 19, 2016. I was given to understand that the Department was awaiting the commencement of the amended Act - The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. With this new Act the previous Act of 1995 was revoked. Twenty one years, from 1995 till 2016, passed by for the Government to adopt the Policy for the Disabled. I sincerely hope the Act of 2016 does not follow suit and the Disabled population need to wait for another two decades for the Government to follow the guidelines of a Policy. An Act or a Policy if not implemented in totality is not even worth the paper it is written on.

Yours etc.,
Sajjad M. Ali
Dwar Jingkyrmen

The rise & rise of eSports

Competitive video gaming is emerging as one of the fastest-growing sports in the world, report Drew Pilewski & Abby Dodge from the US & Souryaprokas Bhaduri in India

For many kids across the globe, video game consoles have replaced footballs and cricket bats as the stuff of childhood sporting memories. Joseph Biswas of Kolkata, India, began his online gaming 10 years ago with the FIFA 09 video soccer (football) game.

American Jake Boeding of Missouri was barely in middle school when he was bitten by the gaming bug: "My parents finally got me my own system, which was a Gamecube, and after that, it was Mario Kart, Super Smash Bros, all that kind of stuff. I was just hooked and I've been gaming ever since."

These casual video game aficionados are among the millions helping turn "eSports" into one of the fastest-growing sports in the world. They've grown so popular that they are on the agenda for the 2022 Asian Games and are even being considered for the Olympics.

According to 2017 data from Flurry Analytics, the United States is the top country for mobile gaming, with 20 percent of all gaming sessions globally. India ranks second, with 13 percent.

One reason eSports are spreading so quickly is that competitive gaming leagues are streamed online, so anyone with an internet connection can watch them play for free. This creates a common ground for young people like Boeding and Biswas across cultures.

As with other sports, some players go pro or compete at the collegiate level. The Columbia College eSports team is one of many from U.S. colleges facing off in the fantasy team strategy video game League of Legends.

"We practice five days a week for two to three hours a day," Coach Duong Pham said.

All this practice lets them put on quite a show for their fans.

"You just see this entire atmosphere of these fans that just love the game so much and it does have that community," Boeding said. "It doesn't necessarily feel like its two teams competing, but rather celebrating the game that everyone loves."

Worldwide eSports explosion

Since The Korean e-Sports Association was founded in 2000, eSports have exploded into a \$906 million (60 billion rupees) worldwide industry that's expected to reach \$1.5 billion (98.6 billion rupees) by 2020.

Young people are driving this growth.

According to a 2016 study by Newzoo, an eSports market data provider, 22 percent of millennials in the U.S. "frequently" view eSports, a number equal to the proportion of baseball viewers of the same age.

eSports are also very popular among India's young people -- making the country of over 1.3 billion a huge force in the industry given its median age of 28, compared with 38 in America.

Shefali Johnson of NODWIN Gaming, a leading eSports company in India, said the rise in internet access in the developing nation is also a huge



Esports image by Nodwin Gaming

factor, spawning "close-knit gaming communities" and a competitive eSports scene.

"Now," Johnson said, "it's easier to watch live streams of international and localized tournaments as well as follow popular gaming content creators."

According to her, the presence of several top gaming peripheral manufacturers in the country also boosts the culture of eSports. "Today it is possible to create an entry level gaming PC for as low as Rs 30,000 or roughly \$500," she says.

"The Indian esports scene has seen huge investments coming in. Major players include Nazara Technologies Ltd, Ucypher, COBx Gaming and more," she said, adding that there are partnerships with top, global eSports companies and events now.

"NODWIN Gaming has partnerships with ESL, ESWC and Valve. Similarly, COBx recently tied up with PGL," she informed.

Live events are also drawing viewers worldwide.

Top-level local competitive gaming streams reached mid-Missouri in the US Midwest in 2013, when Columbia College started its eSports team to compete in collegiate tournaments.

Over the years, it's grown from a few interested faces to full A and B teams with fans like Evan Snell, who travel to Columbia to see their friends play in person.

"You can see how people's personalities play into their performances,"

ESports, or Electronic sports, is a term used to describe competitive video gaming. Competitions involve two teams competing against each other in the same video game for prize pools and trophies. These competitions are broadcast live over streaming services like Twitch, YouTube and Facebook



Snell said. "You get kind of a more personal experience than a video."

Snell got the chance to see his favourite team in action at the Midwest Campus Clash in early April at Columbia College. The League of Legends Tournament featured seven colleges and universities from across the Midwest. Coach Pham said having the support of the local crowd helped his team perform.

"The people are cheering for our sake -- you don't have to block it out; you have to absorb it," Pham said. "The energy you are taking in is like drinking 10 Monster energy drinks."

Indian eSports events come with even more pageantry. The practice of "cosplaying," or dressing up as a character from one of your favourite games, is taking off in India.

"Cosplaying is an alternate avenue

through which gamers celebrate their love towards their gaming passion," Johnson of NODWIN Gaming said.

"India hosts a vibrant cosplay community and many eSports tournaments today are incomplete without cosplay activities," she said.

Spreading through Twitch

A key to the continuing growth of eSports is on an online streaming service called Twitch, which allows anyone in the world to watch live streams of people playing their favourite video games for free.

In 2015, average worldwide Twitch viewership at any given time was just under 550,000 viewers. This year, average viewership is expected to reach nearly a million.

"Before, you just wanted to go play the game yourself. Now, with Twitch, they make a lot of money with people watching other people play the games," Pham said. "It's a new source of entertainment where you can watch them go through the challenges."

Twitch says most of its audience for eSports is between the ages of 18-34, an age group coveted by advertisers and retailers.

English speakers also make up a huge part of the audience, and experts say as many as 30 percents of Indians speak English at some level. In the most recent professional tournament for League of Legends, EU Masters 2018, English streamers made up 64 percent

of the overall peak viewership.

Just like conventional sports, eSports also have live play-by-play and color commentators who describe the action to the Twitch stream. The community affectionately calls these broadcasters "scream-casters" because of their animated delivery. One of these scream-casters is Kyle Crowe, who has had a front-row seat to the "crazy" growth of eSports over the last five years.

Crowe feels online streaming is essential to delivering eSports to the people. "I think streaming is always going to be important to eSports because it's going to be where we came from," Crowe said. "The only counterpart to that is traditional television networks."

Crowe said streaming has some significant advantages to traditional TV coverage.

"The stream is free. It's always there," Crowe said. "It's always really high quality, and then there's a live chat rolling alongside it, so everyone feels involved."

Future Olympic event?

With the growth of eSports comes legitimacy.

The Olympic Committee is considering whether to add eSports to traditional sports like soccer and swimming in the lineup for Paris in 2024. But not everyone believes this will happen, partly because some view eSports as overly commercial. Companies make money off products such as League of Legends, they say, while no single company "owns" the sport of baseball.

"The Olympics and the Olympic Committee have been pretty draconian in the past about

not wanting to get brands involved," Crowe said. "That's something that the Olympics steers clear of pretty heavily. All of eSports are tied to plenty of brands...I would be surprised if they could work out that major roadblock."

Stephen Johnson, a fellow scream-caster, sees it differently.

"I think when you break it down to the core elements of what it takes to play eSports, what it takes to be good at it, it really does line up with the Olympic committee," Stephen Johnson said. "I wouldn't be shocked to see it."

While recognition from the international governing body of sports would be a big step for eSports, Stephen Johnson said it wouldn't be a game-changer; worldwide events already happen every year.

"That being said, with the prestige of the Olympics, I'm sure they'll work it out one way or another," he said.

But no matter what happens with the Olympics, experts say the unmistakable momentum of eSports make them impossible to ignore as a huge force in sports. "At a distance, eSports can be a little overwhelming or a little hard to understand on the front end," Crowe said. "Seeing some of this stuff yourself shows you what this can grow into."

(IBNS in collaboration with University of Missouri)

Colours of Rongali Bihu in City of Joy



By Ratan Bhattacharjee

The Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association is a wonderful team of young and veteran artists and writers, dancers and singers who give the show of Rongali Bihu a brilliant ambience each year.

Bohag matho ata ritu no hoi (Bohag is not just a season), sang Bhupen Hazarika, the legendary cultural ambassador of Assam. This year too, there was no exception. Life suddenly bloomed like the Kopou festivity when the spring comes. It is a wonderful feeling of heart and mind where cultural diversities are melted into one cauldron of unity.

Laughter and gaiety, enthusiasm and energy were never in dearth and the whole-hearted participation of the Assamese and Bengali artists gave the Rongali Bihu 2018 in Kolkata a glorious height of performance. It shows how culturally Assamese and Bengali people are close.

The Baul singers with their dotara go hand in hand with young Assamese singers with dhol, pepa and gogona.

Spring inspires people everywhere to come out and celebrate. From Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to the Roman Valentine celebrations, spring brings to the mind of the people the sunny feelings of American Cherry Blossoms. In Kolkata too, people enjoy the beauty of Kopou flowers, which are iconic of Assamese culture.

But it was a stormy evening of Sunday and yet the city of joy was resonant with

the sounds of dhol-pepa-gogona again on May 13 when the Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association (KACA) showcased the rich and diverse culture of Assam by organising the yearly Rongali Bihu celebration anchored Pallavi Gogoi.

The highlight of the evening was Simanta Sekhar who amazed the audience with delightful numbers.

Eminent Baul folk artist Padmashree Purnendu Baul was felicitated. The nationally renowned choreographer, Sudarshan Chakraborty, and others were also felicitated on this festive display of regional culture.



The programme started with a Mukoli Bihu by the members of the association where others too joined for dancing and also with their cameras. The felicitation with fuloni gamocha is another important event. The well dressed Assamese young men in dhoti and punjabi and the women in Muga sadar gave the occasion a dignity of its own.

Students of Padmini Dance Academy paid tribute to their founder late Monideepa Sarkar Mukherjee by performing a beautifully choreographed dance drama. The annual publication Sristi, the magazine of KACA, was released by eminent journalist Tamal Kanti Ghosh. The Bihu team of KACA 'Ramdhenu' had their brilliant performance that enthralled the audience. Every year, this Bihu celebration is attended by eminent personalities from various places of India and the states of Assam and Bengal. The harmonious feeling enervates all.

The magazine 'Sristi', edited by Ratul Bezbaruah, is a wonderful trilingual landmark of literary creativity accommodating writings from all over India in Assamese, Bengali and English. It is an interesting fact to know that Assamese culture is promoted through Rongali Bihu in Delhi and Haryana to usher in spring. The songs of Simanta Sekhar enthralled their ears while the beautiful dances made a colourful feast for their eyes and the impressions were really indelible. Suddenly the drab and dull routine of life got a new lease of colourful and melodious spell.

The celebration of Bhupen Hazarika's birth anniversary was also a grand event organised a few months ago by KACA.

(The author is Associate Professor and Chair of Post Graduate Department of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College, Kolkata)

The ultimate Dad Jokes list

Fathers, please note: Whenever your child says "I'm ready", it is a legal requirement that you say: "Hello, Ready, I'm Dad!"

The telling of extremely lame "jokes" has been a duty for adult males since the first people evolved. ("Got any fruit? I'm hungry." "Hi, Hungry, I'm Adam.")

You can even see this in small boys. If you laugh at your son's joke, he will repeat it multiple times, eventually taxing your ability to simulate laughter.

But it is when a male achieves fatherhood that a massive biochemical change takes place, causing him to pretty much limit his utterances to Dad Jokes.

Other members of the family have to play their parts, providing set up lines. Wife: "Can you call me a taxi?" Husband: "Sure! You're a taxi!"

And that includes children. Child: "Daddy, can you make me a jam sandwich?" Daddy: "Abracadabra! Bing! You are now a jam sandwich!"

Guys who are not yet fathers can rest assured that your family members will find this totally endearing ("infuriating"), and will show their delighted appreciation by rolling their eyes and palming their faces.

The nature of fatherhood was on this columnist's mind after a reader sent in a recent news story from the Al-Massae newspaper of Morocco.

A professor went to his doctor in the small city of Sidi Slimane for a routine check-up. The doctor did some tests and told the unnamed man (let's call him Professor Sidi) that he was completely sterile, and had been all his life.

This came as a surprise, as Professor Sidi's wife had apparently borne him nine children. A somewhat awkward conversation later took place

which must have gone something like this. Sidi: "The doctor says I've been sterile all my life. So our children aren't mine." Wife: "Ah. Right. Oops." Sidi: "Do you have anything to say for yourself?" Wife: "I'm sorry." Sidi: "Hello, Sorry, I'm Professor Sidi!"

This columnist consulted a lawyer who said that paternity fraud is illegal in most countries, including Morocco, but not in England. There, women can legally deceive their husbands about their children unless the man is a member of the royal family, in which case it is a crime under the Treason Act of 1351. There are a lot of laws which only apply to women who marry British royals, and I hope someone has told Meghan Markle.

There is a scientific reason dads tell bad jokes. Mothers have deep verbal relationships with their children, but fathers are unable to do this, so connect on a silly level instead. Daughter-on-the-phone: "Dad, I'm busy, can you call me later?" Dad-on-the-phone: "Okay, Later! Speak to you later, Later."

On the downside, many fathers have poor self-awareness and will launch a Dad Joke when people are not in the mood. Such as this conversation that took place in this writer's house the night before writing this column. Daughter: "Can you call Mom's phone? Mom can't find it." Dad: "Sure! Mom's phone! Mom's phone!"

Meanwhile, fathers should prepare a Dad Joke for their deathbeds. Here's a suggestion. Wife: "How do you feel?" Husband: "With my hands!" Wife: " [*Rolls eyes*]" Husband: " [*Dies with a smile*]"

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

Ka Jingsneng Tymmen: The teachings of elders

By Bijoya Sawian

Ka Jingsneng Tymmen is a compilation of the ancient Khasi moral code and rules of etiquette. This literary masterpiece is the work of Radhon Sing Berry Kharwanlang who, along with Rabon Sing Suka and Jeebon Roy Mairom, perfected the Khasi alphabet after Reverend Thomas Jones had introduced the Roman alphabet in 1841. Before that ours was purely an oral tradition.

In order to keep the pronunciation intact the letters ii, n and ng were added and c, z, v, f, z, and q were dropped.

Ka Jingsneng Tymmen encapsulates the essence of Khasi philosophy and way of life. It enunciates the import of a life lived correctly, a life conscientiously aware of the divinity within which then leads to inner harmony and outer harmony and, consequently, to the well-being of one and all. Etiquette among the Khasis is not mere social grace but a way of worshiping. By showing respect to one and all one is according respect to the Creator, God Almighty, U Blei Nongbuh, Nongthaw.

The Jingsneng Tymmen was first published in U Khasi Mynta in February 1897. It had 112 lines. In March, the same year RS Berry added another 52 lines. Jeebon Roy, his friend and literary soul mate, immediately realised the beauty and importance of the work and published it in book form in 1901 in his recently established Ri Khasi Press.

In 1902 he published Book 11. In 1997, I had the privilege of having my English translation published in the same Press. While translating this masterpiece, written in exquisite Khasi, I realised its universal and perennial quality in most of the verses and why Jeebon Roy thought it would benefit generations to come, eternally.

RS Berry delves into the deep recesses of the human mind and guides one step by step through the seemingly simple path of day to day living. He details the way on how one should sit, walk, talk and attire, the importance of early rising and diligence, how to conduct oneself while visiting people, travelling, trading, wooing and mixing with opposite sex, the importance of being wary of drugs, drinks, gambling and promiscuity, the evil of greed, envy, sloth, arrogance and over indulgence, why and how to respect our elders, revere our ancestors and worship God and much more.



I quote some of the verses. One cannot match the original in the flow of the language, the perfect rhyme and meter but I have endeavoured to keep the essence and the meaning intact in the simplest of language.

"In the house you are born these you must learn/How to sit and how to stand/How to walk and cross your feet/How to drink and how to eat/How to talk and how to glance/How to move how to advance/How to work and how to labour/How to cope with the work you shoulder/How to dress how to attire/How to be modest how to cover/How your turban you will wear/How to comb and make your hair/How to give how to accept/How to live and your life, will direct."

In front of elders any time any place /Speak with humility and grace/When they enter the room while you're alone or with friends/Stand up, give your seat, never feel shame or offence/In front of them in smoking don't indulge/It belittles their position and dignity very much/You, too, will yourself expose and disgrace/Like a boorish upstart who knows not his place.

Alcohol you shouldn't too much desire/In has, in it, both fire and water/Smoking hashish too do not dare/Impoverished you will be, for your life you won't care/As for opium and other stronger drugs/You'll shorten your life if in them you indulge/From gambling too you should stay far/Or like a bottomless pit it will you devour/Keep away from women of bad character/Or your health and wealth will disappear.

Whatever you know, whatever you gain/It's useless if not by Truth sustained/Even if very rich you

become/If no one respects you, what use is the pomp?/Even if you are very grandly attired/It's useless for it's only your shame camouflaged/Even if you worshipped with folded hands/What use is it if you're not honest and kind?

Don't always pamper your whims and fancies/Detrimental to you are such tendencies/Indulgences encourage only sin and vice/They trample all limits, taboos, advice/To the children of the well to do/Such habits will bring only sorrow and woe/Be careful be wary, stick to what is correct/In matters about how one's life is conducted/My children, my nieces and nephews don't succumb to desire/God will assist you, so will your ancestors.

When a couple has a misunderstanding/Parents shouldn't be too interfering/Parents of either boy or girl/If they interfere it will get worse/A minor issue will surely inflate/If parents meddle and manipulate/If there's a valid reason however/Parents should render advice and succour.

Upon yourself do not bring trouble and woe/With harmful objects do not point and show/Your aura will be marred with ire and resentment/If, towards others and yourself you point a weapon/You may be aiming frivolously/But you may still cause a tragedy/Children you should not play with weapons/This act, is by God, strictly forbidden/If ever at anyone you aim by mistake/Stop using the weapon and apologies make.

All superficial pomp and ostentation/Undermines Truth and is the root of destruction/Once your character is destroyed/Whatever you achieve no one will applaud/Well-being is assured if by Truth you abide/Right from the beginning to the end of your life.

The best etiquette if followed fully/Binds you to your clan and your father's family/The best behavior will always bring/Many benefits and many blessings/Don't take this lightly and dismiss these words/My children instructions you should never avoid.

The stanzas deal with a society that existed hundreds of years ago. Except for a few stanzas that have more esoteric connotations and those that express roles of women very little else are outdated. The masterpiece reveals the elevated world view of the Khasi community, its level of understanding and evolvement, the high moral and spiritual standard of the society. Maybe we should go through this gem of a book, take a walk back in time and retrospect in order to move ahead.

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, MAY 20 2018

A good year is in store for you as Moon opposite Mars on your solar return chart. You will reassess yourself and start looking again at life. You thrive on self-development and inner focus that you have grown. Put your best foot forward as you are full of your usual charm and magnetism. Some of your projects that were disturbing you earlier start giving positive results. You will remain enormously busy and your efforts pay off. Financially this is going to be a very good phase. There will be agreement and togetherness that brings out fun and love. The purchase of a new household is also not ruled out.

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. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

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. Brisk walks in natural surroundings would be helpful this week.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This is a good time for family, business and trips. You are active, skilful 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 will 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. Health will take a turn for the better if you take up a regular exercise routine.

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. You need to conserve health and energy to meet domestic responsibilities.

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. A health routine started now is likely to be successful.

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. You are feeling inspired creatively, and ready to perform in the same manner. 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.

Put the right foot forward

By Ranjan K Baruah

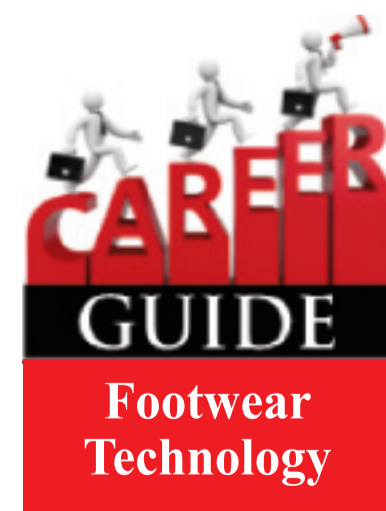
Footwear is a necessary fashion accessory and can be innovated in various ways. There are career opportunities related to footwear technology or footwear designing, besides branding or selling it. Footwear technology deals with every bit of the footwear. It works upon designing of footwear to the study of the materials to be used, structure of the footwear and different types of footwear.

As now fashion boom is everywhere so people are concerned about fashion with footwear apart from comfort and safety. It has lately become one of the most lucrative career options because of the momentous rise in the demand and the variety. Many international players have come into picture. Footwear has also created a slot for themselves in the import and the export market of the nation. Footwear technology studies raw materials such as plastic, canvas, fabric, leather, rubber as an essential part of its curriculum.

Footwear technology or designing is a unique career and it needs lot of skills apart from degrees or diplomas.

We could see cobblers in many areas and some of them used to make new footwear apart from repairing the old one. But as time has passed and design demand is everywhere, so things have changed in comparison with what were few decades back. It requires a blend of artistic talent and creativity. It has come a long way from traditional shoemakers cutting and stitching leather, to specialised professionals utilising modern technology, working at high tech laboratories, on sophisticated machines, experimenting with a varied range of materials, from leather, plastic, canvas, jute, rubber and even cloth.

Footwear designers create new styles of footwear, keeping in mind the popular demand in the markets and also the demands of individual clients. The footwear industry has a range of jobs and skills compris-



in leather, engineering or footwear technology. For engineering degree like B Tech students must be from science stream. Admission to most of these courses is made through entrance examinations.

Courses in these subjects include Certificate Course in Footwear Design and Production, Certificate Course in Footwear Technology, Certificate Course in Shoe Designing and Pattern Cutting, Computer Aided Shoe Designing, Bachelor of Design (B.DES), Leather Design, Diploma in Footwear Designing and Production, Diploma in Footwear Technology (DFT), Diploma in Leather Goods and Accessories Design (DLGAD), Post Graduate Diploma in Footwear Technology, Shoe Production, etc.

Updates:

DU Admission: Aspirants may apply for admission in various courses offered by University of Delhi for the academic year of 2018-19. Students may apply online for admissions into undergraduate, postgraduate and other courses. DU has already issued press release related to admission for current academic year. Interested may visit the website of DU and apply via online mode.

SBI Youth for India: Recognised as the flagship programme of SBI Foundation, it is a 13-month-long fellowship that enables nation's youth to work on rural development projects in partnership with experienced NGOs. The fellowship provides a framework for India's best minds to join hands with rural communities, empathise with their struggles and connect with their aspirations. Stipend is provided to all selected fellows. Graduates and aged between 21 to 32 may apply before May 23 via online mode.

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

"It may serve as a comfort to us, in all our calamities and afflictions, that he that loses anything and gets wisdom by it is a gainer by the loss."

--- Sigmund Freud

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.278

SHILLONG, MONDAY, MAY 21, 2018

Democracy pulverised

KARNATAKA politics shows the debasement of democratic principles in India today. There are states where the party with the single largest majority is not called to form a government. There are others like Karnataka where post poll alliances cobbled up by sundry winners (Congress-JDS and others) were deprived of the chance to prove their majority. Governors have been used by ruling dispensations at the Centre to carry out their mandate to wrest power at any cost. Since 2014 May, this has happened in Manipur, Goa and Meghalaya. It's a different matter that in all these three states the party/parties called to form the government succeeded in proving their strength on the floor of the House. This trend however, did not start with the BJP.

In 1984, Indira Gandhi dismissed a duly elected Government of Andhra Pradesh led by NT Rama Rao whose party won 230 out of 295 seats and replaced him with her loyalist N Bhaskar Rao. In the same year the Governor dismissed the government of Farooq Abdullah in Kashmir and installed a nominee of Indira Gandhi. Between 1975-1980 Indira Gandhi dismissed nine non-Congress governments to ensure that the Congress (I) was in power in most of the states. But the Janata government was not far behind. They dismissed as many Congress governments after winning the 1977 election. PV Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister also sacked BJP governments in four states in 1992 after the Ram Mandir agitation. In fact Article 356 which allows the Centre to impose President's Rule in case of a constitutional breakdown has been used by the ruling government of Delhi to place their own party governments in the states and to ensure that they have a majority both in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. In all cases of application of Article 356, President's rule has been invoked against a government headed by a party which is not in power at the Centre. The Sarkaria Commission, set up in 1983 to look into Centre-state relations pointed out that there are 13 instances from Independence till 1986, where state governments that enjoyed a majority were dismissed. The manner in which democratic principles are sought to be trampled upon from time to time just shows that no political party is interested in guarding democracy and least of all in deepening it, although after the Saturday fiasco for the BJP there were shouts of democracy being saved. Monday will reveal how democracy is yet again being put to the test.

LOOKING BACK

May 24, 1989

CMs of Spl. Category states to discuss financial constraints

The Chief Ministers of twelve special category states will meet in New Delhi on June 1 to discuss their financial constraints following revision of the centre's policy on providing assistance. Nagaland Chief Minister Mr S C Jamir told newsmen today that the special category states had been put in to trouble owing to the new central policy on covering non plan resource gap coupled with "normative approach" by the ninth Finance Commission.

Earlier, special category states were allowed to cover the non-plan resource from plan fund. The practice had now been done away with, Mr Jamir said. Mr Jamir pointed out that the Ninth Finance Commission did not take into account the gradual growth in expenditure after 1983-84 which was accepted as the base year. Many fresh recurring commitments by the states which came up after 1983-84 were ignored by the Finance Commission while assessing their requirements, he said.

Mr Jamir stated that the

assessment of requirements for Nagaland made by the Planning Commission was Rs. 50 crore more than that by the Commission. In view of the financial position of the special category states, the centre had been requested to continue the earlier practice of permitting them to cover the non-plan resource gap out of plan funds and to reassess the requirements of the states shifting the base year to 1988-89 he added.

RS Election from Assam on June 13

Two biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha from Assam will be held on June 13. The byelections are due to the retirement of two Congress(I) members Mr Dharanidhar Basumatari and Mr Baharul Islam whose terms are expiring on June 14. According to the programme announced by the Election Commission, notifications for the elections will be issued on May 25. Nominations will be accepted till June 1.

Need to Include Indigenous Knowledge in the Education System

By H H Mohrmen

If the interface on social media can be interpreted as the views and opinions of the young people, then of late there is a heated debate about mixed marriages and children born out of such marriages. In spite of the fact that most of those taking part in the debate are Christians who believe in 'for those whom God has united, let no man divide,' yet they abhor mixed marriages. The social media warriors also trained their guns at the young women, who have non-tribal boyfriends. They castigated them and named and shamed them in the cyber world.

The so called pure blooded 'khun Khasi-Pnar' believe that the only way to save the Jaithynriew is to cleanse it of the impure blood of children born out of the mixed marriages. For them the identity of the tribe depends only on 'the supposedly pure blood' that run in the veins of the Khun u Hynniewtrep Hynniewskum. Those who are not pure blooded are considered enemies of the tribe and are condemned to be turncoats.

This idea is preposterous because our blood group is universal and the same blood group runs in the veins of people belonging to different tribes of this diverse human race. There is no grouping of blood based on racial or ethnic identity; therefore what we should look at are the genes that we carry than the blood. The question then is whether we have hundred percent indigenous genes or if we share genes of people of other races in our gene pool. Yet this does not answer any doubts but rather raises another question about the identity of the tribe or who is a real Khun u Hynniewtrep Hynniewskum. The question leads us to another very important question and that is whether the strength of the tribe depends on our blood or the way we live our lives?

There is no denying the fact that we are fast losing our way of life to the popular modern lifestyle. Part of it is inevitable due to the advent of technology and the onslaught of media but some aspects of the culture are those that we have voluntarily discarded like the language we speak, the food we eat etc. But it is the intrinsic value system and profound virtues of our tribal way of life which we need to retain, because this is what defines us. Hence it is not only the colour of our skin or the supposed blood

that runs in our veins which defines who we are, but whether we still continue with the indigenous way of life or not.

Therefore the point is that we are true Khasi-Pnar if we continue with the indigenous way of life and that is the crux of the matter. We should judge ourselves not by any other yardstick but rather by how much of the indigenous way of life we still continue. It is in this context that another important question arises and that is if we are still proud of our roots? Or rather how much of the traditional way of life we still cherish? So it is irrelevant if one is a 'khun shiteng/shipiah or khun pongka' or whatever name one would care to use to differentiate the children of one tribe. The test in my opinion is if one continues with the Khasi-Pnar or

of education in the way we trained our children in the past, but it is not too late to make amends. It is high time that government take this issue seriously and while it is in the process of coming up with the new education policy, it should also look at ways how this can be incorporated in the education system of the state.

When the Bard of the Jaithynriew u Soso Tham lamented "Jingstad ngi wad sawdong pyrthei, jingshai ka Ri ngim tip eiei," which roughly translates to (pardon me my layman's translation of the same) 'We travel the world to gain knowledge are ignorant of the wisdom in our own land,' he was speaking about our education system which gives prominence to wisdom incorporated from outside, while we ignore or rather forget the wisdom of our land.

The way they conserved their forests, the water sources, the practice of seed sharing are some of the wisdom that the world looks at to counter and mitigate the effects of climate change on different aspects of our lives.

Hynniewtrep way of life or not.

If we still feel the need for our children to continue with the traditional way of life then the need of the hour is to help the new generation continue with this way of life and make them feel proud to live that way of life. Since much of our tribal institutions are gradually fading away (for example like the hearth of the home where the schooling used to happen between the elders and the young generation), there is no better place to start this process than schools. The indigenous way of life of the first nations is not only being respected but the world is looking at the traditional way of life of the indigenous people as the answer to much of the problems that we have now. The way they conserved their forests, the water sources, the practice of seed sharing are some of the wisdom that the world looks at to counter and mitigate the effects of climate change on different aspects of our lives.

One may say that in some way we have missed the bus when we failed to include this as one aspect

of education in the way we trained our children in the past, but it is not too late to make amends. It is high time that government take this issue seriously and while it is in the process of coming up with the new education policy, it should also look at ways how this can be incorporated in the education system of the state.

When the Bard of the Jaithynriew u Soso Tham lamented "Jingstad ngi wad sawdong pyrthei, jingshai ka Ri ngim tip eiei," which roughly translates to (pardon me my layman's translation of the same) 'We travel the world to gain knowledge are ignorant of the wisdom in our own land,' he was speaking about our education system which gives prominence to wisdom incorporated from outside, while we ignore or rather forget the wisdom of our land.

Teaching indigenous knowledge in school is the need of the hour if we are to produce a generation with a clear understanding of who they are and also with the confidence to walk in the world with their heads held high. Teaching young people about the indigenous food that are mostly from the wilds and our attitudes towards the environment will help our young people understand how we are closely connected with nature. Learning how our farmers grow food and how they keep and share seeds not only qualifies them as the keepers of the old seeds but will help us understand how much our ancestors understand how nature works.

Resources for traditional

TO THE EDITOR

Rebuttal against Seng Khihlang

Editor, Apropos the news item from Seng Khihlang defending Devistone Swer, which appeared in The Shillong Times on 17 May last, the Executive Committee of Seng Khasi Lawsohtun would like to rebut as follows:

It is the undeniable truth that Devistone Swer is the Secretary of Seng Khihlang and that he had caused all the irregularities in the construction of the eco-friendly crematorium at Lawsohtun, as can be clearly seen in the MOA with the Forest Department, Social Forestry Division, Shillong. While the MOA was signed by the non-existent Rajest L. Pompyrthat and the non-existent Metilda Rynjah, the work was actually and strangely allotted to Devistone Swer, Secretary of Seng Khihlang.

Seng Khihlang praises Devistone Swer as 'a hard-working man.' Is it aware that there is a big difference between honest and dishonest hard work? For the information of all the members of Seng Khihlang, the crimes involved in the Lawsohtun eco-friendly crematorium include forgery,

impersonation, embezzlement and also money laundering, since the money meant for the crematorium given in the name of the Seng Khasi Lawsohtun was diverted to the account of the Seng Khasi School Lawsohtun where Devistone Swer is the President of the Managing Committee. All these crimes are punishable under sections 416, 468, 471 of the Indian Penal Code 1860.

Now, it all depends on the members of Seng Khihlang whether they want to be part of the clean-up or part of the crimes. To our mind, it is the moral duty of Seng Khihlang to take action against any of its members who has committed an obvious wrong, otherwise it can never claim itself to be a steadfast believer in the two tenets of the Khasi religion which are "Ka Tip Brieu Tip Blei and "Ka Kamai ia Ka Hok", which demand one to always live in the knowledge of man and God and to always earn virtue in life.

This is also to inform all concerned that when we do take legal action (and this will be soon) against all these criminal forgers, impersonators, embezzlers and money launderers, any one of those siding openly or otherwise with the criminals will be dragged in

as 'accessories to the crime.' It is also good for you to remember this famous saying, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread". It is up to you whether you want to be fools supporting crime or honest men fighting against it.

Yours etc.
Executive Committee,
Seng Khasi Lawsohtun

Why this noise pollution?

A "Mela Cum Circus" is being held at the Police Parade Ground in Tura currently. It generates a lot of noise each evening. This cacophonous disturbance via noise pollution has having a disastrous effect on the student community living around the Tura Bazar area. This disturbing noise continues till 10:00 PM each night. We students are at a loss at how to prepare for our examinations. Furthermore, the noise emanating noise from the Fair drives the senior citizens and those with ill-health up the wall. Office goers who return to their homes are equally deprived of a peaceful environment in the evenings.

I request you to kindly highlight this nuisance in order to drum up sense into the authorities to take

corrective steps by cancelling the permission granted to the Mela Cum Circus Management.

Yours etc.,
Sneha Singh
Via email

corrective steps by cancelling the permission granted to the Mela Cum Circus Management.

Yours etc.,
Sneha Singh
Via email

corrective steps by cancelling the permission granted to the Mela Cum Circus Management.

Yours etc.,
Sneha Singh
Via email

corrective steps by cancelling the permission granted to the Mela Cum Circus Management.

Yours etc.,
Kishan Tibewalla
Managing director,
Polo Towers Group

Quality Education: The Need of the Hour

By Rusievan Shangpliang

Meghalaya may have attained a tag, 'educational hub of northeast India', however, it is high time that we make an assessment on the kind of education that we expect from our students and the method we use in imparting education to them. Here our discussion will be on two areas.

Firstly, concerning higher education, there is a missing link and a gap between the stakeholders, the institutions and the state. It seems that throughout the years the controlling agencies focus more on testing rather on learning. For instance, it is surprising to see that the newly introduced Semester system of NEHU could not improve the performance of the students. For example, the pass percentage of the Ist semester B.A. of 2016 and 2017 are 33.96% (22169 appeared 8151 passed) and 36.77% (20600 appeared, 6996 passed) respectively. Does this mean that students are not learning? Is this the quality education that the University wants to impart? Who's fault is it?

The late declaration of results has become habitual and compelled the introduction of unnecessary break (December- January) in between the semesters. Who feels the pinch (punish .sic)? Definitely, the students and the teachers who struggle to complete the syllabus since the course which was earlier taught for around 8 months is now being taught in only about 4 months. Besides all these, many teachers who neglect their duties add salt to the wounds. Fewer concerns are being shown to the students as we have witnessed recently. It seems like the present sixth semester students are being made scapegoats to see whether the semester system is functioning smoothly or not. In the last examination held in May 2018, sixth semester students feared that their plans would meet with a huge drawback. They may do well in their Honours papers, but when it comes to an additional paper, they may have to pay a high price. Concerned parents and students have voiced out their opinions after the questions set for the Environmental Studies paper suddenly became more of an Environmental Science subject and thus demoralized the examinees. However, least concern is shown by the University or the concerned institutions. Will we pull down our own students by testing their capacity rather than improving the quality? But what more can we expect from the University which has shown its negligence that even the Annual Convocation that was supposed to be held for the academic year 2017 was not convened at all.

Secondly, when we turn to the entire education scenario in the state, we appreciate the concern shown by the current Chief Minister, Conrad Sangma. The swift initiative taken to streamline the education sector either by way of Budget allocation or other related issues is a hats-off applause. An attempt was also made to come up with a draft of the Education Policy. Sadly, without getting proper information the draft has been released and the suggestion box for improvement of the draft has been closed before this article is written.

Now when we talk about improving education in the state it not only means improving the salaries, number of institutions, number of enrollment and number of degrees attained by students. It is quality education and the foundation of professionalism that would prepare the students to determine their future. And in the hope of attaining such aims, a strong educational policy is required along with the mechanism to effectively implement the same. However, the draft policy and its features

seems more like a work of architectural design with high value sounding words that have less significance. To point out a few. It is hard to understand the concept of preparing learners by inculcating 'problem solving' (see vision 1.4.1.) Moreover, what has spirituality got to do with education (see, 1.4.5 Special efforts should be made to enable students: IV. To become mature, spiritually aware and men and women of character). Why can't we put more effort on education that supports and provides students the ability to possess critical and rational thinking. The goal 1.5.3 for Higher and Technical education development to promote and institutionalize high standards for research in higher education institutions seems imaginary given the fact that the state funding and initiative towards research is an ignominy.

The usual tosh about achieving too many things in an educational policy is not always possible. Excellence can be achieved once the focuses are specifically earmarked. One of the key objectives of the Kothari Commission (1964-66) and the National Policy on Education (1986) is to emphasize on improvement in the quality of education. However most of the schemes and acts that were introduced are more towards getting the children to schools rather on focusing on what they learn there. Though access to education and equity seems to have reached the cross line, however, the inclusiveness and employability which can be achieved through quality education is still in need of greater attention.

It is important to assess the situation first before adopting multi-pronged approaches that would unnecessarily waste time, energy and resources. It is the basic feature and function of the education policy that would measure what kind of education is imparted to students. Potential of each pupil should be maximized through guidance and counseling to support, help and guide students to be able to make correct and appropriate decisions concerning their education and careers. It should be able to put an end to the pressure of standardized external tests in which student performance is expected to reflect the quality of teaching work. Evaluation and assessment strategies are important for improving student outcomes and developing a better and more equitable and quality educational. Therefore, it is mandatory that system evaluations should be carried out where clear guidelines and accountability mechanism is necessary for such an endeavour to succeed.

It has to be kept in mind that successful education policies are based on equity, creativity and teacher professionalism. The policy should be based on flexibility not standardization that will ensure high quality of the pedagogical and ethical training of the staff involved. It should be able to prepare teachers for a research-based profession. Teaching profession should be made on a par with other professional works. This enables the teachers to diagnose problems in their classrooms, apply evidence-based and often alternative solutions to them and evaluate and analyze the impact of implemented procedures. If this is implemented properly, parents will trust teachers as professionals who know what is best for their children. It is through professionalism that institutions and teachers become responsible for their own work and also solve most problems rather than shift them elsewhere.

(Dr Rusievan Shangpliang is Assistant Professor, Dept. of History Synod College, Shillong.)

“Your attitude is like a box of crayons that color your world. Constantly color your picture gray, and your picture will always be bleak. Try adding some bright colors to the picture by including humor, and your picture begins to lighten up.”

--- Allen Klein

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.279 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018

Battle for Ampati

THE much awaited election from the Ampati Constituency vacated by former Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma is scheduled for May 28. Sangma had won from two seats, Songsak and Ampati in the elections held on February 27 this year. He decided to give up his pocket-borough Ampati which had elected him for six consecutive terms and to retain Songsak. Mukul Sangma decided to set up his daughter Miani D Shira as the candidate and the Congress concurred. This has created mixed feelings among the electorate. They feel cheated and taken for granted by the man who they have elected consistently. Mukul had nurtured Ampati and made it a shining outpost in the wilderness called Garo Hills where many other districts such as South Garo Hills have continued to remain undeveloped.

Since people of Meghalaya don't vote on issues this is a contest of personalities. Earlier the contest was thought to be a straight one between Miani D Shira of the Congress and Clement Momin of the National Peoples Party (NPP). It has now turned into a three-cornered one with Subhankar Koch filing his nomination as an Independent candidate. Miani D Shira is not talking of issues that affect the state but repeatedly stresses on the achievements of her father and his ability to transform the Constituency into a model for Garo Hills. The NPP candidate meanwhile has turned the debate into a larger discourse about the backwardness of Garo Hills and the need to push for speedy development of the region and the state even while he promises the electorate to take Ampati to a different level. The Congress has roped in all the bigwigs from the Party in the State and the AICC too for the campaign. The NPP is not to be left behind. For Chief Minister, Conrad Sangma and his Party this is a prestigious fight and one that will decide the future of Meghalaya's politics henceforth. The NPP tasted blood when it won Williamnagar known to be Congress candidate Deborah Marak's pocket-borough. That loss put the Congress on the back-foot and resulted in a near revolt by the Williamnagar Block Congress against Mukul Sangma and his men who were accused of campaigning for the Independent candidate. Matters have come to a head and the complaint against Mukul has reached the AICC. May 28 will decide the fate not just of Miani and Ampati but of the leadership of Mukul Sangma too.

Uranium Mining and Ecology

Dr. Nayanmoni Saikia

With the increase in population, expansion of industry and the lifestyles of the present era the demand for electricity is far more than what it was a few decades ago. To cope up the growing need, different available methods have been tried for generating electricity out of which nuclear power plants is considered as one of the most efficient methods of producing a substantial amount of power. As a result the number of nuclear power plants around the world have dramatically increased to meet the demand. At present there are 451 nuclear reactors working all over the world and producing a total of 2476 TWh (trillion watt hour) of electricity. Presently India has 22 nuclear reactors in operation, producing a total of (~) 30,292 GWh of electricity while 6 more reactors are under construction.

Uranium is the solo fuel of every nuclear reactor. Uranium-235, a rare isotope of uranium ore that occurs at the level of 0.7% (with the other 99.3 percent consisting of uranium-238) is used as the fuel for nuclear reactors. Uranium occurs naturally in soil, rock and water in low concentration, a few parts per million. The abundance of uranium is as common as tin or zinc in the earth's crust. According to the OECD NEA & IAEA, Uranium 2016: Resources, Production and Demand (Red Book), the total recoverable uranium resources on earth is 5.78Mt (Million tons). Out of this total recoverable uranium resources Australia has a substantial part (about 29%) of the world's uranium, Kazakhstan 13%, Russia and Canada 9% each. India has about 2.3% (~.13Mt) of the world uranium. The largest uranium reservoir in India is at Tummalapalle Mine, Tummalappalli Village, Andhra Pradesh. The Atomic energy commission of India in 2011 depicted that the Tummalapalle mine would be one of the largest reservoirs of uranium in the world.

In the 1930's the international uranium mining industry started to extract radium from uranium ores. Radium is the fifth radioactive decay element in the U-238 radioactive decay chain. During that period, uranium mines were developed in the Northwest Territories, Canada and in Belgian Congo. In the refineries radium were extracted from the concentrated Uranium minerals and was used to make self-luminous paints for watches, aircraft instrument, dials and other instrumentation. The radium market later declined due to over-supply thereby resulting in shutting down of many radium mines.

The second stage uranium exploration started in 1944, driven by the newly developed atomic weapons. During the period 1944 to

early 1960's the demand for Uranium was high from the United States and European Military which in turn fostered the development of Uranium mines around the world. In between 1974-1983, Uranium mining was again noticed and was driven by the need for civil nuclear power among the different countries. The exploration efforts were relatively low during the period of 1985-2003. From 2004 to till to-day Uranium exploration has increased gradually and Australia produces highest amount of uranium followed by Kazakhstan, Russia and Canada. Australia itself produces nearly 29% of total uranium production all over the world.

Indian Atomic Energy program was started in 1967 with the establishment of Uranium Corporation of India (UCIL) under the Department of Atomic Energy. UCIL is responsible for uranium mining and uranium processing in different parts of India. Presently the firm operates mines at Jadugoda, Bhatin, Narwapahar, Turamdih, B a n d u r a n g , Tummalapalle, Lambapur and Mawthabab in Meghalaya. There are many ways to extract uranium from the ore. The mining and milling process of uranium includes many steps starting from the underground mining or open pit mining. After mining, the ore material is milled near the mine and ground into small particles of uniform size. After grinding, uranium is extracted from the ore material by chemical process, known as chemical leaching. The final product after leaching is yellow in color called the yellow cake. The final step of uranium mining is the disposal and treatment of waste produced during the whole process.

Open-pit method and underground mining is the conventional methods for uranium mining. Open-pit method is applicable to concentrated shallow deposits while underground mining is applied in deeper deposits including vein type deposit. Open-pit mining is more economical than underground mining. Recently due to the discovery of alternative extraction methods, in which chemical solutions are injected into underground deposits to dissolve (leach) uranium from the ore, the conventional methods are become obsolete.

Milling is the process in which the mined ore is crushed and uranium is chemically extracted from the ore. It is further processed to a concentrated state which is called yellowcake. There are

many ways of uranium milling, namely- acid leaching, alkali leaching and In-situ leaching (ISL). In-situ leaching is the most advanced method for uranium leaching from the uranium ore. In milling process significant amount of acids or bases are used to extract uranium from the ore. Based on the leaching agent, several post leaching steps of precipitation and purification need to be done to extract uranium complexes from the other metals.

The waste produced due to mining and milling of uranium extraction is called a tailing. Mining tailings are hard rocks and mine water. Hard rocks usually never contain uranium and may be used in the mines for some other purposes, like filling the pit, making embankments etc.. Mine water can be reused in the mine and the mill. Mine water may contain dissolved uranium, thorium or any other radioactive minerals.

Uranium mill tailing contains radioactive and non-radioactive materials which are solid residue after the uranium has been extracted. The mill tailing also contain a huge amount of waste liquid. The solid residue consists of mainly finely-ground bulk of the original ore and varieties of chemicals precipitated from the tailing liquids. These solid tailings are typically created in slurry form during the milling process and then deposited in an impoundment.

Nuclear energy is renewable energy which does not cause air pollution. It is therefore termed as clean energy. The low carbon emission from nuclear reactors makes nuclear energy one of the most favorable energy sources in this era of global warming. Many climatologists advocate for nuclear energy whereas many of them put their concerns on waste management from uranium mining. Many from the research community believe that due to the invention of new technology and cutting edge instruments, uranium mining and milling operations do not cause alarming concerns on health hazards and environmental degradation. But at the same time all of them put their concern on the management of the by-products of uranium mining and milling. This is because mill tailings contains heavy metal ore constituents and residual amount of radium. Radium is produced during the radioactive decay of thorium-232, uranium-235 and uranium-238. The radium (Ra-226), in turn, decays to produce a radioactive gas known as radon (Rn-222), which may be released to the environment. Radon being a radioactive element with longer half-life may enter our bodies during respiration and be

deposited in our respiratory tract. Moreover since radon (Rn-222) is a noble gas, it does not react with other elements and may accumulate in our respiratory tract which in turn, according to research increases the possibility of risk of lung cancer.

Airborne dust, called as "Aeolian dust" can be created during the mining and milling process of uranium. The variance of concentration or the amount of such dust in atmosphere depends on the surface wind, practices of explosions and earthmoving and the preventive measures taken during the mining and milling processes. The size of such dust particles is mostly greater than about 0.2 micro-meter. Once these particles disperse into the atmosphere, it elevates the level of uranium series radio-nuclides and the potential inhalation and deposition in lung may lead to a radiation dose to the person.

Another important concern due to the uranium mining and milling is the contamination of surface and underground water. Uranium extraction units use enormous quantities of water for washing the ores. If the untreated effluents, slimes or tailings reaches nearby water sources, it will add chemicals, metals and radionuclides (Ra-226, Pb-210, U-238 and U-234) to those water sources. Dispersion of radionuclides through ground water system is another potential source of water contamination due to uranium mining. In this transport process relatively long half-life radio nuclides reaches to the ground water. These radio nuclides then incorporate in the traditional aquatic food stuff which in turn contributes to the radiation dose received by the public.

Radiation exposure is of greatest importance in the perspective of human health hazard not only for the occupational members of uranium mining but also the public around the mining sites. Thus, it is most important to evaluate the extent of radiation exposure the public has had via air, ground water and surface water and there is need to implement strict preventive measures to reduce the radiation levels to the internationally accepted normal radiation levels both inside as well as outside the mining area.

(The writer is teacher Department of Applied Physics, Brahmaputra College, Guwahati)

Who is the Citizen?

By Ananya S Guha

The Citizenship Bill proposed in Assam with amendments, has, as expected raised a furore. Or was it expected? However, it has certainly created an uproar among Non Governmental Organizations, Public Bodies and Student Unions. The bill proposes to seek legitimacy of those nationals entering India from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan etc even as late as the present time. However the Assam Accord signed by the Govt of India and the All Assam Students Union says categorically that those migrants entering India after 25th March 1985 are deemed to be illegal. So, obviously the question is why this turn around now? Is it to protect only minority Hindus? This is a question raised by some. Immigrants are immigrants and they should be treated on an equal and common footing. This is the main argument.

So let us analyse the entire matter. In trying to enforce a new Citizenship Bill the government is certainly renegeing on the Assam Accord. This shows a clear bias towards Hindus only, but the government may give a rejoinder that it is also meant for Christians and other minority groups such as Jews, Sikhs, Parsis and Buddhists. However the people of North East India view it mainly as a case of Bangladesh immigrants, as the region, particularly Assam is inundated with them. By echoing protests, civil society and social bodies in Assam have thrown caution to the winds in the belief that Hindu migration will be acceptable and not just Muslim migration. This is a very just appropriation of matters, and will certainly take the central government by surprise. Moreover it might have thought that after the victory of its main party in Assam, there would be no reaction to the Bill. The reaction however has been quite cohesive and not knee jerking. In fact the Chief Minister of Meghalaya has opposed the Bill and so has a Bharatiya Janata Party MP from Assam. The AGP has threatened to withdraw support to the BJP in Assam, and extremist groups who are in the midst of peace talks, have threatened to revive their ultra movements.

The scene then is more than ticklish: it is charged with emotion, and potentially possessing a threat to the supposed peace that is there in North East India. The peace apparently is very fragile and again, fractious groups can take over. The fact is, as journalist Anirban Roy has pointed out in his writing in The North East Today, a BJP resurgence in Assam, cannot be equated with a Hindu resurgence in Assam with amendments, has, as expected raised a furore. Or was it expected? However, it has certainly created an uproar among Non Governmental Organizations, Public Bodies and Student Unions. The bill proposes to seek legitimacy of those nationals entering India from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan etc even as late as the present time. However the Assam Accord signed by the Govt of India and the All Assam Students Union says categorically that those migrants entering India after 25th March 1985 are deemed to be illegal. So, obviously the question is why this turn around now? Is it to protect only minority Hindus? This is a question raised by some. Immigrants are immigrants and they should be treated on an equal and common footing. This is the main argument.

So, the Hindu Muslim divide though in an unexpected manner; is raised to a torpedo to facilitate the Center's plans. Has it to do with demography, of one linguistic group prevailing over the other? Even if it is not so, it is unfair that Assam should bear the brunt of immigrants, irrespective of religion. The Central Government cannot simply overlook the finery of the Assam Accord a fall out of the Assam Movement in the eighties, and implant a new act or bill, to harvest more votes, the Hindu votes. This is a policy which is corrosive and divisive, acting against the interests of the country.

So the matter is not only sensitive, but also totally misconstrued and misinterpreted by the Central Government. The people do not want it as, one religious group pitted against another, it is the nature and volume of the migration which poses demographic, linguistic and cultural threats which is central to the issue. Central Governments over the past and not only now have indubitably failed to perceive the North East Indian ethos in its proper diverse, cultural, linguistic and historical antecedents. They have resorted to simplification, black and white and not as a riot of colours. They have also failed to see historical processes of cultural assimilation.

However that, nothing or very little was done to implement the Assam Accord, even decades after its signing is of course another wider matter. Was identification of the illegal immigrants carried on? Or are we now to wait for the much debated National Register Of Citizens to answer that question.

TO THE EDITOR

NEC not involved with UDAAN Scheme

Editor,
I have seen a letter under the caption 'Air Deccan Taking NEC for a Ride' (ST May 21, 2018) and I would like to point out that the North Eastern Council (NEC) has no role in running of the Air Deccan Flights. Earlier, NEC was used to provide viability gap funding for Alliance Air. However, the fund has now been transferred to Ministry of Civil Aviation as per the direction of Ministry of Finance, and is no longer operated by NEC.

So far as the connectivity between various state capitals or major towns of North Eastern Region is concerned, NEC has always played the role of a facilitator

and will continue to do so. However, in the present case, the onus is on Ministry of Civil Aviation and not on NEC.

Yours etc.,
Manas Ranjan Mahapatra
Director (Information and PR)NEC,
Shillong

NCERT no boon to MBOSE

Editor,
Any plan and policy should be based on pragmatic considerations. A knee-jerk decision might leave the public in a regretful situation. So the idea being toyed around by the Education Department to change the syllabus of the MBOSE to NCERT might turn out

to be a disaster. It's sheer naivety to hold that the CBSE and NCERT textbooks are impeccably perfect. No, they are far ahead of MBOSE as far as factual errors are concerned. Their published books are replete with errors. Some are blunders, some are typo errors and some are shockingly controversial. Please note, it's not to defend MBOSE but less than a year ago more than "1300 factual errors", both minor and major, were identified from the NCERT textbooks and tabled before the HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar.

We need not be too cynical because even the education boards of UK, USA.... often have to deal with factual errors that have inadvertently crept in, into the school textbooks in the "first edition". Thank God, it's often discern-

ing parents and the teaching community that bring these to the notice of the concerned education boards. BBC reported in January last year about the eight errors in a certain Mathematics book published by a world-renowned 'Cambridge University Press'. Oxford is also not far behind in typo errors. During my earlier days, I had spotted a good number of spelling errors, double words, in the books published by such international publishing houses. True, the errors spotted in MBOSE publication can be corrected by mere letting out a "shout" but with NCERT it might take years together to get the book re-checked and corrected.

By all accounts there is another major drawback in NCERT books. There is an annoyingly irregular and short sup-

ply of the textbooks. While the MBOSE was following the NCERT syllabus only about 60% students, sometimes even less than 40%, could buy the books from the market. Many had to depend on Xerox copies. No doubt the NCERT publications are fairly cheap but in order to purchase a book of Rs. 90 the parents from Nongstoin had to visit Shillong over a dozen times because of the non-availability of books which may not be available at all through the year. Please calculate bit-by-bit the expenses likely to be incurred by the guardians besides the snack and lunch in Shillong town, and then finally when their journeys go waste.

Another sore point with the NCERT textbooks is that they are less descriptive and too

brief with explanations, with comparatively few exercises, examples and classroom activities. To meet this "shortcoming" the bazaar publishers usually grab the opportunity and churn out a whole range of expensive guidebooks with attractive illustrations. That means more expenditure burden on the guardian. So, what's the point in heaping praises on NCERT as our salvation? Of course, MBOSE should not lag behind in adopting the CBSE pattern particularly when conducting the examinations, setting questions and answer-script evaluation. Our students cannot score "good marks" which usually "prevents" them from competing with students of other states. This is

the real bane of education in Meghalaya. The Government should give serious thought to this. I believe, our teachers must be suitably trained based on CBSE norms. The Government should be extra careful about being kind to our much ignored teaching lot by paying them good salaries on time. Lastly, the MBOSE must put all out efforts by thoroughly re-checking its textbooks and ensuring that the books are inch perfect in the second edition.

Yours etc.,
Saili Gwali,
Shillong-2

Will RTI die a natural death?

Editor,
This is in reference to H H Mohrmen's article titled "A mini Assembly in Jowai"

(ST May 7, 2018) where he had written, "If the government agencies are able to engage the public in this kind of programmes then the public will come to know all about government schemes and they not only become empowered but RTI itself will die a natural death." Maybe the writer is not so well versed with the powers and objectives of the RTI. The RTI is not only about getting information about government schemes. In fact the investigative powers of the RTI will be further strengthened when the Meghalaya Lokayukta Act comes into operation.

Yours etc.,
Michael N. Syiem,
Via email

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

"It is not from reason that justice springs, but goodness is born of wisdom."

--- Thomas Hobbes

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.280 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2018

Need for co-existence

WHILE it is accepted that the armed forces must be protected from unnecessary intrusions, since security is of prime concern, there is a case to be made about which areas they can cordon off from civilian use. There was a time when the Shillong Garrison Ground was open to sporting events of various schools in the city. Suddenly the place was garrisoned off and became out of bounds for civilian events. No attempt was made by state governments since then to retrieve this venue for public events. Many national political leaders including the late Rajiv Gandhi gave public speeches from the Garrison Ground. Today what is galling for the local public is that roads that could be used to divert the burgeoning traffic of Shillong city are all out of bounds. This arrogant exclusivity displayed by the armed forces alienates them from the local communities. As it is there are very few occasions for a public-armed forces interface. Even during the two most important events – Republic Day and Independence Day – when the Governor invites a cross section of society for the ceremonial "At Home," there is a clear line that divides civilians from the military. The twain never doth meet and no one makes any attempt to cross that dividing line as if doing so would taint one or the other group.

Civilians are fully aware that security of the operational areas of the armed forces especially Signals Units and Air Force Stations is of paramount importance, but residential quarters within city limits cannot all be appropriated by the armed forces. An activist has taken up a PIL on this issue. But Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's decision to review the occupation of all such spaces that were hitherto allowed for civilian thoroughfare is a welcome break from tradition where spaces occupied by defence personnel within the city were almost sacrosanct. If service to the nation is the military code then people are an integral part of that nation.

LOOKING BACK

May 24, 1989

300-hr bandh enters 8th day 5 including 3 Bodo ultras killed

At least five people, including three extremists were killed last night as the 300-hour Assam bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union which entered the 8th day today. Informed sources said a Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) supporter was dragged out of his house at Patjikul under Tamulpur police station of Nalbari district by a group of extremists and stabbed to death. Another PTCA supporter was killed and his wife seriously injured at Palashpatty under Majbat police station of Sonitpur district by suspected Bodo extremists. Three extremists were killed by PTCA supporters last night in a

group clash at Zengraipara under Barpeta road police station of Barpeta district. Reports received here amidst the news blackout on violence imposed by the Government spoke of group clashes between PTCA supporters between PTCA supporters and ABSU militants in Barpeta district. The report was confirmed by PTCA MLA and general secretary Mr Charan Narzary.

The affected areas were under the Sorbhog, Patacharkuchi and Barpeta road police stations, from where official reports of clashes were pouring in almost continuously, the sources said.

Individualization and personalization of education

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

The etymology of education is derived from the Latin word 'educare' and 'educere' meaning to bring up and to bring forth. In general, education can also be regarded as the process of sharing or transferring knowledge and learning from person to person and from generation to generation. Knowledge implies that body of accepted facts and elements that constitute a structure of things developed and invented from time to time by geniuses. Learning on the other hand is a gradual approach to rediscover and understand the principles and fabric of its formation and development. The acquisition of knowledge is in fact the primary purpose of education but the development of attitude and thinking capacity should be the end objective of education because when there is a change in mental perception of a person, obviously there is transformation in person's life and behavior too. And this is another vital aspect of education as glaringly demonstrated by the educated and the learned who can be distinguished from the illiterate and uneducated. People who are educated and learned are responsive, thoughtful and less emotional unlike those who are less educated. Therefore, holistic education should be inclusive in nature to take care of the individual needs of a person and the transformative process that follows.

Historically, the ancient systems of education were confined to two categories. The first are those who deliver and pass on knowledge and information (teachers or masters) and the second are those who receive knowledge and information (learners). It is a type of individualization of learning-teaching system in a one-to-one model of pedagogy. The nobility of the teaching process here lies in the passion of those who deliver it. Today such a teaching module that is personalized comes with an extra cost in the form of extra tuition classes. Here a school teacher assumes the role of a private tutor and personalizes his/her teaching efforts according to the capacity and need of each individual student. But such a thing is not possible in any educational institution today despite the spiraling school fees. This is due primarily to overcrowded classrooms or the attitude of teachers themselves towards education. Teaching in the present scenario is merely a duty to complete certain

prescribed chapters of a syllabus irrespective of whether a child has learned or not. In this case the entire educational approach is like a one-size-fits-all policy.

But in the context of modern civilization the State has now emerged as the third party which is solely responsible for promoting the authentic process of acquiring and transferring knowledge. How the process is delegated is indeed a topic that raises many questions and apprehensions. Such delegation somehow has perpetrated right to the structure that formed part of the curriculum or syllabus for school children. But the syllabus of school children today appears to be philosophical in nature and less of application. And with the rise in the number of private schools whose primary intention is to capitalize monetarily from the huge market size, the idea of critical learning is just an illusion. For instance, Environmental study was introduced in the school

sake. Due to this consciousness, the process of transferring knowledge too has become more like a commodity which comes in various forms. Further, the process has integrated into an organized and unregulated market where the system itself has made progress to structured customers to adapt after its pattern. Educational institutions are today driven by the market forces of demand and supply of graduates strictly meant for a specific trade. They function like factories that produces homogenous commodity throughout its operation. Those who are not attractive or suitable for any purpose are left out and became a liability later on. On the contrary, such things have made innovative thinkers like Newton, Einstein, Thomas Edison and many others to move out of the system and create a new and different reality for the society. "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education," said Albert Einstein. The concept of individualization

The entire system centers on the individuality of a child and their freedom of childhood expression in a friendly educational environment. In contrast, the system of schooling in our country is so legalistic that the children's freedom of childhood expression is severely curtailed because of excess disciplining.

curriculum for students to be aware about the surrounding environment and issues therein. But in reality who can understand and know the natural environment better and the vegetation thereon other than the rural folks. They can identify each plant and tree by their local name including the season that they bloom that most of the urban students are ignorant about it. Yet these rural folks can fail in this particular subject merely because of the fact that they are introduced into a different kind of learning situation that compels them to memorize unfamiliar concepts. In such a situation, it is therefore imperative that natural and self-learning knowledge should be also incorporated into the school curriculum.

The present civilization has also witnessed huge demographic changes and population explosion coupled with the growing consciousness in the society to acquire various types of knowledge and skills for future livelihood

fits well with the US education policy of, "No Child Left Behind." But Looking at the statistical figures freely available on the website, the picture is deeply unpleasant where the numbers of students who pursue higher studies in humanities stream after the tenth standard are exponentially higher than those who pursue technical streams. So what is this system of education? Does education in the present context merely implies the acquisition of any graduate or post-graduate certificate? Another discouraging aspect of the present educational system is also that choices of preference for further studies depend solely on the outcome of the various entrance examinations where students appear and re-appear.

Having said this, my intent is not to undermine the educational system but only to point out that that this process of transferring knowledge and learning should be conducted in a noble manner with the highest dignity of service to

mankind. Education in the life of an individual begins with childhood and it is during this period that the destiny of a person is also streamlined to a desired adulthood. But when education system fails to impart the right taste to the mind of a person, as he or she grows from childhood onwards, that individual will be averse to the whole idea of education. In reality, each child is uniquely different from the other. Even twins who are born from a single egg or monozygotic are not alike and so is the capacity and nature of wisdom of the individual. The concept of individualization of education is widely practiced in developed nations. It is based on the principle that all learners share same learning goals but each learner can progress through different learning objectives at their own speed depending upon their ability. Thus the entire idea of individualization of education is to gain mastery on the content and the subject matter. Individualization of education for school kids is now more possible because of technology. Teaching and monitoring of teaching methods can be more accurate and simplified with the help of technology.

However, it is quite fascinating to watch a video clip on Finland's education system. This small country in Northern Europe provides what is regarded as the most efficient education system in the world. The entire system centers on the individuality of a child and their freedom of childhood expression in a friendly educational environment. In contrast, the system of schooling in our country is so legalistic that the children's freedom of childhood expression is severely curtailed because of excess disciplining. The prime focus of most of the institutions especially privately run institutions is that the rules and regulation should be strictly adhered to and followed in order to keep up the image of the institution and its reputation. Therefore, education in the eyes of many children is more about rules and regulations. For once in their lifetime can the goal of education go above grades, marks or any entrance test? Because when the goal is higher, these things will be at their fingertips. To encourage and promote learning is indeed challenging but it is also worth venturing.

Streamlining the functioning of Governors in India

By MV Jagadodhara Gupta

The institution of Governors has once again come under the severe criticism with the recent political imbroglio in Karnataka. Surprisingly, both the political groupings have logically argued in their favour and they were correct to a great extent. While BJP, the largest party in the Karnataka assembly was right in claiming the stakes on the pretext not only from the point of view of majority (though short of absolute strength), but from the mood of the mandate of the people of Karnataka by rejecting the ruling Congress & the distant third runner JDS, they cannot have an unholy alliance after the elections, just to capture power. On the contrary, Congress + JDS were correct going by the arithmetic in the assembly as well as due to the recent precedences in Goa, Manipur & Meghalaya where post poll combinations were invited leaving aside the majority party, when it was suing the BJP. Both the national parties viz., Congress in the past & BJP in the present have misused the constitutional posts of Governors. Much has been debated on Governors, whether in Sarkaria Commission or S.R.Bommai case and number of rulings in various courts and the irony lies with the political parties themselves not

shortest time frame such as 24 to 72 hours, so as to avoid horse trading & other illegal practices.

(c) Leader of post-poll coalition.

(d) Suspended animation of the assembly & imposition of President's rule till the resolution of political imbroglio.

(e) Re-conducting elections to state assembly, if no popular government is possible within a time frame of 6 to 9 months.

Moreover, any decisions as regards to discretionary powers by the Governors, even as returning the bills passed by the assembly etc has to be a reasoned judgment in the form of speaking order. Mr Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice president of India & Chairman of Rajya Sabha, while rejecting the petition by

Opposition Parliamentarians for removal of CJI of Supreme Court has given 10 to 12 page reasoning after consulting the various constitutional experts, thus could not be challenged in any court of law. The best possible option with any constitutional appointee in case of doubtful situations is by resorting to conciliation amongst the disputing parties and resolving the issue like an arbitrator by considering their claims and counterclaims. Even, the Supreme Court has not

The best possible option with any constitutional appointee in case of doubtful situations is by resorting to conciliation amongst the disputing parties and resolving the issue like an arbitrator by considering their claims and counterclaims. Even, the Supreme Court has not found any fault with the invitation by the Governor in calling the single largest party to form the government, but only questioned the premise for arriving at the decision regarding the majority by asking for the letters handed over to Governor by the claimants.

interested in streamlining or settling once & for all, the discretionary powers vested with the Governors, for it avoids their manipulation, when in power.

It would be impossible to rule out the misuse of discretionary powers by Governors, if we continue with the present system of appointing Governors by the ruling party at centre, since most of these appointments are being made on the basis of political leanings & as political doles to accommodate the partymen. Most of the problems arising with the biased functioning of Governors can be addressed to a great extent by reforming the very process of appointment by placing 'apolitical' people like retired judges, social activists, renowned people from various walks of public life. On the same analogy now being adopted by the Union Government for selecting the Padma awardees, suggested names of eminent persons can be taken from the general public through online or e-poll amongst the panelists.

Further, the discretionary powers as regards to 'Who should be called to form the government in the case of hung assembly', the order of precedence should be inserted at Article 164 of the Indian Constitution as under:

(a) Leader of the pre-poll coalition, if enjoying majority above halfway mark.

(b) In case of no pre-poll coalition, willingness of the single largest party to form Government and their ability to prove majority within the

found any fault with the invitation by the Governor in calling the single largest party to form the government, but only questioned the premise for arriving at the decision regarding the majority by asking for the letters handed over to Governor by the claimants. On hearing the arguments, Hon'ble Supreme court has reduced the time frame of 15 days for proving the majority to just 24 hours, since it may lead to unethical and illegal practice of horse trading of MLAs as being apprehended by the rival grouping. This embarrassing situation could have been avoided, if the Governor had acted like an arbitrator after hearing both the parties and thereafter, giving his reasoned decision, duly taking into consideration the apprehensions of both parties. By doing so, there would not have been space for judicial interference at all and the dignity of the office of the constitutional appointment such as Governors could have been upheld.

To conclude, a strong political will is required amongst all the political parties to cleanse the polity. Brazenly in few states, several defected MLAs continue in the legislative assemblies as members or even holding the post of ministers, in spite of strenuous provisions of Anti-Defection law and this is possible only due to the discretionary powers vested with the people at the helm of affairs.

(The writer is an octogenarian & senior advocate in Andhra Pradesh)

TO THE EDITOR

Holistic goal of education

Editor,

Apropos to the article "Quality Education- The need of the hour" (ST May 21, 2018) by Rusievan Shangliang, I completely agree with him regarding the problems faced by students under the semester system as they are not getting enough time to prepare for the examinations. The teachers hardly get 4 months time to complete their syllabus for each semester and even if the syllabus is completed the students requires some more time to prepare for the examinations. With the semester pattern the students are not getting enough time for self study as the examination starts immediately after the completion of their course. The delay in declaration of examination results creates more trouble for students. President Ram Nath Kovind on the 9th convocation of Dr. Y. S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry,

Himachal Pradesh said that the goal of education should not be limited to simply getting jobs but it should be such that the students can start their own enterprise by using their skills and learning. Only producing a bunch of graduates every year should not be the goal of education but it needs to cater to the need of students by providing ample skills so they can start up their own enterprise. The students must be nurtured with the qualities of rational and critical thinking. The goal of education is to focus on employability and inclusiveness of all the different sections of our youth. Merely retaining students in educational institutions without providing quality education may increase the literacy percentage of the state but will not really educate them. It's high time that students are provided space to realise their potential and start up any enterprise they are capable of after they complete their

formal education.

Yours etc.,
Anil Singh Roka,
Via email

Cashless economy

Editor,

A cashless economy is one in which all the transactions are digitally or by means of plastic cards. India uses too much cash transactions. The ratio of cash to gross domestic product is one of the highest in the world at 12.42% in 2014, compared with 9.47% in China or 4% in Brazil. Majority of Indians are digitally illiterate (WDR, 2016 Digital Dividends Report). Therefore, RBI has also recently unveiled a document called, "Payments and Settlement Systems in India: Vision 2018" setting out a plan to encourage electronic payments and to enable India to move towards a cashless society or economy in the medium and long term (Source - The Hindu). But the fact is that the common citizen (aam

admi) poses as a major challenge for India to transition into a cashless economy. Ordinary folks in India find the usage of cards, mobile banking and PoS terminals to be a complex process and insecure too. The majority of the mobile payment service providers are non-compliant with the strict provisions for dealing with sensitive personal data including financial data as mandated by IT Act, 2000 and rules under it. Also the IT Act is not comprehensive. India lacks laws to protect consumers if they lose money. There is also the problem of cyber theft, data theft (for ex: NPCI debit cards data stolen) and lack of trust among customers. Will the bank strategies work after such endless efforts to penetrate into the cashless economy where RTGS, NEFT, PAYTM etc. are not known to the majority of Indians? So are we only allured by slogans such as Incredible India, Digital India etc? Government job

applicants, still have to follow the old school method of payment.

There could be more biases if we undertake a deeper study of these challenges. Now the primary concern is whether a small shop owner will be able to adapt to these new technological policies that the government intends to implement in order to turn the Indian economy into a cashless one. For those in large businesses the transformation is not complex because they can adapt to these changes instantly. Although Prime Minister Modi's initiative to usher in a cashless economy may be novel, it lacks a holistic approach as the common citizen could be in a disastrous situation due to lack of awareness and data theft. On the other hand, it provides a gateway for fast cash transaction which is beneficial for banking and non-banking sectors. Bilateral talks can be a suggestive method in solving the problem but how many of these bilateral talks have we seen or heard where

these issues are highlighted. On May 21, 2018 our PM visited Russia for bilateral talks. Does this involve the IT Sector merger or the consolidation of something else which is not a primary concern? Hence the IT & Communications Dept need to collaborate with DIPR Dept to ensure that public awareness is created. The public should demand that India comes out with a strong policy to ensure data privacy and security against hackers that can easily bypass any Govt. website. This issue needs to be addressed by our elected representatives to check whether the digital economy is feasible in our country and how it affects the common citizen.

Yours etc.,
Alert Archie Rymbai
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.

"It's all about quality of life and finding a happy balance between work and friends and family."

--- Philip Green

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.281

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2018

Trade war off

THE US and China which looked like starting a global trade war have retreated assuring good relations between the two countries through bilateral talks. The two sides pledged to keep talking about how China could import more energy and agricultural commodities from the US to reduce the \$335 billion annual US goods and services trade deficit with China. China should be the major beneficiary which has obtained a reprieve from the threatened tariffs on \$50 billion of its exports to the US as well as a lifeline for ZTE Corporation, a major company because of promises of greater imports by China. The shadow over intellectual property rights appears to have receded. US agricultural products, mainly beef and energy like liquefied natural gas could add between \$60 billion and \$90 billion over a period of years which is for less than \$200 billion reduction in China's trade surplus that President Donald Trump had asked for. China has agreed to buy massive amounts of additional farm/agriculture products. That will make US farmers reasonably happy.

Of course, some in US business circles have viewed the cooling off between the US and China with disapproval calling the action premature. James Zimmerman, a former chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China has described the US retreat as a lost opportunity. However, the blowing away of any apprehension about a coming trade war should stabilise stock exchanges globally.

LOOKING BACK

May 15, 1989

Another step forward

Almost the last of the offshoots of the 1962 Indo-China war is at last going to be removed shortly following an agreement between the two countries favoring reopening of their Consulates in Shanghai and Bombay. This is a direct outcome of the fairly successful eight round of talks between the officials of both countries. Agreeing to raise the exchanges to apolitical level following these talks, there is the reported effort to ease the tension along the border. This would formalize the existing clandestine

border trade which need to be brought under establishment rule and procedures would only step up the volume of the trade to the benefit of the remote border inhabitants in all respects. Through such effective control over the border trading the administrative influence over the remote areas would also increase, which would thus be an extra premium gained in the whole process. China's relations having been normalized in all respects at the economic level initially.

Governor's Scam

Need for an overhaul

By Poonam I Kaushish

Whoever said different political strokes for different political folks was dead on. Specially when it comes to the high Constitutional office of the Governor where handpicked loyalists do whatever their mai baaps sitting on India's Raj gaddi want. Governance, after all is one big nautanki which has rewritten the basic time-honoured rules of authority and turned democracy on its head. Bend them, break them, who cares!

Alas, the charade played out in Karnataka between Governor Vala, BJP and Congress-JD(S) combine once again brutally exposed two reprehensible facets of our rulers' democratic temper. At the political level, governance is shamelessly all about cutting deals, side deals and underhand deals. At the Constitutional level, the happenings in Bengaluru have once again put the Governor's role under the microscope.

The grimy tale has its genesis in the Governor calling the BJP which emerged as the single largest Party with 104 MLAs, though short of a simple majority by 8 legislators to form the Government giving it 15 days to prove its majority. Predictably, the Congress with 78 and JD(S) 38 totalling 116 MLAs in a post-poll alliance cried foul and moved the Supreme Court which gave the BJP 24 hours to prove its majority in the Assembly.

The issue is not that BJP Chief Minister Yeddyurappa did a Vajpayee and resigned before the trust vote as he was unable to muster a majority of 112 in a 224 member Assembly. Or that the Congress-JD(S) came up trumps. Either way it has dealt a body blow to the Governor's role in the sordid drama.

The Congress-JD(S) accused Governor Vala of acting contrary to what his compatriots in Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya did by ensuring that the BJP, though not the single largest Party formed the Government after cobbling a post-poll alliance with regional outfits recently. In fact, the Supreme Court upheld the Goa Raj Bhawan's decision.

Alas, in this high drama the first casualty is Governor Vala who was blamed for being a kathputli of his po-

litical mai baaps in Delhi and overlooking the letter and spirit of the Constitution. True, he is an old RSS hand who was also Modi's Finance Minister in Gujarat. Yet, as Governor he should realize his is a Constitutional position and his role and should be guided by recent conventions and not be 'His Master's Voice.' Moreover, he needs to weigh public probity and public interest more than political expediency.

This raises a moot point: What is the role of a Governor, his qualifications and Constitutional obligations and duties? Is he the Centre's chaprasi? Or, the keeper of the people's faith as the Constitutional head of a State? Will ideologies be the touchstones for matters of a Constitutional nature? Importantly, are there any rules to underscore some semblance, coherence and uniformity in gubernatorial actions? Can we have a charter of directions and guidelines?

Of course, this is not the first time that the Governor's role has come under the scanner. Be it the BJP, Congress, Janata Party, NDA-UPA-Third Front, all have misused their powers when at the Centre to topple uncomfortable or Opposition-ruled State Governments to further their political agenda by using, abusing and debasing the gubernatorial office. No wonder, Article 356 has been imposed more than 120 times in various States, at the whims and fancies of the Centre. But when they get hit all cry foul. A classic case of the pot calling the kettle black!

Sadly, in a milieu of you scratch my back and I yours, over 60% of present Governors are active politicians, Saffron Sangh cahoots or 'pliable' bureaucrats etc! The essential criteria for a Governor's selection is no longer whether he is a man of stature, known for his integrity and objectivity, but is he a yes-man, a chamcha.

He runs the administration by proxy. By playing the I-spy game --- petty politicking, gross interfer-

ence, open partisanship at the Centre's behest, sending for files, summoning Ministers and babus, to hear, enice, provoke and register the voice of dissent against the State Government to his political patrons in Delhi. Bluntly put, governors make life hell for the Chief Minister at every step along-with vision of personal grandeur and use it as a springboard to return to active politics.

Instances are aplenty. Meghalaya 2008, Karnataka 2007, 2011, Goa, Bihar and Jharkhand 2005. The common denominator? Each Governor interpreting or should one say misinterpreting the rule book any which way he wants, drawing his own conclusions based more often than not on delusions as long as he and his benefactors at the Centre could rule the roost. What to speak of 1971-81 during which in all 27 State Governments were dismissed by mis-utilizing the Governor's office. By 1983 President's Rule was imposed 70 times.

To curtail the Governor from playing politics in the Chief Ministerial stakes, the Justice Venkatchaliah National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution wanted the Chief Minister to be directly elected by the Assembly to obviate the need to test majorities in the Raj Bhawan. It opined that this would combat the growing menace of horse-trading (sic.).

Pertinently, the Sarkaria Commission noted that the Governor's role was that of "a Constitutional sentinel and vital link between the Union and the State...Being the holder of an independent Constitutional office, the Governor was not a subordinate or subservient agent of the Union Government." It also suggested he be appointed in consultation with the State Chief Minister. This was endorsed by the Supreme Court.

Experts affirm that the Governor's role is to represent the Centre, serve his people and fight their battles with the Central Government, not vice versa. His role is overwhelmingly that of a 'friend, philosopher and guide' to his Council of Min-

isters with unrivalled discretion. He has to bear in mind overall national interest, not partisan Party benefits. The Constitution empowers him to influence decisions of his Government by giving him the right "to be consulted, warn and encourage"

What next? Sadly, all lament the decline of the Governor's office but continue to misuse and abuse it for personal and Party ends. Not only does it generate bad blood between Lilliputian politicians but denigrates the Constitution.

Clearly, Karnataka is a lesson on the dangers of appointing political hatchet men to high offices which calls for fairness, uprightness and adherence to Constitutional values and conventions. We need to cry a halt to the growing depravity. The Governor's office needs to be revamped and restored to its old glory. Remember, what matters are not men but institutions. One can tit for an individual but not tat on the State. If all fails, abolish the office.

Governors need to remember that democracy means respecting the Constitution and upholding established conventions along-with realizing the essence of Constitutionalism is restraint and not confrontation. Time to seriously introspect whether persons with a preference for extra-Constitutionalism and lack of restraint should be appointed or continued as Governors.

Time now to rise above politics and set healthy and gracious conventions for high Constitutional offices if our democracy is to be put back on the rails. We need to appoint neutral non-political Governors. As long as the Centre continues to play partisan politics, India and its unity will be greatly hurt. The Governor must not be reduced to being a who's who to who? A glorified chaprasi! It is now imperative that the Prime Minister who postulates the Constitution also practices what he solemnly preaches! ---- INFA

Christians dressed in crusade mail

Controversy rages over Archbishop's 'Political Prayer'

By Sushil Kutty

With Muslims fasting and generally comatose during the month of Ramzan, authorities in China have told mosques there to raise the national flag to promote the spirit of patriotism. There are 20 million Muslims in China and they are, apart from the Uyghur, the quietest Muslims on the planet, keeping to the mosque-compound and offering Namaz prayers at appropriate intervals, their lives clockwork and no cow vigilante to fear. Ideal. Jannat!

In our own 'we the people' country, though, religion along with the government calls the shots. Tell mosques and churches to raise the tricolour and there will be three shouts of 'Down, Down, Down' followed by the Hurray! Patriotism in India is not to be worn on the sleeve nor raised on a pole at every vantage

"turbulence" all around him. He should know that not everybody can become Archbishop and wear the collar. For the majority in the outside-of-archbishop's world, it's a dog's life with or without the collar.

The Bharatiya Janata Party should rightly be shaking in its pants. The national alliance of the opposition, a glimpse of which will bone show in Bengaluru tomorrow, May 23, 2018, to take it on in 2019 has gone into lanes and by-lanes the BJP never thought the alliance would. BJP president Amit Shah, the other day, laughed at the 'opposition alliance' forming, stating that the "same people had been arrayed against Modi in 2014, too, so, what's the big difference?"

Somebody, who can get close to Shah and that somebody who is not a 'yes-man', should tell him that the difference is that,

"The BJP's Hindu consolidation is still a work in progress, a lot of the consolidation held up by Hindus themselves, Hindus who answer to the call of the 'secular' and are led by an ensemble of leaders in degrees left of centre. Post-Karnataka, a tweet doing the rounds of Facebook is a call to Hindus with these numbers: "92% of Muslims voted; 86% of Christians voted; but only 58% of Hindus voted, when will 100% of Hindus vote?" Definitely not in the next year or less before general elections 2019."

point though it comes handy to make a call to oust a government and usher in a new one.

In this age and time, it is rarely that the Christian Church comes dressed in Crusade mail. But it seems the times have changed and "evil" is at the helm. So, the Archbishop of Delhi Anil Couto sends out a letter to all parishes, urging good Christians to pray and fast to see the back of the current regime come 2019. And the Vatican puts the letter on its website. And to think we were all quibbling over the #TwoNationsTheory!

No names have been taken, neither that of man nor party, in the Archbishop's letter. But the Church's David versus Goliath slingshot is aimed at the Modi government. That is for sure. Logic says Christians should form a political party and get into the thick of the political battle. The Election Commission cannot stop them. And the cross election symbol is still there for the taking, must be.

Forming a party of Christians will be a formality to qualify to make political statements and get away with it. For the sake of opposition unity, the party of Christians, can like Mayawati's party for the Dalit lend Christian votes to the strongest opposition candidate in every constituency: to Mayawati from wherever she contests; Rahul Gandhi from Amethi...

But to use the camouflage of religion to make a prayer out of a call to vote is guided by singular opposition to a particular party/front. The Archbishop of Delhi's residence stands in a grove of greenery and flowers, a sight for sore eyes. No wonder the man only sees

come 2019, there will be "one single chosen opposition alliance candidate" against every BJP candidate in every Lok Sabha constituency. In other words the 69% that voted against Modi will not be fractured splinters but a single lance thrust straight to the BJP's heart.

The BJP's Hindu consolidation is still a work in progress, a lot of the consolidation held up by Hindus themselves, Hindus who answer to the call of the 'secular' and are led by an ensemble of leaders in degrees left of centre. Post-Karnataka, a tweet doing the rounds of Facebook is a call to Hindus with these numbers: "92% of Muslims voted; 86% of Christians voted; but only 58% of Hindus voted, when will 100% of Hindus vote?" Definitely not in the next year or less before general elections 2019. The Archbishop's call to consolidate anti-BJP votes and to Christians to pray for the "dark clouds to lift" places the Christian faith on a pedestal vis a vis the pagan gods of the Hindu pantheon.

If Islam is at the point of the sword, Christianity is all about harvesting the souls of the heathen. And there can be no let-up in the harvesting. Souls command a price higher than diamonds, gold and all the silver in the world, titanium! And, what's that they mined in the movie Avatar, something unobtainable! Like America's ex-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned Americans the other night, "let's not go wobbly on truth". The Chinese would attest to that. They know religion is opium for the masses, dangerous. Can make more than legs go wobbly! (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Govt apathy at its worst

Editor,
I write this letter in the faint hope that the Government might be informed of the actual functioning of its various departments in the "interest" and "service" of the public. On May 22, 2018, I had gone to the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Shillong to procure a challan. I was told that the challans are out of stock. I then went, to the premises of the Shillong Bar Association at which I got the same reply. I was also informed by the lady in the Deputy Commissioner's Office that it would take a week or two or maybe a month or two for the stock to be replenished. I was confounded. So, I proceeded to the Treasury Office (located in the same building as MBOSE) only to be told that they do not "sell" challans there. A lady staff asked me to enquire from a "kwai" vendor in the Treasury Office premises. At the end of my efforts, lo and behold ... I did get my three challans for thirty rupees, from a source I did not think possible-a "kwai" vendor. I was dumbfounded. The manner in which the Government employees served me was high-handed and humiliating but what made the humiliation complete was the source of the challan. How is it possible that instruments such as Government challans are now in the hands of persons not authorised to sell them? I presume one has to have permission to deal in the sale/distribution of challans. Or maybe

the "kwai" vendor was authorised to sell them? Why is there even a shortage of Government instruments? How then can the Government conduct its transactions? Maybe someone can enlighten the public in the matter. While the Government and its employees may not see any urgency in providing services to the public, it should be kept in mind that the common people would not run after these instruments if there was no necessity or urgency.

If the Government takes note of public grievances, hopefully brought to its attention through the media, I hope that it will ensure that this matter is sorted out in the Government's own interest. If not, then perhaps the definition of public service by the Government voted to power by the public differs from the common interpretation. In that case the public is doomed!

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Games infrastructure: another view

Editor,
Appropos the news report, "Minister On Site Recce For Games 2022", I wish to present another view with the vision of looking at 2022 and beyond. While the Government is looking at various sites to host various disciplines for this sporting event, I feel that the real

focus should still be sports while making infrastructure decisions. A week back the Sports Minister said that he wishes to make Meghalaya India's sports capital - but on the other hand everyone will agree we are just a drop in the ocean compared to states like Manipur. Manipur's world class infrastructure has, over the years, nurtured sporting talents and they have proved themselves many times in the world stage. As far as athletics in Meghalaya is concerned, only one region had stood out all the time and this is Mawkyrwat. Sakwang and Shngimawlein has produced many athletes who have excelled in the national platform. If there is anyone from Meghalaya who can bring laurels to our state during the National Games it will be only from this region. For example Krestarjune Pathaw (best of 2hr 37min in 42Km) and Synshar Wahlang (best of 32min in 10Km) might be one of the few athletic prodigies that can make us proud. Mawkyrwat has always been the hotbed of athletics due to many reasons such as genetics, food, and terrain and I cannot think of a better reason why an athletic stadium should not be in Mawkyrwat. This region is poor with farming as the main economy. However, there is great richness in terms of their athletics. This kind of infrastructure will only develop sports in this talented region and who knows what can happen in the future- the next Olym-

pian might just be one of the kids currently running the village roads and playing in the fields. I urge the Government to kindly look at this viewpoint when scouting for meaningful reasons for siting infrastructure for the 2020 National Games.

Yours etc.,
Gerald Pde,
RunMeghalaya,
Viaemail

State Administrative Tribunals

Editor,
Various offices of Meghalaya are currently burdened with innumerable litigations involving Govt staff against their respective departments, ranging from cases of service promotions, dubious supersession, arbitrary delay of convening of a Departmental Promotion Committee which has fallen due to a plethora of other justifiable or ambiguous service wrangles. Since those at the helm couldn't offer any commensurate follow up actions for one reason or other, or for adopting a 'couldn't care less' attitude to such sustained representations, the aggrieved functionaries have had to therefore approach the Court of law in consonance with the existing Meghalaya Services (Conduct) Rules, 1990 as specified under Clause 23(2). However, it is regrettable to say that such legal dispute

in Civil Courts result in interminable delays and it may sound quaint to say that even after the employee petitioners have retired or are on the verge of retirement from service, courts adjudications are hanging fire which to the petitioners could become a redundant exercise. It is an irony that by resorting to such legal options, the petitioners must have shelled out substantial amounts of money through their respective legal counsels. Thus, the cliché: Justice delayed is justice denied is verily applicable in this context.

Perhaps, to address such service run-ins the Central Govt had to officially institute a Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) by passing an Act in Parliament in February, 1985 and established under Article 323-A of the Constitution. This Court of justice is broadly manned by the Chairman, Vice Chairman, a Judicial representative and also an administrative expertise. This tribunal becomes the final appellate authority for all intents and purposes on service impugments. Incidentally the first instant of CAT's exertion was brought to bear on 1st November, 1985. It is reported that some states like Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka have their own State Administrative Tribunals (SAT) and most likely many states will follow suit. It may be mentioned, however that personnel appointed in Supreme Court, High Court and Defence are not under

the ambit of such Tribunals.

The core functions of the said Tribunals are to ensure that the Govt. staff are able to secure natural justice where the law of evidence is not warranted and the clinching adjudication of these Tribunals is irrevocably binding and wherefore no appeals can be made thereafter to any High Court and only with a special leave petition can the Apex Court be accessed if it is an exceptional detriment to basic spirit of justice. Having a State Tribunal of its own, is a win-win situation for the Govt. of Meghalaya and its employees in the long run. Besides averting wasteful expenditures and loss of precious time, the aggrieved employees can secure speedy justice to the ultimate satisfaction of all concerned. I, therefore, appeal to the Meghalaya Employee's Federation to introspect over the viability of such effective Tribunals by nudging the present Government to initiate the establishment of such a seat of judgment for the holistic benefit of the Government in general and its entire rank and file workforce in particular.

Yours etc.,
Jerome K. Diengdoh,
Via email

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

"It is unwise to be too sure of one's own wisdom. It is healthy to be reminded that the strongest might weaken and the wisest might err."

---Aristotle

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.282

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MAY 25, 2018

Teaming up

ONE fruitful outcome of talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin was that the two countries have decided to embark on a new project to cooperate in a new area: Afghanistan. For the first time, the two countries have agreed to take in hand a joint project - possibly in the development sector - in Afghanistan. It may be recalled that at Wuhan, Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping had also agreed to work on a project in Afghanistan. There was a slight difference. Modi proposed the Indo-Russian project and Putin readily agreed. But at Wuhan, it was Xi Jinping who mooted the idea. Russia has been urging, particularly the US to talk to the Taliban to prevent a prolonged sanguinary war. Russia has been known to be getting closer to Pakistan in the recent past. India takes a different attitude and in its pursuit of countering terrorism, it made a veiled reference to Pakistan supporting terrorists all over the world. Moscow and Beijing have been stressing the fact that Pakistan is also a victim of terrorism. India pointedly makes a distinction between different types of victims. Pakistan becoming a victim is of its own making and it does not hesitate to support state sponsored terrorism directed against India.

It has been pointed out that the adverse impact of US sanctions on Russia did not figure in the discussion between Modi and Putin with regard to New Delhi's proposed defence cooperation with Moscow. The issues related to defence, nuclear and trade areas are expected to be brought up at the summit between India and Russia later this year. The recently concluded talks were of an informal nature but showed that the two leaders share a lot of chemistry. The comfort level between the two countries was particularly highlighted.

LOOKING BACK

May 24, 1989

CM grants Rs. 50,000 for Tura fire victims

The Chief Minister Mr Purno Sangma, who visited the gutted market at Tura on his way back to Shillong on Friday, has sanctioned immediate relief of Rs. 50,000 for immediate disbursement to the people affected by the fire that broke out last week. The Tura Municipal market has been temporarily shifted to Dobasipara motor bus stands, while plans are being drafted for a new Market Complex in which the affected shopkeepers will have first choice to rent stalls,

according to official reports. The Garo District Hill Council has allowed the use of the Council Garage to be used as a private motor bus stand until such time as the market at Dobasipara is shifted back to the original place.

An assessment committee headed by the Additional DC Mr B M Recil will ascertain whether the affected traders have availed of bank credit and whether fire insurance cover had been provided.

Who actually owns NEIGRIHMS?

By Patricia Mukhim

The answer to the above question should be, "We all do...Yes we the people of the North Eastern Region do, because this Institution was envisaged to be our version of the prestigious, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi." This Institution is supposed to stem the exodus of patients from here to Vellore (our favourite paid destination), Apollo Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi and the other hospitals in the Indian metros. It is unfortunate that state governments of the seven North Eastern states continue to expend tax payers' money to underwrite the medical treatment of their employees. No other category of citizens can afford treatment outside their states. Perhaps this is one reason why the state governments cannot be bothered about NEIGRIHMS. Politicians and bureaucrats can anyway get the best treatment in the best hospitals in India and even abroad. It's the ordinary citizen - the non-government employee whose life is at stake and who needs the services of a NEIGRIHMS.

For greater clarity it is important to mention that the North East Indira Gandhi Regional Institute for Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) does not belong to the Government of India's Health Ministry, hence it is not a sarkari hospital with all the degenerative traits of lack of cleanliness and inadequate facilities. It should not be treated with disdain. Those of us who visit NEIGRIHMS for various reasons and see the administrative lacunae there should call it out. And those at the helm of this Hospital should stop assuming that they are only accountable to the Union Health Ministry. The NEIGRIHMS authorities including its director, its medical and technical staff are all accountable to the people of this region, no matter what their status is. This should be very clear and all of us have the right to point out where and when things go wrong. And yes, we have the right to use the RTI and to go to the media to voice our concerns. In the past we have seen how the administration of NEIGRIHMS levelled allegations at the media and even called this newspaper and its editor the purveyor of "fake news." Now why would anyone want to waste time and news space to push in fake news and who would

that benefit? Just because the top rung in the administration are hurt by such news does not mean that the news is "fake." And why would anyone want to defame an Institution that is much needed in the region; one that has the potential to become a centre of excellence and one of the best health care and research institutions of North East India, provided the leadership rises to the occasion.

Speaking of leadership there are genuine leaders who lead from the front and create a climate of harmony; where hierarchy is diminished and the leader is just the first among equals. Genuine leaders are never terror mongers intimidating their colleagues at the first opportunity. In America, psychologists have zeroed in on leaders that tend to create problems instead of solving them and who because of their insecurity make other peoples' lives miserable. Such leaders are termed as, "toxic leaders." Let us not forget that even Hitler was a self-styled leader although his leadership was as toxic as it could get. One does not become a leader by controlling, dictating, creating a fear psychosis or by being vindictive. That's the characteristic of a toxic leader. Psychologist Marcia Lynn Whicker coined the term toxic leadership in 1996 and says it is a combination of self-centred attitudes, motivations, and behaviours that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. Whicker says toxic leadership is linked with a number of dysfunctional leadership styles. Hence leadership is not always positive and not all are born to lead. When people are chosen to head institutions in the West their leadership skills are tested to the hilt unlike in India where the test for genuine leadership is not a criterion within government institutions and where only seniority matters. As if seniority is a certificate for leadership! No wonder not a single institution in the region stands out as a model of genuine leadership!

If NEIGRIHMS belongs to the people of the seven North Eastern states then

why are the state governments not taking interest in this Institution? Why don't the Chief Ministers of these seven states show any inclination to engage in the welfare of this prestigious institution? A visit to NEIGRIHMS will inform us that there are bus loads of patients from the Barak Valley of Assam (Haikandi, Karimganj, Silchar), and a good number from Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya. Why are the chief ministers of the seven states apathetic to the status of the Institution?

Since NEIGRIHMS is located in Meghalaya's capital of Shillong, it becomes the remit of the media here to highlight the administrative lapses of this Institution, despite its ability to win sundry awards in some of its performance indices. In Meghalaya, there is no hospital with a Mammogram machine to detect if cancer cells are lurking in a woman's breast. Women are advised to go through these tests especially after a certain age or if they sense any lump in their breasts. The nearest place to go for this important test is Guwahati. Why does NEIGRIHMS not have a mammogram machine? It is learnt that the Mammogram machine at NEIGRIHMS went kaput after only a few tests. The machine was not repaired and was not usable. Since it cannot be written off as scrap after just a few months of purchase it had to be left alone for several years until it could be written off recently. Now a new mammogram machine is being tendered for. I wonder why expensive machines are not purchased on a turnkey basis with robust warranty and insurance coverage. How can an expensive machine be condemned after minimal usage? Who is to be held accountable?

Now NEIGRIHMS is coming up with a state of the art Cancer Institute and already has senior oncologists on its roll. Unfortunately the Institute does not have a radiotherapy treatment machine hence patients have to undergo radiotherapy at the Shillong Civil Hospital where the facilities are available. For laypersons it is important to know that there are three major areas in the field of cancer treatment (Oncology). They are medical, surgical, and radiation. A medical oncologist treats cancer using chemotherapy or other

medications, such as targeted therapy or immunotherapy. Surgical oncology uses surgical methods to diagnose, stage, and treat cancer, and to relieve certain cancer-related symptoms and radiation therapy or radiation oncology is the use of high-energy particles or waves to destroy or damage cancer cells.

Again here it is learnt that tendering for the radiotherapy equipment started in 2013 but there were hurdles galore that NEIGRIHMS authorities could not overcome. It is not known as to where the fault lies as far as procurement of appropriate medical equipments is concerned. Apparently NEIGRIHMS is now closer to finalising the deal for procurement of the radiotherapy machine.

Recently a patient who went in for the Dexa Scan (bone densitometry test) had to have her weight taken. She normally weighs 51 kilograms but the weighing scale in the Dexa Scan unit showed her weight at 56 kilos. That's a good 5 kilograms above the actual weight. When she asked the technician if the weighing scale was faulty he said, "Yes."

These are just a few of the problems of our version of AIIMS and it pains us because if the weighing scale is inaccurate then how do we take the results of the Dexa Scan as accurate? 100% accuracy is important to ascertain the medical problems of a patient.

In an Institution with as large an ambit as NEIGRIHMS there are different leadership levels as there are departments. All department heads need to converge on one objective - service to suffering humanity. This convergence requires that the top leadership knows the way, shows the way and goes the way. Anything short of this is not acceptable.

Meghalaya Chief Minister, Conrad Sangma might be the first CM from the region to meet the Union Health Minister on improving the performance of NEIGRIHMS. Since the North Eastern Council and DoNER are platforms where the North East CMs meet and deliberate issues, it is now the remit of these two institutions to ensure that NEIGRIHMS reaches its full potential.

Chinese designs on Arunachal heighten India's worries Seen following south China sea model

By Barun Das Gupta

A Hong Kong-based English daily reported last week that the Chinese are digging for gold and other minerals at Lhunze, which is right on the border of Arunachal Pradesh that the Chinese call 'South Tibet'. Nobody can object to the Chinese prospecting for minerals in their own land. But what is a matter of immediate concern for India is that development of infrastructure etc. is taking place at a breakneck speed at Lhunze, which is a garrison town of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

That gold is available in the waters of some of the rivers of Arunachal like Noa-Dihing was known as far back as 1881. But the amount was so infinitesimal that it could not be commercially exploited. Whether the gold struck by the Chinese on their side is sufficient to be commercially exploited is not known.

What has added to India's anxiety is that the report quotes a Chinese academician at the University of Geosciences in Beijing as saying that Chinese troops had to retreat from Arunachal in 1962 because "we had no people there to hold the land." But now, with the 'significant increase' in the Chinese population in the Himalayas, there would be stable, long-term support for any military operation aimed at gradually driving out the Indian forces from Arunachal. "This is similar to what has happened in the South China Sea", the academician explained, where China has backed up its territorial claim by building artificial islands and increasing its naval presence.

Another academician, a researcher in the Institute of Geodesy and Geophysics in the Academy of Sciences in Wuhan, spoke in a similar vein. He said that what China had achieved now in the South China Sea was unthinkable a decade ago and he was sure that the same thing would happen in Arunachal also in the coming years. He quoted President Xi Jinping as saying that "not a single inch of our land will be or can be ceded from China, which definitely includes South Tibet." Those familiar with Chinese strategic thinking and achieving strategic objectives, will agree. For all their protestations of friendship with India, the Chinese will never waver from the path of attaining their long-term objectives.

This means that though there is not a possibility of the Chinese mounting a military offensive against India in the immediate future, it is very much on the cards at a time and location of China's own choosing.

There is no doubt that we have been unconsciously remiss in fortifying our borders and improving our road and rail communication along the 4,057 km long Sino-Indian border despite the military humiliation we suffered in 1962. To give an example, during the UPA II regime, it was decided to build border roads in Arunachal, Ladakh and Uttarakhand. But it is as recently as April 4, that the Minister of State for Railways told Parliament that the Defence Ministry had 'identified' four strategic railway lines along the Sino-Indian border. 'Identified', at long last! When will the construction begin, pray, and when will it

be completed?

The MoS volunteered the information that the lines would be Missiamari-Tenga-Tawang (378 kms), Bilaspur-Manali-Leh (498 kms), Pasighat-Tezu-Rupai (227 kms) and North-Lakhimpur-Bame-Silapathar (249 kms); that the Ministry of Defence had 'provided funds' to the Railway Ministry "for carrying out final location surveys; and that "the undulating terrain of young Himalayas and difficult geological conditions are affecting the pace of surveys undertaken." The MoS did not explain how the Chinese could overcome the same difficulties on their side of the border and build a network of railways and roadways in Tibet.

In 2013, the Manmohan Singh Government took the decision to raise a Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) at a cost of Rs. 64,700 crore, for defending our borders with China. The troops in the Corps were to be trained for crossing the border and taking on the Chinese in Tibet if the need arose. The raising was to be completed within seven years. The new government that came to power the next year initially thought the raising cost was too high and needed to be pruned. Then it was said that the raising of the Corps was going on as scheduled. Last year, the army announced that the raising of the second division of the MSC had just started.

Meanwhile, New Delhi seems to have realized that over-dependence on the United States and its ally Israel for our defence needs will be imprudent. Washington wants us to import all our defence hardware from the Western powers. The dangers inherent in this policy seem to have been realized. India has turned once again to her traditional and all-weather friend Russia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's current visit to Russia for an informal summit with President Putin points to that realization. New Delhi's decision to go ahead with the acquisition of the S-400 Triumf anti-missile system from Russia, overruling Washington's demur, is a positive indication. In an actual war, dependence on the US is very risky, as was proved during the Kargil war of 1999 when the US withheld supply of some spare parts of naval helicopters urgently needed by the Indian Navy.

In the field of indigenous production of military hardware, however, India is far away from realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of Make in India. One instance will suffice. The Kolkata Class stealth guided missile destroyers have been proudly shown up to have been indigenously built. What is not known to many is that only the vessel has been made indigenously. The wide variety of equipment it is fitted with is all imported. Its main gun is from Italy, the gas turbines are from Ukraine, LR-SAMs are from Israel, and the BrahMos missiles are jointly developed with Russia.

Over the years, China has built a vast defence-industrial complex. We are lagging far behind. We have to redouble our efforts to attain a credible degree of self-dependence in manufacturing military hardware within a definite time-frame. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

When will Meghalaya Govt abolish interviews?

Editor,

Apropos the news item, "Centre slams nine states over 'slow progress' in abolishing job interviews" (ST May 19, 2018), this report inter alia mentions that the Centre has censured nine States, including Meghalaya, over slow progress in abolishing interviews for junior level government jobs, whereas, the other 20 States have started to take action in this regard. The Report further mentioned that the Central Government had already discontinued with the oral interviews for recruitment to Group 'B' (Non - Gazetted) and to all Group 'C' and Group 'D' posts with effect from January 1, 2016, to bring in transparency and fair selection. It also ensures a level playing field for job aspirants from all sections and backgrounds and that this issue of discontinuation of interviews was also discussed with the Principal Secretaries/Secretaries of General Administration Departments of all States at a meeting held on April 22,

2016, but the details of the action taken by the nine States are still awaited by the Centre.

This action taken by the Central Government and the 20 States which adopted this measure must have come as a relief for lakhs of job aspirants in the country. But, as a common man, I am dumbfounded by the seeming reluctance of the concerned authorities of our State to adopt this practice in spite of disasters like the Teachers' Recruitment Exercise which has adversely affected, if not ruined the future of thousands of young people. I am of the view that the resistance of the authorities concerned to change will further erode their credibility in the eyes of the public, despite repeated platitudinous assurances of fair selection by some of their officials which have now become nauseating.

But however discouraging things may appear to be as of now, I am hopeful that with the present MDA Government showing signs of sincerity and eagerness and commitment to deliver, positive action will be taken through

revamping of the processes of recruitment being followed by DSCs and MPSC, etc. to bring about the desired changes.

By the way, Tripura became the 21st State which has done away with interviews (Tripura abolished oral interviews in govt. jobs (ST, May 20, 2018)

Yours etc.,
Samuel Swett,
Shillong - 2

Arbitrary traffic rules

Editor,

I would like to bring to the notice of the authorities the problems being faced by the residents of Mawpun, Forest Colony, Buddhist Temple etc.. To control the traffic congestion in the area, (which has been created by traffic police themselves by diverting all vehicle coming from Mawlai to this area), the traffic police personnel posted near CRPF Camp, Opp. Polo Ground has suddenly started to put a NO ENTRY Board, whenever he feels like, in front of the CRPF Camp, thereby restricting the vehicles going to the above

road without any prior knowledge/notice to the residents of the locality. There is no proper timing also for the same. This messy/disorderly decision by the Traffic Police has put the residents in great difficulty. Can we expect any remedial measure from the Traffic Department please?

Yours etc.,
S.Dey,
B. Thabab etc.,
Shillong-1

Goraline Road in a shambles!

Editor,

It seems that the road bordering Nongrimmaw and Goraline does not fall under Meghalaya PWD (Roads). I say this because repair works have been done recently up to both ends of the road leaving approximately a portion of two hundred meters untouched. The condition of the road is so bad that one must think twice before taking that road. The plight is the same for both pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

People staying in and around this area have no other option. During school

hours the problem is aggravated and drivers honk relentlessly because they are stuck on this road.

It appears that there is a dispute between the MES and PWD (roads) over the jurisdiction of the road and hence it becomes no one's baby. Considering that the MLA of the area (Laitumkhrah) is a silent bystander, the Government of Meghalaya should take a clear decision on this issue for the benefit of its citizens so that maintenance of the controversial road is taken up regularly as is being done in other parts of Shillong. Government should not forget that Meghalaya is known for its well-maintained roads amongst the North-Eastern states.

The regular users (under compulsion) of this road will vouch for my statement.

Yours etc.,
MK Rai
Shillong-3

An act of compassion

Editor,

Apropos the news item "Hek spends B'day at Nongpoh Leprosy Colony" (ST May 3, 2018) Mr A.L.Hek, Health Minister of Meghalaya, has shown to

the world that Health Care without Compassion is incomplete. To choose to celebrate one's birthday with persons affected by leprosy is an act of compassion towards those people who suffer from a disease which has a strong stigma against it (though it is curable like any other disease and early treatment can prevent deformity and disability). It sends a strong message that one should not be afraid to socialize with them and also makes them feel wanted and actually can mainstream them with the general society because they suffer due to no fault of their but from a disease which needs treatment and compassion like any other disease.

Hats off to Mr A.L.Hek!

Yours etc.,
Dr. N.Manimozhi,
Bangalore.
Dr.R.R.Lanong,
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.

“ This continuing spike in fuel prices is bad for consumers, bad for our economy, and bad for all other businesses. It is hurting us and costing us jobs. ”

--- Jodi Rell

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.283 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2018

US-North Korea Summit called off

THE much awaited summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-un slated to be held on June 12 in Singapore has been dramatically called off. Trump has said that he has taken the decision because of the tremendous anger and hostility displayed by Kim in the past few days. North Korea had threatened to pull out of the summit concerning the nuclear weapons programme of the country and warned that it was prepared for a nuclear showdown with the US. Trump replied that North Korea would be foolish to do so as US military was the most powerful in the world. In such an eventuality, South Korea and Japan were ready to bear the financial burden of such a conflagration. The US will continue its maximum pressure campaign of sanctions to press North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. Last month Donald Trump had called Kim a very honourable man and seemed very willing to attend the historic summit. Kim however finally refused to agree to a unilateral disarmament agreement. The apparent destruction of what North Korea said was its only nuclear test site had been acclaimed as a positive step but it did not carry conviction in the last analysis.

The crisis was aggravated when the US Vice President Mike Pence suggested a Libya model to make a deal. It had a reference to how Colonel Gaddafi was forced to abandon his nuclear designs. North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister called Pence's suggestion stupid. It caused great indignation in Washington. Now that the summit is finally abandoned, South Korea is surprised by the sudden volte-face by the US and North Korea. It had been pressing for unification of the two Koreas and a nuclear free peninsula. Trump for his part has deplored Kim's decision as it would hurt North Korea's economy and further impoverish his people.

LOOKING BACK

May 15, 1989

Another Oil Refinery in Assam

Another oil refinery in the public sector with the participation of the Assam Government will be set up in Assam. This was decided at a meeting between Home Minister Mr Buta Singh and Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta here last night. The two leaders also reviewed implementation of the Assam Accord. According to an official release, the Centre has decided to set up a two million tonnes per annum oil refinery with provision to increased the capacity to three million tonnes in case additional crude is available in the State. The proposed refinery will be a subsidiary of an existing public sector oil company

with some capital participation of the State Government, the release added. The Chief Minister has assured "full co-operations" in ensuring normal operations of all the installations of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission and to take all steps to avoid interruptions in their functioning. For the construction of the proposed integrated gas grid upto Amguri it has been agreed that while trunk pipelines would be constructed by the GAIL, the subsidiary distribution lines could be taken up by AGC on mutually agreed terms, the release added.

Petroleum price hike: A political game?

By K K Muktan

per liter Rs. 52.00
Nepal ---- Petrol
per liter Rs. 66.00
Bangladesh -- Petrol
per liter Rs. 68.00
Pakistan -- Petrol
per liter Rs. 50.00
Sri Lanka --- Petrol
per liter Rs. 49.60

The very question as to how the above countries can afford to sell petrol at such low prices provides us with answer that the

through levy of higher taxes, meaning thereby that the Modi government increasingly sucked the peoples' money depriving them of the benefit that came their way when the crude oil value decreased. This is obviously an act of breach of trust against the citizens of India in violation of assumed memorandum of understanding that the rates of oil should go up and

“The oil prices prevailing now in and around India's neighbouring countries are much lower than in India because, the incidences of tax levied there are much lighter than in our country.”

The following table explains the matter.

Bhutan ---- Petrol per liter Rs. 52.00
Nepal ----- Petrol per liter Rs. 66.00
Bangladesh -- Petrol per liter Rs. 68.00
Pakistan -- Petrol per liter Rs. 50.00
Sri Lanka --- Petrol per liter Rs. 49.60

government of India is levying unjustifiably heavy taxes on petroleum products, even when the crude prices were lowered by the OPEC. Land-locked countries like Nepal and Bhutan, mentioned above, received petroleum products via India and even then they could manage to sell them at much lower prices than in India for the welfare of their people. It is learnt that Indians living on the borders of the above two countries draw their requirement of petrol and diesel from across the borders at almost half the rates. Some of the unscrupulous Indians even smuggle out petrol/diesel into India and sell them with profits undetected by the Central Excise department or the police for that matter.

Five years ago during the UPA government the crude prices were 40 per cent costlier than subsequent years. In July, 2013 crude oil price for Bent was \$ 109.71 per Barrel which came down to \$ 106 in July \$ 2014 per Barrel, and the price further dipped down by 40 per cent in 2015. In December, 2017 crude price for Bent was \$ 66.2 per Barrel which came down to \$ 60 in 2018. Thus, it is seen that the rates of crude oil came down year after year from 2012 to 2018, whereas the prices of petrol/diesel increased continuously

Bhutan ---- petrol

essential commodities like rice, oil, dal, sugar, onion and vegetable which are transported from one end of the country to the other end will go up affecting the poor people. This fact is very well known to Mr. Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, the two BJP Generals of every electoral battle for which they had ordered moratorium to price hike of oil during the last Karnataka Assembly election. There was no escalation in oil price for nineteen days from 23 April to 12 May, 2018 lest the opposition parties (Congress and Lok Dal(s)) get an issue against them for the upcoming election. The prices of petrol and diesel remained static in Karnataka and across the country for 19 days till 12 May, 2018 being, the date of polling in Karnataka, and the very next day on 13 May the prices jumped up by 18 paise per liter for petrol and 21 paise per liter for diesel.

Imposition of high taxes on petroleum and raising huge revenue for wooing the voters through various development projects is also an important strategic programme of the BJP government for the upcoming general election of 2019. Populist projects like distribution of gas cylinder to village women through attractive programme named Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has been already started. However, we have no objection to such good works if it is not politically motivated. The NDA government has started raising petroleum price on daily basis right from the May 13 itself, bit by bit in paise so that people will not feel the economic jolt and raise objection against it. The escalation of oil price and putting economic burden on the masses is purely motivated by political end in view and not at all because of rise in crude oil and therefore, this design should be opposed tooth and nail by all people, political parties and organizations.

The larger benefit for greater number of people would be ensured only with reasonable level of oil prices and availability of essential goods and services at affordable costs for all concerned.

Trump's Iran Move is Most Ill-advised

By Kanwal Sibal

US President, Donald Trump has been chafing to undo the nuclear deal with Iran-the JCPOA- ever since he took office. He held back until now because, Russia and China apart, his European allies were not in favour, the IAEA has been reporting Iran's full compliance with deal and more sober voices in his own administration including Defence Secretary Mattis and former Secretary of State Tillerson have not supported this step.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and the pro-Israeli lobby in the US have been long pressing Trump

ffects the political and security situation in the region, which it did even when the Shah ruled Iran. It would be worth recalling that at the time of the Shah relations between Iran and Israel were close. If Iran is accused of inciting the Shias in the Arab countries, or of supporting the Houthis in Yemen, Iran could accuse Saudi Arabia of forging anti-Iranian understandings with Israel, not to mention US interventions in the region against Iran, including support for Saudi Arabia.

Trump has accused Iran being the principal source of terrorism, which might make

Iran's regional role that is seen as undermining western interests as well as those of its allies in the area figured in the negotiations leading to the JCPOA, but Iran strenuously opposed the extension of the accord to non-nuclear matters. Iran sees itself as a regional power, and while prepared to accept strict limits on its nuclear ambitions it was, and is, vehemently opposed to any constraints on its regional role.

to disown the deal. The US Congress has been against it ab initio. As Trump has become politically more vulnerable at home because of Russia related issues and other scandals he has succumbed to Congressional and other pressures.

Trump's reasons for abandoning the JCPOA are contrived and counter-factual. He claims that Iran is cheating and is engaged in developing nuclear weapon capability but has not offered any supportive evidence. Netanyahu's revelations on April 30 about Iran's secret nuclear programme based on intelligence sources also do not prove that Iran has violated the JCPOA after its conclusion. French President Macron and German Chancellor Merkel had visited Washington before May 12 to persuade Trump not to renege on the deal, but to no avail. The JSPOA did not cover Iran's missile development programme and therefore for Trump to give this as another reason to disown it has little merit. Iran's regional role that is seen as undermining western interests as well as those of its allies in the area figured in the negotiations leading to the JCPOA, but Iran strenuously opposed the extension of the accord to non-nuclear matters. Iran sees itself as a regional power, and while prepared to accept strict limits on its nuclear ambitions it was, and is, vehemently opposed to any constraints on its regional role.

Arguably, if the US and Europe as non-regional powers can legitimately claim a role in West Asia to protect their interests and so can the Arab countries, they cannot seek to circumscribe Iran's regional role. Iran's role in Syria is as legitimate as that of other countries. Iran is a part of the West Asian region, the opportunity for it to increase its role there was, ironically, facilitated by America's destruction of Saddam Hussein's regime and its replacement by Shia majority rule, which radically changed the political equation between Iran and Iraq. Iran has traditionally had very close economic ties with the UAE and good political understanding with Oman. The Arab world has substantial Shia populations and this creates bonds between them and Iran which cannot be suppressed. The historical antagonism between Shias and Sunnis and between the Persians and the Arabs af-

political sense in the context of Iran's support for the Hezbollah in Lebanon and alleged involvement with Hamas. Indeed, Iran's unrestrained hostility against Israel and the leadership position it has appropriated on the Palestinian cause weakens its diplomatic position at the international level when key Arab countries have reached different levels of accommodation with Israel and have ceased questioning its right to exist. Iran is failing to recognise that its excessive belligerence towards Israel only strengthens the arguments against its conduct in the region. If it could make a costly compromise over its nuclear ambitions for pragmatic reasons, its obstinacy on Israel is that much an anomaly. Nevertheless, to call it the biggest supporter of terrorism flies in the face of reality. Iran has actually indirectly cooperated with the US to decimate the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Moreover, within the region and internationally, including the Taliban and the Haqqani group in Afghanistan, not to mention the Al Qaida, Boko Haram or Al Shabab it is the Sunni groups that are involved in terrorism inspired by Wahhabism or Salafism originating in Saudi Arabia.

Trump's decision is creating a rift between the US and Europe over the extra-territorial application of US sanctions law on its companies engaged in business with Iran, besides infringing European sovereignty and independence. Europe is considering legislation that would protect its companies from US retribution. Iran is counting on the European countries to adhere to the JCPOA to enable it to abide by it. If Europe buckles under mounting US pressure and Iran walks out of the deal the stage would be set for a military conflict that would be disastrous for all. India will be expected to cut down its oil purchases from Iran; its projects in Iran, including Chabahar, could get stalled. Already oil prices have shot up, with damaging consequences for the Indian economy. In a actual conflict situation our equities in the Gulf region as a whole would be threatened. Trump's decision is most ill-advised and inordinately dictated by US domestic politics. It disregards the larger interests of the international community as a whole.

(The author is former Foreign Secretary)

TO THE EDITOR

Correction:

The letter to the Editor captioned "Government Apathy At Its Worst (ST May 24, 2018) was written by Dr M. Wollflang of Shillong -14. The letter inadvertently went with her name withheld on request.

Editor

Petrol is fuelling price rise

Editor,

The spiralling price of every essential commodity has already become a matter of serious concern. Again, the price hike of petrol and diesel has further fuelled the fire. Hike on cost of fuel always causes a cascading effect on the whole economy. What is worse is that it has virtually crippled all the lower income groups because it has pushed the prices of essential commodities still higher.

Regrettably, the rapid increases in fuel price have now only caught the present government on the wrong foot.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwali,
Shillong-2

Whither Sports Department!

Editor,

It is utterly disgraceful on the part of the State Government that in spite of having a Sports Minister along with other officers to man such a mammoth organisa-

tion they seem to be twiddling their thumbs as to whether or not to support an aspiring youth to participate in the upcoming international kickboxing event in Russia. Though the kickboxing association is split into two groups due to certain issues, leaving these aside it is important that the State Olympic Association should mediate. This is not the first time that our budding sportspersons are left helpless and they feel let down. This is a very poor show for the State. What is more insulting to the State is that the participant had to avail a bank loan to sponsor his entire trip. This is a great shame for the Sports Department. If the Department says it has no funds to sponsor then what credibility does it have to host the National Games in 2022? It seems this Government is full of talk with no direction and the absence of a Sports Policy which we have been hearing off and on is more like an empty vessel making noise.

Yours etc...

Dominic S. Wankhar
Via email

Abolish institution of Governor

Editor,

Your editorial, "Dubious role of Governors" (ST, May 19, 2018) is right in pointing out ~ "Governors have for a long while been more loyal to the Party that appoints them than to the Constitution." Indeed, the role of a Governor has touched the nadir. The Karnataka Governor had made the apex court work round the clock. His action of giving 15 - day window of opportunity to prove majority to a party that had fallen short of eight MLAs to get the majority mark, had drastically been modified by the Supreme Court and that helped rescue democracy from falling into possible quicksand of horse trading. The Governor's selection of a pro-tem Speaker

who had a tainted record as a Speaker was not in accordance with the best of democratic traditions either. It may be recalled that the Governor's chosen man had disqualified eleven rebel BJP MLAs and five Independents, hours before the then chief minister Yeddyurappa was to face a floor test in October 2010 and that helped Yeddyurappa sail through.

It is highly unfortunate that the attorney general representing the Centre pleaded for secret ballot. The Supreme Court of India must also be congratulated for turning down such an unusual plea that would have helped bypass anti-defection law in this confidence motion. That the Karnataka Governor's action could have given enough space for horse trading had been highlighted in a cartoon where it was seen that a man was engrossed in doing a sum of 15 ÷ (112 - 104) in front of Karnataka Raj Bhavan. Must our democracy touch

such a low?

There should be an effective legal fence that will stop horse trading and floor crossing. Otherwise, there will be of little value to our voting right in such an environment that has made Transparency International bracket us among the worst offenders in terms of graft in their 2017 report. In this context, it would be pertinent to point out that India has further come down in the global corruption perception index from 79th position in 2016 to 81st in 2017.

Now, it is time either to abolish the institution of Governors or at least limit their powers with clear guidelines to restore the honour of Vidhan Sabhas.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

How not to travel in India

India has the fourth largest carbon footprint from tourism in the world, Sahana Ghosh reports



Have you ever wondered if that much cherished Swiss cowbell souvenir and that well-earned vacation may have played a role in global carbon pollution?

A new study estimates tourism releases four times more carbon into the atmosphere than previously thought. It also decodes India's contribution to the carbon footprint from the fast-growing industry.

The complex research took a year and a half to complete and incorporated more than an estimated one billion supply chains and their impacts on the atmosphere.

Noting that India is a "net destination", Sun said this means more emissions are linked to international arrivals to India than emissions associated with citizens of India travelling abroad.

The study reports that global tourism accounts for eight percent of global greenhouse gas emissions with transport, shopping and food being significant contributors.

In 2013, global tourism accounted for about 4.5 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. If things continue at the same pace, then by 2025, the sector will produce 6.5 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

In this assessment, the contribution of air travel emissions amounts to 12 percent (0.55 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) of tourism's global carbon footprint, said Malik from the University of Sydney.

The majority of these carbon footprints are caused by domestic travel; business travel could not be distinguished from tourism, the authors stated.

'Good time for India to make right investment decisions'

Coming close on the heels of the revelation that carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have reached "highest" in 800,000 years, the assessment underlines that global footprint of tourism-related greenhouse gas emissions is "growing faster than international trade and is already responsible for almost a tenth of global GHGs."

Tourism expert, Susanne Becken, who was not involved with the as-

essment, said that she agrees with the findings of the study. It confirms the need for travel and tourism to engage in the climate discussion and reduce carbon emissions, she said.

As for India, Becken opined that this is a very good time for the Indian tourism industry to make the right investment decisions such as investments in energy efficient buildings and low carbon transport among others.

"You have some great leaders in sustainability like the Taj Hotels of the Tata group. It is also a good time to future-proof the sector more broadly. Luckily, India has a large domestic tourism sector, which means that carbon emissions are relatively low," Becken, director of Griffith Institute of Tourism, Australia, told Mongabay-India.

Becken said that given India's high share of vegetarian options, the segment could also be promoted to tourists.

India's carbon emissions from aviation stood at 17.97 million tonnes (MT) in 2017, an increase from 16.06 MT in

2016, as per the Global Sustainable Tourism Dashboard, which was developed by Griffith Institute for Tourism in partnership with the University of Surrey. Per capita, India's aviation emissions are very low, said Becken.

The dashboard provides a mechanism to monitor sustainability issues of tourism, explained Becken pointing out protected areas and tourism planning as one of the segments.

The dashboard illustrates eight World Heritage Areas (WHA) in India. They are Kaziranga National Park, Keoladeo National Park, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Khangchendzonga National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Park, Sundarbans National Park and the Western Ghats.

Out of these, the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area and Khangchendzonga National Park, have tourism management plans.

"We used this as an indicator to say that only WHAs that have a plan are likely to be managed sustainably. From this I would say that India has some progress to do and one might then also look further into the tourism planning in other protected areas in India, especially, if you think that ecotourism/nature based tourism is going to increase," she explained.

So the best way is to combine tourism with community development, sustainability investment, said Becken.

Carbon taxes

As per the study, emissions produced to support tourism within India (destination-based accounting or DBA) was 268 tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent while tourism emissions made by citizens of India (described as residence-based accounting or RBA) stood at 240 tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent.

The respective values for the U.S., which topped the global rankings is 1,060 tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (DBA) and RBA at 909 tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent. This is nearly four times than that of India.

"The differences between U.S. and India reflect the magnitude of tourism demand and the local production technology," observed Sun.

The study also found that the per capita carbon footprint increases strongly with

increasing affluence (wealthier people travel more), decreases weakly with improving technology (saving energy means emitting less) and that time has no significant bearing.

India has witnessed a six-fold increase in passenger numbers over the past decade. According to Centre for Aviation (CAPA), Indian airports handled 265 million domestic passengers in 2016 and will cross 300 million in 2018.

Asked on factoring in the boom in low-cost airlines in India, Sun said the emergence of low-cost airlines generally stimulates the tourism demand, leading to a higher travel frequency but lower length of stay – resulting in a higher carbon intensity per trip and expanding overall tourism emissions.

"If the local public transportation (such as railways) provides a good capacity, it can substitute some demand from air to land transport, but literature finds that this substitution is only good for short or median travel distances," Sun clarified.

Global demand for tourism is outstripping the decarbonisation of tourism operations and, as a result, is accelerating global carbon emissions, the study states. "At the same time, at least 15 percent of global tourism-related emissions are currently under no binding reduction target as emissions of international aviation and bunker shipping are excluded from the Paris Agreement. In addition, the United States, the most significant source of tourism emissions, does not support the Agreement."

In particular, the results of this study could serve to inform the work of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO – which advocates further tourism growth, even in already highly developed tourism economies) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in creating awareness of the carbon burden faced by tourism-stressed areas, the authors said.

Neither responsible travel behaviour nor technological improvements have been able to rein in the increase in tourism's carbon footprint. Carbon taxes or carbon trading schemes (especially for aviation services) may be required to curtail unchecked future growth in tourism-related emissions, the study suggests.

According to Saurabh Kumar Dixit, associate professor, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, North – Eastern Hill University, Shillong, travellers may be encouraged to choose short-haul destinations with increased use of public transport and lower use of aviation. Tourism operators should be provided market incentives to improve their energy efficiency.

"A notable example of this can be seen Wayanad (Kerala) where the forest department, in association with tourism industry stakeholders, has drawn up a unique project to help tourists to offset carbon emissions associated with their trip by planting trees at resort premises and other protected areas of the hill district," Dixit told Mongabay-India.

For government and industry, Sun advises incorporating emissions of international aviation and bunker shipping in targets such as those most recently drawn up under the Paris Agreement.

"Support carbon taxes or carbon-trading schemes to encourage the speed of technology development of airline industries and other transportation. Implement the eco-labelling requirement for airlines so that consumers can make informed decisions," Sun added. (Mongabay India/TWF-IBNS)

Image: IBNS & Wikimedia Commons



This is a very good time for the Indian tourism industry to make the right investment decisions such as investments in energy efficient buildings and low carbon transport among others

NE geared up for the tough road

By Willie Gordon Suting

Gear Up 2018, the first North East bikers festival, was held from 18 to 20 May in Polo Ground Parking Lot. The event was co-organized by North East Auto Show and North East Riders Domain (NERD). It was managed by Opus production and Evenflo Entertainment.

In Shillong streets, one can spot imported superbikes and cruisers. Genuine enthusiasts appreciate high performance and design. Bike culture, trending in the city, had been long awaited. There are local bike clubs formed by youths who commute on long distance journeys to villages. Bike festivals seek to unite riders as a form of brotherhood. It is also where they discuss on technical specifications, design language, performance, rates etc.

Gear Up 2018 was well received. It featured display of 20 international companies. Imported bikes included Harley Davidson, Indian, BMW, Kawasaki, Honda, Yamaha, Triumph, Benelli and Ducati. While the cruisers had a laid-back look, the superbikes and naked bikes had futuristic designs.

The Indian Chief Vintage with 1,800cc and 150 nm torque stood out for its curvaceous design. The light-green body was gorgeous with brown leather sets. The exhaust pipe gleamed in chrome. Established in 1901, Indian motorcycles was part of World War I and World War II providing its bikes for the US army. With its chequered history in motorcycle racing, it recently won the American Flat Track Racing in 2017. Other Indian motorcycles displayed were the Indian Scout Bubber with 1,200cc and 100 bhp and the Indian Scout 60 with 1,000cc and 78 bhp.

"We teamed up with these international companies for the exhibition. People who want to purchase the bikes are directed to shops in Guwahati", says Daniel Thangkiew of NERD.

Bitu Hage, dealer Principal of Indian Motorcycles for North East Region, says "Dealership network is improving in the North East, and the price has come down now".

The BMW display had its models S1000 RR, R1200 GS Non TFT and S100 R. The bikes had an edgy and fierce design. Power is the selling point of all the bikes displayed. But Thangkiew says, "Yes they are powerful, but NERD creates awareness for safe riding with proper gear and accessories".

NERD was established in 2015. It had over 55 displays of its bikes, all above 600cc. There were about 30 NERD bikers from Shillong. It has 23,401 followers in Facebook. The objective of the event was to promote superbikes and cruisers.

"People are drawn to craftsmanship, power and performance. This festival is a meeting place of like-minded people", says Thangkiew.

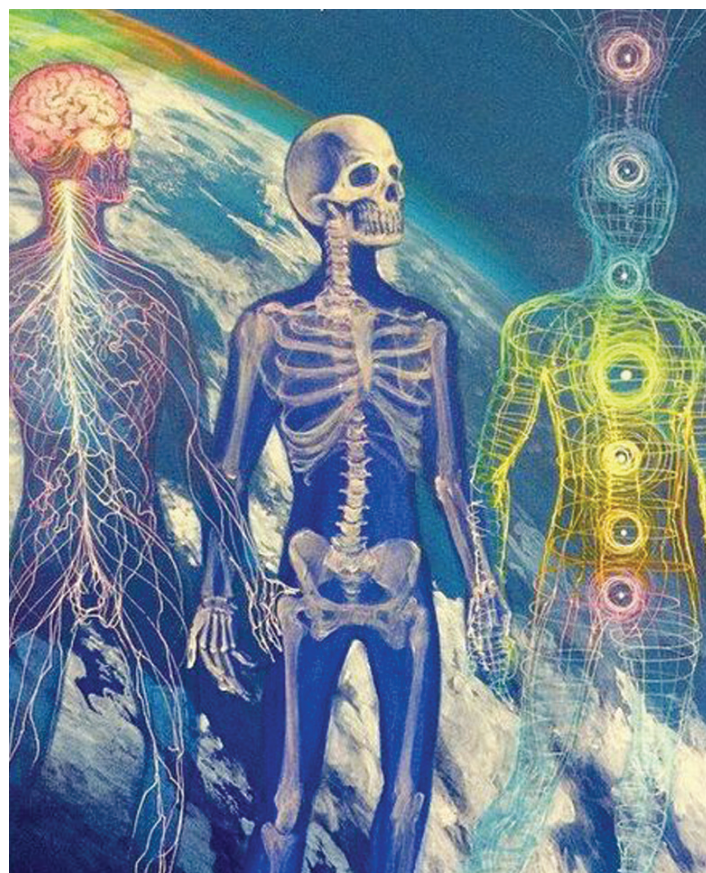
The trend of buying performance bikes started in the mid 2000s. KTM opened its first showroom in Shillong, and international companies opened dealerships in Guwahati.

The event also comprised live music from DJs and rock bands, stunt shows, dancers and bike-themed fashion shows. Thangkiew says the audience turnout was amazing. "With over 10,000 people in the crowd, the energy is just tremendous".

There were bikers from other states in the North East and the mainland.



Alternate medicine opens up options



By Ranjan K Baruah

Studying medicine and becoming health practitioner is a dream for many students. Most guardians in India still want their wards to be doctors if they get good mark after board exams. As there is demand for medical entrances and admission there has been increase in coaching institutes. But most of the students do not get admission in prestigious colleges or colleges which offer MBBS course. I will talk about an option that can be chosen by our students. Alternate medicine or healing, which is known as Naturopathy, is much in demand.

Naturopathy or naturopathic medicine is a form of alternate treatment that employs an array of pseudoscientific practices branded as "natural", "non-invasive", and as promoting "self-healing". The ideology and

the methods of naturopathy are based on vitalism and folk medicine, rather than evidence-based medicine.

It is a system of man building in harmony with the constructive principles of Nature on physical, mental, moral and spiritual planes of living. It has great health promotive, disease preventive and curative as well as restorative potential.

According to the manifesto of British Naturopathic Association, "Naturopathy is a system of treatment which recognises the existence of the vital curative force within the body."

It, therefore, advocates aiding human system to remove the cause of disease i.e. toxins by expelling unused matters from human body for curing diseases.

The term "naturopathy" was created from "natura" (Latin root for birth) and "pathos" (the Greek root for suffering)

to suggest "natural healing".

Naturopathy is an art and science of healthy living and a drugless system of healing based on well founded philosophy. It has its own concept of health and disease and also principle of treatment. Naturopathy is a very old science.

We can find a number of references in the Vedas and other ancient texts. The morbid matter theory, concept of vital force and other concepts on which Naturopathy is based are already available in old texts. The revival of Naturopathy started in India by translation of Germany's Louis Kuhne's book *New Science of Healing*.

D Venkat Chelapati Sharma translated this book in Telugu in 1894. Shrotri Kishan Swaroop of Bijnor translated this book into Hindi and Urdu in 1904. All this gave a wide propagation to this system. We will publish, including courses and institutes in India in our forthcoming edition.

Updates:

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund Scholarships: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund invites applications for Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund Scholarships 2018 from students who have registered for PhD study in India. Last date for ap-

plying for this scholarship is May 31.

University of Strathclyde India MBA Scholarship 2018: The University of Strathclyde invites applications for University of Strathclyde India MBA Scholarship from graduate and postgraduate students. Last date for applying is May 31.

New India Foundation Fellowships: New India Foundation Fellowships 2018 is a fellowship awarded to scholars and writers working on different aspects of the history of independent India. Candidate must be an Indian national and they must apply before June 1.

International Women Forum Fellows Programme: International Women's Forum invites applications for Leadership Foundation Fellows Program 2018-19 from emerging women leaders having exceptional quality training and access to IWF's unmatched network. Applications will be accepted before June 1.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkrnanjan@gmail.com or 8473943734 for any career related queries)

Anything furry is sold as puppy

This columnist's daughter brought home a strange fuzzy creature that she said was a dog she was looking after to earn pocket money, but I've seen Gremlins, Ghoules, Critters, Troll, Chucky et al. It's always the small, innocent-looking things that rise up and kill you in the night.

Asia is relatively new to pet-ownership and so it's easy to claim that pretty much anything furry is a puppy — skunks, raccoons, capybaras, giant tarantulas, wigs, floor mops, mouldy meat and certain types of deciduous shrubs.

A news report is circulating at the moment about a family in China's Yunnan province whose "puppy" grew up to be a 115-kilo bear. But regular readers of this column will know that this happens regularly in that country, and I would be more surprised by a headline which said: "Puppy Sold As Puppy In China Actually Was One."

While waiting for my daughter's thing to slaughter my family, I checked my email to find a dog-related news story sent in by a reader. A householder left his dog to guard his home when he went out. A burglar broke in and the dog simply followed the man around, wagging his tail. The whole thing was captured on a security video, which quickly went viral on the Internet.

This didn't surprise me at all. This columnist has an old dog who barks ferociously at family members, but gives strangers a friendly licking.

A vet once told me that a dog's brain was the size of a walnut, but that's an insult to walnuts. You read about some dogs being able to smell things on other planets, but mine can't find a chunk of meat she's sitting on.

It was a good thing that the burglar incident happened in the United States. Housebreakers who enter homes in China to be jumped on by bottom-wagging grizzly bears with names like Rover and Buddy may find it an unpleasant surprise.

Some Chinese zoos exploit this unfamiliarity. In 2013, a zoo in the People's Park of Luohe, Henan province, displayed a suspiciously small creature in the enclosure labelled "African Lion". When visitors approached, it started barking — revealing itself to be a dog with its fur trimmed to look like a mane. The zoo's leopard was a fox and its wolf a mongrel.

Is your dog a bear? To know for sure, just listen to it. Bears, like married men, communicate entirely by grunting. Dogs bark — but having travelled a lot, this writer knows that they sound different depending on where you come from. Indonesians say hounds go: "guk-guk" (except in Bali where they go "kong-kong"). In Hindi, it's "bow-wow", in Sinhala "buh-buh" and in Thai "hong-hong". Americans hear dog sounds as "woof-woof". I think I would give the prize for accuracy to the Chinese, who claim dogs say, "Houh! Houh!" and the least accurate to the British, who hear hounds going: "Bow-wow".

Meanwhile, my daughter's temporary dog-like thing spent the evening trying to gnaw on a large bone. Unfortunately it did not seem to realise that my left tibia was still in regular use.

Tonight this writer may have to replace it with a cunningly selected deciduous shrub.

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

Literary world loses two stars, discovers one

The literary world, in these recent weeks, experienced joy and sorrows. Never before had a Polish writer won the Man Booker International Prize. Olga Tokarczuk was awarded the prize for this year.

The death of American writers Philip Roth and Tom Wolfe shocked everyone. Both pioneers in their respective genres and styles, the legends were being showered tributes in various publications and social media.

The Shillong Times covers the biography and achievements of these three writers who iconoclastically took writing to newer directions.

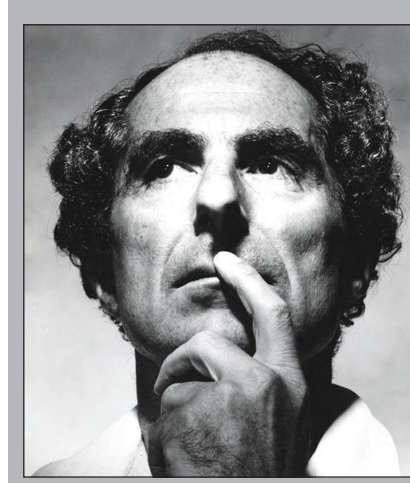
Philip Roth

Philip Roth is so great a writer that it was a shock to be reminded that he died on May 22. He had become part of the Mount Rushmore of American letters, hailed by *The New York Times* as "the last of the great white males", his place secure alongside Saul Bellow and John Updike as one of the towering figures of the 20th-century American literature.

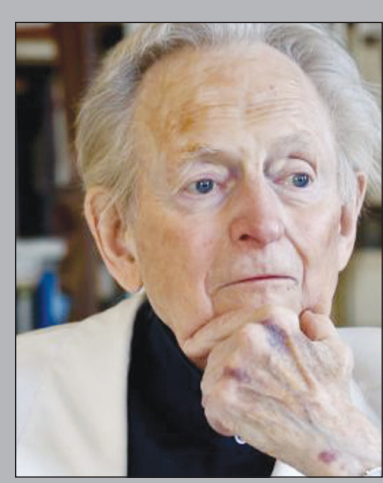
Roth won every accolade, and in 2005 the Library of America announced it would publish Roth's works, lifting him into a pantheon that included the likes of Thomas Jefferson and Walt Whitman, only the third writer ever to receive that honour.

His death deprives America of one of the biggest literary names of the 20th century also of one of that era's greatest chroniclers. The seam he mined was his own life — reassembled, reimagined and variously disguised in meta-fictions in which the narrator might be a writer very much like Philip Roth or a writer called "Philip Roth". As he put it, "Updike and Bellow hold their flashlights out into the world, reveal the world as it is now. I dig a hole and shine my flashlight into the hole."

Nevertheless, it's impossible to read Roth without experiencing the brimming confidence, exuberance and sense of endless opportunity that postwar America seemed to promise. In his "American trilogy" — *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist* and *The Human Stain* — written when he was well into his 60s, he explored the darker corners of that sup-



Great loss: (Left) Philip Roth and Tom Wolfe



posed golden age, when it seemed that to be born American was to have won the lottery of life. His preoccupations were Jewishness and sex. From the start he worried away at every knot and twist of the Jewish experience. His first collection of short stories included one called *The Conversion of the Jews*, in which a Bar Mitzvah boy threatens to jump from the roof of the synagogue unless the rabbi can answer a question about Jesus and the virgin birth.

The great American novelist may be no more, but he has left behind some great American novels.

Tom Wolfe

Tom Wolfe, the essayist, journalist and author of bestselling books including *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and *Bonfire of the Vanities*, died in New York at the age of 88. Wolfe died in a Manhattan hospital on May 14 his agent confirmed on Tuesday. He had been hospitalised with an infection.

With his literary flair and habit of placing himself as a character in his non-fiction writing, Wolfe was regarded as one of the pioneers of New Journalism. Works like the 1965 essay collection *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, 1968's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* — a firsthand account of the growing hippy movement, particularly novelist Ken Kesey's experiments with psychedelic drugs — and 1979's *The Right Stuff* — an account of the pilots who would become America's first astronauts — established Wolfe as the face of a new style of reportage that could be read for pleasure. He even helped define the term New Journalism — with his publication of a 1973 essay collection of the same name, which placed his own writing alongside the likes of Truman Capote, Joan Didion, Gay Talese and Hunter S Thompson.

"He was an incredible writer," Talese told the Associated Press. "And you couldn't imitate him. When people tried it was a disaster. They should have gotten a job at a butcher's shop."

Born in Virginia in 1930, Wolfe went straight into reportage out of university, beginning at the Springfield Union in Massachusetts. He later left for Washington, then New York, arriving there in 1962 to work for *The New York Herald Tribune*.

He'd never leave, making a home there with his wife Sheila Berger, the former art director of *Harper's Bazaar*, and their two children, until his death.

After the success of *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* in 1965, Wolfe built a career writing about popular culture, politics and American life, particularly how money and prosperity had shaped the country since the second world war. *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, regarded by many as the definitive book about the roots and growth of the hippy movement, placed him in the public consciousness.

Taking on what he called "the big challenge" — the novel — *Bonfire of the Vanities* was published in 1987, to huge commercial success. A satirical portrait of greed and money in 1980s New York, the novel followed bond trader Sherman McCoy's journey from Wall Street to a court in the Bronx, after hitting a black man with his car. His second novel, *A Man in Full* was also a bestseller, but his success attracted critics; in the *New York Review of Books* the author Norman Mailer wrote: "Extraordinarily good writing forces one to contemplate the uncomfortable possibility that Tom Wolfe might yet be seen as our best writer. How grateful one can feel then for his failures and his final inability to be great — his absence of truly large compass. There may even be an endemic inability to look into the depth of his characters with more than a consummate journalist's eye."

Olga Tokarczuk

After the great losses, the literary world saw a change of the sombre mood with Olga Tokarczuk becoming the first Polish writer to win the Man Booker International prize, which goes to the best work of translated fiction from anywhere in the world. More than 100 novels were submitted for the 2018 award, and Tokarczuk's *Flights* secured the £50,000 prize, which is shared equally with her English translator Jennifer Croft.

Tokarczuk is a bestselling author in Poland, where she has won numerous awards. In *Flights*, she meditates on travel and human anatomy, moving between stories including the Dutch anatomist who discovered the Achilles tendon when dissecting his own amputated leg, and the tale of Chopin's heart as his sister transported it from Paris to Warsaw.

"It isn't a traditional narrative," said chair of judges Lisa Appignanesi, point-

ing to Tokarczuk's own description of her writing as "constellation novels" to describe an author who throws her stories into orbit, allowing her readers to form meaningful shapes from them. "We loved the voice of the narrative — it's one that moves from wit and gleeful mischief to real emotional texture and has the ability to create character very quickly, with interesting digression and speculation."

The book's themes — "the nomadic life that we now lead in the world, with our constant movement, our constant desire to pick up and go, whether it's from relationships or whether it's to other countries", and "the limitedness, the finiteness, the mortality of the human body, which is always pulled towards the ground" — collide in Tokarczuk's "extraordinary" stories, said Appignanesi. She also praised the novel's translation by Croft, an American who translates from Polish, Spanish and Ukrainian and is a founding editor of the *Buenos Aires Review*.

Selecting *Flights* from a shortlist that also featured the Spanish author Antonio Muñoz Molina, Iraq's Ahmed Saadawi and France's Virginie Despentes was "so hard", said Appignanesi, but Tokarczuk is "a writer of wonderful wit, imagination and literary panache" who has "has written a great many books that sound



amazing, but which haven't been translated yet".

"We really felt this is a prize that has an interventionist quality — it allows writers to be better known in Britain, and in the English language, than they have been previously," said Appignanesi. *Flights*, which is published by the tiny independent press *Fitzcarraldo Editions*, is only the third of Tokarczuk's 10 books to be published in English.

According to Appignanesi, translated fiction is "incredibly important", particularly today, "when we seem to have this recrudescence of a kind of nationalism that would rather have insularity and homegrown-ness as the way of the world". Appignanesi was joined on the judging panel by poet and translator Michael Hofmann, the novelists Hari Kunzru and Helen Oyeyemi and journalist Tim Martin.

The Man Booker International prize delivers a reliable increase in sales for the winning book. Han's *The Vegetarian*, which won in 2016, sparked a 400 per cent increase in sales of Korean literature in the UK, while *A Horse Walks Into a Bar*, the 2017 winner by Israel's David Grossman, saw its sales increase by 1,367 per cent in the week following the award, with the publisher Penguin going through 10 reprints in a year.

(Compiled by Willie Gordon Suting)
Photo courtesy: Pinterest

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, MAY 27 2018

Originality will be peaking for good as Moon sextile Saturn on your solar return chart. You have a great deal of energy for new projects, or for striding existing ones. This is a rather happy, result-oriented time on the professional front. This is a time to follow your visions and ideas, and to plant a seed in the form of bidding for the future. You own extra charm in your professional life. Matters of the heart touch you profoundly. You may willingly play a supportive role to the family and offer empathy and selfless love. Strong opportunities for love and romance occur. More occasions to socialize and network could present themselves now.

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. This period brings love, romance and excitement in personal relations. 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 sparkling 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. This period proves good for long-term investments and finances. 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 tend to instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. Your partner and you complement each other in different situations.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You would work very hard to meet professional goals. This 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. Attending an important social occasion or festival may put you in the public eye. 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. Moreover you are generous and kind in family and personal relationships. 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 would 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. You show your love by helping your partners, and sharing your lovers' problems. 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. Financial benefits may come your way through investments and insurance. 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. Your dynamism attracts creative and charismatic people and makes your social life enjoyable. 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.

Proteus of American Jewish fiction

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

Only last month I was in Princeton University as International Visiting Professor and I was amazed by Philip Martin Roth's contribution as a teacher in the Creative Writing Department in the 1960s. Only in the other campus, Tom Morrison used to teach in the Afro-American Studies Department.

Morrison got her Nobel Prize, which eluded Roth, the Proteus of Fiction. His books meant so much for me and in fact as I was going to Newark airport from Mumbai, I was coincidentally reading his third novel and fourth book, *Portnoy's Complaint*.

In the Newark Airport I decided to see his birthplace in New Jersey where I was going to stay during my US trip near Teaneck where he was born. Portnoy's problem was that he was victimised for being a Jew. But the tragic story was told in the narrative that was a dictionary of Jewish jokes and which are so enjoyable in the novel simply because Roth had a prodigious master of a literary Jewish idiom, which Christopher Lehmann described as "bizarre, exaggerated, visceral profane and wildly funny".

I find some similarity with George Eliot's *Romola* and this also reminds me of his *American Pastoral* in which Roth tackles the very subjects he once spurned as unmanageable, namely what happened to America in the decades between World War II and Vietnam, between complacencies of the 50s and the confusions of the 70s and 80s. I fell in love with Neil Klugman, forerunner to Portnoy and hero of *Goodbye, Columbus*, Roth's first novel that I read during the snowfall in New Jersey.

Roth got the National Book Award and National Book Critics Circle Award twice and the PEN Faulkner Award thrice. He received the Pulitzer Prize for his 1997 novel *American Pastoral*.

Roth's fiction is chiefly significant for its provocative explorations of American identity. Awards came his way

although he did not get the Nobel Prize which he deserved more than many who got it. He received US National Book Award for Fiction for his literary debut *Goodbye, Columbus* which was exceptionally short, a novella rather than a novel.

In his novels, the picture of his Weequahic neighbourhood where he was born is so faithfully depicted with his zest for life and his sardonic humour. In Portnoy's Complaint, his nice depiction of Weequahic High School makes Newark life vivid by referring to Empire Burlesque, the Weequahic Diner, the Newark Museum and Irvington Park.

During my stay in New Jersey I saw all these places and found wonderful resemblances. These places shaped his artistic sensibility. He graduated from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. He pursued graduate studies in the University of Chicago and got his Masters degree in English literature. He taught creative writing in University of Iowa and Princeton University. Later, he continued his academic career at the University of Pennsylvania where he taught Comparative literature.

His fictional voice is his own voice sometimes as in *I Married a Communist* he was giving reply to his divorced wife Claire Bloom whom he married as his second wife and who after divorce wrote a Memoir to which he responded by this novel. Still he maintained the artistic distance and the author's persona never lost the aesthetic beauty as it incorporates social commentary, political satire as in *Our Gang* or *Operation Shylock*.

In an interview to *The Guardian* he bluntly confessed, "I'm exactly the opposite of religious." Maybe like Thomas Hardy of British literature, this great American Jewish novelist was not considered for Nobel Prize for this atheist attitude. His death in a Manhattan hospital of congestive heart failure on May 22 at the age of 85 stunned and saddened many of his admirers and readers like me.

(The author is International Visiting Professor of Fairleigh Dickinson University New Jersey)

"It is well to be up before daybreak, for such habits contribute to health, wealth, and wisdom."

--- Desiderius Erasmus

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.285

SHILLONG, MONDAY, MAY 28, 2018

Battle royale at Ampati

AMPATI is going to the polls today. The three-cornered contest for this prestigious constituency was necessitated as former Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma who won from two seats - Ampati and Songsak - in the recently held State Assembly elections, decided to vacate the former and retain the latter. In a state known for its political dynasties, it is not surprising that Mukul's daughter Miani D Shira is contesting in her father's place. Political dynasties are built by pampering the constituents and Ampati has received more than its due share of development; sometimes at the cost of many other less fortunate regions of Garo Hills, such as South and East Garo Hills. The Congress campaign in Ampati has been a high decibel one. The Congress High Command listed several star campaigners. This has made the Congress workers of Garo Hills wonder why the election to the Williamnagar constituency did not receive similar attention and traction, thereby leading to the defeat of the Congress candidate and former minister, Deborah Marak. But that's political chicanery playing out in full public view.

The Congress and National Peoples' Party (NPP) are both confident of winning Ampati a constituency that has been nurtured as a pocket borough of Mukul Sangma for the past 30 years, which is a record of sorts. It would be interesting to watch how things unfold in Ampati. Would the people of this constituency vote for change? What change are they looking at? Would Miani Shira a rank newcomer into politics be able to upstage Clement Momin who has contested against Mukul in the past? This by-election is crucial for the NPP to establish a firm hold over the coalition government - the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA). In fact all the coalition partners of the present Government have campaigned extensively for the NPP candidate. Mukul on the other hand has portrayed this contest as an opportunity for the Congress to return to power in Meghalaya. There has been a running war of words between the Congress and the NPP during the campaign period. Now it remains to be seen as to who will ultimately carry the trophy and whether the voters are influenced by high pitch rhetoric.

LOOKING BACK

May 24, 1989

A political decision

Assam Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta has raised strong objection to the Centre's decision to locate the Central University in Cachar District of Barak Valley instead of Sonitpur in the Brahmaputra Valley. This objection may be a good political rhetoric, but has come too late in the day since the relevant Bill for setting up the university in Silchar has already been passed by both Houses of the Parliament. True, right from the beginning Mr Mahanta was clamouring for locating the university in Brahmaputra

Valley. But he hardly put forward any plausible argument in favour of Sonitpur or even why Cachar should be out of the reckoning.

What the Chief Minister persistently harped on was that it should be located in the Brahmaputra Valley but not in the Bengali predominant Cachar District. Obviously, Mr Mahanta could not have afforded to lose the battle since it is an emotive issue for the Assamese community which primarily voted the AGP to power.

Need for electoral reforms in Meghalaya

By H H Mohrmen

Now that the election process is over, the need of the hour is to study and look at how we can improve the way we conduct elections particularly elections to the state Assembly. We must first of all congratulate the office of the State Election Officer for a successful and peaceful election. There are, however, few gaps that can be addressed to improve the way elections are conducted in the future.

Since the DC's office is the place which is like a central office with regards to conducting elections in every district, election also has a major impact on the functioning of various departments in this office. For at least three months, almost all the time of the officers and staff of the DC's office is usurped for preparation of the elections only. All other functions of these departments (except for few emergency cases) slow down and some even come to a grinding halt.

The issuance of Scheduled Tribe or Permanent Residential certificates were delayed during the run up to the last election because most of the officers who are supposed to sign the documents were preoccupied with election duties. Supervising the preparation of the elections has taken much of their time and energy and they have very less time to attend to other duties.

Functions of other departments were also affected because all the officers and most of the staff were selected to officiate for election duties and everybody knows that they cannot play truant on this. And because in the entire three months that the government is engaged in the election preparation, officials of all ranks also have very little or no time to attend to their respective duties. The point is that in the three months before the election even the different government departments stop functioning normally or function on a very low pace.

In the last election even the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) scheme suffered as Block Development Officers (BDOs) and gram-sevaks and gram-sevikas had to attend to their respective trainings to prepare them for election duties. It will not be surprising if many of the Village Employment Councils (VECs) which used to achieve hundred days target failed to do so this financial year because of the election process which took many months to prepare.

The blame is also on the

VEC and the voters themselves for not being able to achieve 100 days target because come election, then the festive mood starts to pervade the atmosphere and everything comes to a standstill for the people during the election. The members and the officials of the VECs are all too busy canvassing for their respective candidates so this also hampers the smooth functioning of the VECs. So the last three months of the financial year which could be critical for the community to complete the hundred days target went for a toss because of the election fervour.

The question is also about the need to provide training for officials to man the election. Why do we

The last point is using teachers in the election process. We all know that unlike departments; schools function only few months in a year. Normally elections are conducted just after the schools' winter break and then teachers have to immediately attend trainings and then attend to the election duty.

still need to repeatedly train the officials who are to man the polling stations when most of them have conducted elections many times in the past. Most of the senior staff stated that the training is needed only for those who have not been deputed for election duties. Hence it was a waste of time and money to even call them for training because the training is only a repetition of what was provided to them in the last election.

The new reforms introduced by the government in conducting the elections did have some impact. For example the flying quads were able to confiscate huge cache of money during the election. But does that mean that this time the candidates spent within the limited amount stipulated by the Election Commission? Was there no buying of votes or financing of other activities by the candidates during the election?

During the election candidates compete among themselves in providing financial support to religious organisations which organise their conferences or festivals or what have you. And the assistance varies from sponsoring for the cost of making pandals, hiring of chairs or sound system and others. Some candidates even construct approach roads to the place where the conference or the festival is

held. Questions may also be asked whether the candidates are honest with the returns they submit to the Election Officer or the Observers on their expenditure during the election. But the most important question is whether the candidate provided true information on their declaration with regards to their educational qualifications, wealth and other information during the time of filling of nomination papers? Are they really honest with the oath that they had taken? These are some very important questions that the public really need to know to improve the election process in the state.

During the election we should also have another addition to the Sermon on

the Mount which will say: 'Blessed are those who tie their nuptial knots during election for they shall be abundantly blessed with expensive gifts of all shapes, sizes and colours.'

The other election issue that needs to be looked into in the next election is the campaign style in which several lakhs and crores of rupees were spent. The cost of hiring of vehicles to be used during the entire campaigning period and the expenditure incurred for arranging food and other logistics is phenomenal, yet this went unnoticed. Political party rallies are also one occasion when the Parties spend crores of money only for organising one rally. And parties organise many such rallies across the state. The question is whether the government can control such activities?

It is high time that the EC bans the use of vehicles to convey people from one campaign ground to another during candidate's campaign trails. Instead it is better to organise debates if provision in the election rules allows and also to encourage different civic bodies to organise debates to minimise expenditure of the candidate.

The last point is using teachers in the election process. We all know that unlike departments; schools function only few months in a year. Normally elections are conducted just after the schools' winter break and then teachers have to immediately attend trainings and then attend to the election duty. This has greatly affected the students and the normal functioning of the schools. And just after the election there is the are SSLC and HSSLC examinations where schools which are examination centres again have to give more than ten days holiday to the students. Engaging teachers in the election process is like robbing the students of their precious time which they would have benefitted if their teachers were attending normal schools hours.

Of course conducting elections is a democratic process which is necessary but we also need to learn to improve on how we conduct our elections. This will not only benefit the people but strengthen democracy too.

commodities. But then, I read in the news report about Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar's prescription to observe Sundays as Fundays - as a day without criticism in order to ensure happiness. It was, as it were, some sorts of magic realism as just half an hour ago, I did relate to a goat that had happily been munching jackfruit leaves while waiting in the queue at the butcher's!

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Via email

Wanted a robust educational policy!

Editor,
I would like to congratulate all the toppers of SSLC for their wonderful achievement in this year's exam. Day by day our education system is becoming more challenging

central government, due to official apathy. And there is talk about outsourcing the Radiotherapy services to a corporate health care provider.

However, few citizens seem to be aware of this, leave alone question the government. Hope your article will encourage youngsters to obtain information via RTI and other means and influence government policies. NGOs and student bodies should take keen interest in this as the future belongs to them.

Yours etc.,
A questioning voice.
Name withheld on request

Massacred by price rise!

Editor,
On Sunday morning, after getting back from market, I felt very sad because of the rising prices of essential

Intricacies of Supreme Court decision on Karnataka Several aspects of verdict remain to be explored

By K. Raveendran

With the 'murder of democracy' in the Karnataka Assembly having been averted, thanks to a midnight intervention of the Supreme Court, and a joint JDS-Congress government under H D Kumaraswamy duly installed in place of BJP, it may now be time to revisit the developments in the court and take a closer look at the underlying legal principles invoked in the unusual court intervention.

The previous occasion when a bench of the apex court held an early morning session was in 2015 to clear the execution of 1993 Mumbai terror accused Yakub Memon, which a certain section of people still believe amounted to murder of democracy, and this time the milestone sitting was held to prevent what all non-BJP Opposition parties consider as the real murder of democracy in Karnataka. Curiously, both the unearthly hour sittings involved Justice Dipak Mishra, first as one of the three judges on the bench that heard Memon's petition, and in the present case as the Chief Justice ordering the constitution of a similar bench. The former was not avoidable, but doubts have been expressed about the latter.

Themis, the Greek goddess of divine justice, who is depicted as a blind-folded lady carrying scales

ways of his government, citing the situation which forced the four seniormost judges to go before the people. The burden of his argument was that the fetters have incapacitated the judiciary, affecting its independence and integrity. But curiously, within a day of his making the allegation, Rahul Gandhi was forced to make a u-turn and hail the Supreme Court as it put paid to the BJP's hopes of 'manufacturing' a majority. The Congress president couldn't have missed feeling embarrassed about his outbursts only a day before. Whether the midnight court sitting and the decision, which should have surprised even Rahul and his party, were the court's way of calling his bluff, one does not know.

This column had expressed the view that to overcome the top court's credibility gap and the trust deficit caused by a vertical division in the benches in view of a series of disturbing events in recent past, the judges will have to prove their ability to take decisions that are contrary to their known positions. Karnataka's was truly one such verdict, helping Congress, which had targetted the Establishment group and the Chief Justice for a selective onslaught, to walk away with major 'collateral' benefits. On the

The verdict has given the Chief Justice an opportunity to get even with Congress, which had initiated a move to impeach him on several counts, including illegal gratification. Two of its counsels had challenged, unsuccessfully though, the decision of Vice President Venkaiah Naidu to reject the impeachment notice given by Congress MPs in a petition that was once again 'arranged' to come up before one of the preferred benches. The Congress counsels had to withdraw their plea in frustration as all their moves got checkmated.

in one hand and a sword in the other, is the ultimate symbol for the delivery of justice. The blind-folding is to emphasise she is not influenced by anything that goes on around her; she goes only by the law and her own divine power of insight. So, judges in the classical mould are not supposed to be influenced by anything other than the substantive law points and the evidence brought before them. If they listen to public opinion, the fear is that their judgment will get clouded and justice will likely to go astray. And if they listen to politicians, it is guaranteed that the law will go to the dogs, as that is where politics is going. There is no statue of Lady Justice in the Supreme Court of India, although it is a common sight in many courts around the world. In front of the Indian Supreme Court, however, there is a stylised statue of a mother and child, which means almost the same as the lady justice: protection of the weak.

Whether Justice Misra has a penchant for court sittings well past midnight is a different issue, but there are many intricacies in the trial of the murder of democracy case that need to be explored. The midnight court sitting and the decision came barely 24 hours after Congress president Rahul Gandhi, in his wisdom, or perhaps more due to lack of it, orchestrated a damning attack on the Indian judiciary bracketing it with Pakistan's. He also said that the judges were scared of Modi and the dictatorial

other hand, it went against the interests of the government, which the Chief Justice has been seen upholding all the time.

The verdict has given the Chief Justice an opportunity to get even with Congress, which had initiated a move to impeach him on several counts, including illegal gratification. Two of its counsels had challenged, unsuccessfully though, the decision of Vice President Venkaiah Naidu to reject the impeachment notice given by Congress MPs in a petition that was once again 'arranged' to come up before one of the preferred benches. The Congress counsels had to withdraw their plea in frustration as all their moves got checkmated. It was the same set of counsels who brought the Karnataka petition, but this time the results were dramatically different. The most noteworthy occurrence that separated the two verdicts was, of course, Rahul Gandhi's blistering attack.

Whether the Karnataka democracy murder case was decided purely on the basis of substantive law or whether other considerations also got weighed in is an issue that will remain open for discussion for a long time to come. It may also have set a bad precedent, which may be in keeping with the current state of affairs, but not in conformity with the lofty principles that one generally associates the highest court of the land with. Hopefully, the final word has not been said. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Why blame only the Central Govt?

Editor,
Apropos the article, "Petroleum price hike: A political game" by K K Muktan (ST May 26, 2018), I would like to say that it is indeed a political game, because I feel that some vested interest groups are deliberately shifting all the blame of petroleum price hike to the central government only whereas it is not a hidden fact to any one that the state governments across the country are equally, if not more, also responsible for the present condition. Irrational taxes are levied on petroleum products by both these entities. While it is true that the central govt. must take the pivotal role in minimizing the taxes levied, it is also expected from the state governments to follow suit in a positive manner. One wonders as to why petroleum was not brought into the GST ambit. And remember, the GST

Council has most of the state finance ministers as working members!

Yours etc.,
Partha Sarathi Gupta,
Via email

Democracy needs questioning citizens!

Editor,
An article such as, 'Who actually owns NEIGRIHMS?' (ST May 25, 2018) by Patricia Mukhim is the need of the hour. As rightly pointed out, in a democracy the politicians alone are not responsible for development (or the lack of it). If people don't question the policies of the government, true development will continue to elude this region. Providing Health and Education is the responsibility of the government. We cannot therefore allow the government to shirk its

responsibility. In most parts of the country the people don't expect the government to provide quality education to children and it's taken for granted when most of the children are admitted to private schools. In fact several government schools are being closed due to lack of students.

However, the government is still a major provider of health care. If we don't question the government, this might also become like the education sector. I think institutions like NEIGRIHMS should have an 'open' day wherein the public is invited to visit the hospital and question the authorities regarding the facilities. While the writers mentioned about the Radiotherapy machine which is functional at the civil hospital, it is important to note that the new cancer wing is supposed to have a state of the art Radiotherapy machine which has not been procured, despite funds being sanctioned by the

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

"It is wisdom in prosperity, when all is as thou wouldn't have it, to fear and suspect the worst."

--- Roger L'Estrange

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.286

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 29, 2018

Rajnath Speaks

INDIA'S External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has long been stressing the need for diplomatic initiatives to thaw the standoff between India and Pakistan. Now Home Minister Rajnath Singh has also taken a similar stand. He has said that India is not averse to holding talks with Pakistan but Islamabad should also come up with a reciprocal initiative. Infiltration attempts should stop and a joint action should be taken to counter terrorism. He admitted that measures to restore normalcy in Kashmir through initiatives like the appointment of an interlocutor have not had the desired effect. The Indian Government may extend the ceasefire in Kashmir after Ramzan. Rajnath regretted that Pakistan was firing at the Indian Border, indulging in ceasefire violations and trying to infiltrate terrorists. It should mend its ways. Pakistan is trying to disturb the peaceful lives of Kashmiri Muslims in Kashmir even during Ramzan. It has no sympathy for Kashmir. Rajnath feels that the people of Kashmir should understand this diabolical stance. Pakistan treats Kashmiris as its tools. Looking at the past, he spoke of Atal Bihari Vajpayee taking the bus to Pakistan and Narendra Modi breaking protocol to meet Nawaz Sharif. What more evidence could there be of India's peaceable intentions?

The problem of course is Kashmir. Singh ruled out any mediation on Kashmir with Islamabad. Kashmir and Kashmiris belong very much to India. The rub is that there is a groundswell of anti-India feeling in Kashmir, especially among unemployed youth. The security forces and the National Intelligence Agency are taking firm steps against stone pelters. But the Indian media should not demonise Kashmiris. As disaffection grows in Kashmir, Pakistan will encourage terrorists and there will be no talks.

LOOKING BACK

May 24, 1989

Sikkim package plan for Tourism Industry

International flower show, yak safari and river rafting are just part of a new package of attractions being devised to bring more tourists to Sikkim. According to Director General of Tourism Mr B Goswami, the central government will soon promote tourism in a big way in this still virgin wonderland for pleasure seekers.

The first international flower show, scheduled for May next year will bring

foreign enthusiasts to the original home of the Rhododendron and the proud possessor of forty magnificent species. Yying for attraction will be Sikkim's fabulous 450 varieties of orchids, and its range of ferns and rare Gladiolae.

The Yak safari, a new idea, will be on the lines of camel and elephant safari already popular elsewhere in the country.

MBOSE - SSLC results and the issues thereof

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

The day of reckoning hath come and gone. For most it is a time of enormous joy with a first major stepping stone being taken. The path ahead has become clearer and more promising on counts of career planning. It is beyond doubt that the class X result is the 'mother of all results' in the life of any student; no other result henceforth will ever be able to give as much joy as this one. Hence, at the outset I would like to congratulate all the winners and encourage all those who shall be giving another try next year. Coming to the crux of the matter, as significant as the role of MBOSE is in shaping the future of our state, its shortcomings and challenges becomes a pinching concern. The sad fact is that these concerns are not new; we have been grappling with them for some time now. In time it's mutating into a chronic cancer. However, currently there is a new policy effort (Draft of Meghalaya State Education Policy) towards reversing this trend and thus, this revisit into the age old issues. Accordingly, I place the following pointers -

Firstly, the class X results this term present a regular trend but also a disturbed reading. The pass percentage overall is 56.76% with girls at 58.12% and boys at 55.14%. In the case of regular candidates alone, the pass percentage is an impressive 83.89% with the boys performing slightly better than the girls with 84.49% and 83.41% respectively. Interestingly in the case of scheduled tribe candidates alone, the pass percentage is better for the girls as against the boys with 56.63% and 53.21% respectively. Hence, in the overall pass percentage distribution of girls and boys, once again the girls have fared better. Metaphorically speaking, it's kudos to matrilineal Meghalaya and on hindsight it's time for the boys to wake up. However, the disturbing reading is the district-wise pass percentages. Ironically, this is not a new phenomenon. The Garo Hills districts have fared very poorly with a combined pass percentage of 34.47%. In particular, South Garo Hills and South West Garo hills scored a meager 29.98% and 26.65% respectively. This is a very poor return when compared to the other districts where

they have a combined pass percentage of 76.27% with the highest being East Khasi Hills with 79.04%. This lopsided pass percentage represents a serious developmental problem for our state. Having such a skewed educational profile is nothing to be proud of; rather it is a dire concern which can lead to more rounds of discontent revolving around disillusionment and ultimately percolation into social problems. Needless to say, there is a need to reverse this trend. The starting point here is to conduct a comprehensive study to deeply understand the underlying reasons for this phenomenon thereby contributing towards formulation and implementation of effective redressal measures.

Secondly, and flowing from the above; education in Meghalaya suffers from the issues of rural-urban disparity, uneven spread of teachers, drop-out of students to name a few. These are chronic problems that need mitigation. Meghalaya is a composite picture of 11 districts and not just one district. One district alone cannot stand to represent the socio-economic and educational demographics of a state. Currently, we as a state fit the analogy of a lopsided truck with an uninterested/indifferent governance. This truck is going to topple over anytime soon. Do we have checks and balances for this? Coming to the three parameters pointed above, there exists a positive correlation amongst them. Our schools in the rural areas just do not stand a chance to compete with the urban schools. They struggle with the limitations of infrastructural and basic amenities, equipments, number of teachers and so forth. The outcome of all this is high drop-out rates. As such, school drop-out is not primarily only an educational problem; rather it is more of a social problem. In general, students do not see the point of education as far as their careers are concerned. Couple that with poverty and family guidance towards the students and the outcome is dropping out of school. Hence, this

issue will have to be addressed through a sociological approach and not an educational approach alone. To start with the government may allot a special corpus from the annual education budget towards mitigating rural-urban disparity and uneven spread of teachers.

Thirdly, the macro aspect of MBOSE surfaces primarily through two important issues - accessibility and quality. This is a perennial issue where threadbare deliberations can continue unabated. The critical factor here is that accessibility and quality are the two opposite sides of a spectrum. Hence, finding a common ground is never easy as this would imply a trade-off between the two. As such, the general argument goes that 'you can either have accessibility or quality but not both'. So here lies the challenge. Can we have both? This is a paradox but built upon the accepted truth that school education is the bedrock of a student's life and hence must be accessible to all. But what about quality? One might argue that in the state of employment crunch that we are in now quality has become even more important than accessibility. Now, in simple socio-economic terms it is indeed easy to conceptualize quality. That would imply 'a student who is productive to society while upholding ethical social values'. Are we doing that now? In general, in most quarters here in Meghalaya we still evaluate an individual's ability to speak English as a measure of quality. However, this is an unfair evaluation as quality is a holistic representation of a student. Quality encompasses language and numerals, etiquette and aptitude. In fact to be blunt, numerals and aptitude count much more than language when it comes to competitive examination based career planning. This is the qualitative challenge we face while continuing to focus on accessibility.

Fourthly, in keeping with argument for quality within accessibility; MBOSE is a 'social entrepreneur'. Its orientation and functionality is akin to such. In the true sense of the term, Meghalaya needs more

social entrepreneurs for social transformation based upon economic development. As such, this may just help us catch up with the GDP growth rates of the rest of the country. In the specific context of education, the government needs to revisit and reengineer the vision, mission and goals of MBOSE. As education is a key social sector (along with health); the instilling of social perceptions into its operations and outlook can only result in effective outcomes. Here, the 'teaching-learning factor' becomes the driving force for all other decisions. It is primary and not subsidiary and everything revolves around it. The government would have to invest and not disinvest on education (and health). This would mean less focus on profits and earnings for the publishers at the cost of student interest. The recent errors/mistakes recorded in text books is an indication of such. We cannot afford to have such a lackadaisical approach towards our text books. Till the time our publishers are able to scale up, it would be better to for other avenues. To this end, the adoption of NCERT text books for classes XI from the ensuing academic session is a long awaited welcome step. This is what a social entrepreneur precisely does; focus on social benefits even if that be at an economic cost/loss. Subsequently, in the long-run we shall experience tangible transformational outcomes.

Lastly, the Draft of Meghalaya State Education Policy is in the public domain calling for suggestions. Let us all play a role in improving education of our state by contributing towards it. For future reference, it is better if the education policy is formulated and applied in tandem with the health policy; for education and health together are the real hallmarks of human resource development. This is because it is useless for a person to be healthy but uneducated and vice versa. Either way, he/she is ineffective to society. Ideally, a citizen as a human resource must have the best of both.

(The Author teaches at NEHU)

Unpredictable Trump puts world diplomacy in disarray

Policy rift with USA pushing India closer to Russia, China

By Nantoo Banerjee

Capricious US trade and diplomatic policies seem to have plunged world diplomacy into disorder. Countries in Europe and Asia are getting increasingly confused and uncertain about staying 'allied' with the US. With President Donald Trump appearing as a highly unpredictable 'ally' even to traditionally close Britain, Germany and France, nations are confused over a changing diplomatic order. Russia and China have certainly gotten closer to protect themselves against US whim-whams in the region. India seems to be at its wits end as the US is pushing hard to block imports from India under one pretext or the other, restrict movement of intellectual persons, move more exports to India and exercise penal restrictions on trade with countries not in sync with US policies. The pressure threatens India's independent trade and diplomatic policy pursuits.

India is so fed up with US threats on the trade and economy fronts that on last Thursday, it took an unprecedented retaliatory action raising import duties up to 100 per cent on five products, including wheat, shelled almond, walnut, and protein concentrate, imported mostly from the US. It invoked "emergency powers" to increase import duties under Section 8A of

possibility of a US embargo on countries and companies dealing with Iran. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), largest importer of Iranian oil, may be forced to turn to other oil exporting countries, including the far flung US, to prevent supply disruptions, further pushing up oil import costs. IOC planned to buy 140,000 barrels per day of Iranian oil during this financial year and has an option to buy an additional 40,000 bpd. Indian refiners have raised oil imports from Iran after the latter agreed to steep shipping discounts. IOC is now thinking of tapping the spot market to buy US oil. IOC recently bought 3 million barrels of U.S oil through a tender.

Like the rest of the world, India too was stunned on last Thursday when President Trump cancelled his planned summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore on June 12, blaming increasingly hostile rhetorics from Pyongyang. The US president said he was pulling out of the meeting because of the 'tremendous anger and open hostility' in a recent statement from Mr Kim. Even as the summit date was nearing, both the leaders were busy engaging themselves in shadow boxing and brinkmanship, playing hard ball.

The sudden cancellation of the Trump-Kim summit

The US president said he was pulling out of the meeting because of the 'tremendous anger and open hostility' in a recent statement from Mr Kim.

the Customs Act. Earlier, India told the WTO that it proposes to raise duties by up to 100 per cent on 20 products such as almonds, apple and specific motorcycles imported from the US, if Washington does not roll back high tariffs on certain steel and aluminium items. The US has moved the World Trade Organisation (WTO) against India's export schemes. India, along with a number of countries such as China and Russia, has dragged the US to WTO for creating artificial tariff barriers. Under the circumstances, no one is too sure about the possible outcome of a US-India 2+2 dialogue that may be held in July.

Meanwhile, the unilateral US pull-out of the international nuclear pact with Iran, followed by its threat, last week, to impose sanctions on Tehran and also on foreign companies dealing with Iran are causing new headaches for oil-starved India. Other signatories of the international nuclear agreement with Iran - France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China - too are concerned. They disagree with the US and say they would try to salvage the deal and keep Iran's oil trade and investment flowing. India is highly concerned about the US action against Iran. Because, it is the second largest oil importer from that country, after China. India is also under agreement with Iran to construct Chabahar port, the first part of which was completed in December. India and Iran agreed to develop Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman outside the Strait of Hormuz, near Iran's border with Pakistan. The port and road project, when completed, is expected to give India a direct access to Afghanistan and oil-and-gas rich central Asia, bypassing Pakistan. Now, here comes the

stunned almost everyone. Yet, within 24 hours of his announcement, President Trump sang a different tune, saying the summit could still be on. On Saturday, May 26, Kim Jong-Un met South Korean President Moon Jae-in for the second time in a month, holding a surprise summit at a border truce village to discuss Kim's potential meeting with President Trump. Global leaders in Europe and Asia are trying to reorganise their diplomatic policies and usher in new dialogues in the interest of peace and security in the region.

This could probably explain Russian President Vladimir Putin's initiative to rope in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, earlier in the week, over their informal meet for almost six hours at Bocharov Creek in Sochi, to work on a "non-bloc security architecture" in the Indo-Pacific region. This is despite the fact that India is working with the US, Japan and Australia to bring stability for a rules-based order in the region. India is engaged with the US and its allies Japan and Australia across bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral formats to bring stability in the Indo-Pacific region and make it inclusive amid China's ambitions and BRI (belt and road initiative) projects.

Modi and Putin now agree to a proposed document on fight against extremism, separatism and terrorism, to be signed at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in China next month. Russia is keen to connect the Indo-Pacific region with its initiatives in the Eurasian hemisphere. Russia views India as a key player in that process. The developments may see the world order taking a new direction if the US continues with freak diplomatic manoeuvres across the globe, including with countries such as Iran, the two Koreans and Turkey.(IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Dr Mukul Sangma's identity & the SRT

Editor,
The sustained efforts of Tennydard Marak in knocking the doors of the Apex Court in order to ensure that our ex-CM, Dr. Mukul Sangma be declared a non-tribal is laudable. And nothing is more conspicuous in this specific case than what the Hon'ble Supreme Court observed: "There cannot be any dispute that caste is determined by birth and caste cannot be changed by marriage with a person from a scheduled caste." Therefore, I wish Mr. Marak all success in seeing that Dr. Mukul Sangma is deprived of his tribal entitlement as sued so zealously by this petitioner.

With the benefit of hindsight, I'm having a share of apprehension that if such a noble pursuit is carried through, the same will run counter to the on-going seemingly good-intentioned social crusade launched by the Syngkhong Rympei Thymmai (SRT) who have been indefatigably exploring over time to change the existing traditional matrilineal to patrilineal system of the Hynniewtrep Community.

Further, the ruling of the Supreme Court against Dr. Mukul Sangma would have, I figure, a detrimental effect on our tribal males if their inter marriage with the non-tribal ladies could see them losing their rights over their offsprings in adopting their father's title and conversely, the non tribal mothers shall, by default have the privilege of surname over this wedlock on her children, which for that matter can become an unprecedented case in point. And on the flip side, non-tribal men could be further emboldened to wed our tribal women with a view to have an easy access to economic scopes by way of burrowing their spouse's title in their business ventures. Either ways, this is undeniably a critical issue and we as tribals are presently finding ourselves walking a tightrope.

Yours etc.,
Jerome K. Diengdoh,
Viaemail

Religion cannot dictate laws

Editor,
The recent verdict of the Irish Government of legalising abortion is a

welcome step. The Irish Government took the decision after Savita Halappannavar, a dentist of Indian origin died of sepsis after she was denied abortion on religious grounds. Religious rules are best followed if they conform to human conscience. Religion can never come in between human freedom and happiness. Although, abortion as such is immoral and unethical but in extreme cases such as that of the Indian dentist, it becomes absolute necessity. The Irish Government by banning the archaic law gave up religious dogmatism and welcomed women's freedom and dignity.

Yours etc.,
Sadiq Hussain Laskar,
Guwahati.

Landslides happen for a reason

Editor,
I am surprised to read the report in your paper regarding the concerns expressed by GR Infrastructure about the frequent landslides on NH-44 and that the IITs for solutions. How can a Research and Development

team of an infrastructure company be unaware about the reason for landslides. The simple reason is ignorance in maintaining the slopes in rock cutting for the purpose of road making. Often they cut the rocks vertically to save money. With the passage of time the rocks and soil loosen up and are bound to fall/ slide as rock makes its angles of repose. Hence none should say that landslides are a natural phenomenon. They occur due to severe negligence in road cutting procedures/engineering.

Yours etc.,
Jaipal Singh,
Viaemail

Contribution of Indigenous peoples

Editor,
The indigenous/tribal communities across the planet are suffering tremendously due to exploitation, loss of their traditional livelihood, lands, forests, traditional socio-cultural practices as well social security. In many countries around the planet they have been reduced to significantly low numbers threatened with

extinction in the next five to six decades. Irrespective of their monumental contribution to the human society and civilizations; in most countries their roles have never been truly recognized and honoured appropriately. Rich tribal heritage and traditions should make us all equally proud due to the value that those have added to our societies over several centuries in the form of rich archaeology, socio-cultural history, arts, handicrafts and literature, traditional science and technology, agricultural innovations, ethno-botany and ethno-medicine, forestry & conservation; and above all tribal philosophy. The ancient tribal community life inspires me with their basic philosophy of share and care of all members of a tribe, their meta physiological perspective of life and life processes highlighting that all things in nature are sacred and have equal rights to survive with humans side by side in the same ecosystem or habitat; and that we should not exploit more than what we need for our basic survival.

The rich diversity of different tribal communities with varied ethnicities, languages, cultures, dresses, and religious practices are the cornerstone of most civilizations around the

globe. These communities over ages have helped us to evolve as fellow humans enriched in history, tradition, heritage and genetic diversity towards establishing the foundation of our modern human society, plurality as well as democracy. We must learn to accept and respect aboriginal (tribal) communities as the first human settlers in various remote parts of the world that remained unknown to the modern world for several centuries. We must admire the successful establishment of first aboriginal (tribal) settlements along coastal areas, river valleys and foothills laying the foundation of modern human civilization around the planet. Tribal civilizations provided the basic framework that was used to build and rebuild the world over the past several centuries. As fellow humans we should be proud and learn to recognize this rich heritage of our tribal ancestors and feel strongly for these unfortunately and increasingly marginalized communities.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu,
Lethbridge AB
Canada

“ We have created a society where individual rights and freedoms, compassion and diversity are core to our citizenship. But underlying that idea of Canada is the promise that we all have a chance to build a better life for ourselves and our children. ”

--- Justin Trudeau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.287 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Prohibition Pains

CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar said that prohibition in Bihar would benefit the lower castes most. In two years it has been proved wrong. A disproportionately high number of OBCs, SCs and STs have been put behind bars for liquor-related offences. STs account for 13% of the state's population. Five times that figure have been arrested. One in four Bihari citizens is an OBC. One third of those in jail are from that community. About 80% of those arrested were regular drinkers or alcoholics. Mafias have been left unhurt. While consumers have been punished, suppliers have protected themselves. There may be faults in the compilation of data. Only the poorer areas have been brought under the net. The catch is naturally bigger than in prosperous areas. The poor are more vulnerable to police action. They cannot get bail. Arrests are disproportionately high in their number. Why a survey has been made of violation of prohibition by these people is difficult to understand. Both the chief minister and the police have called it unofficial. Of course, the state has adopted an ill-conceived policy which has proved counter-productive.

The status of the report in the administrative system does not make any difference. Prohibition is adversely affecting people for whose good it was enforced, especially the poorest, disempowered citizens of the state. The enforcement authorities are reluctant to crack down on suppliers who form a powerful pressure group. Nitish Kumar has done nothing to put things on the right tack by taking more positive action against suppliers instead of consumers.

LOOKING BACK

May 15, 1989

Nehru centenary run celebrated

Over 250,000 people pounded down the historical Raj path here as the nation gave a unique salute to India's first prime minister through the Jawaharlal Nehru Centenary run today. Down the slope in front of Rashedpur Bhavan and through the Dalhousie road and Parliament house side entrances people of all ages kept pouring and it was two hours before the sounds of feet were silenced at Vijay Chowk. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who led the last batch of runners down the Raj Path earlier flagged off the more serious In tab Delhi International marathon and presented awards to sports Prakash Padukone, Vijay Amritraj and Bhuvaneshwari Kumari. Shillong run in Shillong, some 1600 students

from various schools converged on the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium at the Polo Grounds after being flagged off from three different locations. At a function held on the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Mr D D Lapang exhorted the students to emulate Nehru, who was once a child, a student, and later grew up to become a great man. The Speaker of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Mr PG Marbaniang dwelt on the universal appeal of Nehru and said that national outlook was important rather than a narrow one. Inspector of Schools Mr H Livingstone and Secretary of the Meghalaya Amateur Athletic Association also spoke.

Food as the bedrock of indigeneity

By Bhogtaram Mawroh

When in an alien place you encounter a landscape which reminds you of home it is not only a pleasant surprise but a source of great joy. It was with these emotions we surveyed the landscape of Northern Thailand. Green hills dotted with jhum fields took us back to the sunny dales of Ri Bhoi and West Khasi Hills. The village which reminded us of home was Melangkham, settled by the Karen, an ethnic group found spread across South East Asia. In popular culture they have been immortalised as the intrepid insurgents fighting the Burmese military regime in the Sylvester Stallone starrer Rambo IV (2008). What the movies don't tell you is that Karens are also a matrilineal and matrilocal society which bear striking similarities with the Khasis. Among others, they have their own sacred forests and follow similar rituals during the birth of a child. Linguistically, though, they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group unlike the Khasis who belong to the Mon-Khmer group. But the similarities in the way they use their landscape and their belief system was remarkable.

This visit to Northern Thailand (May 12-20 2018) was facilitated by Phrang Roy (The Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP), Rome and also Chairperson of NESFAS, Shillong) in order to promote exchange missions of young indigenous professionals of partner organisations like NESFAS to help each other. The team included Phrang Roy, Pius Rane, Senior Associate Agroe-ecology and myself in the capacity of Senior Associate for Research and Knowledge Management. It included field visits to Karen villages in Northern Thailand and a seminar or rotational farming in Bangkok. Part of the mission was also to help a Karen organisation - PASD (Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development) develop a project on food security and nutrition. The project would build on their indigenous food production system which was based on rotational farming which the Karen termed as Rai Mun Wian. This is a form of shifting cultivation (known as rep shyrti among the Khasis) where farmers do not shift their residence but return to the same plot after a fallow period of 7-10 years. As is prevalent elsewhere, a very high degree of agrobiodiversity is the hallmark of this system. More than 200 plant species are found and grown in the rotational system which also acts as shelters and habitats for a wide range of animals, birds and insects during the different stages of rotation (farming-fallow-farming cy-

cle).

Under the Rai Mun Wian the Karen follow various conservation practises that include proper site selection, long fallow periods, fire management, watershed management, forest cover etc. This form of agriculture is very robust because it can withstand various stresses and can provide the participating households with highly nutritive diets. In this respect it is no different from the jhum system followed by the Khasis and other tribes in the North East. Likewise this system has been maligned by mainstream narratives that see environmental degradation as the only outcome. Studies, however, have demonstrated that provided sustainable fallow periods are maintained this system is ecologically highly sustainable and has the potential to contribute to highly nutritive food security of the population. The biggest stumbling block is touted to be land shortage but few ask if other land uses, like the highly polluting mining and industrial estates, are the main culprits rather than the farming system itself. Rotational farming is an integral part of Karen identity and Rai Mun Wian define their worldview and life-world.

While it was wonderful to encounter similar people away from home, it was also distressing to learn of their plight. Many of the Karen people do not enjoy citizenship rights in Thailand, hence they are not eligible to receive benefits from the government. This despite the fact they have been living in the country for many generations. Those fortunate to get citizenship need to adopt a Thai name, a subtle method of obliterating differences. Along with other upland groups, like the Hmong, Mon, etc., the Karen are also victims of negative stereotyping. They were accused of causing deforestation and environmental degradation. They face tenure insecurity with the state not issuing land title deeds and are considered trespassers on their own farms. Many Karens have been arrested for farming in their own lands which have been declared as conservation areas. The National Forest Policy of the 1960s has restricted clearing and cultivation of fallow land, an important part of Rai Mun Wian while policies like mining concessions and reforestation activities have resulted in tremendous pressure on the Karen's food production system by reducing land availability.

We were able to get first hand information on the

challenges faced by the community during the Rotational Farming Festival held between May 18-20, 2018 in Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, Bangkok. NESFAS was asked to present its learning on the international protection of rotational agriculture, the key lessons of NESFAS and its research work on stress tolerant varieties found in indigenous farming systems. Panel discussions on the various aspects of rotational farming were the highlights of the program. Representatives of the state were part of the discussions. The discomfort of the officials in admitting the benefits of rotational farming was evident in the body language of those who represented it. While participants from the Karen and their well wishers impressed upon the state representative about the sustainability of the system, he was adamant that they should not break the law in the processes. What it meant was that the land of indigenous people that had been confiscated for creating conservation areas without due consultation should not be encroached upon. At the same time, he warned that those who have left the practise will not be allowed to return. All of this was part of a larger strategy to push the indigenous groups away from their lands. It begins by confiscating the area without consultation and converting it to conservation areas thus restricting their use. With land being restricted increased population will lead to abandonment of the practise by some families who will then make their way to the lowlands to work, most probably, as casual labour. By not allowing them to return and with the rotational system being dependent on community labour this put further pressure on the remaining households to give up the practise altogether. In the meantime, more land will be brought under conservation areas which, as was seen in the past, will be released for private timber felling, dam construction or mining. The Karen community understands this very well and therefore are doing their best to hold on their rotational farming practises. Rai Mun Wian not only provides them with food but is also the only way the Karen can continue to have claims over their ancestral lands.

The fear of losing their land and their identity was palpable at every discussion session. On the last day of the program chaired by Phrang Roy, the most common (in fact only) questions that the Karen asked was on the land rights of the Khasis. When we explained to them that the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution had provisions for protection of in-

digenous lands and people, we could see the pain and frustration on their faces. The hurt was not because they were resentful of the more secure positions of the Khasis but because of their own dismal situation. They also raised concerns about immigration to the North East region and its danger to the indigenous population. When one recollects the events of the last few months in Meghalaya where there were calls for aliens to be given citizenship rights in the State through different guises, the concern for the future of indigenous groups like the Khasis is not totally unfounded.

In the end, NESFAS was able to help PASD frame a project which would help the Karen build strong institutions based on their indigenous food production system, i.e., rotational farming system or Rai Mun Wian. The aim is to ensure food security while not compromising with food sovereignty and nutrition. For the Karen however, the project goes beyond the issue of food security, food sovereignty or nutrition. It is about protecting their way of life which allows them claim over their ancestral lands. Though our situation is distinct at the moment, we cannot take anything for granted. During one of the panel discussions the NESFAS team remarked, "As long as we have control over our land we control our destiny, the moment we lose that, we lose everything. So we must make sure we never lose that control at any cost." As is true for the Karen this is true for the Khasis as well, especially in these current times lest the Khasis go the Karen way.

The struggle of the indigenous people over their land and their way of life, which includes their food, was the focus of Phrang Roy's keynote address at the opening session of the seminar. The interactions that followed reinforced the need to strive towards that end and meet the challenges that on its path. Personally, I am grateful to NESFAS for this opportunity to be part of a team that is asked to work with indigenous groups. The indigenous way of life is encapsulated by a Native American quote which the world needs badly at the moment. "When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realise that you cannot eat money".

(The writer is Senior Associate (Research and Knowledge Management), NESFAS

Traffic is a boring topic but ...

By Avner Pariat

One of the constant sources of belly-aching that has been doing the rounds in Shillong, for quite a while now, involves the issue of traffic congestion in the capital. You cannot escape (try as I might) the daily complaints about the situation here. We have gained notoriety for the constant

religious cabals don't spend a penny on facilities for their students and what they charge people as fees is tantamount to extortion. Is that fair? We must demand that they address the mess that they are also a big part of. Just in case you're wondering, I was personally not signed up for the bus serv-

“I get very bored listening to the cribbing but unfortunately it is everywhere so I just have to suck it in. There is a lazy resignation that comes from people when it comes to remedying this problem and it is typical of their attitude to other socio-political topics that plague us as a society. Currently this government has hired a firm to sort out the traffic snarls and we hope that goes down well but there are many things which we can do as residents of this town.”

jams and endless stream of honking. I get very bored listening to the cribbing but unfortunately it is everywhere so I just have to suck it in. There is a lazy resignation that comes from people when it comes to remedying this problem and it is typical of their attitude to other socio-political topics that plague us as a society. Currently this government has hired a firm to sort out the traffic snarls and we hope that goes down well but there are many things which we can do as residents of this town. We need not be so lackadaisical.

Firstly, to parents.. please bus your kids. I know that you love your children and need to be with them all day. Some of you might take voluntary retirement and sit in with your children in their classrooms if schools allowed it. But let us be realistic. Aside from the

pool. One car would drop 5 or 6 of us. This is also a much better idea than what I see happening today. I loved car-pooling because I could joke around with my cousins and friends before the rigorous day ahead in the classroom. What's wrong with making that a normal occurrence?

Right, and the other thing about this whole "school duty" that parents engage in. I wonder if there can be a study done by the government on productivity levels of various departments throughout the day. I am pretty certain that those levels would drop drastically from the time period of 2 to 4 pm. Many office workers go missing during this time because they have to pick up their kids from school. They over-extend their lunch breaks and it hurts us who have work with them. It is

“Currently, many SPTS buses are rotting in Mawblei and Mawpat, why can't we demand that they be re-serviced for school duty? It doesn't make sense for 20 cars to drop 20 children when one bus is enough to do the job. The children of servicemen have army trucks which come pick them up daily (in front of the Grotto Cathedral) and that has been going on successfully since I was a child myself. Bus your kids, people, don't let Rosa Parks' hard-work go to waste.”

younger ones who really need to be supervised properly, pre-teens and older ones need to be given more responsibility and you can foster this in a small way by allowing them to get on the bus and finding their own way home. Currently, many SPTS buses are rotting in Mawblei and Mawpat, why can't we demand that they be re-serviced for school duty? It doesn't make sense for 20 cars to drop 20 children when one bus is enough to do the job. The children of servicemen have army trucks which come pick them up daily (in front of the Grotto Cathedral) and that has been going on successfully since I was a child myself. Bus your kids, people, don't let Rosa Parks' hard-work go to waste.

Aside from government buses, many of these schools - which contribute greatly to the traffic congestion - should also have a bus service. Bloody hell, most of these tax-exempted,

nearly impossible to meet anyone during these hours. Maybe this should be looked into closely.

I usually walk everywhere and in pre-Monsoon days, Shillong is a lovely city to walk around in. However, this doesn't seem to be something people think to do. I have to draw a bit of attention here to people who get into cabs from Jaiaw Pdeng to go to Motphran. What are you doing!? Walking through Madan Student, under the pleasant jacarandas, up into Motphran takes all of 5 minutes. One doesn't need to sit in a cramped car for 15 minutes to pay Rs 10. This is your town, walk it, enjoy it. People who don't walk about don't see the reality of Shillong. They can claim to know this and that but honestly a fuller picture comes out only when you're down on the ground. We can talk of the "streets" but what do you know of them unless you've walked them? Bad and good, it's all there.

TO THE EDITOR

NEIGRIHMS belongs to the public

Editor,
One should shout to get heard. If by chance one who has shouted out with good intention is undermined then a lot many things could go wrong. Thanks to the shout of criticism about NEIGRIHMS that gets published every now and again in your daily. The recent article by Patricia Mukhim - "Who Actually Owns NEIGRIHMS?" (ST, May 25, 2018) should serve to caution its management for the good. Or else the anesthesia of complacency might lull it into believing that all is honky dory!

Well, after my previous letter in appreciation of NEIGRIHMS doctors, a good many unhappy souls chose to share their painful stories. Those pains were genuine amidst the sorrowful tears.

One has now realized that due to the poor quality of treatment and apparent apathy of some doctors, and also staff, a certain pocket of the public has lost its faith in this health institution. The inadequate medical appliances is a case which needs the serious attention of the NEIGRIHMS management. A very funny instance of a woman weighing 51 kg but shown by the hospital scale as 56kg, as cited by Patricia Mukhim, is not just upsetting but professionally very uncalled for.

This puts the entire population of the Northeast under the cloud of "doubt and mistrust". Should this case not instantly bring the hospital on rebooting mode? The task of rechecking the accuracy of the entire medical equipment in the hospital laboratories should be undertaken with utmost urgency. Could you imagine how

dangerous it is if the faulty instruments are used which give us wrong test reports? Hope that might not have happened in any case in the past! It's now much expected that the NEIGRIHMS management starts listening to the genuine shouts from the public. Let the lapses not overwhelm the hospital. Let no negligence is tolerated. After all, the hospital belongs to the public and it does not want to see the Health Institute itself ailing in any respect.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gewali,
Shillong-2

MBOSE must buck up

Editor,
Apropos to the letter, "Wanted a robust educational policy" (ST May 28, 2018) by Barnon A Sangma. I completely agree with the writer that our education system needs complete overhauling to be at par with

the other Boards. This year's pass percentage of SSLC examination in our state was 56.76% indicating that more than 40% of the students could not clear their examinations in spite of the adoption of best of five subjects some years back. A report in your daily says that the Executive Chairman of the Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE), Pravin Bakshi says that apart from changing the textbooks the Government is also making sure that the pattern of question setting should be such that it sparks critical thinking and reasoning among students and the ability to comprehend in their own languages. This is a positive step taken by the MBOSE. The percentage of toppers in other Boards crosses 99% but in the MBOSE it remains less than 97%. Granted that over the years the percentage of toppers in MBOSE has shown the kind of progress

which needs to be appreciated but when compared to other Boards we are still lagging behind. The textbook is only a medium to pass on information to the students but apart from that, the setting of question papers and evaluation system should be student friendly to enable them to come at par with students of other Boards. The percentage earned by the students matter the most both for job prospects and for getting admission in quality institutes. Hence proper initiatives should be adopted by taking a cue from other Boards with regards to the evaluation system so that students of MBOSE are not deprived of their rights.

Yours etc.,
Anil Singh Roka,
Via email

Blinking power in Tura

Editor,
Since a couple of months there have been numerous

power cuts every two minutes in Tura town. Whether its monsoon season or not, it does not make any difference. We appreciate the hard work of the MeECL but I have till date not seen any power cuts like this every two minutes or so in an hour. We the student community are having a really hard time concentrating as it seems like it's Christmas season where the decoration lights glisten every moment. So, we urge our concerned authority - the Power Department to put in place an efficient technology to address this problem.

Yours etc.,
Dansil N. Sangma,
Via email

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

"Smile, smile, smile at your mind as often as possible. Your smiling will considerably reduce your mind's tearing tension."

--- Justin Trudeau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LX No.288 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 31, 2018

World No Tobacco Day (WNTD)

MAY 31 is observed as World No Tobacco Day. On this day the World Health Organisation urges health institutions and government agencies to organise awareness campaigns on the deleterious effects of tobacco use. Cinema halls regularly show graphic pictures of smokers and tobacco users who end up with cancer of the mouth, throat, tongue, lungs etc. The images are revolting and grotesque yet smokers continue with their ugly habits. The awareness about not smoking in public spaces is also very low in India. Taxi drivers and/or passengers smoke inside the vehicle despite the presence of other passengers and subject them to passive smoking which is equally harmful. People continue to smoke in streets and markets which are all public spaces.

An important objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to control tobacco use. It is viewed as one of the most effective means to help achieve SDG target 3.4 which aims to reduce one-third premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular disease, cancers and chronic obstructed pulmonary disease, globally by 2030. This requires a robust implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco in all countries as a response to the SDGs. The problem with such objectives is that countries implement them in the breach. Tobacco companies continue to fund political parties to promote their brands. There is a clash of interests even as institutions that push the anti-tobacco campaigns are penalized for their actions by way of fund cuts for their programmes or by unnecessarily meddling with their foreign funding and tightening fund flow vide the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). This is a dichotomy we need to deal with. Unfortunately most governments choose money over the health of their citizens. This is true of India too.

Although all countries benefit from successfully controlling the tobacco epidemic by protecting their citizens from the harms of tobacco use and reducing its economic toll on national economies, their commitment to that cause is highly suspect. The aim of the Sustainable Development Agenda, and its 17 global goals, is to ensure that "no one is left behind." But if countries don't commit to this goal then they will once again miss the deadline like they did the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2015.

Making a mountain out of a molehill

By Albert Thyriani

"Making a mountain out of a molehill," ranks high among the 203 common idioms. This saying that originated in the 16th century is applicable to the over-reaction by the media to the letter written by Archbishop of Delhi, Anil Couto to priests and religious under his jurisdiction. The excerpt of the letter dated May 8, 2018 is as follows, "We are witnessing a turbulent political atmosphere which poses a threat to the democratic principles enshrined in our Constitution and the secular fabric of our nation....It is our hallowed practice to pray for our country and its political leaders all the time, but all the more so when we approach the general elections....As we look forward towards 2019 when we will have new government let us begin a prayer campaign for our country from May 13, 2018, which marks the anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Mother at Fatima, consecrating ourselves and our nation to the Immaculate Heart." The circular requests the faithful to observe a day of fast and Eucharistic adoration every Friday of the week.

The Archbishop also enclosed a prescribed prayer to be recited in churches. It says thus: "May the ethos of true democracy envelop our elections with dignity and the flames of honest patriotism enkindle our political leaders. This is our cry, Heavenly Father, in these troubled times as we see the clouds eclipsing the light of truth, justice, and freedom...Let the poor of our country be provided with the means of livelihood. Let the tribals, Dalits and marginalised be brought into the mainstream of nation-building. Protect our legislature as a place of discerning minds; raise our judiciary as the hallmark of integrity, prudence, and justice. Keep our print, visual and social media as the channels of truth for edifying discourse. Protect our institutions from the infiltrations of the evil forces."

The media has created a huge hype and controversy out of the letter. A couple of pro-BJP television channels have even sensationalised, distorted and twisted the pastoral letter beyond limits. They have intentionally and disproportionately exagger-

ated the exaltation of the spiritual leader to his followers. Though the letter does not mention any political party or leader it was made out to be anti-BJP and anti-Modi. The clarification of the man in the eye of the storm did not satisfy the biased and ever aggressive TV anchors who have thrown their journalistic principles and independence to the winds. They have invented all sorts of ridiculous conspiracy theories by the Vatican and the Christians world.

The "pastoral" exhortation has unsettled the BJP and its cohorts because the Archbishop has diagnosed the present "turbulent political atmosphere" that is prevailing in the country. This view is shared by millions of concerned Indians and even non-Indians. Why should a Christian leader's observation have such a negative take? Instead of appreciating the diagnosis and taking it as an opportunity for soul searching, why shoot the messenger?

The Archbishop sees the rather tumultuous atmosphere as posing a threat to the "democratic principles and the secular fabric of our nation". It true there is no democracy in the Church or in any religion for that matter, but that does not take away his right as the citizen of the country to point out the reality. "Democracy and Secularism are under threat" is an oft repeated statement by opposition political leaders, social thinkers, writers, journalists ever since the BJP led NDA government came into power in 2014. Even former BJP leaders and many within the BJP do not see the present political situation as rosy. With good reasons they expressed their minds on violation of democratic and secular principles in the country. What is wrong if a church leader expresses the same concern?

Religious polarisation is visible and apparent today. The just concluded Karnataka election saw a lot of it. The BJP's landslide victory in 2014 was largely due to polarisation. Polarisation is certainly danger-

ous to secularism. It should stop forthwith. No political party should win an election through polarisation. The electorate should vote a political party to power on the basis of governance, the development plank, programmes to eradicate poverty, plans for education, policies on medical care and a track record of upholding the constitution. The prayer of the Delhi Archbishop was precisely this. Anything wrong with it?

The prayer includes the 'poor, the tribals, the dalits and marginalised that they may be brought into the mainstream of nation-building'. You cannot bring the above sections if violence is carried out against them. The US in February last year in a document titled 'Constitutional and Legal Challenges Faced by Religious Minorities in India' and sponsored by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), said the religious minority communities and Dalits face discrimination and persecution in India where hate crimes, social boycotts and forced conversion have escalated dramatically since 2014. Religious tolerance has deteriorated and violations on religious freedom have increased in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime. The report further states, "Since the BJP assumed power, religious minority communities have been subject to derogatory comments by BJP politicians and numerous violent attacks and forced conversions by affiliated Hindu nationalist groups such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Sangh Parivar, and Vishva Hindu Parishad."

Amnesty International in February this year slammed India for the increase in hate crimes against dalits and minorities. It even accused the Indian authorities of being "critical of human rights defenders in 2017, feeding a climate of hostility and violence against them." It further pointed out that repressive laws were used to stifle freedom of expression, and journalists and press freedom came under increasing attack. The Archbishop prayed for freedom and the end of violence. Why not appreciate him?

The increasing cases of violence against minorities in the last four years are related to cow vigilantism, 'love jihad' and re-conversion. Sensing a conducive opportunity fundamental outfits are even on a mission of converting India into a Hindu Rashtra. Should not a citizen who cherishes the beauty of India as a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, democratic and secular country be concerned with attempts to make this land into a single theocratic nation with one religion, one language and one culture? Praying is the least one can do.

The lesson to be learned is for religious leaders not to be silent. The controversy in Delhi should not deter other church leaders from raising pertinent issues. Church leaders need to be prophets though they have to face criticism. They need to speak the truth though they draw flak. They need to stand with the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed if they have a sense of duty. They need to exercise their leadership if they want to be relevant.

The media made such a hue and cry about the letter because the Archbishop of Delhi asked his faithful to pray for the general election in 2019 and the new government. The media fear that the leader is trying to influence the outcome of the next election. This is silly. Christians constitute just 2.3 percent of the total population. It must also be known that Christians in India consists of many denominations. There is no single authority who can dictate them, much less on elections. Christians in Goa, Mumbai and the North East and elsewhere in the country have voted for the BJP in recent times with hopes of development. Be sure they don't follow diktat of religious leaders on whom to vote.

In fine, a party that believes in 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas or inclusive growth does not need to fear a letter from a bishop. Let it remain an unknown document within the four walls of churches.

Tobacco breaks Hearts

By Dr Caleb Harris M.Ch.(Surgical Oncology)

World No Tobacco Day is observed on the 31st of May every year, since the year 1987. This is an initiative of the World Health Organisation. This year, the theme is 'Tobacco breaks Hearts', with a focus on the harmful effects of tobacco on the heart. Apart from heart disease, tobacco is responsible for stroke, diseases of the blood vessels, lung disease and several cancers. In fact, tobacco is the most common preventable cause of death.

While all of us have heard about the harmful ef-

fects of tobacco, I thought it would be interesting to find out if there were any benefits of tobacco. I asked a colleague of mine as to what he felt was a beneficial effect of tobacco, expecting the common answer which I usually hear- reliever of constipation, but to my surprise, he said that tobacco helps people socialize. This is something to ponder about, as its not just about the degradation of the society, where people need a harmful substance to socialize, but it's the lie that the tobacco industry has been able to successfully propagate.

Though this is cause to worry, we can find solace in the fact that the usage has reduced by about 8% as compared to GATS-1. This is attributed to the curbs on advertisement and the pictorial warnings on cigarette packets. GATS-2 showed that 52.9% of smokers considered quitting because of the pictorial warnings.

The goal of the tobacco industry is only to maximise its profits, at any cost. And this cost is the life of the individuals who consume tobacco. It is not just the indi-

I asked a colleague of mine as to what he felt was a beneficial effect of tobacco, expecting the common answer which I usually hear- reliever of constipation, but to my surprise, he said that tobacco helps people socialize. This is something to ponder about, as its not just about the degradation of the society, where people need a harmful substance to socialize, but it's the lie that the tobacco industry has been able to successfully propagate.

viduals who are affected, but the entire family which will feel the impact of a premature death, or illness in the family. And this in turn, will affect the society and the entire state. As a society, we must protect our children from getting initiated into use of tobacco, betel nut and other addictive substances. The Juvenile Justice Act forbids the sale of tobacco products to minors and does not allow establishments selling these within 100 yards of educational institutions. The penalty prescribed is imprisonment up to 7 years, with or without a fine of up to a lakh rupee. But this is hardly enforced. We have to be the custodians of our society and ensure our children don't fall prey to the false propaganda of these businesses, whose only aim is to make money, at the expense of our health. Also, we can take the lead in curbing smoking in public

places. Teachers in the society have an important role in ensuring that schools are 'Tobacco-free zones' and the most important aspect is for them to be good role models.

GATS is a household survey of persons aged 15 years and above in all the 30 states and two union territories of India. The first round was conducted in 2009-10 and the second round in 2016-17. This was conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt of India.

GATS survey, which is higher than the previous survey done in 2009-10. This is probably related to the fact that 92% of adults know about the harmful effects of tobacco.

The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) is a global standard for systematic monitoring of adult tobacco use and helps in tracking the key tobacco control indicators. GATS is a household survey of persons aged 15 years and above in all the 30 states and two union territories of India. The first round was conducted in 2009-10 and the second round in 2016-17. This was conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt of India.

While 28.6% of all Indians use tobacco in any form, it is unfortunate that 47% of people aged 15 years and above in Meghalaya use tobacco. For men, the figure comes to 59.8%, which means almost two of every three men

It will not suffice if we tell children what not to do. We need to give them goals to achieve. Not necessarily academic, but also in other aspects like sports, arts, leadership, etc. The North-east Region needs a lot of young champions to promote the varied and rich culture, and we should inspire them to do their part in this.

So, on the occasion of this World No Tobacco Day 2018, let us pledge to 'Choose Health, not Tobacco'. For more information, you can attend the 'Sensitisation program' at NEIGRIHMS Lecture Theatre 1 on May 31st, 2018 at 10am. (Dr Caleb Harris is Assistant Professor and HOD, Department of Surgical Oncology, NEIGRIHMS, Shillong)

GATS-2 Highlights for Meghalaya

TO THE EDITOR

Rebuttal by NEIGRIHMS

Editor,

Apropos the letter "Sorry Plight of NEIGRIHMS" (ST May 10, 2018), the applicants for various faculty grade A post NEIGRIHMS who have written the letter may not be aware of the factual position and the Institute seeks this opportunity to clarify matters. It is also evident that the applicants who have applied for the post of Faculty in NEIGRIHMS and has not joined the Institution yet may not be aware of the factual position. Readers can decide the authenticity of the article from the fact that the writer/s has/have withheld his/her name. It may be mentioned that interviews were conducted on May 1st & 2nd, 2018 with the earnest efforts of the Administration of NEIGRIHMS and the sincere cooperation of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. However, it is our duty to bring the facts and figures before the people of Northeast who are stakeholders of this prestigious institute. The clear vacancy of faculty posts were advertised in the first half of the calendar year and NEIGRIHMS made sincere efforts to complete the recruitment process within the same year. The reason for delay to conduct the interviews was due to the non-

availability of the regular Chairman of the Standing Selection Committee for Group 'A' posts. The Standing Selection Committee (SSC) for Group A posts of NEIGRIHMS was constituted with the approval of the Union Health Minister who is also the President, Governing Council, NEIGRIHMS. Under normal circumstances, the Institute directly writes to the Chairman, SSC to fix the dates for conducting the interviews of faculty posts when the screening process is completed. However, in the recent recruitment process of faculty, the regular Chairman (SSC) was not available. Hence the Institute has to seek the approval of the Union Health Minister to nominate a new Chairman. Seeking exemption from the Election Commission of India for conducting interviews for faculty posts does not arise as the new Chairman SSC for holding the interviews had not been nominated by the Ministry.

The course of action taken by NEIGRIHMS for recruitment of faculty is indicated below:

1. Recruitment of faculty posts has its gestation/processing time as there are various stages, which have to be completed before interviews are conducted.

2. NEIGRIHMS had advertised vacant faculty

posts for various departments in May & July 2017 and the last date of submission of applications was June 30, 2017 and Aug 7, 2017 respectively. After the closing date, a Preliminary Screening Committee screened the applications for the faculty posts on September 13, 2017. The screened applications and its report with the lists of eligible and in-eligible candidates are to be placed before the Main Screening Committee on October 25, 2017 at New Delhi, to finalize the lists of eligible and ineligible candidates to be called for interview.

3. On completion of the screening process, the Institute had written to the Director General, ICMR & regular Chairperson SSC for Group 'A' posts, NEIGRIHMS on October 26, 2017 to fix the dates for the interviews. However, the Director General, ICMR in an email dated November 13, 2017 informed that she would not be able to chair the interviews as she will be joining WHO, Geneva.

4. The recruitment of faculty could have been completed by December 2017, but due to the non-availability of the regular Chairman, SSC the Institute vide letters dated November 14, 2017 & December 28, 2017 wrote to the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to seek approval

to nominate a new Chairman of the SSC. During this period, the appointment of new Director General, ICMR who is also the Chairperson, SSC for Group 'A' posts, NEIGRIHMS was also under process. Subsequently, the Ministry in a letter dated March 23, 2018 conveyed the approval of the competent authority to nominate Director, AIIMS, New Delhi to chair the SSC. On receipt of the Ministry's letter, the Institute vide letter dated March 27, 2018 requested the Director, AIIMS, New Delhi to fix the dates for the interviews. Subsequently, Director, AIIMS, New Delhi fixed the interview dates for May 1st & 2nd, 2018 and the interviews were accordingly conducted.

Further, some baseless allegations regarding functioning of stores and procurement office are made by the unknown writer. A clarification from the Stores and Procurement Office with Public Relations Office clearly refutes the allegations as baseless and written with mala-fide intent to malign the image of NEIGRIHMS. It is clarified here for the information of stakeholders that there are no machines lying in packed condition in stores. From furniture store only three food trolleys received in knock-down condition shall be issued to dietary unit af-

ter completion of assembling, along with one unit of weighing scale. It is further clarified by the Stores & Procurement Officer that processing of all purchases/contracts are done through open advertise e-tender on Central Public Procurement Portal (www.eprocure.gov.in) in a multi bid scenario, or through Government-e-Marketplace or local purchase in the respective cases, as per guidelines of Government of India and GFR 2017. All e-tenders are processed on the techno-commercially compliant lowest bidder in the respective cases, being processed through www.eprocure.gov.in, and there is therefore no occasion with regard to contracts/ purchases being fixed by the procurement officer.

Further, with regard to Earnest money/ bid security of the unsuccessful e-bidders in e-tenders, the same is processed for refund on priority after the award of contract as per rule 170 of GFR (2017).

In respect of civil works, it is clarified there are no irregularities with regard to measurements, quality of construction materials and works etc. On the contrary, inspections and measurements are jointly conducted between the Engineering Department and the contrac-

tors concerned to ensure quality of works as per the tender specifications and correctness of measurements of works executed, before preparation of bills.

It is pertinent to mention that the Institute has continuously bagged the Kaya Kalp Award for the last three years in a row, as one of the cleanest Hospitals in the country for which the most important criteria of evaluation by external experts, is for the overall maintenance of the hospital. This is a testimony to the quality of works and therefore the allegation is unfounded, baseless, devoid of facts and figures and appears only to malign the image of the Institute.

Yours etc.,
Dr. K K Pandita
Public Relations
Officer,
NEIGRIHMS

Editor replies: The Letters to the Editor column is a platform to address public grievances. It is our duty to withhold names on request to prevent any form of vindictive behaviour from the institutions concerned and above all for those institutions to correct themselves. There is no question of wanting to malign any institution or person.