

*"To educate a man in mind and in morals is to educate a menace to society."*

--- Theodore Roosevelt

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 229 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2016

### Public health

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has launched a time bound process to improve management of preventable disorders. The focus will be on bringing down mortality and morbidity due to Cancer, Diabetes and Cardio Vascular conditions. Cancer and lifestyle disorders are now causing great many deaths. Gastroenteric conditions, malaria and tuberculosis now have less incidence. The History of Health and Ayush have to come up with the framework of the scheme within three months. The process will achieve completion by the beginning of the next financial year. Special emphasis will be on screening for oral, breast and cervical Cancer. Better management at a pre-malignant stage will be arranged. The National Health Protection Scheme will be in force within six months. Be form of the medical council is due within two months. 3,000 Janau Ushadhi stores will be setup within a month. The Government must refocus on new disorders.

Minister of State for Ayush and the like shaipadnaik claimed that Yoga can cure serious diseases. That includes Cancer. The Government will substantiate the claim with scientific evidence within the year. Yoga plays a significant role in combating Diseases. It also helps in managing existing disorders. It may be advisable to include it in the Health system. But alternative methods cannot be a substitute for modern scientific methods of treatment. Amartya Sen spoke highly of the medical knowledge charak and Susrvt dating back to ancient India. But more importance should attack to latest breakthroughs. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be complemented for stressing the important fact.

### LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

## Jamir to take fresh initiative for talks with underground

Nagaland Chief Minister Mr S C Jamir has said his government will contact the underground activists soon for an "honourable solution" to the insurgency problem in the North Eastern State.

Speaking at a press conference here last night, his first since he assumed office after the recent assembly elections, Mr Jamir said a solution had to be found within the parameters of the national policy and the constitution. It has been our consistent policy and approach towards them of compassion and persuasion," he added.

Therefore, as promised in the election manifesto of the Congress(I), renewed efforts would be made "once for all" to solve the insurgency problem. With the change in the international scene and the 'thaw' in the country's relations with China consequent to the Prime Minister's visit the climate was now favourable to deal with the underground, activists, he added.

A development corporation for women would be set up in Nagaland in keeping with the Congress national policy on women welfare. His government was also concerned about the unemployed youth to solve their problem an expert committee would be set up to suggest measures, Mr Jamir said.

A new pay commission would be set up by the state government to go into all aspects of the service conditions of government employers in the state.

His government had decided to fight the menace of drug abuse in the north-eastern region "on a war footing" with the cooperation of the church and voluntary organization. The existing anti-drug squad under the state police would be strengthened

for this purpose, he added.

The state government was committed to provide a "clean and efficient administration". Since excessive centralization of power resulted in corruption and inefficiency, it had been decided by his government to decentralize power and authority Cabinet committees were proposed to be established to oversee distribution of essential commodities and enforce financial discipline in various government department, he added.

### VP denies Swami's allegations

Janata Dal President Mr V P Singh today denied that he ordered a probe into the possible foreign bank accounts of opposition leaders when he was the Union Finance Minister Mr Singh described Dr Subramaniam Swamy's charge to this effect as "misleading and highly mischievous."

Mr V P Singh in a statement recalled Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi succeeded him as Union Finance Minister and held the portfolio for a considerable period. "That Mr Gandhi took no action whatsoever at that time proves utter false of Dr Swamy's allegations against opposition leaders. The Dal president said the "Malice of Dr Swamy's query should be evident from the fact he had already denied any hand in the probe through a press statement as early as November 13 last year." Mr Singh said he did institute an inquiry as Finance Minister based on the information he received regarding the commission paid in connection with purchase of West German submarines. The fate of these inquiries is now well known, he added.

# Monolith Festival: Exposition of Khasi culture, values and ethics

By Patricia Mukhim

The Khasi Hills District Council must be commended for conceptualizing the Monolith Festival at Mawphlang and creating the Khasi Heritage Village adjacent to the sacred groves. The Festival, started in 2014 drew a huge crowd even then. Last year there was a break on account of the International Terra Madre (ITM). This time the 3-day Fest beginning march 31, is being organized by the Khasi Heritage Conservation Forum (KHCF), comprising tour operators and tour promoters like Alan West Khar Kongor, Banlum Blah amongst others. On the inaugural day, it was as if the gods were there to bless the event which had people from across the state participating. Hence while Shillong was lashed by hailstorm and rain, Mawphlang was dry, albeit cold and breezy. But it was a nice weather befitting the ambience and the occasion.

Dignitaries from the Governor downwards donned the traditional Khasi Jymphong (waistcoat) and the jainspong khor (turban), while the lovely young damsels from the neighbouring villages and different hima (chieftainships) dressed in their finery waiting to perform their dances.

Adding rhythm to the Festival was Nick Don, Maxter Warjri and their team of singers who rendered the theme song. The song is a call to unity and brotherhood. Composed and set to tune by Sylvester Mukhim it was rendered with great finesse by the best artistes of Shillong. The lilting melody and mood-lifting Khasi drum beats got everyone tapping their feet.

The Festival was artistically choreographed and every action was meaningful.

Governor Shanmuganathan took part in the traditional inauguration ceremony called, 'Ka Theh Ka Diang' a water ceremony with a clear message of, 'respecting diversity while celebrating unity.' For the young audience this is a glimpse into the rich cultural practices of the Khasis when they lived alongside nature and when the word 'Mei Ramew' (mother nature) actually meant something.

Past experiences have taught the people of

Mawphlang, the KHADC and the organizers a few things. One, that people cannot just stroll into the Sacred Grove but would have to be accompanied by volunteers upon payment of a certain sum of money. Second, the public toilets created are equal to the best and are well looked after. Third, the arrangement of the stalls and the articles on display were remarkably orderly. Every stall was made of biodegradable material. Fourth, it was a plastic free event and this was publicized ahead of the Festival so people knew they had to bring their own carry bags. These are important lessons in our collective endeavour to conserve nature.

Across the Heritage Village is the Lew Bah (a recreation of the Iewduh, Shillong's biggest traditional market) which had several food stalls and locally produced vegetables, muras (short bamboo crafted stools), a range of bamboo crafts and mats (shylliah), organically grown fruits and pure honey sourced from the different villages of Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

But the stalls that drew the largest crowd were those selling hand-woven Eri silk stoles, scarves and mufflers from the weavers of Ri Bhoi district. Over the years the weavers in and around Umden village of Ri Bhoi have attracted a number of visitors from across the world. The German Government Foundation, GIZ has been working closely with these weavers to help them refine the weaves through better cleansing process of the cocoons and to come up with products that are now sought to be exported to a niche market in Europe and elsewhere. GIZ has assisted the weavers in playing around with more organic dyes and to mix and match the colours. There are Eri stoles with an array of colours on display at the Monolith Fest instead of only the 'Thohrew Stem' or the off-white ones which we were used to in the recent past. While the Thohrew-Stem is like an heirloom, (once you have bought it you don't need another in a whole lifetime), this also meant that the market for it was limited. Now with the use of differ-

ent dyes and a variety of designs ladies can mix and match their stoles to their dresses and jainsems.

Also, as a people we must acknowledge that Daniel Syiem, our ace designer who has popularized the Eri silk all over the country and abroad is one prime reason why this silk is becoming a must-have item. Daniel has just showcased his designs recently at London and Geneva. Last year Daniel created waves with his designs at the Terra Madre festival at Torino. This is how far the humble Eri silk known as the Ryndia in Khasi has travelled.

It is also heartening to note that one of our own folklorists who has travelled extensively to speak on Khasi folklore - Dr Desmond Kharmawphlang - of North Eastern Hill University's Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, in collaboration with Madeline Tham of Lady Keane College is choreographing a drama based on Soso Tham's, "Ki Sngi barim U Hymniewtrep." The drama revisits the Khasi way of life and the value systems of the past which have now given way to greed, consumerism and corruption, often at the cost of the natural environment. The universally relevant Khasi tenets 'earn your right' (Kamai ia ka Hok) and, 'To know God is to know man' (Tip brier, tip Blei) are now clashing with the modern Khasi worldview. Perhaps the idea of enacting this drama is to rekindle these values in the present generation. Drama used to be part and parcel of Khasi society but the inability to sustain this form of valuable entertainment has certainly deprived us of moments of quiet reflection.

One of the evils that have pervaded the once egalitarian Khasi society is the VIP culture which we have inherited from the caste ridden Indian social system. At least for this Monolith Festival, which in essence is a celebration of Khasi culture one wishes that there was no need for car passes; that everyone is treated with equal deference; that you did not have such a heavy deployment of police force including the SOT. Also that if there is not enough space to park cars then all cars should be parked at a particular place and shuttle buses should take the visi-

tors to the venue. If we are to revisit our culture we have to be ready to jettison some of these oppressive modern adaptations of which the VIP culture is the most nauseating. If politicians still want to cling tightly to this VIP cult then they should not be lecturing people about value systems, about brotherhood and unity. How can there be unity when there is so much distance between politicians and the people who elect them?

It is an eyesore to behold the conspicuous presence of a large number of police personnel in every event held anywhere in Meghalaya. I want to ask the so-called VIPs what or who are they afraid of? Governor Shanmuganathan, was until yesterday a field worker of the RSS, not given to security paraphernalia. If he decides to trim down his VIP entourage it will be a good example for lesser mortals to follow. Also, why does the inaugural function have to be so lengthy and interspersed with so many speeches? People don't come to such festivals to listen to boring political speeches. Most people get away to places out of Shillong hoping they would get a respite from politics but politics seems to follow them everywhere! Even the VAB was mentioned and the Governor urged to pass it. Is the Monolith festival about political leveraging or is it about giving people an opportunity to revisit their culture? The Festival may have been funded by the KHADC but it is not about KHASIC CULTURE and its revival and the event is publicly funded. So the CEM should not mistake one for the other.

On this note I rest my case but congratulate the Organizers - the KHCF who have worked very hard to put together this Festival. They must have had sleepless nights. We wish them all the best but also hope that they don't bend over backwards to accommodate senseless VIP protocols.

Having said all that, I would encourage everyone to visit the Monolith Fest and have a first-hand experience of what it is to taste healthy yet lip-smacking indigenous food; to witness the wonderful performances from a galaxy of troupes from the different hima, raid and shnong and to sample culture from up close. It is a wonderful feeling...

### Dereliction of duty

Editor,

I want to bring to the notice of all concerned that in the Class XII (Science) syllabus of MBOSE, no examination was held for Environmental Science (Env Sc) by the Board but the final mark-sheet has grades given for the subject like A, B, C etc. I found out from colleagues in my office that in most schools, classes for Env Sc are held regularly and students perform projects/classwork/home-work. Grades are given on the basis of projects submitted by students. But in Jail Road Boys Hr See School, no classes are held in class XI or XII on Env Sc, though period is allotted for it. My question is how will the school give grades? Since no classwork/home-work/project has been done by students how can the teachers mark them? I found out that the Principal is supposed to take Env Sc class but did not take a single class nor did he deputize someone else in his place. The entire class has lost out. Now if a student wants to take Env Sc honours in BSc, his/her performance will not be good because the student does not have previous knowledge.

I request MBOSE authorities to take action against the Principal of Jail Road Boys School for dereliction of duty, so that in future students do not suffer like my child.

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

Yours etc.,  
A. Blah,  
Shillong-2

### TO THE EDITOR

## Kudos to JFES!

Editor

I am glad that H.H Mohrmen came up with the article "Community Led Eco Conservation" (ST 28th March 2016) which speaks of community efforts to protect the aquatic life in rivers in West Jaintia Hills District.

The article specifically highlighted the activities of the Jaintia Fishing Association (JFA) which plays a dominant role in maintaining a healthy habitat for fishes in the river Myntdu surrounding Jowai. Indeed it is because of the efforts of the JFA that angling which is the favourite pastime of many in Jowai continues to be a pursuit and that too within easy reach. The other positive results that emerged out of the effort of the JFA is that the source of drinking water for Jowai from the river Myntdu is still preserved and sustained and the river also continues to be a source of other recreations. It is also good to learn that the JFA has extensive plans for the protection of the environment by renaming the Association as the Jaintia Fishing and Environment Society (JFES) and by spreading its wings to other parts of Jaintia Hills. It is hoped that like-minded people in the other districts would form such associations or societies

and that the government give its firm support and assistance to them because, after all, protection of our water resources and the environment as a whole depends a lot on the active involvement of the people.

While such organizations can create awareness and concerns, persuade and even enforce at times, their success would depend on people's cooperation and that would be up to the point that their basic needs are not affected. Therefore when Mohrmen says that if the JFES has single-handedly been able to stop mining and coal depots from coming up in certain villages on the catchment of the Myntdu river and that he sees no reason why it cannot stop building constructions on its banks, I am not confident as he is on the latter. People construct buildings mainly for their shelter which is their basic need and that too mostly on private land either inherited or acquired by them. Hence, if they are stopped, they need to be provided with alternative sites or compensated for, for which the organization may not have the means. Moreover if land close to this river banks have not been declared as "no man's land" by any authority or and they are neither Government nor District Council land then such land must be in private possession

by now. Therefore the fear of Mohrmen that the river Myntdu will go the Wah Umkhrah way because of building constructions coming up on its banks is not unfounded. Like the latter, the former may also suffer because of our shortsightedness or procrastination.

Mohrmen also mentioned about rivers falling under the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council's jurisdiction. This means that the Council should also protect these rivers. Since crores of rupees may have been spent by the Government for construction of various projects on some of these rivers in public interest it is hoped that the Council has the manpower and financial resources to protect these rivers for the sake of these projects. If not then the sustainability of these projects is jeopardized. Ultimately, public interest may suffer on account of jurisdiction.

Coming to the JFES one hopes that its present endeavour will also prominently bring environmental issues to the centre of attention in democratic politics, enough to give people's verdict that favours the environment. It is a challenging task for them to create such an upheaval but commitment, hard work and endurance will bring success. Here's wishing the members of the JFES all the best.

# Significance of World Autism Awareness Day

By Dr Shabina Ahmed, MD

On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/139 declaring April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) in perpetuity. The significance of this resolution is that it is one of only three official disease-specific United Nations Days, the others being Diabetes and Mental Health. The Day aims to bring the world's attention to autism, thereby developing world knowledge of autism, especially in its early diagnosis and intervention. It formally recognises autism as a growing global health crisis.

WAAD is being celebrated worldwide today. From Glasgow to Guwahati, Stockholm to Shillong, it is being observed with musicals, video conferences, walkathons, lectures, commitments by various world leaders and activities that would bring together organizations and people around the world to give a voice to the millions who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and seeking help. The world has seen a 25-fold increase in 30 years, in the number of children with autism. An Indian study in 4000 households under the International Clinical Epidemiology Network Trust, estimates upto 1.5% of the population, translating to a prevalence rate of 1 in 66, or 10 million children.

The United Nations 2016 WAAD theme is "Autism and the 2030 Agenda: Inclusion and Neuro-diversity" and reflect how the Agenda implicates in improvement of those with autism. Interestingly, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals targets that none should be left behind, five of these are explicitly referenced to people with disabilities (PWD). They are quality education, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities and partnerships for the Goals.

What I would like to draw attention to is the reference to sustainable cities and communities, which simply means creating the least carbon footprint and producing the lowest quality of pollution as well as creating an inclusive society. There are studies incriminating environmental factors to autism, much more than previously thought of, and the most susceptible periods are the prenatal and early infancy.

Giving the child the proper environment is paramount. On the occasion of WAAD 2016, we need to look into the social and family environment as well as pollutants, and the impact it makes to autistic persons. The environment around us not only impacts us through chemical pollutants, but how we structure it for the autistic person is equally vital.

Why do we need to structure the environment? Autistic persons become very anxious and agitated if there are sudden changes in their daily activities, and therefore need to have a predictable routine. Within this caring and supportive environment, they need to accomplish their tasks. It gives them immense confidence and self-esteem. Empathise with the autistic person as to how he or she views the world around them, and help them in overcoming their difficulties.

Autistic children are very sensitive to noise, light, smell and heat, and thus need a calm ambience. Even the tone of your voice can upset them. Modification of the environment is also desired.

They have no awareness of danger, and parents and caregivers should take special precautions with everyday objects, especially electrical gadgets. A not so uncommon event is when some people with autism run out of the house or school. It is important that some mecha-

nism be developed so that the child can be brought back. It may be a good idea for them to carry some sort of identity on them. Window panes may be covered or replaced with strengthened glass.

Lighting is another important issue with people with autism. They see the various lights as flickering, and to some they emit a humming sound, which can be very distracting. Avoid using blinds, as movement of the head can create a flickering sensation. It is best to use soft, diffuse or even adjustable lighting. It is advisable that soft pastel colours, and not bright patterned wallpaper, be used for the walls. A special sensory room, or a corner, in a distraction-free area may be created for the child to retreat to when necessary. It will contain a selection of sensory items, like bean bags, mirrors, fibre optics, sound system, various types of balls, etc.

Autistic children cannot filter out noises the way we do. Noises therefore can be very disturbing. Carpeting or soft flooring are recommended. Because of their increased sensitivity of the senses, subtle smells can overwhelm them. Someone's deodorant or perfume or the smell of certain materials like fabrics can trigger a panic attack.

Coming to the pollutants that impact autism, it is known that many plastics contain potentially harmful toxins, being manufactured from a large array of petroleum-based chemicals. Some of these are hormone-disrupting and attach themselves or leach onto food and drinks and impact our health, especially pregnant women and babies where neurodevelopmental changes take place. Leaching is more when plastic comes in contact with oily or fatty foods, more so with heating and from old, scratched plastic, the worst offenders being polycarbonate, polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and styrene.

Polycarbonate contains bisphenol-A, and is mostly used in plastic baby bottles, water bottles, "sippy" cups and clear plastic cutlery. PVC is used mostly as cling wrap, squeeze containers, detergent bottles, cooking oil containers while polystyrene is used in the soft, disposable cups.

It is therefore important that we avoid using plastic containers to heat our food in a microwave oven, as the chemicals are released and get leached onto the food; and more fatty the food, greater the attachment. It is thus advisable to use glass containers. Equally important is to note that cling wraps also should not be used for microwave use. Plastic bottled water should be avoided as much as possible, but if you do, as in travelling, take care that you use a polycarbonate water bottle. Wash the bottles regularly avoiding strong detergents, and discard them if there are scratches.

It is therefore always best to use other alternatives to plastic packaging whenever possible. Next time you go shopping, carry your bags or cardboard boxes. As you can see, it requires a heart to understand the autistic child. Every autistic person is different, but if we remember that the environment impacts them, then small affordable changes will make a positive impact to the child.

(The author is Developmental Pediatrician Assam Autism Foundation National Awardee for Child Welfare and can be reached at shabinaloveschildren@gmail.com)

"Hope is a waking dream."

—Aristotle

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 230

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2016

### Visit of Bhutanese delegation

A 35 member delegation from Bhutan led by their MP and a senior civil servant attached to the King of Bhutan and comprising professionals from different technical, legal, educational, scientific and environmental specialties arrived at Shillong recently on a learning trip. The delegation visited three states of North East India, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. This group had an interface with civil society members, government officials and people of other professions at the Asian Confluence. There was a healthy exchange of views and several questions posed by both sides were succinctly answered. Some of the participants from the home state were however curious as to what the Bhutanese delegation with a small and manageable population, a carbon neutral environment and a country known for maintaining a healthy Gross National Happiness Index, would want to learn from India and its states which are battling the ravages of environmental degradation and population explosion.

The Bhutanese delegation's response was simple. The North Eastern states of India are their closest neighbours and there would be mutual benefit in engaging in trade and commerce and also cooperating in the area of tourism and food processing. Besides, the opening up of the Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal route would present a great opportunity for economic cooperation. The Bhutanese delegation admitted that they too were now under pressure to grow at a faster pace to meet the needs of a young aspirational generation that makes up nearly half of Bhutan's population (15-40 years age group). Interestingly despite having a population of only 7.34 lakhs, about 18% of that population is engaged in child labour (5-14 years of age). This would mean there is a disguised poverty in Bhutan which is not reflected at the time of computing the Gross Happiness Index. Either that or people have accepted their fates in the tradition of Buddhism.

That the Bhutanese were keen to learn about overland trade and commerce is evident from the fact that the delegation spent one whole day visiting the Land Customs Station at Dawki to find out the volume of trade between India and Bangladesh and how Bhutan could develop a similar LCS vis-a-vis its neighbours. The delegation were dignified in the manner they responded to some very searching questions from the side of the Meghalaya participants. What intrigued the foreign visitors, however was the long queue of trucks at the Srirampur gate between Assam and West Bengal. They wanted to know the reason for this delay. Perhaps they could have put this question to the officials in Assam while interacting with them. Meghalaya has a lot to learn from Bhutan about niche, high end tourism and we hope the engagement continues

### LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### Buta Singh's visit

Dissidence in Congress(I) is endemic everywhere and it makes no difference whether the party is in power or in the opposition. In Manipur where the Congress(I) is in office, the dissidence threatens the life of its own Ministry handed by Mr Rishang Keishing; in Tripura where it is in opposition to the CPI(M), it threatens law and order in the State in its effort to find a political foothold strong enough for a fight with the ruling party. Mr Buta Singh, the Union Home Minister and also supposed to be in charge of the Congress(I) affairs in the state, must be a bold man indeed to have undertaken a two-day tour of the two states, in expectation of providing a ready-made solution for the Congress ills in both the units.

It requires no extra intelligence to suppose that a high dignitary that he is, he was surely empowered to dispose of the ministerial tangle in Manipur at Imphal itself. That the tide has

turned accordingly in favour of Mr Keishing would be only too evident from the spate of withdrawals of earlier resignations for his Ministry, which started flowing after the close of Mr Buta Singh's series of parleys with Congressman at Imphal. The bane in the dissident camp is that there were too many too willing to be projected as Mr Keishing's substitute and successor-in-office and this only strengthened Mr Keishing's case for continuance in office.

The message do something themselves politically and not be expecting to get everything done for them through the instrumentality of New Delhi. It seems the dominance of the Congress(I) at the Centre is proving to be its undoing in most states, big and small. In Tripura the chance of capturing power is not yet despite the renewed agreement just forged with the TUJS, in Manipur the dissidence lingers.

# Dear Dr Mukul, Please Save Our Children Now

By Melari Nongrum and Glenn Kharkongor

On a casual walk through a village in Meghalaya, be it in West Khasi Hills or South Garo Hills, around Nokrek or in the Sung Valley, one cannot help but notice the children. Boys laughing as they run around kicking an improvised football, a group of girls in giggly conversation, a lone child sitting at a doorstep. The ones that specially catch an old pediatrician's eye is the infant slung over its mother's back, sometimes asleep, or the toddler safely clutching its mother's jainsem.

Many of these underfives have sparse, unnaturally light hair, pale eyes and sores at the angles of the mouth. These are unmistakable signs of malnutrition. A chubby face or a pot belly is deceptive and may actually be indications of low protein levels, a dangerous precursor to compromised immunity and harbingers of life threatening infectious diseases such as diarrhea, measles or pneumonia. Sixty percent of deaths in this age group are related to malnutrition.

Early childhood malnutrition is the greatest threat to the attainment of the full physical and mental potential of the child. It causes a lifelong compromise of growth and development, leaving in its wake a susceptibility to mental deficiency, and propensity to certain diseases later in life. The imprint of malnutrition is tragically transmitted to future generations, so urgent and sustained interventions are needed. A comprehensive approach that includes health, social and economic strategies must be packaged in a coordinated strategy. But some measures need to be taken immediately.

Weight and height are good indicators of malnutrition, and there are different ways of correlating these two indicators. Most children with poor nutrition are underweight for their age. Many look thin, because of wasting. Wasting may indicate weight loss from a recent illness. Some children with low weight may however look proportionate because they are short. Stunting usually signifies chronic malnutrition leading to impaired skeletal growth.

According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16 (NFHS4), for

which figures have been released for 13 states, 29% of children in Meghalaya under the age of five years are underweight. Two out of five children, 43.8% are stunted. More than two-thirds of all children in this age group, 71.6% are anemic (NFHS3). Most of the childhood malnutrition indices in our state are the worst in the Northeast region and comparable or even worse than the so-called BIMARU states.

Adequate nutrition later in life does not mitigate all the harmful effects of childhood deprivation. The effects are lifelong. Predisposition to rickets, delayed puberty, diabetes, stroke, heart disease and even obesity later in life are well-documented. The World Health Organization has devoted much study and analysis to this problem.

The most tragic outcome of severe malnutrition is cognitive deficiency or plainly speaking, mental retardation. In the rural areas, one cannot help but notice the occasional child with a vacant look, a blank stare, an obvious dullard. It is necessary to use crude phrases so that we do not beat around the bush with euphemisms, but squarely face up to the fact that the neglect of our children begets in every generation a higher proportion of these low IQ individuals. No one else will tell us this.

Unfortunately, the matter does not end with this generation. The girl child with undernutrition tends to become even more anemic when she reaches puberty. Half of our girls, 49.2%, in the age group 10-19 years are anemic. Almost two-thirds, 63.9%, of pregnant mothers in Meghalaya are anemic. Just look at the pale eyes and pallid skin of the women pavement vendors when you buy vegetables. So the womb in which the precious baby grows does not provide the nourishing environment which it should. The pregnancy results in a low weight baby, already starved in the womb.

This two-generation link is well-documented. But it goes beyond low weight. The poor nutrition of the mother, before and during pregnancy, has other effects. Her baby's biological systems become biochemically and

physiologically programmed to deal with the chronic undersupply of nutrients. The developing brain is given priority and glucose is diverted from muscles and other tissues so that cognitive potential is somehow maximized, even at the cost of physical growth.

The growing science of epigenetics has found that these adaptive signals are also embedded in the ovaries of the unborn girl baby, which means that the effects of malnutrition in the mother are carried even to her yet unconceived grandchildren, who will be born decades later to her daughters. Some of these epigenetic effects are also expressed through paternal influences so the nutrition of the boy child is also key to the sparing of future generations.

The question that arises is why do a majority of our women have poor health? Good health is largely dependent on consumption of nutritious food. In our context, there are social and economic factors that influence the consumption patterns of food by women and children. Maternal education is a critical factor that determines the choice of specific types of food in the home and contributes positively to the general nutritional status of the children. Education is often narrowly considered to be a formal school education.

But traditional knowledge of food systems have made communities food secure for generations. Therefore, though formal education is important, traditional knowledge should not be looked down upon. These two systems of knowledge are a continuum; one complements the other. Both systems of knowledge need to be acknowledged and promoted among mothers and indigenous people in general.

Other factors that affect health or consumption of food is food availability, food selection practices and biological needs. Food availability depends on production and harvesting processes and also peace and stability in the area. When food is available, food selection is affected by many factors such as cultural preference, affordability, influences of education and the media, and individual biological needs.

An important underlying

factor that affects the consumption of nutritious traditional food is land. Patterns of land ownership and use among the Khasis and Jaintias have changed drastically in the recent past. Land is now mostly used for cash crops and monoculture has replaced traditional crop rotations. Privatization of land is on the increase. These forces have left many common people landless. Landlessness has many implications; as people lose access to land, their engagement with land is considerably reduced. This reduced engagement with land leads to decline in the knowledge of the natural environment which would also lead to a decline in the consumption of nutritious traditional foods.

Poverty is closely linked to landlessness and therefore the inability to grow and consume a balanced diet for the family. Poverty is a complex phenomenon in which numerous factors interplay. The number of earning members in the household play a role in the ability of households to be able to afford balanced meals. Smaller families tend to have a better standard of living and are less likely to have children deficient in vitamins. According to the 2011 census, Meghalaya has the highest fertility rate, family size and the largest proportion of children aged 0-6 years in the country.

The underlying social factors described in this article were amply demonstrated in a survey that showed a high prevalence of vitamin A deficiency in Pynursla Block of the East Khasi Hills District. Perhaps the situation is even worse in some other districts of the state. In the NFHS survey, Meghalaya has been clubbed with Bihar and Madhya Pradesh as the states with the highest percentages of stunted children.

Not to single out Meghalaya, most of India has not addressed this problem in a meaningful way. Despite two decades of high economic growth, the rates of child malnutrition have hardly changed. Many well-intentioned schemes have failed to make an impact. Perhaps Meghalaya, with a doctor at the helm, can find a better way.

Melari Nongrum is associate professor of social work at Martin Luther Christian University. Glenn Kharkongor was professor of pediatrics at Manipal and is now at MLCU.

## A duplicate morality

By Michael Makri

We are deeply saddened and some of us inconsolable while listening to and reading of the brutal rape and murder of a 19-year old young girl (forgive me for not mentioning her name, I respect her name and so too the names of many other victims) from 4½ miles Upper Shillong on March 17 last. On a daily basis, there are several reports in local newspapers of rape cases within the state of Meghalaya; it is shameful that probably in the only matrilineal society in the world, women are seen as objects of pleasure for few psycho-satyrists males of our society. It is unthinkable that our society, which is known for 'tipbriew-tipblei', is polluted by hypersexual-maniacs. What has become of Meghalaya today? Where is that morality' gone? And from where do these deviant immoralities sneak into our society? Definitely the blame would be the media. And to a certain extent, it is true because of the ability of media to duplicate morality. There is nothing more oppressive than the standards of morality that the media culture promotes. Media, be social or traditional, in alliance with modern-day capitalism, manufactures false needs, desires and dreams, defining for people especially the young a standard of measure of one's social life. But its potential danger lies in the tyranny of judgments we make on the lives of others on the basis of such. It leads to a mere duplicated morality where the original is far from attainable.

Therefore, a false consciousness imminent in this standard does not only discourage timid young people from their pursuit of self-esteem but it also hides from them the wonder of an early-morning walk or the rushing sound of a stream nearby on their way to school. That is why many young people can fall prey to illusions and would duplicate those for in their lives and thereby fail to recognize the fact that those things s/he finds as s/he scrolls down their news feed or as s/he changes the television channels are mere representations of the truth of things. Likewise, many talk shows uproot the masses from a historical totality, in the same way as the beauty of Aishwarya Rai transforms a young man's passion for magical reality into an empty dream. Fr. Joseph Celia sdb in one of his seminars few years back said that this phenomenon is a product of the 'culture industry,' which is symptomatic of what is so irrational about modern life. No doubt, modernity has brought forth affluence and prosperity, however, massive poverty remains the scandal for which modernity has failed to account.

Honestly, we can mention various ways and how efficient and effective our most modern means of communication has become. And without any arguments this has been translated to the emerging societies coupled with novel initiatives for professional growth. Moreover the modern means of communication is also the cheapest way to maintain one's contacts with peers and the most convenient mode of gathering information on current affairs. And so, it has turned some into instant critics and analysts, thereby contributing to a culture of intelligent discourse. And this must be credited to the media. But, what is the role of 'human reason' in this unfolding? History has taught us that the 'enlightenment' that was brought by media and modernity was supposed to bring human reason to new heights. It was viewed as the redeemer of humans from the abyss of ignorance.

For example, science has opened new worlds and expanded the reach of human imagination. Science has enabled humans to understand the universe and unveil its deepest secrets. Science has become the master over nature and has kept that dominion. Media is the youngest child of the enlightenment. Yet, beyond that promises of salvation and glory, nothing can be more dangerous than the false sense of the good life that the media culture unknowingly promotes. We find its massive duplication in the likes of Paris Hilton, Kim Kardashian or Miley Cyrus. And don't we see this morality being duplicated by our young people all over the world? This duplicated morality of the media culture industry in modern-day capitalist society makes the minds of young people less critical and this is the truth we are challenged with. This is more alarming because social change cannot happen overnight. It has always been the case that social transformation will require a new generation in order to overhaul the mistakes of a previous one.

It is true, economic progress cannot be denied and, indeed, thousands of people have truly benefited from economic expansion. However, unchecked addiction of the young to media culture also perpetuates the marginalization of some people who continue to suffer from neglect amid economic progress. Its severe implication often makes the poor man, the orphan, or the stranger an outsider. More than their hunger, the pain caused by the invisibility that those people in the periphery experience is disturbingly real and deeply personal. Skyscrapers, however high, can and will never reach the heavens; just as any picture posted online or the advertisement in television screen is no more than a mere image of our true but duplicated selves. Therefore, the real battle for humanity happens in their hearts and minds.

The film 'Modern Times' of Charlie Chaplin can serve as a suitable portrayal of the subordination of the individual to modernity. Without its own form of criticism, media will enslave the individual. The number of rape cases will rise. The hallucination of comfort created by media in our consumer society has made us forget that real beauty is something that we don't have to pay for. In fact, today's media culture as a modern-day spell is apparent in the failure on the part of many to realize that consumerism has also diminished the meaning of human life, equating the struggle for human happiness to that which is material. Something is truly wrong and incomprehensibly absurd when some people do things on the basis of utility or that which is pleasant, all in view of some value that is tangible and impermanent. Media culture therefore, whether social or traditional should remain that way. But users and consumers should be critical and should not duplicate those moralities in real life. Because, without critical thinking and without ethical grounding, media culture will lead to various problems that might prevent us from fully appreciating what really matters in life. It is merely a duplicated culture — that leads to a duplicated morality, which will soon fade. So users and consumers of media must be forewarned.

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Tourism requires a holistic approach

Editor,

It is a great moment of pride for Meghalaya that the rest of the country has come to realise that Shillong is one of the favoured hill stations amongst other hill stations. Along with this achievement it is the Government's proactive approach and encouragement that is required in helping the rural areas where the actual tourism potential lies. Upcoming entrepreneurs in the tourism industry should be welcomed with their plans and ideas rather than playing red tape with their spirit and zeal. Involvement of the local community under a private public partnership should be

given more impetus while corporate houses should be involved but without disturbing the prevailing local systems. We should improve rather than change and destroy. However, while talking about promoting eco-tourism the state needs to do more to reduce deforestation and quarrying and ban illegal felling of trees and burning of forest cover which is almost a habit amongst rural people. Better and motorable roads, pathways, sanitation, accommodation and security are primarily important if the tourism sector has to grow at par with other states. Perhaps initiating the program of having trained tourist police amongst the local people will be a benefit as would bring in a sense of responsibility, ownership, respect and income in the long run.

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

#### Shillong best hill station?

Editor,

While we are gratified at the fact that Shillong is nominated as one of the best hill stations it is our duty to live up to this reputation. Alas, it seems like a far cry. The dirtiest place in the city today are Police Bazar and Motphran two of the populous markets without a garbage collection system worth the name. I know of many tourists who complain that Police Bazar is the most disorderly space with hawkers spilling over into every available space and leaving pedestrians with almost no space to walk on. This is particularly true of the road from Motphran to Paltan Bazar. It also seems that no one is able to hold to account the Syiem of Mylliem who lays claim to the whole of Iewduh (Bara Bazar) and

collects revenue from all shops owners but has no control over the market and nor is the syiemship interested in improving the condition of the market. It is a shame to take visitors to this dirty, crowded market, yet it is also a tourist site since it houses the oldest market in the state. Why does the State Government no assert itself and take over the reins of Iewduh? For how long can the Syiem of Mylliem play around with the market and earn from it without any accountability about what he does with the money. It is high time someone goes to court on this issue. Lets see what the court has to say.

Yours etc.,  
D Blah,  
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.

By Shweta Patwardhan

# Happily ever after....

Marriages are made in heaven, they say. Right here on earth, one of the most commonly sustained institutions in life, and perhaps one of the most bewildering, is that of marriage. Surprised that I am calling it "bewildering"? If you stop and think about it, you will probably agree. But, that is the point. We do not stop to think about it! It is one of those institutions that is entered into without any questions. One is born, grows up, gets an education, finds a job, and then gets married.

For most people, there is a lot of pressure to get married once one is "settled in life". Indeed, "settled in life" generally means getting married. And if this does not happen as soon as one has found a job, society begins debating on the reasons for the delay. But what does marriage mean, really? Most people I spoke to generally agreed that it is all about companionship. That is what a "life partner" has come to mean -- someone to share your life with. One friend called it "a kind of security, a comfort."

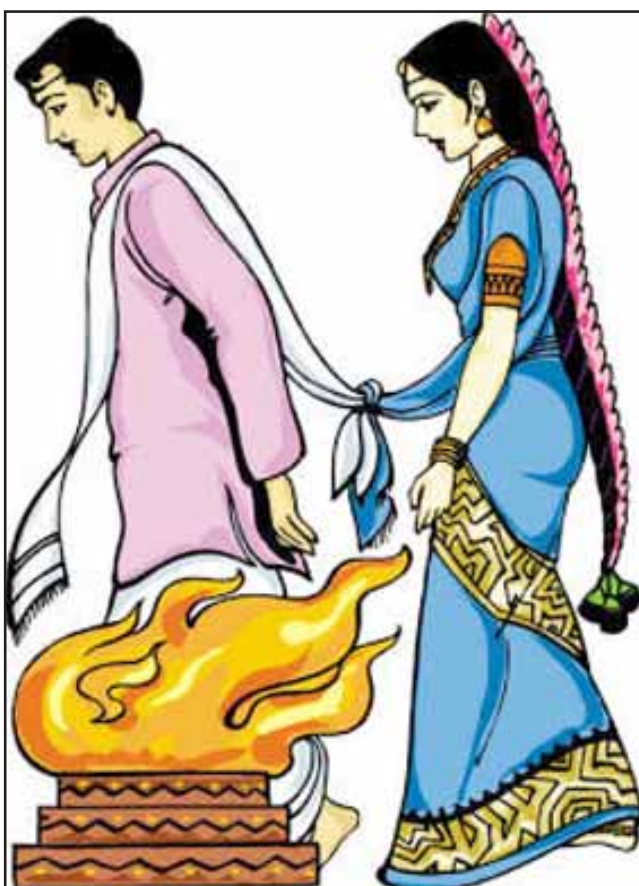
There is no definite trend to suggest that more people are choosing their own partners -- what is quaintly called a "love marriage" in our country! Both arranged marriages as well as romancing and finding partners, are continuing to happen in different spheres. Yes, there are several matrimonial sites that are now available for people to find suitable matches. These sites are in-between, a third dimension, where one can choose partners very specifically, right down to wanting a live-at-home wife or a working professional. They have replaced the days of the "marriage broker" to a large extent. Remember him? A cloth bag clutched in his hands, he would visit you with a selection of horoscopes, complete with kula and gotra, details of property, amount of salary earned, family details... that's what used to puzzle me when I was much younger -- how can two complete strangers decide to get married for life? The thought used to be scary. How does one take that huge plunge on such little knowledge? But then, even if one meets an interesting person, falls in love and gets married, most often the true colours of the partner get revealed only when one is married and lives with each other.

And for many, there is no choice after getting married and finding that there are a lot of mismatches -- it is one of those conveyor belts that one simply clambers onto, and there is no getting off. Yes, divorces are also happening, but for a majority of people, there is simply no second innings. It is some-

taking the partner for granted begins. It happens regardless of gender. Nobody pauses to think about what is happening. I remember, a long time ago, when I was discussing relationships and marriage with a teacher; I had mentioned that it was a 50-50 partnership. He had gently corrected me and said it was a 100-100 tie-up. Isn't that true? But I suppose we don't find the space to think seriously about what it really means. Let me take this thought a little further and see if I can put my finger on it. Take a moment and think about relationships in general, and not just the institution of marriage. Even in a workspace relationship, there is always a "taken for granted" element that sneaks in, and usually no one stops to think about it, or if they do, there is a fall-out, unless they can sit down and talk about it. Now, if you take this thought a little further and apply it to this institution called marriage, you will perhaps see what I mean -- two people living constantly with each other until the lines blur, and each probably taking the other for granted and never realising it, and before one knows it, life maybe over.

"We do sit and talk about it," said a friend, "but with children, time constraints, and a hectic schedule, serious changes are not possible. I guess you have to accept that there is not enough time for each other. My husband is okay with it. I think I am the one who constantly compares my present life with my past. Very often, I live in the past. That's the problem. I think I just need to accept the fact that things in life keep changing," she said ruefully.

Another friend of mine, a teacher, said she constantly asks girl students in her college if they are applying serious thought to why they want to get married. She says women don't realise they are in great danger of getting



claimed. Very often, it is not easy to change something, especially a partner, simply because it is not working satisfactorily, because two families are involved. The problem of too many explanations that disappointed families and the society demand usually deter couples from breaking up. The other angle is when there are children involved. How many

times does one detect people's unvoiced view that they are continuing in a relationship "for the sake of children". Broken marriages often tend to have a traumatic effect on children. So one continues to soldier on. "I cannot just move on now. I believe my children are used to a certain comfort now," said a human relations expert. "There is definitely expectation of more from the relationship," she continued. "I don't agree that expectations come down. But with so much time and effort spent in looking after the household and children, it often remains just that -- only an expectation."

Hectic urban life also takes its toll on marriages. Working couples are so involved in the everyday roller-coaster ride that there is simply no time to pause and introspect. What is meant to be a lovely life together usually turns into a meaningless routine of waking, scrambling to get the children ready for school, and leave for work, often hurriedly preparing breakfast and packing lunch. Evenings are spent in long com-

muties back, especially in urban India, and even then people don't take time off to switch off their minds and relax during the long hours of commute. One friend has started listening to talking books. She says she finds it relaxing. But the mad scramble begins once she reaches home. Very many women unquestioningly take a huge burden on themselves to run a household. Yes, shopping together with family does happen, what with the new trend of supermarkets and the glitzy display of goods, but ends up being the only family "outing".

Mediocrity is also a huge part of our lives these days. One is often puzzled at how little we question things around us in daily life. We take bad traffic, bad roads, electricity and water problems, and bad films, all in our stride. The fact of the matter is that this acceptance of mediocrity has become an integral part of our psyche. When was the last time you saw a really outstanding film? How often are you puzzled (Contd on P-VII)

## Plague of insensitivity is sweeping the planet

My friend watched the dinosaur movie "Jurassic World" in front of her pet bird so that the creature could remember when his kind ruled the earth. She was trying to be nice but I thought it was really insensitive.

The same friend once told me that she thought I was as "dumb as a box of rocks" while we were walking through an ornamental park. "Shh," I said, moving us away from the rockery. "They can hear you."

But, of course, there are no people on earth as insensitive as children. Child: "Can we have a bee house on the balcony?" Me: "No. Mum's allergic to bee stings." Child: "Can we have one when she's dead?" Me: "I guess."

Now a question: if someone is two hours late for dinner and then complains that the food is overcooked, is it justifiable to dice him into cubes and lightly flash-fry him with cilantro as an extra meat dish?

I knew you'd say yes. I do this sort of thing a lot these days (identify acts of thoughtlessness, not flash-fry friends). Because it is clear that a massive epidemic of insensitivity is spreading around the world.

The most astonishing example came from a reader in China. A funeral company touting for business set up hundreds of fake gravestones bearing the names of (living) local residents in gold letters, the

Residents were unimpressed to the point of apoplexy. The hard-sell morticians at the China Dragon Garden graveyard in the Beijing suburbs were eventually persuaded that their venture, though creative, scored 8.9 on the Richter insensitivity scale. Especially in a community where omens are taken as scientifically verified proof. Doctor: "You have three months to live." Patient: "My test results were that bad?" Doctor: "Your test results were fine, but you picked waiting ticket 44 and sat in the Unlucky Chair."

If you think about it, most disputes are due to thoughtlessness. In the paper was a story about a bid by organizers of a UK vegetable growing contest to attract more entries by allowing people to enter veggies bought at the local supermarket. They never thought about the vegetable growers, who were outraged. A cynical colleague reading over my shoulder (go away) said that everyone had probably been entering vegetables bought from supermarkets for years anyway.

He maintained that people today were over-considerate, and offered an example. Earlier this year, a university in the US state of Connecticut said it was promoting inclusiveness and invited applications from

### The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

caused much head-scratching. Please do not write in and tell me what each letter stands for. I treasure my innocence. Let children be children.

By Sayan Mukherjee

## 'Tennis unlikely to get serve and volley Grand Slam champion'



thing that is accepted without question. It is something that simply happens, and if there are mismatches, there is only compromise. There is a stage in life when the "honeymoon period" is over. That is when

stuck in the rut of marriage and becoming glorified cooks and housekeepers. "There is very little space to think about it. There is no out-of-the-box thinking. Anything different becomes wrong, politically incorrect.

ple take -- is to sit down with the toaster and try and repair it. "It is just a question of how you look at the problem. You cannot treat a relationship like a badly working toaster and change partners," he ex-

The gradual slowing of playing surfaces, which has prompted players to adopt a pro-backline approach, means tennis is unlikely to get a serve and volley champion any time soon, beams former British No.1 Tim Henman.

A serve and volleyer at heart, Henman reached the Wimbledon semi-finals four times and was a good exponent of that particular style of play. It was still prevalent during his playing days in the 1990s and early 2000s, but since his retirement in 2007, a uniform hard-hitting, baseline approach has become a norm of sorts.

It is this one dimensionality of contemporary tennis that hurts the former World No.4, but he accepts that it is unlikely to change any time soon with budding players inclined to follow suit.

"Yeah, the serve and volley game is dying, you know the surfaces are a lot slower now. The players come to the net less. So they don't develop those skills at a young age. So on the circuit they serve and volley a lot less," Henman said in an interview, on the sidelines of the "Road to Wimbledon" programme, a tournament for Under-14 players here.

"Probably not. We won't get a serve and volley champion. Not any time soon," he added, when prodded to predict the future of the endangered style.

He is not the only one, however, to voice concerns



about the predicament staring at tennis. His one-time adversary, 14-time Major champion Pete Sampras, against whom he lost two successive Wimbledon semi-finals in 1998 and '99,

has also earlier lamented the slow demise of the style among the current crop of players.

Henman feels the homogeneous slow nature of tennis surfaces globally has

contributed to it as it affects the overall development of a player, discouraging forward movement, adding they could only benefit from playing in non-identical surfaces.

The 41-year-old is, however, curious to see the extent of dominance reigning top ranker Novak Djokovic has on the circuit. It is the Serbian's "effectiveness" that sets him apart and Henman (Contd on P-VII)

By Kishori Sud

# De-link food from comfort! Don't Diet!

Often, individuals on the heavy side of the weighing scale follow every theory to the 'T', try every tactic to lose all that food love which converts into fat, increasing not just the waist line but the perfect chin, the once slender shapely thighs and firm buttocks. Tending to all these 'red alert' problems, "Don't Diet" by Kavita Devgan focusses on healthy habits.

In a refreshing, non-preachy writing style, the author keeps you glued to the book until the last word. The read motivates and convinces you to drop all those fried sinful snacks, pointing out the small little habits that all working people get into and thus change the dimensions of our respective bodies.

Addressing the mere fact that we use food as a comforter during the time of stress (a major no-no), the author says that small habits like ordering tea throughout the day too contributes to the extra calories we gain just like that!

Fun to read, filled with easy and practical tips, the book can motivate anyone and everyone to lose weight.

The foremost important tip that Devgan points out is that intake of water is extremely important for our body. With a proper explanation on the connection between keeping yourself hydrated and losing weight, the author has gone on to make the reader understand the importance of water.

With pointers like one should pick happiness over hunger, quality of food is paramount, never leave home without breakfast, "Don't Diet!" breaks many myths about dieting that have been instilled in us over the years and takes a holistic approach to losing and maintaining weight.



The book basically suggests that you go slow and make easy lifestyle changes. Many different and interesting recipes have been given by the author with some easy to do workouts.

Soaking up the sun, going out for morning walks

are facts that are known to all but not implied in daily life by most of us.

With the message that thin people stay thin because the good habits which fat people generally

dodge are "embedded in their subconscious and are a part of their daily routines", "Don't Diet!" is a read that can be understood while sipping on fresh green tea!

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

By Aditi Singh

Each stage of human life has its own peculiarities. An infant enjoys himself and always lives in the present. He instinctively emanates inviting vibes to others to enjoy his company. We talk to him lispingly and haltingly and he heartily responds by cycling his legs energetically.

He reciprocates our love when we life him in our arms. As a teenager, he responds to our affectionate queries about his sports and other areas of interest with his reservoir of exuberant energy. As a professional in his forties, he responds to our queries in a laidback and cocksure confidence. As a retired man at sixty, he would talk to you peacefully with distinct calm and composure like a man who has navigated many storms and the contentment of having reached a safe harbour.

A senior navy officer after retirement has rechristened his abode 'Anchor-age'. An elderly professor colleague of mine who taught English Literature to post graduate classes has been devoting some time daily to students who turn to her for guidance.

She loves quoting Lord Tennyson's lines: "Death closes all, but something are the end. Some work of noble note may yet be done."

Whenever I hear or read about Mother Teresa, I am reminded of Joseph Campbell's lines: "As a candle in a holy place, so is the beauty of an aged face." Greek philosopher Plato has very insightfully commented on old age. He says "Old age has a great sense of calm and freedom. When the passions have relaxed their hold, you have escaped not from one master but from many."

Greek philosopher Plato has very insightfully commented on old age. He says "Old age has a great sense of calm and freedom. When

# Beautiful old age.....



the passions have relaxed their hold, you have escaped not from one master but from many."

Old age affords precious leisure which can be profitably used to rejuvenate the jaded and rickety limbs in the company of peers and



progeny who surrounded them in the evening to listen to interesting incidents and anecdotes that evoke peals of laughter. Even aged ladies are seen sitting in their own cluster to enjoy their

bonus years of life.

It is a common experience that age brings with it a sturdy sense of humour. I have noticed toothless, bespectacled oldies breaking into guffaws on a small oddity noticed by them. Only one example will elucidate

the point. A reporter queried an old man about his age and was told that he had turned a hundred that week. "Do you expect to see another hundred?" he was asked. The old man scratched his bald head and blurted out, "Why not? I am stronger now than when I started the first one hundred."

Age is only a number of years and they don't count much. It is well said that we do not count a man's years until he has nothing else to

count. It appears to be fallacious to believe that youth is the happiest time of life. In fact, advancing in years is likely to make us happier. Facing of difficult and responsibilities strengthens the mind and makes it more dynamic. When we surmount odds, new horizons open to us and we get a broader and clearer view of situation facing us.

In conclusion, it can safely be said that age is revered because of its wisdom. Youth denotes 'josh' (raw energy) while age denotes 'hosh' (sanity and wisdom). The running of world's affairs needs sound experience and composer which are the mementoes and badges of age. Mark Twain expressed the same idea in his own inimitable way: "Life should be infinitely happier if we could only be born at eighty and gradually approach eighteen." INAV

## 'Tennis unlikely to get serve and volley

(Contd from P-VI) is curious how many more Grand Slam trophies he can win.

"He has already won 11 Grand Slams. It will be interesting to see how many more he can win in the future," he says.

He concedes that Djokovic doesn't have any evident visible weakness in his game. But irrespective of the 28-year-old's formidability, he is unwilling to dub him the most complete player ever.

"No, he is not the most complete player ever. He might be one of the most effective players. I think his every aspect of his game is so advanced and so athletic. He is very solid from the back of the court, one of the best ever. He makes so few unforced errors," the six-time Grand Slam semi-finalist said.

These attributes have made Djokovic almost "unbeatable" at the moment, and the Serbian star is unlikely to alter his hugely successful style. But Henman would still love to see him come to the net more often, which would test his weaker volleys.

"There's no weakness as such. It looks like he is unbeatable at the moment. But he doesn't come to the net a massive amount. So, you know, his volleys are not the best. But that's not what his game is all about. His athletic ability and speed at the baseline and how consistent his ground strokes are." The Brit expressed shock at reports of rampant fixing in tennis, hoping that the malice doesn't become overwhelming. He also predicted that India should develop singles players by concentrating on making them "physically fitter and stronger".

"There have been reports leading to a lot of speculation. We have to understand the facts and I hope it's not going on," Henman bemoaned.

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, April 3, 2016

Moon sextile Sun on your solar return chart is good for initiating new projects. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional and your ideas are more progressive. Get down to the basics; put your best foot forward to get things off to a flying start. You also see the start of a new relationship. Financially this is going to be a very good period.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You bring a powerful and energetic approach to resolve professional projects in hand. Your leadership qualities come to the fore as you organize professional activities with great élan. You are in your element in your interactions while meeting with business associates. As you travel you will find that it brings in luck in another aspect of your life too. You need not over analyze personal relationships but rather respond with your heart and feelings; as a new understanding gives you added perspective. It is time to express your feelings and ideas and share what you have learned through a variety of experiences of late.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

This period finds you responsible, hard working, dutiful, and serious when it comes to finances, investments and issues related to the family. You would move on the path of success in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth. You feel the need to be appreciated by family members, and the need for togetherness with others comes into focus. New contacts may also occur. Events are such that you move towards a more objective approach to your life and you cultivate true friendships.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You are fun loving, energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. Financial benefits may come your way this week. Self-confidence and action are highlighted and you instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. Excellent work opportunities for those working with associates from overseas and you may travel for business dealings. At home, you accept the individuality of your spouse and that would be helpful to resolve your conflicts and move ahead in harmony. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Stars favor people in the field of show business and fine arts. Excellent professional opportunities for students in fine arts, music, singing and creative writing will open up new doors. Personal relations are rejuvenated and your romance moves more rapidly as you relate well on the intellectual level as well and move towards a long-term commitment. Home and family matters capture your attention and are a strong source of pride. It's a time when worldly matters are not as important to you.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You would be more determined and hard working. This is an excellent period in your life in which to get organized and to stick with projects through to the end. You would spend money on clothes, furniture, and entertainment. You initiate a force of energy to achieve success in an important venture. You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with controversial, professional matters. You are also likely to form relationships with people based on a deep love. You are in touch with your more sensitive and spiritual qualities. You are able to express a greater level of sensitivity and sensibility.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You would adopt a realistic, practical and disciplined approach towards work and domestic relations. People in fine arts, creative lines and communication related fields would give a traditional blend to their contemporary creations. You assume a leadership role and take control of matters both at work and home. Your communication abilities will largely be applied to professional ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters. You are proud of your ideas, and very good at expressing them to family members smoothly now.

You tend to entertain them with your conversation, and your sense of humor. This is an excellent phase in which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships with loved ones.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Activities related to communication such as journalism, literature and fine arts are prominent. An arduous yet stimulating project should be taken as a challenge which would further promote business prospects. Physical energy and good health enable you handle a busy schedule and complete work commitments. Responsibilities and commitments may take up more time than usual, so set some time aside. Also, arrange your schedule so that you don't take on too much and you don't end up handling more errands and odd jobs than you can effectively manage.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You feel fresh and re-energized as a blast of personal energy comes your way and exhibiting your leadership skills works for you now. You are at your most convincing, as others accept you at face value. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. There may be gains from property, shares and fixed assets. You are nurturing and caring in personal relationships. A short vacation allows you to enjoy the gifts of nature with a loved one.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

Your credibility is important and efforts at self-promotion could be made now. It's an excellent period to make a lifestyle change and get extra mileage. Any unresolved argument may create rifts in your relationships; take a softer approach in your interactions when it comes to the family and romance related matters. A new set-up in the existing house or a new house altogether may be part of the picture in the coming months, as well as a sense of renewal and reinvigoration. It is time to come back to your inner center to regain physical strength, mental balance, emotional harmony and spiritual awareness.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You would be able to make an impact on business associates with your hard work and sincere efforts. Your creativity will assist in your output at work and help you undertake new or existing challenges. You would 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. Your ideas are higher than usual, religious teaching may be part of the picture, and your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background than you are indicated during this phase.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

The current planetary combination lets you be responsible, hard working, dutiful, and serious in finances and investments. This is an especially spiritual time for you—a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you. It's a good time to join organizations and groups with a social purpose. You move on the path of success and there is betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction. It's time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and friends.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You have intellectual vibration and ability to adapt to most situations. This phase brings a change in professional patterns and there is no more ambiguity about these matters. You would be able to face truths, deal with emotional choices or difficult situations. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs realizing that this too shall pass. You are compassionate and generous with family, friends and relatives, drawing respect from them. It's a good time to join organizations and groups and to attend meetings or social events. You would come back to your inner center to regain physical strength, mental balance, emotional harmony and spiritual awareness.

## Happily ever after...

(Contd from P-VI) that a "hit" film turns out to be quite terrible? I am not generalising and saying that we only get to see terrible films. But, more often than not, we accept a film even if it does not have all the elements that truly affect us simply because there is no luxury of choice.

And accepting mediocrity day in and day out has become so much a part of our mental make-up that I wonder if it leaks into our marriages and relationships. Do you understand what I mean? Do we compromise on our marriages and accept things simply because we don't even see that there could be something better? A friend disagrees. "I would not call it compromise. It's more of a give and take, sort of lending a shoulder."

Marriages are like precious plants that require careful nurturing, watering, and weeding from time to time. How

many of us are doing those things on a regular, daily basis? Most of our marriages, if you take the analogy of plants, are surviving somehow, fending for itself, without daily care and maintenance. Cable TV and modern communication tools like the Internet and social pages are adding to the "always on the go" phenomenon. We are not switching off. A banking tech-

nology expert told me that he has taken to switching off his "wireless world," as that was severely affecting the way he spent quality time with his wife and children. Otherwise, he found himself constantly checking emails on his smart phone, and carrying his office home. "Many times I found myself returning late from office, eating and crashing. I had to change that. Sundays do not mean I should sleep the whole day at home. I need to spend quality time with my family. The shelf life of a marriage is determined by the quality of companionship."

It maybe changing now, with working couples sharing the work at home, but males in India have generally been brought up to take the woman of the house for granted. It starts with our mothers. There is never a question of her taking a day off. She is always there, whirling about the house, working, doing a hundred things without any personal time off.

Carry that forward to when they get married -- you get the picture of how it does not even strike men on the numerous tasks that the woman of the house carries out. One friend is making sure that her son does his bit around the house, and that "he should not be like his father, expecting things to be done automatically for him."

The teacher friend said she was having serious doubts on whether the institution of marriage, as we know it, would

survive in the years to come. "With so much cold communication happening with social networking sites and the Internet world, I feel the younger generation does not find the need for marriage as a means to companionship. Indeed, they don't even realise what real companionship could be, because they have no access to friendship in the "real" world."

It is not that this is a generational thing. I remember when we were growing up, about four decades ago, the subject of "a good marriage" versus "a bad marriage" always came up with a lot of discussions and examples. If somebody was blamed for not helping out with anything at all, it would be -- "he is like a paying guest". On the other hand, there would be warm praise lavished on another "for doing so much at home although he was a man!"

With so many people discussing about the ways and means of applying brakes on the hectic mode of life, it makes it seem more current now. More people are at least trying to feel that they should introspect on all aspects of life, including that vague but hugely important part of our lives -- marriage.

I was pleasantly surprised at how many people began talking so readily about the subject. Every discussion was at least an hour long, and it did seem to me that people were just waiting for somebody to ask them what their marriage meant to them. Could it be that even asking them about it showed how important the subject was in all their minds? And it was not just an urban phenomenon. A resident of a nearby village took just a couple of seconds to begin talking freely on the subject. "Marriage means having a good family life, looking after everybody well to the best of our capacities. The main thing is to live happily with whatever little we have. My wife is my good friend now. We may have some arguments or debates about certain things in our lives, but it never lasts for more than 15 minutes."

I think it is safe to conclude that although people have different takes on this centuries-old tradition called marriage, the most important point is that many more people than I expected were thinking about it, and agreed that happiness, that elusive thing, was most important. With all its compromises and taken-for-granted issues, marriage is still a huge part of our lives. We spend most years of our lives living it. And, just as we love to really taste and enjoy every meal without hurrying through it, we also need to make sure we savour our marriage, every single day of it! INAV



*"If the weak hand, that has recorded this tale, has, by its scenes, beguiled the mourner of one hour of sorrow, or, by its moral, taught him to sustain it - the effort, however humble, has not been vain, nor is the writer unrewarded."*

—Ann Radcliffe

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 232

SHILLONG, MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2016

### Flyover Collapse

THE collapse of a flyover in Kolkata caused several deaths. Its construction started in 2009 and there were problems from the start. There was delay due to the failure of the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority to ascertain where one ramp would land. Then the firm did not get permission from the Kolkata Port Trust for use of the land for the other ramp. Engineers were baffled. The fact is that the roads in north Kolkata are narrow and congested. They are also asymmetrical. It is inexplicable why construction was allowed in the daytime. There were structural and design flaws. There was no proper maintenance and material was substandard. IVRCL which was in charge of the construction is not trusted by the Railway Ministry.

The Kolkata disaster is evidence of the infrastructural flaws in the Metro cities and this is at a time when smart cities are on the way. Such talk does not hide lack of planning and regulations. There should be strict norms and standards. Violations should be severely punished. Otherwise safety cannot be ensured. It is only to be expected that in Kolkata the political blame game has started right on the eve of the Assembly Elections.

It is encouraging that some prominent members of the rolling Trinamool Party have been critical of official inefficiency.

Twenty six lives have been lost on account of the flyover collapse but no one is talking about compensation to their family members. With election hanging heavy in the air everyone is trying to win brownie points by playing the blame game but quite forgetting the human casualties. This incident should serve as an example to all construction companies not to do sub-standard work and get away with doing so. The penalty levied on IVRCL must be exemplary so that such slipshod jobs are not tolerated.

## LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### Police Cleanse Delhi of Obscenities

The Police are cleaning the capital of its obscenities.

Led by police commissioner Ved Marwah, the force launched a drive against salacious cinema posters and hoarding following a meeting earlier this week of an advisory panel which decided that the poster must go. The panel which includes actress Sharmila Tagore, Sociologist Mrinal Pandey is chaired by Mr. Marwah. Armed with the new indecent Representation of Women-act in force from the beginning of this month the police can put offenders behind bars for two years in the first count.

An improvement on the earlier law which dates back to British Colonial times, the act recognizes that the norm to what is obscene or indecent is not readily definable.

As an example of what can be removed, police point to a poster, on the streets recently, depicting a man, armed with a whip seizing a woman with unmistakable intentions. Both are fully clothed. Much of the suggestively of the poster emanates from the skill of the artist who at the behest of the exhibitor stay just within legal limits but ate sufficiently risqué.

In fact, visual film publicity in India can claim to be a genre of its own and one of the country's celebrity painters, M.F Hussain began his career as a cinema poster painter.

It has argued in favour of posters, vulgar or otherwise, that they are merely mirror to the fantasies of the average Indian.

While depictions are mostly of male in all his macho glory, there also test building up across the country against indecent posters comes mainly from feminist, social workers and those concerned with public morality. A real danger is the effect the posters could have on young minds. Last month two youths staged a protest fast before the Bombay Municipal Corporation's office against what they called the potential of "a whole generation being depraved".

One of the first places where any real actions was taken was in Madras where as in the films themselves the depictions tend to be far larger than life and cutouts of the artistes are festooned with garlands as become their heroic status.

But the limit was reached after traffic at an intersection was distracted by cloth skirt, draped around a rather ample pair of cardboard thighs, which kept riding up in the wind as was meant to.

What explains the comparatively recent increase in the lewdness of the posters which have been around as long as the films the promote? Cinema theatre owners blame the video-boom which they say is putting them at the mercy of the masses interested only in quick titillation and not particular how they get it.

Not long ago, authorities here were perplexed at Hindi-speaking audiences normally apathetic to other languages, making a beeline for a Malayalam film until it was realized that the rush had more to do with the posters than with the film.

# From subsistence to profit making farming

By H H Mohrmen

How does a farmer sustain his life is perhaps a query asked only by economists and planners. And in spite of the fact that we all depend on farmers for almost all our basic needs and also have good intention to help the rural folks, we rarely have time to try to understand how farmers support themselves. In a state where majority of the population lives in the rural areas it is inevitable for the bureaucrats, technocrats, politicians and all of us to understand this very important topic. This therefore is a layman's attempt to understand this very important part of life of a very vital section of people in the state – the farming community.

Findings from several preliminary surveys conducted in few villages in the East Khasi hills and West Jaintia hills districts in which I was involved gave us the broad idea of the kind of livelihood the farmers engage in the Khasi and Jaintia hills of the state. The surveys gave us the idea that when it comes to earning their daily bread the farmers in the state have not changed much from what their parents were. Their livelihood activity is no different from that of the previous generation because they still continue to farm for subsistence only.

To understand the economy of the village one need to understand the first and the most important unit of the village and that is the household. If we are to define what a household is, one can say that a household in the Khasi and Jaintia hills comprises of a husband, wife and the children. The average members of family in the house would vary between 5 to 6 members in one unit. Now the tendency is that the family system in this area is gradually undergoing change from a joint family system to a nuclear family especially in the areas where Christians are in majority. There are very few villages which still continue with the joint family system and there are two reasons why people continue to follow traditional joint family system.

The one reason why people continue with the joint family system is because it is a part of tradition. One can still find peo-

ple following this tradition in places where there are large numbers of people following the Niamtre (indigenous faith). The other reason which compels people to continue with the tradition is the scarcity of land in the area. In the villages of War Jaintia areas a large section of the population still continue with the joint family system because of the peculiar land tenure system in the area. In the southern slopes of Amlaren sub-division, land belongs to the few clans or as they would like to call them, the jaindars. Only few clans in the village owns large tracts of agriculture and non-agriculture land and people have to depend on these clans for their land needs. People in these villages are compelled to live in a joint family system because of the non-availability of land to construct new houses.

A survey on the livelihood portfolio of the households in few villages pointed to the fact that almost all households are engaged in multiple livelihood activities - which is not a surprise. Unlike the salaried class or labourers in service sectors, farmers do not have a permanent or stable income that they can rely on. They can only have security by engaging in multiple livelihood activities, so in case one crop fails them or one activity fails to take off then they still have other activities to rely on.

This is a common experience and in a typical village if one would ask villager questions like 'do you grow crops? Or do you rear pigs/chicken/goats/cows and etc., the common response would be 'of course a little or few, just for consumption and the little extra that we cannot use we sell in the market.' In Khasi they would say (Haoid tang kat ban bam bad kaba tam khyndiat ngi die sha iew ban ioh thied ia ki jingdonkam.) In a typical village one would find that a household would normally grow one major crop depending on the region and few minor crops. For instance in West Jaintia hills the major crop will be rice and minor crops will be vegetables, ginger, turmeric and fruits which are seasonal. In War Jaintia area arecanut and betel leaf are

major crops and pepper and some fruits are minor crops.

Apart from that a family would perhaps rear one or two pigs and few chickens; some keep goats and cows. And animals are reared for particular reasons. Pigs and chicken are with the intention of selling them off during Christmas or New Year when the demand for the animals is high. Or animals are reared with the plan that they will mature at the right time to enable them to buy books and pay for their kids' education. Some would keep animals to be used or sold in preparation for a child's baptism/birthday or church's special jingiseng in the village. The point is that in spite of the fact that there is a huge demand for meat in the state, the farmers still do not involve in commercial farming of animals.

Apart from these multiple livelihood activities, during lean seasons farmers would also migrate to other places or commute to the nearest town and cities to engage in labour activity. This is broadly the kind of livelihood activity that a typical household in the village would be involved in. Therefore the entire livelihood activity that the farmers are engaged in like a vicious cycle and if the farmers continue with this same practice it will be difficult, if not impossible for them to get out of the shackles of poverty. The vicious cycle will go on from grandparents to their children and continue to the grand children till they decide to stop it.

We read reports about the illegal export of cows to Bangladesh and about the Shillong butcher's association protesting the failure of the BSF to stop this activity because it also affects the supply of cows to Lewduh. Things would not have come to such a pass if we continued with the tradition of cow rearing which was one of the major activities of our parents. Now very few people keep animals. And by the way, instead of protesting against the illegal supply, why not look at the brighter side of the issue. Instead of protesting the illegal export of cows why don't we pressure the state government to lobby with the Centre to allow legal export of cows to Bangladesh? The state

government can then promote commercial cow rearing (which of course is not an unfamiliar activity to the locals) and we all know how huge the market is, considering the dietary habit of the majority of the people in Bangladesh.

To help boost the economy of the state the need of the hour is to help the farmers improve their production and the only way we can do that is to bring an attitudinal change in the farmers. The farmers need to change their mindsets from subsistence farming to a more prosperous kind of agriculture and allied activities. It is important to help the farmer get out of this vicious cycle and one of the ways to do so is to help improve that particular activity and upscale their production. Instead of engaging in the activity for subsistence only the farmers need to be encouraged to work on their favourable activity and try to improve and upscale it. Rural economy depends on agriculture so the emphasis should be on agriculture and allied services. It is important to help them identify livelihood activities which are not only conducive for the region but also have market potential to enhance their income and improve the economy of the village and the state at large. It is important to help them identify where their strengths are and work on their strength to help enhance their incomes and build the economy of the household.

The economy of the state will only improve if the people in the rural areas also prosper. To achieve this goal the state government needs to take proactive steps to reach out to the farmers and more importantly work on the area where their strengths lie and build on those strengths. The state has experienced economic instability because it relies only on mining and other unsustainable economic activities. The NGT ban on coal mining and the recent court order on wine stores will definitely have its ramifications on the economy of the state. The answer therefore is farming and agriculture because it is not only sustainable but a large section of the population depends on agriculture and allied activities such as livestock rearing, bee keeping and food processing etc., for their livelihoods.

# The way dynasties end

By M.J. Akbar

Success measures capability; a crisis tests an individual's or institution's maturity and resilience. Congress was hit by an explosion in the 2014 general elections which ripped apart its crumbling ideological facade and exposed the termites that had eroded its structural foundations. It was a moment that demanded the emergence of a sagacious leader who could prescribe an elixir of renewal and the way forward through a tense and aspirational period in India's history.

Instead, Congress continued to invest in its fatal flaw, dynasty at the expense of merit, sycophancy at the cost of introspection. With Rahul Gandhi in charge, the explosion was followed by a series of implosions triggered by political incomprehension, and temperamental management that exacerbated inner dispute into rift and fissure into split.

The shambles in Uttarakhand is hardly unique. It is part of a pattern. Assam and Arunachal were earlier examples, although the Tarun Gogoi government survived the split. Regional leaders, who stayed with the party through the havoc of 2014, have realised the party is trapped in a tailspin. One common complaint is that Rahul Gandhi had little time for them; and if they did get a few minutes, he was not listening.

Last weekend, the New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote an illuminating analysis of Republican floundering in America. Brooks applied Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, a Marxist-sounding phrase for dissection of democracy. Intellectual progress, goes the proposition, is not steady. It moves from the success model, when everything seems to be working, to the "model drift", when contradictions and anomalies surface. This leads inevitably to a "model crisis", when the paradigm collapses: "Attempts to patch up the model fail. Everybody is in anguish, but nobody knows what to do."

Brooks suggests that the inexplicable behaviour of the Republican Party is due to the fact that it has been "psychologically defeated",

leading to policy dislocation and disorder, even if this is a "negation of its own history".

During the five years between 2009 and 2014, Congress slid from success, endorsed by re-election, to model crisis. There is plenty of anguish but, because of a local variation, no one will admit it, let alone try and search for a prescription. Dynasties permit some leeway when successful and therefore secure, but shut minds when under threat.

We have recently witnessed a classic case of Congress negating its own history. I have studied the life of Jawaharlal Nehru and been an editor from the time Mrs Indira Gandhi was Prime Minister to the Dr Manmohan Singh decade. I can assert with confidence that not a single Congress leader would have compromised the Congress commitment to nationalism in the manner that Rahul Gandhi did by showing warm approval of an upstart student activist who was stupid enough to endorse the outrageous suggestion that Indian soldiers in uniform were rapists and that the Indian Army was worse than Maoists. Rahul Gandhi has become middle-aged without understanding what the Indian Army means to the people of India, and indeed to his own ancestors and predecessors.

Even as a tactical ploy this is counterproductive. Congress is not going to get many votes by standing alongside those who want the dismemberment of our nation.

In the past, Congress has dealt with its crises through a split. The most famous, and most productive, was the split engineered by Mrs Gandhi. It is important to note, however, that Congress was not immobilised by dynasties in 1969; this ailment only began in the mid-1970s. Today, senior and thoughtful minds within Congress will never admit in public what they express in private. To do so would be suicidal to their individual prospects.

That is the way dynasties end, as T.S. Eliot might have noted: not with a bang but a whimper.

## TO THE EDITOR

### What is the solution?

Editor,

I am shocked and saddened and also perturbed by the repeated incidents of rape, murder and inhuman atrocities on minor girls and women in the state, specifically in a civilized city like Shillong. For the last two / three years innumerable incidents of such heinous crime have occurred in this city. When hapless, innocent girls fall victims to death what can be more tragic? It is unfortunate, disgraceful and a discredit to the state that girls and women are highly insecure and their chastity is at stake. A matrilineal state like Meghalaya where women's rights dignity, and chastity are should be respected; where women should be able to move freely and fearlessly, how can such disastrous moral deterioration befall this sacred place? Today, new of rape of minor girls or brutal killing of women are reported by the media with repeated frequency.

It is worth mentioning that U Tirot Singh, the great son of the soil, sacrificed his life to protect the chastity and security of the

women of his land. He vehemently protested against the proposal of the British government to construct a public road through his estate connecting Guwahati to Sylhet. He could foresee that this would impinge on the privacy and chastity of the women of his land. That was the first issue of his revolution against the British Government. Alas! Where is that spirit today?

Only two / three decades back, I personally recollect how safe it was for girls/women to move around in Shillong. We were only scared of drunkards. But even drunkards were not without morals as we find them today. The local guys were always very gentle, courteous and helpful to the women as a whole. Ugly incidents like rape, killing, molestations etc were rarely heard, and society was conscious of its sanctity. Today beastly creatures in human form are chasing them mercilessly as sexual prey. Sometimes the protector / guardian like father, uncle becomes the predator. What can be more pathetic than that and where is the solution?

The recent incident of rape and brutal killing of Shailinia Kharrymba, a

teenager of Upper Shillong is a heart wrenching incident. The girl fell victim because of her refusal to the ugly proposal of the culprits. Women are physically weaker than men and despite their resistance they cannot fight the rapists. Hats off to Mrs Dlet Syiemlieh, (mother of the main accused Vicky Syiemlieh) who has the great honesty and courage to hand over her own son to the police. In this age of corruption and denial, 99.99 % mothers irrespective of their educational status would not have the moral courage to confess the truth because of the desire to protect their family reputations and social prestige. Here is an ideal woman who has the real sense of morality and sensibility, who did not walk the path of indulge injustice despite her motherly affection towards the guilty son. She is an exemplary mother!

As citizens we depend on the law and order machinery. We should put pressure on the police to control such open barbarism in the heart of the city, Law and order must be more stringent and the culprits should be treated sternly to stop repetition of the crime. No bail should be granted to the accused even if influential persons interfere. Exemplary punishment should be given

to the culprits to stop repetition of the crime. Unfortunately we have not heard of a single exemplary punishment being imposed on rapists and murderers in the state till date. Justice delayed is justice denied. In Meghalaya criminal cases are pending and delayed due to absence of proper investigation and other departmental formalities. This emboldens others who want to commit similar crimes. It must be pointed out that the conviction rate in Meghalaya is extremely low; hence the rise in crimes!

No amount of protests and candle light processions seem to hasten the legal process in crimes that are often open and shut cases. How long can women tolerate this weak and debilitating justice delivery system?

Yours etc  
Uma Purkayastha  
Shillong - 4

### Shillong Archery

Editor,

In Meghalaya archery is a legal gamble with licenses issued to individuals to conduct the business. My only question to the authorities is what if someone wins a huge amount from archery?

How can the person declare that source of income while depositing the cash in the banks? Firstly, there is no document/receipt for the money from the archery counters, and in no case will the archery counter pay by cheque. I hope, the authorities will clarify this issue.

Yours etc.,  
Anjan Kr Das  
Shillong-6

### Tobacco extracts a heavy cost

Editor,

Propos your editorial titled, "Public health" (ST April 1, 2016), toxic-tobacco consumption must be checked if the management of preventable disorders is to be improved. Tobacco users damage not only their own health but also the health of their near ones. Passive smoking and passive inhaling of the dust of chewing tobacco are at least as injurious to health as that of direct tobacco consumption. In this context, it needs to be recalled that those who chew tobacco have severely, damaged Howrah Bridge in Kolkata with their happy-go-lucky spitting culture. This

cantilevered steel suspension bridge is one of the busiest bridges of the world. Though it has withstood the weight of huge traffic load, officials say that it cannot survive the gallons of corrosive chewing tobacco spat on its pillar hoods. Experts also say that any damage to the steel hoods, which shield the girders and hangers from water, can make the bridge unsafe. If chewing tobacco can corrode such a solid world famous structure and its steel frame, it can, easily, be gauged what a menace it can become for human health. Studies suggest about a million people die from tobacco-related illness in India each year and tobacco-related health costs in 2012 were estimated to be an astronomical sum of Rs104,000 crore! Health costs and lives lost to tobacco far outweigh any revenue the tobacco sector generates. Therefore, we need bigger, bolder and sharper pictorial tobacco-warnings in all toxic-tobacco packets that contain the poison in the form of cigarettes, beedis, snuffs or its chewing avatar.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

"When you play, play hard; when you work, don't play at all."

--- Theodore Roosevelt

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 233 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2016

### Assam elections-Phase 1

THE huge turn-out (close to 80%) in the first phase of the Assam election in 65 constituencies suggests a vote for change. Translated literally this would mean a change from the Congress to the BJP-AGP-BPF combine. The only other Party that promises change along the line of the Aam Aadmi Party was able to put up only 14 candidates overall. While they may win a few seats they are unlikely to be the game changers. Voting in Assam has revolved around the issue of illegal immigration. This time too a fear psychosis is being spread that if the communally inclined All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) led by perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal gets substantial number of seats and becomes the crucial factor for government formation by any of the major political parties then Assam could become more vulnerable and its flanks further opened up for influx from across the international border.

Close to 60% of voters in Assam are young and aspirational. They are not led by emotions or communal frenzy but are driven by a hard, pragmatic outlook as to whether the next government can deliver growth which in turn will generate economic opportunities. This is the demography that will decide the outcome of the Assam elections. For too long the political parties in Assam have capitalized on the fear and paranoia that voters are obsessed with, which is that of being outnumbered by Bangladeshi immigrants. This has been the election plank right from the 1980's when the Assam Movement was at its height and the Asom Gana Parishad was later voted to rule Assam. The AGP was replaced by the Congress which has had a 15-year uninterrupted rule. The Congress has not taken the issue of detecting these illegal immigrants seriously enough. On the contrary the illegal immigrants have been known to be Congress vote banks. Recently the Supreme Court pulled up an official of the state government for failing to give a convincing answer as to what the government has done to detect and deport illegal immigrants and those who have overstayed their visa period. Hence the Congress pitch about protecting the interests of the indigenous Assamese is riddled with holes. It remains to be seen how the next phase of the elections pan out. But any which way we look at it, change is imminent.

### LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### 19 TNLF extremists come overground

Nineteen people, said to be belonging to a new extremist group formed recently under the Tripura National Liberation Front (TNLF) surrendered to police at Patni Goan Sabha under Jirania police station in Tripura west district today.

Six country made single barrel guns were also surrendered by them. District Superintendent of police Mr Rama Rao said the tribal group which had arms in its possession had started its operation recently and its existence came to light only in December last year. With the surrender, possibility of fresh insurgency was nipped in the bud. Police also arrested two of its activists recently, he said and added that the group which reportedly had 41 members including a woman was in possession of some more arms.

He said the group was involved in dacoity and other crimes but could pose a serious threat at a later stage. He said they were formally arrested and taken to the court for remand. Asked if the government would help them rehabilitate as prayed by them he said the Chief Secretary was consulted and the government might consider their plea for rehabilitation.

The Tripura National Liberation Front (TNLF) used to support the Tribal National Volunteer (TNV), but formed the new group in

"disillusionment" as it did not get any rehabilitation facilities, according to its president Mr Malindra Debbarma. Mr Debbarma who surrendered to the authorities at Patni Gaon Sabha under Jirania police station in Tripura's west district today told newsmen at a remote area that the group earlier used to help TNV from 'overground' and hence expected such facilities as being offered to the TNV. The TNLF even collected money latter gave up insurgency following an accord, he claimed adding that the new group resumed its activities in absence of jobs.

### Bihar CM's love march'

Bihar Chief Minister Mr Bhagwant Jha Azad today undertook a "payatra" from the martyrs memorial to Adalatganj in the capital. Mr Azad described the march as "prem march and not a "protest march" against the dissent activities. He garlanded the party's memorial and visited a mosque and the Hanuman temple near the railway station en route. Later, addressing a gathering at the terminating point Mr Azad said the decision of Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi alone would be acceptable by all and appealed to all sections to forget differences and join hands for rebuilding Bihar.

## Of mono syllabic grunts, mysterious diseases and vanishing fishes

By Toki Blah

Readers looking for a piece of light reading spiced with humour are well advised to turn away from Meghalaya dailies. It would be like searching for water in the parched Sahara. Its just not there! News, views and opinions usually expressed in the Meghalaya print media, are almost one in uniformity. One and all, sombre, grave and decorous to a fault. Only the sedate serious side of life is usually allowed to be printed with a definite slant of course towards political matters. It's called serious journalism with class. Let me hastily add that I have absolutely nothing against the staid and the dull. It has now become fashionable to be seen so. People sincerely believe that a furrowed brow, a perpetual frown and a long horse face symbolises intellectual poise or the ability to think. It's become a fashion symbol to frown. Priests of all hues; church elders; Rangbah Shongms, Nokmas, bureaucrats, clan elders, everyone who is someone in Meghalaya, are avid followers of the "gotta look serious" cult. Such people prefer to walk around with a grim face; a perpetual sour expression (jew eit in Khasi); and if they happen to smile at you, every muscle in the face contorts to make sure you know it's a forced condescending smirk from a superior being to a lesser mortal. And we have the gall to claim an egalitarian, caste free society. It's very inhibiting let me tell you. As kids we use to run as far away as possible from such characters. At least I still do!

Beauty pageants notwithstanding, it would certainly appear that as far as Meghalaya society is concerned, the person capable of putting on the best horse face stands the best chance of reaching the top of the social ladder. Just take a look at the composition of the State Assembly and the Autonomous District Councils. Awesome, as these are elected leaders, but frankly speaking, the only common characteristic they share are their looks! In all probability the ability to pull a long face is the only common denominator to their getting

elected. Some uncharitable soul somewhere has described the hallowed institutions of democracy, occupied by these glum sour looking souls, as a gallery of rogues. I stoutly refute such aspersions as it forms an attack on human rights. Everyone has the right to carry and present whatever face he/she was born with. Not much one can do about it but simply can't understand attempts to be visually impaired as well! Dark glasses in the Assembly simply increases that silly goofy look. Perhaps its a decoy. People have been heard to ask "How can an ugly looking mug-wearing foolish looking horse blinkers be associated with corruption or even considered capable of engineering horse-trading activities? Impossible!" (Why the poor horse should be linked with all kinds of human perfidy is beyond me!) Point I'm trying to make is, an uninvited face can at times be better than the best of all faked alibis. A positive life saver in the Meghalayan political jungle. "Butter won't melt in my mouth" sort of expression, if you know what I mean, wins elections, gets you into the cabinet without risk of revealing your true motives, and that's all that really matters.

In the Meghalaya political jungle it is also wise to pretend that one's vocabulary is as impoverished as ones demeanor. This is especially true if an elected representative has by means fair or foul, (hitting below the belt but what are thick skins for?) managed to secure a seat in the cabinet. Proof? Televised proceedings of Meghalaya State Assembly Sessions will confirm my statement. Look how ministers, doddering, ugly and pretty senior ones at that, reply to questions thrown at them by the opposition benches. Mono syllables of "Yes Sir", "No Sir" ("Three bags full" perhaps already given elsewhere.) echo through the hallowed halls of the Assembly building. One thought that such mono-syllabic grunts were the monopoly of rustic halfwits, but we live and learn. One appreciates

Government's need to economise but why on words alone? Why can't our representatives also discuss economy on MLA spending? Trouble is such a question is capable of shutting down even the flow of monosyllables. Dead silence would probably shroud the entire Assembly proceedings. It could be the final nail on Democracy's coffin. So why risk it?

Yet some of these Sad Sack, dead pan, innocent looking politicians can also throw a witty one now and then. A friend, a former politician, narrated the following mono syllable joke that happened in one of the sessions of the Assembly. The Minister for fisheries was in deep trouble, cornered by the opposition on some suspicious misuse of departmental funds.

"Will the Honourable Minister Fisheries kindly inform the house as to the number of fish ponds constructed by the department during the year" was a direct starred query from one of the opposition members.

"Eighty" came the short and brusque reply.

"Will the Hon. Minister then kindly inform the house the number of fish ponds out of the eighty that still have water in them?" came the next innocent sounding barb.

"Non-n-n-e" came the stammered but once again terse reply

With a triumphant roar of a lion that had just managed to flush its prey, the opposition pounced with, "Then will the Minister kindly inform the house the kind of fish that is available from these eighty dried fish ponds?"

Pin drop silence ensued. Everyone waited with bated breath for the inevitable answer that had the potential to bring down the Govt. of the day.

"Dried fish" came the meek reply.

It brought the house down and the minister walked home free. Mono syllables do have tremendous value when handled by an expert.

Talking about fishes, fish ponds and farms, from Ri Bhoi district come some very entertaining episodes. It is a well known fact that

most bureaucrats have farms tucked away somewhere in Ri Bhoi where they believe they will while away their time after retirement. Good idea that comes along with some very tricky management problems. One such retired entrepreneur narrated his farming woes which I feel should be shared with others who love mysteries or who are thinking of similar enterprises. "Its strange," he tells me, "Every time that enters the weekly market at Umsning, ten or twelve of my broiler chicks would mysteriously die of some strange unknown disease. The vet is totally foxed by this mysterious avian ailment. My chowkidar meanwhile advises one and all to visit his sister in law's jadhoh stall on market day as she serves wonderful chicken curry and the best kharang (roast fish) dishes for miles around and very cheap at that. Please advise, as there is urgent need to make an immediate stock inventory of my fish ponds". I left him to ponder on his fast depleting farm assets but the adage "No fool like a retired gullible old fool" simply refused to leave my mind.

Most urbanites who jump so enthusiastically into the world of agriculture are people who normally couldn't know the difference between a potato plant and a stinging nettle, not even if their life depended on it. There is this story of a pretty, not so young thing that decided to stock her fish ponds with the most exotic variety of fishes. She was a firm believer that variety was the spice of life. So she went about buying all types of fish fry that came her way. For one whole year she fed them with whatever fish feed; growth hormones etc recommended. Then came the big day when the hugely anticipated fish harvest was to take place. The nets were cast, dragged ashore and lo and behold all that came out were a wriggling mass of giant Thai mugsers (Thai catfish) and nothing else. Apparently the amateur fish enthusiast had introduced killer mugger fry that then grew fat by feeding on her other fishes. Even fishes are keeping up with the times. Some nationalist species are simply intolerant of others!

Along the left side of the road opposite State Bank of India towards Sylhetipara, a drain already exists on the right side of that road. With drains on both sides, the road width will be reduced to 3 or 4 feet.

Along the left side of the main road going up from the Red Cross bridge to connect with the drain already mentioned above along the main road on the opposite side, two drains already exist. Again with drains on both sides of the road, the main road width will be reduced to only 5 to 8 feet. In some parts even less.

Firstly, construction of these drain is unjustified and unnecessary as effluents from only a few houses require drainage on that side. This is a bad time to construct anything major especially outdoors. The Khasis and Jaintias call this season Iaiong (dark period), the month of April, a period of frequent storms. When it rains, students, pedestrians etc will have a tough time crossing and walking on these roads. As the road is already narrow, frequent traffic jams will occur. Business will also be affected - for shops along the road. Added to this will be the overflow of the dirty water and garbage from the perpetually blocked existing drains.

The big question is, after the drains have been constructed, which department will maintain and clean them? The existing drains have never been cleaned and maintained after construction. There are no grills

## Is the Left Front on a comeback trail? West Bengal, Kerala may see resurgence

By Amulya Ganguli

A recent poll survey appears to be right in its predictions about the winners in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. But it is the losers who are also likely to attract considerable attention. In West Bengal, for instance, there is expected to be a difference of a mere one per cent in the vote share of the ruling Trinamool Congress and the opposition Left-Congress combine - 40 per cent against 39, the latter being made up of the Left's 31 per cent and the Congress's eight. What this projection means is that almost nothing has changed in terms of percentages between the last assembly election in 2011 and the present. Five years ago, Trinamool's vote share was 39.8 per cent, the Congress's 8.9 per cent and the Left's 30 per cent. The difference between then and now is that earlier, Trinamool and the Congress were allies.

Now that they are adversaries, their number of seats will come into the equation. Trinamool's, for instance, is expected to come down from 184 to 170. But the combined seats of the Left and the Congress are anticipated to be 127, comprising the Left's 106 and the Congress's 21. It is in this context that the losers will have something to be cheer about, for a difference of 40-odd seats between Trinamool and its opponents will underline a sizeable erosion in Mamata Banerjee's popularity.

But that is not the only point. What is of significant is that the comrades will get their voice back. In 2008, when the communists broke off with the Congress at the centre due to differences on the Indo-American nuclear deal, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen had said that the Left had "lost its voice" because of the decline in its influence after the rupture.

The decline was evident in the 2009 general election when the CPI(M)'s tally of seats fell from 43 in 2004 to 16 and the CPI's from 10 to 4. The downhill journey continued in 2014 when the Marxists won nine seats and the CPI one. Much of the blame for the virtual debacle was attributed to the then CPI (M) general secretary, Prakash Karat, whose hardline policies - evident in the ouster of the widely admired Lok Sabha speaker

Somnath Chatterjee from the party - and an abortive attempt to cobble together a rickety third front headed by Mayawati were held responsible for the Left's decline and fall.

Karat has now been replaced as the general secretary by the moderate Sitaram Yechury, who has restored the earlier tactical ties with the Congress. But since the taste of the pudding is in the eating, it is the partial revival of the Left's political fortune in West Bengal which may indicate that there is still some hope for the party. The expectations will be further bolstered by the Left's almost certain success in Kerala.

What will be obvious from such outcomes, however, is that Left hasn't found its way back into reckoning on its own steam but because of the failure of its opponents. In West Bengal, the disillusionment with Mamata Banerjee, especially in the urban areas, is likely to play its part in breathing life into the Left-Congress alliance.

At the same time, the voters will remember that the factor which undermined Mamata Banerjee - rowdiness of the Trinamool cadres - is the same which had spelt doom for the CPI(M) in 2011 when CPI(M) politbureau member Brinda Karat had advocated the application of the so-called "Dum Dum dawai (medicine)" - an euphemism for lawlessness - against the Left's adversaries. The chief minister of the time, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee, too, had favoured the adoption of violent tit-for-tat methods in the Singur and Nandigram areas against the supporters of the Trinamool Congress and its allies, the Maoists and the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI). Unless the Left forsakes such tactics, its gains will be temporary.

It will be no different in Kerala where the Left's success will be seen to be in keeping with the established pattern of the voters choosing the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) in alternate years. By that token, it is the LDF's turn this year. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Thank you for the Monolith Festival

Editor,  
For the past several days I have been receiving good news about the Monolith Festival, which concluded on 2 April 2016. Many of our friends here in Rome who took part in the November 2015 International Mei-Ramew/Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM 2015) gathering were also very happy to see how yet another large, successful event in Mawphlang has highlighted the wonders of our traditional cultural and culinary diversity. They have asked me to convey their congratulations to the event organisers.

ITM 2015 brought 606 delegates representing 62 countries and 170 indigenous communities to Meghalaya. Over sixty per cent of the resources required for air fares, conference infrastructure and other event-related activities was raised from overseas and other parts of India. Eager to learn lessons from this unique gathering, foreign donors commissioned an on-site evaluation run by a US-based organisation. The evaluation team concluded that ITM 2015, while organised in a remote area of a developing country, exceeded the standards that are normally set only for similar conferences organised in the developed world. These del-

egates have today become ardent admirers of the people of Meghalaya and the North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS). The international and national media coverage from recognised media houses such as the BBC has been remarkable, and many outlets were thrilled with the stories of bio-cultural diversity they gathered throughout the event. The message that spread from ITM 2015 was, yes, indigenous peoples have a story to tell, and the world must listen.

The 2016 Monolith Festival, with its unique traditional games, cultural shows, diverse food stalls, clean sanitary infrastructure and good traffic management, has further strengthened this evolving reputation of Meghalaya as a state with vibrant indigenous communities from whose history and traditions India and the world have a lot to learn. As the Chief Organiser of ITM 2015, I know how complex and challenging it is to organise such massive indigenous event whose main focus is for ordinary people to rediscover their culture, local food and traditional practices. I will humbly say that I can perhaps appreciate the achievement of the organisers of the 2016 Monolith Festival more than anyone else. I would therefore like to express through this letter our congratulations to the KHADC and to Alan West and the Khasi Heritage Conservation Forum for

this great achievement. NESFAS will use its wide global network of ITM 2015 to spread the achievements of the 2016 Monolith Festival with the hope that these events will ultimately improve the wellbeing of all our people and be a shining example of why the indigenous voice must be heard locally and globally.

The Government of Meghalaya, KHADC, NESFAS and the Khasi Heritage Conservation Forum have learned some very important lessons from these two mega events. NESFAS, as a platform that promotes the importance of local indigenous food systems and bio-cultural diversity for peace, resilience, good governance and sustainability will share the ITM 2015 Evaluation Report, so that collectively we can reflect on the positive and less-than-positive feedback from such events. Let us therefore work cohesively, collectively and inclusively for the good of our people and be a clear model for a fractured world.

Yours etc.,  
Phrang Roy  
Chairman, NESFAS

### Ongoing drain construction in Laban

Editor,  
It seems the authorities have not weighed the pros and cons, feasibility and consequences arising out of construction of drains in Laban.

At regular intervals along the drains, to catch the solid waste. The huge slabs covering the drains are a deterrent too for regular cleaning of the drains. Removing a slab will affect the next slab and the edge of the drain/road, some breakage will occur. Since this is the situation, it seems that the Shillong Municipality is sending a message to the PWD that since they have constructed the drains, they should maintain them, clean them.

But neither the Municipality nor the PWD will clean the drains, so they will be perpetually blocked. In fact, all the drains in Laban are never cleaned regularly. The Telecom cables are all exposed. Will shifting of the cables have any effect on them? Last month there was an explosion in the distribution boxes next to the wall. Were some cables damaged causing a short circuit? The cables and water pipes will be raised on rods at regular intervals. Will the weight and sagging of the cables have any effect on the insulation? Exposure to air and heat produced in the wires will affect the insulation and cracks may occur on the insulation in the long run. Burying the cables underground protects them and the cold earth cools them.

The next big question: Will the Chief Engineer PWD guarantee that the sides of the road won't collapse? Since either sides of the road will have big drains of a depth of 3 to 4 feet, the sides of the road will be without support unless the drain wall

on the side of the road is constructed with thick reinforced concrete or heavy stone wall. In some parts, the road width will be about 5 to 6 feet or less. Hence, the wheels of heavy vehicles will ply on the edges of the road. The constant pressure and vibration of moving vehicles will be transmitted to the sides of the road. When it is time to tar the road will the sides of the road or concrete slabs take the load of a road roller?

Other factors which will affect the sides of the road and drain is erosion, and when removing the slabs for water pipe repairs, cleaning drains, etc. Then there is the gradient and North - South direction of the road. Will the drain near the Red Cross bridge cut across the road to open into the river? If so, the slab covers have to be extra strong, or a strong culvert constructed. If the drain is connected to the one coming from above, that is, the left side going up, then water, etc will always collect there.

I would also request the PWD to rectify the drain on the right side of the road going up. The lower end of that big drain is connected to the smaller existing drain in front of Mahari outlet. By constructing these drains, Laban is not benefitted at all. We will only suffer the consequences as mentioned.

This is literally money down the drain.

Your's etc.,  
D. Rangad  
Via Email

Things do not change; we change.

—Henry David Thoreau

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 234

SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2016

### Fanaticism again

NOW it is the turn of Devendra Fadnavis, BJP Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He said at a BJP party rally that people who refused to chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' had no place in India. The issue may be controversial but such an aggressive remark was not justified, especially coming from a Chief Minister. A day later Baba Ramdev said that those who refused to chant the slogan should be beheaded. That is an individual making a fanatical and irresponsible remark. But Fadnavis is the Chief Minister of a state and should not get away with the violation of the spirit of the Constitution which does not enjoin upon a citizen the chanting of a slogan. India is not regarded as a motherland or a fatherland and citizens have equal rights.

Last month the Maharashtra Assembly suspended an MLA for refusing to chant the slogan. The action resulted in the issuing of a fatwa by the Darul Uloom Deoband. Deoband and Ramdev can cross swords on their idea of nationalism and patriotism but the controversy should not threaten the public order. Chief Ministers, ministers and legislators elected by the people should always abide by the spirit and letter of the Constitution. Such an explosion of fanaticism can affect the flow of global capital especially into a city like Mumbai which is the hub of cosmopolitanism and modernity in India. Whether or not Bharat Mata Ki Jai has a religious connotation is however open to debate. European countries also refer to motherlands and fatherlands. The injunction is not necessarily to be written in the Constitution and the fuss seems uncalled for.

### LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### Opp. Visualizes coalition at Centre

Haryana Chief Minister Mr. Devi Lal said today the Opposition parties visualized a coalition Government at the Centre if they could dislodge Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's Government.

Addressing a press conference jointly with Mr. Biju Patnaik and Mr. Karpoori Thakur, he said the Opposition-sponsored nation-wide campaign was not aimed solely at the removal of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who had "lost his credibility."

The campaign was to focus attention on bringing about a social change in the country and fighting communal and other divisive forces, he said.

Answering question on the proposed nation-wide campaign of the Opposition Mr. Patnaik said Mr. Devi Lal had this morning talked to the Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh Chief Ministers, Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde and Mr. N. T. Rama Rao about holding another meeting here tomorrow to finalise the strategy to fight the "corrupt Government at the Centre."

Mr. Devi Lal and Mr. Patnaik maintained that the campaign would continue till Mr. Gandhi was forced to resign and pave the way for a "stable and honest government" at the Centre.

Mr. Devi Lal and Mr. Patnaik said the left parties, including the CPI and CPI(M), were agreed on the "common programme" to oust the Congress(I) Government, which had "betrayed the confidence of the people."

Assam alerted against communal flare up

The Meghalaya Government has alerted its Assam counterpart against a possible outbreak of communal tension following the recent mob violence in parts of West Garo Hills bordering Assam, State Director General of Police Mr. M.I.S. Iyer said here today.

Situation in the curfew-bound Bongalkata and adjoining area of West Garo Hills district remained peaceful so far since there was no relaxation to the indefinite curfew imposed on Monday

# Strategies for development and export promotion in the north-east

By Manas Chaudhuri

It is a stark reality that even after six and half decades of planned economic strategy, the country has not succeeded in providing basic infrastructure and resource base to the North-East of India. The compelling issues of regional imbalances have not been tackled with effective policy framework. Look at it from any indicator, the answer will be the same---the Region is not only way behind the rest of the hinterland but also not ready for adding significantly to the national export basket. It is a telling commentary that forty four years after the Reorganisation of the erstwhile Assam, which gave political and economic power to the peoples of the NE States, the scenario has not changed a great deal.

This paper will try to take a closer look at the export potentials of the Region and examine the effect of some of the inconsistent strategies of the Government of India to bring about an accelerated pace of development and also pin point some of the built-in deficiencies of the Region itself.

State of backwardness  
The Northeastern States account for only 8% of India's geographical spread and a mere 4% of its 1.25 billion population. The importance of the Region obviously lies in its strategic location surrounded as it is by Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and Bhutan. In fact, 98% of Northeast share borders with these neighbouring countries. Owing to historical, political and social reasons, the Northeast has been in the backwaters of India when it comes to economic development. It is an admitted fact that due to inadequate attention from the Government of India coupled with lack of initiative of the States, the Region finds itself at the lower rungs of development ladder.

Let's look at some of the comparative basic indicators:  
Per Capita Income (As in 2013-14):  
All-India average : Rs 33,731  
North-east average : Rs 77,949  
Arunachal Pradesh : Rs 76,370  
Assam: Rs 44,263  
Nagaland: Rs 77,529  
Manipur : Rs 41,573  
Meghalaya : Rs 61,458  
Mizoram : Rs 76,210  
Sikkim : Rs 1,76,491  
Tripura : Rs 69,705  
(Source: Lok Sabha)  
The figures may look flattering for the NE States but the reality is that low population density has made it considerably below.

Below Poverty Level:  
All-India : 26.1%  
North-east: 34.28%  
Road Density per 1000 sq km : Road Density per

1000 population:  
All India : 965.73  
Arunachal Pradesh: 196.96  
Assam : 2936.51  
Nagaland : 1345.32  
Manipur : 739.11  
Mizoram : 292.11  
Meghalaya : 436.67  
Tripura : 3026.23  
Sikkim : 263.95  
(Source : Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, 2008)  
(NB: Road length per unit area is higher than National average in Nagaland, Assam and Tripura. Road density per 1000 population in all the NE States is higher than the national average. Given the low density of population and hilly terrain of the Region, this is an expected outcome.)  
Railway Network: All-India : 64014.88 route kms NE Region : 2452.07 kms (Assam alone accounts for 2283.71 kms, while Sikkim has no rail connection)  
Airports: Of the 24 Airports in the North-east, only 12 are fully or partly operational. Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim have no airport. No Export Hotspot  
By no means Northeast can be termed as hotspot for export of her produce to the neighbouring countries. The current export value from India is \$ 254.4 billion and the Northeast contributes a negligible \$0.01 billion. Nearly 94% of exports from the NE comprises tea and coal. Remaining 6% is accounted for by boulder stones, limestone and fruits.

The Northeastern Region which is regarded as a biodiversity hotspot of the world, is endowed with huge natural resource wealth. Aside from coal, oil and natural gas, this Region has immense potentiality to economically prosper through planned cultivation of Bamboo, Rubber, agri-horticulture and Hydel Power. These four categories should be the bedrock of export from the region.

Bamboo: According to a study conducted by Indian Chamber of Commerce, Northeast has 65% of the national bamboo production value and 20% of the world. Mizoram alone accounts for 40% of the country's bamboo production value. UN's Industrial Development estimates that bamboo production in the Northeast will grow to \$ 5.5 billion. Regrettably, bamboo cultivation and its export still remains as an idea.  
Rubber: According to Rubber Board, India ranks third in rubber cultivation globally, but stands 19th when it comes to exporting rubber with a meagre 1.48% share of the world market. China tops the list with 11%

share globally.  
In the Northeast, rubber is cultivated in Tripura, Assam, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Tripura steals the show. The State which has 35,760 ha of rubber plantation area, is regarded as "second Rubber Capital of India", after Kerala.  
Although rubber has a huge market in the western countries, including USA, Northeast is yet to reap the bonanza.

Hydro Power: The Region has an identified potential for hydro power to the tune of 63,247 MW out of which only a small percent has been utilised till recently.  
Identified Potential  
Meghalaya : 2384 MW  
Arunachal Pradesh : 50328 MW  
Sikkim : 4286 MW  
Others : 6249 MW  
Total : 63,247 MW  
Hydro Power Utilised  
Meghalaya : 13.45%  
Arunachal Pradesh : 9.77%  
Sikkim : 60.85%  
Others : 9.84%

With a view to harnessing the hydro power of the Region, in 2008 the Government of India announced "Hydro Policy 2008" with a mission which was termed as "50,000 MW Hydro Initiative". Several incentives were added to a package for attracting private invest in this sector. Till recently, projects of only 14,000 MW were allotted to private players. The status of these projects are not available. The combined installed capacity of the NE is 3513.08 MW. As on August last year, the per capita consumption of power in NE was 249.65 KW per hour as against national average of 1010 KW per hour. The gap is yawning.

Agri-Horticulture: Current agricultural production of the Region is insufficient to meet its domestic consumption and a fair bit is being imported from the national pool. Vegetable production of NE is only 4.5% of the total national yield, according to a study undertaken in 2005 by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA). The study revealed that fruits production in the NE is 23.35 lakh tonnes which is only 5.1% of the national production. Mizoram accounts for 12% of the fruits produced in NE. The Region has excellent quality of turmeric, ginger, chilly, orange, pineapple, passion fruit, mushroom, bamboo shoot, areca nut etc which have a huge export potential.

Efforts of Government of India  
Truly speaking, the Central Government plans and policies for developing the NE can only be described as experimental, inconsistent and even muddled. Over the years the Government of

India has taken a slew of initiatives and generously sanctioned monies to "help" the Northeast. Here are some of the highlights:  
Creation of NEC: In 1971 by an Act of Parliament the Northeastern Council (NEC) was set up. Initially it was meant to be an "advisory" body and today its engaged in "regional planning". During the last four and half decades the Centre has funneled a huge sum of money through the NEC. It is observed that NEC has turned out to be a wooden horse. It is taking Northeast nowhere. Some critics call NEC the "milch cow". Indeed, if the first 44 years are anything to go by, NEC has not really lighted up the NE.

Incentives for industrialisation: Indian Chamber of Commerce describes NE as "industrial desert" bereft as it is of industrial climate. In spite of the fact that in 2007 Ministry of Commerce & Industry under the North Eastern Industrial and Investment Policy declared the entire region as Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Several incentives like 90% transport subsidy, Income Tax exemption for five years, Capital Investment Subsidy of 15% etc, there are few takers.

Export promotion: In 2000, Government of India announced "PM's Action Plan for NE". Commerce Ministry created Northeast Cell for giving more focussed attention to infrastructure development. Under this package Rs 55 crore was allotted under export development fund in 2005-07. In all 47 projects were put up by the States worth 40.75 crore. The status of these projects is not known.  
Central Package: As Special Category States, the Central Government had a wide-ranging economic package for the Region, including 90:10 funding pattern for Plan development. Evidently, the packages failed to make the cut and in 1998 Non-Lapseable Pool was created out of the 10% mandatory contribution of various Ministries. According to figures provided in Parliament in 2003, only Rs 1318.66 crore of the Rs 5806.07 crore deposited in the pool between 1998 and 2002 had been released. Obviously owing to lack of proactive approach of the States, the funds are under-utilised.

Look East Policy: Quarter of century ago, i.e. in 1991, when India's Look East Policy (since renamed as Act East Policy) was announced, experts hailed it as a "strategic move" that changed India's approach for its own development and its vision of the evolving global economy. The essential philosophy behind this Policy was to forge a closer and deeper economic integration with its eastern neighbours.

These basic courtesies which are part and parcel of Khasi culture.  
Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong-3

### Write new books, not ban a book

Editor,  
Apropos to the demand made by the Seng Khasi Mawsynram to remove the text book "Dienjat Ki Longshwa" or part thereof from the prescribed syllabus of MBOSE. I wish to state the following:  
Every individual or group has a right to critique or appraise any literary works. But to demand the removal of the said text book or parts of it smack of a deeper malaise towards an-

other group, in this case the Christians. Undoubtedly there is a strong need to delve into the pre-independent literature and at the same time enhance the post-colonial readings and engage in writing back to the Empire (British)

In the same demand a suggestion was also made to incorporate other readings like Babu H. Onderson Mawrie's works and others like Vedas and Ramayana. While one has no objection to it, but can only ask if this is a part of the grand strategy to saffronize our thoughts, beliefs, culture and our way of life? Many a student of religion and theology have time and again referred to H. Onderson Mawrie's, "Ka Theology Jong ka Niam Khasi." Taking into account Mawrie's background, there are ele-

ments of Judeo-Christian thought in his esteemed work. In conclusion, we can challenge a book by writing another book and not by calling a ban for it. Let us have a dialogue and debate for the betterment of our future.  
Yours etc.,  
Rev. Kyrsioibor Pyrtuh,  
Via email

**Well done, West Indies**  
Editor,  
Hats off to women and men of the West Indies cricket teams for lifting the ICC World Twenty-20 crowns. Hats off to Sourav Ganguly, Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) and the administration of West Bengal for successfully staging the India - Pakistan match and then again two T-20 world cup finals. When some TV adver-

tisements are consolidating the slavish myth of equating confidence, success and popularity with fair complexion, it is really nice to see how dark-and-lovely women and men cricketers of West Indies outplay their fair-and-lovely opponents in every department of the game. It is time to realize that we all are powerful and beautiful irrespective of our colour, caste, class or creed. The Australian women's and English men's cricket teams must also be congratulated for making the finals so absorbing. Finally, we should applaud Virat Kohli for winning the man of the tournament laurel. But for him, India could not have reached the semis.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

agitations not only has compelled flight of precious capital from the region but also driven away the prospective investors.  
Above all, there is the perennial problem of funds not reaching their intended recipients and the ubiquitous politico-contractor nexus that seems to have sucked the vitality out of the Region. The worrying gap between conceptualisation and actualisation of Plans and Policies will continue to widen unless there is a paradigm shift in our strategies for development.  
Compare with Bangladesh  
Bangladesh, our most important and immediate neighbour, was born a month before the Reorganisation of the Northeast in 1972 to pave the way for creation of new States in the Region. Although comparison is oddeous, one is tempted to look at the remarkable strides of development sweeping across Bangladesh, if only to serve as an eye-opener for the NE.  
Bangladesh was born abject poor. The Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 had ravaged the nascent country's infrastructure and economy. Add to it the political upheavals and nagging civil unrest that followed thereafter. The stagnant economy and political instability gave rise to general despondency and hopelessness. Economic reforms started in mid-80's and was aided by World Bank and IMF. Even India chipped in with \$ 1 billion as interest free loan!  
During the last three decades Bangladesh has resurrected its economy and today it is classified by experts as "next eleven emerging markets" and "one of the frontier five". The country has the second most pro-capitalist population in the developing countries. Its economy is increasingly led by export-oriented industrialisation. Pharmaceuticals, ship building, ceramics, leather goods, textiles and knitwear, frozen shrimps and fish industries are notable. In 2014 Bangladesh had an export billing of \$ 33 billion of which \$ 24.5 billion was accounted for by textiles and garments. The country's per capita income as in 2015 stood at \$ 1314 (or Rs 85,410)---nearly three times above our national average.  
Bangladesh's success story is not just about foreign remittances and export earnings. In the social sectors like agriculture (second largest in the world), fishery (fifth in the world), life expectancy (70 years), low infant mortality, education at door step (literacy 70%), women's emancipation through self-help and literacy mission etc  
To be continued....

Why Northeast languishes?  
Obviously, it takes two to tango. If despite all its efforts, Northeast still finds itself wanting, the reason will have to be found within. Clearly it is not a case of funds crunch that debilitates the Region. If anything, the States have not shown proactive approach and are unwilling to burn midnight oil. The States apparently are content with Central assistance which provides for their bare comfort. Since 1972 we haven't seen a heightened commitment towards bringing economic emancipation for its peoples. We have to say that there is hardly any sense of urgency shown by the movers and shakers by most of the States of the Region.  
Over-dependence on Central doles, comfort of reservation for the locals with little serious competition and clear lack of collective aspirations have added to the sluggish and laidback syndrome common in the Region. Generally speaking, there seems to be no history of entrepreneurship in the Region's DNA. Lack of job opportunities, inequitable enforcement of law and order, ethnic assertions, identity crisis---all have their share of contribution to the festering problem of militancy in the region. Blood letting, intolerance for "outsiders", frequent public

TO THE EDITOR

**Uncouth behaviour of policemen!**  
Editor,  
It is often reported in various local dailies regarding the attitude and false pride that VIPs carry. But the policemen who guard them also are equally arrogant and pushy. Recently there was an incident involving a pilot vehicle along with its so-called VIP near the intersection at Jaiaw Langsing. The pilot car overtook other cars from the middle of the road while shouting expletives at other cars, including at me. I took a look at their faces which made me really wonder whether do they teach any form discipline or de-

these basic courtesies which are part and parcel of Khasi culture.  
Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong-3

**Write new books, not ban a book**  
Editor,  
Apropos to the demand made by the Seng Khasi Mawsynram to remove the text book "Dienjat Ki Longshwa" or part thereof from the prescribed syllabus of MBOSE. I wish to state the following:  
Every individual or group has a right to critique or appraise any literary works. But to demand the removal of the said text book or parts of it smack of a deeper malaise towards an-

other group, in this case the Christians. Undoubtedly there is a strong need to delve into the pre-independent literature and at the same time enhance the post-colonial readings and engage in writing back to the Empire (British)

In the same demand a suggestion was also made to incorporate other readings like Babu H. Onderson Mawrie's works and others like Vedas and Ramayana. While one has no objection to it, but can only ask if this is a part of the grand strategy to saffronize our thoughts, beliefs, culture and our way of life? Many a student of religion and theology have time and again referred to H. Onderson Mawrie's, "Ka Theology Jong ka Niam Khasi." Taking into account Mawrie's background, there are ele-

ments of Judeo-Christian thought in his esteemed work. In conclusion, we can challenge a book by writing another book and not by calling a ban for it. Let us have a dialogue and debate for the betterment of our future.  
Yours etc.,  
Rev. Kyrsioibor Pyrtuh,  
Via email

**Well done, West Indies**  
Editor,  
Hats off to women and men of the West Indies cricket teams for lifting the ICC World Twenty-20 crowns. Hats off to Sourav Ganguly, Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) and the administration of West Bengal for successfully staging the India - Pakistan match and then again two T-20 world cup finals. When some TV adver-

tisements are consolidating the slavish myth of equating confidence, success and popularity with fair complexion, it is really nice to see how dark-and-lovely women and men cricketers of West Indies outplay their fair-and-lovely opponents in every department of the game. It is time to realize that we all are powerful and beautiful irrespective of our colour, caste, class or creed. The Australian women's and English men's cricket teams must also be congratulated for making the finals so absorbing. Finally, we should applaud Virat Kohli for winning the man of the tournament laurel. But for him, India could not have reached the semis.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

*"Don't hit at all if it is honorably possible to avoid hitting; but never hit soft!"*

--- Theodore Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 235

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2016

## Conundrum around Parliamentary Secretary post

THAT the BJP Secretary in charge Meghalaya, Nalin Kohli, should make a hurried visit to the state, hold a press conference and pick on the ticklish issue of appointment of parliamentary secretaries (PS) is not coincidental. On March 30 last, the Jirang MLA, Lamboklang Myllem suddenly resigned as PS in charge Taxation. Myllem claims that he is trying to avoid legal complications since several High Courts have ruled that the appointment runs counter to the Constitutional 91st Amendment Act, 2003 which states that the total number of ministers including the chief minister cannot exceed 15% of the total number of MLAs, which in the case of Meghalaya means 12 ministers. That the Jirang MLA should only now realize the ramifications of his appointment fools no one. Also that Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prestone Tynsong should only grapple with the seriousness of this matter is banal. Nalin Kohli has made things much clearer by accusing Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma of insecurity from his own MLAs and of buying their loyalty by appointing them as PS. This is not far from the truth. It has been a survival tactic adopted by all Chief Ministers who wish to hold their flock together, since MLAs are wont to jump fences on the promise of a ministerial berth.

Rumours are rife in political circles here that Meghalaya will soon go the Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand way. In both the states the crisis was precipitated by disgruntled Congress MLAs with the BJP playing midwife to the birth of a new government owing allegiance to it. There are as many disgruntled Congressmen in Meghalaya too; the most prominent of them is PN Syiem, the CEM, KHADC who has defied the State Government's Ordinance on Office of Profit which requires that a person holds either the post of MLA or MDC and resign from one of them. There are Congressmen who are secret admirers of PN Syiem for daring to take on Mukul Sangma. Amongst those who are considered close to Syiem are Lok Sabha MP, Vincent Pala. Pala has been seen in the august company of PN Syiem quite often these days and sources in Delhi believe that the duo are in touch with Union Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju to pull off a coup on the Mukul Government. Lambok Myllem's resignation as PS looks like the first nail in this Government's coffin. It could have a cascading effect with others following in his footsteps. So is Meghalaya headed the way of Arunachal Pradesh? The Assam election results which many predict could go the BJP way might just hasten the coup here.

## LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### Bandaranaike escapes attempt on life

Former Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike this morning escaped an attempt on her life the second in less than two months when unidentified men threw bombs at her party election campaign meeting in eastern Sri Lanka, police and party sources said. Meanwhile, continuing violence involving extremists elsewhere in the island left 22 people dead, security officials said. SLFP sources said that at least four bombs were hurled at the dais where Mrs. Bandaranaike and other party leaders were seated at the inaugural parliamentary election campaign meeting of the party at Hingurakgodda in Polonnaruwa district.

They said three of her personal bodyguards, who kicked away two of the bombs, a woman escort and her drive were among the wounded. "It was a clear assassination on my life," Mrs. Bandaranaike, who was immediately whisked away from the site in a car and later helicoptered to Anuradhapura, told reporters. The Hingurakgodda po-

lice said the wounded were being treated at Hingurakgodda, Matale, Kandy and Anuradhapura hospitals. Their exact number was not available, but the condition of 14 of those admitted to Matale base hospital was serious, they said.

They said the attackers had burst a smoke bomb apparently to conceal their position, before hurling the bombs at the meeting, held at a road junction. Police and security personnel providing security to the meeting fired in the direction from where the grenades were hurled injuring many in the crowd while many others sustained injuries in the crowd, in the stampede that followed at they said.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but police believed to be the work of Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) extremists who had staged a similar attack on Mrs. Bandaranaike's final campaign meeting in the city in December before the presidential election, which she lost to Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa.

# MBOSE policy: Why go for soft option?

By Albert Thyriang

Recently, during the budget session of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, Ardent Basaiawmoit criticized the policy of the Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE) of increasing the pass percentage without any justifiable reasons. Press reports did not specify the policy but it is publicly known. According to MBOSE rule, in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination a candidate who clears any five of the six subjects is declared passed. In other words, a student is affirmed passed even if he fails in one of the six subjects. The failed subject can be Mathematics or Science. Earlier students needed to compulsorily pass these two subjects. Now the only compulsory subjects are English and Modern Indian Language (MIL).

Before further discussion a word on the benefits of science and mathematics would be enlightening. Proficiency in numeracy, figures and calculations is invaluable in any field. Analytic and synthetic skills are also required in life and are acquired through mathematical education. Science and mathematics also enable individuals to develop problem solving skills. A certain Daniel who posted in getsmaart.com wrote, "The skills gained from studying science and maths are versatile and transferable and are applicable to any profession; a foundation in science and maths can lead to a huge variety of career options in all sectors, beyond those that might be predicted. Science and maths are obviously relevant to many science-related jobs, such as engineering, information technology, medicine, psychology, sports science, music technology, animal health, forensics or astronomy, but they are also significant to working in banking, journalism, teaching, television, marketing, law, photography, art restoration, media and film production, to name but a few."

It is accepted that all need not take up science and commerce after class X. However, a minimum knowledge of science and

mathematics is handy for whatever stream a student might opt later. It is advantageous in whatever profession a person chooses. Moreover, more than the utility aspect, a minimum of mathematics and science education is universally desirable. It is necessary for a scientific temper. This scientific temper is considered part of a general culture and civilized life. This has to be nurtured and developed in the students' mind right from primary school onwards. The government, through MBOSE, has played down the importance of this significant culture in the students. If there is scientific temper in our society we would not have had cases of witchcraft and the ugly reactions of assaults, vandalism, burning of houses, feeding of animal excreta, lynching and murders. These horrible cases will continue to occur in a society with no scientific temperament.

The system has led students to take important subjects like Mathematics and Science lightly. They are certain that even if they fail in one of the subjects they can still get through. A majority of the student community does not look to excel in these two subjects. Thus the HSPDP MLA observes that the policy does not help the students in the long run. This is a correct observation. My own experience and that of others informs that most science and commerce students in the state at the higher secondary level, opt for Mathematics as optional subject. This means they give least importance to the subject. They do not know that they cannot excel in physics, chemistry or even accountancy without mastering 'the queen of science'. Thus many drop out of science course after the first year. Even those who succeed at the higher secondary level do so without shining in mathematics. Thus there are very few who go for the combination we call as PCM (Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics) at the degree level. This explains the acute shortage of science and mathematics teachers in the state.

There is a need for change in attitude. It is argued that all cannot do well in mathematics and science. There is aversion for the subjects. We see mathematics as formulae unrelated to reality, a jumble of incomprehensible symbols dismissed as irrelevant. A fear for mathematics among students is common. Our own personal experience has told us that science and mathematics are difficult. Unfortunately MBOSE has reinforced this message by its policy. It has endorsed this perception officially. The perception is wrong. It is a myth that should be drilled out of our minds. Of course, the subjects are not easy either. But students have to be motivated that they can succeed. A conviction that every student, rural or urban can at least pass in mathematics and science has to be there in all teachers. Nothing can be achieved by avoiding reality. A bull has to be caught by its horns. The widespread, deep-rooted fear of the subjects has to be overcome by making them an inseparable part of education.

Www.timeshighereducation.com of June 30, 2011 reported that four to five scientists in the UK admitted to having early difficulties with mathematics. One confessed that he was variously "challenged by maths" and was "mathematics-phobic". The report also mentioned that a Nobel laureate described himself as "hopeless at maths" but was rewarded by persistence. The message is clear. To ease the pressure Mathematics has to be made relevant and enjoyable. The advent of smart classrooms may help.

Another obstacle to be overcome is severe shortage of science and mathematics teachers in the state. In many schools in rural areas there are no qualified science and mathematics teachers at the primary, upper primary and secondary levels. I know for a fact that many secondary schools in rural areas do not have teachers for science and mathematics. Then how do we expect them to score pass mark in SSLC examination? They struggle in the two subjects

because of denial of opportunity, not because of inability. This is not an excuse for making mathematics and science optional. Passing these two subjects should be insisted on all the more so that in 15 to 20 years we will have sufficient qualified mathematics and science teachers at the LP level at least. This is call foresight. Sadly, we have no visionaries in the state.

High rate of teacher absenteeism, which is hugely responsible for poor education, is a curse that can be easily dealt with if there is a will. The government is aware of it, the education department knows it, DSEOs in all the districts see it but no but wants to fix it. NGOs who claim to work for the welfare of the people too are very familiar with the menace but rarely pay any attention. In many rural government LP schools, teachers only teach for a couple of days in a month. The trend continues up to Upper primary and secondary school levels. In such a scenario we don't expect students to learn mathematics. But no one cares. No one lifts a finger to challenge the obvious mal-practice. At every annual examination students are given more than pass marks. MBOSE too does the same. All have no complaints.

The MBOSE policy is a short cut to success. It is a short sighted measure. It is a temporary success strategy that brings no solution. It is not a remedy for poor education in the state. It is not a boast for good quality education. It is, in fact, counter-productive. It lowers the quality of the education in the state. The government, instead of improving the quality of education has resorted to this short cut. This is a cosmetic change, an easy, nay, a lazy way out. Due to poor results you just wave off a crucial subject. Everyone rejoices at the good/improved pass percentage but the quality regresses. An overhaul of the educational system is needed not a facial make up. It is the duty of the government to provide good education in science and mathematics to all students all over the state. It is unfortunate that due to its inability to do so a defective policy has to be implemented.

## Wanted revised strategies for NE development - 2

By Manas Chaudhuri

Bangladesh's success story is not just about foreign remittances and export earnings. In the social sectors like agriculture (second largest in the world), fishery (fifth in the world), life expectancy (70 years), low infant mortality, education at door step (literacy 70%), women's emancipation through self-help and literacy mission etc and excellent inland roadways, unflinching communication system, touted to be better than India's, will serve as a handy case study. Unmistakably, there is a deep sense of commitment at all levels in Bangladesh and a passion to take their country to the top. Just look their turn around in cricket! Despite political unrest and corruption in high places, it is the people's high aspirations and application which have made the critical difference.

### Revise strategy for tangible results

Let's face it, we cannot be in today's business with yesterday's mechanism. In order to make a tangible difference, all stakeholders have to learn from past mistakes. Adopt the road not travelled, without fear or favour. It is also imperative that there has to be a missionary zeal infused in the system which will be accountable and transparent. Tough ask, this. But as the saying goes, when the going is tough, only the tough get going. Let us not forget that stakes are not the Region's alone but that of the whole country to see that Northeast blossoms. Here are a few of my humble suggestions as strategies for re-vitalising the tempo of development of the region:

### 1. A Revised Plan :

Against the backdrop of our improved ties with Bangladesh and the winds of change blowing across Myanmar, the Centre, in consultation with the States, must draw up a focussed perspective plan for the next 25 years for the Region thus making the Northeast ready for the Act East Policy. The Plan must identify priority areas of each State, allocate funds and execute time-bound schemes through central agencies.

2. Restructure NEC: The role of Council should be revisited. In any case, it should not be a mere funding agency. Instead it must be mandated to supervise the centrally-funded works on the ground, monitor progress, conduct audit and provide technical and other expertise and liaison with stakeholders. The DoNER Minister should personally come to NEC headquarter in Shillong to take stock on a quarterly basis. This should help keeping all concerned on their toes.

### 3. Roads and surface transport:

Roads will have to be top priority with or without Act East Policy. All-weather modern roads of international standards—entirely funded by the Centre—should be taken up under the aegis of Central Government on a time-bound manner. If there are good

roads, deficiency in rail and air connectivity will not matter much.

4. Non-lapsable pool: Every year there is a huge accumulation of non-lapsable funds in the central kitty. Instead of carrying forward, Centre should consider utilising these funds under its own care for building up "Model Blocks" in each State every year. Each Block Development unit can thus become a focal point of planned living conditions for the inhabitants.

5. Air link: Every State must be provided with air link with the rest of the country. When we have successfully launched Mars Mission, it will patently unfair not to give this facility to this peripheral region.

### 6. Private Investment:

If economy has to grow faster, there is no alternative to private investment. To facilitate FDI and PPP Mode ventures, the States must create conducive climate for investment. Rules, regulations must be transparent and equitably enforced. The fear psychosis of the prospective investors, both inland and overseas, must be addressed. There has to be a strong political will and fire in the belly.

### 7. Manpower planning:

It is estimated that during the decade ending 2025, NER will have only 2.6 million jobs, as against 16.8 million job seekers. Capacity building and competencies in critical sectors, therefore, assumes paramount importance. Centre should engage experts to undertake a manpower planning of the region and help set up job-creating industries commensurate with local aptitude and resources.

### 8. Prioritize exportable items:

In order to give a fillip to export promotion, the Centre should identify a few core products of the Region which can be sustainable. In my considered view, the items should include Hydel and Gas-based power, Rubber, Coal, Bamboo and select agri-horticultural produce. A holistic thrust should be given to these identified areas with a comprehensive long-term perspective plan will surely make a difference.

All said and done, it is for the people of the States who should learn to demand better life, better roads, better amenities, better opportunities—at par with the most developed parts of the country. Indeed, Northeast can be a bright shining outpost of the country, only if it wants to! It is rightly said that you may drag the pony to the pond but cannot make the pony drink. May the pony develop some thirst, after all!

(Excerpts from the paper presented by the author at a recent seminar organised by Shillong Commerce College)

## Undue harassment by Gionee company

Editor, I thought Gionee mobile phone is good so I bought a handset on October 16, 2015. After 5 months from the date of purchase the said handset automatically switches off. The same was sent to the repair center at AC lane Police Bazar with a hope to get on time delivery. Surprisingly, I got a message from D.M-G Care from time to time stating that the delivery has been extended. The message had been forwarded to me 5 to 6 times. Then on April 4, 2016, a message was received stating "hope the handset had been delivered to you." When I contacted the serv-

ice center, their reply was that it was not yet delivered by the Company. Again to my surprise on April 5, 2016 another message was received saying that the handset was under repair process and the delivery date is April 10, 2016.

What is the motive of the company in treating me and other customer's of Shillong as fools? Since my handset is under warranty period I want the Company to set things right by either repairing or replace my Gionee P.35 handset.

Yours etc., Pynshai 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.

## TO THE EDITOR

### Rejoinder to the Bacchiarello debate

Editor, I have been following infrequently the posts about the various issues regarding the minority Niam Tynrai/ Niam Tre and their respective spokespersons. The small report regarding the demand for removal of the Fr Bacchiarello's book, Dienjat Ki Longshuwa was an eye-opener. It is no secret that Christians dominate various spheres within the state's socio-economic and political apparatuses. Many might not like to admit this, but sadly, the world is not as fair as we like to believe. Much like the caste-denying benefactors of caste discrimination, we (Christians) do not want to admit to our advantageous positions. It must be part of the much touted Christian value of humility, though humility is hardly an exclusively Christian virtue (nor is hypocrisy). I totally agree that there are various texts that have many insulting and demeaning messages within them. Let me give you an example from the Presbyterian song-book.

Take song no. 553 (546 in old edition) Rex Gloriae:- "Sha khlaw sha btap ka pop ka lam/ Ban mane bla ba kynsha/ Mynsiem ba

bha hapoh ka dam/ Hapoh jingdum ba thala/ Ia kine mano ban leit wad/ Mano ia ki ban pyllai?"

What did the author mean when he said that 'sin and false/profane gods dwell in the jungle', why do the people who worship in the 'jungle' have to be rescued by the Christians? Mind you, this is hardly a rarely sung song. It is still very popular today as during the days of the British. These sorts of messages are today being critiqued in various forums as racist, colonial bigotry. I support the Mawsynram unit of the Seng Khasi in wanting a pro-Christian book removed from the MBOSE syllabus but all religious books should also be removed then. There should be no question of Vedas, Quran, Torah etc being introduced in its place. It is either 'take all' or 'take none'. Secular education is being threatened throughout the country, at least in Meghalaya we should show the way forward and not succumb to communalism.

Yours etc., Babet Sten, Via email

### Why dismantle a heritage building?

Editor,

The Jaintias are known to have first migrated from their homeland Jaintia Hills to Shillong a year after the execution of the great martyr U Kiang Nangbah. It was during the year 1863-64 that they migrated to Shillong in search for better means of livelihood and first settled in areas vicinity to Iewduh like Qualapaty( Kwar), Paltan Bazar(Dukan Pyrton) and Wahthapbroo.

Living far away from their ancestral home, they felt the need to have an Organisation which would be a conglomeration of all the Jaintias in East Khasi Hills particularly Shillong. Thus an Organisation named 'Sein Jaintia' was founded in 1947 with (L) Rai Bahadur Hari Blah and (L) R.Tokin Rymbai as its founding President and General Secretary respectively. Since then, Sein Jaintia has taken up a number social, sports and cultural and other allied activities. In due course of time its members also felt the need for a permanent community hall. Thus under the leadership of its President (L) Aron Alley, Vice President, (L) R.Tokin Rymbai and General Secretary, (L) P.R.Kyndiah, the Assam Government was petitioned for the transfer of the SERAI (Muzafirkhana) Building or a small portion of the Vaccine Depot vide Letter dated 7th June 1955. Subsequently, the SERAI Building was transferred to

Sein Jaintia on the 23rd December 1955 by the Assam Government during the tenure of (L) Bishnu Ram Medhi as Chief Minister.

The old and dilapidated SERAI Building was then dismantled for construction of Indoor Sports and Theatre Hall and the Foundation Stone was laid on the 6th October 1958 by (L) Bishnu Ram Medhi, who was at that time the Governor of Madras State. However, much to the dismay and sadness of all the Jaintias, this very Sein Jaintia Hall which was build for Sports and Cultural activities has been dismantled for construction Commercial Complex. Is this Hall which was the first indoor sports and theatre hall in Shillong not a 'heritage building' that needs to be conserved? What is really sad for all the Jaintia community is that the Hall has been brought to ground by the very own leadership of the Jaintias who have been proclaimed champions of saving and preserving heritage building in and around Shillong like the Tara Ghar. This entire episode of dismantling the heritage Sein Jaintia Hall in Shillong was not a decision approved by the members of the General Council of Sein Jaintia but by the whims and fancies of few so called leaders of the Jaintia community.

Yours etc., Dr. Omarlin Kyndiah, Life Member, Sein Jaintia, Via email

*"Aggressive fighting for the right is the greatest sport in the world."*

--- Theodore Roosevelt

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 236

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2016

### The Riyadh connection

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's just concluded visit to Saudi Arabia has produced a joint statement which is unparalleled in terms of strong words and the space devoted to terrorism. The 2010 Riyadh Decoration is one up on the 2006 Delhi Decoration. It provides for an extradition treaty and also outlines an expansive security cooperation agenda. It emphasizes India's positive engagement with Gulf Arabia. A couple of days before Modi arrived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and the US slapped joint sanctions on the Lashkar-e-Taiba. This was of course meant to please India. But Saudi Arabia is also driven by enlightened self-interest. After the Arab Spring, Arab monarchies have become nervous about the changed security situation in the region.

Sunni extremism from the Islamic State and the rise of Shia Iran have struck a blow against a Saudi concerted move to fight the ISIS and al-Qaida. But the US joined hands with Iran to impair the strength of the Saudi combine in the name of human rights. Besides, the US is getting less dependent on Saudi Arabia and more on Iran for supply of oil. US ties with Iran strengthened especially after the nuclear energy deal with Tehran. There is space for India to re-enter the Gulf as a strategic and security partner. Both India and Saudi Arabia are committed to carry on war on terrorism in the Near East. India is also gradually overcoming its reservation about Saudi Arabia's traditional cordial relationship with Pakistan. India's attitude to the Taliban in Afghanistan is a help to its asserting its anti-terrorist role in the region.

### LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### Punjab violence unabated: Akali Ex-MP among eight killed

In unabated violence terrorists gunned down Istri Akali Dal president and former MP Mrs Rajinder Kaur, daughter of late Master Tara Singh at Bhatinda today. Elsewhere in Punjab seven people, including a terrorist, were killed and one person was hanged while security forces arrested 10 extremists during the past 24 hours. Three terrorists attacked Mrs Rajinder Kaur as she entered her car after attending a function at a secondary school in Bhatinda. While she was sitting in her car, the terrorists opened fire killing her on the spot. Another person, identified as advocate Baldev Singh Khokhar, who had taken the driver's seat in the car was also killed in the firing. The third person, Piara Singh Nirchhal, sitting in the car, however, escaped unhurt in the shootout.

Bhatinda Deputy Commissioner Mr Darbara Singh Guru and district police chief Mr R S Gill immediately rushed to the scene of the crime. Police have cordoned off the area. Mrs. Rajinder Kaur, edited a Punjabi monthly magazine "Sant Sapai." Terrorists hanged to death one Joga Singh after abducting him from his home at Jaurisinghwala village under the Patti police station in Tarn Taran police district (Amritsar) last night. While taking him away, the terrorists fired in the air with Chinese AK-47 assault rifles, five rounds of which were recovered from the spot.

In an encounter, security forces shot dead and unidentified terrorists and injured dreading ultra Satnam Singh "Satta", self styled "general" of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan" at Bopari village in Majitha police district (Amritsar) last night.

The encounter took place when the security forces raided the farm house of one That Singh in the village where the terrorists along with their associates had taken shelter. Six members of Tehal Singh's family were also injured in the encounter and admitted to a hospi-

tal in Amritsar.

An unidentified body was found at Jaisinghwala village under the Sangat police station in Bhatinda district last night. The body bore knife injuries.

### Splinter Janata party to retain identity

The national executive of the truncated Janata Party today decided to maintain its identity and elected Mr Innubhai Patel as its president. A meeting of the national executive resolve to maintain the identity of the party at all costs and take steps to strengthen the organization. The president was authorized to oppose the Janata Dal application for transfer of the party symbol and take necessary steps to reoccupy the office.

Talking to newsmen here Mr Patel claimed that 102 members of the party attended today's meeting where many important decision was taken to strengthen the party at the grass root level. Besides Mr Patel, other members who attended the meeting were former Karnataka Power Minister Mr Dev Gowda, Syed Shahabuddin, Dr Subramanyam Swamy and Dr Sorojini Mahaiswal. Mr Patel said the Janta Dal had forcibly occupied central office of the Janata Party and steps would be taken to remove them from that premises.

### AP Govt. may move

**court against Kumudben**  
The Andhra Pradesh Government would move the court if Governor Ms Kumudben Joshi did not approve the appointment of Justice Mr R N Agarwal as the state. Lok Ayukta within fifteen days, state Law Minister Mr H B Narse Gowda said here today.

He told newsmen that the Government would move either the Supreme Court or the Andhra Pradesh High Court on the grounds that the institution of Lok Ayukta was in jeopardy, if the Governor or the President and Union Home Minister failed to resolve the stalemate.

# The politics of religion vs the religion of politics -1

By Wanphrang K Diengdoh

Haba thet wat kynther ia ki kti ioh pharait ia ki briw da ka um thet

When you wash your hands do not shake the water off too vigorously lest you squirt on others

Ka Niam jong ki Khasi ~ Rabon Singh Kharsuka,

Let me first confess, that I am a Khasi by location and one who also subscribes to a pre-written, pre-institutionalised idea of the Khasi niam with a healthy dose of atheist desires. (In this anxiety driven materialistic world, we need something to cling on to). Nonetheless, that is personal. But most importantly in these days of Arnab Goswami led binaries, I must also admit that I do not subscribe to any political positions, left or right. I am though, interested in how forces or patrons of culture facilitate its dissemination. Since time immemorial custodians of culture and politics have always played dual roles. Let us look at our recent past.

The attempt to put into paper the Khasi language was by K. C. Pal from the Serampore Missionaries. He adapted the Bengali script and his first translations were from the Bible. Unfortunately, most people thought that all those Bengali characters on paper would make them go blind. Nonetheless, the saying remains, "U 'ko' bad u 'khu' u kiew nyingkong ha Shella". Thomas Jones eventually put it down on paper adapting the Roman script into Khasi. Indeed he worked hard at it, charged by ideas of Welsh Methodism and Moravian principles which did not favour the functioning of the East India Company in Cherrapunjee. He did not last long. He was accused for working against the interest of the East India company, and even inciting the people to rebel against the British. He died in 1849 in Calcutta fleeing from the Khasi hills. Meanwhile, a few years later, trouble was brewing in the Jaintia hills.

The house tax was introduced. Brigadier General G.D Showers who was the Commissioner of the 'Cossiah and Jyntia hills' and had called the Jaintia Hills - the rudest state of 'civilization' was now caught in the middle of rebellion. The Dalois and Pators were removed for misconduct and the first Jaintia rebellion of 1860 was

quashed. This was two years after Jeebon Roy Mairon joined work for the East India company. Roy worked as a writer and interpreter then for General Showers.

The Income Tax was introduced in 1861. The second Jaintia rebellion broke out in 1862. Rabon Singh Kharsuka's detailed description on Khasi religion was first published in 1889 a Khasi monthly paper 'U Nongkit Khubor' the first Khasi newspaper edited by William Williams in 1889 of the Presbyterian Church. Kharsuka worked for the government in Shillong but retired to Mawmluh, his ancestral village to work in a school for a meager pay. In 1911, he wrote 'Ka Kitab Niam Kheini Ki Khasi'. By then he had converted to niam Khasi and had retired to Mawmluh to teach in a small school with an even smaller pay.

Interestingly, in another book of almost the same title "Ka Niam jong ki Khasi" (February 10, 1897) Jeebon Roy mentions his desire for a very long time to write about the religions of all the people who inhabited the Ri Khasi and Synteng especially in times when Presbytery, Catholic, Unitary, Brahm religions are taking over the Khasi religion but due to paucity of time, he persuaded his friends to contribute writings and he himself would publish and edit them. He retired as Extra Assistant Commissioner after serving the East India Company until the late 1890s. Jeebon Roy was the founder of the first printing press in this part of the world in 1895, two years before the great earthquake of 1897. Upon his retirement from the EIC he also took up limestone businesses.

The quarries were already leased by the Syiem of Sohra to the East India Company for Re.1 pa. For his entrepreneurial and literary contributions, he is considered the "Father of the modern Khasis". He also translated Mit-Upodesa (Parts I and II), The Ramayana and Chaitanya. But Jeebon Roy is remembered more for his contributions to the Seng Khasi and the creation of a press that mostly distributed niam Khasi books. On the November 23, 1899, sixteen young men got together in the Brahm Samaj Hall at Mawkhkar to form

the Seng Khasi. Most of these men would attend lectures conducted by the Brahm Samaj (not the Arya Samaj) where they would be taught and educated ideas of the Brahm Samaj. Among them was Radhon Singh Berry Kharwanlang (not to be mistaken for Rabon Singh Kharsuka) who in 1886, help set up a Brahm Samaj Mandir in Mawkhkar. He wrote 'Ka Jingsneng Tymmen (1902)'. The sixteen young men who were architects of the Seng Khasi had Roy's second youngest son Chandranath Roy as it's first secretary. There are no records of this selection process. If political hegemony created rebellions cultural hegemony did indeed create more interesting names. Nonetheless, the first Seng Kut Snem of November 1899 held at the Brahm Samaj Hall at Mawkhkar was celebrated with much enthusiasm. It was then the first concrete building of Aheet Ali.

The purpose of the Seng Khasi was primarily to unite all the Khasis who were not converted or influenced by other religions. Finally the Seng Khasi acquired a place of its own at Mawkhkar. Hajom Kissor Singh donated a considerable amount of Rs 300 towards the purchase while Jeebon donated Rs 430. Hajom Kissor Singh is today remembered as the leader of the Unitarian church movement in the region. Over a period of time, the women organisation of the Seng Khasi was started in 1941 with Kong Helimon Diengdoh as the first president. In 1980 the Seng Khasi became the first tribal organization to become a member of the International Association of Religious Freedom (I.A.R.F.). On hearing that the Seng Khasi had become the Associate Member of IARF, the Rev. Deither Gehrman, the General Secretary of the IARF in his letter dated 1980 conveyed, "It is with great pleasure that I can report to you: the recommendation of the Executive Committee on Associate Membership of the Seng Khasi was received and unanimously accepted by the council".

In 1981 Hipshon Roy Kharshing and H.O.Mawrie represented Seng Khasi in the 24th Congress of IARF held in the Netherlands. That same year, the Seng Khasi was founded by

H.O. Mawrie. Mawrie studied theology at Serampore College - (founded by the Serampore Trio whose attempt was to impart education to students of every "caste, colour or country".

The location of the college was under a Danish colony then and free from direct Imperial control till 1857). But just as gardens grow flowers, spaces also nurture ideologies. In H. O. Mawrie's book, 'Ka Seng Kheih Lang' (March 15, 1998) he states "When you reach Shangpung in the Jaintia area, do not forget to ask where the Imperials shot down the Doloi Giri". He leaves no answer as to how it happened but I am tempted to ask, was he the victim of the rebellion during the house tax or the income tax in the 1860s? Were any double agents responsible for this tragic event? And upon answering that, can we say that even the Khasi niam was also appropriated to a liberal theology interpretation within itself? Indeed there was an attempt by the Welsh missionaries and other Christian denominations to consider indigenous practices of the Khasis as barbaric.

This primitive mumbo jumbo is only meant for stages and travelling freak and variety shows in the market places of civilized nations. Hygiene, sanitation, English language, western clothing were benchmarks of civility and nobility and even till the late 1980's certain members of church were ostracized for playing 'traditional' instruments. Now these 'traditional instruments' are part of almost every church singing activity.

The desire by the 'natives' themselves to create new church culture and not just restrict themselves to age old hymns and the organ is an interesting area to look into. On the other hand some representatives of other Christian denominations have always been more open to ideas of syncretisation. Some even indicating that there was mention of a grand Khasi durbar in the Bible. Interestingly enough photos of privileged 'enlightened' Khasi men both of the niam Khasi or Christian converts who were producing Niam Khasi literature or paraded as 'Mission fruits' around the late 1800s always had an air of Victorian sophistication about them. I was hoping I'd find photos of them adorned in a jymphong and jainboh with thua and spong but could not find any.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Closure of wine shops

Editor,

The State Government order to close all wine shops located 100 meters from the national highway, educational institutions, hospitals, places of worship, etc has come as a rude shock to wine store dealers. This is a business that provides livelihoods to many. It is learnt that the Supreme Court has only advised all the state governments to take the decision not to allow any wine shops near national highways and that they should be at a reasonable distance from the highways. But the question that now arises is, what is that reasonable distance? Is it 10 ft, 20ft or on the same wall? The actual distance is not specified. .

It is also learnt that the Supreme Court has only suggested relocating of wine shops along the national highways. They have never mentioned educational institutions hospitals, places of worship, etc.

This is an addition by the State Government. Before passing such arbitrary orders the Government should have realised that it will affect thousands of families and Government revenue. With this order, Government will lose over Rs 300 crore revenue and all the staff working in the shops will become jobless. There are many wine shops especially in Ri-Bhoi area and Garo Hills where the licensees have no other source of income except that of the wine shop and with that income they are running their families.

The state Government is already facing financial crunch after banning coal and limestone mining. The closure of liquor shops is an extra burden on the Government. From newspaper reports we learn that the Central Government has restricted the flow of funds to states. The Government owes about Rs. 400 crore to the contractors over and above the liability of paying off several other loans.

No other state govern-

ment in India has passed any order for closing of wine shops as is done by the Meghalaya Government. Interestingly all the wine shops are licensed by the Government including those that have come up near educational institutions, hospitals and places of worship. In most cases the wine stores came up much before these institutions. So whose mistake is it? The Government which has given the license, the wine store owners or the institutions that decided to open shop near the existing wine stores?

This decision by the State Government will compound the unemployment problem which will precipitate many other social problems. It is surprising that a Government struggling to create livelihoods should take a decision which will have serious ramifications. Besides it is a decision which is not even mandated by the apex court. Before taking such a decision, the government should have assessed how many persons would become jobless

and what alternative employment it can offer those working in wine stores.

Since the matter lies with the Government it is incumbent on them to reverse their decision and allow opening reopening of wine shops at the earliest. I also request the Government to come up with their views on the matter.

Yours etc.,  
BK Khongsar  
Via email

### Commendable job MeECL

Editor,

I wish to convey my gratitude to MeECL and the Area Manager of our area and others in the Department who have worked ceaselessly since the tornado struck parts of Shillong on April 5 and severely devastated several electric posts. The MeECL technicians worked late into the night to restore electricity supply. To restore power within such a short period was beyond expectations considering the ex-

## Ranking of Institutions of Higher Education

By Ananya S Guha

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has perhaps for the first time come out with a list of the top ranking universities/professional institutes in the country. Well it deserves kudos for taking such a plunge because erstwhile Ministries were silent on any assessment, excepting coming out sporadically on some 'Centres Of Excellence'. In the meanwhile, of course, private agencies are consistently doing rankings of colleges, universities and technical institutions. The trenchant irony one may point out here is that JNU & the University of Hyderabad, have been ranked third and fourth-ironic because of the students' controversy raging in these universities. But that is the crux; that controversies have been left aside and universities have been appraised on basis of quality and research. That drives home the point that the assessment has been impartial. It also drives home the point that the attacks against both of them, especially the former that it is a hunting ground of activities other than academic are perhaps unjustified. This persisting baiting must have riled both teachers and students alike leading to a climax and series of incidents, which are now well known. But one must be happy that the rating has come at the right time to allay doubts about the academic credentials of these universities. It goes to the credit of the MHRD that it has maintained a dispassionate stance in the ratings. Also the fifth place going to an University in the North East part of the country is a recognition of hard work done in semi rural areas.

This also is a pointer to the numerous ratings been done every year by privately enlisted agencies. The parameters vary from agency to agency and so the rankings differ. But a government agency taking the bull by its horns and then doing an assessment based on clear cut criteria is laudable, because the players here are private universities as well as public universities. One of the criteria singled out is notable and interesting: students from other states seeking admission in that university. That is an indicator of the quality of that university as well as popularity, in terms of faculty and departments/schools, courses offered etc. Tezpur university right from its inception has been introducing professional and research oriented academic programmes as its focal point.

For example the Department of English is merged with Foreign Languages studies, which is a pointer towards the eclectic nature of the university having also courses on technical sciences and social sciences.

Thirdly although such ratings are ostensibly performance oriented there is an issue here of comparing state government universities to those of central government universities. The latter are

obviously heavily subsidized with more allocation and funding towards research, whereas the former are more often than not crippled for want of funds. The Vice Chancellor of Guwahati University lamented on this aspect although the university was decently ranked at 22nd.

It is good that the Ministry has taken this bold decision to rank universities. It should give a fillip to universities to act further, improve their surroundings and introduce innovative courses, research and training. But the best part of the decision was the faith it put on the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the University of Hyderabad as centres of excellence, an age old reputation matched with good research and teaching, shrugging off controversy. That in itself is intrepid. This should dispel all the warped notions that the doubting Thomases have and a shot in the arm for these Institutions, amidst such controversy mired situation. Much has been talked about Indian Universities not finding a place among the top 100 rankings in the world. The point is that it is unfair to compare universities in countries where research facilities are poor, where there is not adequate funding for research work and where research projects among science subjects are teacher driven rather than sharing resources with the student or students. Again centrally funded universities as pointed out earlier, get more funds as compared to state government universities which at times face acute financial crunch, not even being able to pay salaries to teachers. Some years back there was an instance in one of the Universities of North East India, where the Vice Chancellor refused to work because of paucity of funds. And his point of view was sympathetically taken by many.

Indian universities have bright students, but in the international arena they cannot cross rankings below 300 or 200. Of course to many the entire issue of rating is debatable, as some universities could excel in certain disciplines, specialized or general. But the collective spirit of an university visa vis teacher and taught, research facilities, innovative disciplines, publications of teachers, their impact on scholarly publications, all these must and should count. It is against this background that universities like JNU in the national context hold their own; not compromising on quality of both teachers and students, and allowing meritorious poor students to study at affordable cost. It is unfortunately that such an university has been enmeshed in controversy and issues which are unabashedly and shamelessly politicised.

after the power supply was restored the Area Manager informed me that it was done. MeECL keep it up; you have done a great job despite the massive challenges created by the storm. My sincerest gratitude to you all!

Yours etc.,  
N Bhattacharjee  
President,  
R & R Colony Welfare  
Society.  
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.

By Iboyaima Laithangbam

# Betel tales

There had always been a love-hate relationship between Ahom and Kangleipak kingdoms, the old names of Assam and Manipur. They went to war numerous times.

But there were also tales of bonhomie. On one occasion, after a Manipuri princess was married to an Assamese prince, the king of Manipur decreed an entire village to emigrate to Assam so that his daughter would not feel lonely in the new land where language, culture and social practices were different.

Villagers in Manipur also migrated to Assam when marauding invaders from Burma (now Myanmar) and

Manipuris, as far as the nut and leaves are concerned.

Cut into six fine pieces the betel nuts are put on betel leaves which in turn are placed on two layers of plantain leaves. This offering became indispensable for religious and social functions. Apart from offering to the Gods and Goddesses,

To meet the widespread practice, several truckloads of betel nuts and leaves used to arrive in Manipur from Assam. The climate in Manipur is not conducive to grow the plant, except in a limited form in some areas bordering Assam.

In Imphal, there are several wholesale shops. Ev-



China struck. Others often left for economic and personal reasons.

One fallout of this migration was that Manipuris adopted the Assamese habit of eating tamul (betel nut), which then seeped into the society in Manipur. Now the society is grappling with the changing habits of

shrines or temples, each given coming for a wedding, or even a death ceremony, is offered the betel nuts and leaves.

In Assam, the nut is eaten raw. But the Manipuris, who call it kwa, often dump the arecanut in pits for several days to soften it, known as kom kwa.

ery market and every village had kiosks with women vendors selling skinned or unskinned betel nuts, leaves and lime. Most of the elderly persons are hooked on to the habit of chewing it throughout the day.

As a result, traders in both the states thrived and farmers in Assam got bet-

ter returns.

But the habit of consuming paan has undergone a change.

Triggered by intervention of militants, and attraction of tobacco laced sweet-laced leaves (mitha-patti paan), the practice of chewing has undergone a transformation, which in turn has brought about an upheaval in the market.

When truckloads of the areca nuts and leaves from Assam used to travel along NH37 to Manipur, the militants -- of whom there are groups galore -- found it lucrative to extract their pound of flesh in the form of "taxes." To evade this illegal levy, the truckers would try to move with army convoys. But then they found many of their trucks torched or pushed down deep

gorges by the militants.

As a response, perhaps, the Manipur market was practically invaded by the tobacco-laced leaves, called "mitha patti" brought by air freight from Kolkata and

other airports.

Ningthemjao, a wholesale trader, said there was a drastic slashing of the demand of Assamese betel nuts and leaves since the chewing habit was adopting

to the other variety. "There is still some demand for religious and formal social functions," he said.

Ibethoi, a woman who used to sell betel nuts at the Keishamthong market in Imphal, said: "I had closed down my shed many years ago since nobody bought it. People were after the mitha patti paan".

The business of the costlier "mitha patti" is so lucrative that newspaper packets and other luggages are sometimes off loaded at originating airports to accommodate its consignments. The 'high quality' betel nuts that go with this variety is brought in from Myanmar.

Because of a lack of demand for the Assam betel nuts, most kiosks have either closed down or adopted

One fallout of this migration was that Manipuris adopted the Assamese habit of eating tamul (betel nut), which then seeped into the society in Manipur. Now the society is grappling with the changing habits of Manipuris, as far as the nut and leaves are concerned.

the flown-in variety.

Radhesyam, a social activist, said "guests at functions like marriage ceremony or funeral gatherings had stopped eating the offered betel nut. They just ended up littering the venue."

He wondered why people still insist on offering it on special occasions. Inao, an event manager, said: "It (the offering) is made out of respect for the guests for coming to the function and this has to continue".

Some estimates put the habit of chewing the leaves at 90 percent of the adult population. But it's not without its darker side.

Health specialists say the incidence of cancer, because of the tobacco-lacing, is exceptionally high in Manipur.

"What is worrisome is that women are not lagging behind men much", Prof Tomcha, former head of department of Radio Therapy at the Cancer Centre, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal, said.

According to Lakpa Laishram, a retired teacher, to avoid the health pitfalls, some families had started serving small packets of coconut pieces, spices and sugar cubes in lieu of the betel nuts and leaves. "It is high time others follow the practice," she added.

As traders and farmers in Assam and wholesalers and vendors in Manipur suffered from the loss of a lucrative market, the militants too must have seen their illegal income drying up. Some of the insurgent groups called for a ban on "mitha patti paan".

But since they could not intervene in its supply, the flow was not hampered much. Moreover, armed policemen guard markets where wholesale trade in the leaves takes place. Also, highly-mobile traders, often from Bihar, have fanned out across the state to sell their product.

The business has really moved on.

(The writer can be contacted at [imphalreport@gmail.com](mailto:imphalreport@gmail.com))

Off-shoulder tops are hot this summer according to fashion designers. Pramita Bose reports

## Shoulder it, stylishly

Don't give it a cold shoulder, literally, but expose it with elan this spring-summer, say fashion designers. We are talking about off-shoulder tops, of course, which are ruling the fashion scene now.

Conceptually, however, shoulder-baring is nothing new but has been a part of dresses from ages. Observes designer Shruti Sancheti, "It's been a trend from time immemorial. Its origin can be traced back to the great evolving era of Indus valley civilisation

down to the Aryans and the golden period of the Guptas in history. On the western front, Greeks, Romans followed this fashion route and later during the Victorian and Edwardian reign, a woman's shoulders, collar bones and arms were steadfastly ruling the roost. Its USP is that it reveals yet looks demure."

It appears sexy yet feminine and additionally, looks stylish and leaves the rest to imagination. "The cold-shoulder trends with downplayed make-up, halter-variations and boat necks with sleeve cut-outs would hold sway in the months ahead," Sancheti predicts.

"No wonder the shoulder fad is hitting the runways big-time at New York, London, Milan and Paris fashion weeks this 2016 spring season. Earlier in the 90s, this was a craze and now it has sprung back to emerge as the biggest story in the fashion street," echoes Shibani Sanghvi, CEO, creative head and founder of Divaat.com, a leading online fashion store for trendy apparels at pocket-friendly prices.

Exposure is the key element here but overdoing things can spoil the whole show. So



Collections of fashion designers Zulekha Shariff and Shruti Sancheti

the right mix and balance are crucial, suggest fashion exponents. Cautions designer Zulekha Shariff, "It's definitely a sexy way to show off your skin but if you try too hard, it backfires. These off-shoulder dresses are the best bet to draw attention to your face and lend the illusion of an elongated neck. Hence, minimal styling is needed

when you slip into an off shoulder and look gorgeous at the same time."

The high-street stores are now brimming with off-shoulder varieties to pick and choose from. Tops with ruffled, crochet, a white lacy look or just sleek velvety gowns can do all the talking for you. While for a bohemian look, opt for those gypsy tops, navy off-shoulder with

distressed jeans and brown suede fringe heels, white sheer off-shoulder with denim skirts, shoes, skinny jeans and a bucket purse make a style statement as also floral prints for the summer. One may pair it up with white pants.

The fashionistas would know how important it is to pay attention to the bottom part (Contd on P-VII)

By Trisha Mukherjee

Noted writer and historian William Dalrymple, who recently rediscovered his long lost passion for photography was "surprised" at how the photos he took while on his travels turned out to be dark - even darker than his narratives of crumbling empires and perishing dynasties.

Over 50 black and white photographs by the Scottish author documented from his extensive travel across unfathomable regions of Afghanistan, Iran, Tibet, Ladakh and other parts of Central Asia have found place in a new book titled, "The Writer's Eye" (Harper Collins).

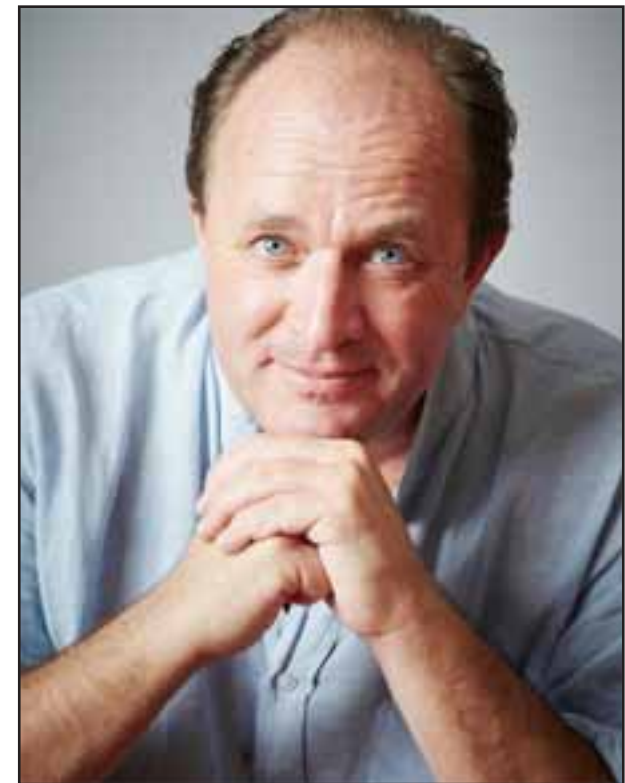
"I am surprised how dark and drastic some of the images are. My writing is not strictly dark. It seems to draw on a different side of me. It is a rather dark, more extreme vision of the world, but the photographs are darker."

"I am not a dark character. I am a lively person in my private life and I spend most of my life laughing. There are some sad stories (in writing) but there is a lot of humour too in books like 'The City of Djinns.' But I am surprised at the shots. They are all dark," Dalrymple said.

He believes that his photography showcases a "palette" that is different from the one visible in his writing, despite drawing inspiration from the same travels and the common themes of Mughal architecture, ruins of Afghanistan and domes of Golconda among others.

"The photographs show a taste for the dark and remote, the moody and the atmospheric, perhaps even the Gothic, that I don't think is there in my books or articles and which slightly surprises even me," he writes in the book. For Dalrymple, who turned 51 about a week ago, it was "completely thrilling" to foray into a new avenue and "find something else that I could do at the age of 50."

With 19th century photog-



William Dalrymple

## 'My writing is dark but photographs darker'

rapher Julia Margaret Cameron as his great great aunt, the art of photography was certainly something that Dalrymple inherited genetically. Beginning at the tiny age of 7 with a Kodak camera, he graduated to a Contax 35mm SLR with Carl Zeiss lens within few years.

"Ever since I started writing, my photography languished and died," he says.

But, what took a back seat decades ago, with his writing

flourishing over the years, has recently resumed precedence in the last 18 months, as the author has been photographing profusely alongside researching for his upcoming book, "The Anarchy," that documents the 60 years of East India Company's imperial rule over India.

"I have always been a photographer but it is something that I have rediscovered (Contd on P-VII)



By Ranjan K Baruah

# Career planning after Class X

Many students have appeared in the Board Exams or Secondary Level this year. There might be separate boards like state board or central board but after passing Class X examination or secondary level examination many students are worried. Off course some worry for marks that they might get but many are worried regarding next studies or what would be after they pass the exam.

We have to take proper care while selecting our career as it decides our future. Proper planning and proper counselling might help a student to choose a good career. We need to have proper information about various opportunities before selecting any career. Most of the students completing their 10th standard are confused about deciding a right career path. It's difficult for a student to judge everything and hence the role of teachers and parents are very important.

Students getting good marks shall continue for higher studies but some may not be able to continue due to many problems. There are some limited careers opportunities after passing class X as many are after senior secondary or after graduation. Some of the options after Class X are

Indian Army recruits Soldier (General Duty) (All Arms) for the matric pass candidates securing more than 45 % and 32% separately in all subjects. In case of candidates joining after senior secondary then there is no cut off marks. Candidates aged between 17 years and 6 month to 21 years and 6

months may apply for the recruitment. Aspirants may visit the website of Indian Army for further details and advertisements. Like Indian Army, there are some provisions as Airmen in the Indian Air Force. Aspirants may join as musician and the age limit is in between 17 years to 25 years. There are opportunities in Indian Navy as Steward and cooks for the Class X pass candidates. Aspirants aged between 17 to 21 may apply for those posts.

There is age relaxation for international players who wished to join Indian Navy in required vacancies after Class X. Indian Coast Guards also has provision for taking aspirants after passing class X. They may be Navik in Domestic Branches and the age limit is in between 18 to 22. There are opportunities in other para military forces. Aspirants may visit the website of different forces and advertisements are published in leading newspaper.

There are some other opportunities like Animation, Beauty Care, Jewellery Designing, Video Editing, Modeling, Video Jockey, Radio Jockey, etc. But most them also prefer senior secondary pass now a days. Students may also take skill development courses which are provided by different institutes and choose their profession though skills.

Though there are some opportunities after Class X but one may complete

Class XII and then seek for employment opportunities or continue further studies. Some student also helps their parents or guardians in traditional or family business. In rural areas some drop out from regular schools due to other responsibilities. In some cases some may opt for the open schooling and complete the course till senior secondary level.

A student may also seek advices from career counselors or experienced teachers while choosing subjects after class X. There are some personality tests available online which are free. Some may also go for the paid tests and assess the type of personality to choose the best career option. It depends on authentic information and a good planning if a student wants to shine in the future. Students must be careful and choose their best career options. Parents or guardian should not force their kids to take up science if they are not comfortable. Good planning would help in building the career and future and students may also contribute for the development of the society by becoming a human resource for the country.

*(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjn@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries )*

## Success and failure lead Bollywood stars to commit suicide, feels Zeenat Zafar

# Life of glitz, glamour and depression

Bollywood is a cruel place. Today you are right on top of the world and tomorrow nobody knows you. This leads to extreme depression and financial disability. From every nook and corner of the country young aspiring boys and girls make way to Mumbai to be either a movie or serial star, some get chance but a large majority struggles to make both ends meet. In the process the hollow, make believe world of glamour is a snare to many young people who become disoriented in the limelight and are haunted by loneliness. She was four months shy of her 25th birthday when Pratyusha Banerjee was found dead hanging from the ceiling of her flat in Mumbai on April 1.

The young woman with a pretty face was a household name in television entertainment, and not a struggling actor fighting for a toehold in the industry. She had a long life ahead of her and dreams to fulfil. But Pratyusha is gone now, and that is the truth -- however shocking it might be.

For the teeming millions who were mesmerised by her performance as the lead actor in the serial Balika Vadhu, hers was a life of glitz, glamour, money and adulation. On the face of it,

that many aspire to but only handful actually gets to live. Well, the truth is -- and it comes with fatal reminders time and again -- the world of make believe is as fragile as a soap bubble, lasting till the arc lamps are shining and the last shot of the day is canned. Beneath the layers of pancake is a face that's scared to confront the harsh and unsparring reality.

Beyond the dazzling fame is a life consumed by loneliness and insecurities -- an all powerful genie trapped behind the bars of celebrityhood, waiting, perhaps unknowingly, to be liberated from the prison of success that he/she willingly stepped into.

It took tremendous courage for Deepika Padukone to admit in public that she was suffering from depression. On top of her game, she could have easily hidden her vulnerabilities from the world -- depression is a dreaded word even for



Pratyusha Banerjee

with depression and Parkinson's disease.

Pratyusha's death has given birth to many conspiracy theories, but the fact remains that what appears picture-perfect on screen is far removed from reality. Aspiring and successful actors, struggling and accomplished fashion models, all go through the same grind in varying degrees. The heady cocktail of fame and money can leave a lasting hangover; the air-kissing, red carpet and flashbulbs go hand-in-hand with obscurity. It's a high-stakes game and not everybody can withstand the wear and tear, mental agony and the gnawing fear of failure. Death, then, becomes an escape route. Pratyusha may have thought that she entered stardom with a bang, and

keep their psychological ailments under wraps for fear of ostracism. Padukone has done a huge service to millions of people by being candid. If she can, then we too can, and without fear!

Fame has claimed many lives; success that comes easily and early in life can become a cyanide pill for those who either can't handle it or fails to come to grips with failure. The renowned director-actor Guru Dutt committed suicide falling a victim to depression as he could not get the desired love from one of the top actresses of his time.

Divya Bharti at the peak of her film career committed suicide! Often, as in the case of Kurt Cobain, the lead singer, guitarist and songwriter of the rock band Nirvana, it's fuelled by drug abuse.

Tamil sex symbol, Silk Smitha, turned into an alcoholic and snuffed out her

own life when she found her popularity declining. VJ, actress and former Miss India, Nafisa Joseph, embraced death when she was

only 12 years old. Pratyusha's age, calling it quits in an identical manner 12- years ago.

Jiah Khan's demise is still shrouded in mystery, and she left the world pretty young. The dream churning factories in India and abroad have many sad and shocking tales of suicide.

The world woke up with a jolt when the immensely popular and much respected Hollywood star, Robin Williams, committed suicide, unable to cope



Deepika Padukone

her life must end in an equally spectacular manner! In death, she once again became the talk of the town. Today, everyone is discussing how she had suffered all this while, that she was a victim of domestic abuse and besieged by financial troubles. It's too late now.



Divya Bharti

it was an enchanting life lesser mortals who prefer to

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, April 10, 2016

Moon sextile Sun on your solar return chart is good for initiating new projects. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional and your ideas are more progressive. Get down to the basics; put your best foot forward to get things off to a flying start. You also see the start of a new relationship. Financially this is going to be a very good period.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**  
You bring a powerful and energetic approach to resolve professional projects in hand. Your leadership qualities come to the fore as you organize professional activities with great élan. You are in your element in your interactions while meeting with business associates. As you travel you will find that it brings in luck in another aspect of your life too. You need not over analyze personal relationships but rather respond with your heart and feelings; as a new understanding gives you added perspective. It is time to express your feelings and ideas and share what you have learned through a variety of experiences of late.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**  
This period finds you responsible, hard working, dutiful, and serious when it comes to finances, investments and issues related to the family. You would move on the path of success in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth. You feel the need to be appreciated by family members, and the need for togetherness with others comes into focus. New contacts may also occur. Events are such that you move towards a more objective approach to your life and you cultivate true friendships.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**  
You are fun loving, energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. Financial benefits may come your way this week. Self-confidence and action are highlighted and you instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. Excellent work opportunities for those working with associates from overseas and you may travel for business dealings. At home, you accept the individuality of your spouse and that would be helpful to resolve your conflicts and move ahead in harmony. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**  
Stars favor people in the field of show business and fine arts. Excellent professional opportunities for students in fine arts, music, singing and creative writing will open up new doors. Personal relations are rejuvenated and your romance moves more rapidly as you relate well on the intellectual level as well and move towards a long-term commitment. Home and family matters capture your attention and are a strong source of pride. It's a time when worldly matters are not as important to you.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**  
You would be more determined and hard working. This is an excellent period in your life in which to get organized and to stick with projects through to the end. You would spend money on clothes, furniture, and entertainment. You initiate a force of energy to achieve success in an important venture. You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with controversial, professional matters. You are also likely to form relationships with people based on a deep love. You are in touch with your more sensitive and spiritual qualities. You are able to express a greater level of sensitivity and sensibility.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**  
You would adopt a realistic, practical and disciplined approach towards work and domestic relations. People in fine arts, creative lines and communication related fields would give a traditional blend to their contemporary creations. You assume a leadership role and take control of matters both at work and home. Your communication abilities will largely be applied to professional ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters. You are proud of your ideas, and very good at expressing them to family members smoothly now.

You tend to entertain them with your conversation, and your sense of humor. This is an excellent phase in which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships with loved ones.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**  
Activities related to communication such as journalism, literature and fine arts are prominent. An arduous yet stimulating project should be taken as a challenge which would further promote business prospects. Physical energy and good health enable you handle a busy schedule and complete work commitments. Responsibilities and commitments may take up more time than usual, so set some time aside. Also, arrange your schedule so that you don't take on too much and you don't end up handling more errands and odd jobs than you can effectively manage.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**  
You feel fresh and re-energized as a blast of personal energy comes your way and exhibiting your leadership skills works for you now. You are at your most convincing, as others accept you at face value. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. There may be gains from property, shares and fixed assets. You are nurturing and caring in personal relationships. A short vacation allows you to enjoy the gifts of nature with a loved one.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**  
Your credibility is important and efforts at self-promotion could be made now. It's an excellent period to make a lifestyle change and get extra mileage. Any unresolved argument may create rifts in your relationships; take a softer approach in your interactions when it comes to the family and romance related matters. A new set-up in the existing house or a new house altogether may be part of the picture in the coming months, as well as a sense of renewal and reinvigoration. It is time to come back to your inner center to regain physical strength, mental balance, emotional harmony and spiritual awareness.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**  
You would be able to make an impact on business associates with your hard work and sincere efforts. Your creativity will assist in your output at work and help you undertake new or existing challenges. You would 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. Your ideas are higher than usual, religious teaching may be part of the picture, and your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background than you are indicated during this phase.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**  
The current planetary combination lets you be responsible, hard working, dutiful, and serious in finances and investments. This is an especially spiritual time for you -- a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you. It's a good time to join organizations and groups with a social purpose. You move on the path of success and there is betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction. It's time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and friends.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**  
You have intellectual vibration and ability to adapt to most situations. This phase brings a change in professional patterns and there is no more ambiguity about these matters. You would be able to face truths, deal with emotional choices or difficult situations. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs realizing that this too shall pass. You are compassionate and generous with family, friends and relatives, drawing respect from them. It's a good time to join organizations and groups and to attend meetings or social events. You would come back to your inner center to regain physical strength, mental balance, emotional harmony and spiritual awareness.

## 'My writing is dark but ....'

(Contd from P-VI) in the last 18 months. Part of it is because I haven't been writing. I have been researching for my book and travelling widely to places that have lent themselves quite well for photography too," he says.

Dalrymple currently uses the camera of his Samsung Note phone to click pictures.

Dalrymple's rekindled rendezvous with photography started with sharing pictures with friends over Facebook and have now "taken a new life of their own."

"It is very exciting to see the works developing and then how they were put on the front cover of the Creative Image magazine (by Raghu Rai). I began to take it seriously as other people began to take it seriously," he says.

But, he insists that he is essentially a writer rather than a photographer, and adds, "there are many ways you can live your life."

"No question, I am a writer. That's my day job. But, these days one can be anything. I have been at different times - a foreign correspondent, a historian, a feature writer, critic, a documentary film maker and co-founded the Jaipur Literature Festival"

The award-winning writer who has produced stunning charcoal-painting like photographs of landscapes besides those chronicling the routine lives of people in several

countries, prefers black and white photography to colour because the former, he says, is "powerful and can really pack a punch."

"There is something about the monochrome intensity of black and white. It seemed a much more daring and exciting world, full of artistic possibilities and allowed me to develop and edit my own prints," he says.

He also prefers using a phone camera to a more elaborate professional set up with multiple equipments for lighting, exposure etc.

"I love the lack of pretension in it. It is very discreet. It goes with you. No one knows you are taking a picture and gives you terrific freedom," he says.

A collection of caption-less photographs (published in the book) by Dalrymple were also exhibited at Vadehra Art Gallery here recently, after a show at Sunaparanta: Goa Centre for the Arts.

"The curator did not want them to be documentation of travels but sheer works of art. Whether for good or for bad, it was the curator's decision," he says.

Curated by bestselling writer and Sensorium Festival co-founder, Siddharth Dhanvant Sanghvi, "The Writer's Eye" will next travel to London to host a show at the Grosvenor Gallery in June 2016.

## Shoulder it, stylishly

(Contd from P-VI) of the dress when in an off shoulder



with off-shoulder tops to create that cool, chic look. Separates as in maxi dresses or gowns also look good.

"A black off-shoulder dress with a classy cross belt bag, a blush pink dress and a floral top with distressed denims are a few good must haves in one's closet. Interestingly, off-shoulders are incredibly easy to be coupled with any bottoms," says Sanghvi.

There is no particular colour palette to compliment this

silhouette, yet tops generally in soft pastel hues, whites and nudes retain their popularity with nautical prints for company. "For an avant-garde feel, bold chromes and prints would look simply awesome with a little bit of ruffles to unleash that X-factor. Petite floral prints for off-shoulder summer costumes are yet another runaway winner," prescribes Sanghvi.

The fabric can range from silk crepe to linen for maxi dresses, kaftans, tunics and dinner dresses. "And if you want a bodycon top or a tight-fitting dress to clad yourself in, then lycra is just the material to work wonders for you," she adds.

On the other hand, Sancheti urges stylistas to raise their bar with "denims which is a hot trend this year". While in print section she considers native prints, paisleys, block prints and special screen prints to set their own benchmark and the print-on-print story to be pronounced as a strong trend for the year.

Hints of pastels or the Pantone unisex palette that comprises offbeat tints like 'rose quartz' and 'serenity' are the go-to colours of 2016 fashionscape and would undoubtedly give your off-shoulder attires a very chic yet refined look.

"Even darker hues like blacks, khaki green and burgundy will look stunning to the admirers' gaze," recommends Sharifi, who votes for solid colours and smaller prints to get along with this trend. "However, it's always good to select prints and fabrics depending on your body type. Almost any print can suit this style right from the stripes to florals with fabrics ranging from lace to cottons," she observes.

Off shoulder tops can work for office-wear too but then, advises Sanghvi, "For a corporate spin, pair it up with a pencil skirt or a neat trouser. And if a night-out is planned with your girlie gang, never forget to grasp an alluring pair of shorts to be the cynosure of all stares." (TWF)

*“A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it begins to rain.”*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 239

SHILLONG, MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2016

### Maneka on marital rape

WOMEN and Child Development (WCD) Minister Maneka Gandhi has said that her ministry could consider taking a step towards criminalizing marital rape provided there is ample proof of a sufficient number of complaints. She said that although marital rape happened frequently, women had to complain themselves about this aspect of violence. Only then the government could respond. At present, the government does not have a case for introducing a separate law to criminalize marital rape. The fact is that women do not even have the guts to complain against domestic violence. Maneka Gandhi said emphatically that violence was violence and had to be dealt with severely. It has, on the other hand, been argued that if marital rape is criminalized, the entire family system will be under great stress. Section 375 of the IPC which deals with rape makes an exception for cases within marriage. Even sexual intercourse by a man with his wife who is under fifteen years of age is not legally rape. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 provides for civil remedies for domestic violence including sexual abuse “within a marriage but does not make it a criminal offence”.

It may be noted that while the Law Commission report was not in favour of making marital rape a criminal offence as that would be “excessive interference with the marital relationship”, the Justice Verma report made a strong case for criminalizing marital rape. Can Maneka Gandhi push forward the case for harassed married women and criminalize marital rape?

## LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### 18 killed in orgy of violence in Punjab

An indefinite curfew was clamped on the walled city of Amritsar today after an orgy of terrorist violence claimed eighteen lives in Punjab. One terrorist was also killed in an encounter with security forces near Haipur village in Jalandhar district this morning.

All but four of the killings took place in Amritsar district where a dozen terrorists raided a house in Jagdev Kalan village and shot dead all twelve members a family. The villagers came to know of the killings only this morning. Indefinite curfew was clamped on the entire walled city of Amritsar and Durgiana Mandir area this afternoon in view of tension, official sources said. The sources said a funeral procession turned violent and stoned a police party accompanying it. The procession was in connection with the funeral of vie people who were shot down by terrorists yesterday near Dubarji on the Amritsar Taran-Taran road in Amritsar district. Police opened fire injuring two people. Terrorists shot dead two people at Kaonka Kalana village in Ludhiana district last night, police said. Police said two terrorists forced their way into one Veer Singh's house and escaped. Later, the terrorists gunned down a panchayat member Pal Singh in his house and escaped.

One person was gunned down by four terrorists outside his home at village Balpur last night, a report from Batala said. Police identified the victim as Mr Apar Singh (35). Police said the terrorists called him out of his house and shot him dead. In another incident in Amritsar six terrorists shot dead a Communist Party of India (CPI) activist. Tilak Raj and injured his party colleague in village Khadar Sahib, police said. Police recovered two bodies in Naurangabad village this morning, police believed that the two were killed by terrorist. One terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces near Haripur village this morning, a report from Jalandhar said. Police

claimed to have recovered one 12-bore gun along with 12 cartridges from the person of the slain terrorist.

### V.P. Singh asks P.M to own Bofors scandal

Former Defence Minister V P Singh today urged Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi to own the responsibility in the Bofors scandal. Addressing a public meeting here this evening Mr Singh said it was a pity that the Prime Minister had to make a statement in Parliament to clarify that neither he nor any of his family members had taken commission in the deal.

Justifying his action to hire Fairfax, Mr Singh said if foreign Government's help could be sought to arrest General. Vaidya's killer, there was nothing wrong in “my taking foreign assistance to book economic offenders.” Mr Singh said the fact that the Prime Minister had announced an inquiry into the amassing of wealth by Ajiabh Bacchan in Switzerland showed that there was a case against him.

### Splinter Janata party to retain identity

The national executive of the truncated Janata Party today decided to maintain its identity and elected Mr Innubhai Patel as its president. A meeting of the national executive resolved to maintain the identity of the party at all costs and take steps to strengthen the organization.

The president was authorized to oppose the Janata Dal application for transfer of the party symbol and take necessary steps to reoccupy the office. Taking to newsmen here. Besides Mr Patel, other members who attended the meeting were former Karnataka Power Minister Mr Deva Gowda, Syed Shahabuddin, Dr Subramanvaim Swamy and Dr Sorojini Mahaishi. Mr Patel said the Janata Dal had forcibly occupied centre office of the Janata Party and steps would be taken to remove them from that premises.

Jowai now is greeting all visitors with streets littered with dirt all over the town. At certain locations of the town one will also see piles of garbage which is mounting every day. It looks like Jowai is on the competition for the honour of becoming the dirtiest town in the world and no prizes for guessing the cause of the predicament. The reason is because the employees of the Jowai Municipal Board have once again gone on strike to demand their rights. The employees of the Board who are responsible for keeping our town clean have not received their salaries for over eight months. And it is not the first time that the staff of the Board have had to resort to a strike to pressure those in power to redress their grievances. But each time a solution was arrived at it was a stop gap arrangement with no efforts to solve this problem once and for all.

Unlike Shillong which has written records of the beginning of the city since it was established, there is not much written records about Jowai in the pre-British period. But Jowai being one of the oldest towns in the hills is rich in tradition and culture and people still maintain their spiritual connection with nature by keeping certain space and natural phenomenon as sacred. But the town which abounds in traditions and spirituality is now facing a gigantic problem of garbage disposal.

Like any other town, Jowai too developed naturally with no proper planning. The town which was a composition of many localities (dongs) is now becoming an unplanned urban settlement. As this new urban settlement gradually developed into a town, the dongs or localities maintain their local dorbar dong or dorbar shnong but later the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council constituted the Jowai Town Committee to cater to the overall need and development of the entire town. JHADC conducts regular elections to the Jowai Town Committee and people exercise their franchise to elect their local representatives. In 1995 when Dr R C Laloo MLA of Jowai

# Jowai: A town at the crossroads

By H H Mohrmen

constituency was a minister in the state government and Moonlight Pariat was the Chief Executive Member of the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, the Jowai Town Committee was dissolved to make way for creation of the Jowai Municipal Board. It is therefore not wrong to conclude that JMB is R C Laloo's baby. Unfortunately since the creation of the JMB the Board had never had any election and every now and then the chairman of the Board was appointed by the government without any members.

In 2010 an organization called Jowai Civic Awareness Committee was formed. It demanded that the government conduct elections to the Jowai Municipal Board, but there are also organizations which opposed the creation of the JMB and were also against conducting any election to the Board. The fear of influx of non tribals to the town was the main reason people opposed the creation of the municipal board. A section of the population also opposed the creation of the JMB because for fear of having to pay tax, particularly house tax. Their argument is that it was against the house tax that u Kiang Nangbah had led a revolt against the British government. Hence they were against the Board too. But what we do not realize is that u Kiang Nangbah's revolt was against a tax levied by a foreign power; now we have a country of our own.

Because the election was not held and the government too had not appointed anyone as chairman of the JMB, the office of the Jowai Municipal Board is now headed only by the Chief Executive Officer who looks after the day to day affairs of the Board. The JMB is therefore functioning as an ad hoc organization and because the state government cannot hold any election as mandated by the central government, hence funds from the Ministry of Urban affairs are also not forthcoming. The non-availability of funds from the state government and also the dearth of funds from the Central government is the major cause for

funds constraints of the Jowai Municipal Board.

The staff of the JMB under the banner of the Jowai Municipal Board Employee's Association has once again decided to call for an indefinite strike from the beginning of last week. The only demand was that the Government should pay the ninety odd employees of the Board their salaries pending for more than eight months now. Not even a week had lapsed since the employees of the JMB launched their indefinite strike and the town's folks are already complaining.

The administration has already anticipated that this would happen and few months back convened a meeting of the headmen of all the localities of Jowai to discuss this issue. The deputy commissioner had proposed the enhancement of the monthly fee per household for collection and dumping of waste. But the headmen of the localities of Jowai rejected the proposal outright. The government is now spending about rupees nine lakh per month on the salaries of the employees working in the JMB while the localities are only willing to pay rupees thirty rupees per month to the JMB for collection and disposal of garbage.

It is ironic that while individual households in the town had their backyards clean spick and span yet the same people are not worried about the streets in the town littered with dirt and garbage at many locations. So why are we not willing to pay? Or do we still think that somebody else should clean the mess that we made? Or are we of the opinion that it is the government's responsibility to clean the mess that we have made. The board has already calculated that there are five hundred ninety seven households in Jowai and it will only cause them less than two hundred rupees per month to pay the nine lakh per month needed to clean our mess. Yet the Rangbah Shnong are unwilling to shell the much needed money to clean our town.

Now Jowai also has two major markets; the premiere lawmusiang and the new law-thymme market at

Ladthalaboh, Jowai. In these two markets there are also hundreds of shops and commercial establishments which should also be taxed for the services they use. Then there are also markets run by faith groups in the town like those run by the Sein Raid, Jowai, the Presbyterian Church, Jowai and the Church of North East India. These organizations should enhance the amount they pay to the Board to enable the JMB to pay their staff. After all, they are also running a business.

It has been a week since the staffs of JMB begin their strike on April 4, yet none of the public representatives of the town have taken cognizance of the problem. Neither the MLA Dr R C Laloo who is highly educated nor the local MDC Andrew A Shullai who is also a Deputy CEM JHADC or the other MDCs of the town like Moonlight Pariat and Marki Mulieh did anything to address this public grievance. R C Laloo has failed the town he was born in, time and again and this problem is also of his creation because the Municipal Board is his own creation. He cannot also wash his hands off this issue because he has represented Jowai since 1983 except for the two terms when he was defeated by Singh Mulieh. So Laloo must be held responsible for whatever befalls the town.

Now foul smell is emanating from these garbage mounds but only the pedestrians have to face the problem because all our leaders are driving on their swanky SUVs with all the windows closed. Even if our leaders had failed us, thankfully good sense still prevails in the young people. On April 9 last five days after the JMB strike started, some young people from villages like Mushrot, Rymbai, Looksi, Mukroh and few from Jowai decided to remove the garbage collected at the heart of the town in front of the Jowai Police station. That morning 15 pickups of garbage were removed and the group of young volunteers under the leadership of one Nehemayah Tyngkan even paid for the cost of transportation of the garbage to the dumping ground.

Jowai is being neglected by its leaders and it is time for the young people to take over from these incompetent leaders.

## Assembly polls road to 2019 Mamata, Jaya both set to win

By Harihar Swarup

What does ongoing elections in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union territory of Puducherry portend? The outcome of poll may set the tone of general elections in 2019. Of course, the stakes are high both for the Congress and the BJP; but not so much for the BJP because, except Assam, the party has virtually no stake in four election-bound states.

It is foolhardy to make any poll predication at this stage when only one first phase of election is held in Assam. What appears clear and for that poll forecasts are not required is that Mamata Banerjee is certain to romp home in West Bengal irrespective of the margin of her victory; it may be less than last election. Obviously, Congress-Marxists alliance does not measure up to her popularity.

Bengalis have shed ideas and ideology for pragmatism. The promised Poribortan (change) is translated as rice at Rs. two kg, cycles for college students, shoes for schoolchildren, free education for girls, and other largesse for voters. But Bengalis want jobs. An important reason why Left Front fell was that having regenerated the countryside, it did not meet the revolution of rising expectation by inviting industry.

On her part, Mamata's fierce campaign against a Special Economic Zone at Nandigram and Tata's factory at Singur made industrialists even more suspicious. For all her undoubted achievements, charisma, energy and burning desire to do something for Bengal, Mamata lacks the vision, manpower and organizational support to seek a permanent solution to long-standing economic problems.

Almost the same is the situation in Tamil Nadu where Jayalalitha is sure to win; in the prevailing situation Congress-DMK alliance is no match to her. What is seen as Karunanidhi's climactic battle with his bete noir, Jayalalitha, 68, who has enjoyed a popular, if tumultuous, reign in office. The DMK, which was washed out in the last election, because of rampant corruption, is hoping in vain, to make a recovery by allying with smaller parties and attacking Amma where she is perceived to be weak—her government's stand on prohibition, its management of the Chennai floods, and her aloofness from the body politic, among other things. Karunanidhi's party men will not allow the 92-year-old leader to hang his boots. He had, after all, led his party to victories in four assembly elections.

The first time Jayalalitha assumed office, in 1991, it was a spectacular victory for the AIADMK. The AIADMK-Congress alliance won on the back of a sympathy wave after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. This time around, Jayalalitha's dramatic acquittal in an 18-year-old disproportionate assets case, which she hailed as a “victory of justice”, may work in her favour. With the elections shaping up to a battle royale, her vote share may

well dip, but she is sure to get a clear mandate. The BJP has not made a dent in Tamil Nadu.

Most tough electoral battle is slated in Kerala where prediction, at this stage, appears to be difficult. According to electoral pattern in the southern state, Congress-led front and the Left Front alternate each five years.

The 92-year-old V S Achuthanandan has become the face CPI-M in the current election; he is all set to go to battle field again, the sixth time in an eventful political life that began in 1938 at the age of 18 as a trade union activist. He asserts “we will this time with a thumping majority. People of Kerala are badly in need of change. They are fed up with the Oommen Chandy government. There is corruption at all levels”.

Life started as a struggle for Achuthanandan. He lost his mother in early childhood, and his father at the age of 11. When he was 12, he dropped out of school to work in a coir factory. He got into politics by organizing workers. Even now, at this age, the energy is unflagging. Achuthanandan gets at 4 in the morning, does yoga for an hour and then goes for a brisk walk for another hour. Breakfast is limited to two idlis and sambhar; lunch is less than a cup of rice with plenty of vegetables. Fish is a luxury when he comes to his home.

Despite Achuthanandan's popularity, the challenge for Marxists is formidable and all is not well for Left Front. In spite of charges of corruption against the ruling Congress led by Oommen Chandy, the Congress and its allies are set to give a tough fight to the Left Front. The results are difficult to predict. Wait for the D-day - May 19.

Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, the Congress stalwart of Assam, is a worried man. He is facing the biggest battle of his life. His dilemma is that there are new claimants for Muslim votes but he can't enter into any pact with pro-Muslim parties for fear of antagonizing Hindu voters, who possibly would veer towards a relatively new contender, the BJP, which has made all out efforts to establish a major foothold in the state. After the poll debacles in Delhi and Bihar, this is one state—among those going to polls in April-May—where the ruling party at the centre has some realistic chances of making a dramatic progress.

For Gogoi, who has turned 80, this month, the challenges are daunting. While it is the BJP that is making a bid to win over Hindu votes, it is Badruddin Ajmal's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) that he fears would eat into Congress' traditional vote bank that comprises Bangladeshi immigrants among other Muslims. (IPA Service)

Western term which rural folks hardly understands.

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

### Kudos to Rose Millian Bathew

Editor,  
Through The Shillong Times, I wish to extend my salutations to Ms Rose Millian Bathew a prominent resident of our locality, Madan Laban, for receiving

the honorary “Degree of Litt” (Honoris Causa) from the Union Minister HRD, Smriti Zubin Irani during the North Eastern Hill University Convocation held on March 29, 2016. She was the first woman Chairperson of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), and has contributed richly to her respective field and has furthered the cause of women.

Yours etc.,  
Mr. Hamlet Rani,  
Shillong- 4.

## TO THE EDITOR

### Clarification by GIONEE

Editor,  
Apropos the letter of complaint against published in your esteemed newspaper (ST April 7, 2016) titled, “Undue Harassment by Gionee Company”; we would like clarify as under.

Firstly, Gionee has never manufactured a mobile phone with model name P. 35. Secondly, we do not have any data/record of such a repair taking place in our repair centre. Thirdly, we do not have any record of a customer named Pynshai Syiem in our CRM as well as Job Sheet. All these facts have also been cross-checked with the officials of Gionee.

Hence we are extremely surprised to have noticed the issues pointed out by the customer in your newspaper. We strive to provide the best quality in our services offer and we therefore request the customer to kindly contact us to clarify his/her complaints and settle the issue.

Yours etc.,  
Lyngdoh Services (M. Dkhar Building, Fire Brigade),  
Shillong-3

### No VIP treatment please

Editor,  
Through your esteemed daily, I wish to inform that today as I was driving back to my house at Lawjynriew, Nongthymmai, I was stopped by traffic cop at Jingkieng who pointed to a “no entry sign” near the junction. He diverted my vehicle to the main road. When I inquired, I learnt that somebody had died somewhere near Reebok in Nongthymmai and the person's funeral would be held 2/3 days later. Just because of the death of some person, I had to spend precious fuel and waste extra time to go all around the IIM Shillong to get to my home at Lawjynriew. This sort of inconvenience is not acceptable. I request the Shillong Traffic Police not to entertain such VIP brushness and to immediately take out the “No Entry” sign.

Yours etc.,  
Martin Hujon,  
Via email

### Common man at receiving end

Editor,  
I am a resident of

Nongthymmai. The death of a common man somewhere near IIM Shillong has caused tremendous inconvenience to another common woman like me. I had to take a complete detour because of no entry at Jingkieng. When I was passing through IIM Shillong, there was no sight of any funeral party, and the streets were literally free with no cars parking along the road. Only later was informed that the funeral is some days away. I wasted my time, money and patience due to this utterly ludicrous action by the traffic police. I urge them to remove the no entry sign and bring back some sanity.

Yours etc.,  
Sweety Khongwir,  
Via email

### Mawbyinna please, not monolith

Editor,  
The three day Monolith Festival that got underway at Mawphlang witnessed a huge turnout of people partly because the event was something different, unique and special in its own place. However, I would like to put certain points of argument, about the term Monolith which is

a Western term which in the real context should have been and should be changed to a rather indigenous term by renaming it as Mawbyinna Festival. The fact is there is no connection whatsoever with the term Monolith in Khasi while we display our tribal culture using a Western terminology, because Monolith depicts only stones but Mawbyinna is something that is related to our cultural and traditional history from the religious and social view point. The significance is that the KHADC which is seen as the torch bearer of the Khasi race should adopt a pragmatic term like Mawbyinna Festival rather than the English terminology. It is not that people wouldn't understand but they will surely have the knowledge to accept the important link of the Mawbyinna and our culture. If there is opposition to this change then why not change Ka Shad Suk Mysiemi into the English meaning, or maybe the Shad Sukhra or Ka Pomblang too. But just as these religious festivals are imbibed traditionally so the same should be done with the Mawbyinna Festival instead of the Monolith Festival. The festival should focus on improving traditional knowledge rather than tagging a

*“Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you an opportunity to commit more.”*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 240 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2016

### Rent seeking state

THE toll gate at Umling which is set up to recover the cost of constructing the Shillong-Jorabat four lane highway has been operating for about a month. In that single month the rate collected from commercial vehicles has been hiked by Rs 5 for smaller vehicles and an equivalent percentage for trucks etc., Earlier the rate for one tourist taxi both ways was Rs 85. Now it is Rs 90. For a single journey it was Rs 55.; now this has shot up to Rs 60. Trucks are charged a whopping Rs 280 for a one-way journey and Rs 510 both ways. This must be the highest toll collected for plying on less than a hundred km of road, anywhere in the country. It is learnt that the extortion racket is in full swing and there are several groups and individuals who see this toll gate as an easy way to make money. They allegedly include politicians, policemen, pressure groups, village authorities et al. To survive, the toll gate contractors have no option but to pay the amount demanded by each of these rent seekers. So a road constructed out of the Indian taxpayers' money has become a soft target to be fleeced by free-loaders. These are signs of a failed state. Actually a strong government should have dealt with this issue head-on but the Government of Meghalaya hardly has the credibility to stand up for what is ethical. In fact, ethics is divorced from the day to day functioning of the government.

Then comes the ban on the sale of liquor based on an Act that the Government has been sitting on for a while and which it suddenly decided to implement. The Act says that a wine store should be located 200 metres away from educational institutions, religious institutions and hospitals. For a city of only 100 sq km to expect each of the 107 wine stores and/or bonded warehouses to be located 200 metres away from the above institutions is not tenable. Already there is a lot of livelihood squeeze on account of the ban on coal. Now with the ban on sale of liquor many more livelihoods are imperiled. Should the government not be thinking of these realities? Or is this another rent-seeking attempt from wine store and bonded warehouse owners? The state has 39 bonded warehouses and more than 600 wine shops, of which, at least 314 wine shops have been affected by the notification. The Government has to give a better explanation than that of implementing an Excise Act which clearly has no locus-standi in a city where many of the wine stores pre-existed the educational or faith institutions or hospitals.

### LOOKING BACK

February 5, 1989

### PM reiterates resolve to stamp out terrorism

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today reiterated his government's commitment to stamp out terrorism in Punjab. The government would take more effective measures to check the activities on extremists, he said addressing a massive public meeting here.

He categorically stated that any solution to the Punjab problem would have to be within the parameters of the constitution. Meanwhile, two dreaded terrorists belonging to the "Kahlistan Liberation Force" (KLF) were gunned down in Ferozepur district this evening.

Elsewhere in Punjab, terrorists shot dead four members of a family, including a medical practitioner and kidnapped two people while twenty ultras were arrested during the past 24 hours.

In an encounter, security forces shot dead two terrorists at Apmalha village in Ferozepur District this evening. One of the terrorists was identified as

Balwinder Singh while other was yet to be identified. Two AK 47-Rifles alongwith 600 rounds of ammunition were recovered from them.

Four terrorists waylaid a Maruti car near Baikwind in Taran police district (Amritsar) this evening and kidnapped two passengers Prem Kumar and Prabha Dayal while letting the third passenger go.

Majitha police arrested eleven terrorists, including dreaded ultra Satwant Singh alias Pappu. The arrested terrorists mainly belonged to the "Babba. Khalsa and Bhindrawale Tigers Force."

Besides Satwant Singh alias Pappu, others were identified as Bhopinder Singh, Balbir Singh, Sarbajit Singh, Kartar Singh, Jawahar Singh, Harbajan Singh, Gurnam Singh, Gurmej Singh and Bachan Singh.

One AK-47 rifle with a magazine, four double barrel guns, one 38-bore revolver, three pistols and 527 cartridges of different bores were recovered from them.

Panama gives only a glimpse of the black hole of secret tax havens

# Implications of the Panama cash stash

By Nantoo Banerjee

The tiny state of Panama, a central American republic of just three million people, has long been known to the global shipping community for its famous 77-km long canal, a world wonder, and also as a US promoted rogue state registering ships, largely from the US, plying in the oceans and seas around the world under Panamanian flag, helping shipowners to hide their income and profit and violate all kinds of maritime regulations, including those for seafarers.

It was a known tax haven for rogue shipping companies, real owners of which rarely surfaced. As a result, Panama has the world's largest shipping fleet -- more than the combined tonnage of the two largest global economies and trading nations, the US and China. For over 100 years, Panama has been one of the world's most important marine trade routes, which connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Thanks to the USA, it always managed to maintain a low profile as a tax haven, until the international law firm with strong Panama connection, Mossack Fonseca, decided to leak 11 million 'Panama Papers' exposing their business link with Panama as dump house of secret funds. Ironically, US businessmen, politicians, celebrities, financial traffickers and the like rarely figured in Fonseca's eye-propping list.

The most interesting part of the Panama Papers leak is the mention of over 500 well-known Indians as stakeholders in obscure ventures in Panama. They include India's biggest real-estate baron, K.P. Singh of DLF, who is also a close associate of Robert Vadra, Vinod Adani, brother of businessman Gautam Adani, Apollo Tyre's Onkar Kanwar, TAFE's Mallika Srinivasan, prominent Goan shipping family member Anil Vasudev Salgaokar, former solicitor general Harish Salve, former attorney general Soli Sorabjee's physician son Jehangir and film stars Amitabh Bachchan and

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.

Though Amitabh Bachchan was quick to respond to the Panama leak saying he had nothing to do with any Panama company and his name may have been misused, not many have reacted to their names figuring in the first list of Panama Papers alongside such global figures and their associates and close friends as Saudi King, UAE President, Argentina president, Russian president, British Prime Minister, South Africa president, People's Republic of China's president, children of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, son of former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, Sportsmen Lionel Messi and Michel Platini.

Panama Papers are mostly unclear about the colour of the money parked in the accounts of individuals through their offshore firms. They could just be tax-evaded black money or tax-avoided grey funds. They could comprise money made out of under invoicing or over invoicing export-import trade by companies or individuals, hawala transferred money, legal or illegal trade facilitation commissions, terror fund transfers, or a purely legal offshore investment. Illegal or legal money transfers in tax havens are not easy to detect. Tax havens, which survive and flourish on such money transfers, rarely cooperate with any outside government. They will try to protect any national tax offender who may be using the offshore hidden fund channels without offending local rules and regulations of host countries. India's Rajiv Gandhi-era Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh and his enforcement directorate head Bhure Lal tried their best to fruitlessly nab Ajitabh Bachchan, brother of Amitabh Bachchan, named in Panama Papers, on charges of illegal transfer of huge fund to Luxembourg and Switzerland, both leading tax havens, raised out of the sale of his huge stocks in a Mumbai-based pharmaceutical company. Ajitabh Bachchan moved to Luxem-

bourg lock, stock and barrel overnight to relocate himself there and run a chemical factory across the border in Switzerland.

Life of the Indian super rich is much easier now than they were in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Most Indian billionaires today have legal residences in Europe, the USA, Singapore and other free countries across the world. Dual passport and dual citizenship facilities are offered by most tax havens. These offers are legally advertised in some of the well known foreign publications that are sold in India as well as in other countries. The deals are made secretly through agents. It is not easy to book such people, who have taken legal shelters abroad after allegedly cheating the governments, banks and even the innocent public of their countries of origin.

Like Lalit Modi, Pramod Mittal and Vijay Mallya, there are several other moneyed Indians who have happily left the country with family to peacefully park themselves in their big villas which they legally acquired abroad. They may be alleged tax offenders, bank looters or employees' provident fund cheaters in their countries of origin, but they are respectable citizens in host countries. Almost all of them have strong political and bureaucratic connections in their countries of origin as well as in host countries. Most Indian billionaires also have offshore shell companies and trading ventures abroad. Many of them have children based outside the country. Parking legal or illegal funds outside are child's play for them. Like a 'nominee' in a 'demat' share account India, it is no longer necessary to sign papers to be legal owners of such stocks in due course.

Incidentally, India, which is often mentioned as one of the major sources of global hidden funds, may also be accused of aiding hidden funds accumulation by multinational corporations doing business with the country. For instance, most US MNCs having FDI in India routed their investments

into the country through their legal subsidiaries or shell companies based in one or the other international tax haven. GE of the USA, the world's largest manufacturing company, has lately been accused by a Democratic Party nominee, Bernie Sanders, of parking huge funds in tax havens and demanded the GE chairman and CEO be arrested. Sanders has been constantly fighting against the dishonest US way of protecting and promoting hidden funds by its super rich, large corporations and friendly overseas countries.

Until recently, Mauritius, a tax haven has been used by some 400 well-known large foreign financial institutions to park funds collected from unknown sources in Indian stock market. Many believe that many of these FIIs are handling funds hidden by Indians and Indian corporations abroad. In fact, the US is officially the world's No. 1 tax haven. The latest Financial Secrecy Index says it is "because of both the size of its offshore sector, and also its rather wayward attitude to international cooperation and reform." America provides a wide array of secrecy and tax-free facilities for non-residents, both at a federal level and at the level of individual states.

India's national parties such as Congress and BJP are known to make huge noise about unearthing black money hidden abroad by Indians and their shell companies when they are out of power. But, they fail to achieve any noticeable success when in power. According to reports, an astonishing amount of global private financial wealth - ranging from \$21 to \$32 trillion as of 2010 - is parked in the world's black hole of secret tax havens, made up of 136 predominantly low to middle income countries, but the top 10, including the US, Switzerland, Germany, Cayman Island, Hong Kong, Singapore, Luxembourg, Dubai, Bahrain, account for 61 per cent of the overall such wealth. It is possible that Indians have secret funds parked in most of these countries. (IPA Service)

## Prince Charles message to Indigenous Communities of the world

By Phrang Roy

As Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Princess Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge arrive in Kaziranga to witness the rich biodiversity and meet the indigenous communities around the reservation it is important to revisit the video-recorded message from His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales to the 606 delegates from 62 countries and representatives of 169 indigenous communities who participated at the Indigenous Terra Madre 2015, that was held in Shillong, Meghalaya.

Many might question the importance of this message but we at the North East Slow Food and Agro-Biodiversity Society consider it crucial to remind ourselves that the indigenous peoples' of the world might have many of the answers to the current ecological challenges that we are buffeted with such as severe climatic vagaries. That the developed world is looking to indigenous peoples' for answers to some of the most baffling environmental challenges requires that we show greater responsibility in leading the world towards a more sustainable mode of living and use of natural resources. It would not be appropriate to summarise what Prince Charles has spoken with so much conviction. Hence it is only fair to reproduce what he said.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, having been invited by Carlo Petrini to give the opening address at the very first Terra Madre event in Turin in 2004. I cannot tell you how delighted I was to receive an invitation from Phrang Roy, to address the first Indigenous Terra Madre gathering in India. I need hardly say how extremely sorry I am, not to be with you in person. Now, as Pope Francis recently said in his encyclical Laudato Si...the indigenous peoples are the not merely one minority among others, but should be principal dialogue partners. For them land is not a commodity but rather a gift of God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact, if they are to maintain their identity and values. Yet in our modern world we are totally disconnected from the wealth of traditional knowledge that has up till now guided countless generations, to understand the significance of nature's process and economy. How has the world come to face such a plethora of intractable problems?"

In the 40 years or so that I have been attempting to understand and address this question, I have tried to ask myself what is it in our general attitude to the world that is ultimately at fault? And I have come to realize that the essential unity of things as reflected in nature has become dangerously fragmented and deconstructed. The modern world has shifted away from the holistic indigenous cosmology of seeing ourselves within nature, to our standing apart from it. So if we wish to maintain our civilizations we must look after the earth and actively maintain its intricate balance, so that it achieves a state of harmony and health. But we have fallen short and consequently the

Kashmiri, Muslim girl. With this singular act he defied divisions of religion, region, race, caste, class, creed, gender and generation to hoist the flag of humanity. Actually, Swami Vivekananda did a Sri Ramkrishna who himself practiced Islam, Christianity and other religions to live his words - 'many opinions, many paths'. They tried to make us realize that confinement to a single religion could throttle humanity. Oceans of human blood could have been saved had we realised the limitations of religions. It is a pity that the juggernaut of religious prejudices is still marching for-

sustainability of the entire system is collapsing. In failing the earth we are failing humanity. Indigenous peoples, like all of us, are standing at a moment of substantial transition, where we face a world view and an economic system with enormous challenges, paired with an environmental crises including climate change and excessive population growth, which threatens to affect us all.

Of course, we have achieved extraordinary prosperity since the industrial revolution but we in the industrialized world have increased our consumption of the earth's resources to such an extent that as a result our collective demands exceeds nature's capacity for renewal by some 25%. With this in mind, how can we better empower all communities to create a participatory economic model that safeguards culture, diversity and the environment, one that makes a clear distinction between the maintenance of nature's capital reserves and the income it produces? By looking to indigenous wisdom, we can develop an approach that acts locally by thinking globally; just as nature does, with all parts operating harmoniously to establish a coherent whole.

I wanted, therefore, to offer my warmest congratulations to the organisers of this unique gathering of indigenous food communities, not only for defending indigenous food sovereignty but also for envisioning future food systems that maintain the resilience of the entire ecosystem by promoting rich biodiversity. You, ladies and gentlemen, are a model for linking our traditional indigenous thinking with modern science as equal partners, a beacon of inspiration for others to learn from. We stand here at a historic moment where we can only enable a transition to living within our planetary boundaries if we adopt a more reverential approach in recognizing that we are not separate from nature, but actually part of it, and that if we listen to the wisdom which is still embodied in your cultural and spiritual traditions we can find the guidance we need to live in harmony with the world around us. Now, I have no doubt that the necessary spirit of leadership lives within your communities and I wish you all much strength and good fortune in your efforts to influence a more positive future for humanity during the coming days."

This speech was shared with the gathering of more than 1000 guests at the inauguration of the Indigenous Terra Madre on 2nd November 2015, including the 606 delegates of ITM 2015, the Chief Guest, Honorable Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Ministers of the Government and other international academicians and dignitaries. (Information Courtesy NESFAS - North East Slow Food & Agrobiodiversity Society)

ward in this 21st century. Shani Shingnapur temple with its women-phobia is just one example of it. The need of the hour is to realize the teachings of the great souls for taking us, in the words of Tagore, "Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit". 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.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Let's join hands to protect nature

Editor, In the name of development nature is dying. Man is not allowing the leaves to sing. Trees, stones and rivers are crying. Nature is pleading for her survival on earth and longs for freedom of space to shine and bring forth her happiness. Every seed of rejuvenation is bleeding; every bit of air, grass, flower is yearning for life. Clean streams and rivers are now overflowing with innumerable toxic waste. No doubt nature admires humans for their achievements, but choking down the green world will only bring hurdles and turbulence. Let us therefore give a bit of our hearts to protect nature.

Yours etc  
Christine Nongbet

### Corruption on SPTS buses

Editor, On April 06, 2016 at around 7 pm, I boarded the SPTS bus bearing Registration No ML 01-6820 which was supposed to go towards Mawiong via Mawlai Iewrynghep. When the conductor collected the bus fare I paid him ₹10, but he did not return me ₹5 as change since

I disembarked halfway. Politely I asked him for my change but he rudely replied that it wasn't a Mawlai bus, although the bus plied through Mawlai. The conductor further threatened and mocked me. He made me feel as if I was depriving him of the legitimate fare. The concerned authorities should take note of such misdemeanours and issue Travel Slips or Change Tokens so as to avoid such psychological assaults on bus passengers. This is actually daily corruption of public money which if added up for a whole year would amount to about ₹1825 approximately per passenger. Imagine how much money is collected illegally from just about 100 passengers if they are denied their rightful change.

SPTS buses are deployed to ease public travel, hence, some strong measures must be taken to curb grassroots level corruption and to prevent wastage of public money. I hope those concerned with the running of SPTS buses take note of this letter and punish the culprits.

Yours etc.,  
Eddie Kharjana,  
Shillong-8

### Religion kills humanity

Editor, It is shame that religious prejudices that cannot tol-

erate free thinking have killed another blogger of Bangladesh. Nazimuddin Samad who used to campaign for secularism on Facebook. He wrote, "I have no religion". In recent past, matchete-wielding killers took the lives of Niloy Chatterjee, Washiqur Rahman Babu, Avijit Roy and Ananta Bijoy Das for speaking against religious prejudices and hatred. We can see that all religions carry with them inherent problems of creating divisions and hatred among us. They create walls within the society and in this way disturb social harmony. With its emphasis on rituals and static approach, religion contradicts the essence of spirituality. Religion is such an institution on whose name 'sati' can be performed, untouchability can be practiced, Dabholkar, Pansara, Kalburgi and Nazimuddin Samad can be killed. Beheading of people who belong to different ghar other than ISIS (a permanent ghar-wapasi?) can be video recorded and broadcasted. Religions confine themselves to mechanical rituals and thus obstruct the spiritual path of realising the One. Sri Aurobindo in 'Letters on Yoga' said, "The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue."

The Mother said, "God gives Himself to His whole creation; no one religion holds the monopoly of His Grace". She also explained why religion throttled spirituality. She said, "The first article of these established and formal religions runs always, 'Mine is the supreme, the only truth, all others are falsehoods or inferior'. For without this fundamental dogma, established credal religions could not have existed. If you do not believe and proclaim that you alone possess the one or the highest truth, you will not be able to impress people and make them flock to you. This attitude is natural to the religious mind; but it is just that which makes religion stand in the way of the spiritual life. The articles and dogmas of a religion are mind-made and if we cling to them and shut ourselves up in a code of life made out for us we will not know the truth of the Spirit that lies beyond all codes and dogmas, wide and large and free. When we stop at a religious creed and tie ourselves with it taking it for the only truth in the world, we stop the advance and widening of your inner soul".

Sri Ramkrishna and Swami Vivekananda hammered hard at the walls of religion to make us realise its inherent problem. Swami Vivekananda worshipped and touched the feet of a four-year-old, poor,

*"I cannot teach you violence, as I do not myself believe in it. I can only teach you not to bow your heads before any one even at the cost of your life."*

—Mahatma Gandhi

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 241 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

### Why oppose Aadhar?

PRESSURE groups who are opposing the Aadhaar scheme must be anti-poor since the scheme is meant to facilitate the transfer of subsidies directly to the bank account of the Aadhaar Card holders who are also the poorest (BPL category) So no Aadhaar card means no transfer of subsidy. The Aadhaar scheme was launched in 2009 to give a universal identity to every resident Indian. That the Narendra Modi Government has found this scheme initiated during the UPA regime, worth pursuing also means that the present government sees its positive aspects. Direct transfer of LPG subsidy will very soon be made applicable only to those having the 12 digit individual identification number on the Aadhaar card. Even when opening the Jan Dhan Yojna account which benefits the poorest, the Aadhaar card will be made mandatory. The Jan Dhan Yojna has several benefits such as the RuPay card (an ATM card for money withdrawal), a zero balance savings account, life and accident insurance and many other cash transfers which will reduce corruption and eliminate middlemen from the system.

From March 2015, in most states, the Aadhaar card UIDAI number has been linked to the voter ID to eliminate bogus voters. Once an Aadhaar number is linked, it is impossible for a multiple voter ID card holder to use it illegally because registration requires the voter card holder to be physically present and produce the Aadhaar card to the polling booth officer for linking.

Now all pensioners must register their Aadhaar card number to their respective departments in order to receive monthly pension. This move was initiated as there have been fraudulent incidents where beneficiaries seeking pension were found to be fake. Similarly, provident fund money will also be given to the account holders who have registered their Aadhaar number with employee provident fund organization (EPFO). The Aadhaar linked Digital Life Certificate is another initiative which was launched by Department of Electronics and IT. Named as "Jeevan Praman for Pensioners", this system will put an end to the process where the pensioner had to be physically present at the Pension Disbursing Agency to prove that he/she is alive. Instead all the details of the pensioner will be accessed digitally by the agency. There are other benefits as well such as getting a passport in 10 days if one has an Aadhaar Card since police verification will be done later. Under the Modi government's new rule if one needs a passport the Aadhaar number is compulsory.

Considering the increasing acceptance of Aadhaar card across the country and also its importance in getting cash transfers directly to the poor, it is puzzling as to why there is a fear psychosis about accepting this scheme here. Moreover, no pressure group can legitimately appropriate the voice of the people. Those who stand to lose the most, namely the poor could approach the court of law to redress their grievances since the Government has been dilly-dallying and does not seem to have the political will to get on with the scheme.

## LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### No Question of CPI-CPI(M) merger : EMS

There is no question of 'merger' of the two Communist parties 'unless the CPI, corrects its mistakes.' According to CPI(M) general Secretary Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad. He was reaching to reports about the possibility of the forthcoming 14th CPI Congress in Calcutta adopting a resolution on the merger of the two parties. In an interview to a leading Malayalam daily here Mr.

Namboodiripad said the CPI continues to 'commit mistake like aligning with Ms. Jayalalitha and opposing the DMK in Tamilnadu, opposing the Telegu Desam in Andhra Pradesh and supporting the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam.'

He said opposing Mr. Karunanidhi and Mr. N.T. Rama Rao was tantamount to 'supporting' Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

# Proud to be a South Asian!

By Saji Varghese

'Wosobipo', translated as cuckoo's call, a movie in the Karbi dialect won the hearts of many in India especially the North east in the year 1990. A scene in the movie calls for attention being the prelude to the topic here. As the elders in the village gathered around the fire as usual in the evening with a huge mug of rice beer discussing the issues concerning the village, at the faint sound of an explosion from the distance they pass the comment, 'It must be beyond the Naga hills.' Though constrained by information on what lies beyond the horizon, in the rural set up of the hills then, their understanding on the war like situation, militancy, ethnic conflicts, violence etc. seemed perceptive. However, the present scenario is different. There lies a vast distance of land beyond the eastern borders of our north eastern part of the country which is undergoing transition at a fast pace and the attention of the government is focused on it now, in measures much larger than before. This drastic shift in situation is due to a number of factors which sharpened the democratic process in this part of the globe and the constant efforts of the government to usher in development by containing the armed struggle.

South East Asia is home to varied cultures and traditions. There are historical evidences of India's cultural and commercial engagements with its eastern neighbours, in the ancient past. The transmission of Indian culture to the distant parts of South East Asia is certainly one of the greatest achievements. Another aspect to such spread of its culture is that there was no coercive exercise, no capture of power through force. No other great civilization has been able to achieve such success without military conquest. Besides these facts of cultural, religious transmission of the Indian 'mainland', there are immense levels of similarities in the

cultures and way of life of the 'indigenous' North east with South East Asia as far as Cambodia and Vietnam. Homogeneity in traditions and in the ways of life of the 'hill people' of the North east is never a point to be proved. Rather it is beyond a measure of any doubt. Folklores and mythical stories of the ethnic cultures of the region point to the 'affinity' it shares, which is life in union with nature. There is rather a 'common cultural space' which actually extends beyond the borders of our region. It would be of no exaggeration to say that one within such an 'ethnic culture', would feel 'at home' beyond its eastern border.

The 'Look East Policy' of India which is gaining popularity can be traced back to the early nineties when the then Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao initiated a new chapter in the Indian foreign policy paradigm. The Look East Policy was officially launched in 1991 during the tenure of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, although the term 'Look East Policy' was mentioned for the first time in the annual report of the Ministry of External Affairs in 1996. I.K. Gujral had stated that 'What Look East really means is that an outward looking India, is gathering all forces of dynamism, domestic and regional and is directly focusing on establishing synergies with a fast consolidating and progressive neighbourhood to its East in the Mother Continent of Asia'. Since its initiation in 1991, twenty five years have gone by, though as envisioned by the policy makers, achievements have not been huge, yet many things have fallen in place.

One of our immediate neighbours, Myanmar is a strategic partner as it is our gateway to Southeast Asia. The interest of India in overseeing the democratic set up being crafted in Myanmar is huge, as it would lead to different lev-

els of bilateral agreement. With the elections that happened in Myanmar the possibilities of insurgent groups coming together to a peaceful settlement to end the prolonged violent aggressions has become rather high. There have already been many arrangements of trade through two border corridors, one Moreh (Manipur) with Tamu (Myanmar) another Champhai (Mizoram) with Hri (Myanmar). Opening up of these corridors have led not only to immense avenues of trade between the bordering villages of both the countries but also along the large areas of western Myanmar. ASEAN markets provide big opportunities for North Eastern Region, particularly in areas such as promotion of horticulture, floriculture, and medicinal herbs.

In the past, India's engagement with much of Asia, including South East and East Asia, was built on an idealistic concept of Asian brotherhood, based on shared experiences of colonialism and of cultural ties. The rhythm of the region today is determined, however, as much by trade, investment and production as by history and culture. That is what motivates our decade-old 'Look East' policy.

Two important projects which would improve connectivity between India and South East Asian countries are Kaladan Multi-modal Transport facility which would link Indian ports with Myanmar. The Kaladan project, when implemented, will connect Kolkata to Sittwe port in Myanmar, and then further to Mizoram and river and road. The Trilateral Highway Project which would link Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand via Bagan in Myanmar is currently being undertaken at a fast pace. It is so exciting to know that one can drive all the way from India to Singapore without any hassle, once this project is completed.

Further, a rail link from Diphu - Karong - Imphal - Moreh - connecting India with ASEAN; the construction of a 98 kms railway line connecting Jiribam to Imphal has already been taken up at the cost of Rs 31 billion. The project was initiated in April 2003. On completion of these projects there could be possibilities for (i) India - Myanmar - Thailand - Malaysia - Singapore rail link, and (ii) India - Myanmar - Thailand - Hanoi rail link. This would boost large scale movement of commodities in this vast region of the globe. Another aspect of this policy is to build confidence through people to people contact between the North east and the South East Asia.

There are a number of historical, geographical reasons for such a policy which was envisioned by arguably one of the best visionaries of India, who was made to experience and pay for not being a part of the Nehruvian legacy. If liberalisation as a policy made any impact in India's economy, it was due to the then Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, the thinker and philosopher who went down as just an 'unpopular Prime Minister'. However, today it is no longer just 'Look East' but Narendra Modi wants it to be an action packed, 'Act East policy' for he believes in less of talking and looking but in putting things into action and being practical. A new era is about to begin with immense avenues to overcome the long debated cause for prolonged unrest and backwardness. Guwahati and Shillong jointly hosting the recently concluded South Asian Games, do convey a lot to the world and to the groups which threaten the integrity of our country. Perhaps it is time that we look beyond the borders and broaden our identities from being ethnic to that of a South East Asian or further to a South Asian one.

(The writer is Associate Professor. Lady Keane College)

## TO THE EDITOR

### If BJP wins Assam...

Editor,

Of the 4 (four) states and 1 (one) Union Territory that are currently going to polls, the BJP is pitching high hopes that it would form a government of its own only in Assam, which is why it is firing away on all cylinders by trooping in a host of Union Ministers and other saffron leaders to criss-cross the length and breadth of the State to ensure that Assam can at least be a face-saving triumph vis-a-vis the consecutive humiliating defeats in Delhi and Bihar in January and November, 2015 respectively. 2015 had therefore stood out to be not a happy hunting ground for BJP, electorally speaking. Consequently to these elections reverses, the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has markedly declined to the chagrin among the rank and file of the entire saffron workforce. However, Assam being the gateway to Meghalaya any installation to power in favour of BJP will without an iota of doubt have an adverse domino effect in Meghalaya as one of the notable policies of the BJP is to put a total ban on cow-slaughter. Such restrictive approach of this party would have the singlemost effect for the areas inhabited by the people of Hynniewtrep given that the tribal herein widely consume beef as one of the

important sources of first class protein; further, it is reported that for the purpose of meeting the monthly demand in beef products not less than 10,000 (Ten thousands) heads of cattle are required to be supplied to the areas in question via Assam. But assuming that Assam is under the BJP dispensation, the consequential effect would be catastrophic for an army of workers engaged with commercial pursuits pertaining to the beef industry. The conscientious citizens of Meghalaya have therefore every right to apprehend the BJP's victory in Assam!

Furthermore it has been reported that in the state of Assam, Muslims constitute around 34 % of the voters and 11 millions of total population, but with the BJP in power it would decidedly copy cat its ruling party counterparts in Maharashtra, Haryana etc. In banning cow slaughters in toto and consequent upon which a wide spread communal violence leaving a trail of inexorable blood-letting cannot be wished away. Also it cannot be ruled out that a Dadri like infamous incident which has shamed India world wide would not occur here repeatedly. This apprehension is also precisely expressed by a host of Assamese intellectuals, prominent among them being Prof Hiren Gohain while commenting on the prospects of Assembly election in Assam, when he stated that: If BJP comes to power in Assam, there would be

lawlessness here. That being so, I only pray and hope that the saffron party does not capture power in Assam but, instead get a severe drubbing worse than that of the Delhi and Bihar hustings of last year.

Yours etc.,  
Jerome Diengdoh,  
Shillong-2

### Neighbourly assistance

Editor

India as a nation has greatly advanced and now plays a key role in the international forum. As the world's largest democracy and known for the great hospitality of Indians all across the world, may I humbly request the Indian government through your esteemed daily to kindly open doors for sports persons and athletes of the SAARC nations so that they have, the opportunity to train and practice in India with their Indian peers. Countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Sri Lanka do not have quality training facilities in their respective countries due to a number of factors. Since India has appreciably adopted the policy of assisting her neighbors; this could be another forum for establishing stronger socio-cultural contact between the SAARC member nations. A newly emerging Iran freed from decades of western sanctions and a democratically emergent Myanmar too if invited for joint train-

ing within this fold will be a diplomatic victory for this great nation. India will demonstrate to the whole world that she is not only transforming her people but also extending windows of opportunities for her neighbors in a dynamic manner. Joint training will also benefit Indian athletes and sports personnel in various disciplines while preparing for the SAF Games, the ASIAD, Commonwealth Games and the Olympics.

Indian athletes too will learn from this experience and this could be a new approach in establishing India's positive influence around her borders. Can the world's largest democracy be a little more humanitarian in approach and extend her arms to help the neighbors in new areas so that India's great economic journey also turn out to be a joint success story for the entire SAARC neighborhood. India has already played exemplary roles in various international forums; this could add another feather in the crown of the nation. Representing one of the world's most ancient civilization and cradle of humanity India needs to actively consider this proposed program.

Yours etc.,  
Saikat Basu,  
Lethbridge AB Canada

### Women have equal rights to worship

Editor,

# Saga of Patriotism..

By Ananya S Guha

Patriotism is a word that is difficult to define or to condense into a meaning or a typology. When I or someone says that she or he is patriotic it brings to mind a love for the country, a love for everything related to the country. But does it bring along a sentiment that, that patriotism is confined only to the limits of one's country or ethnicity? Perhaps the more euphemistic word for this would be nationalism on which a long and tedious debate has been taking place. So a shout of in praise of the country is an apposite sign of patriotism. Then one migrates to another country and retells stories, customs and practices of his country, worships his original gods, and that also is patriotism. What is left out are beliefs of a human kind, a single entity called Man or a common humanity where suffering is the same everywhere, where poverty and hunger are spread across the world like a dreaded disease. Perhaps Tagore stopped for a while thinking on nationalism, and mused on internationalism. Perhaps Bertrand Russell too dreamt of a 'single world government' but abandoned the idea as utopian- because the political nature of man and his moral nature are two separate identities, two separate worlds, not in harmony with one another but in a constant tiff, war or battle. The Dalai Lama recently said in a television interview that human beings are intrinsically compassionate, but their supposed intellect or intelligence cannot measure up to such compassion. So be patriotic and nationalistic and leave it at that.

So what happens in a country like India where are contiguous forces of harmony, in terms of religion, music, food habits and culture, but there are also forces of sub-nationalities, where within a broad cultural umbrella there are others who trace origins/descent in other ways? There is diversity, but what about the much talked of unity, or patriotism? What does patriotism now veer to? Is it the assimilation of cultures - a pan Indian consciousness that we talk about? Is it the same as say a pan Hindi, Bengali or Marathi culture? The focal point is culture, but when we talk about sub cultures and diversities, it is not that there is a problem at hand, but how are we mentally prepared to assimilate those broad, inchoate and amorphous cultures, into our existential souls. That will be the challenge, before snaring politicians and other go getters destroy a fabric which is a quintessence of composite cultures, and shaping of forces such as historical, geographical or migratory.

So the patriotic zeal will continue, in cricket matches, in utterances of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', but it will not shovel out de-patriotic or nationalistic forces, or for that matter the de-humanizing elements of a country or a world. The

time space factor of a world now abetted by technologies, is doing wonders to merge space identities, but as long as only political power is seen as the syndrome of a vision, where technology is driven to suit individual ends, then patriotism or nationalism not only become meaningless, but their one step forward to seek unification with the 'other' is hopelessly lost in the morass of animosities and divisions.

That is why I have often wondered, when the national movement in India reached a crescendo, why men like Tagore or even Gandhi maintained reticence on some issues; issues related to self glorification, caste high handedness for example? People are the same everywhere, the Dalai Lama emphatically states, but the governments are not, they change. It is the people who matter. I may, he says, have a problem with the Chinese government, but not with the people! This slice down or breakdown of what we normally call 'truth' is no subversive ideal, but can help us to think soberly in a balanced manner. So when we are patriotic, we should consider other patriots, then only the obverse, the reverse, and the entangled meshes of the world, come into an objective whole, not jaundiced, where people of different races, or ethnicities strike us as palpably humans. In our forging ahead with this furious debate on nationalism we have hectorated both the past and the present. We have refused to see anyone else's point of view except our very own; we have forgotten that there are brethren in other parts of the world who also hold us and our country with a deep sense of reverence.

So in our desire to be patriotic, we must understand the patriotism on the other sides of the hedges too. There are people on social media networks who vociferously appeal to a oneness of humanity, perhaps they mean it earnestly, but we also know that this can be a double edged, vicious sword. Today one of my friends wrote on one of these sites: "Welcome back to the world of FB". It was a nice feeling, a positive one, because a friend living beyond a million miles had the cognitive and re-kindling spirit - the recognition of lights beyond possibilities- thanks again to this creation of a virtual world, that must cohere with the real. So in such a simple statement isn't there a shade of reaching out, making the impossible possible, or an infinite possibility of a reality hitherto not known? It is not sure when one can meet such a friend, or will someone ever meet him, but the meeting is via an independent world, not of homilies, but self lived, self declared!

Apropos the report "Shani temple lifts curb on women" (ST, April 9, 2016), the Bombay High Court has rightly held that entry to temples is a fundamental right of women and it is the state's fundamental duty to protect it. Ultimately it is the fundamental right of a woman and the government's fundamental duty to protect women's rights. There is no place for discrimination in Hindu culture. Celibacy is not the exclusive privilege of men. Article 25 of our Constitution says, 'throw open' the doors of public religious spaces to all human race. Right of 'Darshan' in any temple of the country is a fundamental right of the citizens of India irrespective of gender, caste or creed. Those trying to tamper with its tradi-

tions should keep in mind the hurt they cause to millions of devotees. One would find that women are more religious, often more deeply so than their male counterparts. Women have been learning the Vedas and also performing religious practices. Prayers and worship are mind-related, not body-related. Hence, it is natural for women devotees to seek permission for worship at the temple.

Yours etc.,  
Vinod C. Dixit  
Ahmedabad - 15

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

*"Barring that natural expression of villainy which we all have, the man looked honest enough."*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 242

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2016

### Military Ties

FINALLY India and US have agreed in principle to sign within weeks a logistic exchange memorandum of agreement (LEMD) to provide supplies of fuel to each other's Armed Forces. It does not however mean stationing of US troops on Indian soil, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had stated on his return from the US that there would be no joint patrols which confirmed India's non-aligned role. US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter is the chief architect of the Bilateral Defence and Trade and Technology Initiative (DITT). It tries to elevate the Defence relationship to development and cooperation. India has plans to procure \$ 100 billion worth of arms over the next decade. The main driving force is the growth of conventional gap with China. The Chinese army is modernizing itself. India has to do the same with US firms like Boeing and Lockheed Martin promising full technology transfer. But US Congressional legislation still stands in the way.

Carter's LEMA is a way forward. It will be the first of the foundational agreements tailored for India. His visit to New Delhi also paved the way for the new maritime security dialogue and the enhancement of the Navy to Navy discussions. There are also two new pathfinder projects under the DTTI. Indo-US dialogue this time seems to have gathered steam. But the negotiations are now at a nascent stage especially considering the possible outcome of the US presidential elections. Much will depend on US policy regarding west Asia. Afghanistan and Pakistan. US policy towards China may also oscillate.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### Time to implement Mandal Report

Some recent activities of the Congress(I) and its confabulations with Mr. Kanshi Ram and the grand Gujjar Sammelan organized by Mr Rajesh Pilot indicate, as election draws nearer, a keenness to win support of the so-called "Backward classes" the intermediate peasantry mostly consisting of Ahirs, Yadavs, Jats, Kurmis, Gujjars and the like constituting 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the population in UP and Bihar. It is the growing doubts about an assured support from the established vote bank of Harijans and Adivasis (20 per cent of the population) and Muslim (11 per cent of the population) and Mr V P Singh's open declaration to allot 35 per cent of seats to the backward castes from which the Lok Da draws its main strength which may prompt the Congress(I) to play the Mandal Committee trump card to check mate the Raja's strategy.

A re-appraisal of the Mandal Committee recommendations and consequences of accepting their acceptance of national level may be instructive at this stage. It may be recalled that this committee was appointed by the Janata Government but could submit its report only when the Congress(I) was back in power at the Centre. The recommendations have been allowed to gather dust in the shelves of the Secretariat over several years in spite of pressing and persistent demand by the Opposition to implement them.

This new "backward caste" lobby owes its origin to the tutelage of late Charan Singh and his follower Karpuri Thakur. They wanted to challenge the upper castes and professions by this newly emerged force of middle peasantry in rural areas and traditional artisans in both rural and urban areas who as the chief beneficiaries of abolition of Zamindari and several other land reforms had acquired assets and property and were in a position to challenge, but lacked the outlook and educational qualifications to do so.

Taking our experience objective view to the basic approach to the problem of backwardness in conditions of society in India one cannot fail to observe that by appointing a Commissioner to list backward castes for the purpose of special representation in services and educational institutions, the Janata Government disturbed a hornet's nest as it was. As early as 1956 Nehru found the report of the Kalakar Commission on the same subject listing 2700 castes as backward fit to be shelved, as admitting the very principle of special representation on caste basis was bound to lead to competing claims for special representation on the basis of population of a caste rather than degree of backwardness and ultimately lead to a compartmentalization in the society, releasing forces of disintegration.

This would be giving the constitutional provision and exceptional treatment and protection to Harijans and Adivasis or occupation treated as impure and hence ritually avoided in the hierarchy ridden traditional Hindu society. Even this provision meant for ten years but now being perpetuated has by opening opportunities to these castes by depriving 25 per cent on merit to other castes, particularly in promotions and admission to technical institutions, have aroused feeling resulting in tension, conflicts, open confrontation and demonstrations as seen in Gujarat.

All the fears besetting Kalakar report seem to be coming true with Mandal Committee classifying 3700 castes as backward an increase of 1000 in 30 years an unreasonable conclusion of so many castes going backward obviously, the commission failing to resist scramble of so many castes joining backward, even Muslim 'Moplas' in Kerala promoting the Muslim League leaders, Mr Sulaiman Sait and Mr Bantawala to claim the entire Muslim community as backward and deserving of special representation in proportion to its population.

# BR Ambedkar: Crusader for Human Rights

By X P Mao

It may not be an exaggeration to say that B R Ambedkar was one of the great men of modern India. He shaped the destiny of the scheduled caste and tribes of India. Ambedkar was soaked in the liberal political and social ideas of his time. Being a Dalit he suffered the brunt of a rotten caste system. A highly educated man who studied in some of the best universities in the west was put to humiliation by many including his own peon would not give him a glass of water to drink on the grounds that he was an untouchable.

But Ambedkar is regarded as one of the important architects of the Indian Constitution.

It is true that MK Gandhi the father of the Indian nation spoke vehemently against the practices of untouchability in India. Gandhi could not see the drafting of the Indian Constitution or the practice of untouchability as a cognizable offence. It was only through the intense effort of Ambedkar that untouchability in all forms was treated as a cognizable offence. Hence Ambedkar can be regarded as one of the greatest men of contemporary India. Whatever may be the basis or origin of caste system in due course of time it was regarded as a very powerful weapon of discrimination and exploitation. The Hindu scriptures particularly Bhagavad-Gita treats caste system as a kind of division of labor.

According to the author of Bhagavad-Gita, it is the competence or capacity of a person that should constitute the fountainhead of caste system. Guna(competence) and karma(action) constitute the twin pillars of caste system. But it may be pointed out in this connection that the author of Bhagavad-Gita fails to distinguish fact and value relating to caste system. It is necessary that ordering of society should be based on competence and capacity of an individual. But historically speaking, the basis of ideal ordering degenerated into an ordering of society based on birth. Somebody is Brahmin only if he is born of Brahmin parents. This shift from competence to birth not only degenerated into a caste system based on division of labor to hierarchical ordering of society based on birth.

It is necessary to mention that nowhere in the world does caste operates

in such a rigid system except in India. Interestingly, Ambedkar was not in favor of reservations of jobs for SC and ST indefinitely. As a matter of fact he suggested that such a reservation should be for a fixed period of 10 years only. Accordingly the 10 year limit was inscribed in the Constitution for reservation. But now things are different. After Constitutional amendment for jobs and employment for SC and ST the reservation policy is for all practical purposes extended indefinitely. The benefits of reservations given to SC and ST have inspired other caste groups to demand for the same. The Mandal Commission report and its aftermath are glaring testimony to the above point. Even in Tamilnadu Brahmins are demanding some kind of reservation for them because they are a minority. This informs that the reservation policy is not an effective method of fighting age old social injustices. The confusion gets worst confounded when demand is made to create clear cut reservation quota even in multi-specialty hospitals. To demand reservation in certain kinds of jobs and in certain institutions is intelligible but to demand reservation in multispecialty hospitals is absolutely unintelligible.

Reservation policy has exhibited the inner contradictions and absurdities. The contradiction is inherent in the reservation policy itself if it is beyond certain limits. Had Ambedkar been alive today he would have been aghast at the policy of reservation followed at present in India. By this I do not mean to argue that reservation is an absurd idea, instead, I would suggest that equal opportunity should be extended to all irrespective of caste, sex, creed and religion. An effective and meaningful way to eliminate the age old tyranny of exploitation and oppression in the name of caste, creed, sex and religion is through legislation in parliament. The policy of reservation may be a stop gap measure but it cannot be treated as a permanent panacea for centuries old exploitation, oppression and discrimination. It is a fact that even after scientific and technological revolution oppression, exploitation and discrimination continue to be there throughout the world in some form or the other. In

the Indian context after independence, wealth has increased manifold. To borrow a jargon from economics GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is on the increase. But it is surprising that poverty and misery are also on the increase. Some people soak in luxury and wealth while a large number of people get impoverished day by day. There is no need to collect any data or statistics to prove this point; one has to simply go to a crowded railway station in cities and towns to see this. Slums are increasing and children of slums become street kids which also suggests that we have failed to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and misery from Indian society.

What is wrong? Where does the shoe pinch? The answer to these questions is that in India some privileged sections of the society have created socio-economic order where money and wealth get accumulated in the hands of few. This excessive wealth is used at the time of election and these people are in turn protected for all their ill gotten money by the elected politicians. This is how the vicious circle continues. Unless we check and change the process of wealth being accumulated in the hands of few, we cannot eliminate poverty and misery. Perhaps the idea of party-less democracy suggested by late Jai Prakash Narain in the late sixties is partly the solution. Further, austere life in the higher echelons of society is bound to percolate to the masses. Instead our day to day life clearly shows that privileges, benefits and other perks are added to the pay package of persons belonging to the higher status in the government. Unless this practice stops, poverty and misery cannot be eliminated. It is a fact that caste in due course of time has done extensive damage to the Indian psyche. Perhaps because of this reason caste was not taken into account at a particular stage in census enumeration. Surprisingly government of India has taken a decision to re-introduce caste in the last census operation. It may be suggested that while taking important decisions for a large number of people for long term measures utmost care must be taken because in the social ordering of human society, there is no one absolute and eternal method.

Laws and rules are necessary for managing and

running a state but what is most necessary and primary is the change in psyche of humankind. It may not be an exaggeration to say that Indian Constitution is one of the best constitutions in the world. Further, the legal provisions in this country are superb but it is also true that Indians are most degenerate. Rape, theft, murder and embezzlement of public fund is a day to day affair in India. Crimes of all types are on the rise. Historically speaking, any great people including saints and prophets are born in India. But one is shocked by the concrete facts of life. Perhaps, it appears more than true that our religion and culture have no impact on our lives. In fact there is a yawning gap between text and context. What can be done to save the situation? It is necessary to make comprehensive and effective laws. But what is most necessary is to bring about attitudinal changes. It is one thing to frame laws and rules and another to implement them. We have succeeded in framing good and effective laws but failed miserably in implementing them. This is the lacuna in the Indian state as it has been suggested earlier. All out efforts should be made to save the situation. People at the helm of affairs should take a vow to lead an austere and moral life. Discrimination primarily is of psychic origin, so discrimination, exploitation and oppression can be eliminated only through a thorough psychic revolution.

Ambedkar was aware of it, he took bold initiatives in this direction. Perhaps he was aware of what was going to happen in India in succeeding years. Abolition of discrimination, exploitation and oppression resulting in caste system is imperative. Today, in India to prevent rape cases there are suggestions that the rapist be awarded a death sentence but no steps are taken to change the existing social and economic order and other conditions that in a way inspire an individual not to commit rape.

To conclude, human and social problems are very complex and complicated and require comprehensive methods and techniques. To do this, we should offer the right type of ovation to the founding fathers of our Constitution particularly the chief architect Dr B R Ambedkar.

(The author is HoD, Department of Philosophy, NEHU, Shillong and can be reached at [xavmao@gmail.com](mailto:xavmao@gmail.com))

## Indian economy tiding over a global cloud But growing risks remain, says IMF

By S. Sethuraman

Even as the global economy slows down further and recovery remains fragile, India can draw some comfort that its current status as the fastest-growing economy is intact with growth projections retained at 7.5 per cent in 2016 and in 2017 in IMF's World Economic Outlook April 2016.

But the problem for policy-makers is to ensure that even this growth rate, though below India's potential, is not allowed to be jeopardised and that the benefits of growth also get widely shared, say, in terms of incomes and jobs. Far from evidence of such gains so far, the Modi Government has entered the third fiscal year amid growing disappointment and a rise in social tensions, especially among the youth.

The Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley, who is in Washington to attend the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings (April 15-16) and to meet investors, will no doubt present a highly promising picture of India for doing business with Government there. This is the lacuna in the Indian state as it has been suggested earlier. All out efforts should be made to save the situation. People at the helm of affairs should take a vow to lead an austere and moral life. Discrimination primarily is of psychic origin, so discrimination, exploitation and oppression can be eliminated only through a thorough psychic revolution.

Ambedkar was aware of it, he took bold initiatives in this direction. Perhaps he was aware of what was going to happen in India in succeeding years. Abolition of discrimination, exploitation and oppression resulting in caste system is imperative. Today, in India to prevent rape cases there are suggestions that the rapist be awarded a death sentence but no steps are taken to change the existing social and economic order and other conditions that in a way inspire an individual not to commit rape.

The IMF Outlook notes "resilience" of Indian economy and expects growth would continue to be driven by private consumption, which has benefited from lower energy prices and higher real incomes. With the revival of sentiment and pickup in industrial activity, a recovery of private investment is expected to further strengthen growth, it says.

Latest indications from the markets are India's corporate sector may have turned the corner to improve its balance-sheets in fiscal 2016. If so, this should augur well for an early revival of corporate investments. Macro-economic conditions are favourable except for the problems in the financial sector, especially the stressed banking and corporate sectors.

India is one of the principal beneficiaries of low oil prices and with a range of supply-side measures, and a relatively tight monetary stance, there was faster-than-expected fall in inflation, making room for nominal interest rate cuts, but upside risks to inflation could necessitate a tightening of monetary policy, according to the WEO.

Monetary conditions in India remain consistent with achieving the inflation target of 5 percent in the first half of 2017, although an unfavorable monsoon and an expected public sector wage increase pose upside risk. IMF expects CPI to stay at 5.3 per cent in both 2016 and 2017. The current account deficit, which is not posing a problem at present, would be low at -1.5 per cent of GDP in 2016 but it could rise to -2.1 per cent in 2017.

Fiscal consolidation should continue, underpinned by revenue reforms and further reductions in subsidies, IMF urges. Sustaining strong growth over the medium term will require labor market reforms and dismantling of infrastructure bottlenecks, especially in the power sector.

IMF economists have revised down global growth estimates for 2016 and 2017. Global output is estimated to have grown by 3.1 percent in

2015, with 1.9 percent growth for advanced economies and 4.0 percent growth for emerging market and developing economies. World growth is projected to remain modest in 2016, at 3.2 percent, before picking up to 3.5 percent in 2017.

The Outlook says emerging market and developing economies would still account for the lion's share of world growth in 2016, yet their growth rate is projected to increase only modestly relative to 2015. The factors accounting for slowdown are weakness in oil-exporting countries, the slowdown in China and a still-weak outlook for exporters of non-oil commodities.

While India has derived significant terms-of-trade windfall gains from the sharp drop in oil prices, which alleviated inflation pressures and reduced external vulnerabilities, it used these gains to strengthen fiscal positions. The lower prices were not passed on to consumers at the retail level.

Raising the question in a general way, IMF agrees whether all the gains should be saved (for the exchequer only) depends on the extent of economic slack, the availability of fiscal space, and country-specific needs. In particular, terms-of-trade gains may provide an opportunity to finance critical structural reforms or growth-enhancing spending.

Finance Minister Jaitley has not told the country how much of the "oil savings" was used for growth-enhancing spending. He would maintain the budget has stepped up public investment in infrastructure. This increase in capital expenditure would also be cited in justification of all the tax and duty increases in the Budget, some hidden, and in the service tax increase and cesses.

China's revised growth estimates for 2016 and 2017 are 6.5 and 6.2 per cent respectively. The World Bank, however, estimates growth in 2016 to be 6.7 per cent declining to 6.5 per cent in 2017. But IMF warns the ongoing rebalancing in China, given its size, high investment and high import content of its investment and exports, could have widespread international ramifications.

There could be sizable global spillovers through trade channels, which would impact on demand for trading partners' products and on world prices for specific goods, especially china's bulk commodity imports. In turn these could affect other countries' exchange rates and asset markets, IMF said pointing to its more than 100 trading partners that account for 80 per cent of world GDP.

Further, a stronger pullback of capital flows from countries at risk could tighten financial conditions in emerging market economies and put additional downward pressure on their currencies. IMF noted Indian rupee had so far remained "broadly stable". Average oil price is assumed to be 34.75 dollars a barrel in 2016 and it could rise to 40.99 dollars in 2017.

Global recovery is projected to strengthen in 2017 and beyond, driven primarily by emerging market and developing economies, as conditions in stressed economies start gradually to normalize. But, given increased uncertainty and risks of weaker growth scenarios becoming more tangible, the Outlook has emphasised the urgency of a broad-based policy response to raise growth and manage vulnerabilities. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Tourism in Meghalaya

Editor,

My morning readings of The Shillong Times have made me aware of the concerns of certain people who would like to see more tourism in Meghalaya, and the North East in general. As a person of western origin who has travelled extensively in many countries, I have developed a natural sense of what tourists would like to see. The people of Shillong, I find are very particular about their dress, cleanliness, and personal appearance also with their homes and yards which are kept very clean. However, I find this in complete contrast to what I see in the debris filled streets. I understand that there are people working tirelessly to solve this problem. The hawking and spitting in the streets are particularly disturbing, seeing that they're spreading their

germs to others. This is both unsightly and unacceptable. I might mention that in places, such as Singapore they levy a heavy fine for spitting in the streets. Consequently their streets are very clean. The problem should be approached from the bottom up. Perhaps programs in schools, encouraging children to draw pictures of clean streets and doing their part to keep it clean, might help. People have to take pride in keeping their localities and community areas, such as parks and streets clean. Plastic bags floating on rivers take away from the beauty, and of course the lack of sanitary public toilets is appalling. I know this is not new to you, but if you don't start you can't finish. Action on the ground is required. People wishing to travel to outlying areas, such as Cherrapunji need decent roads for a lasting impression. The road from Shillong to Guwahati is quite impressive. There

are different forms of pollution such as water, air etc., But one form of pollution that is often overlooked is noise pollution. Great Sages and Saints sought solitude; quietness must be of some value. Why so much noise? I refer especially to the extreme base sounds that are pumped out from far too many vehicle as they pass by, filling the area with disturbing sounds. It is hard to tell whether it's music or industrial noise.

Lastly, how many tourists living at a guest house would like to be awakened in the middle of the night by howling dogs, both street and domestic? Elephants, bears and tigers can be trained to perform and do a wide number of intelligent things. Dogs too can be trained to signal when an intruder is approaching the home, but not standing at the gate barking at all passers-by. I can cite one area that I am quite familiar with, where there are a large number of dogs believed to be kept

in cages and on leashes, all of which bark for most of the day and into the night. It is unfortunate that there isn't some control on this sort of thing. It's also unfortunate that the people who are keeping these animals don't seem to be aware of the effect that they have on others. In most civilized countries, there are laws against this. And here I must include India as one of the oldest and highly regarded civilizations. I always enjoy my stay in Meghalaya and don't wish to appear too critical, but I would greatly appreciate seeing these changes. Bring back the well-known similitude of 'The Scotland of the East'

Yours etc.,  
John Oliver  
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.

*“George Washington, as a boy, was ignorant of the commonest accomplishments of youth. He could not even lie.”*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 243 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2016

### Ambedkar Remembered

YESTERDAY was Babasaheb Ambedkar's 125th birth anniversary which was observed with due respect all over the country. There are several communities demanding inheritance of his legacy which can have diverse implications. The recent suicide of Rohit Verma on the Hyderabad Central University campus has caused a spate of controversy. The question is if the Indian state and society are aware that Dalits are oppressed more than they were six decades ago when the country adopted the Ambedkar Constitution based on equality. Discrimination in government structures and educational institutions is still very high. Caste hierarchy still predominates in contradiction to Ambedkar's principles of democracy. Dalits have themselves taken advantage of it. On the other hand, programmes for the uplift of Dalits are more talk than action. Negotiations for quotas have vitiated the political ambience. Caste has become more powerful as a result of the exploitation of it by political parties. The State does little to wipe out discrimination in political and academic fields. Whereas there may be something to be said in favour of special reservation for Dalits in the electoral battle, such quotas at the academic level only lower educational standards.

For long the Congress associated itself with the ideals of Ambedkar who was inducted into Prime Minister Nehru's cabinet. But with the politicisation of Dalits which was Babasaheb's contribution, other parties also now seek their support. Ambedkar's legacy comes out loud and clear. Caste inequality has been rendered historically invalid and Indian society has to accept the reality.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### Re-naming of roads

The Meghalaya government has renamed some of the principal arterial roads in the State. The occasion for it was the celebration of the 17th anniversary of the birth of this nascent State which has been making significant progress in all directions in recent time. By renaming the roads by the names of our eminent men and women, we honour their hallowed memory and additionally help preserving our culture as embedded in, and fostered by what these personalities of our little known history contributed through their lives and works worthy of emulation by posterity. By dedicating the roads to these leaders of the past, the government therefore has only helped in preserving our culture which is the sum total of all that they did, dream about and lived for during their own life times.

And, of course, there is also a practical aspect to it for renaming the road, naming them for the first time in fact. It sounds strange how we could make do without such "christening" so long. And now that the roads have duly been named, it should perhaps be the time now to initiate the other twin step of also numbering the homesteads and houses standing on them. This done, it should thus be so much easy for postal deliveries and more urgently for fool proof enumeration of residents during the periodic revision of electoral rolls or holding of the statutory Census operations. Proper naming and numbering would be of immense benefit to day-to-day municipal operations as well besides the obvious needs of the public distribution system of the local civil administration.

We presume the list of names of roads released so far is only the first among the many more which would be similarly treated. In Shillong alone there are many left out from the present exercise by the concerned Authority.

"Meghalaya Names Authority" as we come to know of it. And among these the most glaring omission has been the arterial road starting from one end of the Garrison Ground and ending at the other end at Flag Staff Houses covering in its course the entire huge Laban belt which has been a vital part of the town from its very inception even if looking somewhat detached from the heartland.

As regards choice of names for the respective roads the same has more or less been appropriate. At least two of our great national leaders have also been honoured, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru getting respectively the two busiest roads in Shillong and Tura. Jowai has not got a national name yet, but the lapse cannot surely be intentional. As regards name some of the local personalities it would perhaps be more useful in popularizing their life and work to publish suitable brochures which can be done by either Publicity Directorate or more suitably by the Tourist Department. A Guide Map of the towns, showing the new names so far adopted, would also be a valuable aid to a very practical exercise undertaken at long last.

### Signature campaign against Gujarat Chief Minister

Dissident Congress(I) legislator in Gujarat today launched a fresh signature campaign to urge Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi to change the party leadership in the state. Mr Bigant Oza Mr Ghanashyam Thakkar and Mr Jitu Shan the three dissident legislators who have launched an offensive against the Chief Minister Mr Amar Singh Chaudhury told reporters they would soon submit a memorandum containing signature of 90 MLAs to Mr Gandhi demanding a change in the leadership.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma expressed delight that the state is placed 6th on the list of the most favoured destinations in the world, by Skyscanner, a global search engine that enables people to find comparisons for flights, hotels, destinations etc. The company formed in 2001 by three British IT professionals is headquartered in the United Kingdom with offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London, but it has now set up shop in almost every part of the world. So when a company of that stature tells us that Meghalaya is where it is because of its Double Decker Root Living Root Bridge (DDLRB) at Nongriat we ought to be happy and proud of that rare natural endowment.

There are many living root bridges in Meghalaya. Many have walked on the one at Mawlynnong which is fairly easy to reach but the DDLRB requires that we walk down 2500 steps and climb up the same number. I did this trek in 2013 because I was persuaded by friends, two of whom came from Bangalore but were keen to take up the challenge. Dennis Ryan who runs the Cherra Resort provided us with a tour guide - a young man who has probably taken several tourists up and down and has therefore lost his nerve. After sizing up the five of us he turned to me (I was the only Khasi in the group) and with a serious demeanour said, "Your lady friend (pointing to the better endowed among us) will not be able to make it." It was almost a definitive statement. I told him that he cannot just dismiss us like that and in any case if my friend fails to make it all the way down she can wait for us half way. He said mockingly, "No it is useless, please tell her she cannot make it." Meanwhile my friends wondered what the conversation was all about. I didn't want to translate it for them because it would have been discourteous if they understood. I finally persuaded the guy to guide us on the route.

We walked silently, conserving every bit of our energy. In the group was a gentleman who had just had a stent inserted a few months ago after he suf-

### TO THE EDITOR

### Aadhar Card registration

Editor,  
Kudos to your editorial titled, "Why oppose Aadhar?" (ST April 13, 2016). We should welcome Aadhar since it can check many loopholes in the system. However, it needs to be ensured that Aadhar is used not to harass people but to help them. The onus of its registration should rest with the government. Those who fight shy of going to Aadhar camps due to physical or other constraints must get the opportunity to be registered at their homes. It is not a difficult job as registration requires only a laptop and a biometric camera. If someone is left out from being registered then local government needs to redress the matter in time.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### NE foothold for BJP?

Editor  
The Assam election is extremely important this year not only for the state of Assam but for the future of entire North East India. Most opinion polls are now suggesting a BJP lead majority government in Assam

# Tourism and other issues in Meghalaya

By Patricia Mukhim

ferred a heart attack. He decided to take the plunge and none of us were authoritative enough to dissuade him. Huffing and puffing and with sore muscles we all made it the spectacular DDLRB. It was a sight worth beholding. I asked myself why it took me so long to discover this piece of engineering marvel of our wise elders. The stream beneath the Bridge was sparkling clean. Little fish swam about merrily biting away at dead skin from our feet. It felt ticklish but that is a treat that people go all the way to Bangkok to experience. It's called fish pedicure all available for free!

Our guide was the most insipid guy. He did not even know how to weave stories around the Bridge. While we enjoyed our tryst with this world famous natural marvel he sat nearby looking bored. He only wanted us to get back post haste so he could claim his fees (Rs 300 for five hours) and pursue his other hobbies perhaps. There are several living root bridges not far from the DDLRB but our guide was just not interested in showing those to us. Two of us broke away from the group and decide to explore some of those bridges on our own. We found two more and we could see they were unfrequented. We also photographed some rare flora and birds. Meanwhile the group missed us and waited somewhere at step number 530. When we arrived there the guide looked at us disapprovingly. I was not bothered. Rather I scolded him for not taking us to the other root bridges. He smiled sheepishly. So that's the story of our adventure into the famous DDLRB.

We met several visitors along the way up and down. I asked them where they came from. They were from Mumbai, Chennai, Guwahati and every other place in India. There were some foreigners who camped in the roughly constructed guest house a few feet away from the Bridge and some who had come to do a research. Now that's what tourism is all about. People from across the world and the country know about the DD LR Bridge because it is pack-

aged and sold by tour operators. Why do they do it? Because every tourist books tickets and hotels through their website and pays for that service. That's how they earn. But what do the people of Nongriat actually get in return for putting up the intrusion into their otherwise quiet and simple lifestyle? Not much. Except for little shops selling bottled juices and the ubiquitous Uncle Chips and its other avatars and of course betel leaf and betel nut and tea and snacks, they don't really earn much. This is where a little creative planning to leverage from tourist destinations needs to happen. Tour operators must be willing to share their profits with the locals; otherwise a time will come when the locals will get wise and begin to realize they are being exploited.

Schemes initiated by the State Tourism Department need to look at these angles. While tour operators are important because they are the ones who blaze a trail into newer destinations, the local villagers cannot just be idle bystanders. They need to be active stakeholders. Also we need to train up a vibrant young team of tour guides from within the village. This will provide employment to youth who are from the village, have passed their high school and college but cannot find a job. The Tourism department needs to take these young men and women on exposure trips to learn how tour guides actually operate. Unlike the dour-faced young man who took us to the DD LR Bridge, a tour guide must have a pleasant disposition, a happy body language and ignite the curiosity of the tourists, challenging them to venture beyond the known treks. That way they keep the tourists happy and can earn a well deserved tip, over and above the tour guide fees. In fact, tourists will narrate their pleasant experiences and remember the journey largely because of the tourist guide who spent five hours with them. Alas! We don't seem to understand this essential part about tourism.

I have seen tourists left to themselves in Mawlynnong and wonder why the promoters of Mawlynnong have failed to

capitalize on this potential of creating a band of dedicated tourist guides. The Dorbar Shnong is only interested in collecting parking and other fees such as while climbing the tall bamboo structures leading to the Lookout Point to Bangladesh.

Some universities in this State offer Tourism as a course of study. I wonder why they have not yet been able to effect the changes needed on the ground.

Another sore point with our present tourist destinations is that they are getting over-heated. Those who have visited the DD LR Bridge in recent times have noticed that the roots of the Ficus plant used to plait together a robust bridge that the villagers use to traverse over rivers only for their livelihoods, are now frayed and worn out. There is a limit to the carrying capacity of the living root bridges. Do we want to destroy them completely in our lifetime as we are doing the other spaces that we frequent? Or shall we treat these nature's gifts with respect. I have also noticed that Indian tourists have no sense of respect for a destination. They come in hordes, make loud noises and are there as if they are on a "Khatron Ki Khilari" kind of trip where posing for pictures is more important than the journey to the destination. Foreigners on the contrary imbibe the silence and seek it as part of a healing process. They spend both time and money meaningfully. They know what is expected of a tourist and don't intrude into the privacy of the villagers, knowing full well that these are indigenous people with a wealth of wisdom and not just museum pieces to be stared at and photographed.

True, Meghalaya has several fascinating and exotic destinations. HH Mohrmen has mentioned several living root bridges in Jaintia Hills as well which have not yet been explored. It would be a good practice to limit the number of tourists per day/week, so that nature gets a respite from intrusive humans. Meghalaya should not short-sell itself as a tourist destination for bag-packers. It must promote itself as a high end tourist destination a la Bhutan!

ism on command, senseless violence and all the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism --- how passionately I hate them!"

No true Indian will chant rhetorical slogans so as to pass the litmus test of "patriotism" as defined by the communal saffron brigade. Rather their all-embracing work, tolerant thoughts and democratic ideals will talk about their dedication towards India. And I desire to end with Rabindranath Tagore's assertion "Never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity". Remember this very person came up with number of swadeshi songs, including 'Jana Gana Mana...', reflecting his deep love for the country. But Tagore's love for the country was not limited to mere flags or zealous chant of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'; but got extended to respect for values, humanity and an earnest yearning for an environment where the mind is without fear and the head held high.

Yours etc.,  
Kajal Chatterjee,  
Kolkata-114

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

# The Kollam tragedy and aftermath

By Elsa Lycias Joel

As the ongoing news series on Kollam tragedy surfaces, Incredible India is not all that it's cracked up to be, especially our living temples. It is a matter of national shame that despite more and more fire accidents, there is no national or state level policy that addresses this goof up as such. Given the agitation and persuasion from the people's side to host the "Kambam" calling it a tradition, there is no doubt that temple festivals have wound their way out of all legal, political and moral conundrums to become a law unto themselves. It annoys me when an incident as this is described as a 'Tragedy' when it's actually a 'fallout' of unwarranted deeds and the repetitive nature of temple festivals and accidents. Considerable suspension of disbelief I required to come to terms with the affected lot calling "Kambam" a tradition that can't be banned. Fatalistic Indian!! Or is it his thought process orbicular that life's inequalities tend to follow him around!

The past few days have shown just how difficult it is for the Kerala government to put up with the fire tragedy

firework display and more so a competition. According to estimates, in the last 50 plus years, there have been more than 400 such accidents in Kerala which conveys that the government didn't care to enforce tougher rules and thereby create a controlled environment for selling, possessing or igniting fireworks. Learning of the impact, it's anybody's assumption that our country's crackdown on fireworks is not yet as tough as the rules laid out by the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization of the central government. Temples in Kerala seem to be the most disaster prone areas given the stories of fires, stampedes and elephants running amok to the deafening sounds of the loudspeakers and heart thumping bursts of crackers. The louder and grandeur the show sans a reality check, the more divinity seems to be the idea which ultimately claims a lot of lives about which the state government doesn't care. As of today, a huge black market for banned illegal fireworks and related products seem

**The choice is actually quite simple for the government: Ban the production and sale of fireworks or review the regulations and measures of The Explosive rules, 2008 to limit the sale of fireworks thereby include necessary prohibitions on the importation, sale, possession and use of fireworks in public places or places of worship even late at night.**

and confront the challenges. Though the discomforts with banning fireworks have been visible for a long time now and especially after the clamor for a blanket ban grew louder, it's ridiculous that the government is still unprepared for the starkness with which a wise choice should be articulated. The choice is actually quite simple for the government: Ban the production and sale of fireworks or review the regulations and measures of The Explosive rules, 2008 to limit the sale of fireworks thereby include necessary prohibitions on the importation, sale, possession and use of fireworks in public places or places of worship even late at night. If the government is concerned that a ban could lead to an unregulated black market in illegal fireworks, then they should be at least working on the enforcement of the existing measures. For now, the spectacle is shocking. Once again, highly regarded people have proved themselves to be wholesomely susceptible to breaching the law. Have they been agile in harnessing connections and influence to dodge punishment is yet to be seen and heard. The disaster will have to be closely watched for signs whether people behind this horrendous tragedy will enjoy immunity from the law. And for those who believe that worship places holds life's codes, it's another sad reminder that rules often don't carry beyond some boundaries.

If fireworks aka the noise and dirt are loved and enjoyed then we need to have a tough approach on firework regulations. Come festivals and there is nothing that would prevent us from enjoying the bursting and cracking like there is no tomorrow. But the visuals of the kollam tragedy are so disturbing, making people re-think about how relevant is a

to thrive in spite of the history of accidents getting repeated. Yet, even in the midst of a bloody disaster, we ignore the lessons of history at our own peril. It's difficult to define Kerala's enduring appeal for fireworks during temple festivities. Surprisingly enough, the temple authorities in determining the purpose of the visual treat didn't really care to rewind one of the sobering reminders. Religion to them above all signifies rites and their 'Kambam' performance, I guess. Perhaps the fact that there's something loud and bright for everyone has something to do with it. Minus a ban, we are in dire need of professional fireworks operators and breaking rules isn't fun all the time. The government would also do well to draw quick lessons from the 'Kambam' episode to evolve a tough mechanism by which devotees are spared from death in worship places.

Therefore, despite the loss, anxiety, uncertainty and tension caused by this accident, the good news is that certain sections of the society are doing their best to advocate that temples are places of worship only and not "Kambam". For people who don't learn from mistakes, too much gloom, doom and analysis is of course bad for their souls. A certain happy-hearted fizz to celebrations seems to be must and if fireworks, even banned ones are part of the act, they will sure gear up, for Indians always look for a silver lining in a cloud. Besides, even if the government formulate an absolute foolproof solution for a safe "Kambam", there is no telling if it will be executed given the devotees unfortunate stories of courageous but doomed firework adventure.

*“Many people consider the things which government does for them as social progress, but they consider the things government does for others as socialism.”*

—Earl Warren

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 244 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2016

### Cultural nationalism

THE Seng Khasi Mawsynram has come up with an irrational demand of doing away with Fr Bachiarello's book, 'Ki Dienjat U Longshuwa,' on the plea that it shows the adherents of the Niam Khasi- Niam Tynrai in a bad light. Had the plea ended there it would not have created any controversy and right thinking academics might have been called to critique the book and filter out the subjectivities therein. But the fact that the Organisation asks that Bachiarello's book be replaced by the Ramayana and the Vedas immediately rings warning bells. Is Mawsynram a place where only people of one faith live? Firstly, how can the people of a small part of Meghalaya demand that a book be dropped from the MBOSE, SSLC syllabus? Can a small group of Khasis ask for a recasting of the entire MBOSE syllabus simply on the premise that the book is irreverent towards the Khasi indigenously faith? Has this been proven beyond reasonable doubt? Has any study been carried out? Or is this an ingenious way of supplanting a harmless book written by a Christian missionary many decades ago based on his understanding of the life and culture of the Khasi people of the time, by the Ramayana and Vedas? One would appreciate the matter if the Seng Khasi Mawsynram had asked that Bachiarello's book be replaced by one on Khasi culture and tradition. But why two books on Hinduism? The Ramayana is the story of Rama, the crown prince of ancient Ayodhya, and an earthly incarnation of the Hindu god, Vishnu. To that extent it is a Hindu text that is also used as a universal moral guide where good triumphs over evil. Since India is a secular country, the Ramayana can only be included as a study in literature in the same manner that the Bible is read for its literary narrative. But there is a hint here of a slow encroachment, of a form of cultural nationalism which seeks to define all Indians as having a homogenous culture, faith and nationalism! This is a dangerous trend because we are a country that is racially diverse and culturally heterogenous.

Cultural nationalism tends to focus on national identity shaped by cultural traditions and language, but India is a land of varied languages, cultures and traditions and every ethnic group chooses to hold on to them. Cultural nationalism based on a single language and culture is a sure way to disrupt the fabric of this country. Yet this is what we see happening ever since the BJP came to power in Delhi. In the villages of Meghalaya a silent cultural nationalism is sought to be infused on people of the indigenous faith and the brainwashing has been happening through what is sold as 'education.' Our young boys and girls are lured away to study in Bangalore, Pune and Mumbai and they are imbibing the RSS brand of nationalism. When they return these young people become force multipliers. Religious inducement of any kind is uncalled for. A person must be allowed to make a free and informed choice about his/her faith. And since faith is a personal quest it cannot be imposed as part of the syllabus of any educational system.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

#### Bandh affects life in Assam Hill Districts

Guwahati : Life was affected today in Assam's two hill districts Karbianglong and North Cachar following a 36-hour bandh by the Autonomous State Demand Committee, official reports received here said.

The bandh however evoked a partial response. Through train services were withdrawn in the two districts.

The Government offices remained open though the attendance was thin. Business establishments were closed in some areas and

vehicular traffic went off the road. No untoward incident has been reported so far. In all 16 supporters were, however, arrested at Haflong, the headquarters of North Cachar, for forcing observance of the bandh, the reports said.

The bandh supporters took out a procession at Diphu in Karbi Anglong district and submitted a memorandum to the authorities to press for their demand for creation of an autonomous state with the two districts.

# A Visitor's View of Us

By Oliver Lyngdoh

Back home after two years of a stay outside Shillong, I naturally had a lot of odd jobs to do. And like any other normal person I set out to complete these "jobs" of mine. As I came out to catch a cab from Jingkiang towards Governor's house I already dreaded the journey as it was 10 am in the morning-Shillong's rush hour. Sitting in a cab, I noticed our people rushing and honking at other drivers. I looked on, amused at the sight: Why does Shillong a place with small amenities, small families and with people who are supposedly tied down by roots and family ties have so much need for so many vehicles to ply on the road?

A friend of mine visiting Shillong was fairly amused. He said it looked as a family of five has six cars in Shillong. Little does he know how close to the truth he was. And as we got off the infamous black and yellow cab, the cab driver blatantly told me to pay Rs 5 extra since he didn't have change; and of course we Shillongites don't care for small change do we? So what's a meagre Rs 5 coin right? I simply sighed at the driver's demand while this "out of station" friend of mine looked on with curiosity.

After a dreadful journey to SBI main branch, I went in to find the branch jam-packed. As I sat there with my visitor friend, I noticed all around the office hoardings asking the citizens not to waste paper; to use net banking and mobile banking facilities, "Go Green" seemed to be the motto of SBI. I was filled with a sense of pride to notice that people out here have started to actually act on the environment. I beamed at my friend for this.

However my sense of pride was short lived for by the time I reached the counter and when I asked whether I could pay for my DD with my card, the teller told me wryly that the machine didn't work. So as I paid for the same with cash (so much for saving paper) I was informed that I had to get my draft from a different counter. Isn't this business of moving from one counter to another for the same purpose a waste of time and personnel? Why can't there be a single window counter for demand

drafts? Guess there must be another reason for this logistic process unknown to most of us.

I reached the DD counter and requested the lady behind the counter to accept my application form, since she was just sitting there doing nothing and no one was in front of me. But I got a rude answer, "Can't you see I am busy with these other files? Why can't you wait in the queue like everyone else?"

Taken aback I returned to my seat in front of the counter while my friend watched in disbelief at the turn of events. His expression made me wonder why we are treated like outsiders in our own bank? Isn't the purpose of working in the bank or any other institution supposed to be to assist the customer? Correct me if I am wrong but isn't the whole purpose of setting up an institution of any sort actually meant to help the customer who ultimately brings in the "greens" for the institution to profit and prosper from?

For example anyone starting a small fast food stall (which seems to be the trend here now with all the unemployment and backdoor employments happening in and around 'institutions' out here); what you need apart from the capital investments is that you need clients to visit the food stall. These same people become the regular customers who would visit time and again and indirectly bring in the moolah, which would ultimately lead to the person's prosperity? If you don't treat your customers the right way, who's to say that they will come again next time?

The basic principle of any for-profit organisation is to treat the customers the way they would want to be treated themselves if they visit a similar establishment. Extend this to any other organisation or institution and there will be clashes all around. Some might argue that not all institutions are for-profit. Well, even then they are meant to serve the people because they are paid for doing so.

This brings me to my next point and I don't need to tell you now that this of course was also pointed out by my "out station" friend. I was in a state government office

today for some work. As I was talking to this person another person most probably not one from the town but from a village came in. This person, out of 'courtesy' or fear' for being lambasted by the person inside the office, actually knocked at the door and asked "Kong, long ban rung shapoh?" (Ma'am can I enter?)

Now I really don't know the etiquette in offices and whether I should be knocking or asking permission to enter. But I found it amusing that someone felt the need to ask for permission. And being a student myself, I understood the tone of voice of that person. It was a pleading to the government employee seated inside lest he is refused entry into a place which every citizen has a right to enter and ask for help and information regarding their needs.

My out station friend has pointed out a lot of things to me. It opened my eyes for the first time at the dysfunctional system we are living in. My friend being from a metro, asked me why our traffic lights have gathered dust on the streets? Why is it that people everywhere use smart phones but everything that matters is still on paper? Why does the paper have to be filed in a folder and then in a file to be stored on a shelf only to be covered in dust?

I had no answers to these pointed questions. And as we stood in line to wait for our turn to book tickets at the MTC counter I noticed most of the other fellow persons in queue had high end smart phones with them which they were using for social networking or browsing the internet; all online. This then prompted a thought in me. If we are all so connected online then why do we have to stand in line for a mere train ticket? I was baffled at my own question. Who was I to ask as I was also one of the others in the queue. So I struck a conversation with the person in front of me asking him why he doesn't book his ticket online. To this he simply replied, I don't know how. I told him that he was just browsing Facebook and watching videos on YouTube on his smartphone just now so how is it that he doesn't know how to do a

simple online transaction. He replied that although he knows the basics of online booking he is afraid of doing so since he feels it's not secure and his perception of net banking is that people would steal his bank details.

I guess we are all the same. We don't hesitate to put out every other information about ourselves online on social media but when it comes to things that matter we still feel comfortable with doing things the old way even though it takes so much of our time. I guess some more 'education' and 'awareness' on this matter is needed. And by the way, I was able to have engage in a long conversation with this person in front of me in a queue of three people because the person on the other side of the counter was taking an extended lunch? But that's just the normal thing in our beloved 'Ri' right? Besides if it wasn't for the extended lunch of the person I wouldn't have had the chance for a wonderful conversation with the person in front of me.

So after a long day of odd jobs and errands I and my "out station" friend decided to quit for the day. We boarded another yellow and black cab from Khyndai Lad and again the cabbie asked me to pay Rs 5 extra than the normal fare towards Laitumkhrak since he said it was rush hour.

My out station friend chuckled at this and I simply sighed and resigned myself to this fate we have created for ourselves.

And as I entered my house, I told myself that I will definitely utilize my net more often for simple necessities and simple transactions to avoid such tiresome meetings and useless travel. But lo and behold! There was no current! (Shocker right? Most probably not, it's the season of load shedding here, part of our yearly rituals.)

And as I turned to my out station, friend he simply chuckled and smiled at my plight.

Now I know why we still stand in queues and still use the tardy conventional methods for most of our needs. Of for poor customer service and over-priced taxi cabs! Well I guess we Shillongites are simply uncaring and too rich to bother about menial things like that. Why we have the Oscars and the Grammy's to worry about don't we?

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Beware of cultural nationalism

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, I wish to condemn the self-contradiction of the report "Row over inclusion of Christian text" in MBOSE Syllabus (ST April 4, 2016). It is self-contradictory because the leaders mentioned in the article wanted India's secularism by throwing out Christianity and promoting only the indigenous faith and Hinduism. The whole country must guard against divisive elements who want one India, who want all to say "Bharat mata ki jai," who want to dictate 'what to eat and what not to eat (beef)', who preach 'nationalism' only in one narrow way. What is Indianess? Does it mean India - one religion, one language, one culture, one race...? Yes to a group and a force that is creating hatred and enmity in the nation. But the reality and the truth is that we are a nation of diversities. Any sensible citizen will know there is no such India in the past and in the present and therefore we must preserve the richness of diversities for the future.

Believing that the news item is true, I would like to draw the attention of the citizens of Meghalaya to some points for caution:-

1) Be aware of the dangerous ideology that promotes fundamentalism, fascism and hatred of the other. We see this trend in the mainland and it is com-

ing to these peaceful hills of ours. All right thinking and good willed citizens must come out and stop such poisonous thoughts before we see reenactment of Syria or Yemen in our hills.

2) Some are paid to spread hatred and division in the name of preservation of the indigenous.

3) The leadership of Seng Khasi Mawsynram (Batistalng Myrthong and Bidi Myrthong) know only one way to be secular - out with Christianity and in with the Vedas and Ramayana of Hinduism. These leaders are acting as if they are controlled by Nagpur (RSS) or Delhi (BJP), otherwise why do they need to bring Hinduism to MBOSE? Leave MBOSE alone!

4) Do they (leaders of Seng Khasi Mawsynram) want to make our Niam Khasi Niam Tre one and the same with Hinduism? It is good that they clarify to the public. I know "ka rukom lehniam jong kawei ka ilaka ka iapher naka wei pat"(rites and rituals of one elaka differ from another). So even in Niam Tre/Niam Tynrai there is diversity.

5) I urge all citizens not to sow seeds of hatred and enmity or exclusion and when such things come in the public domain, let us be quick to condemn. We need to promote unity in diversity, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

6) The leadership of Seng Khasi Mawsynram cannot control the freedom of each Khasi on what to believe, what to eat and how to be a Khasi. The Khasis of Mawsynram can remain

good Khasis without telling the Khasis in other parts of Meghalaya - in Ri Pnar, or in Maram to be like them.

The way forward is integration, unity (not sameness or oneness), tolerance, respect, dialogue and harmony. Therefore, political leaders and religious leaders should not mislead the public. There is no religion that teaches hatred and enmity to the other. So to my Khasi brethren "ka lawei jong ka jaibynriew kam shong ha ka bor jong ki nongialam ba hikai ban isih bad pynduh ia kiwei, ka shong ha ka jingieid bad burom ia kiwei, na kata ka daw ka don ka tangkur". Ngi hap sumar ban kiar na ki nongialam kiba khwan myntoi shimet ban pynlong ka juh bad kawei ia ka niam bad duster u hynniew trep bad ka niam duster hindu. ( the future of the jaibynriew does not depend on those leaders who teach hatred and destroy communal harmony; hence we have the ting-kur or clan and kinship ties. We should be wary of self-seeking leaders who seek to introduce Hinduism into the indigenous Khasi faith)

Yours etc.,  
Riskhem Lyngdoh  
Jowai, Jaintia Hills

#### Wine Store at Rynjah Bazar

Editor,  
With reference to the numerous news articles regarding the closures of wine stores as per the New Amended Guidelines of September 23, 2015 notification, I would like to know from the authorities that why the wine store at Rynjah Bazar is still

operating and whether it is not violating the provisions in the above notification. This wine store is located within 200 meters of the Rynjah State Dispensary which was setup in 1960s. It is also within 200 meters from the Pohkseh Presbyterian Church and the Umpling (R) L P School located in R & R Colony which was setup in 1960. The Rynjah ITI and St Thomas School are not far away. So the said store is located within 200 meters from the Dispensary, School and Church so how it is still operating and why are the authorities not taking any action against the said store.

The wine store located at Lane No 15, R & R Colony has created numerous problems for the residents. Customers after buying drinks from the store, sit on the walls or staircase or inside vehicles and consume the same. Then they throw the broken bottles in the lane. Sometimes they even ask water from the houses located there. I request the DC / Excise Superintendent to visit the lane after 6 PM and see the condition. It is impossible for the residents to come out of their homes between 6 pm - 9 PM as the area remains crowded and the lane has also become a public toilet. Residents have requested the shop owner to employ security guards for better security but nothing has been done.

I request the authorities to shift the wine store from Lane No 15, R & R Colony as it is a residential area and also it is violating the amended rules of new excise act. It is high time that the residents' well being and in-

## Honour Killings Maharashtra, TN talk tough

By Insaaf

Maharashtra has changed the rules of the game for honour killings and khap panchayats. In one fell stroke, its Assembly has ended the menace of extrajudicial institutions such as caste and community panchayats, read khap, by unanimously passing the Prohibition of Social Boycott Bill. Undeniably, the credit for this goes to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis even as his BJP counterpart in Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar sees red. According to the legislation, any individual or group citing jaati panchayats would be dealt with an iron hand, including imprisonment of seven years and penalty of Rs 5 lakhs, or both who call for a boycott of a certain community or caste. The provocation could well be Raighad, wherein 42 cases of social boycott vis-a-vis inter caste marriage, worship rituals, lifestyles, dress and vocation are pending in this district alone. Is this the death knell of age old traditions in the name of caste and religion? Only time will tell.

Close on the heels of Maharashtra, the Madras High Court has put the Tamil Nadu Government on notice in regard to harassment to couples of inter-caste marriages. It has ordered that protection be provided to them. This follows public furor over the killing of a dalit boy in full public view in Thirupur last month for daring to marry a girl of the Thevar community. The court has directed the Jayalalitha administration to set up special cells providing a 24/7 helpline to register complaints, give assistance as well as protection by ensuring temporary shelters to couples and facilitate their rehabilitation. Further, funds should be kept aside to educate people about the scourge of honour killings and eradicating this evil. Moreover, as all police stations come under the umbrella of the electronically crime and criminal tracking network and systems, the government should examine the feasibility of auto-generated FIRs as soon as it receives complaints. Will the AIADMK supremo oblige in election year?

#### Bengal Under EC Watch

West Bengal is scrupulously under the Election Commission's scanner. Not only did the poll watchdog remove the Kolkata police commissioner but undertook an unscheduled visit to the State on Thursday last, ahead of the second phase of voting, following several complaints about intimidation and violence of voters by the ruling Trinamool Congress in the first phase. The axe fell on the police commissioner on Tuesday last after the Opposition perused its complaints with the EC of his alleged closeness to Mamata Banerjee and "snooping" on its leaders, bureaucrats and journalists! While it is hoped the action will be a warning signal to other 'compliant' police officers, history shows that Bengal is famous for widespread intimidation of voters and violence. This time around, the Left parties are on the other side of the fence! The bigger question is whether the EC full team will restore confidence in free and fair poll? Given the State's track record of violence in elections, it's a tough call for Nirvachan Sadan.

#### Kerala's 'Sinister' Tragedy?

Is there more than meets the eye in Kerala's Kollam fire tragedy, which claimed 116 lives? Questions such as whether it's a plain simple case of fireworks display going terribly wrong or was there a sinister design behind it are doing the rounds. While the probe so far clearly reveals political pressure being put on the administration

to remove the ban on fire-works at the Puttingal Devi Temple with an eye on the May elections, there are reports that three cars laden with explosives - cylindrical sticks/pipes meant for high intensity blasts, were found near the temple! Were these meant to target those fleeing the temple area after the mega fire and impact adjoining buildings? The doubt has arisen as the administration rushed a bomb squad to the site to tackle the car explosives. While the Oommen Chandy Government has announced a judicial probe and ordered a Crime Branch investigation, the High Court has, other than banning the use of high-decibel crackers at places of worship between sunset and sunrise, suggested a CBI inquiry. But with elections round the corner, fear is that the tragedy as a prelude to it would get buried and a thorough inquiry lost.

#### More Trouble In J&K

It's been a rough start for the PDP-BJP government in Jammu and Kashmir. The Valley continues to be on the boil. First it was the NIT campus fracas and now tension prevails over the killing of four youth in Army firing in Handwara. Strict restrictions have been imposed in Kupwara town, where the protests continue. The firing followed protests, by now well-known method of stone-pelting, at an Army picket, after a video of a college girl on social media showed that she had been molested by the security forces and some local boys snatched her bag. The Army has done well to at least regret the incident and has ordered an inquiry. Recall, it has done so on earlier occasions too. But is that enough? A dissatisfied Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti flew down to New Delhi to complain to the BJP top trio-- Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Rajnath and Defence Minister Parrikar and sought an assurance of a speedy time-bound probe and exemplary punishment to the culprits. At the crux of the issue are two videos: one purportedly alleging molestation and the other of the girl denying it later. The Army will need to tread carefully. The confidence of the people in the new dispensation needs to be restored by both the Centre and State government. Sooner the better.

#### Andhra's Bollywood Connection

Andhra Pradesh is following Gujarat's footsteps. If it was Amitabh Bachchan as the western State's brand ambassador, the southern too is not behind. It has scripted for its tourism sector Bollywood faces of couple Ajay Devgan and Kajol. With Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu according top priority to this sector, he wants the celebrity couple to be part of his mega dream plans. Help woo global investors and have a world-class new capital of Amaravati, is the direction. Luckily, his venture may not be a flop. Apparently, Devgan is reported to have gone to Hyderabad "along with half a dozen investors," already. This apart, he has evinced interest in projects such as a theme park and mini-digital theatres with small retail outlets attached in small cities and villages. Clearly, a boost not just for the State but for the film industry too! When the production will roll out is going to be keenly watched. Of course, both Devgan and Andhra Tourism should be given time to ensure they have a blockbuster.--INFA

terest is looked after by the authorities who till now have turned a blind eye to their sufferings. I urge the R & R Colony Welfare society to pursue with the authorities

and if needed file a PIL in the Hon'ble High Court to help the residents.

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request

Shweta Patwardhan feels there is no difference between biological and adopted children



Young, middle class families from various backgrounds, are increasingly opting for adoption even when they have their biological kid or are capable of conception. The trend, first spotted in the last decade, has picked up lately. Perhaps the most beautiful part of the story is, as Madhuri Abhyankar, Director of Social Service, Society of Friends of the Sassoon hospitals, Pune, observes, "From secret adoption to open adoption, single parent adoption to family adoption, this is the renaissance era for adoption".

Media personality Shumita Mahajan, 34, says, "I was inspired when my cousin adopted a baby. So before I got married to Shripad, I shared my wish with him. Surprisingly, he too desired the same. Initially, only adoption was on my mind. But later my counsellor friend convinced me to bear a child. Later, as planned, after the birth of our son, Nakul, we decided to adopt our daughter Radha. Thankfully, my in-laws were very supportive. And what's best, there is no sibling rivalry either". Studio owner Meghna Varma (36), Pune, narrates, "Since my in-laws' family didn't have any daughters, we wished for a girl child. So, when our son Aditya was born, we decided to adopt Aaliyah. Initially my father was not very comfortable with this idea, but I managed to convince him. Today, our daughter has naturally blended with the family. We actually laugh when people find resemblances between her and different people from my

family. And she really does, surprising many!"

Explaining this growing trend of biological-adoption combo, Senior Programme Director, Bharatiya Samaj Seva Kendra, Pune, Maina Shetty feels today, young couples are more confident about making certain bold decisions as they are educated, independent and financially stable rather early in their lives. The average age group these days, as Abhyankar says, falls between 30 and 40- years. There is a definite shift in perception as adoption is no longer an unusual concept. For some others, as trustee Purna Shankar from Karna Prayag, Chennai, maintains, they adopt in order to provide a home and family for a destitute child. "And sometimes it is because of their particular gender choice of their second child," she adds.

Then there are people like Uma who are too busy to go in for a second pregnancy. An IT professional from Mumbai, Uma Kumar observes how the adoption by her colleague made her think on similar lines. "We wanted a daughter, but I was not too keen on a pregnancy as I had a back problem and led a very busy professional life. So, adoption suited us best. Of course, I had to convince my son, Shashank as he was eager to have a brother. Now he

is extremely fond of his sister Shama," says Kumar.

two kids before adopting Aishwarya. "The world has been good to me. This

really a trend. Romesh Mehandroo (director and CEO of Nari Niketan

more open to accepting dark-complexioned children too. They prefer

# Innocent kids



For Delhi based Chhavi Ansari (38), a tarot card reader, who always wanted to adopt a child and did so after her daughter Tanvi's birth. What's more heart warming; they adopted Tanishq when he was three. Chennai based Sushila Natraj, simply felt, too many children are abandoned for no fault of theirs. Hence, she had

was my pay-back gesture," says Natraj. None of these adopted children live under any illusion. They know the truth. As Varma says, "I told my daughter, she has come from my heart and her brother, from my stomach, and she has two mothers (her biological mother and me)." Not everyone is convinced that this is

Trust, Jalandhar) believes that there are few takers for such adoptions. However, Shankar affirms that there is a considerable increase in adoption - from 7 per cent during 1997-2001 to 10 per cent during the last five years (2002-2007), among couples with biological kids. The best part avers Shetty, "Unlike in the past, families today are

a happy assimilation. Some families are going a step further -- they are adopting kids with special needs, like children born with congenital conditions like heart defects, vision problems, cleft palate, club foot and minor hearing loss. An innocent tug of a child matters more than the health or family background of the child."

There are only 70,000 of us Parsis left in India, Penaz Masani said in an interview with Biswajit Choudhury

## Vanishing Parsis

There is something highly moving when a woman, whose people face extinction, sings of unrequited love. Love, not just for a mortal beloved but also of the mystic kind as in ghazal singing, that is a male dominated art. Take a bow, Penaz Masani, the Parsi queen of ghazal.

"There are only 70,000 of us Parsis left in India," Masani, the only Parsi who sings ghazals and a Padma Shri awardee, said in an interview, during a visit for the minority affairs ministry-hosted "The Everlasting Flame International Programme" to celebrate Zoroastrian culture and the Parsis in India.

"It was a once-in-a life-

House and later on the lawns of Lutyens' Delhi," she said.

As part of the celebrations, a two-month long exhibition titled "The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination", that started across three venues in the capital on March 19, depicts the earliest days of Zoroastrianism to its emergence as the foremost religion of imperial Iran, followed by the 10th century maritime journey of Zoroastrians fleeing religious persecution to India,



Penaz Masani

tion to their new homeland, both in material and cultural terms, is history.

The minority affairs ministry, along with the Delhi-based Parzor Foundation, launched the Jiyo Parsi

scheme in 2013 to stem the community's decline in numbers. Jiyo Parsi has to show 30 babies born since the scheme began, with another dozen expected, and around 50 couples undergo-

ing fertility treatment. However, a campaign that adopted slogans like "Be Responsible. Don't Use A Condom Tonight" also raised hackles within (Contd on P-VII)

time experience to meet all the Parsis I know in Mumbai, whyo had gathered here in Parliament

where they came to be known as the Parsis. As for the rest, the Parsi contribu-

## Silence is golden

A comedian named Dan reminded me that TV used to stop overnight, and it inspired me to tell my children the horrific truth about life in the old days: "And at about 11.30 every night, they would play the national anthem and we would pretend to stand up and every screen went blank. And all screens in the land remained dead until the next afternoon."

They were shocked. "But what did people do," asked one.

"Many committed suicide while others were driven insane by the silence." (Dads are good at getting the sympathy vote.)

The conversation put me in mind of how little silence we have these days. Reader Josefina Cavallero sent in a news report about an apartment in the UK which was identified in so many noise complaints that police got a warrant to break in. They found 34 audio speakers in the small flat and confiscated the lot. "They left only a CD player

complaining rather than the noisemaker. Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., revealed recently that it received 8,670 noise complaints in 2015, of which 6,500 came from one person.

I think it can be assumed that one of the airport's neighbors did not enjoy the sound of planes.

I did the math. Since there are only 8,760 hours in a year, the guy must have complained every hour, night and day, five days a week. WIFE: "Why are you getting up? It's 3 a.m." HUSBAND: "I haven't called the airport



complaints line for nearly an hour. A man has to follow his dreams,

plus a pair of headphones," she said.

I remarked that this was kind of them, but a youngish colleague who loves heavy rock, metal and punk shook his head. "The only purpose of putting on loud music like that is to annoy other people," he said. "You don't think anyone actually enjoys it, do you?"

It's funny how young people don't realize that it was the adult generation who actually invented rock music and its accompanying misbehavior. When I lived in London, I was such a naughty kid that people would come to my house to get tips on how to smash up stuff.

Anyway, this colleague, who clearly has a Mission to Annoy, forwarded me a recent news report of a case where the problem was the person

Janice."

Yet, the best way to deal with noise complaints is to use cunning rather than getting into a fight. I remember some years ago reporting on the case of a myna bird in Nanjing, China. His owner, a Mr. Jiang, decided to invest in a pair of noisy parrots as well, who squawked night and day. The myna bird soon noticed that the newcomers shut up whenever a cat passed the window. Mynas are famous for their ability to mimic sounds, so it started miaowing like a cat whenever it wanted a bit of peace.

### The Funny side

He did it many times a day," Mr. Jiang told a reporter.

In honour of adults, I will now bring this column to a close by singing the national anthem. Kindly pretend to stand up.

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

## Secrets of England's first printed Bible

Historians have uncovered secrets of England's first printed Bible -- one of only seven surviving copies and which is housed in London's Lambeth Palace Library, a media report said.

The discovery assumes significance in view of the revelations it made about hidden annotations, which were copied from the famous 'Great Bible' of Thomas Cromwell, seen as the



epitome of the English Reformation.

Written between 1539 and 1549, the annotations were covered and disguised with thick paper in 1600, sciencedaily.com reported.

The secrets hidden in the Lambeth Library copy were revealed during research by Eyal Poleg, historian from Queen Mary University of London (QMUL).

"We know virtually nothing about this unique Bible -- whose preface was written by King Henry VIII of England himself -- outside of the surviving copies. At



first, the Lambeth copy first appeared completely 'clean'. But upon closer inspection I noticed that heavy paper had been pasted over blank parts of the book. The challenge was how to uncover the annotations without damaging the book," Poleg explained.

Poleg sought the assistance of Graham Davis, a specialist in 3D X-ray imaging at QMUL. Using a light sheet, which was slid

beneath the pages, they took two images in long exposure -- one with the light sheet on and one with it off.

The first image showed all the annotations, scrambled with the printed text. The second picture showed only the printed text. Davis then wrote a novel piece of software to subtract the second image from the first. (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

# Career preparations after 10 + 2

The foundation of a bright careers starts from early age and academically it starts from school days. To choose a course after senior secondary is confusion for some while some are determined what they are going to do in future. A student after passing secondary chooses the stream but some do changes them after senior secondary. We could see that many students doing well in matric or secondary exam opt for science stream in senior secondary but many of them fail to get good marks in board exam after class XII. It is important to have a good plan after class XII as this is most important time of choosing courses and institutes.

There are some entrances exams after senior secondary and many students appear in them though everyone cannot crack entrances. Entrances are available for different stream like arts, science or commerce. Whenever it comes to entrance we think mostly medical and engineering entrances. There are many other entrances for various courses and for different institutes. Some entrances are All India level while some are specific to certain states only.

**NDA Examination:** One of the best ways to join defence forces is through National Defence Academy Entrance exam. Male student may appear in this exam when they are pursuing their senior secondary or after passing senior secondary. NDA is for three years and followed by training in respective academies according to choice like Army, Air Force or Navy. Students having Physics and Maths may opt for any wing but students from arts and commerce may only choose army wing. Written test is conducted by Union Pub-

lic Service Commission followed by SSB interview and health check up.

Written Examination consists of Mathematics (Objective type) 300 Marks and General Ability Test (Objective type) 600 Marks and the total marks for written examination is 900. After the written SSB interviews are held and mark for SSB Interview is 900 Marks. Age limit for student who can apply is in between 16 years and 6 months to 19 Years. Advertisements are published in leading newspaper and in Employment News.

**Medical Entrances:**  
**AIPMT-** This entrance test is being conducted for the 15% merit positions in the Medical/Dental Colleges of India as specified in the directives of the Supreme Court and shall be governed by the rules and regulations specified for the same by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India from time to time. This is conducted by Central Board of Secondary Education. The counselling for successful candidates under 15% All India Quota seats is conducted by the DGHS and the Counselling for admission in seats under the control of other participating States/Universities/Institutions shall be conducted by their respective Authorities. Science students having Physics, Chemistry and Biology are eligible to appear in AIPMT.

**Engineering Entrances:**  
Joint Entrance Examination - JEE is conducted for engineering college's admis-

sion in different parts of the country. It has Main and Advanced section to get admission in leading engineering colleges of the country. Students from science stream with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics may appear in JEE Exam. Admission criteria to Undergraduate Engineering Programs at NITs, IITs, Other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions, Institutions funded by participating State Governments, and other Institutions shall include the performance in the class 12/ equivalent qualifying Examination and in the Joint Entrance Examination, JEE (Main). The Paper-1 (B. E./ B. Tech.) of JEE (Main) is also an eligibility test for the JEE (Advanced), which the candidate has to take if he/she is aspiring for admission to the undergraduate programmes offered by the IITs. The States of Gujarat, Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Odisha have joined JEE (Main) system.

Parents, Guardians and students must be careful when they are appearing for entrances test for private colleges. All colleges may not be credible and one needs to check out details. There are many private medical and engineering colleges which seek admission from students as seats in government colleges are limited. **(The writer is a social activist and career mentor and can be reached at bkrjanjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)**

By Annie Samson

A futuristic building shaped like a giant ladle is how Michelin-starred chef Vikas Khanna's culinary museum is set to look like in a few years from now.

For at least 15 years, the Amritsar-born chef has been collecting pots and pans besides other utensils from India for the upcoming "one-of-its-kind" museum in Manipal, Karnataka.

"It is a very big project I want to preserve all of our country's rich culinary history. There is no other place in the world, believe me, which has such diversity. And what better way to do it than with food," says Khanna on his visit here recently.

The MasterChef India judge and celebrity face of Junoon, a modern Indian flagship restaurant in New York with a branch in Dubai, has been with anthropological zeal scouring for old kitchen utensils during his visits to India and emerging with finds that he says will "make one cry with joy."

"You can find in my treasure trove vessels from Kashmir, Jammu, Pune, Hyderabad, Kochi, the list goes on. For the past 15 years whenever I visited India I have been carrying a piece of it back in the form of kitchen utensils. Be it laddles, colourful rolling pins for making chappatis, measuring cups or a huge variety of tea strainers from different regions of the country," says Khanna.

A graduate from the

# Kitchen museum



Celebrity chef, Vikas Khanna, has been with anthropological zeal scouring for old kitchen utensils during his visits to India. (Photo: Facebook)

The idea for a museum came to Khanna after he started living in the US, which he says has over 5,000 museums.

is the character in them, we are one of the oldest society and in terms of design and ideas we have so much to offer to the world," says Khanna.

For now the treasures collected by Khanna, which include plates from Goa made by the Portuguese while they were here, an over 100 year old ladle with an iconic design used to serve devotees in a temple, a yesteryear seed sprinkler, an ancient samovar (tea pot) and others have been stored in a godown and will go into the museum, which is expected to be open by 2020.

"The idea is to have a living museum, to be continuously updating its collection. For some time we displayed utensils in my New York restaurant and we had patrons who donated their generations-old vessels to add to the collection. It has become unstoppable now this obsession and I want the world to see our rich heritage," says Khanna.

For someone who has made a living out of his passion for cooking, food knows no boundaries.

"Food is more powerful than politics it knows no borders everybody loves food," says the chef who is now looking forward to releasing his documentary 'Kitchens of Gratitude' featuring different religions of the world at the Cannes International Film Festival in May.

Welcomgroup Graduate repay his alma mater and



Indian samovar (tea pot)

School of Hotel Administration, Manipal University, the chef wanted to

got to know that he had moved from there after his home was demolished in a

road widening exercise. It is only recently that we managed to get in touch," Khanna says.

The idea for a museum came to Khanna after he started living in the US, which he says has over 5,000 museums.

"There is a museum in the US to showcase how the computer was invented, somebody has put together one on the origin and developments of making glass. It is fascinating to know how the glass in your hand has been made. They have spent billions of dollars to showcase their culture and I thought our children too need to understand their heritage and culture," says the chef.

The 44-year-old boyish looking chef is upset over society turning to mass produced goods.

"We have become a fabricated society where everyone's 'bartans' are similar, everyone has the same spice boxes. Where

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, April 17, 2016

On your solar return chart Mercury trine Pluto and will provide you wonderful opportunities as far as career is concerned. Some of your plans that either did not take off or were abandoned earlier shall revive by dint of good luck. Professionals will do very well. You may have to change your strategies and a new modus operandi will come very handy as you feel the need to change and re-evaluate your ideas. Promotion or betterment or switchover can happen without much effort. An additional source of income is not ruled out as you open your mind and are receptive to fresh views and novel ideas. Familial relations will be strong but there could be a fluctuation in energy levels at times.

**Aries:** (March 21 - April 20)

This is a mixed period for you. You are compassionate and generous with family, friends and relatives. You would be more accommodating in relationships and not take things personally. Work wise there will be some obstacles that you would face. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs realizing that this too shall pass. It is time to express your feelings and ideas and share what you have learned through a variety of experience in this life. There could be an interaction, which on the face of it looks difficult to resolve but you reach out and get to the root of the problem.

**Taurus:** (April 21 - May 21)

There is a deeper understanding in professional associations and personal relationships. Your associates and co-workers prove to be loyal and disciplined. You are patient, laborious and clever with material aspects and manage finances and business ventures with ingenuity. You are likely to meet well known people in authority and share ideas and spend a fair bit of time in their association. A stimulating project should be taken as a challenge that would further and promote your business prospects. You are in touch with innocence that comes from life lived fully, which also has a quality of wisdom and the acceptance of the ever-changing wonders of life. Health will take a turn for the better.

**Gemini:** (May 22 - June 21)

You would be able to integrate forces, resources and professional aspects to achieve success in important ventures. You are individualistic in professional aspects. You boldly express your views and comments without being afraid. It would be good to say what you feel that you would be appreciated for being honest. There could be alteration in ideas or plans, increase and decrease in finances and fluctuation in business. On the personal front you go all out to make the special people in your life feel wanted and special. This is a time for you to renew your energy.

**Cancer:** (June 22 - July 22)

This is altogether a happy and relaxed time for you. There is perfection and beauty in emotional relationships as you come from a deep and spiritual space within to relate in a new way with your loved ones. Communications and business associates from overseas bear good news and offer lucrative opportunities. Marriage, business partnership and collaboration would be strengthened through understanding and commitment. You may handle more than one project at the same time with expertise and success. End of this period brings fresh energy, love and romance in important relationships.

**Leo:** (July 23 - August 23)

This phase brings pleasant results in your professional life with rewards and recognition. You would also work hard and would get ready to express yourself and take charge and responsibilities. Personal projects are on an upswing. Income from foreign sources could also figure during this time. You would be able to complete work assignments and personal business with good energy and support. Emotional attachments and relationships are rewarded with reciprocity. Some interesting people are drawn to you and invite you to work with them. Health problems are resolved and your energy is restored.

**Virgo:** (August 24 - September 22)

There could be an exciting job offer, reward, recognition, or promotion. An opportunity to expand on a global level arrives now. You would have more energy for work and your daily work tends to speed up now. Perhaps you have a larger workload than usual. This is a very significant period of the year, when you are inspired creatively and emotionally. You can draw correct conclusions from prior knowledge of people



**Libra:** (September 23 - October 23)

This period is marked with fun, entertaining and happiness. Your hobbies, leisure time, moments spent with family and children, are highlighted. There is youthful energy and verve in your life. You are generous, kind and preserving in family and personal relationships. You are diligent and pedantic at work as you exhibit your knowledge in your field of activity. You can well utilize the energies to attend to your health and well-being. Though you are assiduous and hard-working you do not relish being tied down to your laptop or cell phone and would like to spend quality time on the personal front.



**Scorpio:** (October 24 - November 22)

There is good-luck in love and romance and personal relationships. You are on the threshold of a creative and inventive assignment that brings you name, and exposure, as your desire for some form of recognition will be fulfilled. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering as you have to positively use your talents and efficiency. Good health and energy enables you to participate in sports related pastimes. A pleasant surprise awaits you. Yoga and meditation put you in touch with inner bliss.



**Sagittarius:** (November 23 - December 21)

You would handle your profession sincerely and creatively and devote your time to children and family members. A personal involvement has the qualities of love, balance and freedom that you desire. On the other hand you are frank, outspoken and can be outrageous or undiplomatic on occasions. Learning important lessons from life could be the beginning of spiritual growth and understanding. Spiritual pursuits and meditation can be rewarding. You grow and transform as you pass through a touching emotional experience. Health needs to be maintained with a planned diet and fitness schedules.



**Capricorn:** (December 22 - January 20)

As you improve personal and professional relations with patience, love and care you avoid long drawn discussions, criticism and arguments. You are blessed with divine wisdom and inspired to take up a professional challenge. You are original and ambitious instilling a personal style in whatever you do. You give and receive affection and love from friends and relatives. You connect with old friends and business associates. Being open and receptive, you attract prestigious opportunities and interesting people. You are happy as there is balance and harmony at home and synergy in the work area. Don't allow personal feelings to influence professional decisions.



**Aquarius:** (January 21 - February 18)

Pay close attention to performance and continuity and your efforts would be visible to senior colleagues and people in authority. You resolve an important issue that has been the cause of anxious moments for some time as you start a new business project while adding zest to an old one. Express your views and conditions clearly when it comes to business and financial dealings. Sharing your philosophical interests with a romantic partner may be especially appealing to you. A new person or influence leads to renewed interest in creative fields. Fresh attitudes and a new perspective are needed.



**Pisces:** (February 19 - March 20)

You would effectively handle difficult projects at work. Your idealistic nature is stimulated, and you are likely to yearn for a connection to more spiritual or idealistic pursuits. A sense of belonging through connection to something larger than yourself is something that is entering your life now. You look to community service and lend a helping hand as you want to make a difference. Be ready to make quick decisions at work and act spontaneously in personal situations. You would achieve success at work and complete projects through interplay of ideas and correlation of subjects since communication is your forte. You could be restless and pay impromptu visits to friends and relatives.

## Secrets of England's first...



(Contd from P-VI) leaving a clear picture of the annotations.

According to Poleg, the presence of annotations supports the idea that the Reformation was a gradual process rather than a single, transformative event. "Until recently, it was widely assumed that the Reformation caused a complete break, a Rubicon moment when people stopped being Catholics and accepted Protestantism, rejected saints, and replaced Latin with English. This Bible is a unique witness to a time when the conservative Latin and the reformist English were used together, showing that the Reformation was a slow, complex, and gradual process," he informed.

The annotations were written during the most tumultuous years of King Henry VIII's reign. The period included the move away from the Church of Rome.

Printed in 1535 by King Henry's printer, within a few short years of its publication the situation had shifted dramatically.

The Latin Bible was altered to accommodate reformist English, and the book became a testimony to the greyscale between English and Latin in the period between 1539 and 1549.

## Vanishing Parsis

(Contd from P-VI) the community of those who objected to such urging to procreate.

"The factors that have brought Parsis to this pass are late marriages, not marrying at all, decline of fertility, emigration and marrying outside the community," Masani said.

There has been ferment within at the rigid adherence to tradition in not recognizing the offspring of Parsi women who marry outside the community. With the Mumbai Parsis recording 175 births as against 735 deaths in 2013, and intermarriages climbing to 38 percent, a Parsi former advocate-general of Maharashtra raised a furor recently when he argued that Zoroastrianism being a universal religion, Parsi women married outside the faith and their children should be permitted to enter the community's places of worship "if they have been initiated into the faith through a navjote ceremony."

On the other hand, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat has waged a long, legal battle to debar three priests who presided over rituals involving intermarried couples. Masani is unique as a Parsi who has embraced the ghazal form of Urdu poetry, a genre that is heavily influenced by Islamic mysticism. To be the first to take up ghazal in a community where to be cultured also means to cultivate an ear for Western classical music, with the great Zubin Mehta as a role model, Masani is indebted to her late father, who was a Hindustani classical singer in the court of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad of Baroda in the 1930s.

With her good looks and fantastic voice Masani emerged on the scene in the 1980s at a time when ghazal as live performance was becoming popular among the urban middle class.

Ghazal poetry, which is imbued with Sufi love for the divine, had already entered popular consciousness through Bombay cinema, beginning with the playback singing of Begum Akhtar, poetry of the likes of the incomparable

able Faiz Ahmad Faiz and others like Sahir Ludhianvi, Jan Nissar Akhtar, Hasrat Jaipuri, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Shakeel Badauni, Anand Bakshi and Shailendra, all of whom have penned memorable film songs. Masani herself has sung in over 50 films.

"Because I appeared on stage at a time when only male singers were singing ghazals for the masses that I got this image of a rock star," Masani said alluding to the late Jagjit Singh, who was the first to use the guitar in ghazals and, along with exponents like Mehdi Hassan, Pankaj Udhaas and Ghulam Ali, did much to popularize the genre post the 1970s.

"Classing me as a pop stylist of ghazal is, however, not correct because I am faithful to the classical form that I have been trained in," she adds.

As she walked past Delhi's Lodi monuments like a priestess of love, Masani described how in Iran, as a way of reversing the decline in Zoroastrian population after the 1979 revolution, they have revived the ancient practice of ordaining female priests, an idea opposed by Indian Parsis.

"I think the terrible conflicts we see around us based on religious identity wouldn't happen if we had women leading the institutions," Masani said, recalling the priestesses of ancient Greece and Rome, without forgetting the "devdasis" in the indigenous tradition.

Among India's religions, Sikhism, emerging as a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, does not have priests, which were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh. Due to the faith's belief in complete equality, women can take part in any religious function, perform any Sikh ceremony or lead the congregation in prayer. A Sikh woman has the right to become a Granthi, Ragi, and one of the Panj Piare (five beloved), and both men and women are considered capable of reaching the highest levels of spirituality.

*“Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.”*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 247

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2016

### Patronage and democracy

IN principle, patronage and democracy should not go together but always do, especially in India. The Congress encouraged patronage especially bestowing it the Indira Gandhi family entourage. Narendra Modi promised change when he took over but as was to be expected, that did not happen. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) was originally the preserve of those who covered her with adulation. Sonia Gandhi was its President till she resigned in 2001. As Modi became Prime Minister high hopes were raised about institutions like the IGNCA being run by experts without ideological and political servitude. But Modi has belied these expectations. These have also become seats of patronage. The trustee board of the IGNCA is packed with people known for close links with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Famous leading art historians and historians who do not subscribe to the BJP's bigoted Hindutva beliefs can never hope to be on the IGNCA and similar bodies. On the other hand, an Odissi dancer has been made a trustee of the IGNCA because of her blind attachment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It is a sad reflection of cultural and similar institutions in India that it is tied to the apron strings of governments despite their coming and going. Merit and expertise are thrown out of the window. India was over famous for its cultural riches and educational achievements. But for successive decades these peaks of glory are falling into the clutches of political overlords. Politics stifles excellence at groves of academe. While Indian shouts about political democracy, it promotes cultural and educational authoritarianism.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### Budget: populism versus inadequate resources

On the eve of commencement of the Budget Session, hiatus between the Prime Minister and finance Minister S B Chavan on ideas of a populist Budget put forward by the Congress(I) Working Committee has not been overcome. If anything, the chasm has grown after the Tamilnadu poll results, with the Prime Minister favouring the introduction in the Budget of proposals which will have a strong appeal for the weaker sections as well as the middle classes.

Three major proposals having a powerful popular appeal had been formulated by the Planning Minister Mr Madhavasingh Solanki and these were subsequently adopted by the CWC. The first proposal was of a mid day meal scheme for school children, similar to the one being implemented in Tamilnadu, on a national scale. The second proposal was to give subsidized rations to all sections below the poverty line, while the third envisaged assured employment to at least one member of every family belonging to the weaker sections, especially Harijans, Scheduled Tribes etc. The Finance Ministry estimates are that these populist measures will entitle Rs. 3000 crores additional expenditure which will immensely increase the already heavy load on the exchequer and enlarge the existing budgetary gap between revenue and expenditure. On top of this, several other demands are being made on the Finance Minister to assuage not only the middle classes but all and sundry. For instance, it is proposed to life the tax bottom line to Rs. 24,000 income and to cut down the tax rate of taxable groups.

Reports are that while the Finance Minister has been accommodative in regard to some of these populist proposals he new now feels that

a line has to be drawn beyond which such extravagant ideas cannot be accommodated. Mr Chavan feels that the best way to increase the Budget populist appeal is to bring forward such measures as will generate resources, thus paying for the initial expenditure which gets transformed into an investment yield far bigger results than the amounts put in initially.

In this category are such projects as increasing irrigation facilities, improving rural communications, and opening more outlets for agricultural inputs. All these, the Finance Minister feels, should be enlarged in a dramatic way, having a tremendous appeal to the rural voter. The amounts invested, moreover, will pay off many times over, within a relatively short period and will thus not be inflationary. But if resources are frittered away on the other populist measures, finance will not be available for these projects. The exercise for reconciling the populist proposals, such as mid-day meal for children, and subsidized rations, and the Finance Ministry's thinking has been made difficult after the Tamilnadu poll results, with consternation spreading in the Congress(I) leadership. The expectation is growing that the Finance Minister will some how produce a budget which will sway not only the weaker sections but also the middle and affluent classes, and the demands in this respect are becoming strident.

The Prime Minister is apparently leaning increasingly towards those who went a dramatic impact through the budget proposal as a consequence, the Finance Minister is stated to be bewildered some of the populist ideas are not acceptable to him since he does not know to find the needed resources.

# Culture and commerce don't mix

By Jennifer Dkhar

We talk about preservation of our culture and tradition, our identity, our faith and belief but more importantly there is a greater need to pass down legacies of humility, piety, conscientious minds, principles, ethics, moral values, love and respect for one another to our future generation. After all, what makes life beautiful is the ability to live in harmony amidst diversity. And what better way to do it other than setting good examples for our children to emulate, uphold and further strengthen. To pass on anything that is valuable is far more worthy than allowing our principles and moral treasures and wealth to slip through our hands. It is this bond of togetherness, selflessness, love and faith in one another that will triumph over adversities that may come our way.

As parents, all that we look forward to is the well-being of our children. We will do all in our might to give them the best of everything and we do so out of love, care and adoration. If within the hearth and home we protect our loved ones from harm then the same must follow in our dealings at the community and public level. We must still be guided by the same principles and moral values. Once we enter the public space, we must not compromise with the very ethics that govern us in our day to day lives. Alas, this is not to be. Many a times we have witnessed the dual personality of people once they assume office in a public space. There appears to be many compromises made. We begin to evolve as individuals more concerned about the self than the common good. Then we do not shudder to bury our principles, ethics and moral values. Sadly this is one truth in the way of the world and it is both sad and alarming.

When we were jolted by the earthquake it made me ponder upon our existence here on earth. The earthquake that shook the earth also shook my mind and thought processes. Everyone, both young and old, male and female rich and poor ran to the streets, amidst screaming and fear, talking and sharing their feelings with no display of social divide and distinction. This really is a reminder of how man is born equal but it is man himself who creates division and distinction. Death is an equaliser and

we all will have to leave this earth empty handed. Then why this distinction? Why this sacrifice of goodness and piety? Why this compromise of conscience, morality and our sense of right and wrong? At this juncture, I am forced to wonder if decisions had been too hasty or perhaps moral values and principles have actually been relinquished with regards to Sein Jaintia Hall.

members. I, for one, know for sure that some of its members had played significant roles in making the best use of Sein Jaintia Hall. From cultural activities to sports to theatres, fetes, social meets, and lots more; all had found a space and a platform there in that very Hall. My 84 year old grandmother, who was an Executive Member of Sein Jaintia at the time of its inception, was shocked and

malicious by drawing their attention to constructive activities. It is important to channelize their minds towards activities that will help them grow personally and build bonds of love and camaraderie with fellow human beings by involving them in sports, theatre and myriad social activities.

Located in the vicinity of commercial areas and market places, Sein Jaintia Hall had been a place of worth especially for people who lived in and around that area.

For decades the Hall had served its purpose well by providing a space for various activities that our people especially our youths could engage in. If in the past, Sein Jaintia Hall was able to provide a platform and a space for various activities, the task at hand must be to further strengthen the foothold of the Hall even more firmly rather than take away the sole purpose for which the Hall was given a name and space. As of today, the Hall appears to be missing out on its intention and purpose. Hence, I am forced to reiterate what I had said at the beginning that those at the helm of affairs must have thought carefully, wisely and far-sightedly before having taken any decision. If that is so, then I do not see why a general meeting is not called where all the active members can be present so that a healthy and participative discussion can take place or for the members to be informed and convinced of the decision taken to convert the larger part of the Hall into a commercial complex and leave only a small area for cultural and social activities and sports.

Once an individual assumes any office of public importance and significance, he/she cannot and must not sideline his work ethics and principles of goodness and moral values. I am worried that as it stands today, it seems that the Sein Jaintia Hall is being made to waver from its real objective as envisioned by our forefathers who strove to help it stand tall. However, all is not lost provided there is a will to correct all the wrongs and set things right. Opinions and views of right-thinking people must be taken into account and loopholes must be re-examined. We must collectively think about the welfare and wellbeing of our future. Let us be visionaries for the good of all especially our young people who are pillars of tomorrow.

*As parents, all that we look forward to is the well-being of our children. We will do all in our might to give them the best of everything and we do so out of love, care and adoration. If within the hearth and home we protect our loved ones from harm then the same must follow in our dealings at the community and public level. We must still be guided by the same principles and moral values. Once we enter the public space, we must not compromise with the very ethics that govern us in our day to day lives. Alas, this is not to be. Many a times we have witnessed the dual personality of people once they assume office in a public space.*

I was shocked and dismayed to see that Sein Jaintia Hall was flattened. Yet, I was of the impression that this was done in order to build a more spacious, sturdier and better Sein Jaintia Hall with modern architecture and state of the art infrastructure. However, I was filled with a deep sense of inhibition and apprehension when the flattening was carried out to make way for a commercial complex that will reduce the size of the Hall to a mere one floor. This appears to be a clear violation of and contrary to the purpose and objective that our forefathers worked for to procure the Sein Jaintia Hall. While it is proper to renovate and reconstruct the Hall and it may not be a bad idea to have a few shops that will pay for the maintenance of the Hall, what does not seem right is the way the entire matter has taken shape. Letters to the editor, in this esteemed daily, by members of Sein Jaintia reflect a lot of discontent and resentment of the members. And why not! What is the need to be a member when you have no participation in the decision making? It seems that the leadership of Sein Jaintia shies away from taking into account opinions and views of the

saddened about the state of affairs and this unfortunate turn of events. She said, "I am very unhappy and sad about the recent developments but because I am old and unwell, it also breaks my heart that I am helpless and cannot do anything. This is really unfortunate. All efforts of the founding members of the Sein Jaintia Hall will be washed down the drain if the true intention of having built the Hall is lost." What is happening today must be rectified as it will defeat the very purpose for which the Sein Jaintia Hall was procured. She testifies that it was indeed the dedication and determination as well as the prudence of the elders that gave birth to the Sein Jaintia Hall that stood tall this far and served its purpose well.

In today's age and time our youths are exposed to a number of social evils that are a threat and a menace to all. Alcoholism, abuses and crimes of various sorts are the order of the day and nearly every household is inflicted with the menace. Those who are fortunate and are not yet touched by this menace, live in constant fear and apprehension lest their children fall prey to these evils. Hence it is imperative for us elders to keep our youths away from anything corrupt, wicked

# Case of the Barking Dogs of Meghalaya

By Michael Makri

I guess we are familiar with the phrase, 'Barking dogs, seldom bite'. I am not sure if any of us have tried making a dog bark and then gone towards it in order to prove this English idiom correct. Nay, for most of us the experience is just the opposite; a barking dog frightens us and we try and move away from such dogs. Our instincts fail to inform our brain that since the dog is barking it will not bite. This is one instance where our feelings get the better of our reason. I am not sure how psychologists and philosophers would come to term with the 'barking dog,' experiment. But barking dogs certainly frighten people. When and where does the dog normally bark? Definitely, when someone or something unfamiliar enters into its territory! The dog has no reasoning power to know why that someone or something invades its space. Its only instinct is to bark and frighten others. If that dog is not trained, later on it will keep barking even at the owner who is away from home for a long while. Hence the dog will guard its territory as a, 'NO ENTRY' zone for anyone and anything.

When this happens, it leads to two things. Firstly, this sort of behaviour is dangerous for the dog as it could lead to the dog having to starve by alienating its own master/mistress. Secondly, ing as the barking between the parent dogs and the puppies gain momentum frightening even the false masters that had befriended the parent dogs earlier. Talk about the Uranium issue or the NGT issue and there are too many dogs blindly barking for the sake of getting rotten bones. Why the roads especially in the countryside and villages are as bad as having no road is due to this constant barking dog which seldom bites but is simply waiting for bones and thereby halting all development in the state.

It is over a decade now that Meghalaya is a state without an Assembly House. Let me be clear here, Meghalaya government definitely has got enough money to build an Assembly like the White House of the US, or else who would think of building a Times Square at Polo market. But why is it that a even a thatched Assembly House could not be erected? There are dogs barking there; frightening every one. They are waiting for some false master to throw bones and rotten meat. I once had the privilege of attending the assembly session and believe me I would never think of attending such session again. The barking and howling literally left me dis-

**Meghalaya, with its rich cultural heritage, decked with myriads of flora and fauna is indeed the 'Scotland of the East.' But sadly enough, that glory of the past has remained only a piece of history. And the future for Meghalaya is very bleak. Neither can we retain its past nor could we make it better for the future.**

someone who is clever could befriend the dog by giving some bones or meat and then win over its protective instinct. So, even if that person is a thief, the dog will not bark anymore. And this is more dangerous.

Meghalaya, with its rich cultural heritage, decked with myriads of flora and fauna is indeed the 'Scotland of the East.' But sadly enough, that glory of the past has remained only a piece of history. And the future for Meghalaya is very bleak. Neither can we retain its past nor could we make it better for the future. In fact, we are now having to eat our own excreta. This is a sad and shameful to say the least. There are reasons galore that force us to eat our own excreta, although not all are responsible, but definitely some barking dogs in the state are. Talk of any developmental work for the state whether initiated by the government or private institutions and the barking dogs are always there making their presence felt. For what? To be won over through some bones and meat. And this phenomenon is too common in our state, thus turning it into a corruption zone for ages.

Have we heard of the railway project that was supposed to connect Meghalaya, especially the Khasi Hills with the rest of India? Yes, it's in the distant past now since it was initiated. The development that this project is supposed to bring could not be actualized because the German shepherd breed was barking even at noon. Another episode that gives opportunity for various dogs to bark is the Umroi Airport. The old breed were fed with enough bones in the past, leaving the present young puppies clueless on how the bones were eaten. This is more interest-

couraged although this scene is common even in Parliament. How could we think of anything else except to run for life when such barking happens?

These past few weeks, we came across another breed barking for a secular Meghalaya by shunning Christianity and its literature. Well, many things could be conjectured from the tone of the howl. For many of us who have watched different breeds of dogs being trained to bark this is nothing new. It is enough to give them bones and they will stop barking and they will obey the one who befriended them by feeding them with even rotten meat. This is more dangerous - befriending some false master who gives them rotten meat just to tame the dog only to skin it alive later. This is not a distant dream if we look at some of the states in our region where we will not find dogs within a mile because they make a good meal. Sadly, those who bark for secularism in Meghalaya don't realise they are being used. A day will soon come when we will be searching for such dogs and not find them anywhere.

So, shall the dogs stop barking then? Definitely not. Let them not just bark but bite for the right reasons. Why are the dogs not barking for cleanliness of their kennel? Why are not dogs barking for roads and connectivity? Why are the dogs not barking for flyovers in many places to ease the traffic especially in the towns? Why are not the dogs barking for improving the standard of living especially the means of communication? Let us bark for the right reasons and not just for bones and rotten meat.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Shillong back to being dirty

Editor,

While expressing sincere gratitude, through your esteemed daily I wish to draw the kind attention of my fellow citizens to the news report in a section of the media in February this year captioned, "Shillong back to being dirty" wherein the present sewage system and the state of cleanliness has been criticized. In fact this is visible after last Saturday's hail storm where all the drains, streams, rivers were clogged with plastics. We all know that Shillong is losing its pride of being the "Scotland of the east". It is worth mentioning that a small village named "Mawlynnong" has been appreciated by our Prime Minister, Modi in his "Maan ki baat" program for their effort in keeping the

village clean and also for turning it into a famous tourist destination. During the 12th SAF games launching ceremony this small village "Mawlynnong" was portrayed for its cleanliness. Unfortunately we did learn anything from it. Aren't we all responsible for the mess called Shillong? Is it also not our duty to keep our city/ locality clean? We cannot always blame the civic authorities; we are equally responsible. If we can keep our houses clean why not our locality and the roads we move around on. It is a common phenomenon that most of us throw garbage on the road, and into nearby drains/streams. The garbage accumulates and chokes up the drains causing blockage and pollution and damaging the environment which also spreads diseases. It is not at all difficult to keep our surroundings clean; we only need to change our

mindsets and pledge that henceforth all household garbage is dumped in the nearby dustbins and not strewn everywhere. I also request the authorities concerned to install dustbins all over and ensure that the garbage is disposed off and also to construct drains of standard sizes and repair the existing drainage system. I appreciate the Prime Minister's initiative for a clean nation but it is our moral responsibility to make his move a reality because a nation will be great only when its citizen becomes great.

Yours etc.,  
Krishnendu Deb,  
via email

### Mindless dumping of garbage

Editor,

The latest stormy episode

has created a disaster in many localities. It is time for the Meghalaya Govt to ban plastic bags and the growth of bamboo clumps in residential areas. I live in an area where bamboo causes major damage to electric wires and the entire locality suffers from clogged drains caused by the bamboo leaves which even enter the homes of people. I hope the Govt takes some harsh measures to control the growth of bamboo clumps and big trees near electric poles since the MECL has to spend a lot of money to repair the breakdown all the time. Also please ban plastic bags in Meghalaya a la Sikkim.

Yours etc.,  
SA Lyngdoh,  
Via email

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

*"Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first."*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 250 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2016

### Obama in Riyadh

PRESIDENT Barack Obama has started a summit in Riyadh along with Gulf Arab leaders to forge joint action against Iran and the ISIS. There has been a change in the U.S. attitude to Saudi Arabia which had been strained of late. For one thing, after the accord with Iran and phased withdrawal of sanctions on it, the U.S. had become more dependent on oil supplies from Iran than from Saudi Arabia. Secondly, Riyadh had decided to form an alliance with friendly Islamic countries against the ISIS and al-Qaeda. But in doing so, it executed a liberal leader who had links with al-Qaeda. The U.S. took strong exception to it on humanitarian grounds and Shia pressure from Iran in favour of the executed Shia leader. It punctured the proposed Saudi grand design against Islamic terrorism. Barack Obama has now changed course and hopes to allay fears of the Gulf countries about Iranian influence and overcome sectarian tensions so that they could strike a blow against Jihadist militants. Obama is now negotiating with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar to promote their cause.

The new line of thinking in Washington has a bearing on civil wars in Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security advisor said that recent strains between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia were over tactics rather than goals. It remains to be seen how receptive Riyadh will be to Washington considering the latter's estrangement with it lately. Obama's oscillations in West Asia are not likely to favour Democratic prospects in the coming U.S. Presidential elections.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### V.P. Singh visit highlights Janata Dal problems

Janata Dal President V P Singh's one day visit to Calcutta on January 24 helped to highlight the division within the West Bengal Janata Dal, between the former Janata Party and Mr Ashoke Sen's Jan Morcha which still appears to maintain its separate identity here. Mr Singh addressed what was purported to be a party workers' meeting. About 500 of the two thousand people assembled were former Janata Party workers or supporter. The rest, according to Janata Party leaders, were collected by Mr Sen's lieutenants and brought to the meeting place in the loads.

There was some technical difficulty in convening the meeting. As there is no regular State Committee of the Janata Dal, the question arose as to who would convene the meeting. It was suggested to Mr Singh in Delhi that that as party chief he himself could call it. Ultimately it was decided that Mr Sen Samar Guha who comes from the Janata Party would jointly convene the meeting as members of the party's parliamentary board from West Bengal.

When the meeting began, it was apparent that the show was dominated by Mr Sen. There were only two chairs on the dais one for Mr Singh and the other for Mr Sen. A third chair was brought only when Mr Guha asked for it for himself. As the meeting started, a group of young men on the dais and another from the right hand side of it raised the full throated slogan Ashoke Sen Zindabad, with an occasional "V P Singh Zindabad" thrown in. Soon, another group of young men positioned themselves on the left-hand side and started shouting "Samar Guha Zindabad" while a section of those sitting on the front rows asked the men on dais to stop giving slogans in the name of Mr Sen and say "Janata Dal Zindabad" instead Mr Singh was visibly annoyed.

Mr Singh made three points in his speech. First that Mr Rajiv Gandhi was leading and could only lead the

Congress party to defeat. Secondly, that the Prime Minister was devaluing all democratic offices and institutions, from the controller and Auditor General to the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to the judiciary. And thirdly, the instability in the Rajiv-led Congress party was bringing in instability in all the Congress-ruled States Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan where Chief Minister were frequently changed and where factionalism had become rampant. By contrast, he said the Opposition ruled States, Assam, West Bengal, Harayana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka had stable governments.

Recalling the Janata experiment at the Center in 1977-79 and the subsequent development, he said the people then were not behind the Janata Party but the Janata Dal of today reflected not merely the unity of the people who had, for the first time now, got a real alternative (to the Congress).

Mr Singh, however, parried all questions newsmen regarding a possible electoral alliance of his party with the BJP. All he would say was that at this stage it was a hypothetical question let the Prime Minister first declare the Lok Sabha election, then the time would come to think about it. However, Mr Singh's talks with Chief Minister Jyoti Basu went off well. Initially it was decided that Mr Singh would go alone to meet Mr Basu but as soon as it was known he was accompanying him, the other group ensured that Mr Samar Guha also went with Mr Singh. Both were present during the discussions. The former Janata party men had intended to elicit Mr Singh's views on a number of specific socio-economic issues and had prepared a set of questions which they wanted to ask him at the workers' meeting so that he could clarify the party stand on these.

# Theatre of the absurd

By Ananya S Guha

A film actor who was refused a visa to attend a literary festival in Pakistan, now goes on the rampage. He wants to visit NIT Srinagar which is now in the midst of a controversy with students polarized into 'locals' and 'outsiders'. Thank God it is not a Hindu versus Muslim spat. But the writing on the wall is clear. True, what happened there, (apparently some students expressed happiness after India lost in the T-20), will be unpalatable to some, if not many, but how many students did it? Was it a reflection of all 'local' students so much so that orchestrated reaction took place leading to one event after another? Not one student could play the role of mediator or peacemaker. Instead students from outside the state started demanding security and shifting the Institution out etc. This is absurd. You cannot relocate Central Institutions like that. And to support that demand, especially by public figures is reprehensible to say the least. These are national institutions, maybe located regionally, but the idea is to give affordable education to both locals and non locals. Even when they were called Regional Engineering Colleges, they had a national character. Students would be there from all over the country. Now the funding and infrastructure has improved because of Central intervention. But to say, because of this one episode that an entire Institution has to be shifted to pander to some select sentiments, abetted by in-

tellectuals and political pretenders, is taking things to the limits. Adopting confrontationist attitudes does no good to an institution. 'Who is mightier,' seems to be the message. Why are we trying to use students as pawns to further our rabid tendencies? The double-speak is that, those who say that students should be studying are now meeting them to express solidarity with their cause. The pro-Pakistan stances of the people of Kashmir is a familiar narrative so why were there no protests all these years? Why now?

And when the film actor is rightly denied entry for his noble crusade, our traditional media blows this out of proportions and makes it a larger than life story! What dramatic fiction this! And the paradox-the Government in Kashmir is a PDP-BJP combine while the maverick actor's wife is a member of the BJP! I think enough is enough, politicians and para politicians should not meddle with politics. Nor should academics come out with nonsensical suggestions that a Central Government institution should be shifted, thereby creating divisions, demarcations, the vicious 'us' and 'them' syndrome of pure animosity. How long will we sow seeds of hatred in our country? How long will our efforts to make fractious societies continue and that too by educated people, who could have made vital contributions to nation building?

Many say that a student's sole duty is to study. This is very well taken, but then actors should not extend their theatrics in politics. The controversies in Indian universities continues unabated. Everyone knows that Kashmir is a sensitive point and that after the clash between two groups of students, things have gone murkier not only in Kashmir, but in the entire context of India. Shouting pro-Pakistan slogans in cricket matches had happened earlier, but this time it happened after the JNU episode where apparently pro-Pakistan slogans were also mouthed. Every university or academic institution has its own internal administration to deal with issues and tackle students' outbursts. The administrations of both JNU and NIT failed by giving an opportunity to absurd politics and 'theatre'. Then comes the demand that the NIT must be shifted, thereby complicating matters further and polarizing the local students and those coming from different parts of the country.

Majoritarian views are important, but minorities in the country are integral to the country and their voices matter. That is not to say that the culpable in any incident must not be punished. The paradox about the NIT Kashmir incident is that of the paradox of politics in the country. We must understand that. And that is why the HRD Minister is categorical that the Institute cannot be shifted! Educa-

tional institutions should have their internal mechanisms for dealing with student problems, and if here students are polarized on the basis of caste and religion, it is the internal administration through its mechanisms, its rules and regulations, its acts and statutes which must probe into them and make inquiries. Otherwise what is the point of having Vice Chancellors and Deans? Once the matter goes out of hand and is hijacked by politicians, or would be/ could be politicians, irrespective of their political allegiances, then we are allowing politics to exploit the educational system by making students pawns in their hands. If students are politically and socially conscious as they should be then it is up to the university to give them that freedom of speech within its precincts. True in the JNU incident on 9th February 'outsiders' intruded but till date we do not know who they were and are! The University mechanism of controlling activities within its campus has obviously not worked.

But coming back to NIT in Kashmir it is preposterous to even suggest shifting the campus. Why are we trying to set in more alienation in the people's minds regarding a battered, suffering state? The political situation apart, an NIT there functions like an NIT anywhere in the country. Singling it out is to give a clear message that it should not be located there because of the state and the people!

## Remembering my father

By Sonu Choudhury



My father Pradip Choudhury was born on November 17th 1931 in Karimganj town of Assam. In Karimganj college he studied his graduate degree, B.Sc in Science. My father married my mother in the year 1973. In the same year, he started his business known as Pradip Choudhury and Company, which deals with electrical

and mechanical engineering in Shillong. He was a hard working businessman and remained a strong employee of his business for almost 50 years. Sadly, he passed away on the 6th of April, 2015 exactly a year after his prolonged illness.

My father was truly an honest businessman. How I wish I had seen him and known him professionally. With his company, he had rendered great service which has supported many people. How I wish I have the skills of a business man, so that I could do much more work like my father. He was the happiest man on earth. He prayed to the almighty and thanked him for showering the heaven's

choicest blessings on his own family and near and dear ones.

In June, 2011, his health started to deteriorate and he worried about his business and who would look after it. He felt that it would be difficult for me as a deaf person to take care of his work.

My late father was the former president of Central Puja Committee, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Frontier Chamber of commerce, Keatinge road welfare organisation, Matri mandir, Gitanjali Dance Academy, and former member of Sri Aurobindo institute of Indian culture, Jagannath Mandir Opera, Umshirpi College, Ribong Sports and Cultural club. Indeed it is a

great loss for Shillong as I recalled how he had lent a helping hand to various public institutions and sections of the community throughout his life.

It was decided that a suitable memorial be created with a view to perpetuating the memory of this man who spent all his active life in Shillong and devoted much of his time for peace and harmony amongst all sections of the people.

Papa... as a child, I had a million ways to annoy you. As a teenager, I had a million reasons to defy you. As an adult, I had a million opportunities to make you proud. I did all that but I missed out on the most important - a million chances to say I love you while you were alive. I miss you.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Sein Jaintia needs a mediator

Editor,

It was indeed a pleasure and an eye-opener for all readers reading the article penned by the President of Sein Jaintia (ST, April 21, 2016). However, what the members of Sein Jaintia would like to bring to the notice of the general public is that despite efforts to convince the leadership to convene a General Body meeting on the issue of dismantling and reconstruction of Sein Jaintia Hall, nothing seriously transpired and thus voicing our views and concerns on the matter through your esteemed daily was the last and final resort.

It may be mentioned that the members of the Sein Jaintia knew about the dismantling of the heritage building through the President of ICARE, in his speech during a condolence programme for former President, late APJ Abdul Kalam (refer Shillong Times, August 2, 2015) and there no other communication from the leadership to its general members including life members. It was then that that some members wrote to the General

Secretary, Mr. R.L.Shullai and urged him to convene a General Body meeting to discuss the issue (letter dated August 10, 2015). Fortunately, a meeting was convened on the 29th August 2015, where a large number of members were present. It is possible that the President overlooked the proceedings of the meeting so let me apprise the general public about what transpired in the meeting. It may be mentioned here that dismantling of the old structure had already begun before the GB meeting was held and before the so called 'transparent tendering process' had begun. The dismantling work was already assigned to M/s R. Rapsang. A beautiful and creative Power Point presentation of the proposed new building was shown to all which was indeed a pleasure for the eye but actually lacked technicality.

The members present in that meeting had a series of questions for the leadership, namely: (1) whether the plan for the project was prepared? (2) Had the MUDA given building permission? (3) whether notices calling for tenders have been issued? (4) what is the total estimate of the project?

To the utter surprise of

all, the house was informed that these processes had still not been completed and would be done eventually. Again what is surprising to all is how could the able leadership of Sein Jaintia completely ignore these mandatory processes and give an order to construction firm M/s R. Rapsang to start the dismantling process in the month of August 2015. It is at the insistence of the members in that GB meeting that notices for tenders from interested registered parties were called through advertisement (published for one day) in Shillong Times only. Lo and behold! The construction work was allotted to the same firm. So much for the so called "open and transparent tendering process". Does it leave any reader with any sense of doubt about how and why this happened?

What is really wonderful to learn is the great vision and idea the leadership had, is to "house two Badminton Courts of international dimension". This sounds utopian to say the least. What more can the members ask for? However, for the general information of the readers the dimension of an international standard badminton courts as mandated by the Badminton World

Federation (BWF) should have a ceiling height of 29 (approximately 9.0 meters). A MUDA RTI revealed that height of the 3rd floor which will house international dimension badminton courts and a stage for theatrical purposes is left with only 5.0 meter (equivalent to 16.4 ft). The rest approximately 30.0 feet is devoted to the commercial complex. So what international dimension badminton court is being talked and written about? This ceiling height is not even fit for a community or club level badminton court! The clear height for such level is 6.7 and 7.5 meters.

Suspicion based solely on hearsay and rumours get the better of your common sense- the President writes. So, readers, it is left absolutely to your judgment whether the leadership had the right to misinform the public in general and mislead everyone. I agree with the President that the issue needs intervention by the Chairman of the Trust, Mr. G.S.Massar, Senior Advocate because, only the Board of Trustees of Sein Jaintia Trust can protect the rights of ownership of Sein Jaintia property.

Yours etc.,  
Dr. Omarlin Kyndiah  
Life member  
Sein Jaintia Shillong

### Indian Ministers overestimating growth story

## Rajan's note of caution fully justified

By S. Sethuraman

The nation awaits in a few weeks the report card of the Modi Government on completion of its first two years and its labours thus far to transform what it regards a by and large undeveloped India into a leading global power of the 21st century. So charged are its leading lights for that red letter day that they had begun to look askance at anything said or written by anyone meanwhile that tends to detract from the impending glory.

Even a person of the eminence of Governor Dr Raghuram Rajan of the Reserve Bank is no exception, and has to measure his utterance in tune with the celebratory times. What is worse, a sense of intolerance associated with this Government becomes explicit when Dr Rajan is chided for not joining the "fastest-growing economy" chorus.

Defenders of the realm are peeved, not the least among them the most articulate Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman. Contextually, both Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley and Dr Rajan were in Washington last week for the spring meetings of the IMF-World Bank when they spoke at different fora and investment summits and aired views in interviews on the "bright spot" in the world economy.

First, let us not overlook reality and the distance to be bridged between ambition and performance, between policy pronouncements and physical outcomes, despite "maximum governance", let alone the rush with half-backed financial proposals such as on provident fund and retirement benefits and subsequent backtracking. To talk of faster growth without regard to key factors on what it makes for inclusive growth and jobs - a barren record so far - does not make us great.

No doubt, the prospect of a bountiful monsoon this year has uplifted sentiment all over and Mr Jaitley expects good rains to push even the projected growth at 7-7.5 per cent to rise to 8.5 percent cent and for interest rates to fall further on a continuing trend of low inflation. That India is the "fastest-growing economy" has been hammered home at every destination.

True, plentiful rains could have a spiralling effect on demand and productivity, and the central bank is much more alert to inflation developments and the monsoon to determine how much and when RBI could take its accommodative monetary stance a stage further. As evidence builds up one way or the other on inflation and monsoon, according to Dr Rajan, it will give more information of "how the trajectory of the monetary policy will be".

Governor Rajan has always taken a more pragmatic look at the state of economy and said while India was doing better than many nations - he has praised fiscal prudence - it has still to reach the point when it feels it could achieve its medium-run growth potential. Without giving himself up to the hype about "fastest growth", Dr Rajan notes things are falling into place.

Investment is starting to pick up strongly. "We have a fair degree of macro-stability. Of course, we are not immune to every shock, but immune to a fair number of shocks", he has said. But what has caused the hullabaloo in North Block was Dr Rajan's story of "a one-eyed man being king in the land of the blind" even while he was putting in perspective India's "fastest" growth story.

Apparently unhappy, Mr Jaitley had to assert, "we are growing much faster, com-

pared to the world". And Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman chimed in to say Dr Rajan's choice of words could have been better. Indeed, this led Governor Rajan, without loss of time, to revisit his remark in a clarificatory exercise and spell out the semantics.

"Every word or phrase that a public figure speaks is intensely wrung out of meaning. When words are hung out to dry out of context as in the newspaper headline, it only becomes a fair game for anyone who wants to fill in, meaning to create mischief," he pointed out. Secondly, it is pertinent to consider how India, all of a sudden, became the fastest-growing economy in the world, overtaking China. It was a consequence of evolving major developments over the last two years in China, the world's second largest economy, as it began moving away from excessive investments and exports hitherto to a more balanced and sustainable model for the future.

As China's growth slowed down, India automatically moved a notch higher in the growth league. Internationally, India is now regarded as a country with great promise but, which has under-delivered in the past. This explains its status of being the poorest country on a per capita basis within BRICS, though its performance outshines the rest, given the deep recession in Brazil and contraction in Russia, apart from the corruption scandals now tormenting Brazil.

Pertinently, Dr Rajan points out that our "outperformance was accentuated because world growth (mainly China's) was weak". A central banker, who has to be pragmatic, cannot get euphoric if India is the fastest growing large economy. but growth has to give every Indian a decent livelihood". Payoffs would only follow strong and sustainable growth over the long term.

His sobering reminder for our policy-makers meanwhile is in regard to comparing ourselves with China. A smaller economy than India's in 1960s, China is now five times our size (14-trillion dollar economy). In per capita terms, a Chinese citizen is over four times richer than the average Indian. While potential growth is estimated currently at 8 per cent, a NITI Aayog's exercise talks of need for India to grow 10 per cent for ten years to reach or exceed the current China GDP.

Going into semantics, which is of greater relevance for the touchy politicians in power, Dr Rajan raises the question of weighing how much of our language is tinged with meaning that is liable to misinterpretation and how forgiving should "we be of a bad choice of words when the intent is clearly different?" Speakers have to be more careful while listeners should not be looking for insults everywhere.

Dr Rajan's advice is more timely, in a socially distraught India at present, no matter the economic initiatives, as, he points out, if we do not communicate or debate, there is a danger of divisiveness increasing and that would be "disastrous" for a country conceived and flourishing in diversity. The Report Card can do no better than to acknowledge and endorse such pluralism and diversity. (IPA Service)

By Shweta Patwardhan

Buying a cell phone now is no longer about its ability to make and receive calls. The customer looks for various other attributes, the most important one being its camera. Phone manufacturers smartly sell the instrument based on the number of pixels the camera has, even though that does not necessarily make the output any better or worse, unless one wants to blow up the photograph.

Yet, the customer wants the camera to not just take good pictures but also to be able to expound on all its features. Some cameras are now being sold as ideal for "selfies". Think about how strange that sounds. Cameras were always for taking photographs of other people, or landscapes, or buildings.

The vast majority of cameras today - and certainly almost all phone cameras - are now used to take photographs of the photographer. How does one explain it -- vanity? Or just another symbol of the 'Me' Generation? How far we are ready to take pictures of ourselves became so apparent when photographs sur-



# Selfie generation

all ended well, because the hijacker only wanted to talk

became, for that one short moment, is notorious, and therefore newsworthy. And out came the phone cameras. A British passenger, beaming happily, posed with the bemused hijacker, and the selfie went viral. Another one surfaced, with a crew member looking poised but equally happy. Both will undoubtedly have stories to tell their children and grandchildren and will have the photo as proof.

While these could be classified as "silly, if not downright stupid", the obsession with selfies can have real, dangerous consequences. Recently, a college student fell into the sea while taking a selfie in Bandra Bandstand, Mumbai.

In February a young boy was killed when he tried to take a selfie in the backdrop of an oncoming train. India is now being called the selfie-death capital of the world! The Mumbai police have identified 16 no selfie zones in the city, because they are dangerous. Will that stop adventurous (or foolish) people from taking selfies? One doubts it.

No doubt psychologists

and social scientists are at this very moment working on these and studies to figure out why we are all so obsessed with photographing ourselves. The cheap and easy availability of technology is of course a factor, but even so, why is the lens being directed at ourselves, rather than at something else. Film stars and celebrities say that no one asks for their autographs any more -

ments to anyone wanting to show off. Selfies are also important to prove one has travelled (selfie with the Eiffel Tower!) and that one is in interesting situations.

But let's leave aside the narcissistic element of the selfie aside. Let's look at the actual photograph. What is the value of all these photographs? In an earlier era, the photos taken of the family or during important events

is?

A professional photographer Mike Yost has an answer. He says the most photographed generation of all time will have nothing to show for it in a few years. In a blogpost, he has said, "The sad part is that few of these photographs will survive beyond a year. To many people, a "picture" is only good for the moment. Moms and Dads want to snap every little movement of that new baby. Grandma wants to see each one of those, too. When you want to show off the new puppy, you pull out the phone. And in a week, none of them have any real meaning and might even get "deleted" just to make room for more pictures that have little meaning as well inside of a couple of weeks.

So what will become of all the pictures that are being taken today? Here is the reason that 99 per cent of the photographs being taken today are soon going to be totally gone -- digital images are no longer important enough to most people to actually keep them in printed form!"

It makes sense, when you think of it. After we have taken the photo, how many of us bother to store it on other platforms and then get the best ones printed? The taking of the photo is a thrill of the moment which does not exist later and certainly not in the long run. Indeed, many of the digital photos stored on the computer will never be seen again (assuming they don't get corrupted or wiped out when the computer crashes.) The selfie, like much else in these times,



to his ex-wife in Cyprus. He turned out to be someone with a past criminal record and was described as mentally unsound. "He is not a terrorist, just an idiot" said one Egyptian minister.

Be that as it may, what he

is instant gratification and nothing else after. The man who got himself photographed with the hijacker got his few seconds of fame -- who will remember him after a week?



like a wedding, found their way into the family album, which then got relegated to a dusty corner of the cupboard, to be opened only once in a few years. What will happen to digital pho-

into the limelight in 2011, when she bagged five gold medals (Contd on P-VII)



Dipa Karmakar

# Dipa's journey to Rio

Dipa Karmakar has created history by becoming the first Indian woman gymnast to qualify for the Olympics. She booked her place at the Rio Games after putting up a strong show in the final qualifying and test event here.

Her journey from humble beginnings in her hometown of Agartala is testimony to her hard work and determination. The daughter of a weightlifting coach at the SAI centre in Agartala, Dipa started gymnastics from the early age of six. She is trained by coach Bisbeshwar Nandi.

But Dipa's tryst with gymnastics was not a case of love at first sight. She did not enter the sport by choice, but was initiated into it by her father. In fact, Dipa's fear of falling coupled with her flat feet made her

initial days in the sport quite tough.

Dipa's flat feet used to affect the spring in her jump and Nandi had to work hard to bring the arch in her feet. With time, she also managed to overcome her fear of falling and started to improve quite rapidly.

Dipa won the Junior Nationals at Jalpaiguri in 2007, which increased her interest and passion for the sport. The 22-year-old first came



Gauhar Jaan, one of first mass media superstars at the turn of the last century, sang in 20 languages and cut over 600 records. She is a part of India's recording history during the British rule. Gauhar, the play directed by Lilette Dubey, recounts her fascinating personal and professional journey. Though Gauhar initially felt, as the play shows, that recording one's voice on a machine and then played back for listeners was blasphemous to music, she later relented.

The play is the work of award winning playwright Mahesh Dattani who has adapted it from Vikram Sampath's -My Name is Gauhar Jaan - Life and Times of a Musician.. Dattani suggested to Dubey that she direct Gauhar, a woman who lived life on her own terms be it her music, her love life, or the enormous wealth she had acquired but who died penniless.

Gauhar Jaan was not Muslim by birth. She was born Angelina Yeoward in 1873 in Patna to William Robert Yeoward, an Armenian Jew, who was an engineer in Azamgarh and Allen Victoria Hemming, a Jewish Armenian lady. Victoria was born and brought up in India, and trained in music and dance. The marriage ended in 1879 when Angelina was six. Trapped in a no-exit situation of social ostracism and financial distress, mother and daughter migrated to Banaras in 1881 with Khursheed, a Muslim nobleman who loved Victoria's music. Later, Victoria converted to Islam and changed

Gauhar, a play, was recently staged in Kolkata organised jointly by Master Minds Theatre and Weavers Studio, Kolkata, bringing alive the history of recorded music in India on the one hand, and the story of a woman whose life seems like pages out of a film script. Shoma A. Chatterji reports



Angelina's name to 'Gauhar Jaan' and hers to 'Malka Jaan.'

In 1902, Gauhar Jaan was asked by the Gramophone Company to record a series of songs for them. She was paid three thousand rupees per recording, an exorbitant sum at that time. From 1902 to 1920 she recorded over 600 songs in

more than ten languages. She became India's first recording star. You can still hear her thumris on YouTube where the name of the raga was carried on the label of the 78 rpm record and the singer had to end her song with her name. The play has an amusing minute when the younger Gauhar, after recording a

song into the conical microphone, tells the would-be listeners, "I hope you like the song." Over the years, she developed a love-hate relationship with F. W. Gainsberg of the Gramophone Company which, however, remained professional. Denzil Smith gives a wonderful account of himself both as Gainsberg and Angelina's father in the play.

Gauhar travelled through the country singing songs in the language of the region - Tamil, Gujarati, Bengali and so on where the audience keeps cheering are essayed beautifully. The play, a bit too long for a musical at two-hour-fifteen-minutes, also charts history and biography along with the dramatic elements of love, betrayal, success and tragedy, is dotted with tender moments of romance between Gauhar and her male companions who loved her and her music but never married her. In the end, she was left all alone, coping with the loss of her beautiful home in Kolkata due to the betrayal of the man she os-



tensibly married and another young man who claimed to be her half-brother.

Dubey has used two different actors to portray Gauhar- the younger

Gauhar and the older one. This offers a multi-layered perspective on both the musical success and personal tragedy of Gauhar's life. She has chosen Rajeshwari Sachdev, a fami-

iar face on television and occasionally on the large screen to portray the younger Gauhar and Zila Khan, a trained classical singer who has never acted, to portray the older version.

Both Rajeshwari and Zila Singh carry themselves with great poise and dignity despite their social positioning as atawaf courted by Maharajas and zamindars but shunned by mainstream society. The way Rajeshwari emerges as actress-dancer-singer getting under the skin of another singer-dancer of a different time and space considering that she had never even heard of Gauhar Jaan when Dubey first asked her if she would do the title role is amazing. "I was ashamed of my own ignorance and immediately began to set it right by beginning to read Sampath's book on Gauhar Jaan which she found "one of the most well-researched books I have read."

Zila Khan, incidentally, is Ustad Vilayat Khan's daughter. Rajeshwari on the other hand is an actress known for her versatile performances in some Shyam Benegal films and though she can sing well she is certainly not a trained singer. Yet, she equips herself well and sounds convincing in this rich musical play.

Piya Benegal's costumes highlight the 'period' ambience of the play.

The single-set stage is flexible and fluid to change instantly into a courtroom where Gauhar is forced to fight a case claiming her legitimacy from her own father who agrees in exchange of a handsome sum. The play has an open ending beautifully choreographed with the two actresses on stage. Gauhar died in 1930 at a relatively young age dying a sad death. Yet Gauhar is touched with a spirit of optimism, of wanting to be loved and of wanting to live. (TWF)

By Ranjan K Baruah

# Studying Architecture after 10+2

We have published about medical, engineering, defence and hotel management entrances and how one can appear in those examinations. This time we shall publish about architecture entrances which can be appeared after passing senior secondary exams. We are thankful to our readers for their calls and feedback to make this column better.

**Architecture Entrance:** There are about 423 institutions, which impart architectural education in India leading to recognized qualifications. The standards of education being imparted in these institutions (constituent colleges/departments of universities, deemed universities, affiliated colleges/schools, IITs, NITs and autonomous institutions) is governed by Council of Architecture (Minimum Standards of Architectural Education) Regulations, 1983, which set forth the requirement of eligibility for admission, course duration, standards of staff & accommodation, course content, examination etc. These standards as provided in the said Regulations are required to be maintained by the institutions. The COA oversees the maintenance of the standards periodically by way of conducting inspections through Committees of Experts. The COA is required to keep the Central Government informed of the standards being maintained by the institutions and is empowered to make recommendations to the Government of India with regard to recognition and re-recognition of a qualification.

Some of the institutes take admission through JEE marks like some of the IITs and some NITs. Students have to appear in

JEE for getting admission into these leading institutes of the country. After qualifying in JEE aspirants need to qualify in AAT or the Architectural Aptitude test. The paper consists of an Aptitude test that is mandatory to clear for admission to B.Arch. colleges. Apart from JEE, students may also take admission in some of the architectural institutes through NATA.

**NATA:** National Aptitude Test in Architecture (NATA) is being conducted by the Council of Architecture, being the competent & final authority for the purpose of fixing norms and standards for architectural institutions and having the necessary expertise to hold a Common Aptitude Test in Architecture, at national level to provide a single window system for appearing in aptitude test and to facilitate institutions, students and public at large for admission to First year of 5 year B.Arch Degree Course at all recognized institutions all over country.

The purpose of conducting NATA is to provide a single scheme of examination for holding aptitude test and to facilitate prospective students all over the country to apply for admissions in architecture seats in institutions spread across the country while the actual admissions shall be carried out only by the concerned designated authorities of the respective states/institutions based on NATA. The NATA also ensures that the eligibility criteria for admission to five year Bachelor of

Architecture (B.Arch.) degree course, as prescribed by CoA and duly approved by the Central Government, are strictly adhered to and followed all over the country in Architectural Institutions.

It measures the aptitude of the applicant for specific field of study, i.e. Architecture. The test measures drawing and observation skills, sense of proportion, aesthetic sensitivity and critical thinking ability that have been acquired over a long period of time and that are related to specific field of study, i.e. Architecture.

**Exam Update:** Aspirant may fill up forms for MBBS Entrance for Jawaharlal Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education & Research to be held on 5th June. Last date for applying is 4th May. There are all together 200 seats in two campuses of the institute.

**Scholarships for Girls:** The Parasol Foundation Trust is providing an Israel-India Leaders Scholarship to get an MBA at the Tel Aviv University and develop an Israel-India venture. Applications are currently being accepted from Indian women who are aspiring entrepreneurs or social entrepreneurs. Last date for sending application is 1st May.

*(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at [bkranjan@gmail.com](mailto:bkranjan@gmail.com) or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)*

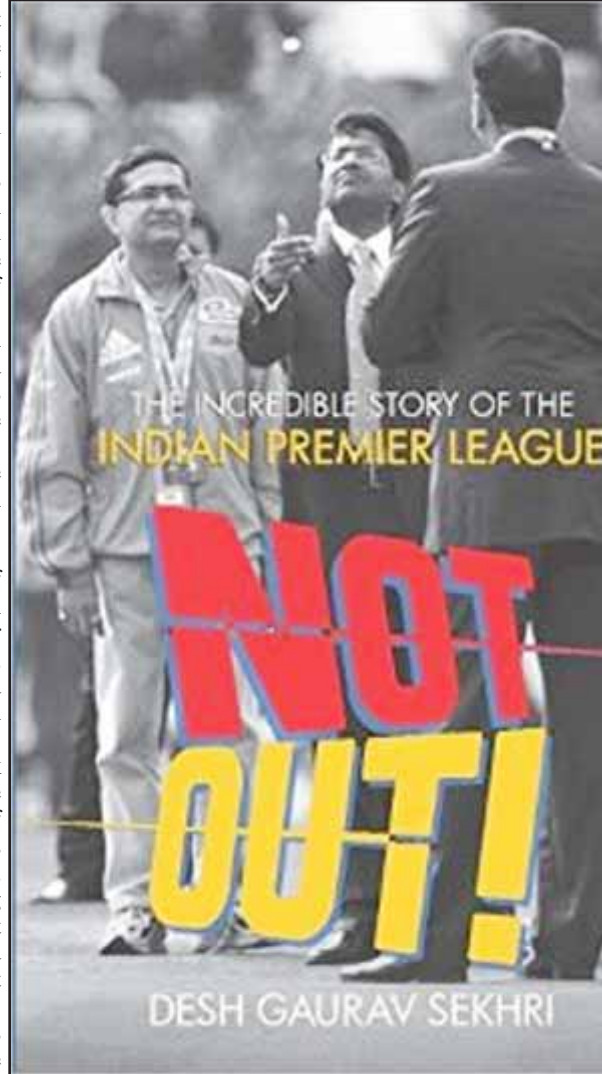
By Zafri Mudasser Nofil

The politician-cricket official dual role has hit the reputation of the game and the IPL and has also been the cause of many of the conflict of interest controversies thereby adversely impacting politicians as well as cricket's overall health, says Delhi-based sports attorney Desh Gaurav Sekhri in his new book.

"Conflict of interest has become the single most relevant term that is synonymous with Indian cricket in 2016. The conflict of interest phenomenon has shaped how ethics in cricket are to be determined," he writes in "Not Out! The Incredible Story Of The Indian Premier League", published by Penguin Books.

The book explores the intricacies of the business of the IPL, pinpointing what it got right and where it went wrong. It also looks closely at the spot-fixing scandal, the conflict of interest controversy, the issues that led to suspension of two champion teams and the complicated interplay between the BCCI and the IPL.

According to the author, nothing has caused more grief to the BCCI-IPL than the conflict of interest controversy. He says the most likely to be damaging to the



reputation of the BCCI-IPL in the future is the duality of roles performed by public officials who hold positions in the BCCI.

"Former BCCI president and the current nominee for the ICC, if (Shashank) Manohar is unavailable, Sharad Pawar, is a politician.

Many of the state associations' presidents or board members are politicians," Sekhri writes.

"But the politician-cricket official dual role has caused concern to the judiciary, to the public at large, and to the reputation of cricket and the IPL. It has also been the cause of many of the conflict of interest controversies, adversely impacting the politicians as well as cricket's overall health," he goes on to say.

For the IPL, the conflict of interest controversy took centre stage during the spot-fixing scandal, but the first

great fiasco in the IPL happened much earlier than that, the book says. "The franchise expansion auction of the IPL was both its biggest success and, soon after, its biggest failure. I have already detailed the Kochi franchise's story and its eventual collapse. The Kochi franchise was a primary example of conflict of

interest, and an extremely warped set of events. There was a lot more to it than just the sweat-equity component," the author writes.

He says the challenges to the IPL are self-imposed and all of that can be revised, and none of it actually takes away from the future success of the event.

"There are many things the IPL did correctly, right from the start. It had and in many respects still has the blueprint for creating an extremely successful sports event in India. They say imitation is the best possible flattery, and the IPL has been mimicked in India in every shape, size, form and sport. There is virtually no sport in India today that hasn't had a 'league' that imitates the IPL almost to the core," the book says.

The recipe for the IPL's success, according to Sekhri, was intuitive and intrinsic. "It was destined to

trouble began. The trouble though is only as much as the BCCI lets it be."

He feels the coming year or two will be extremely difficult for the IPL.

"On-field, it has to maintain consistency despite the off-field turbulence it is facing due to the conflict between the sponsorship requirements of eight teams, and the inability to rustle up eight able teams for the two upcoming seasons.

"The board will need to focus on its flagship property while at the same time work tirelessly to alter the public's perception, preempt the court and the Justice Lodha Committee, and modernize the way cricket is administered in today's day and age. For the IPL, the board must ensure that it remains scandal free and retains control over the various elements that threaten to disrupt it," he writes.

"The next few years will



do well and the recipe was ingenious at the time. In a seller's market, the IPL was the perfect product to pitch and captivate. Perhaps it did everything in too much of a hurry and with not enough diligence, and then the

tell us if the first-in-time IPL turns it around and builds upon a golden opportunity. The IPL has never believed in half measures - now would not be a good time to reverse that trend," he argues.(PTI)

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, April 24, 2016

Mercury semi-sextile Venus on your solar return chart which denotes a wonderful year. Keep abreast of events and situations and your innovative mind will do wonders. You will bag very lucrative assignments which will help to advance your career. With a lot of hard work behind you; you are ready to move forward in exciting directions. Great accomplishments come from a willingness to take risks and it is a good time to do so now as luck favours you. Be on the lookout for opportunities and openings which may encounter. Beware of overindulging and balance out your body and mind. Family life will be harmonious.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

Self-confidence and action are highlighted and you tend to instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. Good work opportunities crop up for those working with overseas connections. You probably should be prudent as there is a tendency to create financial stress due to extravagant spending habits. At times you feel fun loving, energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

Economy in the home and management of manpower and finances at work keep you in control of situations. You further your business by expanding in related fields of activity with good chances of collaborations. 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. You would have more opportunities to improve relations with relatives, friends and loved ones. You take on a dreamy and philosophical outlook. You attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with hitherto unapproachable people. Your hobbies, leisure time and time spent with children come into focus. Give yourself a fitness routine and healthy diet program.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This week brings harmonious relations with friends, colleagues, loved ones, family and children. You will be able to make best use of your talents, work experience and would insert your creativity into your work and projects in hand. You would be more determined and diligent. On the financial front, progress would be steady and solid. The need to express and communicate your ideas is extremely important to you during this period. Your domestic life takes on top priority. Making yourself feel comfortable and secure is paramount, and you have every chance to boost your feeling of stability and support of the family. You may be tempted to spend extra money on material goods.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Good financial returns are on the cards as your meticulous planning pays off. A promotion at work or gainful business opportunity starts. You win many a point with your dynamic energy and communication skills. Your personal charm and charisma take you through complicated situations. You would spend a lot of money on clothes, furniture, and entertainment. Domestic relationships and the home environment would be harmonious and peaceful. This is an excellent period in which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships with loved ones.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Professional situations turn in your favor. You would be able to face truths, deal with emotional choices and difficult situations. You would be able to integrate forces, resources and professional aspects to achieve. With mastery in your field you meet deadlines. Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs realizing that this too shall pass. You would be compassionate and generous with family, friends and relatives and earn respect from them.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

Activities related to communication such as journalism, literature and fine arts are prominent. You would successfully use your charm and your sense of humor to make peace and harmony in personal and professional relations. Romance brings a sense of belonging and feeling of security. You exhibit

an ability to adapt to most situations. You would be willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Excellent opportunities for people in show business, entertainment and related fields are in the offing. You would work more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. You have been more determined and hard working and this brings fulfillment of all desires particularly in your personal and domestic life. People see you as a loving and lovable person, and as someone who is aware of their needs and feelings, which can benefit you at this time. Others are willing to help and cooperate with your goals and ambitions.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You would use your talent and knowledge together in personal and professional life. You would get familiar with new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations. Strong existing relationships are likely to grow and transform. Your finances could also improve as long as you employ strategy and work in a disciplined manner. You would also form relationships with people based on a deep level of mutual appreciation and understanding for each other. This is a favorable period for people in the arts, hospitality and other related fields. It's a great time to exert your personal influence, as you are coming across as especially cooperative and graceful.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

It's a very favorable time for developing your relationships with parents and other relatives. Personal relations are precious and need to be treated with tender love and care. New ideas and concepts floated by you at your work place will be appreciated. You may take up new assignments and project that would bring creativity and invention of new ideas. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. There may be gains from shares and assets in hand. You impress people with your talent and charisma and invite fresh opportunities.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You would be able to maintain balance of the head and heart in professional and in personal relations. Family is supportive, children are loving and friends extend hospitality and love. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. You are more willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations. You are able to find creative solutions to problems now. You put in a lot of efforts and then find this has established a strong professional base with your hard work and this brings in desired and even unexpected gains. This would help you to get a better perspective to achieve desired goals.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

Your courage and confidence will keep your hopes alive. You can attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with seniors at work. Increased energy and a renewed feeling of confidence favor you. Take advantage of time and utilize your energy accordingly. Problems in your life may be overcome by bravery, self-assertion, and directness. Romantic matters, as well as pleasure-seeking activities, come to the fore. You might spend a lot of time in making short frequent trips, visiting friends and relatives. Activities related to communications such as journalism, literature and fine arts are highlighted.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

A wonderful professional opportunity takes you towards success. A personal meeting will lead to romance, love and a long lasting relationship. There are chances of new associations and beginnings as new opportunities and changes may come. Your family would be more supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships and feel more comfortable. You exhibit brilliance in handling business ventures and collaborations. This helps you to build your self confidence and strengthen your financial position. You would take up assignments and projects which would end on a winning note for you.

## TIP OF THE WEEK

### Best way to say sorry and show that you mean it

Scientists have now given us six components to an apology, which can make our 'sorry' more effective.

Making the perfect apology can be tricky. But not when you have a secret science-backed formula to saying sorry in the best possible way.

Scientists have now given us six components to an apology, which can make our 'sorry' more effective.

"Apologies really do

to-face apology.

While the best apologies contained all six elements, not all of these components are equal, the study found.

"Our findings showed that the most important component is an acknowledgement of responsibility. Say it is your fault, that you made a mistake," Lewicki said.

Read: Toddlers too have self-esteem

When the elements were evaluated one at a time, there was general consistency in the importance of the components across the two studies, with slight variations. But in both studies, the request for forgiveness was seen as least important.

Lewicki noted that, in this work, participants simply read apology statements. But the emotion and voice inflection of a spoken apology may have powerful effects, as well.

Apologies really do work, but you should make sure you hit as many of the six key components as possible. "Clearly, things like eye contact and appropriate expression of sincerity are important when you give a face-to-face apology," he said.

The study appears in the journal Negotiation and Conflict Management Research. (ANI)



work, but you should make sure you hit as many of the six key components as possible," said lead author Roy Lewicki of the Ohio State University.

In two separate experiments, Lewicki and his co-authors tested how 755 people reacted to apologies containing anywhere from one to all six of these elements: expression of regret; explanation of what went wrong; acknowledgment of responsibility; declaration of repentance; offer of repair; and request for forgiveness. Things like eye contact and appropriate expression of sincerity are important when you give a face-

## Dipa's journey to Rio

(Contd from P-VI) in the National Games, representing Tripura. She won the golds in floor, vault, all-around, balance beam and uneven bars.



In 2010, she was part of the Indian gymnastic team in the Commonwealth Games held in Delhi, where she saw Ashish Kumar create history by winning India's first ever gymnastic medal. Dipa later said Kumar was an inspiration for her.

Four years later in the 2014 Commonwealth Games (CWG), Dipa grabbed the bronze medal in the women's vault final. She received an overall score of 14.366. The medal made her the first Indian woman to win in a Commonwealth Games gymnastic event.

Dipa attempted the Prodnova vault -- a move that consists of a front handspring and two front somersaults -- which is one of the most difficult and dangerous moves in gymnastics. However, Dipa's attempt did not come off clean as her bottom touched the mat before she bounced back onto her feet, which earned her a penalty of 0.1 point.

But Dipa earned the distinction of being the highest scorer in the world to have accomplished the move. Among the contemporary gymnasts, only Yamilet Pena of Dominican Republic and Fadwa Mahmoud of Egypt have attempted the Prodnova vault and neither managed to score as much as Dipa.

At a felicitation for the CWG athletes on August 8 in New Delhi, Dipa's efforts were praised by cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar.

Later that year in the Asian Games, Dipa finished fourth in the vault final with a score of 14.200.

In October 2015, the Agartala girl also became the first ever Indian to qualify for the final stage of the 2015 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships. In the final she scored 14.683 to grab the fifth position. (IANS)

*"It is in justice that the ordering of society is centered."*

—Aristotle

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 252 SHILLONG, MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2016

### CJI's predicament

CHIEF Justice of India, TS Thakur broke down while speaking at the annual conference of chief ministers and chief justices in Delhi. The conference, chaired by the Prime Minister is an opportunity for sharing upfront the problems faced by the judiciary across the country. The Chief Justice it appears is pained by the mounting number of cases that have accumulated because there aren't enough judges to hear them. Chief Justice Thakur blamed the Government for its indifference towards appointment of judges which he said has resulted in an "avalanche" of litigation lying pending. Delay in justice delivery is a slur on the judiciary, although judges themselves have little to do with the delay. Justice Thakur became emotional as he appealed to the prime minister on behalf of the litigants and people languishing in jails and also in the name of development of the country and its progress.

It was in 1987 that the Law Commission had recommended an increase in the number of judges from 10 judges per 10 lakh people to 50 judges per 10 lakh people but nothing has moved. Following the Law Commission's recommendation, the Supreme Court in 2002 had also supported the increase in the strength of the judiciary. A Parliamentary Department Related Standing Committee on Law then headed by Pranab Mukherjee had also recommended taking the judge to people ratio to 50 from 10. But even today, the judge to people ratio stands at 15 judges to 10 lakh people which is way lower than it is in the US, Australia, the UK and Canada.

In 1987, the requirement was 40,000 judges. From 1987 till date India has added another 25 crore to its population and is now one of the fastest growing economies of the world. Investors coming to India to invest here however face a plethora of legal hurdles and delays. It is intuitive that the Chief Justice should mention that the efficacy of the judicial system is vitally connected with the present government's 'Make in India' and 'Ease of doing business' campaigns. Rarely have we heard a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court make such a direct appeal to the Prime Minister. We hope this bodes well for the justice system in the country. Modi should respond with swift action.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### No action against ministers without probe: Sangma

The Chief Minister, Captain W.A. Sangma has said that he would act against the two PHE Ministers only if the Rynjah Committee report suggests their involvement in the multi-crore scandal.

He was winding up a marathon debate in the Assembly on June 21 on a private Member's resolution on the issue.

The Chief Minister rejected the Opposition plea that the two Ministers should be sacked outright. Said he "I am not yet convinced (that they are involved just because some slips have been produced. Will it be good to take hasty action without going through proper investigation? I would like to give every accused person a chance to defend himself.

Captain Sangma made it amply clear that he would not succumb to any sorts of "political pressure". As the leader of the House he would discharge his responsibilities in a "judicious manner". He said in a forceful manner that no stone would be left unturned to find out the truth. "If I am satisfied that the Minister are responsible, I will not hesitate to take action against them. It is not a mere promise". The motive of the Ministers in sending the chits would come to the fore only when investigations were completed. Pending that he would not consider any action against the Ministers.

Significantly Captain Sangma did not go out of his way to shield the two Ministers. Unlike other Ministers he did not try to justify their action in issuing chits.

Regarding the demand for

handing over the case to the CBI. Capt. Sangma said that it did not warrant such a step at this stage. However, depending upon the Rynjah Committee report the Govt would not hesitate to take CBI assistance.

The Home Minister, Mr D.D. Lapang quoted from the CBI manual to state that the central agency could not be involved in such cases right away. He wondered whether the CBI was all that effective since it had failed to solve some of the murder cases entrusted to it earlier.

Regarding issue of chits by the Minister. Mr Lapang reminded the Opposition that when they were in power they too had issued slips in similar fashion. "I do not accept the allegation that issuing of slips is wrong", he said. He surmised that the whole thing was a case of human failure. "Complacency brought the Govt to such a crisis. We will not let down this House, we will not betray the people of Meghalaya. Allow us time to correct ourselves", he added. The Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr Grosswell Mylliemngap observed that there was nothing wrong in Ministers sending chits to the executives. The important thing of the matter was the motive behind it. They should not be blamed merely because of the chits. He refuted the allegation that the Govt was trying to influence the enquiry committee.

# Our Stories, Our Identity

By H H Mohrmen

I don't subscribe to the idea that only those who follow certain religions are true Khasi-Pnars or only those who conduct certain rites and rituals are the only ones who can claim to be Ki Khun u Hynniewtrep (son of the soil) In my humble opinion, a true Khasi-Pnar is one who knows his roots, his origin and stories. In fact the most important question that we should ask is, who are we without our stories? Our stories are an integral part of our identity. In fact much of our identity is lost if we forget to remember our stories.

It is also true that apart from our stories, our lineage system is also one unique aspect of the tribe. It is also essential that a Khasi-Pnar should speak his 'tien-shnong' (Pnar/War/Bhoi/Lyngngam/Maram) dialect and is also one who can also read and write the written language or communicate in the Khasi Sohra language. On the other hand a true blue Khun u Hynniewtrep is also one who tries to uphold the cardinal principles of the community and the other Khasi-Pnar values. Earn righteousness (Kamai ka hok), courteous living (Tip-briew tip-ble) and respect for the mother's and the father's side of the families (Tip-kur tipkha) are the three most important principles of the jaitbynriew but the Khasi-Pnar life is also governed by the important value system that we have which is the close relationship we have with the nature and to be honourable even when dealing with one's enemy. For example, even before a duel between warriors, the combatants will always swear to honour one another. To honour and keep one's words, promises and commitment (tien-hok tien-sot) is the hallmark of a person's character and signifies the pillar of Khasi-Pnar morality. To signify how important it is to keep one's words we define the tongue which is the source of words as the 'golden tongue', the silver tongue (u thylliej-ksiar; u thylliej-rupa).

Not stealing that which

does not belong to us is another very important value of the people. Not long ago people would keep their tools and their produce in the field or a public thoroughfare and no one would even touch those things. Locks and keys were very recently introduced to us. In fact in some villages in Jaintia hill they only need a wooden pad (iu-jnang) to lock their houses. And if one happens to walk through somebody's orchard, it is a common practice that if it is just to satisfy one's hunger or quench one's thirst, one can pluck and eat some fruits from the trees even in the absence of the owner of the orchard.

Community support in times of need is also another important feature of the Khasi-Pnar society because it stresses on the need to maintain the well-being of the entire community (ka bhalang ka imlang ka sahlang). In other words the common good of the community is paramount; hence we have traditions like the community support for farming activities (called chunong in Pnar and Kurulok in War Jaintia dialect). Then we also have a support system during times of exigencies such as death in the family where relatives and friends will provide food to the family one after another (called ja-nam) till the mandatory mourning period is over. And among the War- Jaintia, people contribute to support the bereaved family in their time of sorrow in a tradition call (Chep). Chep is also being contributed in times of celebration, especially when there is a wedding in the family. Again among the War Jaintia, Chep could also be in kind. Then when a mother gives birth to a child, the family and friends will provide food to the mother in what is called jakhonboo till she is able to support herself. In other words we have a strong in-built network support system in the community, because the common good of the community (ka bhalang uba bun balang) and not that of the self or the interest the individual is the

overriding principle of the Khasi-Pnar.

Principles and values are an important part of the Khasi-Pnar customs, traditions and way of life, but stories too are an essential part of the Hynniewtrep way of life. It begins with the same creation stories of the Hynniew-trep Hynniewskum that we all share and which is not only the story that attest to the fact that we are one community, but the narrative also confirms that we are unique because we have our own creation story. Just like the Jews have their creation stories in their Torah which can also be found in the book of Genesis in the Christian Bible, we also have our own Hynniew-trep Hynniewskum genesis narrative that we should be proud of.

Apart from our own creation story we also have stories on the various aspects of our social life and define many aspects of our society by using stories. For example each clan has its own folklore about the origin of the clan, stories of the ?awbei and the Thawlang of the clan. These stories are important not only because they tell us about the origin of the clan, but through these stories we know about the family name/surname (jait) which are related to the clan (Kur). And this is also important because clan plays a vital role in the person's life. But it is also important because in the Khasi-Pnar tradition it is taboo to marry within the clan. Therefore we know that Laloo-Lamin-Diengdoh clans are connected by the story of 'ka ?awchibidi/?awchibijai and all the jait under the clan share this same story. Then we also have story of the Talang clan, and all the jait within the Talang clan which include the Buam, the Nialang, the Suting and the Nongtdu are related and they share the same story of origin from the Talang Basiah narrative.

Even our towns and villages have their own stories; some villages not only have stories of their origins but they also have their ancestors' migration narratives. For example Jowai

owes its origin to the four sisters who are half-human half-divine who became the first settlers of the place we all know as Jowai now. And the four sisters; ka Wet, ka Doh, ka Tein and ka Bon were the Iawbei of the Sookpoh Khadarwyrnai clan. Similarly if one visits other villages, one would find that all villages would have stories of how the village started or at least how the people migrated to the village.

Our rivers, streams, hills, monoliths and even lakes and waterfalls have stories; in fact almost all natural phenomena which occur in the area have stories to tell. Umiam, Umiew, Myntdu, Kupli, Lukha have stories of their own so does Lum Shillong, Lum Bahboo Bahkong, Lum Sunaraja, Lum Sohpetbneng and others. Then u Kyllang, ka Thadlaskein, ka Kshaid Iale, ka Nohkalikai, ka Kshaid Krangshuri, to name a few, also have their own stories. As a matter of fact we have stories of the kind of relationships that we had with our fellow creation in the animal and plant world too.

These stories not only demonstrate the unique connection that we have with the nature around us, but they are in fact part of our identity because they connect us with our clan, the community and the natural world. The stories demonstrate that in the Khasi-Pnar milieu humans do not exist in isolation but he or she is one with the entire creation. His relationship starts from within the family, to the community and then to the wider world. So stories are important because they tell us about us and who we are and more importantly they inform us of the profound relationship that we have with the community and nature around us.

Stories are therefore not just fables or folktales that we tell our children. They are more than that because they have meaning and the importance of the stories is because they also help define who we are. Without our stories we are incomplete, so if we lose our stories, we also lose part of our identity because stories are an intrinsic part of the Khasi-Pnar life.

# The Pope talks to Europe

By M J Akbar

Real stories so often get lost in the news; and news itself becomes a passing banner in the long parade of information that sets out after breakfast on a march into the night. Who has time or attention span to measure significance?

On 16 April, something significant happened, which, largely if not completely, got lost in transition. It was an encounter between the Holy Father of Roman Catholics, Pope Francis, and anxious, even desperate refugees from ravaged Muslim countries like Syria, on the once-obscure and now famous Greek island of Lesbos.

After two centuries of independent existence on the fringe, Greece has again become the gateway to Europe — although Europeans want Greece to become a barricade rather than door. Once, Ottoman-Turkish armies made Greece their base for forward movement into the Balkans, from where they hovered over powerful European kingdoms. Today, refugees from war-torn Muslim lands have turned Lesbos, next to Turkey, their landing point on the way to harbours as distant as Germany, Scandinavia and Britain.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, European courts were legitimately worried about the expanding Ottoman power across Eurasia and Mediterranean

human catastrophe since the Second World War. The Pope chooses his words with care, and acts after much thought. According to a report by Christina Lamb in the Sunday Times, London, the Pope offered support, comfort and prayer, and then took a dozen Muslim refugees back to the Vatican. [The 12, who happen to be from Damascus and Deir Ezzor, a town now controlled by ISIS, were chosen by lottery.] You may dismiss this as symbolic, but it was a powerful gesture of love that will resonate in the hearts of ordinary people. There is a beautiful photograph illustrating Lamb's story, showing a young boy reaching out to kiss a smiling Pontiff's hand while his mother can barely restrain her tears. Yes, there are tales of misery that need to be told; but hope is also a narrative.

True, the Pope was reaching out to Muslims. He has done this before and he will do so again. His faith is inclusive; his concern for human suffering transcends the boundaries of faith. But he was also telling Europe that it could not remain indifferent, or become hostile to families like that of Nour Essa and her husband Hasan, both engineers, along with their 2-year-old son, who

*After two centuries of independent existence on the fringe, Greece has again become the gateway to Europe— although Europeans want Greece to become a barricade rather than door. Once, Ottoman-Turkish armies made Greece their base for forward movement into the Balkans, from where they hovered over powerful European kingdoms. Today, refugees from war-torn Muslim lands have turned Lesbos, next to Turkey, their landing point on the way to harbours as distant as Germany, Scandinavia and Britain.*

### TO THE EDITOR

### Brilliant choice!

Editor,

I want to congratulate the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya for honouring JM Lyngdoh with the honorary Doctorate of Literature (ST23april2016). Compared with the honour given to Rose M Bathew by the NEHU, I think the USTM's choice is worth much more.

JMLyngdoh got the Magsaysay award for his integrity as an administrator. Even after demitting office he made two prominent judgments. As part of a Supreme Court panel he awarded and recognised the human rights of victims of fake encounters in Manipur. He also gave a judgment that political parties should be banned from taking part in college and university student unions elections (the bane of Indian Education System), all against the prevailing Indian ethos. It is indeed a shame that he has no place in his own society (Jaidbynriew).

Here I also want to make comments about two other individuals. Not long ago the Telegraph interviewed Lou Majaw on the books and literature he is currently enjoying. The greatness of Lou Majaw is revealed when he told the interviewer that he is not educated enough to

know that. That is humility and greatness— a rare commodity these days.

And now I read that Mary Kom is debating whether she should accept the Indian government's offer of Rajya Sabha seat or concentrate on her work on sports. The foundational philosophy of BJP and the RSS is that Muslims and Christians are not real Indians. And there is bound to be more problems for these minorities in the years to come. Will Mary Kom be able to improve the lot of the minority group's? Will she vote against the Party if there is a move or bill against their interests? Honours and RS seats are fine but at what cost! Hope she will think through before she leaps (or she boxes).

Yours etc.,  
Rasputin Bismarck  
matters  
Kolkata.

### Why this partiality?

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, may I bring to the notice of the concerned authorities and general public of Shillong, of the irregular permission to Hunlang Wine Shop at Lane-15, Rynjah to continue running its business in direct violation to amended Rule 183 of the Meghalaya Excise Rules, which has already been upheld by the Shillong

High Court too.

The said shop is located within the stipulated distance of 200 meters from Pohkseh Presbyterian Church. As seen from Google Maps, the distances from Pohkseh Presbyterian Church to SBI ATM at Rynjah Bus Stand, Dutta Brothers Store and Rynjah Post Office is found to be 120.53 meters, 127.66 meters and 145.94 meters respectively. It is thus evident that, the Hunlang Wine Shop which is situated in between Pohkseh Presbyterian Church and Rynjah Post Office, must have much lesser distance than the stipulated 200 meters. But for some strange reasons, this shop is found to be eligible to run its business in direct violation to above rules.

As such the concerned authorities are requested to review and take appropriate measures so as to avoid violation of stated rules and high court orders.

Yours etc.,  
Rini Baruah  
Shillong - 6

### Honouring Shakespeare!

Editor,

This refers to your front page news-report "Royalty, Obama & Fans mark 400 years since Shakespeare died" (ST Apr 24, 2016). Looking at the life and character of Shakespeare one learns that

Shakespeare occupies a distinctive position in world literature and his success lies in creating characters which are real. As a poet and playwright, Shakespeare used landscape to place and illuminate people's actions, emotions and thoughts. It is said that the name "Shakespeare" is spelt in at least 50 different ways. Which ever way it is spelt, the Bard of Stratford-upon-Avon will remain the greatest lyricist and poet ever. It is also observed that a generation of young people leave school with at best a vague memory of one or two plays and at worst have no connection with Shakespeare at all. Shakespeare's universal themes of love, power, greed and complexities have paved the way for successful movies and theatrical productions. In Bollywood, Vishal Bharadwaj has really distorted his love for Shakespeare on the big screen with his versions in movies such as Haider, Maqbool and Omkara. Shakespeare's 400th anniversary is an opportunity for the world to celebrate the legacy of the most famous English playwright - all year round.

Yours etc.,  
Vinod C. Dixit  
Ahmedabad - 15

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

Africa. Western dramatists, masters of the mass media in their time, turned the Turk into a monster waiting to ravish the civilisation, wealth and beauty of Europe. The liberal genius, Shakespeare, was an exception when he created a more nuanced hero like Othello the Moor, whose valiant exploits won Desdemona's heart, and whose explosive jealousy lost love and life. This time it is not fear of the scimitar that has risen across Europe, but that of a demographic invasion. The hordes have arrived, on decrepit boat rather than charging horse; but in this democratic age the civilian is as alarming as the soldier, because the civilian can become a citizen.

Europe's governments were initially overwhelmed by the refugee onslaught. Trapped between humanitarian instinct and growing public angst, they seemed frozen. Some furious diplomacy with Turkey, and effective frontier policing, calmed nerves; but there is now a huge population of refugees left in no-man's land, dreading the thought of return to homelands they abandoned.

At such a fraught moment Pope Francis, a son of immigrants himself, visited a refugee camp in Lesbos. He has described the situation as the greatest

will now spend their lives in the Vatican rather than Damascus. Five, or even three, years ago they would never have imagined such a churn in their existence. They never wanted to leave Syria. They were driven out by that most destructive and desolate human experience, remorseless war. They are lucky. Thousands have lost their lives in search for a different life. It would be unfair, and wrong, to suggest that Europe has not understood. Many governments have done their best. History will remember Angela Merkel, even if she has to pay a price at the next elections. But the world cannot forget those floating in limbo.

The Pope, as the world's most famous faith-leader, has told us something that we do not really want to hear: if human beings do not understand the meaning of humanity then they are no longer human.

It is fashionable—and often, given the evidence, reasonable—to be sceptical about our contemporary leaders. Religion is no insurance against scepticism. So when we see a man of God believe in God, we must admire his courage and applaud his vision.

*"Education: that which reveals to the wise, and conceals from the stupid, the vast limits of their knowledge."*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 253

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2016

### The Nepal earthquake

A year has passed since the Nepal earthquake which killed as many as 9000 people. The tremors shook even parts of India killing 102 people and pulling down about 13,000 houses. It shows that the calamity was not confined by boundaries. Communication between neighbouring countries has to be expanded to minimize the risk of earthquakes. It will be folly for India to play down the crisis in the Himalayan region. The government of India has recently added 81 new cities and towns to a list of urban areas vulnerable to earthquakes of very severe intensity. Earthquakes kill people. But what causes these earthquakes? It is mainly the faulty construction of buildings done by people themselves. A Survey of the National Disaster Management Authority has found that in the past 25 years, more than 25000 persons have been killed in earthquakes. The Bhuj earthquake in Gujarat in 2001 was the most severe in recent times and it cast a shadow of death over the whole area. Buildings went down like houses of cards. India now has a range of seismic specifications covering a variety of structures which is satisfactory. These structures include mud or low strength masonry houses as well as modern buildings.

New building codes have been drawn up for new constructions. But existing buildings also need to be made earthquake resistant. Engineers trained to handle such jobs are in short supply. The subject is not taught at the undergraduate level in engineering courses. The need for safer buildings is a must and the memory of the Nepal earthquake should be a salutary lesson.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### Dissidence in UMF too

As well in line with the ruling party in the Assam Assembly, the principal opposition party there is also no less plagued by dissidence. In fact, the United Minority Front (UMF) is ahead of the AGP in this regard, the former having already virtually split into two. Here, too, Assam seems to have kept abreast of what is happening in the Opposition parties elsewhere in the country. What is unfortunate about the UMF is that it is nowhere near the point of capturing power and yet have allowed themselves to be engaged in an internecine fight which is devoid of any principal and lacks of genuine concern for the lot of those whose interest is positively threatened politically. That was the signal for a successful mobilization of the minorities, both religious and linguistic, as reflected in the electoral success of the Minority Front recorded and the fruits of which are sure to be lost if its unity is to be sacrificed now because of what appears on the face of it to be a clash of personalities.

What is odd and even crude about the whole sequence of events is that two of the eminent minority leaders in the State, themselves holding the two top executive posts of President and general secretary, should be involved in an open confrontation landing this promising minority organization to an outright split. The general secretary, Mr Golam Osmani, recently organized the annual conference of the front in his home town, Silchar, which was boycotted by the other group led by President Santiranjan Dasgupta who threatened to hold the rival show at his own strong hold, Hojai. Among these two outstanding public figures of the State, both former Ministers in different Congress and non-Congress regimes, they virtually monopolized the sectional leadership of both the religious and linguistic minorities. An added premium on this joint leadership

was that one belonged to the Brahmaputra valley and other to the valley of the Barak.

Now that the two stands arrayed against each other and the UMF virtually split almost beyond redemption, it is difficult to envisage the utility and effectiveness of the separated wings which in any case cannot be as effective as the whole. The UMF took its birth at a crucial period of Assam's history when it could render yeoman service to the minorities, the religious in particular. Dasgupta came in much later, but this exit bow is bound to alter the qualitative character of the opposition even if not also the quantitative aspect. To that extent the Opposition in Assam is bound to be weaker in years to come. And, as for the coming election, whose gain would this loss come to mean in the AGP and the Congress(I) fight for power is difficult to forecast at the moment with any pretence to accuracy. It is more probable that the Congress(I) would be the more apparent beneficiary and it is not unlikely that the national party may have its finger in the pie more in the evolving trends in the UMF rather than in the AGP.

### 3 killed in copter crash near Kohima

Three people were killed and as many injured when a helicopter crashed at Merema village, four km from here today official sources said.

The helicopter was carrying passengers from Dimapur to Kohima. The injured were admitted to hospital. The chopper, owned by Helicopter Corporation of India, was hired by the Nagaland Government for passenger service between Kohima and other important towns in the state.

# Measuring the success of a government

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

The general perception is that success is about achieving wealth, respect and fame. Strayer University of Washington DC in an attempt to readdress success has put it this way, "Happiness derived from good relationships, and achieving personal goals". As individuals whether or not we are successful depends on how we define success based on what we value the most in our life. It can be spiritual, emotional and material. But one proverb says, "the greatest happiness comes from making others happy". According to one dictionary, success is defined as an event that accomplishes its intended purpose and to be successful refers to a situation that is achieved with favorable or pleasant outcome and prosperity.

Becoming successful is the coveted ambition and aspiration of every normal human being but to accomplish that purpose, there is a process that even illiterate chaps in the marketplace too are engaged in without realizing the processes involved. They knowingly or unknowingly do so in their effort to attain 'success' and well being in life. The process on the other hand as a medium is varied in nature and necessitated by the condition of life and work. To achieve success a person has to list out with clarity his/her roadmap towards that goal. Again this can be achieved by systematic prioritization of various activities to align with the objectives.

It cannot also be ruled out that many attribute their success to luck as the ultimate deciding factor of their fate. But those who have climbed the ladder of success have judiciously invested their efforts in that process diligently leaving no minute detail unattended. Few of those who have paved and shaped themselves to be outstanding have somehow attempted to share the secret of that success to enable others as well to benefit from their innovative activities. This reflects that human beings are social animals with rational relationships and that they are at

their best when they share.

History from around the world gives remarkable accounts of numerous individuals whose contribution to the well being of humanity in general is tremendous. But on closer look at the treasure of their personal cache, they possess no assets or inheritance as a reward for their outstanding and extraordinary capability, except a renowned legacy. One such personality was the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi who did not own a single rupee yet every Indian currency bears his image. His effort and struggle to be successful culminated into mass and nationwide achievement of liberty and well being. Similar to this non-materialistic lifestyle is that of our former president, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam whose successful career is our nation's success. Locally and indigenously, there are many generous men and women whose sacrifices and hard work within their own family has translated into the success and the achievements of those close to them. Seen from this perspective the definition of success should also be seen from the applicability and productivity aspect.

Governance by its very name is to ensure that there is a smooth conduct of events and activities where the greatest good can be experienced by the largest number of people. In fact the purpose of this article is basically on the need to measure the string of successful achievements from a stable government. Does stability of a government itself translate into good governance? To continuously remain in office for six years is a remarkable achievement for the incumbent Chief Minister Dr Mukul Sangma. The only other incumbent was (late) Capt W.A. Sangma who was also in office as CM for over six years. While the MUA -II Government has already completed three years the credit for this uninterrupted political stability goes to the CM himself

for his ability to keep his party men intact even though some outrageous aspirants may appear here and there. But having said that, should this achievement become a personal success or should this opportunity be translated into a channel that will endorse and guarantee the state's prosperity and development? The road for the future and the distinctive blueprint for economic development should be the bottom-line of governance. While the state's economy as we have seen and heard from various sources is on the downward trend, it seems there is no alternative to substitute income and revenue generation the loss of which was perpetrated by NGT's intervention on coal mining and other allied environmental issues.

So how do we gauge a successful government or governance here? Several decades have passed with many governments in the state, yet not a single success story can be formulated or good practices can be replicated except rules and regulation that make people worried like the Tenancy Bill, confrontation with District Councils, etc. whereas corruption, nepotism, open dereliction of duty and wastage are on the rampage. It is pathetic for our small state if this situation still persists and continues for many more years.

As it appears today, to be in power and to run the government is only to meddle with the financial affairs of the state by manipulating the allocation of funds to various departments depending on personal choice. Is this the correct way to think? There is a sharp contrast between governance in our state and other industrialized states like Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala and others on the basis of generating resources both human and capital. The challenges of governance in these states are to some extent appropriated by the people despite the affluent caste and community hurdles.

When the CM, Mukul Sangma says that if a better

replacement can be found he is ready to make way for that person, he is making a banal statement. Our CM should capitalize on the opportunities in Meghalaya instead of spending time looking for a potential and better replacement because as of now it appears irrelevant. This statement on the other hand is like an insult to most of his predecessors and a challenge for those who aspire to be. His assertion in this context could imply that a better replacement is a person who can keep his party colleagues intact. History itself has proved that there cannot be any collective and united government in our state except when all MLAs are from the same family having one or two close friend as adopted members.

In most of the cases, our government accountability before the electorates is substituted by pressure groups' agitation and propaganda. A responsible government should clearly demarcate issues pertaining to development and political confrontation and to decisively pursue the former with determination. Merely relying on situations and blaming the opponents for all the mess is another technique designed and mutually promoted in order to kill time and keep those in advantageous position one step ahead. If the Chief Minister feels lucky because of the absence of a better replacement then he should translate this situation into making the state prosperous and come to terms with issues confronting development. The CM should prove his efficiency and determination to deliver effective governance since the time is already late for any replacement even if there is one.

There is a need to reinvent the concept of success as far as governance and administration is concerned. Just by completing the full term in office and disposing all expenditures within the financial year cannot be termed as success unless that action results in the generation of resources and assets beneficial for the people and the state now and in the future.

## 'If you are not with us, you are against us'

By Kalvakuntla Kavitha

After taking part in the recently concluded 1st half of the Budget Session of the Parliament, where the members of the house were subjected to lectures on Nationalism from my esteemed colleagues from the BJP coupled with the diatribe of "In your Face" nationalism as espoused by mainstream news anchors, I suddenly made me ponder, as to whether even a normal person like me is a 'national' or an 'anti-national'. The specific narrative of Nationalism as being played out by the ruling party and glorified and promoted as the nationalistic line by primetime news anchors, to me signals a disturbing trend. The older generation would do well to recall the Mc Carthyist era in the United States or in recent times Former US President George Bush's quote "If you are not with us, you are against us" during the heydays of the War on Terror where attempts were made in the public consciousness to determine on whose side a person was. In similar ways, the nationalists have decided that chanting 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' or 'Jai Hind' as the benchmark of patriotism now. The recent Parliament session reminded me of our typical school days where a bully would taunt the lesser mortals to praise him or say something like 'Jai Hind', and one person gathers the courage to say that come what may, he won't say it and then the entire bully's gang would gang up against the lone errant boy and start a vitriolic rant. Imagine this being played out day in and day out in the great portals of our democracy that is in the Parliament itself. It is only when we witness instances like these that we feel how true was Albert Einstein when he said "Nationalism is an infantile thing. It is the measles of mankind."

I certainly believe that we are witnessing dissent being labeled as anti-national and as former US President Eisenhower had once remarked "honest dissent being characterized as disloyal subversion". The problem is compounded, when leaders like Arun Jaitley who is also known to be one of the saner voices in the BJP had remarked that in the ideological war, the BJP has won the first round as people who raised anti-India slogans till now have been forced to say "Jai Hind, if not Bharat Mata ki jai".

I strongly feel that the Government, instead of thrusting its own version of nationalism should take concrete steps to dispel the typical stereotyped notions that are prevalent even now in this day and age also. For example, anything and everything down south are clubbed together as a Madrasi, or the entire North East termed as Nepali etc without realizing that there are far too many variations of ethnicities and cultures amongst them.

In this regard, the Prime Minister's repeated visits to the North Eastern Region and especially taking part in the Annual Hornbill Festival in Nagaland is a welcome and refreshing move. However, with regard to the North East, apart from the symbolisms, the Central Government has to look into the status of various projects that had been announced since 2014 and their current stages of implementation at the ground level. I firmly believe that 3 most important issues need to be addressed concretely so that our brothers and sisters from the North Eastern Region feel at home in their own country.

First, a lot of emphasis should be given on promoting greater awareness and respect for the diversities in the cultures that are currently there within the seven north eastern states and people in other parts of India, should be made aware of that also. Secondly, the Centre and the North Eastern States should work in unison and harmony to bring all round development in the region. Infrastructure development be it the roads, railways and airports are urgently required so that tourism potential and trade potential of the region can be enhanced. For example, the projected requirement for the North Eastern Industrial Investment and Promotion Policy scheme for 2016-17 was estimated to be 632 crores but only 172 crores have been allocated which is not enough for the 7 states at all.

Thirdly more should be done at the political level to make the respective State Governments and elected representatives feel that they are an integral part of this country too. The decision to sign the peace accord with the insurgent groups in Nagaland, without consulting the Chief Minister of that state or for that matter the CM's of the neighbouring states, or the unwillingness of the Finance Ministry to allocate the Rs 15,000 crore of unspent money from the Consolidated Fund of India to the DoNER Ministry for development in the North Eastern states are examples to show that with regard to co-operative federalism there is a lot of difference between preaching and practicing in reality.

Having had the personal example of playing a crucial part in leading the peaceful struggle for the formation of our State of Telangana and having personally been branded a dissident at some stage in my life, I am reminded of former Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel who was a writer, a philosopher and a former dissident too when he said, "You do not become a 'dissident' just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career. You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of the society"

I hope that the government of the day would listen to the genuine voices and aspirations of the people from all parts of the country and instead of thrusting the BJP's views on nationalism on all sections they should attempt, to carry along the people and make them feel genuinely welcome and wanted in our diverse nation as per the rights enshrined in our great Constitution and as Sarojini Naidu had mentioned "We want deeper sincerity of motive, a greater courage in speech and earnestness in action" and I truly look forward to that day when it happens.

(Kalvakuntla Kavitha is a Member of Parliament - Lok Sabha from Nizamabad representing the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) party. (twitter:@raokavitha; facebook:www.facebook.com/KavithaKalvakuntla)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Controversial Nongstoin - Mawthabah Road

Editor,

The news for and against construction of the proposed two lane 61 odd km Nongstoin-Mawthabah road joining West and South West Khasi Hills, has been appearing quite frequently in both print and electronic media of Meghalaya. The reasons put forth by those who are against it is that it will facilitate Uranium mining, which they are deadly against for fear of radiation. Those who are in favour state clearly that the road is for development and will provide easier and faster communication to people inhabiting the most neglected areas besides boosting their agricultural and other economic activities. They also say that the road will provide a life-link to the district headquarters of Nongstoin, Mawkyrat and the state capital, Shillong besides, reaching out to the sick and the suffering in these headquarters.

Starting from Nongstoin town, this road, if constructed, will pass through Nongjyllieh, Kynroh, Nongkynjang, Nonglwai, Mawpon, Sasniang, Pombriew, Domshrah, Laitjynrai, Ranglang, Nongbah,

Sohphekhlyliang, Ngundilang, Myriem, Laitdiloil, Umdohlung, Mawpat, Wabhkaji, Nongtnger, Domiasiat, Nongbah Jynrin to reach Mawthabah. It is a fact that if completed, the proposed two lane main link road will provide better lifeline not only to the people inhabiting the above-mentioned villages but to more than 200 other villages having a combined population of approximately 80,000 who belong to Nongstoin, Nobosohphoh, Maharam and Langrin Syiemships (Elakas). I can foresee that many houses, buildings, shops, godowns, gardens, paddy fields, community halls, churches etc will be affected by construction of the road. But that can be taken care of by adequate compensation which ought to be paid to those affected by the road construction project.

Having travelled extensively on foot as well as by vehicles throughout the length and breadth of different villages of the sector to be covered by the proposed road, I can vouch that the areas have been forsaken since the Assam time and even after Meghalaya attained statehood. Therefore, the urgent need for good road connectivity to these areas is urgent as it will ease their long pending communication problems. Till date people have to walk on foot for long distances to reach the MP road which is the only ex-

isting motorable road today in the areas though it is in very dilapidated condition. One can very well imagine what hardships the rural people of the areas have to endure in the absence of good roads. I, therefore, am in favour of immediate construction of the road as it will provide better and faster transportation of passengers and goods besides countless benefits and blessings that will follow thereafter. The need for the road far outweighs other unnecessary obstacles.

Road linkages are integral to development and who does not want development. To those who are against construction of the proposed road link for fear of Uranium mining, I would only say that there is nothing wrong in opposing Uranium mining but do not obstruct development of the people. Let the road be completed first and if there are signs of uranium mining the opposition to it can carry on. Moreover, I am certain that those who oppose construction of the road will utilize it more often and will also stand to benefit much more after its completion than those who are in favour. I also do not see any fear at all if Uranium is mined with full-proof safety measures as prescribed by IAEA and also by AERB. Besides, after mining the uranium ore it will only be processed up to the yellow cake stage.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marweil,  
Shillong-2.

### Selective criticism

Editor,

Apropos the letter by Riskhem Lyngdoh (ST April 16, 2016) where the writer has pointed fingers at leaders of Seng Khasi Mawsynram unit and Hinduism as a whole as trying to destabilize the harmony of this region, I would like to point out that Seng Khasi Mawsynram had only objected to the inclusion of a particular chapter in the MBOSE syllabus which they felt is detrimental to their religious faith. They are not influenced by any other religious organization. Niam Khasi is an indigenous religious faith which has its own views and opinions. It is not a saffron organization but has maintained its own identity and culture for years. Let us not forget that our greatest threat is now ISIS and we should remain united. What ISIS is doing with other religious faiths in Syria, Iraq is a serious warning for all of us. Obama and the West are not sincere about crushing the ISIS. The reason is oil! If ISIS is not crushed then it will eat up Macedonia, Turkey and other small colonies, experts say. Russia is serious about fighting ISIS but Obama is not endorsing it. Where is the ISIS procuring its fleet of vehicles, arms and ammunitions? India has a vital role in this regard to combat the challenges of ISIS and we should remain

united, otherwise the future is critical. ISIS has threatened India and we see how the youths of different countries including India are lured by ISIS. We know Boko Haram kidnapped hundreds of

school girls, burnt alive children etc but UNO and Obama did nothing. So why the selective criticism?  
Yours etc.,  
Anjan Kr Das,  
Shillong-6

*"The happiness of a man in this life does not consist in the absence but in the mastery of his passions."*

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 254 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2016

### The Afghan instrumentality

FOREIGN Secretaries of India and Pakistan met on the margins of the Heart of Asia Conference on Afghanistan. The foreign secretaries had stopped meeting after the Pathankot terror attack. Later, a Pakistani joint investigation team came to India to investigate the Pathankot attack. But confusion followed. The Pakistani High Commissioner said that bilateral talks had been suspended though the Pakistan foreign minister insisted that both sides were working on the modalities of talks. Inside Pakistan, the civilian government in Islamabad and the army in Rawalpindi were not in agreement on India. It is possible that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Narendra Modi who have got closer are in favour of the dialogue process. But the Pakistani army chief, Rahil Sharif has a greater say in Pakistan's India politics. The two Sharifs have also been fighting over the Panama papers.

The foreign secretaries meet has to be put in proper perspective. It may not indicate the possibility of resumption of dialogue but it is a point of contact. India should insist on a reciprocal visit. It means that an Indian investigation team should go to Pakistan following the Pakistani visit to Pathankot. The conference on Afghanistan should be built on trust. India and Pakistan should realize that they are both stakeholders of the same nature in peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan. So far attitudes of India and Pakistan to the conflict between the Taliban and the Kabul government have not been altogether friendly. Cooperation between the two countries is of great importance. Peace in Afghanistan will improve the security situation in South Asia.

## LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### Drug To Reduce memory deficiency

A substance that stimulates brain cells has partly reversed a memory deficit in aged rats, suggesting that similar drugs might help treat Alzheimer's disease and other neurological disorders. Swedish researchers report.

Infusions of "nerve growth factor" into the rats' brains also partly reversed age-related shriveling of some brain cells, researchers said. The effect on age-related deficits suggests the substances may one day help treat such disorders as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, said Ander Bjorklund of the University of Lund in Sweden. In a Telephone interview Mr Bjorklund cautioned that the rats did not have Alzheimer's disease and that the link is "only by analog."

Nerve growth factor stimulates growth of nerve cells and helps them survive after injury. It appears to be one of a family of similar substances produced in the body, Bjorklund said.

### Urban areas development scheme in Assam

The Assam Government has earmarked Rs. 2.4 crores for development of various urban areas of the State.

An official report here said it has stressed on the development of Diphu and Haflong, the district headquarter of Karbianglong and North Cachar Hill Districts respectively, under the centrally sponsored integrated development of small and medium towns schemes with fifty per cent Central assistance.

Rs. 5 lakhs has been allotted for Diphu in the current year with a matching share from the Centre while for Halfong Rs. 3 lakhs has been sanctioned and work was in

progress the report said. Under the programme for assistance to local bodies some urban development scheme had been proposed in the two hill districts and Rs. 15 lakhs earmarked in the current year. Of this Rs. 3 lakh has been taken in the state it said.

The report said that Nagaon, Karimganj, Sibsagar and Bongaigaon towns of the State have also been taken up under the integrated development of small and medium towns.

### Bandh affects life in Assam Hill Districts

Guwahati : Life was affected today in Assam's two hill districts Karbianglong and North Cachar following a 36-hour bandh by the Autonomous State Demand Committee, official reports received here said.

The bandh however evoked a partial response. Through train services were withdrawn in the two districts.

The Government offices remained open though the attendance was thin. Business establishments were closed in some areas and vehicular traffic went off the road. No untoward incident has been reported so far. In all 16 supporters were, however, arrested at Haflong, the headquarters of North Cachar, for forcing observance of the bandh, the reports said.

The bandh supporters took out a procession at Diphu in Karbi Anglong district and submitted a memorandum to the authorities to press for their demand for creation of an autonomous state with the two districts.

# Tura by-poll: A two way contest

By Albert Thyriang

It will be Conrad K Sangma versus Dikkanchi D Shira for the Tura Lok Sabha by-poll schedule to be held on May 16 next. Yes it will be late PA Sangma's son versus the Chief Minister's wife. The BJP and GNC may put up candidates but they will be minor players. Independents may also join the bandwagon but the contest will be between the NPP and the Congress. Everything will be at stake for both the parties. For the NPP it will be a matter of relevance and survival. For the Congress it will be the biggest coup if it wrests the seat that the late PA Sangma had made his own for almost four decades.

At the moment it seems the junior Sangma is going to walk away with the winner's trophy. It looks as if he is going to fill in the big shoes of his father. He is going to represent Garo Hills in Lok Sabha in place of the famed former Lok Sabha Speaker. He expects an easy win. Four factors should work in favour of the junior Sangma.

On merit Conrad is widely considered a better bet. Political observers see him as capable and intelligent. Way back on July 6, 2012 in her article, "Topsy-turvy politics and the reinvention of Sangma", renowned columnist, Patricia Mukhim observed that the Wharton Business School educated Conrad Sangma, "is an excellent young man with fine qualities of head and heart. Above all he is intelligent... And I know that Meghalaya needs young blood and Conrad Sangma is that person who understands governance and other ideas of statecraft. Let's face facts; Conrad is the only guy at the moment who can give Dr Mukul Sangma a run for his money if there was a competition involving intellectual callisthenics." Recently while paying tribute to PA Sangma, she writes,

"I think he (Conrad) should and he must... he has what it takes to lead Meghalaya and the North East and to prove to this country that tribals have come into their own." The fact that he was elected president of NPP unopposed after the sudden demise of his father speaks volumes about his capabilities.

Conrad has had some good experience. He was a legislator once, representing Selsella constituency during which tenure he became the state's youngest finance minister at 30 in 2008. Later when the Donkpar Roy-led Meghalaya Progressive Alliance (MPA) government fell due to the Congress defection engineering works that led to the formation of government of the Hand party under the leadership of DD Lapang, he was chosen as Leader of the Opposition. The experience should serve the young politician well.

Conrad's name resonates with young people. This is a huge advantage for the 'Young Turk'. The youths of Garo Hills who constitute more than 30 per cent of the total voters might identify themselves with the 1977 born, 39 year old young gun seen to be a dynamic and vibrant leader. Accused to be too much under the shadow of his dad, now he has the opportunity to bloom, though invoking his father's legacy, of course. That brings us to the next important point.

Sympathy will play a big part in the performance of the former Lok Sabha Speaker's youngest son. Even his opponents are fully aware of this fact and will be weary of it. Sympathy has worked elsewhere and might work here too. Conrad and the NPP will make the most of the name and fame of the iconic and legendary PA Sangma. The people of Garo Hills had

never let their man down. Over forty years the voters made him victorious in all political battles. From now on posters and banners will be on display, speeches will be made invoking his name, narrating his inspiring life and listing his achievements. Appeals to voters will be made to vote for his son to fulfill the dreams and plans of the departed father. Adokgre village where Conrad kicked off his campaign on May 25 saw it all. An overwhelming positive response could be expected.

What about Dikkanchi D Shira? Not much is known about her except that she is the wife of the Chief Minister and MLA from Mahendraganj in South West Garo Hills. She is a 1988 graduate from NEHU. If websites information is correct she is the registered director of at least nine firms, a successful business woman with enviable movable and immovable assets. Recently she was seen inaugurating a suspended bridge along with her husband.

Will she have a chance? Why not? What are her strengths? A couple of them are worth considering! She is the wife of the Chief Minister after all. Dr. Mukul is going to campaign extensively for his better half. The fight will be his as much as hers. Remember in 2014 when he aggressively campaigned for Daryl William Cheran Momin? The 'David' Daryl almost pull off an upset win against the 'Goliath' PA Sangma. The novice lost to the veteran by just 40,000 votes. All because of Dr. Mukul Sangma! The CM knows the huge implication of this by-election. Victory will make him the undisputed Congress leader not only in Garo Hills but in the state. 10 Janpath will be mighty pleased with him and will certainly reward him big. His leadership will no more be questioned and

the demand for change of the same will disappear into thin air. Aspiring alternatives will go into hiding. A loss on the other hand will adversely affect his leadership. His style of leadership too will come under fresh scanners and the demand to replace him will get shriller and louder. So the CM is going to do whatever it takes to capture the Tura seat and leave the NPP in deep crisis.

Dikkanchi has another unmatched advantage. She is fighting on a Congress ticket. The Congress has 13 MLAs from Garo Hills plus independents who are supporting the Congress Government in the state. Reportedly there are 18 MLAs (out of 21) in the Congress camp. If all of them ensure that the congress candidate win in their respective constituencies then Dikkanchi will be on her way to Delhi come 19th of May. The Congress has huge resources; much more than the NPP for sure. Money may not be the only factor but certainly one of the compelling motives for voting for a particular candidate not only in Garo Hills, but all over the country. Could it be a decisive or a deciding factor?

Who will the 587717 voters, 297236 male and 290481 female vote on the May 16, 2016? What will be the issues to ponder upon? Will it be corruption? Will it be law and order? Will it be development? Will it be unemployment? Will the above factors be meditated upon by the electorate? It is believed that a vast majority have made up their minds. Officially, however, they have three weeks to decide whether their finger will be the on hand or the book on the EVMs on the D-day. The winner could register a narrow win and so the loser will lose fighting. Will Conrad K Sangma or Dikkanchi D Shira be our next representative in the Lower House of the Indian Parliament or will someone else throw a surprise?

## TO THE EDITOR

### The Bell Also Tolls For Me.....

Editor,

It was, indubitably, tragic news to know that in this April, the 'cruellest month of the year' as a renowned writer, T.S. Eliot, has aptly called it, two fatal incidents of mushroom poisoning had occurred in two villages of East Khasi Hills, viz., at Mawsawa near Mawsynram and another at Nongpriang not far off from Sohra respectively. In Mawsawa village, however, the death toll reported in the wake of consuming wild mushroom, locally known as "Tit Kur Miau" mounted to six. It must have been acutely traumatic for the unfortunate household to have lost both the parents besides the other four near and dear ones at that.

It is a common at this time of the year preceding the onset of Monsoon to see wild mushrooms run riot in full bloom across the hilly terrains of Khasi Jaintia Hills and people young and old go mushroom plucking to supplement their food menu besides adding to the taste. Besides being loaded with health food vitamins and proteins, none can question the exotic delicacy of mushrooms but the same is also fraught with life

threatening dangers as it is generally believed that such edible fungi might conceal a concoction of deadly poison spewed out by venomous snakes or other equally lethal creatures, thereby making them hazardous for human consumption.

However, the popular belief, of so called serpent's poison viz-a-viz mushroom death might be scientifically proven if only the powers that be direct the nodal agencies like the ICAR, NEHU, Botanical Survey of India, NEIGRIHMS etc conduct a meticulous research on such mushrooms and submit a final analytical report on how to avoid selective types of mushrooms that contain toxic substances. Write-ups in local newspapers, especially the vernacular ones with pictures of poisonous variety could go a long way to avert such tragic incidents in future. Incidentally the Department of Agriculture, Meghalaya has long instituted an office at Upper Shillong called Mushroom Development Centre which is currently headed by a lady officer. The latter could have been shouldered with responsibility, besides her other official assignments, at convenient times to organize an outreach field programme to create awareness of the dos and don'ts of wild mushroom consumption. This would prevent such tragic incidents as mushroom poisoning. Given that for any casualty in any part of this

land of Hynniewtrep, the death toll does not sound for the ill-fated family only but it also tolls for me as so suggestively expressed by poet, John Donne, in one of his poems.

Statements cautioning people not to consume anything plucked from anywhere as reiterated by our Health Minister, A L Hek in the aftermath of the above mushroom poisoning incident does not instil much confidence among the public. What is called for is to ensure that result-oriented actions are taken, thus saving precious humans lives.

Yours etc.,  
Jerome Diongdoh,  
Shillong-2

### Untenable comments of DC Shillong

Editor,

Apropos the news items, "LPG crisis in parts of city" (ST April 21, 2016) and "Evasion of dues led to LPG crisis" (ST April 23, 2016) regarding shortages in supply of subsidized LPG cylinders by Longmie Gas Agency (LGA) and the show cause notice that the DC (Supply) asserted is being issued to this errant agency (ST April 26, 2016) is turning out to be a big farce. The biggest farce is that the DC (Supply) himself is not fully aware of the ground realities. His other officials in the Supply Department were also caught unawares as reported by your esteemed daily. The

latest version of the DC (Supply) only exposes the complete lack of awareness in the Department. In this game of passing the buck we the consumers are made to suffer.

Also, the latest statement of the LGA in-charge, Anita Gurung, is ridiculous. She attributes the LPG scarcity to Bihu celebrations and the Assam Assembly elections. If this is the reason then how come other gas agencies in Shillong have reported no such scarcity? Why is only LGA at the receiving end? This is a total farce. LGA has admitted that the agency caters to nearly 7500 consumers, which is too much for it to cater to. Greater Laban is a big area and none knows it better than the DC (Supply) himself that there is an urgent need for another agency to not only meet the demands but also to ensure timely delivery of cylinders. At present, the LGA is unable to deliver the quota of 12 subsidized cylinders in a year to its customers due to some scarcity or the other. Hope the authorities wake up and educate themselves of the real situation.

Yours etc.,  
A. Lyngdoh  
Shillong - 4

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.

# Tall political promises don't translate to good governance

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

The Prime Minister recently announced a drought action plan to fight acute famine across the country coupled with severe water scarcity aggravating the crisis, especially in Western and North-east India.

More intriguing is that even as announcements and promises are being made very little has actually been accomplished at the grass-root level wherein villagers remain in deep distress.

Remember, at the beginning of its tenure the NDA Government talked of bringing back black money stashed in foreign banks to the country to partly solve the resource crunch facing the economy. But no initiative in this direction has been made till date even as the Government remains silent on this matter.

An example: In the mid-day meal scheme the HRD Ministry owed States Rs 560 crores for 2015-16 as the allocation that year was only Rs 9000 crores compared to Rs 13,000 crores the previous year.

This is not all. The Ministry owes money to six States - Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir and Jharkhand - which were not paid the second installment of the mid-day meal scheme in the last financial year.

Besides, even this year the allocation of Rs 9700 crores will definitely be inadequate by over Rs 3000 crores more due to drought and water scarcity prevailing in many States.

Additionally, under pressure from the Supreme Court the Government announced release of Rs 12,930 crores of funds to States to take care of the job scheme backlog for 2015-16. Notwithstanding, the Union Rural Development Minister Birendra Singh's assertion that the previous fiscal had seen the highest MGNREGS expenditure at Rs 41,371 crores since inception, how does this year's allocation of Rs 38,500 crores being considered justified?

It is equally surprising why the Government ended the year with arrears of Rs 8000 crores which continue to pile up.

Recall, a few months ago the Union Finance Minister had asserted that the job scheme would be provided all financial support for its success. But the People's Action for Employment Generation questioned the Government's claim about record budgetary support for the scheme, claiming that it was facing a resource crunch which was quite justified.

True, while implementation of reforms in making the scheme more oriented to combat agrarian distress especially in 10 States is welcome the resources allocated for the plan looks quite meagre. More so, due to the backlog payment from the current year's allocation.

Add to this is the Government's recent decision to extend the entitlement from 100 to 150 days to households in drought-affected regions. Arguably, just imagine how much money would be necessary if last year's expenditure was above Rs 41,000 crores?

It is a no-brainer that water scarcity has been increasing due to virtually no rainfall in the first four months of 2016. In the current fiscal, States have proposed to construct 8.82 lakh farm ponds and increase the irrigation potential under MGNREGS. Here again the question arises how with such relatively low allocation the scheme would cater to the increased activities?

Meanwhile, the Congress has alleged that the NDA Government slashed funds for rural sector schemes even after declaring 246 districts in ten States drought hit in 2015-16, wherein the situation was particularly bad in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telengana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra

Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

It further accused the Modi Government of reducing funds for rural water supply from Rs 9700 crores in 2013-14 to Rs 5000 crores in the current year.

It is not known why this curtailment is being resorted to for welfare schemes which are targeted for the poor and the economically weaker sections. Remember, the Supreme Court too recently averred that even as subsidies for the poor are highlighted but various direct and indirect subsidies for the corporate sector as also their delay in loan payment have been overlooked.

However, it was interesting to hear Prime Minister Modi underscoring in his election campaign in poll-bound States, that just modernizing cities would not help as the majority of the country's population lived and worked in rural areas. Consequently, a dramatic improvement in their livelihood is necessary.

Towards that end he mentioned various initiatives and schemes launched by his Government. But unless there is strict monitoring and adequate resources are made available, the success of these schemes remains only in paper.

Moreover the tendency of Governments to overrule schemes of the previous administration and find faults in them need to be avoided as this gives a bad picture of the country.

This apart, it is quite apparent that the promises pertaining to education and health remain unfulfilled. While education in Government schools is in a pitiable condition, health facilities in primary health centres and sub-divisional hospitals are worse. No matter, State Governments' talk of improving facilities, the reality is indeed highly distressing, affecting the poor and the impoverished sections.

Undeniably, our politicians are always known to make tall promises, most of which remain unkept. As a major section of the rural population is uneducated, they mostly believe the promises but in recent years these have become suspect.

The present NDA Government is no exception and announced innumerable schemes and changed names of various plans to show they had started something new. As a result, the welfare schemes, especially the job scheme started by the UPA and which has been heralded the world over has been affected due to lack of funds.

Clearly, only talking about development initiatives and glorifying a few things that a Government has done is not enough. There has to be statistical evaluation of the work done by an Administration in its five-year tenure and should be available on the net for public viewing.

There is also need to evolve some mechanism to make Parties accountable for the promises they make to woo voters or enhance their social image. A system has to be devised and it would be best if the judiciary takes up this responsibility.

In sum, the wide gap between tall promises and the lack of sincerity and efficiency in Government functioning needs to be improved for efficient implementation of various programmes and schemes. The allocation of funds for specific programmes should be decided not by bureaucrats but by independent experts under the aegis of the Niti Aayog and forwarded to the Government. This should be made public so that the Administration cannot take arbitrary decisions that have only political and no social implications. --- INFA

*"Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with."*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 255 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2016

### Woeful deaths

MUSHROOM poisoning regularly claims human lives in Meghalaya but beyond the initial shock there follows a calm acceptance. The Agriculture Department which has the wherewithal to create public awareness about which mushrooms are edible and which are poisonous has failed to do so. The Department should have come up with pamphlets and literature showing mushrooms that are endemic to Meghalaya and which of those must be avoided. Mushroom poisoning is usually the result of ingestion of wild mushrooms after misidentification of a toxic mushroom as an edible species. The most common reason for this misidentification is close resemblance in terms of colour and general morphology of the of the toxic mushrooms species with edible species.

Almost all tribes of the North East know their mushrooms and with the onset of spring and early monsoon after the first few showers, all kinds of mushrooms spring up in the forests. Some of them are very delicious; much more delicious than those grown under controlled conditions. It is not so much that people know the nutritional value of mushrooms as the fact that it adds taste to their food. For most village folks, mushrooms are a delicacy and a change from the usual boring menu. They cannot afford the cultivated variety which costs Rs 300 or more a kilogram. But little do they suspect that this harmless looking food would take their lives. However, telling people to stay away from mushrooms is equally futile. Hence the importance of educating them about the types of edible mushrooms! In addition, the edibility of mushrooms may depend on methods of preparation for cooking. Collectors also need to be well aware that edibility or toxicity of some species varies with geographic location.

While there are quite a variety of poisonous mushrooms, not all can cause death, although delay in reaching a hospital could be fatal. In Meghalaya the distance between villages and a health sub-centre and the non-availability of a doctor or an anti-venom medicine/injection could often be the cause of death than anything else. It is imperative that Government comes up with a pamphlet listing the poisonous mushrooms and also educating people on first aid measures, should they experience mushroom poisoning.

### LOOKING BACK

February 7, 1989

### 'Country is in volcanic situation'

CPI general secretary Mr C Rajeswara Rao said here today that the merger of two communist parties CPI and CPI(M) was "non-issue" particularly when the country was facing the worst crisis now. Mr Rao told newsmen that the country was now in a volcanic situation arousing out of casietism, communalism, religious bigotry linguism and growth of regional parties. The situation had reached such a pass that it was beyond Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi's capacity to manage. Even the Republic Day was boycotted in Jammu and Kashmir, he added.

He said that he did not like to enter into any political controversy before his party's fourteenth congress and avoided any criticism of the CPI(M). The CPI - Congress meeting scheduled to held here in the first week of next month after forty-one years, would discuss the current problems before the country. Mr Rao said his party in its draft political resolution had specifically stated that relations between the CPI and CPI(M) had improved in general. But still bigger issues concerning the country's unity, were to be discussed at the coming Congress. Mr Rao wanted to make this clear that the people of the country were more clever than the political leaders.

Asked whether the unity of left and democratic parties was the only alternative to

combat the current menace in the country, the CPI leader said. "It does not fall into a formula, what was the unity of parties and individuals opposed to communalism and religious bigotry to help bale out the country from its present crisis, he added.

### Two Mire/IPKF battalions to be withdrawn

Two more battalions of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) will be withdrawn from north east Sri Lanka in the next few days as part of a continuing process of their phased withdrawal from the island, Indian High Commission officials said today.

They said the withdrawal of the first battalion would begin tomorrow and the pull-out of both the battalions would be completed in next few years. Two IPKF battalions had been withdrawn in early January in response to a request by President Mr Ranasinghe Premadasa in line with his campaign pledge to get the entire IPKF withdrawn from the island. Mr Premadasa announced the fresh withdrawal at an election rally of his United National Party (UNI) in the northern Jaffna town yesterday. "I made some election promise and I am in the process of implementing them" he said.

# Appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries: A fraud on the Constitution

By Manas Chaudhuri

The contentious issue of Parliamentary Secretaries has become live again. A PIL has been admitted in the Meghalaya High Court and is slated for hearing on 4th May next. One of the live-wire regional parties—HSPDP—recently impressed upon the Governor to dispense with the posts. The principal opposition party UDP is also on the same page with HSPDP. Besides, CSWO, an active vigilante group, too has lent its voice against the system which foists a fraud on our Constitution. Quite understandably mum is the word from the ruling Congress which first resorted to appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries in 2004 when D D Lapang was the Chief Minister following downsizing of council of ministers to 12 in the House of 60. This was necessitated with the Constitution (91st Amendment Act) 2003 which put a cap on the size of the ministry. Lapang cabinet, prior to 2004, enjoyed a jumbo sized ministry with as large as 39 Ministers!

There can be no two opinions that the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries is a political subterfuge to dodge the Constitution. The idea is that since every MLA can no longer be accommodated in the cabinet, the provision was made for Parliamentary Secretaries to keep the non-ministers' flock happy with loaves and fishes. Each Parliamentary Secretary enjoys the status, pay and perks as much as a Minister. In reality, they receive an assured sum of Rs 1,03,750 every month. Besides, there are variable allowances which make the pay packet quite hefty. Then there is an allotted vehicle, a government accommodation and other paraphernalia. They have an allotted chamber in the secretariat backed by support staff. All these, practically for no work. For, the Parliamentary Secretaries re-

ceive no files, they are seldom consulted by ministers or are required to assist ministers in any manner.

### Strange response

In June 2006, when I had first raised the issue in the Assembly, I got a virtual rebuff. When I said that the Government was wasting its scarce resources on "unproductive" expenses on Parliamentary Secretaries all hell broke loose. There was instant objection from the treasury bench. I recall my good friend R G Lyngdoh raised his objection to the use of the term "unproductive" and demanded that the word be expunged. I stood my ground saying that these political appointees were a liability for the state exchequer. I told the government that it was living beyond its means since 78% of the government expenses were met from Central resources and the remaining 22% from the State's own. I also dared the Government to submit records of the files put up to the Parliamentary Secretaries. Obviously, such utterances could not have pleased the ruling side which had its own political priorities rather than sparing a thought on thoughtful use of resources.

Next morning when the House resumed session, the then Deputy Speaker P W Muktieh, who was in the chair, made a stunning ruling. He said the word "unproductive" used by me for the Parliamentary Secretaries is expunged. When I queried whether the word was an unparliamentary one, the presiding simply replied that he had upheld the submission of Parliamentary Secretary R L Tariang that the use of the expression "unproductive" reflected on him. (ST June 28, 2006). There was no explanation offered how it reflected on an individual member. Indeed, it was politically incorrect to raise the issue of appointment of

Parliamentary Secretaries which was driven by political expediency!

When we are in government in 2008, a number of Parliamentary Secretaries were appointed by the multi-party ragtag non-Congress coalition. Frankly, it did not please me a wee bit. As an Independent MLA, who is not in a position to pull his political weight, I suppose there was little room for me to crib. The sitting NPP MLA James Sangma who was then first-time MLA, was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Home and Education. As Minister in-charge Higher & Technical Education I made it a point to keep him in the loop. From time to time, I consulted him on issues relating Garo Hills, put up a few files for his views on important policy matters and took him along for my official tours to the outlying areas. That's the best I could do. As I look back, I feel it is always possible to make the parliamentary secretaries "productive". I suppose it's for the concerned minister to take a call.

I also recall that shortly after the Assembly session in 2006, a public spirited person Kyrshan War had filed a PIL in the High Court. Ten years down the line, there is no clue as to the fate of the PIL. Neither the litigation pressed for a verdict nor the Court thought it fit for its disposal.

### Ultra vires to Constitution

Meghalaya is not alone in this predicament. Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi have appointed Parliamentary Secretaries at one point of time or the other. The issue has meanwhile been examined by three High Courts and each one of them have ruled in favour of doing away with these posts.

In 2006, Himachal Pradesh High Court quashed the appointment of Chief Parliamentary Secretaries and Parliamentary

Secretaries. The Court described them as "usurpers of public office". The Court reminded the Himachal Pradesh Government that Article 164(A) was inserted in the Constitution primarily to put a check on misuse and drainage of public money and to put a ban on over-sized cabinet. Similarly in 2009, the Bombay High Court ruled that the Parliamentary Secretaries of the rank and status of a cabinet minister is in violation of Article 164(1A) of the Constitution and set aside appointment of two Parliamentary Secretaries. The Calcutta High Court on June 2 last year quashed the appointment of 24 Parliamentary Secretaries in West Bengal dubbing it as unconstitutional. The High Court ruled that 7th Schedule (Article 246) demarcates Union, State and Concurrent lists. The State Government cannot create constitutional posts which is ultra vires to the Constitution. I am pretty much sure that Meghalaya High Court is abreast of these verdicts.

Last year when the AAP Government in Delhi appointed 23 Parliamentary Secretaries, predictably both Congress and BJP found it politically expedient to launch a tirade against Arvind Kejriwal. That's double standard, to say the least. How could Congress and BJP conveniently forget the old adage that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others. Isn't BJP guilty of appointing Political Secretaries in Arunachal after the dramatic political coup? The least said about Congress the better. What the two national parties did not bargain for is that unlike in other States the Parliamentary Secretaries in Delhi receive no pay and allowances. Whether this will pass the test of law is a moot point.

Happily for me, today the issue has come a full circle. Palpably there is a wider appreciation of the need for dispensing with these unproductive posts. The writing on the wall is clear.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Why this land alienation?

Editor,

It surprised me to discover that there is a big plot of land opposite NEIGHMS which has been acquired by Nagaland Government in view of building a Nagaland Guest House and a little further ahead at Mawkasiang, another big plot of land has been acquired by the Mizoram Government for a Mizoram Guest House. As far as I know both states already have their guest houses in Shillong. Nagaland House is in Nongrim Hills and Mizoram House is located in Risa Colony. The question many are asking is why should in a small state like Meghalaya, these states need two guest houses each? In my knowledge, a State Guest House is meant for maintaining an inter-state diplomatic relationship. That is the reason why in every State guest house there is a liaison officer whose principal task is to maintain and promote diplomatic relationships between his state and the state in which the house is situated. Such houses also serve as official guest houses for their state officials who come on government assignments and by way of extended service, they can also provide accommodation to persons in need, coming from their states. This brings me to a conclusion that these two State Governments are acquiring our land more than they actually need. This is precisely why alienation of the Khasi people's land which should be halted at

the earliest as it endangers the survival of a community. According to an RTI obtained and analyzed by RAIOT, there are 60 Government organizations, 23 non tribal private companies/organizations and 38 non tribal individuals who have applied for land acquisition in the NST (New Shillong Township) area. I wonder what was the follow-up of that RTI or has it been hushed up? What are those NGOs doing about it? The way these non-local institutions are coming up, it looks like this issue has not been followed up. Tribal land should be protected at all cost and alienation of land should only be considered for educational and development purposes (that too with proper contracts to benefit the local people) and not for making guest houses or private enterprises of the non-locals. The much needed amendment to the Meghalaya Land Acquisition Act of 1971, has not yet been effected till today. What is the Government doing about this? If the government is intent on protecting the future of our people, then the needed amendment must be effected at the earliest. I hope the village leaders of those concerned villages will take up this matter with due seriousness before it is too late.

Yours etc.,  
Meba Aihun Blah,  
Shillong -6

with the contemptible services that MeECL is rendering to the area. There are at least five power cuts almost every day, some of which lasts for hours together. When inquiries are made as to why there is power cut, the most cited reason is that repair work is going on. One fails to understand what kind of materials the Corporation to necessitate repairs every single day!

We, the residents of Nongrah, Shillong would like to remind MeECL that we are living in the 21st century and so much of our lives depend on electricity. Our tolerance of its services is indeed almost at breaking point.

Yours etc.,  
Meba Aihun Blah,  
Shillong -6

### Arrogant SBI staff

Editor,  
Through your esteemed newspaper I wish to express my extreme distaste at the arrogant attitude displayed by the staff of SBI, Meghalaya Secretariat branch. This was my experience when I went to inquire about some discrepancies in my Loan Account for the month of April, 2016. Being a Govt employee, I together with all my colleagues usually get our salaries late in the month of April since this is the end of the financial year. To my utter surprise, the deduction for the month of April was made beyond the usual deduction. However, when I went to enquire from the staff of the said bank, they were casual and arrogant in their attitude and even after more than a week, did nothing about it but feigned ignorance and in-

stead blamed me for the late salary being credited for this month. Even the AGM refused to entertain my inquiries and told me to speak with the staff dealing with the Loan section and this particular staff also gave one pretext or the other and did not rectify the discrepancy. I therefore, urge upon the higher authorities in the SBI to look into the matter and take necessary measures to correct this attitude being displayed by their staff in dealing with the public otherwise I will be compelled to report this matter to the Banking Ombudsman with the name of the staff concerned.

Mark Khongwir,  
Via email

### Mushroom poisoning

Editor  
The unfortunate reports of mushroom poisoning have become quite frequent in Meghalaya and needs to be addressed seriously; the public need to be educated about the same. Mushrooms are predominantly Basidiomycetes fungi with elaborate vegetative and reproductive structures. Mushrooms are known to be rich in proteins, amino acids, fibers, vitamins and minerals and are hence extremely rich in nutrition. They constitute an important component of global nutraceutical and functional food industries and are commercially cultivated worldwide with annual turnover of several million dollars. Mushroom production has earned good dividends in terms of quality source of nutrition as well as financial success across

## BJP's learning curve in Kashmir NIT episode must wake up bhakts

By Amulya Ganguli

It is easy to imagine how the BJP would have reacted if a confrontation between students from the mainland and the locals in Srinagar's National Institute of Technology (NIT) had taken place when the Congress and the National Conference were in power in the state.

Hordes of saffron sympathisers would have descended on Srinagar to express their solidarity with the "nationalist" students, supporting their demand for raising the tricolour in the campus - in keeping with Smriti Irani's prescription for keeping the national flag flying all the time in the universities to instill patriotism - and permanently deploying the CRPF in the NIT.

The resultant tension in Kashmir and elsewhere in the country would have been grist to the saffron mill, strengthening - in the BJP's opinion - the party's hold on the Hindu voters in Jammu and in most of the other states, especially in northern and western India.

In reality, however, the party's reaction this month was the exact opposite. It detained the self-appointed stormy petrel of the saffron cause, Anupam Kher, when he arrived at Srinagar airport in order to stand by the "nationalist" students in their confrontation with the supposedly less than patriotic locals, and put him on the next flight back to Mumbai. The same treatment probably awaits the lawyer who beat up Kanhaiya Kumar at the Patiala House Court if he tries to emulate the Bollywood activist by trying to visit the NIT.

Such has been the fallout of the unavoidable responsibilities of power. Being in office and swearing an oath to treat as equals all citizens - nationalists and those unwilling to wear their loyalty on their sleeves - rule out partiality. In the process of bowing to the imperatives of a secular state which eschews theocracy, the BJP has had to curb its natural instinct to flaunt its nationalist creed which, in actual terms, reflects a pro-Hindu bias.

The party is aware that such dilution of its patriotic credentials can upset its core constituency of communal-minded Hindus and make them believe that the BJP is imitating the so-called "minority appeasement" tactics (LK Advani's contribution to the saffron lexicon) of the much-maligned Congress. But there is no alternative but to moderate, for sobriety and restraint are the hallmarks of democratic functioning. If the BJP wants to remain in the portals of power at the centre and in the states, it has to dispense with the aggressive pro-Hindu agenda which it followed when in the opposition.

As is known, there are still many in the party and in the other affiliates of the Sangh parivar who are unable to come to terms with the realities of being in office. Hence,

their diktats against eating beef or allowing the non-Hindus to have more than two children lest the rise in their numbers put the "Hindu daughters" at risk. Moreover, to put the seal on the BJP's nationalism, the hardliners also want everyone to chant, Bharat Mata ki Jai, with the threat of dire consequences if they demur.

Kashmir, however, has turned such ideas on their head. If the BJP has no option but to acquiesce in the temerity of the local students to cheer India's defeat in a cricket match, the reason is the realisation that the "children" (recalling Smriti Irani's description of Rohith Vemula, who committed suicide in Hyderabad central university, as a child) have to be handled with patience and understanding. Treating them as potential insurgents who have to be immediately curbed will turn them into genuine rebels.

It is a lesson of which Union home minister Rajnath Singh was oblivious when the "crisis" erupted in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) with the "children" there shouting anti-national slogans. So the minister directed his pet police officer, B.S. Bassi, to book them under the colonial-era sedition law.

The BJP has now understood that such heavy-handed action can be counter-productive. It has proved to be so even in the JNU with the student leaders of the university acquiring country-wide fame with their eloquence. If at least some of the BJP leaders had an academic background which made them aware of the non-conformism which prevails in the campuses on personal choices in dress, food and political ideas, they would have proceeded with caution in the JNU and the Hyderabad central university and not treat them as dens of extremism.

The NIT has been an eye-opener for the BJP. Even Subramanian Swamy has refrained from calling for its closure and resignation as he did with regard to the JNU. If sense can dawn even on mavericks, it is easy to understand how sobering a stint in power can be.

This is not the first time that the BJP has tried to be moderate. When Atal Behari Vajpayee found in 1996 that none of the "secular" parties was willing to support his government of 13 days, he announced that the BJP was putting in cold storage its plans for temple construction, scrapping Article 370 and introducing a uniform civil code. That exercise in bowing to pluralism is continuing in Srinagar. (IPA Service)

the world. However, on needs to note that there are two types of mushrooms-edible (that is suitable for human and animal consumption) and non-edible (toxic). In most developed nations as well as in big Indian cities, edible mushrooms are bought from certified commercial producers who maintain high quality and nutrition level of their mushroom products during production.

The problem becomes when consumers turn to wild mushrooms as source of nutrition in developed and under developed countries and misidentifying poisonous species of mushroom like different colorful species of Amanita (commonly known as toadstools) in place of edible species like Enoki mushrooms, Button mushrooms (Agricultus), Morchella etc. Various edible mushrooms are commercially grown around

the planet. Unknown wild mushrooms are always a source of potential danger as they are loaded with toxic chemicals as fungal chemical defense mechanism to avoid potential predators. The best practice to avoid mushroom poisoning is to avoid eating raw and cooked wild mushrooms with dubious identity as well as any colorful ones picked from local forests. The best practice that must be encouraged is to consume only commercially produced edible mushrooms.

Yours etc.,  
Saikat Kumar Basu  
Lethbridge AB Canada  
TIJ4B3

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.

*"Be careful about reading health books.  
You may die of a misprint."*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 256 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 2016

### Shillong comes of age, but how

SHILLONG quietly turned 150 years on April 28. There was no gala celebration, no birthday cake, no candles, no rock band or crooners to wish this city. Many don't even care to remember. It took Shillongites living away from this city to remind everyone on social media that their affectionate birth-place has crossed the sesquicentennial year. Much has been written by different people, over the years about how this little town came into being in 1866 as a small settlement of two square miles with a population of about a thousand people has had to bear the burden of rapid urbanization. Shillong's population in 2011 was 3.54 lakhs. We are now in 2016 and it is evident that the population has grown by at least a couple of lakhs. That there is no respect for this city is borne out by the fact that there is no single responsible agency to take accountability for the garbage disposal and sanitation system. The residents of the city moan and groan but have not been able to get their act together to ensure that a viable garbage management system is in place. The Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA) whose mandate it is to ensure that residential accommodations are constructed in a manner that suits the ambience and ecology of a hill station has failed miserably to carry out its mandate. Corruption and nepotism in the MUDA has resulted in the violation of building bye-laws and the raising of buildings that threaten to collapse in case a high intensity earthquake shakes the city. Most buildings are ugly concrete, shoe box structures whose owners don't care how they look so long as they can collect their monthly rent.

Two of the most important rivers – the Umkhrakh and Umshyrypi are encroached upon and have become victims of anthropogenic activities. These rivers are also repositories of the city's sewage and garbage. Attempts to clean up the rivers have failed as the efforts have not been backed up by adequate scientific preparations and finances. Both the rivers are now dead as they are heavily toxic. Resuscitating them would require a mammoth effort and expertise but it would also mean having the political will to tackle the encroachment. No Government thus far has had the courage of conviction to take the bull by the horns. Even the much vaunted Swacch Bharat campaign has failed to take off in Shillong. In this pitiable scenario the only tribute that the people of Shillong can pay to their city is to take a solemn oath to clean up their respective patches; reduce waste and put pressure on Government to ban plastics - the one evil that will eventually choke us all up or bury us under its weight. If every locality takes it upon itself to clean up the mess there is a chance that we will succeed. Every great change begins with a small step. Can the people of Shillong rise to the occasion?

## LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

In Garo Hills

### Money power upset HPU: Khongwir

The leader of the Opposition Mr S O Khongwir has attributed the recent Opposition debacle in the Garo Hills District Council election to superior money, material and muscle -power of the Congress(I). Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday he said that he was "surprised" at the results since his party's expectations were "high" in view of its fine showing last year.

Mr Khongwir, who is also the General Secretary of the HPU, alleged that the Congress(I) lavishly pumped in money to influence the voters. Besides its leaders had the access to Helicopter thus affording them superior communication means at their disposal. He said the HPU, on the other hand, had only four vehicles at its command. In most constituencies the party granted a paltry sum of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000. Immediately after the results were announced, Mr Khongwir said, he went round Garo Hills to gauge the causes of his parties routing. In course of ex-

change of views within the party workers, he was told that supporters of the Congress(I) told the voters the party to power, the Centre would stop funding District Council projects. This is really unfortunate, he commented.

However Mr Khongwir did not think that the Congress(I) victory was all that spectacular since the party had bagged 17 seats in 1983 District Council election compared to 19 this time. Asked whether the HPU was hamstrung because of the split in the party, Mr Khongwir said that some extent, Mr Purno Sangmas influence might have titled the balance somewhat. He does not think that B B Lyngdoh made any impression on the people. "The people are annoyed with him" he added. In this connection, he refuted Mr Lyngdoh reported statement in the press that he had not asked the Speaker to name his faction of the HPU as HPU(B).

# Do we need political dynasties in Meghalaya?

By Patricia Mukhim

Many may not agree with me when I raise the issue of why political dynasties in a democracy are a troubling dichotomy. In fact quite a few people I know, point to the United States where political power has been concentrated in a few families. But is that good for India? Or closer home for Meghalaya? That this is happening in a tribal society where the right to any public resources is not by virtue of one's birth but on merit, also tells us that we have imbibed many of what's wrong in the Indian mainstream society where political dynasties are now part of this country's political cosmos. Dynastic politics started with the Nehru-Gandhi family and it is but natural that Congress party men and women would choose to model their career paths on the first family of Indian politics.

Political scholars Levitsky and Way were the first to coin the concept of competitive authoritarianism. They define competitive authoritarianism as, "a regime wherein political elites operate under formal democratic institutions and election is the only way for leadership transition, but the incumbents have flexibility to manipulate the playing field for their electoral advantage." The crux of their argument is that while competition does exist and oppositional forces have an opportunity to replace the incumbent, but the playing field is unequal. The authors contend that one of the distinguishing features of competitive authoritarianism is unfair competition. The inequality of the playing field is marked by three factors: (1) the ability of the incumbent to exploit state institutions (2) special treatments that are directed to support the incumbent's advantage (3) subtle discrimination against the opposition's attempts to organize and compete.

The National Peoples' Party (NPP) candidate Conrad Sangma is a product of dynasty as much as Dr Mukul Sangma's wife Dikkanchi D Shira is. Anyone looking in from the outside would think that there are not enough faces in the politics of Garo Hills other than the Sangmas. Not that the Khasi Hills or Jaintia Hills are far behind. While Conrad Sangma will invoke his late father's legacy, Dikkanchi Shira's campaign will largely be led by her husband, r Mukul Sangma who will launch a frontal attack on the NPP's truck with the BJP.

One of the reasons why Narendra Modi was voted

in 2014 is because the voters were fed up of dynastic politics and its accumulation of powers. The Congress Party is known to have been behind many a scam and it does not take too much intelligent mind to know who the largest beneficiary of those scams are. Ironically, the more the scams, the firmer is the grip on the Congress Party by the dynasty. Well meaning leaders within the Congress Party don't have the gumption to defy Sonia Gandhi. Anyone daring to do that will be shown the door. There is just too much at stake for her. It is not easy to maintain a lifestyle where Rahul Gandhi can take off to foreign locales at the drop of a hat. Rahul Gandhi may kick up a storm about, "suit-boot ki sarkar," but does he not frequent some of the high end, plush hotels of this country and abroad where a gourmet cuisine is served upon being summoned? The double standards stink!

And then this country has the horror of seeing deal after defence deal where huge commissions were paid. And all of them with Italian links! Yet Congress lackeys continue to defend the dynasty. And because it's kosher for the dynasty to rule this country so it's fine for smaller satraps in the states to also follow suit. Now, state level leaders nurture pocket boroughs for their wives, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, et al. And now it is not just the Congress but other political parties that have started treating their constituencies like an heirloom.

Jonathan Zimmerman who teaches history and education at New York University, once said of the US, "We tell the world that we're a land of opportunity, where anyone can grow up to be the president. Then we limit ourselves to a handful of political dynasties." Zimmerman says this is not healthy for American democracy! Obama was a rare exception! He adds that politics and law are generally the sources of family wealth and professional identity and these families either are rich or soon become rich in Washington. This is exactly the opposite of what America needs today.

So what's wrong with political dynasties? First, we deprive others who might be capable of contesting and who could bring in fresh ideas. Second, there is concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few families, which is the antithesis of democracy. Thirdly, we

have seen that most politicians in our state are self-serving. While they have not been able to change the faces of their constituencies and constituents, they have certainly changed their family fortunes; so much so their children are now educated in America, the UK or Australia. How many non-politicians, non-bureaucrats and non-business people can do that? And how did the wealth accrue to each of these three categories of people? Is it not public money stealthily siphoned off in a well-oiled system? Show me one business person in Meghalaya who is a true entrepreneur and did not start as a Fair Price Shop Owner or wholesaler of food-grains or owned a coal mine (the most extractive and exploitative business)?

My simple question to the voters is: Does being part of a dynasty impart one with greater political wisdom or a higher level of achievement? The answer is a resounding, "No." Wisdom and talent are fortunately not genetically endowed. The environment plays a more dominant role. Parents who are geniuses don't necessarily produce a genius. Doctors don't beget doctors or sportspersons another sporting offspring! So political competence is not an inherited trait either!

Scanning several literature to understand the perils of dynastic politics I came across a study by Yoes C Kenawas (Arryman Fellow Research Paper, May 2015), titled, "The Rise of Political Dynasties in a Democratic Society." Kenawa finds that political dynasties are a stumbling block to democratic consolidation and erode the quality of democracy. Above all, dynastic politics is a source of corruption, a root cause of underdevelopment, and an obstacle to another reformist candidate's ability to occupy office. His studies reveal that the rise of political dynasties happen primarily because of the ability of the incumbent dynastic politician to create an "uneven playing field," by exploiting family networks and material wealth to help his/her family member/s to win office. Family networks are useful for politicians to exercise various forms of an informal, "menu of manipulation," such as vote buying, misappropriation of state financial resources and infrastructure, politicization of state institutions (mobilization of state apparatuses), and intimidation through thug groups. Additionally, unlike political dynasties in developed democracies that rely on family name, self-per-

petuation of political power by dynastic politicians in consolidating democracies like India relies more on their material wealth to win an election.

It is no secret that our politicians are in hot pursuit of material wealth the moment they are elected. Much of that wealth is accumulated through illicit funding mechanisms such as manipulating the state budget and receiving kick-backs from business. Whenever dynastic politicians lose their grip on territorial control, their ability to consolidate and expand their dynastic control diminishes. In short, dynastic politicians in a consolidating democracy may capture public office to create, strengthen, or expand their power base through a democratic process, i.e., election, but by exercising anti-democratic methods. Therefore, the capacity of a politician to create, consolidate, and expand his/her political dynasty depends on (1) the strength of the informal family network (2) the size of accumulated material wealth garnered by using his/her status as an incumbent. These two factors help dynastic politicians to create an arena of uneven competition that seriously hinders the opposition from capturing office both at the central and state level.

Why do elected politicians need to build a political dynasty? They do that in order to mitigate the risks that may occur during and/or after they step down from office, including legislative opposition during their tenure, possible defeat in the re-election campaign, and potential prosecution after leaving office. The last one is what many fear the most. In cases where holding office is an important source of illegal wealth or is used to defend business interests, dynastic capture of offices is strongly favored. Incumbents select family members to replace them in their position and/or to strengthen their power base primarily because family members are most trusted. Gibson calls this "boundary control."

We are seeing this being played out before our eyes in Meghalaya and at one point I thought the only brave guy who dared to stick his neck out was Rophul Syntang Marak. The guy has now backed out and we can guess why. This election is one to watch out for. Will money and extensive yet subtle use of the state machinery win the day or will people take a different view of the mid-term Tura Lok Sabha poll? May the best man/lady win! But in this situation how do you define 'best'?

## Tura Lok Sabha By-Poll: High stakes for Dr. Mukul Sangma

By Philip Marwein

I have gone through the article, "Tura By-Poll: A two way Contest" scripted by regular columnist, Albert Thymiang, (ST April 27 2016). This piece of analysis on 2-Tura Parliamentary Constituency By-Election provides a clear indication and direction as to which way the election winds will blow and who is likely to go to the Lok Sabha to represent the western sector of Meghalaya. It is indeed a fact that the main contest will be between Conrad K. Sangma of NPP and Dikkanchi Shira of INC. It is up to the 6, 22, 189 odd voters whom they would prefer to vote. However, I do not mean to belittle other candidates who may be in the fray.

On merit, comparing the two main contestants as individuals, whom would the people of Garo Hills place their confidence, on - Conrad Sangma or on Dikkanchi Shira? Opinion collected from a wide range of people outside Garo Hills suggests that Conrad Sangma has got more merit and would be a better choice than Dikkanchi Shira to go to the Lok Sabha. But that may not be so for the voters of Garo Hills. However, even in the Achik land individual merits may be one of the major factors in the Election. But during elections many camouflaging and distracting factors are at play which digress voters from clear cut consideration and the main issues. Both candidates have their own merits and demerits as well as pluses and minuses which the voters down there know very well. Who of the two has better public relations and communications skills with the common masses at the grass root level which Purno Sangma had? Who of the two can come down to the level of the common people, freely mix with them, identify themselves with them and share their good and bad times, be with them in sorrows and pain which late Purno Sangma did?

In the Tura Parliamentary constituency, MLAs are more in INC camp than in NPP whereas, MDCs are a bit more in NPP. Again, we do not know what kind of tune these representatives will play to voters during this election. We also cannot predict exactly whether the voters will dance to MLAs/MDCs tunes and obey their voices or not. Sympathy will also play quite a role in influencing the verdict. But whatever be the case, we cannot underestimate the people of Achik land who are known to be very conscious, intelligent and united when it comes to choosing their leader. Further, as experienced in the past, the turn-out of voters is less during M.P elections as compared to MLA elections. This election is held at the time when the people of Garo Hills, especially the Jhummas, are busy in the fields for cultivation. However, it all depends on the ability of the candidates, canvassers and party workers on motivating the voters to vote.

Here, I will not go into the various winning prospects of the candidates but I just want to point out only one pertinent fact. This By-Poll is the contest between Conrad K. Sangma and Dr. Mukul Sangma. The reason is because Dr. Mukul wants to take complete control all openings to Delhi and in the state. His wife, Dikkanchi Shira, may be contesting from the INC, yet it was only after his final say in the MPCC election Committee that her name was forwarded. The highest stakes of this By-Poll therefore, is for both Conrad and Dr. Mukul, not for Dikkanchi. It is their electoral tussle and it is a do or die battle, especially for Conrad to be relevant in the political arena. If Conrad wins then his future political prospects will be brighter and he will inherit the rich political legacy of his worthy father and NPP will survive in the near future. If Conrad loses then his political future is uncertain. If Dikkanchi wins then Dr. Mukul will become the undisputed leader of Garo Hills the status gained by (late) Capt. W.A.Sangma and Purno A. Sangma. Besides, none of the Congress bigwigs of Meghalaya will dare anymore to challenge his leadership and AICC may reward him abundantly. In fact, after the death of Purno Sangma, the undisputed leader of the Garo Hills ought to have been Dr. Mukul Sangma, at least people from other parts of Garo Hills think so.

Dr. Mukul has done quite well and is capable as CM during last six years of his tenure. But the people of Garo Hills, somehow till today, are a bit hesitant to place him in that status. Why and what is preventing them from recognising him as their undisputed leader? Only the people of Garo Hills know better. If Dikkanchi loses this contest she does not lose much, except finance, as she is already an MLA. For Dr. Mukul, apart from reputation, he stands to lose not much as he is already holding the reins of power as undisputed CM of Meghalaya.

With regard to issues during this election, the protracted law and order problems in Garo Hills, lack of development and youth unemployment during the last six years, are in the hearts and minds of the people. These will affect badly the polls prospects of the ruling INC there. But, perhaps, with political tactics and strategies combined with money power these issues may be relegated to the back burner. Dr. Mukul will leave no stone unturned and with his political acumen and genius the impossible may become possible. However, in the end, the wise decision of the Garo Hills' voters will have the last say to decide the candidates' political fate.

money? Moreover, they say that all are welcome but put restrictions. Now if a farmer needs to enquire something from NEC on Central schemes related to farming how can he get a pass to enter the office building to meet officials, which is so perplexing. Perhaps the officers at NEC should come out off their babu syndrome and be more open to public scrutiny.

Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Program Manager,  
BRMC Saipung Block

instituted an organization like North Eastern Council to deliver and assist States of the Northeast in different spheres of development. To be honest very few people know what is the actual role of the NEC in the Northeast and most importantly in our state. Recently I had gone to enquire about various schemes and programs from NEC only to be told by the security that only government officials could meet officers but not common people. It is surprising and ironic that an institution like the NEC which is supposed to be of service to the people of the region is suddenly out of bounds even to enquire and meet officials concerned. If a mammoth organization cannot be open to the public what is the point of spending tax payers

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

## TO THE EDITOR

### Fraudulent Khasi activists

Editor,

I write this letter on behalf of my childhood friend and his father residing in New Colony, Laitumkhrakh and belonging to a working-class (shop-keeper) Bengali community, who has been constantly harassed and bullied by so called "Khasi Activists" who are demanding "illegal tax". Ironically, these goons involved in such actions are not even genuine locals/Khasis but pretenders who claim to be members of "Khasi Students Union" and "Federation of Khasi Jaintia Garo Peoples" etc. They themselves originally come from a "Bengali background" and their very own parents are shop-keepers in Laitumkhrakh. It is really a shame to our whole Khasi, Jaintia and Garo community that we allow these parasites to take advantage of our culture, tradition and heritage when

they do not even know our value systems.

Here are a few points to apprise readers as to how these self-styled "Locals" and opportunistic maniacs proclaim themselves to be a "Khasi." Firstly they get married to a Khasi/Jaintia/Garo girl and proclaim to be a genuine local. Secondly they convert to Christianity and enjoy the platform of being a local. Let me educate these people that Christianity is a religion and not a department to certify one as a local tribal. Religion is open to all depending on the person's faith. The reason I mention Christianity is because after baptism one can change one's name from the original to some fancy English and Roman names.

As a well wisher of our state I humbly request all leaders of various pressure groups to kindly select your members responsibly. They should have a good educational background so that none can point fingers. They should be performing the duties allocated to them

whole heartedly. Those reading this letter who might want to test out its veracity can come to Laitumkhrakh on Sunday evenings from 6 pm onwards. You will find the goons in fancy two-wheelers and four-wheelers, ironically even without a proper income!

Yours etc.,  
Mewanshuwa Pariat,  
Shillong - 3

### Bad behavior of bus conductor

Editor,

Through your esteemed newspaper I wish to express my extreme distaste at the rude behavior of the bus conductor of STPS No MLO1 6204 bearing sticker no 307 which was on duty on April 22, 2016. I happened to travel from Rynjah that day and I boarded this bus which plies from Nongthymmai to Mothphran. Like other buses which stop at every

bus stand this bus too had stopped at every location, but to it halted for over 10 minutes at every station thereby frustrating the passengers. When they started raising their voices and asking why the bus had to stop so long at every station, the bus conductor shouted at the passengers instead and used indecent language at some of the passengers. This is a very shameful act. We are not free travelers but have paid our fares and do not deserve to hear filthy words from a public transport operator. I request the higher authorities of the MUDA to please take strict action against the bus conductor and driver who were on duty that particular day so that such misdemeanours are not repeated.

Yours etc  
Name withheld on request

### NEC out of bounds?

Editor,  
The Government of India