

“When one has much to put into them, a day has a hundred pockets.”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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India and Africa

A series of brutal, mindless and seemingly unprovoked attacks on Africans in India has prompted President Pranab Mukherjee to condemn them not so much on humanitarian and racist grounds as on political and economic grounds. His comments may indicate a greater preoccupation with national self-interest. Vice President Hamid Ansari has also more or less taken the same line. Their observations are of course extremely sensible. The attacks on Africans in India can indeed sour this country's relations with Africa. India has long had strong political ties with Africa especially dating back to the Bandung Conference in 1956 when Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt and Kurama Nkrumah of Ghana stood for peace shoulder to shoulder with Jawaharlal Nehru. Indians also without exception backed the freedom struggle in South Africa led by Nelson Mandela. Pranab Mukherjee said it would be most unfortunate if the long-standing relations are soured. African students should be able to study here with minds without fear. Of course, the attack on Africans is instigated by people who are unaware of or against India's traditional ties with Africa in a shared struggle against European colonisation.

What is needed to fight the mental backwardness among a section of Indians is the creation of a healthy awareness of values. Political and economic ties with the victims' countries are not fundamentally relevant. Brutality must be denounced. In the case of Africans, the colour of their skin does matter even in India which was exploited by white rulers for two hundred years. Indians are allergic to "blackness" except perhaps when it comes to hair. The emphasis is on fairness as much in the sale of beauty products as in the marriage market. A dark skin is as much of a hurdle as casteism. To that can be added Indian chauvinism. White leaders and students are also discriminated against at Indian academic institutions.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Absu’s bandh call

The 120-hour bandh beginning on February 16 the call for which has been given by the All Bodo Students' Union is the longest in the series of bandhs so far by the ABSU in their movement for a separate "Bodoland" in Assam. We are at a loss to understand what special argument the ABSU seeks to press through this five-day long bandh except that it recalls the one observed by the Gorkha National Liberation Front in the Darjeeling hill areas of West Bengal last year when normal life in that part of the country was immobilised for weeks on end.

Although the bandh is meant for observance throughout Assam, the bandh in effect will be confined, as in the past, mainly in the plains tribals dominated Kokrajhar district and Udalguri areas of Assam. Since the bandh is likely to affect the movement of road and rail traffic along the life line of Assam that passes through Kokrajhar district, the Assam Government is not going to take any chances : this time and has already alerted the army to be in preparedness mainly to keep the lifeline moving and tackle any other situation that might arise.

In this first major confrontation between the ABSU and the Government of Assam the bandh may not remain particularly peaceful as some earlier ABSU bandhs had its share of violence in spite of the best efforts on the part of both sides. In a bandh the sufferers are mainly the peaceful citizens, and in the present case since the road and rail lines passing through Kokrajhar district are also the lifelines of other north eastern states, the disruption of these lines will bring to a halt not only the movement of people but also the essential supplies of the entire region.

The plea behind the bandh call that neither the Centre or the Assam Government was responding to their movement is hardly convincing for the State Government had a round of talks with an ABSU delegation only last month and had invited, the ABSU for a further round of talks on February 28. This latest posture of ABSU obviously indicates a hardening of attitudes which will hardly, advance the cause of their movement, for it is only through mutual talks and discussions that any problem can be solved or a settlement reached over demand. It appears no less intriguing that the ABSU has declined the invitation of the Assam Government for talks which they themselves have been demanding since the beginning of their movement.

movement of people but also the essential supplies of the entire region. The bandh organisers have not possibly spared a thought to the dimension of sufferings entailed in the possible disruption in the whole region as well as to those of the daily earners and other professionals in their own tribal dominated areas. In this first major confrontation between the ABSU and the Government of Assam the bandh may not remain particularly peaceful as some earlier ABSU bandhs had its share of violence in spite of the best efforts' on the part of both sides. In a bandh the sufferers are mainly the peaceful citizens, and in the present case since the road, and rail lines passing through Kokrajhar district are also the lifelines of other north eastern states, the disruption of these lines will bring to a halt not only the movement of people but also the essential supplies of the entire region.

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NEET is hardly about medical parity

Spring board for CBSE North Indians

The Supreme Court of India has revived from death the specter of a common medical entrance examination for all medical colleges. Ostensibly, this common entrance examination called National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) is to create a level playing field.

Wide-ranging protests, rail-rokos and even clashes with police across many non-Hindi states (Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, among others), vehement opposition from students, doctors (especially rural doctors associations and Indian Medical Association state branches), parents, non-commercial educationists, political parties and even social justice organizations as well as opposition from non-Hindi state governments have by now demonstrated that many fear that the effect will be exactly the opposite.

They fear that this will huge advantage to students of Delhi-headquartered boards like CBSE – who also tend to be more urban, richer, more upper-caste, less likely to be from non-Hindi states and not having the principal language of non-Hindi states as their first language. In short, they will be unrepresentative in a way that will deepen already existing inequities that exist along various axes of class, caste, language, location and rootedness, among others. Many fear, this will destroy prestigious state boards as we know them.

While the NEET judgment was in response to admission-related corruption in private institutions, other reasons have been offered in its support. They include the relief this will provide students giving multiple entrance tests, lessening of corruption in the admission tests due to supervision of MCI and CBSE and finally, the purported desirability of a common syllabus, which will ensure that similar grades of physicians are produced all around (a ridiculous idea, since medical entrance exams don't make doctors, MBBS exams after admission do).

Firstly, most major states already held their own state medical entrance exam. Private medical colleges are not located in air but on the soil of some state. A simple solution would have been to admit students through already-existing state medical entrance exam. States like West Bengal and others have nearly four decades of experience of organizing transparent medical

By Garga Chatterjee

entrance exams. Why would the excuse of corruption somewhere be used to change admission policies everywhere is beyond understanding.

Capitation-fee corruption for management quota of private institutions is a headache only for people who can pay in tens of lakhs and even crores - in short, not even 5 per cent of the students who take medical entrance exams. It's a problem of the upper-middle class and the super-rich which obscenely fancies itself as the "common man".

On the question of relief to multi-exam taking students, it is important to take note of reality. What proportion of all medical entrance test takers across all states do they form and who are they? It is astonishing that no such data has ever been presented – likely because anecdotal experiences suggest that this is a very small proportion of students.

Let us get some numbers. Across multiple AIIMS institutes, their common entrance test attracted about 1 lakh students last year. This figure is under 10 per cent of the medical college admission seekers across all states. Just in Maharashtra, about 4 lakh students took the CET exam this year.

When we compare to number of all Class XII science students across all states, irrespective of entrance-taking, the percentage become negligible. And even among that small minority, CBSE like central board students are hugely over-represented in this multiple entrance test taking class.

The fact that the NEET judgement might imply science syllabus changes across many boards, tells us how the stupendous majority is being victimized and marginalized for the convenience of a tiny minority.

Among the major characteristics of this minority that I mentioned earlier, what stands out is the board- CBSE. It is the CBSE syllabus that will be followed for NEET. Is this the largest board in Indian Union? No. Just Maharashtra state board has more Class XII students compared to CBSE all over the Indian Union.

If that statistic comes as a surprise to some of us, we need to seriously question our sense of standard and get out of our metro-centric Anglo-Hindi bubbles. Is that the 'best' board in some academic sense? Hardly so. Are students studying science at the 12th standard in the CBSE syllabus uniquely equipped with an

understanding of the sciences that is unparalleled by the state-boards? Or in other words if the state boards are being forced to emulate the CBSE (in the name of aligning syllabi), is it something worth emulating?

By rigorous research work (published in Current Science, 2009) that reviewed the comparative performance of students from different boards, Anil Kumar and Dibakar Chatterjee, scientists at the Indian Institute of Science, showed that when it comes to science proficiency, CBSE is not numero-uno. West Bengal board students did better than CBSE students in all 4 science subjects – Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics. Andhra Pradesh does better than CBSE in Mathematics and Physics.

By the same metric, Maharashtra is hardly the worst performing state as it was in NEET that was held in 2013 before it was scrapped. Tellingly, neither West Bengal nor Andhra Pradesh was the top performing state in the NEET. Independent non-CBSE excellence has thus become an albatross around their neck. The CBSE 'pattern' of syllabus has become the standard, even though research shows it isn't the best.

States boards with syllabi that differ considerably from the CBSE are at an unfair disadvantage – they have to change or perish, for absolutely no reason. The viability or 'worth' of a board of education's science syllabus then is not in how well it teaches science to the students but incredibly, by how well it has adapted (or not) the basic framework of a Delhi-based boards' syllabus.

This will reduce the important of the Class XII exam and we will increasingly see coaching institutes operating under the legal shell of a school. The schools affiliated to the state boards will rapidly become low-grade holding pens for the rural and the poor, while the urban middle-class will detach itself from them – taking educational apartheid to another level.

By completely disregarding the percentile obtained in Class XII board exams, Multiple Choice Question solving is privileged over detailed concept development, something boards like the West Bengal and Tamil Nadu board have been historically proud of and is evident in the over-representation of these boards among faculty members of science institutions, where the CBSE 'advantage' evaporates. We cant even fathom the

damage that this will do to science education.

This Delhi-headquartered board and Anglo-Hindi bias in so-called 'all India' medical entrances is not new. Central board students (constituting less than 10% of Class 12 students) have till now enjoyed a de-facto 15% reservation in all medical colleges, as the syllabus of the AIPMT exam (held in Hindi and English only – though no MBBS courses are taught in Hindi) through which these seats were filled was modeled on CBSE syllabus and conducted by CBSE.

So much so, that in West Bengal, students coming through this 'all-India' were from Hindi-belt central board schools almost to the last man and in West Bengal were referred to, simply as 'CBSEs' or 'Delhi boards'. Such a naked violation of the principle of natural justice and fairness went unchallenged as the positive beneficiaries of this provision constituted the unofficial first-class citizens of the Indian Union – typically well-to-do, urban, largely upper-caste Hindu males from Hindi-speaking areas studying in Delhi-headquartered school boards.

Since Hindi areas have much less number of medical colleges per capita, the AIPMT is a system to lodge North Indian student in South and East India in disproportionately high numbers, under the innocuous dissent-stopping fig-leaf of 'All-India'. The NEET seeks to create a hugely expanded version of this unjust dominance over all seats of all medical colleges in the Indian Union.

The Supreme Court ruling of holding a test under CBSE syllabus thus violates the fundamental legal principle of fairness. A state board student studying in non-Hindi mother-tongue will have to compete against a CBSE student who has studied for 12 years of incremental science syllabus learning.

For example, in Tamil Nadu, the Biology syllabus is about 70 per cent different between the state board and CBSE (<http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/another-reason-neet-bad-idea-what-about-those-who-dont-know-english-or-hindi-42665>).

Can a state be forced to change its board syllabus to align with central syllabus or otherwise risk playing in an unfair non-level playing field? That makes a mockery of the federal structure of the Indian Constitution. (IPA Service)

Guwahati.

Misbehaviour of HDFC manager

Editor,

I, the undersigned would like everyone to know about the dictatorial attitude of the Branch Manager, HDFC Bank, Police Bazar Branch. His actions towards the customers whom he does not favour has not only irritated us, but compelled us to close our transactions with the Bank permanently. He has a handful of "high-end customers" whom he attends to at any point of time as per their whims and fancies, but normal and small time customers like us are shunted out of his business circle.

In addition to the above, I have also personally witnessed the Manager's rude and ungentlemanly behavior and attitude towards the staff of the Bank. Most of the time he only hollers and shouts at

In Asian power game, China wants its own rules to apply

By Kapil Sibal

On the heels of its provocative step to prevent the United Nations Security Council sanctions committee from designating Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist, China has publicly opposed India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). In both cases China's "all weather friendship" with Pakistan and disdain for India's reaction have influenced the decision-making. China's policy of trying to box India in the subcontinent is being stretched to the point of treating both the terrorism and NSG membership issues as ones of managing India-Pakistan rivalries.

China would want to deprive India of diplomatic advantage over its "iron" ally in forums where it can hold up consensus. It has chafed at the India-US nuclear deal, openly questioning US "favouritism" towards India and advocated a similar deal for Pakistan. Its decision to build two additional nuclear power plants beyond the two it "grandfathered" while joining the NSG is a violation of its NSG commitments. It was intended as a signal to the US that it cannot have a monopoly on decisions on non-proliferation matters and that China can balance the US nuclear gesture towards India with one of its own towards Pakistan.

Undeterred by its egregious proliferation record (the AQ Khan affair), blocking of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) negotiations in Geneva, the frenetic build up of its nuclear assets, the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons in the sub-continent, and its public threats to use nuclear weapons against India, Pakistan is aggressively seeking parity of treatment with India on nuclear matters. It uses its irresponsible nuclear conduct to coerce the US/West into giving it an India-like nuclear deal as an incentive to be "responsible".

China has been the biggest proliferator with its well-established nuclear transfers to Pakistan. Its continued nuclear cooperation with Pakistan as a non-NPT country, without any NSG exemption in the latter's favour, is itself a serious act of proliferation. That the Chinese built reactors are under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards is irrelevant, as India, before the Indo-US nuclear deal and the NSG exemption, had offered putting all its foreign-aided nuclear reactors under IAEA safeguards but the proposition was not acceptable even to friendly countries like Russia and France because of their "international obligations". In China's case, its "civilian" nuclear cooperation with Pakistan is accompanied by the construction of reprocessing plants that are not under IAEA safeguards. It is these plants that are giving Pakistan the capability to produce plutonium and develop miniaturised warheads for tactical nuclear weapons. China is not accountable for all this activity.

Just as in Masood Azhar's case the Chinese explanations for its position were misleading and duplicitous, China's reasons for opposing India's NSG membership are hollow, and even arrogant. It explains its opposition on the ground that "as a member of the UNSC we are the watchdog of the world, we must ensure that

rules are followed. And we must also think it is not just India who wants an exception to the rules". Humbug apart, this is an astonishing language of entitlement and privilege. China feels it must follow the rules as a global watchdog when it comes to India and the NSG, but is not obliged to do so when it comes to the East China and South China Seas. It pleads helplessness in having to oppose India because the rules were made by western powers and "we just have to maintain them", ignoring conveniently its repeated tilting at the West-imposed international rules governing the international system. China finds it normal to defy these rules in the western Pacific, where it wants its own rules to apply. Its concern about being the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) watchdog disappear when it protects the North Korean regime from sanctions and insists on dialogue to resolve the issue of its NPT violations.

China - after opposing the NPT as discriminatory for years - is now taking the position that only NPT countries can be members of the NSG. Russia, US, France and the UK, all four recognised nuclear weapon states under the NPT, do not take this position. The US, which initiated the NSG as a stringent export control mechanism to deny access to certain critical nuclear technologies even to NPT member states, has repeatedly said that India is eligible for NSG membership and is committed to making it happen. The NSG is just an ad hoc body, it is not a treaty. The logic of China demanding that India sign the NPT in order to become an NSG member is malevolent on another count. India cannot sign the NPT as a nuclear weapon state as the NPT has been permanently extended without any scope for amendment. China is therefore implicitly asking India to sign as a non-nuclear weapon state, which means dismantling its weapons programme under international supervision. This is consistent with its non-recognition of India as a nuclear weapons state. The arrogance of this position is astounding.

In the past, before high level visits, China has staged provocations as part of both engaging India and pressuring it. Significantly, it chose to pique India just before President Pranab Mukherjee's visit to China. This way China maintains the upper hand and sets the terms of the relationship. In any case, having been cajoled by president Bush to agree to the NSG exemption for India, China has already yielded on substance. The purpose of blocking India's NSG membership therefore makes little sense apart from power politics to boost its client Pakistan and diminish India's standing. As regards the argument that China has hardened its position because India is drawing closer to the US, it needs recalling that Xi had in effect proposed a G2 to Obama.

(Kanwal Sibal is a former foreign secretary. The views expressed are personal).

them as if they his slaves, and that too during business hours in front of the customers. He does not have any etiquette in dealing with his subordinates, and I personally feel very sorry for them. Further, I believe there is a senior Manager in the Branch by the rank of "Cluster Head," who sits in his office chamber within the Branch itself. But where is he when all this is happening within the walls of his business house? Is he so scared of the Branch

Manager that he does not dare exercise his authority over him? Or is this the way that HDFC managers are trained prior to their assuming their responsibilities?

Sad to say, but at this rate HDFC Bank (especially Police Bazar Branch) may be heading for a downfall, thanks to such conceited and chauvinistic Branch Managers.

Yours etc.,
M Kharnaor
Shillong - 3.

“*He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.*”

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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Congress infighting continues

MEGHALAYA made breaking news on Wednesday when an NDTV reporter claimed she had notes of a report given by Dr Mukul Sangma to the Congress High Command on the recent goings-on in the State Congress. In a sharp, vitriolic reaction, Dr Sangma asked the NDTV channel how they got copies of an email sent from his private email account. The reporter of course ducked the question stating that the channel has its sources of collecting information. This is an incident that needs more probing and investigation agencies must be on the job to find out who leaked this vital information to the media and whether Dr Sangma’s email account has been hacked and if so by whom.

Dr Mukul Sangma has been facing rebellion inside the Congress Party essentially because he has not effected a cabinet change even after three years. Those waiting on the fringes feel cheated when they see the Government not performing well on certain fronts and some key departments being held by those with overt business interests. Not that any MLA does not have a business interest while contesting the election. We would be naïve to imagine that, because, without a side business no MLA would be able to meet the daily demands from his/her constituents. Ministers who have held key portfolios until now are seen as having an edge over those who are mere MLAs. Dr Sangma ostensibly is waiting for a green signal from the High Command to affect a cabinet reshuffle. Those who fear losing their turfs are now ready to switch sides after being promised key portfolios. This has been the bane of Meghalaya’s politics. The fact that the elderly and near senile Lapang is projected as the alternative leader also means that the dissidents believe they can take him for a ride.

Definitely this rumbling is bad for governance as the bureaucracy is waiting and watching. It would be again naïve to believe that the bureaucracy is completely insulated from the political rumblings. Important decisions will be kept on hold for fear of getting into trouble with the next government. Dr Sangma has of course shown uncharacteristic bravado by stating that he is in control of the situation, but, in politics there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. Should a new government take over the momentum of governance will be lost as it would take a while for the new ministers to familiarise themselves with their respective departments. The losers will be the people of Meghalaya who have nothing to do with the rumblings within the Congress which are fuelled by personal ambitions.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Convergence of Nationalism and Globalism

A perceptive debate on the nature and dimension of nationalism and globalism has been set in motion by a series of break-throughs in science and technology. This is especially in the areas of supersonic travels, space and communication technologies and needs to be carried forward for facilitating the process of transition to the global society. The international security environment unfolds the symptoms of the dual situation-the positive and the negative forces. While the positive forces arc flashing the messages of disarmament, development, oneness of the human race and global civilization, the divisive forces generated by narrow nationalism, fundamentalism and racialism are keeping the world in an explosive situation or on a razor's edge. This is the hinge of history on which we stand today and the climate is surcharged with hot blow and cold.

Living in Marshal Mac Luhan's global village, one can not escape the progressive influence of mass media of

communication that's cutting across the artificial barriers which have kept the humanity divided into faces, religions, nationalities, castes, creeds and colors. A manipulated society either by religious pundits or Maulvis, or Pope or authoritarian and totalitarian communism or capitalist's , welfare state is not the answer and perhaps has lost much of fascination amongst its votaries.

President Gorbachev who has emerged as new messiah of peach and human unity has given a call for a break with the existing outworn orthodoxies breeding the climate of cold war diplomacy. He is making a radical paradigm shift in the Soviet philosophy, policies and programmes. Whether he succeeds in it or not is besides the point but the issue to be highlighted in that the Marxian paradigm of reality that has dominated the process of human thinking to such an extent that it was accepted as What Laski would call the major inarticulate premise underlying our intellectual and conceptual world view is virtually collapsing.

Second anniversary with Macho Posturings

Fast-growing economy has more challenges

Curiously, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the nation neither a cogent account of his Government's two-year record of 'vikas', by way of outcomes toward the 'achhe din' he had promised in 2014, nor did he hold out any early promise of meeting job and such aspirations of the people who had voted for him. India's social record – basic education, health and poverty - remains appalling even in relation to many less developed countries in Asia and Africa. The economy, claimed to be “fastest-growing” is locked up in a multitude of challenges which are conveniently downplayed by a drum-beating government.

Instead, Mr Modi turned the second anniversary of his rise to power and total command in governance into another gala show, with tall claims on his corruption-free stewardship of the nation. The underlying theme of his enduring political campaign is that his Government needs even more power for a total grip over Parliament for him to accomplish all his 'transformative' reforms. To this end, the Rajya Sabha is sought to be packed with BJP nominees this year and the party's strength would be boosted to a level to extend its domination into the Upper House, not later than the next biennial (2018), well ahead of the next Lok Sabha poll 2019.

The immediate focus is on UP where BJP wants to regain power in 2017 by ousting both the dominant ruling SP and the power-in-waiting, BSP of Ms. Mayawati. Hence, the Prime Minister and the campaign-in-chief, aggressively promoted by BJP as the most shining pro-Dalit leader, launched the 2017 poll campaign at Saharanpur on May 26. He is already committed to doubling of farmers incomes by 2022, and one can expect all economic policies and welfare schemes to be

By S. Sethuraman

designed to cover Dalits, making up over 20 per cent of UP population. There is a gnawing fear that without UP under his belt, Mr Modi, whose glory had begun to fade somewhat in the light of his below-expectation performance, might have to fight a losing battle in 2019.

Overall, the elaborate anniversary ritual mocked at the acute rural distress and unrelenting farmer suicides, mostly in BJP-ruled states. As usual, Mr Modi revelled in running down the Congress Governments of the past with the choicest epithets. One would hope that the Modi Government would get back to tackling the immediate challenges, with the two-trillion dollar economy in disarray in several respects

Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley may have contained the fiscal deficit in 2015-16 at the budgeted 3.9 per cent of GDP. But there are many tougher macro-economic tasks ahead including structural reforms for job-creating growth and financial stability.

Also, it would do well for the credit of this Government from the Prime Minister downwards to become less insolent toward parties and opinions, which may be legitimately critical of certain approaches of theirs, and try and harmonise views on reforms and other issues in furtherance of rapid economic and social advance. A free and thriving democracy like India needs to be fully safeguarded as a global model..

The Rajan episode, ignited by BJP nominee and political maverick Mr Subramanian Swamy, totally disrespectful of an universally acclaimed economist in Governor of RBI Dr Raghuram Rajan, and calling for the premature termination of his prestigious stewardship of our central bank, reflects an undesirable slur on the Modi Government for its stony silence.

Mr Modi would like the media not to go into this ugly side of the way things may go even beyond the Prime Minister's control but the latter himself becomes discreetly silent whenever necessary to suit the interests of his party and the RSS.

Also the Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley's few casual remarks have been ambivalent, underscoring perhaps the reservations that this Government may have about an extension of Dr Rajan's term beyond September 2016.Surely, Mr Jaitley, just back from another investment-seeking foray, cannot overlook the damage for his Government abroad the way the Rajan matter blows over.

The Modi Government may be comforted by the rise in GDP by 7.6 per cent in the year ending March 2016 as against 7.2 per cent the previous year. (The gross value added – GVA –was 7.2 per cent (7.1 per cent). But there is no concealing the fact that it was jobless growth with lower inflation helping a rise over the previous year.

But what is disturbing is the declining investment rates and slowing manufacturing growth at 2 per cent, going by IIP, as against 3.9 per cent in 2014/15. Gross fixed capital formation has been on downtrend to less than 30 per cent at current prices over the previous year's 30.8 per cent at current prices. Basing estimates on corporate returns, CSO has enhanced manufacturing growth to 9.3 per cent in 2015-16. WPI and CPI stood at 3.3 and 4.9 per cent respectively during the year.

India enjoys the limelight as a vibrant economy, “one of the fastest growing countries”, as OECD has said in its June update of economic outlook, with growth projected to remain strong (7.4 and 7.5 per cent in 2016 and 2017) fuelled by private consumption depending on increases in public wages and declining inflation.

No early revival of private

investment looks likely as deleveraging continues for corporations and banks, the Outlook notes. While fiscal consolidation and enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, setting a time limit for resolution of insolvency, are welcomed, OECD assessment for growth this year rests more on fiscal rather than monetary policy.

For fiscal consolidation, it stresses quality improvement by increasing tax revenue from personal income and property taxes and further rationalisation of subsidy programmes. Spending mix should be tilted towards physical and social infrastructure. Contrary to NDA claims on fast-tracking of stalled infrastructure investment projects, OECD said these had again risen to more than 8% of GDP, with the private sector accounting for the bulk of the delays.

On monetary policy, with the RBI policy review due on June 7, analysts see little room left for further rate cuts, with inflation expectations remaining high and the CPI inflation above the long-term target (4 per cent). At the last review in April, Governor Rajan brought the repo rate further down to 6.5 per cent and hopefully accommodation could come with lower lending rates by banks, with benefits passed on to consumers and investors.

Jobless growth and lower productivity are among major concerns voiced in the OECD outlook report. These vitally impinge on India's potential for higher growth. Job creation in the organised sector (enterprises with 10 or more employees) has been slow, leaving most workers in the unorganised sector, with little job protection. .

Government puts great hopes on this year's normal monsoon forecast for a strong growth revival. But private investment may not pick up until after some cleaning up of banks' balance sheets and corporates see demand resurgence. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Reserve forest land scam: Whom to blame?

Editor,

I do not agree with the views of S.Kharkongor under the head: “No way to treat church elders” ST May 31, 2016). In fact a majority of whom I know do not have the same views as S Kharkongor. The claim made that “the sentiments of the people are hurt deeply” is false. Yes, may be some people's sentiments might have been hurt, but it does not include anyone whom I know of. That being said, I, a Christian from one of the victimized church who also contributed a small amount to buy the land, praise the actions taken by Paiem Ricky Nelson Syiem. If the Acting Syiem had not taken such action, then he would have not been any different from the corrupt criminals who rob the church in broad daylight. It is important for all of us to understand that it was not the church's fault nor was it Ricky Nelson Syiem's fault that the church fell into such a scam. S Kharkongor rightly said that the church was acting out of the need. To add to that, the church was acting out of complete trust in the Syiem (Latho Manik Syiem)and his myntris. No one would have ever thought that a respectable Syiem or any of the myntri who represent the Syiem would indulge in such cheap

tricks; that too to with church bodies. This shows that the ex-Syiem and his myntri are irresponsible, selfish and seek to fulfil to their own agenda, their own interests and in filling their own pockets. I know of a few myntris associated to the previous Syiem who are now living in the lap of luxury, driving around in their SUVs and decorating all their fingers with gold and diamonds. These are the myntris who had made a good fortune for themselves by indulging in corruption.

We should remind ourselves that the land sold by the ex-Syiem and his associates the myntris to the church is actually part of the Reserved Forest (Law Adong) which was decided jointly by the KHADC and the Myllem Syiemship to be converted into a Reserve Forest on the 22nd of May 2014. The question now is: How could they sell a Reserve Forest for some other purposes? For this will actually render the status of the Reserve Forest invalid. They have not only cheated the church but also cheated the citizens and the environment. These culprits should not be let free and justice should be served. We the Khasis have been too soft towards corruption and hence have encouraged it. Let there be CBI inquiry and the entire truth will come out. I urge the church bodies to stand for what is right, and my humble request to our Acting Syiem Ricky Nelson Syiem and to the KHADC is to act wisely and see that

the culprits pay back every penny stolen, regardless of who they are or what position they hold, for all are equal in the law.

Yours etc.,
M Khyriem,
Viaemail

Expedite setting up of 5th Pay Commission.

Editor,

Apropos the editorial in your paper (ST May 10, 2016) relating to revision of pay and allowances under 5th Meghalaya Revised Pay with effect from 1st January, 2016, can the Government set up the required number Pay Commission at the earliest? State Government employees face tremendous problems because of price fluctuations etc. The State Govt enhances Dearness Allowances twice in a year, from January to June and July to December sometimes at the rate of 6%. But the market prices of commodities is going up @ of 10% every six months. So how can we cope with the present price rise? Benefit of raising pay under 5th Pay Commission will be after mandatory raising of 3(three) times of basic pay with medical, house rent and hill compensatory allowances on percentage calculations which may be arrived at fixation of pay.

It is evident that the unscrupulous business fraternity have raised the prices of essential commodities after hearing of the enhancement of

dearness allowances and yet again after the actual declaration of dearness allowances. It is also observed that the benefit of sympathy by the government to its employees goes to the pockets of unscrupulous businessmen. State Government employees are not asking to revise their pay under financial constraints but seeking for their long overdue rights. The editorial of your paper had stated that because of financial constrains, pay revision to government employees is not appropriate. This statement is condemnable and smacks of lack of empathy towards the employees. Will the State Government please pay heed to the demand of its employees?

Yours etc.,
Waillingstone N. Marak
Agillanggre : Tura

Non-payment of dues

Editor,

The Assembly Election in Meghalaya was held in the March 2013. Thereafter the general election for M.P. was also held in 2014, followed by District Council elections and bye-election for Chokpot MLA constituency in South Garo Hills in 2015. The officers and government and non-government employees have worked hard for smooth conduct of the above elections. But the Govt employees who worked the hardest were from the election Branch of

Challenges Before the Legal Profession and the Judiciary

- An outsider's view of the National Seminar

By P. Niroop

Having attended the two-day National Seminar on the title of this article, I seek indulgence, to fill the gaps in the insightful and incisive reporting of the deliberations highlighted by Mr B M Lanong, Advocate in the columns of The Shillong Times (ST May 27th 2016), as an outsider i.e., a practicing lawyer in the Supreme Court of India, Delhi and simultaneously holding the office of the Addl. Advocate General of the State of Meghalaya.

Coming to the core of the all important National Seminar, which was an interface between the lawyers of the Supreme Court and those from the rest of the country and the local Bar, which mainly constituted lawyers and law students of Shillong, the highlight of the said seminar was of course the oration of the text-book model of the criminal lawyer, Mr Ram Jethmalani. He did not mince words to drive home the point, that in a Democracy, it is the lawyers and the judiciary, who act as a shield against excesses committed by the power-drunk executive. But the challenge before this least dangerous branch of the State, which is the Bar and the Judiciary, is to rise to the challenges by fulfilling their expected role in a Constitutional Democracy.

That brings us to the fundamental question, as to where are the Jethmalanis, and Narimans etc, of the legal profession. They are today, an endangered species, if not a vanishing tribe. In other words the idealist lawyer is today lost in numbers (with 12 lakh lawyers enrolled across the country). The legal profession seems to have failed the ideals that inspired it from the beginning of time. About the profession, below is an excerpt of a twelve-line reply of the Former Chief Justice of America, Justice Felix Frankfurter, to a twelve old boy M. Paul Clausen of Alexandria, Virginia.

aspiring to be a future lawyer. The letter dated May 1954 says, “No one can be a truly competent lawyer unless he is a cultivated man. If I were you, I would forget all about any technical preparation for the law. The best way to prepare for the law is to come to the study of the law as a well-read person. Thus alone can one acquire the capacity to use the English language on paper and in speech and with the habits of clear thinking which only a truly liberal education can give. No less important for a lawyer is the cultivation of the imaginative faculties by reading poetry, seeing great paintings, in the original or in easily available reproductions, and listening to great music. Stock your mind with the deposit of much good reading. And widen and deepen your feelings by experiencing vicariously as much as possible the wonderful mysteries of the universe, and forget all about your future career.”

The above sage counsel will surely make for a good lawyer but whether it would make for a successful lawyer, is for the readers to judge. Nevertheless, it is ideals such as these that beckoned idealist lawyers to the calling and hence should be good enough to serve as goals for the younger generation of lawyers to emulate. Those belonging to

the younger Bar who are inclined to probe the subject further are advised to read an inspiring book by the Harvard Professor of Criminology, Alan Dershowitz in his book entitled, "Letters to a young lawyer", published by Basic Books, New York.

The other highlight of the Seminar was the aspect of integration of the local Bar not only of Shillong but entire Northeastern States with the Indian Bar. Although India is endowed with a pan-Indian Bar, but to weld the diverse territories of India, into a truly federal frame-work, is a herculean task though not impossible. The basic pre-requisite, for forging such an integration, is to have sympathetic understanding of the nature of the plural society that India is. In fact, one way, is to undertake extensive travels across India, to understand the nature of the complex plural diversity. In fact, such a journey of the Northeastern States was undertaken by the human rights activist-lawyer Nandita Haksar, who has accounted her impressions minutely, in her travelogue, entitled "Across the Chicken Neck", published by Rainlight - Rupa New Delhi. This was an inspiring account of an arduous journey of 15,000 kilometers in the Northeastern rainbow land, while commenting on every issue of importance, on the areas traversed. But the overarching issue was the enforcement of the draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, and its negative impact on the Northeastern States. It is only when such bridges of understanding, are built assiduously, especially in the sensitive conflict prone areas of the Northeast, that India can become a full blooded Nation by moving towards a Union of States, from what is now only a Union of Territories, kept together forcibly by the liberal flow of Central Govt. funds and the strength of the Central Armed forces.

The last session of the seminar on the customary laws, is what intrigued most listeners from Delhi, when the local lawyers H.S. Thankghiew and Khalid Khan, excelled in expounding the customary laws, with all their intricacies and warned that the State should tread cautiously, while dealing with the said customs, especially while codifying the same. In this context, India may have lessons from America, where the customary laws, of the native Americans, was integrated into the American Constitution or for that matter from Australia, where the fellow Commonwealth Nation, has dealt with the Aboriginal Laws viz. their Constitution, in case such a comparative study is undertaken.

To sum up, may many such seminars and conferences, take place in the State of Meghalaya, whereby there is meaningful interaction between the local lawyers and the lawyers of national and international repute so that the confidence of the local Bar is propped up and it comes into its own, i.e., a strong, independent and articulate Bar, true its native spirit.

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the DC's office. Other employees from the DC's establishment were also involved in the process. But none of the employees except some high ranking officials from DC's office and DC election staff have received remuneration. It is learnt that in other districts such as North Garo Hills and East Garo Hills, the employees of the DC's office and other amalgamated branches of

the DC's establishment have received remuneration equivalent to one month's basic pay plus D.A. for each of the above elections.

If so, I would request the D.C. (Elections) South Garo Hills districts to kindly make the funds available for the staff involved in election duty which comprise even Grade IV staff who worked day and night.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

“But thus do I counsel you, my friends:
distrust all in whom the impulse to punish
is powerful!”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 291 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2016

The Language Front

THE victorious BJP has taken a new offensive to strengthen its position by allowing the use of multiple languages at the oath taking ceremony at Guwahati. Angoorlatha Deka an Assamese actress and a BJP legislator created a stir by taking her oath in Sanskrit. She said that although her mother tongue was Assamese, she regarded Sanskrit as the mother of most Indian languages. She wanted to focus the importance of the Indian languages and impose upon younger generations the need of learning the ancient yet rich and scientific language. She represents the Batadrava constituency which is the birthplace of of Srimanta Sankardeva, the 16th century saint and reformer who enriched the Assamese language by translating several Sanskrit scriptures. Two other BJP MLAs, Ashok Sharma and Bimal Borah also took their oath in Sanskrit. This was unprecedented as Sanskrit is not one of the languages recognised in the Constitution. While there is no denying the importance of Sanskrit tolerance and scientific creations, other oath taking in Sanskrit seems part of the Hindutva crusade by the RSS and BJP. It began with the replacement of German with Sanskrit in the central schools and the Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani's overemphasis on Sanskrit in academic institutions. The BJP won the Assam poll by distancing itself from the RSS but the Sangh influence seems to be seeping in.

It has been argued that the choice of multiple languages at the oath-taking ceremony-only 91 out of the 196 took the oath in Assamese could be part of BJP’s larger designs of redefining and reconstructing Indian nationalism. Nobody will deny that Assam's links with mainland India should be strengthened. But it cannot be done by advocating multiple languages and even an ancient language like Sanskrit. No European country has promoted Latin in that manner. It is also illogical to maintain that multiplicity of languages at an official level will develop ethnic languages and culture.

LOOKING BACK
February 11, 1989

Bodo hands suspected
Bomb blast in bus kills
12 in Assam

Twelve people were killed and ten others seriously injured when powerful bomb went off in private bus near Kojalgaon under Sidly Police station of Kokrajhar district of Assam yesterday an official report received here today said. (According to Doordasshan, the death toll was 20.) Six persons died on the spot and the rest succumbed to their injuries. In the hospital, it said. The seriously injured persons were shifted to medical college hospital here. The bomb was planted by suspected Bodo extremist. The bus which was completely damaged was proceeding from Basugaon to Bongaigaon, the report said. Bodo extremists who have been active in the trouble torn Kokrajhar district during the past two weeks have snatched over a dozen rifles and ammunition from the police, the report said. Chief Minister Ms Prafulla Kumar Mahanta strongly condemned the bomb blast incident and directed the concerned authorities to nab the culprits at the earliest. He also conveyed his deep sympathy and condolences to the members of bereaved families. **Non-Congress CMs flay Rajiv, Central Govt** National Front chairman and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Mr. N.I.Rama Rao

today appealed to the opposition leader to forged their "petty differences and bickering and clash of personal ambition and rivalries" to present a viable alternative to the Congress (I) in the coming general elections. He was addressing a rally organised at the Judges Field here by the Asom Gan Parishad (AGP) a constituent of the motional front. Mr. Rama Rao appealed to all those who were critical of the Congress(I) to come together and support the National Front to inflict a "crushing defeat to the Congress (I) in the coming general elections. This kind of opportunity comes rarely on a notation. Let not history condemn us for having failed to rise to the occasion'., Mr. Rama Rao said. Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal said the Prime Min Minister had lost his bold on the people because he was the most inaccessible Prime Minister that India ever had. The Prime Minister does not give time for appointments to his own Congress(I) Chief Minister. He is surrounded by a coterie of offices and sycophants who continue to misguide him on the affair of the nation, he said. Mr. Devi Lal said the recent elections in Tamil Nadu had established that the people had rejected Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as their leader at the Centre. The defeat in Tamil Nadu is his personal defeat, he said.

Of self fulfilling prophecies
and how they become real

By Patricia Mukhim

This week has seen a lot of high drama with allegations and counter allegations by the Mukul Sangma and DD Lapang camps. But what was most surprising was how NDTV got hold of a personal email written by the CM to his mentors Sonia G and Rahul G about his government being in danger. Instead of accusing NDTV Dr Mukul should have taken on the AICC, who sources claim are very close to NDTV. But that leak was a Congress ploy to show to the world that BJP is up to its old tricks of destabilising Congress Governments. Did it work? I don't think such naive tactics would. What has to happen must happen. Then came the Election Commission notification vindicating the KHADC PN Syiem's stance that being both MLA and MDC and a CEM at that is not violative of the office of profit clause. Now as a non-political person who expects certain duties and responsibilities from both the MLA and MDC, I personally feel that concentrating all political resources in one person is dangerous. Besides there is a conflict of interest when an MLA is also an MDC because suppose the District Council has passed a law and the same MDC sitting as an MLA rescinds that law under Para 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule then how would that look? Did the Election Commission go into this aspect? But for now Mukul Sangma's woes seemed to have piled up. The errors began with the nomination to the GHADC. By depriving Conrad Sangma and appointing a nondescript relative of his wife's (Shelma D Shira) who does not enjoy the confidence of even the Congress party. The campaign for the Tura Lok Sabha seat appeared to be not that of the Congress Party candidate Dikkanchi D Shira versus Conrad Sangma of the Nationalist People's Party (NPP), but it was pitched to look like Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma's solitary challenge – a sort of battle for survival for him; one that would test whether he is the undisputed leader of Garo Hills. To me, Dikkanchi Shira was a proxy candidate for Dr Sangma. I wonder why the Congress is so devoid of alternative leaders that it has to bank on the Mukul Sangma family each time a Lok Sabha election takes place. A question to ask is: Do the members of the Congress Party in Garo Hills have voice? Are they allowed to voice their thoughts? Is Dr Sangma too overbearing for them to even venture to speak up? Are they afraid of being silenced by a CM who believes he knows everything about everything and therefore has no patience to listen to those who are slower on the uptake? Isn't this also true of the manner in which cabinet meetings are conducted? Even in the Assembly, it is the CM who has all the information about his colleagues' departments and gets up to answer whenever they flounder. Leadership does not mean doing everything for your colleagues; it means helping them to come to their own because each one has his level of competence and native wisdom. Hence when genuine Congress workers find that their voices are not heard, they distance themselves from the proceedings. Only sycophants remain because they are looking for their pound of flesh. This sycophancy is spilling all over social media. Sycophancy is what destructs leaders because they are not open to being told that the road they are riding on is fraught with danger. So on the issue of dissidence in the Congress camp, Congress sycophants including those holding important offices in the Party who are expected to know better, blame the media for creating a non-existent rift in the Party. They also blame the media for insurgency and claim that if not for the media insurgency would not get such a fillip. Listening to these rants you begin to wonder if the media is doing wrong when it reports murders, kidnapping and extortion by militants. So whose side are these Congress party workers on? The side of the insurgents or those who have lost their family members to insurgent outfits and suffered abuse and violence at their hands! Do Congress supporters want media to suppress these gross human rights abuses because Garo Hills must be insulated from bad press? I would have thought that those who work for a political party represent the aspirations of the people but evidently they represent their own selfish interests. In an article “Sycophancy is ever-present in Indian politics” (LiveMint Jun 2, 2016), Vikram Sinha elucidates how sycophancy is written in the DNA of the Congress. He points to the West Bengal polls, where immediately after the results were declared all the 44

Congress MLAs signed a declaration of unqualified allegiance to the party which naturally means the Nehru-Gandhi family - Sonia and Rahul. And while Congress rivals made fun of this imbecilic show of loyalty (where the one who initiates the move hopes to be amply rewarded), sycophancy cuts across party lines in India. We don't see such overt display of sycophancy in the tribal states of the North East but it is catching up. The irony is that leaders can make out sycophants a mile away but they encourage them because they hear so much of negativity about themselves in the media and among rivals that they need to hear something good even if that is fake. Now that sort of leader who can't handle criticism is no leader. He/she is a self-styled leader. A leader who is not insecure would invite his critics and hear them out and check if what they have to say is borne out of prejudice or of real concern about issues. Trust me you will not find such critics within political parties (a) because they do not have the breadth of knowledge and evidence-based studies to engage effectively with the Chief Minister (b) because they don't want to be seen as critics. Naturally the CM then has no one to point out his mistakes. He does not care about bad press because most of his constituents don't read English. And as one who has never lost an election since he first contested in 1993, he is rightly proud of his achievement. But humility has its place. When the Congress suffered an unprecedented loss in the Tura by-polls the party should have immediately closed ranks and dissected what went wrong. After all, anything can happen in an election. A study should have been commissioned to an independent agency to tell the Congress which of its strategies backfired and which worked. But again that is only C if Congress leaders have the appetite for the truth. To my mind, the Congress big-wigs did not think it worth their while to campaign for Dikkanchi Shira. Neither Rahul nor his mother came to Garo Hills to lend their support. On the other hand a united opposition with the backing of the BJP whose leaders actively campaigned in Garo Hills won the votes for Conrad Sangma. There is no denying that Conrad got a lot of sympathy votes but he is also more suited to take on the role of a Lok Sabha MP than Dikkanchi Shira. I don't intend to demean the lady, but we all have our

levels of competence and people have the right to judge us by that. Some voters even felt that setting up Dikkanchi is an insult to their intelligence. So the Congress needs introspection instead of trying to rock the boat now. And by the way we all hazarded a guess that Conrad was winning. How could Dr Sangma not see that coming? In the present game of one-upmanship it is Congress insiders who don't seem to know where their loyalties lie. Each one is out to extract his/her pound of flesh. With such people around Dr Mukul Sangma does not need the BJP to rock his Government. However, this is an old malady of the Congress Party in Meghalaya. It is a ritual enacted times without number with leaders flying in and out of Delhi to convince the High Command that they would make a better leader. Sources in Delhi tell us that most often these state leaders hardly get to meet Sonia Gandhi or Rahul Gandhi and that the latter is least interested in what happens in Meghalaya. At the moment his focus is Uttar Pradesh! So we have to take with a pinch of salt the statements that Congressmen trot out from Delhi. Now for some inexplicable reason Sonia G seems to have more faith in Vincent Pala to help lick the Party's wounds in Meghalaya. And Pala did not even campaign for Dikkanchi during the elections. He was busy travelling abroad! Is there any logic here? The combined opposition would love to take over the reins of government with two years to go before the next elections. But the combined opposition “combined” in Garo Hills because they have no foot-hold there. Even here they are riddled with inherent contradictions on the leadership issue. The BJP would find it hard to understand Meghalaya's rare political physics which defies even Einstein's Theory of Relativity where mass which is otherwise constant can only be moved by light. That light of leadership which could effect a split in the Congress and wean the Independents, is missing. It has always been missing. So Government change now looks inevitable since Himanta has his job cut out. But politics is an uncertain game. Enemies today are friends tomorrow, all for the sake of power. So there you go....the game of musical chairs has only just begun. Yours etc., B. Mawrie

Crying hoarse over Nehru deletion
Must textbooks
be only about
Delhi?

By Garga Chatterjee

Ever since the “news broke” that all references to Indian Union's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had been omitted from the Class VIII textbooks of the Rajasthan state board curriculum, there has been a huge hue and cry. Syllabus content, especially those of non-science subjects, has always been a bone of contention where various political forces have wanted to introduce changes based on their conception of what students should know more of and more crucially, what students should know less of. Given the super-dose of Jawaharlal Nehru worship that the citizens of the Indian Union have been fed for decades, the BJP has sought to downplay Congress's greatest family mascot. Congressis as well as those who think that the Congressi stream of politics represented the most glorious faction of politics before the transfer of power from the British monarch to the Indian National Congress, naturally were not amused. Usual suspects perched in Delhi's high wall universities who could care less about the state of school education in Rajasthan protested this de-Nehrufication. Some called it Saffronization – which is a trickier charge to establish given the simultaneous deletion of references to Madan Mohan Malviya, one of the great Hindu nationalist leading lights of the Indian National Congress and also a Hindu Mahasabha-ite. With Vallabhbbhai Patel, Maliviya has been a figure that the BJP has carefully sought to patronize. Hence, this round of saffronization was haphazard at best. This is nothing compared to the NCERT syllabus tweaking of the Vajpayee years that had the Congress patronized Delhi-based academic cliques up in arms. The BJP has got on a back-foot and has promised that this oversight would be corrected and Jawahar Lal Nehru would be rehabilitated in the minds of Rajasthani students of Class VIII. In terms of setting the rules of the game, Congress has had the first movers advantage and built up a entire academic bureaucracy by frank nepotism, with some historians happy to play second fiddle in that game of infecting hearts and minds of young ones through their selective take on the past and more importantly, through their particular spin on issues that couldn't be excluded. The BJP and the Sangh earlier was quite amateurish at this game. It is slowly building up a counter-bureaucracy. It is in learning mode and hence some of their history-management moves appear very undignified. It is still learning and it has all the intent to do fry the brains of students in their own particular snake-oil that will make proud sons of Bharat Mata out of unsuspecting Rajasthani kids. One thing, however, unites the Congress and the BJP. Both want the state boards to be destroyed-which is evident from their support of NEET in order to establish the dominance of CBSE. The other similarity is the stress on a make-believe 'national' centre and its politics over the various power centres that were sequentially subdued or gobbled up by the British to manufacture India. Thus we have the ridiculous things like the NCERT and the CBSE, which provide syllabus and content for a whole subcontinent. Given only BJP and Congress have been in power with their unitary India imaginations, they have created history books which claim to be about the subcontinent but predictably end up about the political forces of the Hindustani-belt in general and the rulers of Delhi in particular. A student of West Bengal or Nagaland who studies in such central boards will learn much more about the rulers who sat in a place thousands of miles away than the rulers and the past politics and culture of their own ethno-linguistic homeland. It is hardly different from the colonizer's history as in the USA – where students learn more about European and Greek history than the past of the people who were in charge before White men vanquished them physically through genocide and culturally through various methods – education being one of them. With the right inspiration and imbalance of power, 'education' aimed at 'unity' can be an effective tool of cultural genocide. The perverseness of the Delhi-ideology is that it silences the histories of most peoples and nationalities of the Indian Union. There is no uproar against this deletion since they were never included in the first place. That's how their deletion is normalized while one is also coerced to protest the deletion of Nehru. The difference between Congress and BJP histories is about their assessment of Aurangzeb. None would mention that this Delhi imperialism's army led by Hindu general Ram Singh was resisted successfully by Hindu Ahom general Lachit Barphukan aided ably by his military officer Bagh Hazorika Ismail Siddique. A focus away from the exploits of Delhi rulers to the resisters of Delhi rule or even worse, the description of great rulers who could care less about the existence of North India, evokes deep anxieties in the mind of the deep state and its academic time-servers. Nehru ruled Rajasthan from Delhi. Usual suspects who have never protested the erasure of Manipur or Bengal or Tamil Nadu's rulers from the Indian syllabus are protesting the erasure of Nehru from Rajasthan's textbooks. At present, no Naga is taught about their homeland's past but the past of Delhi. When Delhi will learn about Phizo, then only should Nagaland be expected to learn about Nehru. It's rather simple. If there has to be an Indian Union wide history, Harshavardhan needs to be cut down to size and the Pulakesins and Shashankas need to rise. Along with glory stories of successful hunters from Delhi, there has to be as many stories of those hunted by Delhi's rulers, from whatever make-believe Indian antiquity up until 2016. Textbooks cannot simply be about Delhi ideology. Let's learn about the ground beneath our feet. Let's remind ourselves the words of American poet Wendell Berry - “What I stand for is what I stand on.” Finally, that's what matters and connects man to his surrounds, to his soil, to his soul. That's what has ever mattered, here, there, everywhere. (IPA Service)

“*One must have a good memory to be able to keep the promises one makes.*”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 292 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2016

Jungle Raj in UP
EVENTS unfolding in Mathura which is represented in Parliament by actor Hema Malini are very disquieting. That people who spread terror and fear are occupying Government land and are able to carry out their reign of terror unchecked is enough to tell us that law and order has collapsed in Uttar Pradesh. Too many incidents, including the Dadri lynching one, reek of a goonda raj. In the attempt to evict the encroachers twenty four people were killed including an SP and an SHO. The illegal occupants calling themselves Azad Bharat Vidhik Vaicharik Kranti Satyagrahi were evicted following an Allahabad High Court order. While all political parties have closed ranks in roundly condemning the Akhilesh Yadav Government for complete breakdown of law and order in the state, there are also attempts to politicize the matter keeping in view the upcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh. That the encroachers were enjoying political patronage goes without saying. They might even be used as agent provocateurs during elections by the ruling party.

BSP supremo Mayawati has called for the resignation of the SP government for the “unfortunate and painful” incident and demanded a time-bound judicial inquiry. The BJP has sought a CBI probe and claimed the incident reflected the “lawlessness” in the state. The Congress jumped in saying it is time for the Samajwadi Party Government to come out of its slumber. The Mathura incident is a result of massive intelligence failure. How could the ABVVKS bring guns and bombs into the state without any hindrance? How could they practice with firearms et al in the area they have illegally settled in without the connivance of the ruling party? Politics in India is taking a very ugly turn with politicians ready to break all the rules only to remain in power. The Union Home Ministry has now stepped in to clean the mess in Mathura. Hopefully there will be more of corrective action and less of politics on this issue

LOOKING BACK
February 11, 1989
Bihar scenario
Limited options before Rajiv

The curtains is yet to drop on the suspense-packed high drama being enacted since last one month on the Congress stage the situation has reached a point of no return. The Bihar Congress(I) dissidence, which became a rebellion during the sojourn here of the Central team headed by Home Minister Buta Singh and Steel Minister Fotedar, has not been subdued, though a face saving device in keeping with the Central Congress leadership's call has been found But the one-point demand of the dissidents remains unaltered, and the compromise formula does not change this situation. The options open before the Congress(I) high command remain the same as they were during the recent crisis, namely (1) to agree to the demand of dissidents and being about the and immediate change in the CLP leadership, which may jeopardize the leadership's prestige and authority in dealing with dissidents in other states (2) impose President's rule and allow Bhagwat Jha Azad to continue as head of a caretaker government irrespective of whether the recommendation of a government which has lost majority in the House should be accepted or not (3) the cooperation of the Acting Speaker may be taken for granted and, so allow the Assembly session to be adjourned for one and half or two months, utilize this time for reapproachment and at the fag end of the financial year get the budget for 1989-90 passed; (4) dissolve the Assembly take disciplinary action against the

dissidents and go in for elections in March or April, preparing itself for a split in the party? And lastly (5) allow Azad to step down and keep the house in suspended animation till such time that a government can be constituted. The central leadership has a difficult choice. In any case, it has to be remembered that Bihar is a Congress(I) ruled State with a thumping majority (191 in a house of 325) in the Assembly. Therefore, suspension or dissolution of the Assembly and imposition of President's rule is bound to very adversely affect the Congress(I) credibility and authority all over the country. Recall the situation obtaining in the Congress party eleven months ago when in a mid-night-coup Azad was flown to Patna, elected CLP leader at 2 AM with just about two dozen legislators present in the meeting and an hour later he was sworn in as CM in the Raj Bhawan. No Congressman raised his little finger. Everyone, including Dr Jagannath Mishra and Bindeshwari Dubey assured cooperation. Today's situation is in sharp contrast to the one obtaining in February 1948 when Azad took over a CM. how did this come to happen? True, the Congress debacle in Tamilnadu and the situation in Madhya Pradesh heralding erosion of prestige and authority of the Central leadership had its effect on Bihar but only partially. The situation here even otherwise had reached the boiling point. For this turn for the worse in Bihar the Congress (I) High Command, Mr Rajiv Gandhi is largely responsible.

Oops 'they' did it again.....The "They" here refers to the normally weird people who want to direct the way as to how human beings should live to attain the realm of spirituality by worshipping this or that entity. In simple terms we can say that the supposedly good one-God and the evil one -Devil or its several incarnations in Khasi such as Thlen, ka Bih ka Ban, Taro ka Shwar etc. Based on this the worshippers time and again create moral panic in the community at large by pointing to the need for revival or earth quake prophecies, the glowing buildings , the calendar images of god/s who either drink milk or are shedding tears in blood, the men ai ksuid (witchcraft) episode, the Nongshohnoh and now the devil worshippers. This is human insecurity in its diverse implications and disorder which is the natural consequence of the characteristics of our State, Meghalaya, a land of festivals where festive moods are only designed to suppress the prevailing frustration among the struggling youth; a sort of a pain killer for the insecure and uncertain future. Psychologically, in such a situation the human mind is bound to look for alternatives. Sadly for us, both the prescription and the alternative seems to be wrong.

Without delving into the different kinds of devils in different religions or cultures of the world, lets us try to find answers to the recent accusations of devil worship. My simple question is: whose devils are the devil worshippers in this part of the world worshipping? The oriental devils or the devils of Islam, iblis, or the Christian devils who come in different names, or are we just pretenders of religiosity? The term religious also mean the followers of the religion called Satanism. Satanism as a religion is practiced in different forms, from theism to atheism from peaceful religiosity to vulgar vandalism. The atheistic Satanists also known as Laveyan Satanists after the name of Anton Szandor Lavey, who authored the Satanic Bible and founded the Church of Satan in 1966. For them Satan is a mere symbol with characteristics and traits of individuality, carnality, independence and earthly success and power. For them Satan is a "Beast in man."Laveyan Satanists do not worship Satan but worship the self as the

centre of one's own universe. The Gnostic Satanists worship Lucifer as the Bringer of Light, who helps us to transcend the imperfections of earthly existence by enticing us to indulgence, rather than abstinence.

The other is the Deistic or Pantheistic Satanists. They too do not believe that Satan is a personal being rather than the impersonal supreme being or force which is one with all things. This theistic branch of Satanism is divided into multiple sub-categories the oldest being the Gnostic Satanists, who are descended from the Ophidian Gnostics and believe that everything that existed was originally pure spirit ; then Demiurge(who was identified as the god of the old Testament by Ophidian Gnostic and with the Devil by Gnostic Christians) trapped our souls in matter and cut us away from the source. The Gnostic Christians believe in the way of discovering Gnosie or knowledge of the divinity within-which was believed to be the only way to escape the sinfulness of the material world and to abstain from worldly pleasures in order to transcend the material world. On the other hand the Ophidian Gnostics believed that Gnosis could be achieved by indulging in worldly pleasure and by exhausting their sinfulness. This is where the Gnostic Satanist came from. The Ophidian Gnostics refused to identify the Biblical serpent as Satan but as Sophia the goddess of wisdom which tempted Eve to consume from the tree of knowledge of the good and evil and thereby freed from the authoritarian power of the Demiurge (Jehovah).

There are also the Christian -based Duo-theists who believe in a form of Satanism that is essentially more like versified Christianity. They believe that Satan in not a god but a fallen angel who has rebelled against the Creator, and who is attempting to usurp the Creator's throne. This is probably a form of Satanism that most Christians are familiar with and what they believe such as the Fall of Man, the Crucifixion, the coming of Anti-Christ but they choose to stay on the other side of the fence.

Then there are the Joy of Satan-Style Satanists who like the Christian -based Duo- theists believe that there is a cosmic struggle going on between Satan and Jehovah. This school believes that Satan and Jehovah are not actually

supernatural beings, but mortal aliens living on a distant planet across the universe, who communicate telepathically with human beings and who are engaged in a psychic mind wars over our allegiance. They believe that all the Gods worshipped by human beings throughout history are really extra-terrestrials. They also believe that Satan was originally the pre-Christian Sumerian deity Enki, before he became corrupted into the fallen angel concept. They call themselves Enkians.

There are also the Devil worshippers known as the Diabolators who believe in Satan and worship him. The Diabolators can also embark upon a wide variety of theological perspectives-polytheism, pantheism, henotheism, duo-theism etc. They openly worship the Power of darkness as their Gods and refer to that power as Masters, a term that most Satanists refuse to accept.

Bottom of the list in terms of chronology are the Black Metal Circle or the Black Metal Mafia. This was founded by a man who called himself Euronymous (after a Greek Deity of death and the underworld). Euronymous and his followers were musicians who played black metal music (not all black metal artists are Satanists). They chose to call themselves Satanist because they believed in Satan as this Spirit of Evil who only wants to spread misery and suffering throughout the world. In order to "serve" him, Euronymous and his followers began a long campaign of church-burning and graveyard desecrations, as well as murders. They made it a point to target churches that were historical monuments of architecture in Norway. The explanation that Euronymous gives to all these deeds was that by performing acts of terrorism cloaked in satanic imagery, they would cause Christian fanaticism to grow in Northern Europe a reverse psychology against liberal Christian attitudes in Northern Europe. The Black Metal Circle ended when Euronymous was murdered by his own member in 1993.

Coming back to Atheistic or Laveyan Satanists, in our State we are having more Church-going population and less Christian population. Our leaders in different capacities are corrupt to the core. Their corruption stems from the instinct of self-preservation and aggrandisement to the point that our whole political, religious, social, cultural ,economic and moral systems are corrupted. Our educational institutions run by different religious

denomination are becoming unaffordable to many; consumerism is our way of life. Our humanity is judged not by standards of humanism but by the apparent spirituality. Broken homes, addictions, deprivations, poverty and landlessness for the majority and luxury and land grabbing for the rich and powerful is the order of the day. So are we not being carnal? Are we not being selfish? Are we not being self-centered? And are we not being one among the Laveyan Satanist with a pretention of being theistic.

A section of our youth is alleged to be the devil worshippers. They are either arrested or reprimanded or admonished by the elders. It is reported that these youth are indulge in desecration of churches and graves ,vandalism and midnight congregation. It seems they are subscribing to the Dark Metal Circle or Dark Metal Mafia Satanism of Euronymous, with or without knowledge of it. This category of Satanism lacks academic and philosophical bases .What do they get by burning, vandalising or desecrating churches?

Church buildings have never been the prescription of the Bible. In fact it was only after the late 2nd century that the practice of building churches started and the idea of state-sponsored Church buildings started with the a converted Emperor Constantine who built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 326 AD. This means that Christians concept of church was different before the 3rdcentury. The Catholic encyclopaedia defines the last supper as the church. Prior to the 3rd century any congregation of believers be it in a private home or an open space is a church. There are many instances and verses in the Bible where even Jesus Christ did not approve the idea of church or temple building. Apart from the criminal fringe Euronymous Satanist, no other Satanist or Satanism endorses the idea of vandalism or desecration in any form.

I feel westernisation has to stop somewhere. We have westernised enough and imbibed it in all aspects of our lives to our worldviews and our standards of judgement. Recently we did not forget to even westernise a humble vegetable, "Tomato", by copycatting the Spanish La Tomatina festival. We have westernised God and now we are on the march to westernising the Devil.

(The author is lecturer, Seng Khasi College)

TO THE EDITOR

Injustice meted out to MLP trainees

Editor, Apropos to the heading above, we the aggrieved trainees both senior and junior cadre courses at the 2nd MLA BN, Goeragre Tura Training Centre would like to express our views through your esteemed daily. The service cadre courses started on December 7, 2015 for a period of 45 days which was due to be completed on January 22, 2016. The training, including the usual Firing Test (UFT), was completed on 14-15 January, 2016. We have been closed for (L&O) duty during the South Asian Games from January 28, 2016 till February 17, 2016. Till date no results have come up even after a lapse of 5 months. May we

mention here that our colleague N K Banshanlang Chyne of Jowai DEF who had completed the course along with us had been discharged from the Training Centre vide Memo No. BN/2nd MLP/A-81/2016-2532-37 dated May 30, 2016 because he fell sick after completion of the training including the Firing Test (UFT), without being given a fair chance for explanation. We feel this is unjustified.

Similarly, the Junior cadre course of constable for promotion to the rank of LNK/NK which was conducted in the noted training center i.e., 1st MLP BN Mawiong Shillong and 2nd MLP Bn were also aggrieved. The result of the trainees of 1st MLP BN was declared. However, the results of the trainees of 2nd MLP BN is kept pending till date. We therefore request the Police Headquarters to look into the matter so that

justice is given to all. Moreover, the presence of ABI, Jonardhan A.P and ABSI Ramasavak Thakur in the Training Centre created inconvenience to all the trainees at 2nd MLP BN Training Centre. They should be summoned from 2nd MLP BN and posted to other units.

Your etc.,
Trainees of Senior and Junior Cadre Courses
2nd MLP BN Goeragre, Tura

The pothole and the PM

Editor, The vicious pot hole at the bottom of the Lachumiere road (coming from passport office)which had been causing massive traffic jams and which had been ignored by the PWD for nearly a year now, has suddenly been filled and repaired all because of

'Modi Magic' - yes, if the P.M. had not visited Shillong, that pot hole would have still been there and this is a pointer to the efficiency of the government. If it requires the visit of the Prime Minister to fill up a mere pot hole then no wonder most of the many important government projects do not get off the ground - being more important than a pot hole, perhaps these projects are waiting for a visit from someone much more powerful than the P.M. before they can take off! Hence the reason for the long long wait?

Yours etc.,
D M Pariat
Shillong -3

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

Privatizing Education
Do they benefit the meritorious?

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

The recent Supreme Court order underscoring the demand for capitation fees by educational institutions as illegal, has come at the right time, when commercialization of education has spread to the far corners of the country.

Whereby, the five-judge Constitution bench emphasized that the objective of setting up educational institutions must not be to make profit. Further, it asked the Government to step in, curb malpractice and regulate this to promote merit. The judgment also highlighted, "It has to be ensured that the admission process meets the triple test of transparency, fairness and non-exploitativeness".

Surprisingly, education has been commercialized wherein no one thinks of it in 'no-loss-no-profit' terms.

A section which has for long been advocating privatizing various types of services, including education, now finds that profit making is the only objective of these private institutions. Worse, the lack of Government monitoring has resulted in private sector education emerging as an area where high profits without any risks are ensured. Arguably, the Government must have been aware of the role of the private sector in education as lakhs of students flock to these institutions only to turn away when capitation fees is demanded. Interestingly, most of these establishments are backed by well-known political leaders and, as such, the Government does not want to interfere. An example, a Kolkata private medical college is demanding around Rs 60-70 lakhs for admission through a manipulated entrance examination. Obviously, the Medical Council of India is involved in the racket; or else how can the academy make this demand.

Undeniably, privatization has been increasing at a fast pace in education but is concentrated in urban areas, big cities as the rich stay there. According to a survey, in the 5-10 age group and among below poverty line families, only around 14 per cent attend private schools, most of whom are from rural areas.

As regards teachers, their qualifications are quite high in Government schools but they not only lack sincerity but also absenteeism is high, though this has been checked to a considerable extent. Besides, except for a few religious or missionary organizations, by and large the fees charged by private educational institutions is very high, most of which are beyond the means of even the lower middle class.

Therefore, it is surprising that some educationists advocate the need for expansion of education through the privatization route, knowing that such growth would benefit the rich and upper middle class.

This is unrealistic as the private sector is not for charity. True, though we talk of our tradition of benevolence, the present CSR spending is not up to the mark. Despite the Government urging corporates to set up educational institutions in rural areas for the impoverished and economically weaker sections, not much has happened.

True, the quality of education in private schools might be higher compared to its counterparts in the Government sector, but in institutions of higher learning, the performance of private sector is not at all encouraging. Of course, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, the Manipal group and a few others are exceptions.

Further, as reflected in international surveys Indian colleges, universities and professional institutes do not match the standards in many other emerging

economies and Third World countries. Moreover, the state of institutions in semi-urban and rural areas is neglected thereby standards suffer considerably.

Undoubtedly, the strategy for improving quality education at all levels is not difficult. Selections should be fair and transparent and merit should be the only criteria. Though there are reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, wherever suitable candidates are not found, this should be opened to general candidates.

Additionally, there has to be a difference between outstanding teachers and those who are poor performers. The process of automatic promotion should be done away with and only those promoted who are above the benchmark in all respects

Consequently, the onus for development in the educational sector lies totally with the Government with the private sector making a contribution, wherever there is potential for profits. Towards that end, more funds need to be allocated for expansion, which has not been done so to the desired extent.

Pertinently, the 12th Plan echoed this and suggested a target of public spending of one per cent of GDP on higher education and 0.5 per cent on technical education. The Narayana Murthy Committee Working Group on Higher & Technical Education for the 12th Plan too projected a resource requirement of Rs 413,367 crores which would require innovative and newer avenues of funding.

This apart, there is need for a lot of resources to spread primary education across the country. Regulation and a strict monitoring mechanism of the state of private academic institutions is another crucial aspect, which unfortunately is lacking.

Not just the quality of teachers, most of whom after retirement join private institutions, but also the fees charged must be regulated. One needs to find out whether the institution is committed to inducting students from poorer sections in return for land which they receive at subsidized rates.

Sadly, quality higher education has become profit-oriented which means that lower income groups and the economically weaker sections cannot afford it. During the last decade or more, 70 to 80 per cent of capacity created has been done by the private sector, especially in the field of engineering and management. It is paramount that these deemed universities concentrate on quality teaching and recruit teachers with requisite qualifications. While the quality of well-known private institutions cannot be doubted, the question remains: What will happen to the poor, especially those who are not so brilliant and cannot get admission in State universities?

In sum, an integrated educational plan needs to be worked out where the private sector should be allowed to open institutions but the quality of its teaching should be strictly monitored. However, if education is treated as a 'no loss, no profit' basis, corporates would not be interested in entering this field and some might even exit this sector.

Furthermore, the fee structure should be such that there are different payouts for the EWS and lower income groups, middle income sections and the rich class. Only then would people from the bottom tiers of society get an opportunity to enter the private deemed universities and colleges.

The admission pattern should also be strictly monitored and the 'management quota', where capitation fees are demanded, needs be totally abolished. ---- INFA

By Shweta Patwardhan

Betty Friedan very well said "Aging is not 'lost youth' but a new stage of opportunity and strength". Music is his passion. His ringtone "Tere mere sapne ek rang hain" makes you feel nostalgic. Filled with enthusiasm of a 21-year old young man, N.R.Venkitachalam, 73, has brought happiness in the life of thousands of people.

After retiring from the post of senior marketing professional at the age of 61. He decided to work for differently-abled and street children and found out that how difficult was it to get funds for different projects for them. It was then he got the idea of using singing for the purpose and he formed Klub Nostalgia which is run by group of professional senior citizen.

Till date the club has supported many NGOs. Venkat says, "I am enjoying my golden years of life. As my expertise as manager and hobby have come together to given a new meaning not only to my life but support to thousands who were searching for a meaning to their life. I work 21 hours a day to make my shows a success." Similar is the experience of Harendra Bengali, 71, who after retiring as vigilance officer from a nationalized bank got a new purpose in life. He became the member of senior citizen club in dada-dadi park in Borivali in 2001 and



Essence of life after 60

bungalow.

It was here he saw a Karoke artist performing and there he got the idea of forming a Karoke group.

He consulted his group members and they all got ready and everyday they practise on old songs. Now the group has 5000 members and has the laurels of being the biggest Karoke group in the world. Bengali says, "I am more busy post-retirement. Everyday half of my day is spent on downloading

songs from internet and learning new techniques to bring more professionalism."

Not only music but for some dance has been a source of keeping themselves engaged and fulfilling their dreams. Navanita Parmar, 69, teaches Bharatnatyam, folk and semi-classical dance to children and adults. Navanita says, "I am still young at heart. I learnt dancing at the age of 44 along with my daughter and completed full course of eight years. After retiring from my job I started teaching dancing to differently abled children." Many of the members have participated in the reality shows on the television. Some others like Surendra Kothari started teaching computers to his friends and then now holds regular classes for senior citizens and making all of them technology friendly to handle their day to day life.

Not only mentally but keeping healthy is the goal

of many of them. It was found that they were more food and health conscious

took control of the situation. Bajaj says, "Most of the women feel helpless when one of the partners passes

not a bearer."

Bajaj is curing people through her treatments but



than the earlier generations. Vidya Bajaj, 72, yoga and chiropractic exponent conducts regular yoga classes in Mumbai. After the death of her husband, she did not close herself in the house and did not let anybody pity her but strongly she

away. This is the time when we have to show our potential and come out of the grief state. Now I have hundreds of well wishers as they feel that because of my guidance they have been able to get relief from pain. Now I am a pain killer and

there are some others like Dr. S. S. Bhandare, 80, medical practitioner who pursued her hobby of gardening to reduce the pollution and maintain greenery in her neighbourhood. For past three (Contd on P-VII)

Importance of taking risks

I never used to be a risk-taker but then I had children who would play in the park and say things like: "Daddy, close your eyes and open your mouth." You soon learn what true courage is.

A gutsy decision was made recently: a couple who got top score on a farm-themed mobile phone game took home a live cow as their prize. Game-maker Digital Media gives winners the option of taking their award in the form of steaks, but the latest winners, from Tunisia, took the entire cow "as is".

"That way they get the cow as a pet, but also have the option of turning it into steaks later," said reader Bernard Betts, who sent me the news item.

Reading it reminded me of a solo sailor I once met who went on long sea voyages with a dog called Emergency Rations. He assured me that the pooch had no idea what his name meant, but it kept making worried eyes at him.

Anyway, I like that the cow-winners chose the brave option. The same could be said for UK university students who this month elected a cat as honorary president, I heard from reader Sara Padilla. I added that to my list of unbelievable-but-true election results. In 1967 a tin of itchy foot powder was elected mayor of a town in Ecuador; in 1988, a chimpanzee stood for election in Rio de Janeiro under the slogan "Vote monkey, get

vote for anyone whose slogan has the frankness level of "Vote monkey, get monkey". You get someone honest, and it's good to be a risk-taker.

(The writer is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send comments and ideas via the author's FB page)

sions.

Of course, you can also make life interesting by making original decisions on a smaller scale. Reader Rajiva Singhe forwarded me a news item about a US business traveller who noticed a box on his hotel booking form labelled "additional requests". So Sean Fitzsimons wrote something silly on it: "If it's not too much trouble could you build a fort out of pillows?" The hotel staff did. Now he always puts in off-beat requests ("I would like a photo of a dog dressed as a sea captain") purely to challenge hoteliers and increase the amount of fun in the world.

I immediately thought of "additional requests" I could make for some of the hotels I stay in around in Asia: 1) "A bed that doesn't collapse in the night"; 2) "Edible food"; 3) "Staff which speak at least one of the top 10 human languages"; 4) "A door that closes" and the like. That should challenge them!

Anyway, if I ever win a mobile phone farm-themed game, I'm definitely going for the live cow option, whatever trouble I get into. Wife: "You said you wouldn't bring home any more large useless items." Me (covering the ears of cow): "Shhh! She can hear you, darling."

Meanwhile, a lot of people have been complaining about elections this year. If you don't like the candidates, nominate a tin of foot powder, or just

vote for anyone whose slogan has the frankness level of "Vote monkey, get monkey". You get someone honest, and it's good to be a risk-taker.

(The writer is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send comments and ideas via the author's FB page)

Green activists worldwide have been campaigning for long to bring the world to adopt an eco-friendly approach before the impact of pollution, deforestation and soil erosion wreck havoc on the planet immeasurably. At last, it is having some impact among responsible citizens and countries committing to the limit pollution.

The new breed of fashion designers in the country are also putting their weight behind the cause of sustainability. They encourage fashion with a conscience using home-grown products and designing wardrobes with desiethnicity. Garments are getting manufactured from organic fabrics and materials. It also means giving support to the local cottage industry by facilitating job opportunities for indigenous artisans, craftsmen, weavers and labourers. Additionally, the products come at a reasonable price-range, but keeping intact the aesthetic values and quality.

Agrees designer Nidhi Munim, "Sustainable fashion is all about being environ-friendly with affordability. It's definitely not a short-term trend but a design philosophy that we as socially responsible couturiers must adhere to." It involves using natural dyes, zero

Sustainability is a living concern today with issues like global-warming and climate-change posing a huge threat to the planet. How is the fashion designer community responding to the call for sustainable fashion? Pramita Bose probes

Green fashion

waste production and up-

turn increases comfort and makes for practical sense in our hot country," she says.

Designer-duo Jaya Bhatt and Ruchi Tripathi of Indigene brand often caters to sustainable sartorial lines. They feel, "Slowly but steadily, people are becoming aware of better options and this is greatly motivating us to turn out items that are eco-friendly. This also explains why a lot of designers today are sourcing handmade commodities, involving cheaper manual labour and low-cost natural stuff." They point out that "The

sources and the fast languishing crafts and skills of our age-old cultural heritage has propelled the fashion industry to stop and think about the necessary changes to be brought in".

Dresses, fashionable trousers, pants, tops, maxis and shirts are commonly seen using sustainable fabrics. They come in as single piece outfits or separates for both women and menswear. All sorts of garments from traditional wear to modern interpretations of jackets and overlays can be created in handmade fabrics, applying fair methods.

Many new and established designers are consciously moving towards using recyclable raw material and ethical work spaces to produce and create wares that do not compromise on quality and sustainability.

Designer Ritika Arya Jain emphasises that "Both designers as well as consumers have understood the importance of using organic fabrics that do not harm the environ and are taking a paradigm shift. They are resorting to more biodegradable items now and are also finding alternative means to adopt in the wake of ban on plastic bags".

cycling. "It's about using hundred per cent organic cotton clothing which in

growing consciousness amongst the general public about our depleting re-



By Ranjan K Baruah

Ask any student about their concern if they are in college and universities and the quick answer that one would get is their worry for getting a job. Getting employment is concern for all students. Though some will make it to government jobs but many will be struggling with private jobs or business venture. There are differences in jobs in case of male or female. Many students are fond of getting government jobs and we are aware that fewer aspirants will be getting into government sector but in spite of that majority want to get a job in government sector.

There are difference between employability and employment. We may think it to be same but there are differences and students and job aspirants must know the differences to excel in life. Employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required. It can be defined as: 'a set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy'. In simple terms, employability is about being capable of gaining, retaining and excelling in employment. It means that there is difference between employment and employability.

Employment means any legal income generating activity. It is a relationship between two parties, usually based on a contract where work is paid for, where one party, which may be a corporation, not-for-profit organization, or other entity is the employer and the other is the employee.

Understanding employability

Employees work in return for payment, which may be in the form of an hourly wage, by piecework or an annual salary, depending on the type of work an employee does and/or which sector she or he is working in. Employees in some fields or sectors may receive gratuities, bonus payments or stock options. In some types of employment, employees may receive benefits in addition to payment.

For any individuals, employability depends on the attitude, skills and knowledge they have and the way they execute and present them to derive maximum benefit to realize their set goal. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are different and they may fit in all sort of industries or areas of work. It is employability skills that enhance the growth and progress in any employment.

Updates: =The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship:

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program provides 10 months of professional enrichment and non-degree graduate-level study in the United States for accomplished mid-level professionals from designated countries. Fellows are nominated by U.S. Embassies or Fulbright Commissions based on their potential for leadership and a demonstrated commitment to public service. The fellows are placed in groups by the professional field at selected U.S. universities offering specially designed programs of study and training.

International Scholarship from University of West London:

The University of West London is pleased to offer International Scholarship Award commencing in Sep-

tember 2016. International applicants are eligible to apply for this award programme. It aims to examine the impact of the division between further and higher education on strategies to widen participation in undergraduate education. Last date for sending application is 19th June.

PhD Fellowships in Development Studies:

International Institute of Social Studies is inviting applications for 5 Ph.D. Fellowships in Development Studies. International students (except European Economic Area) can apply for these fellowships. Fellowship aims to assist high achieving and highly motivated international students who have been offered a full-time place at an International Institute of Social Studies. ISS is based in Netherland and last date for applying is 15th June.

International Scholarships in Business Translation, University of Strathclyde :

The University of Strathclyde is offering 5 international scholarships in Business Translation and Interpreting for the academic year 2016-2017. Scholarships are available for M Sc programme. The University of Strathclyde is a Scottish public research university located in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Last date for applying is 30th June .

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

Novoneel Chakraborty is a self-confessed thriller fanatic and his latest, "Forget Me Not Stranger", is going to reveal the identity of the stranger while marking the end of the Stranger trilogy. IBNS correspondent **Sudipto Maity** finds out the hugely popular writer's plans for the future and the 'myth' surrounding him.



Since the trilogy is over, have you started writing something new?

Yeah. I have already started a standalone novel this time. It's a psycho-sexual thriller...working at it right now.

Are you trying to move on from the romantic thriller genre?

No. See, basically I'm trying to get into that thriller genre only. Sometime it's going to be a romantic thriller, sometime it'll be a psychological thriller, but that thriller element has to be there because that's what I think I'm good at and I'll play on my strength.

What about the movie (a screenplay by him) that you spoke about the last time we met?

It's still in the pipeline, it has not gone to the production stage as of yet. So it's there. It's happening and yet not happening, in-between. I have written the screen play and my part is done. It's just that the production part is awaited.

What is this movie all about?

It's too early for me to say

anything because I don't have their permission. It's the producer's prerogative...so not right now, but it's a thriller.

The last time I checked, you were reading 'Aiwa Maru'. What are you reading right now?

I have just started reading a thriller called 'Charlie Presumed Dead'. I have just started it and it has been sometime that I have read a thriller. I have been writing thriller, but like I said, it has been sometime I had read one, so I thought I might as well give it a try. You know with all these work, life has left me very little time to read these days, and I don't like it at all. I have got my Kindle; I have got my hard book, so wherever I go I try to read at least two or three pages.

If I'm suppose to bump into you at any given point of time, what's that one book I'll find Novoneel reading?

I generally don't go back to books and it's very rare that I go back to one particular book. If you still insist, I will say Paulo Coelho's 'The Alchemist', just to read the lines once more. I will also go back to Ayn Rand's 'The Fountainhead' and maybe Tagore's works. I read a lot of translated works. I may not read the entire story, but a few lines or a particular scene. So, these are the three

'I don't read my books'

books you'll find me going back to.

Getting back to the trilogy, have you found your real life Revannah Banerjee, the character in the book?

Real life Revannah Banerjee...yeah, of course. It's not one person though. Revannah, the character itself stemmed out of my observation of so many girls who live outside Kolkata. Girls, who have left their home and have gone to other cities and are fighting it out there, so there's isn't just one Revannah, I have got so many of them. But if I have to zero down to someone, there are three people. It has to be a great serendipity or coincidence to meet exactly that character. So, these three forms the puzzle that Revannah is. Two of them is from Kolkata, one is from Patna and she lives in Gurgaon.

How did you come in contact with these three girls?

All three were my readers and we started talking. One of them started sharing all her life problems with me. She thought I'm some kind of love guru or something and will be able to solve all her problems. As I started talking more, I kind of started to know her as a person and from there on the character of Revannah took shape. It happened very subconsciously.

You have completed this trilogy, so tell me, while writing did you always have a fixed story line, or it kept

say, I knew where exactly it's heading. But I did not know how I'm going to say it, because my style of writing is a little stream of consciousness writing, so it's like, if I'm working on a book today, I don't know what I will write tomorrow. So, I sit and I discover. Though I knew the beginning and the end, I did not know how it will play out.

Do you still feel the chill before the release of a new book?

I'm not scared, but I'm shit nervous. I'm very nervous, especially with this boo because it's the end of a trilogy and people have a lot of expectations. See, it's one thing to read a book where you don't expect much and it's very different when you like it and start expecting. I know half of them will open up Forget Me Not Stranger thinking that in the first chapter itself I will tell them who the stranger is. And with that kind of a mentality it's very difficult to understand or to read a book the way it should be read. You read it with a filter of expectations, which is very scary for me as an author. Because I know then you're not seeing what I'm doing, you are just going with your preferences.

Does it get frustrating at a certain point, when you go through one of these phases?

Yeah, it does get frustrating, until you discover something more to the story. The moment that happens, you again are charged up and say I got it, I'll write again. But sometimes when you are struck for a week or ten days, not knowing where to go, won't say it's frustrating, it's just that mentally you start shutting yourself out. You start procrastinating, and that is scary.

Do you get that feeling

Interview

on changing?

When I started, I had the beginning... I had the end with me. I did not have the middle, how to go about it. I knew what I was going to

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, June 5, 2016

You would have great ambition and energy for your work as Venus opposite Saturn on your solar return chart. You plan in an unorthodox way and get appreciation from your business associates and colleagues. You might consider ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one source for monetary gain; however make sure that you read the fine print. There is much joy from children and family relations. You gain from literary pursuits. Financially this will be a very secure and comfortable period. Assets like property or vehicle can be acquired. Overseas travel will lay the foundation for stronger connections and associations.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

Your efforts and confidence and courage bring success in the form of monetary gains and your energy increases for work projects and your job environment is lively. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful through devotion and considerable efforts on your part. You may find your children at an age that requires more attention and discipline. You have more energy at your disposal to express yourself creatively, through activities with children, romantic hobbies, or sports.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

This phase brings love and harmony in professional and personal relations. You have the chance to shine, largely because you project yourself with self-respect and modesty. You are especially appealing and charming in personal and family relations. Your children may need more discipline than they previously did. You may enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress. You might invest time in traveling and visiting friends and relatives.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

This period offers a natural curiosity, facility with words, and the ability to multi-task successfully. You are especially good at mediating conflicts. Smoothing over differences and using your diplomacy skills figures now. Your mind is always active with new ideas for an increase of income. This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily self-discipline to match. You are inspired creatively and emotionally. You want others to take notice, and you are more sensitive to the appreciation of people. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

This is favorable period for hobbies, sports and competitive exams. Beware of a covetous and suspicious person around you who could cause misunderstanding in your personal relationships. You are bold in your love, yet not aggressive either. Artistic self-expression is important, possibly through music, fashion and writing. Your communication style tends to be sharper, more direct and to the point. You may work hard at making yourself feel more secure, and you may be called upon to take charge on the home and family front. In fact, if you are feeling very restless, moody, or defensive, it would be a good idea to do any of these things.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

The present planetary configuration increases confidence in personal relations; courage and efforts at work place. It is a great time to do something entirely new and pioneering. Discussions and ideas about finances and material security figure strongly. Although you like the good things in life and may spend quite a bit on clothes, furniture, and entertainment, your innate sense of security will not permit you to go overboard to the point of extravagance. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

This is a period that brings love and understanding in personal and professional relations. Friends and loved ones take priority. People at work might be surprised by your ability to assert yourself and your needs. You do not find yourself lacking in opportunities to socialize. You are

likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in friendship, or with groups of like-minded individuals. You are more peace loving than usual and slightly detached on a personal level and feelings towards religion are enhanced this week. Examining the past in order to improve the future is certainly worthwhile, as long as you don't waste your energy.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

Success, responsibility and maturity are the keywords. You have a great deal of energy for new money making projects, or for stepping up existing ones. Matters of the heart touch you deeply. You may willingly play a supportive role to the family and offer compassion and selfless love. This is a rather happy, goal-oriented time on the professional front. This is a time to follow your dreams and ideas, and to plant a seed in the form of a wish for the future. You possess extra charm in your professional life. Strong opportunities for love and fun occur. More opportunities to socialize and network could present themselves now.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

This phase is good for money, family, status and happiness. Money matters come into focus for you. You would adopt a serious approach to business because you are in the spotlight. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional success, and leadership. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. Your love life is more attractive and charming. Public relations work, promotion, and other such endeavors are favored now. You give attention on fitness and health related programs.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

Diplomacy, correctness in manner, finesse, and charm will be a big plus in aiding financial gains, especially in areas requiring public interaction. You feel attracted to intelligent people with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas. You know how to relate to others and you do so in a natural and warm manner. More contact with authority figures is likely. Recognition is likely to come your way whether you ask for it or not, and the responsibility that comes right along with it. Do what you feel is right, keeping in mind that you are at your most visible during this time. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

This is an excellent time to create a budget or financial plan, or to rid yourself of old habits that undermine your sense of personal power and self-mastery. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy. If single, you are more willing than normal to enter into a committed relationship. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You receive pleasure from anything that expands your horizons, both physically and mentally.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

All that is deeply personal comes into focus now. Conflicts with a partner over values or personal possessions are more likely to occur. Circumstances are such that your diplomacy skills are required. Your self-mastery skills matter more than usual. This is the time when you are most desirous of change on a deep level. You are more willing than usual to explore life's secrets. On a more practical level, you may be dealing with joint finances and shared resources now more than usual. Social life takes priority in your life. Social interactions of a personal, one-on-one kind are emphasized.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

You would be generous, emotional, and sympathetic with people around you. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, with a loved one. You have good team spirit right now, and you are more tactful and obliging with your co-workers. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. It's important to include others rather than to go solo for the time being. However, bending too much to the will of another is not advised either. You take more pride in the work you do and in your health routines.

Green fashion

(Contd from P-VI) line was originally launched at Lakme Fashion Week earlier this year in its full-length size, including a conventional stole in matching fabric. The duchess and her stylist Natasha Archer further customised the apparel cleverly by shearing it off to look like a dress and transformed a part of the stole into a belt. This do-it-yourself move drew praises from fashion circles all over, including the creator.

The palette suggested by the dressmakers is mainly earthy and eye-soothing. "Colours like earthy tones, indigos, clay dyes and other natural tints are apt for sustainable creations," recommends Munim. She reveals that a lot of textile exponents like to work with kora or off-loom natural fabrics in off-white shades without dyes, while others prefer to go for natural hues. "The palette is muted and subtle ranging between calming indigos to rich pigments and plain grays. These are no less intense shades, yet they leave a soothing effect unlike chemical dyes and processed fabrics," she says.

For Jain, cement gray, white, ivory, black, earthy browns, denim blue, pastel blues, khaki and light pinks form the perfect shade-card for sustainable style of clothing.

Apart from caring for the environ, the designers also have to be concerned about the working conditions and wages of their battery of staff. When asked how fashion designers can ensure that, Munim replies "By paying adequate wages to artisans and tailors, having a work-compatible environment and space enough to ideate, ex-



press and create, things can hopefully be upgraded. Add to this, provision of basic amenities like health-care service, insurance and loan benefits to the employees". (TWF)

Essence of life after 60

(Contd from P-VI) consecutive years she has won the first prize for her beautiful home garden by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s in Chembur. One can hear the birds chirping and butterflies hovering around the flowers in her garden.

Many residents in the area come to her house to take tips on her expertise of home gardening so that they can get relief in the polluted air of Chembur. At this age she every day keeps on shifting the pots from end to the other so that all the plants get the requisite sunlight to grow. 'I am very happy,' said Dr. Bhandare who has been living alone in the bungalow after her daughters got married, adding that for past 30-year she has been maintaining this garden and picking

out the flowers and plants. Also I keep on adding lot's of waste household material to add beauty to the garden." Now she planning to utilize her garden recreation activities of senior citizens of the area where they all could sit together and play indoor games and get themselves involved in some creative activity. Today in 21st century the term 'Senior Citizens' 'old age' has different dimension, earlier it was considered 'ill'delry now its 'well'living .

There is life beyond 60, we are living longer and you just can't be 'retired' from life at 60, we need to be rewired to live meaningful life." INAV



“No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

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World Environment Day charade

WORLD Environment Day has become a charade with too many short term programmes lined up in the month of June. Since most programmes are conducted by the Government there is no attempt to measure their efficacy or impact. Data on how many trees were planted in Meghalaya in 2015 on WED; how many survived; how many were eaten up by cows, goats and other animals would be interesting. Also the amount spent each year to celebrate WED and the tangible and intangible outcomes from such spending would give a fair idea of the seriousness of the Department of Forests & Environment in increasing the green cover of Meghalaya. From what is visible around the city things are not hunky dory. The forest canopy over Shillong city stretching from Laitkor forest all the way to Lumparing ridge is dwindling, with public representatives themselves demanding that such areas be vacated for use as parks and other public spaces.

Meghalaya’s problem has always been that its elected representatives take stances that are adversarial to the larger public good in an attempt to appease their supporters. Whether it is about coal and limestone mining or about safeguarding our natural resources like rivers etc from large scale pollution, politicians have chosen to align themselves with those who exploit the earth and pollute the rivers, rather than stand in solidarity with environmental activists who seek to defend the earth. Politicians have a very short-term, tunnel vision aimed at political survival for five years at a time. Hence all their actions also point to this short term gain. Time and again we hear the State Chief Minister speak of revenue loss from coal mining. Till date we have not heard him spell out an imaginative framework for raising revenue from other sources that do not destruct the environment. So can the people of Meghalaya rely on politicians for their future survival? Of course politicians will be invited to every WED function and mouth platitudes there. But, there is such a huge gap between what they say and what they do that they convince no one. It’s a case of wasted words and wasted time. The people of Shillong now have to rally together and save the forests of Lumparing and the adjoining ridges from being overtaken by encroachers and the accomplices of politicians. That forest cover feeds the rivers and provides drinking water to this whole city. Shillongites owe it to themselves to physically defend their environment instead of just talking about it. Also its time to stop the charade of a celebration called World Environment Day.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Yoga claims, diabetes can be controlled

More people in Indian cities are becoming diabetic patients, a recent survey shows. Madras and Lucknow lead about eleven percent of the population suffering from diabetes followed by Delhi with 9.4 percent. The total number of people suffering in the country as a whole is estimated at 15.2 million. The figures for other major cities are: Bombay 2.5 percent and, Hyderabad 4.2 percent, Nagpur 2.4 percent, Varanasi 2.7 percent and Chandigarh 1.53 percent. Office goers are more susceptible to the disease and the chances of getting it are fifty to sixty percent higher in case of women than men, Interestingly, only about half of the total know that they are its victims. Kaivalyadham, Lonavala, (Maharashtra) claims that the disease can be controlled by performing yogic exercises. Its claims are based on a research project, undertaken by it on behalf of the Union and Maharashtra Government. Under the project, a number of diabetic patients performed specific exercises for a period of five weeks in a hospital. The patients were

in the age group of 20.50 years. They found that the sugar level in the blood and urine of the patients under treatment stabilized in the first three weeks and later started gradually declining. The patients also registered increased glucoses tolerance. The general health level of the patients showed improvements in many areas like the weight reduction and blood pressure. On the psychological side, reduction in stress and anxiety and a feeling of freshness was reported. The symptoms of diabetes include lose of weight and strength, exercise thrust, hunger and urination and blurring of vision. One of the major causes recently confirmed regarding the disease is there is a strong like between fluctuations in blood sugar level and in emotional ups and downs. In 1922, it was discovered that insulin promoted the production and utilization of glucose in the body. Now, however, an increasing number of cases are coming to light which do not respond to insulin. The Kaivalyadham research offers hope for millions, of such cases.

Meghalaya’s Inconvenient Truth

By H H Mohrmen

In Meghalaya like anywhere else in the World it has become a routine affair or a formality to celebrate World Environment Day. This year since the day falls on Sunday, all government functions were either observed a day earlier or postponed, to adjust to the convenience of the officials. We adjust to our convenience even on an important issue as the protection of the environment. This is the general attitude of people all over; we do not take the environment seriously as we only celebrate the day to suit our convenience. We put it off; we say we'll do it tomorrow or ask, ‘What I can alone do anyway?’ We assume that if a single individual pollutes or litters it will not make any difference at all, so we continue with what we are used to doing. But the most unfortunate situation is when we feel helpless and see no hope around and conclude that since we are in a minority we can't do anything at all to protect or preserve the environment. In more than two decades of campaigning for protection of the environment, we were threatened; our meetings were sabotaged, we were forced to stop what was meant to be a private meeting because mine owners gheraoed the place where the meeting was supposed to be held. And I was even detained in the police station for, “speaking for those who cannot speak- the forest, the animals and the nature.” At times we also are frustrated yet we continue to advocate for the cause and try to make people see the light - that rat hole mining is illegal. In fact in Meghalaya, any kind of mining as such is detrimental to the environment and the future prospects of the society, because we still do not have any mechanism to regulate and monitor the activities. We were up against the odds not only because the miners or the mining lobbies were against us, but even the government was against us. It all started when people were fed with false propaganda. Common people were made to believe that since mining is a customary

practice of the tribals the state was exempted from the purview of any central mining laws and regulations. This lie was allowed to continue for more than four decades. The popular but false urban legend that was doing the rounds for more than forty years was that the former MP G.G. Swell was able to convince the central government to exempt the state from the purview of any Central government mining regulations. We were made to believe that since the state falls under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and we have a unique land tenure system, so Meghalaya remains outside the purview of any Central mining laws or Forest Acts. But the NGT ban on rat hole mining proved all that assumption wrong and our common held position that mining in Meghalaya is illegal because it has violated all mining and environment laws of the country stand vindicated. Now after the NGT had granted the request of the coal mine owners to temporarily exempt them from the ban and allow them to transport the extracted coal is over, the question is what next? To our utter surprise, instead of compelling the government to come up with policy to regulate mining in the state, we saw numerous organizations making a bee-line to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the state capital to request him to intervene and do something to lift the NGT ban on coal mining from the state. How can we expect the NGT to lift the ban if there is no effort from the state to set right the wrongs? The NGT banned rat hole mining because it is the main cause of water pollution in many rivers in East and West Jaintia hills, yet many organizations are seeking PM’s intervention to lift the ban in spite of all the damage that has been done to the environment. According to media reports one of the organizations which managed to get audience with the Prime Minister is the Synjuk ki Waheh Chnong East Jaintia hills and the issue of ban on rat hole mining was the main agenda of the

organisation’s meeting with the Prime Minister. The Frontier Chamber of Commerce (FCC) under the leadership of P.D. Chokhani, Sajjan Kumar Tharad, O.P. Agarwala, K.K. Jhunjhunwala, J.P. Agarwala and Manoj Agarwala which had also submitted a memorandum of demand requesting the PM to intervene and see that the NGT ban is lifted. FCC claims that ban on coal mining is an impediment to the overall development of the state, but the question is whether the proposed overall development of the state in the FCC trajectory also includes the people who live downstream of the dead rivers. How can we expect development in those areas when the rivers which are the lifelines of the region are all dead? Who among the leaders of the FCC had ever made a visit to the village in the downstream of the dead rivers? How can the state achieve overall development when a section of the society had lost their very means of livelihood because the water in their rivers is polluted? If overall development of the state is the real focus of FCC, then instead of requesting the PM to find out ways and means to lift the ban on mining, it should first impress upon the PM to advice the central pollution control board to find out ways and means to reclaim all the dead rivers polluted by coal mining. But, if the FCC is talking about the overall development of the state, and at the same time demands that the PM see that the ban is lifted only proves that FCC is selfish and it is only concerned about the interests of the business community of the state capital only. Another organization which met the PM was the Confederation of Industries of Meghalaya (CIM) led by its President Banwasri Lal Bajaj. This organization also submitted a memorandum to the PM requesting him to see that the supply of coal; which is the key mineral for cement production is not affected. CIM’s president also stated that more than 5,000 crore was invested in setting up the cement industries in the region and if NGT ban on coal mining continues then it will definitely have a drastic effect on the companies. The president of the organization also claimed that the cement industries in the region are providing direct employment to over 10,000 families in the state. Claims of providing employment to the locals is one, but proving physical evidence that the companies had really employed large numbers of local people in their respective plants is another thing. In the first few years since the industries started operations they were provided with tax holidays and huge subsidies from the government. The question is whether any of the cement plants share the information of the benefits that they derive from such policies with the public? The question is how much subsidy has the companies received since inception? And how much have they given back in return? But the most pertinent question is a detailed account of how they execute their Corporate Social Responsibility in the region or in the state? The state and its people have the right to know and if the companies are really fair and transparent in their operations they should make all the information public on where and how they spend their CSR. What has been done to the exhausted mines or coal quarries is another important question? Why do the major cement companies have their corporate offices in Guwahati and Kolkata and not in Shillong, Jowai or Khliehria? The other question that needs to be asked is what is the status of all the caves in the Narpuh area? Is it safe for anybody to enter the caves or isn’t it true that all the caves in the Lumshnong area have been damaged by limestone mining? So while we celebrate the World Environment Day let us also ask ourselves these difficult and uncomfortable questions. The inconvenient truth about mining in Meghalaya is that despite mining having caused irreparable damage to the environment, yet we continue to lobby for mining as if nothing has happened. To what ends greed? And must the indigenous people of Meghalaya pay the costs for the profits made by these shark companies?

went viral in the social media some months back, had drawn international ridicule. Why has education in Bihar reached this sorry state of affairs? It is illogical to put the blame on the students alone. Are not those leaders who ruled Bihar with the brute force of lawlessness, responsible for this degeneration? One need not dig deeper to feel the stench of political sewage and the subsequent rise of crimes in Bihar for over two decades. This has practically corroded the social and academic fabric that we now witness such shameful instances. Here we have noticed how some political leaders contest elections even from prison. Laloo Prasad Yadav, the RJD chief, who has been topping the chart for goondaism in the last two decades, is still holding Bihar to ransom. He has a whole bunch of followers who know no law, but the sound of guns and pistols. Just a few weeks ago a journalist Rajdeo Ranjan was murdered, allegedly by an RJD’s gangster. The criminality in politics seems to have again come back with a vengeance in the present setup where RJD claims its pound of flesh. It is not strange that Laloo Prasad pushed for his blessing to those people who come to our state to experience the cool and calm climate which they don't have in most parts of the country. Think about it! Our future also depends on the way we treat our environment. Yours etc., Banmankhraw Lyngdoh, Shillong -5

TO THE EDITOR

Our environment, our hope

Editor, World Environment Day will be celebrated on the June 5, worldwide. It's a day when the environment will be 'pampered' with various ceremonies and functions. It will be the only day where plants and other trees will be properly thanked for their role in keeping our city green. New trees will be planted, streets will be cleaned and awareness will be spread throughout the world. This is a good initiative especially in those parts of the country where the green cover is rapidly disappearing. With the effects of global warming, there comes the need to really educate people on the importance of the environment. To conserve the environment should be our number one priority especially today. Shillong which usually is 'cool' now is really feeling the 'heat'. Temperatures have risen during these last few months. We never required to run the air conditioning system in our cars because we have a natural 'AC' but in some parts of the city today, it's a must to switch it on. Either it's too humid or too polluted by the fumes of the cars. We may not be the direct victims of global warming as yet but it has started to show. Shillong's weather may be unpredictable and may amuse some of us but it is sad to say that this is also due to the effects of global warming. We need to conserve our beautiful and blessed environment because we are still lucky to be surrounded by greenery in almost every part of our beautiful green state. Let the 'pampering' of the environment not stop after June 5 but let it continue every day. Not every State is blessed with a cool climate like ours. And it is also because of the large tracts of forests which are present that Sohra and Mawsynram receive heavy rainfalls each year. This is known to the world and many flock to these places to experience the 'true' rain showers. But without trees and the forests this rain will also disappear. The elements of nature are interconnected and these should be balanced. We are still known as the Scotland of the East so let us retain that title. Let's not care about our environment only on World Environment Day or Earth day but on all the 365 days of the year because this is also a

A Jogi in search of Nirvana

By M J Akbar

It is not difficult to define success in electoral politics; it is measured by objectives. There are, broadly, two objectives. If you are in play for power, then you count the number of seats you have won. If you are in play for growth, then you compare vote share, and check whether the graph of popularity is headed north, south or remains flat. Thus, Congress considers the general election of 2009 a success because it won 205 seats, and led a stable government; and 1989 a failure when it got only 197 MPs and had to sit in opposition. If you examine these results in terms of vote share, you might be—at the very least—perplexed. In 1989, Congress got 39% of the vote and failed. In 2009 it got 28.55% of the vote and succeeded. This is partly explained by spread. In 1989, the Congress was in contest for virtually every seat in Parliament; two decades later it had shrunk substantially and needed allies. But the trick, if you are bidding to win power, is clearly to maximise the success ratio within a catchment area rather than to stand everywhere in an election and end up sitting nowhere in Parliament. The interesting phenomenon taking place now is that both the catchment area and the success ratio of Congress are in continuing decline. Of course the party can delude itself with false analysis, but that does not really get you much further than the cold comfort of commentary. The difference between analysts and politicians is that the latter respond solely to ground reality. Number juggling is chicken soup for cheerleaders. One would imagine that Congress would be most confident in a state where, as opposition, it is in a theoretical position to exploit anti-incumbency. But in a state like Chhattisgarh, Congress is crumbling. Ajit Jogi, who is without doubt the most effective of Congress leaders, has rebelled and seems to be on the verge of setting up his own, regional, party. There is speculation that he might only be threatening the high command, but that is probably even worse news for Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, who run Congress as a fiefdom. Even two years ago, it was the high command which threatened regional leaders guilty of indiscipline, not regional leaders who accused their Delhi chiefs of poor judgement. Why is this happening? The obvious answer is that the transition of authority from Mrs Sonia Gandhi to her middle-aged son is stuck in uncertainty. Mrs Gandhi clearly wants to hand over the baton, but the party is not confident that the baton will be steady in the grasp of the heir. Neither Mrs Gandhi nor Rahul Gandhi has any programme for Congress revival beyond waiting for anti-incumbency to take its toll on non-Congress governments. This is a policy of stasis. The first and most important imperative for any opposition party seeking power in a time when development has become the highest priority for the voter is to offer an alternative set of economic policies. Strangely, even this thought does not seem to have occurred to Congress leaders. Their only strategy is a relentless, and rather over-loud, attack on anyone and anything. You can get passing mileage out of decibels, but voters want to know what options you have to offer. For all the rhetoric on the coating, democracy, in essence, remains a rational business. Screaming for the sake of being heard is irrational. Perhaps this has also been induced by the fact that the anti-incumbency is just not happening. Opinion polls done on the second anniversary of the Narendra Modi government confirm that the Prime Minister's personal popularity remains extremely high. There is a visible economic revival, reflected not only in statistics but also in the popular mood. And in states like Madhya Pradesh, a long-serving Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, continues to pummel Congress in by-elections. Facts force most Congress leaders to retreat into silence, and take what comfort they can in helpless inertia. But all leaders will not remain inert. Ajit Jogi is only the most recent prominent Congress leader to say that he has had enough. Congress has split in most of the Northeast, including Assam, and Uttarakhand. In some states, Congress leaders remain where they are only because they have nowhere to go. Ajit Jogi sees a better future for himself alone than as member of a party that once held sway across the country. The current of an ebb tide runs below the surface, but that does not make it any less turbulent. Those Congress leaders who believe that nothing is amiss because the surface is seemingly placid, might find solace in delusion, but that is an unhappy epitaph. inexperienced would be disastrous? Daggers are only wielded by skilful knights whose job is to protect the weak. The list of the recently elected ministers in Bihar, their portfolios, and their academic qualifications is appalling. Again, the fact that such ineligible rookies and jailbirds in the ministry do not make the mainstream media sit up is mysterious. Of course, one does not doubt that there are countless exceptionally brilliant students, scientists, technocrats, administrators that are produced by this sacred land of Buddha's enlightenment. Where there is a will there is a way. At one stroke, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar banned alcohol which has dramatically brought down crime rates in Bihar. Hence it is expected that the state administrative machinery will look into such shameful anomalies in education. It is the Nalanda University of this very Bihar that had for thousands of years attracted knowledge seekers from far off lands. Let the past glory be restored before it is too late. Yours etc., Salil Gwali, Shillong-2

“*Be careful when you fight the monsters, lest you become one.*”

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The decline of the Congress

THE state leaderships of the Congress in different states are receiving a rude jolt. Take Chhattisgarh where Ajit Jogi was asked by the Congress high command to account for his alleged involvement in an assembly bypoll to make it easy for the BJP to win. As a result, his son, Amit Jogi was expelled from the party. Ajit Jogi has now decided to launch a new outfit. His third force will reduce Congress support and weaken the party position in the contest in Chhattisgarh. It will no longer be a bipolar contest. The trend is part of the nation-wide rift between the state Congress units and the Congress high-command in Delhi. The same thing happened in Assam with Himanta Biswa Sarma leaving the party and Vijay Bahuguna doing the same in Uttarakhand. All this is a blow to the Congress in Delhi which has a skeletal existence in Parliament. The Party itself is pessimistic about its future.

Since 2014, the Congress has been on a steep downward slope. Its latest reverse has been in Assam where the BJP never had a hold. The BJP won a massive victory in the state by weaning away powerful leaders from other parties in the state. The Congress had of course ups and downs in the past and was reduced to a very low position when Atal Behari Vajpayee was Prime Minister. But the political scene changed with Sonia Gandhi elevating the Congress to an undisputed position. The situation has taken a U-turn. If the party goes down in the states, the high command will also take a beating. There is a lot to make the old warhorse totter.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

New Delhi letter

‘Cabinet reshuffle’ : Bizarre exercise for PM?

There is talk once again of a ‘Cabinet reshuffle’ but now instead of excitement in political dovescots, mention of prospective ministerial reshuffle elicits derision of sorts. The reason is not far-fetched Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s Council of Ministers has been shuffled and reconstructed with such frequency that it now ceases to be a subject of curiosity, not to speak of its being a major political event.

The reshuffle exercise too is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Time was when Cabinet reshuffle - a term loosely used to describe not only Cabinet appointment but also those relating to ministers of state and deputy ministers was a potent weapon in the hand of the Prime Minister as it was with his predecessors. In the Indian set-up, the prerogative of selecting this Council of Ministers confers immense leverage on the Prime Minister. But its effectively presuppose undertaking, discretion and qualities of leadership. It is through the right choice of his team of Ministers that the Prime Minister not only gives the best possible Ministry for the country’s governance but also carries immense authority in his party.

However, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has not made the best use of this potent weapon of ‘Cabinet reshuffle’, to put it mildly. It is not only the excessive frequency of rearranging the Union Council of Ministers that it at fault but also inappropriate selection for the key ministries. The result is that there is no policy direction or sense of purpose in the successive Cabinet changes that have been undertaken since 1985 just one year after his assumption of power nor is there a sense of stability for his senior colleagues. In a way therefore, the Prime Minister has himself been imparting destabilization to his Council of Ministers.

A case in point is the handling of the portfolio of External Affairs, presently held by Mr Narasimha Rao. It has been noted that it was this very portfolio that Mr Narasimha Rao held in the very first Council of Minister that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi constituted. In the preceding Union Cabinet under Mrs Indira Gandhi too Mr Narsimha Rao held the portfolio of External Affairs which he managed with distinction. But soon after taking over, in Mr Rajiv Gandhi’s very first major Cabinet reshuffle, the External Affairs portfolio witnessed a change.

The portfolio has in fact passed through a number of hands since then - a happening which creates a degree of bewilderment among senior diplomats and in major world capitals. For, the External Affairs portfolio is generally taken to be indicator of a nation’s policy thrust in foreign relations and is not subjected to a political game of periodic shuffling about that the Prime Minister thought it fit and quite aply this time to bring Mr Narasimha Rao back to the External Affairs post is of course welcome, but it only underlines the thoughtlessness of the proceeding changes.

To a large extent the same lack of rationale and logic on the part of the Prime Minister has marked other portfolios such as Finance, Defence and Home Affair. That apart, the clubbing and rearranging of ministries under the present dispensation has lacked definite purpose, not to speak of any ‘stream-lining’. The most inappropriate in this respect was the decision to club a number of distinct assignments and portfolios under the heading, Human Resource Development. However fancy and modernistic the title appers, it has seved no purpose except to create an unwieldy bagged in which little justice done to education, culture or sports.

The Congress Party’s worst ever existential crisis in Indian politics is not only visible in the mainland India but also the peripheral region of the Northeast India. In fact, the grand old party’s such crisis is attributed by both internal and external factors. Internally, almost all state units in Northeast India, the Congress is afflicted with the growing dissident activities and the demand for leadership change where the party in power. Externally, the BJP’s strategy of Congress Mukht Bharat (Congress Free India) creates more odd situations for the party which the central leadership finds it difficult to counter. The current existential crisis of the Congress in the north-eastern state is perhaps the strong anti-incumbency wave against the Congress regimes where its Chief Ministers are in power for the two or three consecutive terms, denying the same opportunity to other leaders of the party. In fact, one of the reasons for the huge electoral adversity of the Congress in the recently concluded Assam Assembly election was the strong anti-incumbency of the three consecutive term of the Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi. In Manipur, too, Okram Ibobi Singh continues to power for the three consecutive terms while its Mizoram counterpart Lal Thanhawla enjoys political power for the two consecutive terms. Though, in many occas-ions, the state level Congress leaders expr-essed their anguish over these ‘consecutive chief ministers’, the Con-gress central leadership took a lackad-aisical attitude to the demand leading to aggravation of resentment against these chief ministers.

Secondly, most of the Congress state units in northeast India, like the mainland India, are riddle with factional feud and open fight against leadership which shatters the prospects of the party at the state levels. The High Command, in many cases, either failed to solve the organizational problems or adopted a wait and watch policy leading to its disarray. Thirdly, the emergence of family politics, putting the

By Dr. V. Bijukumar

kith and kin of the leaders both in the electoral fray and party organizational positions often brings adverse impact on the fortunes of the party at the state level in the long run, though it can reap short-term benefits. Such an argument is strengthened by the fact that former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi even promoted his son Gaurav Gogoi, the sitting Loksabha MP from Assam as his political heir. In fact, Himanta Biswa Sarma, the once trusted aid of Tarun Gogi and the current BJP Minister in the Sarbananda Sonowal government, disillusioned with the Congress due to the realization that his political ambition to become the Chief Minister of the state was dashed by the Congress as Gogoi is promoting his son Gaurav Gogoi. In Meghalaya, Dikkanchi D. Shira, the wife of the Congress Chief Minister Mukul Sangma, a sitting MLA in the current Assembly, was fielded as the Congress candidate in the Tura Lok Sabha by-election of May 2016 against the National Peoples’ Party (NPP) candidate, Conard Sangma, the younger son of the late Purno Sangma. In fact, the current spurt of factional politics led by D D Lapang, the MPCC president and the former Chief Minister and Vincent Pala, the LokSabha MP from Shillong constituency and the growing demand for leadership change in the state in the aftermath of the electoral defeat of the Congress can be seen as the adverse impact of family politics promoted by the Congress in the state.

Fourthly, after having lost political power at the Centre, the Congress party also lost its command over the Chief Ministers and leadership at the state levels. The interesting observation is that these small states always heavily depend on the central government for financial allocation for developmental projects in their states. The ruling party at the centre utilizes this opportunity for hobnobbing with opposition state governments by alluring with impressive financial allocations and special packages thereby bringing them under their disposal. One can cite many empirical

evidences that the BJP government at the centre used its good offices to allure the Congress Chief Ministers by offering perks. In most cases, the factional feuds and the dissident party activities the ruling Congress confront in the north-eastern states have the covert support of the BJP government at the centre.

Finally, the changing nature of ethnic composition of the state has an impact on the losing support base of the Congress party in north-eastern states. Often the Congress failed to sustain its umbrella image – attracting and accommodating diverse ethnic groups and social forces – due to the communal polarization and social engineering of the BJP. For instance, the BJP’s aggressive campaign against illegal migration of Bangladeshi Muslims and the communal divide created by the BJP between the Bodos and the Muslim minority community in the Bodo areas and its electoral alliance with the Bodo People’s Front (BPF), the communal mobilization of Bengali Hindus in Barak valley and the upper caste Assamese Hindus in Brahmaputra valley on the hysteria of illegal migration gave much electoral dividends to the BJP and the rout of the Congress in the recently concluded Assembly election. In the Congress ruled Manipur, the stage set for the communal polarization by the BJP before the Assembly election stated to be held in early 2017. The BJP is fishing the troubled waters in the ongoing tussle between the Hill and Valley. The BJP is alluring the Hindus who constitute 41.39% of the total state population without antagonizing the interest of the Nagas, the dominant Hill tribe and other smaller tribal communities such as Kukis, Mizos, etc. The Sangh Parivar who engage in ghar wapsi (homecoming) often raise the issue of reduction in Hindu population in the state. According to it, there is a declining population growth of the Hindus as compared to other religious communities in the state. It claimed that in just three decades, the Hindus have declined from 70% to 41.39% of the population. An article in the 4 January, 2015 issue of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s mouthpiece, Organiser, has

offered another statistics in support of this argument. It says, "There was a 5.2 per cent decadal (1991-2001) growth in Hindu population of Manipur. However, at the same time, Christians grew by 36.6 per cent and Muslims by 43.1 per cent." In a resolution adopted in RSS’ Akhil Bhariya Karyakari Mandal in Ranchi in October, 2015 claimed that in Manipur, the share of the “religions of Bharatiya origin” was over 80 per cent in 1951, but came down to 50 per cent in 2011”. The reason for dwindling Hindu population is the high fertility of Christians compared to the Hindus and conversion to Christianity as claimed by the Sangh Parivar organisations.

To conclude, though, the BJP’s mass base is not so impressive to come into power on its own and provide an alternative government to the many present Congress dispensations, the party’s shrewd strategy to overthrow the Congress governments in the region is the larger political strategy of Congress Mukht Bharat. While the BJP adopts a multi-prolonged strategy according to the social and political chemistry in various Congress ruled north-eastern states, the Congress is often become less defensive to the onslaught of the BJP’s mobilization. The BJP clinching on a strategy of concrete analysis of concrete situation in these states – either creating communal polarization, raising emotional issues, orchestrating defection and factional feuds, or highlighting the bogey of ‘development’ (wherever it fails to mobilize on the basis of above issues) – the Congress party is at the receiving end due to its own inner contradictions and complexities. No doubt, the crisis of the Congress in north-eastern states like that of the mainland India is disturbing as it has a larger implication for the protection of the ethnic plurality and cultural diversity, social harmony, national security of the north-eastern states of India.

(The author is a former teacher at NEHU, Shillong and currently associate professor of Comparative Politics at JNU, New Delhi).

Stage set for big Chinese investment in India

Modi's economic engagement policy yielding results

By Subrata Majumder

China has been a long term challenge for India. Politically, China has been a persistent threat on India’s borders and dampener to India’s relation with its neighbours. Economically, India has become a dumping ground of Chinese goods after the recession in the west and rise of free trade power in South East Asian countries.

The coercive relation has a twist after the Narendra Modi government came into power. For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, China is not a foe. For President Xi Jinping, India is an opportunity. Both seemed to have taken vow to reinvent the relation from the perspectives of economic engagement, instead of hurling brickbat to each other.

Mr Modi was never averse to China. His hobnob with China is not sudden and new. His relation with China was established well before he became Prime Minister. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, he first visited China in November 2011. He visited China four times before he became the Prime Minister. His priority was to attract Chinese investment in Gujarat. He continued to harp on Chinese investment in India as Prime Minister.

China’s President Xi Jinping pinned for a new look towards India after USA became assertive to have a strong foothold in Asia through its Asia pivot policy, mainly to counter China. Paranoid by USA’s consolidation of political power in Asia and hobnob with India, China viewed India a perceptible tool to counter-balance USA’s threat by enlarging economic engagement with India. Both India and China are in need of investment, however with a difference. While India yearns for domestic investment, China looks for overseas investment, given the bleak chances in domestic investment due to Chinese currency renminbi’s appreciation.

The green shoot is visible. The visit of President Pranab Mukherjee to China in May this year reaffirmed each other’s eagerness for economic engagement. Chinese media Xinhua was upbeat with the visit, saying “it will open a new chapter in the development of bilateral relations”. Indian Prez returned with big bang of Chinese investment proposals. China’s biggest industrial park developer CFLD showed interest to set up 10 industrial parks in India. Already MOU were signed between the two governments to set up 4 industrial parks, when India’s Vice President Hamid Ansari, along with Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, visited China in June 2014. Shanghai Automobile Company, Chint Group for renewable energy, Sopo Group of chemical, Ding Shen and Shanghai Electric Company were keen for large investment in India.

Let down by glut in inward investment, China is on the binge for outgoing investment. From a paltry overseas investment of US \$ 3 billion in 2005, Chinese overseas investment increased to US \$ 90 billion in 2013 and became the third biggest overseas investor in the world. Asia was the biggest receiver of Chinese investment. Chinese investment also made a surging growth in South East Asian countries including Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

The glut in China also prompted MNCs to shift

their manufacturing bases from China to India. Investment by Ford Motor Company is a case in point. Nearly 80 per cent of total Chinese investment in India in 2015 was made by SAIC General Motors Investment Ltd. It is a joint venture company between General Motors of USA and SAIC Motors Group, China. This investment was made for the second car plant by General Motors India Pvt Ltd in Ahmedabad.

China’s bubble burst beacons for Chinese investment surge in India. Given the upward valuation of Chinese renminbi and lackluster demand in China (similar on the line of Japanese bubble burst), China looses its power of investment attraction. This will leverage opportunity for India to attract foreign investment, given the big domestic demand and strong macro-economic factors. A number of Chinese handset manufacturers are planning to set up their manufacturing units for handsets in India. They are Vivo, Huawei, Xiaomi and ZTE.

Chinese investment unleashes two benefits. First, Chinese investment will help in curbing the rising trade deficit. More than one-fourth of India’s total trade deficit is factored by cheap imports from China. Second, Chinese investment can be instrumental to normalize the political relation between the two countries. After the change of guards in Chinese leadership in 2012, China wants to improve its relations with India. China upgraded its diplomatic presence in Delhi after Mr Modi became the Prime Minister. In September 2014 President Xi Jinping appointed Mr. Le Yucheng as the new Chinese Ambassador to India, who was at the rank of Vice Minister. China deputes ambassadors at Vice Minister rank only to those countries of strategic importance. Countries like USA, Japan, Russia, North Korea and Great Britain have Chinese ambassadors at the rank of Vice-Minister.

Besides investment, China can prove a major fund provider for India’s infrastructure projects. With AIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and BRICS’s National Development Bank becoming reality, where China is the biggest stake holder, China can edge out other funding institutions in providing infrastructure funds to India. One of the reasons is the flexibility in the conditionality of these banks. For example, AIB funds are more preferable to India for its power projects. This is because funding by World Bank, IMF and ADB were averse to the coal based power generation, given the policy stand to promote clean energy in the world. Since 2012, World Bank did not sign any memorandum of understanding for coal fired electricity projects with its member countries. And, ADB was selective in supporting coal based energy projects.

Power is the important infrastructure in India. Its investment requirement is paramount. Over sixty-five percent of electricity generation depends upon coal-based energy. It needs huge investment for coal based power projects.

That way, Mr Modi’s new strategy for economic partnership with China, despite security threat, is a timely attempt to seek Chinese economic power to speed up India’s development. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Dynastic politics

Editor,

The dynastic politics of Meghalaya Congress, rise of dissidence in the party ranks and the brilliant victory of Conrad Sang?m?a are writings on the wall for a possible change that may happen even before the completion of the term of the current government. The massive mandate received by BJP and allies in neighbouring Assam is going to have some domino impact on other states of the region; Meghalaya in particular. The increasing popularity of the NDA ally, NPP in Meghalaya is yet another impending factor that will keep state Congress leadership under huge pressure. Irrespective of the ideology and principles of different political parties, the agenda of peace, stability, democracy and economic progress are the cherished aspiration of ordinary citizens in any corner of the nation. Meghalaya is no exception to that. If BJP

and NDA governments adjoining Meghalaya could demonstrate better success in people centric developments as has been recently demonstrated by CM Pul in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh, people will swing further towards the BJP led alliance with hopes for better governance, infrastructure development and economic progress. Rough rides are awaiting Meghalaya Congress! If PM Modi could revitalize and inspire the current opposition in Meghalaya in a positive direction to lead the state in the next election, a ?better future may be awaiting Meghalaya. However, failure of BJP and allies in adjoining states will tilt the balance of power again towards Congress.

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

When the rules can be twisted

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, I write this to bring

into everyone's attention how the laws and rules in Meghalaya are twisted and amended, so as to benefit few powerful people and business houses. Since April 1, 2016, when large numbers of wine stores in Meghalaya were closed down following the Amended Rule 183 of Meghalaya Excise Rules, it was seen that one wine shop in Rynjang bazar "Hunlang Wine Shop," continued to run its business, unhindered in spite of different religious, educational and medical institutions being just a stone's throw distance from this wine shop. Institutions like the Pohkseh Presbyterian Church, Rynjang State Dispensary, Umplang Primary School and ITI Rynjang all are within the stipulated 200 meter radius of the above stated wine shop. When complaints to the authorities concerned failed to evoke positive response, an RTI dated April 27, 2016 was filed. DC (Excise) East Khasi Hills vide his reply dated May 24, 2016 has thrown a surprise. It was found that on May 10, 2016 further amendment to Rule 183 of Meghalaya Excise Rules, was carried out

wherein directives were issued to measure the distance of any educational institution/ place of worship/hospitals from different wine shops or bars through routes/ roads/pathway generally used by majority of the public.

By that logic, may I ask the concerned authorities and the Hon'ble High Court, if I will be allowed to open a bar/wine shop which may be located in the back/or adjacent to the wall of any educational institution/place of worship/hospitals and protected of course, by the clause that, there remains no direct thoroughfare any diverted route between any of these institutions and that therefore my bar/ wine shop is more than 200 meters away from any of them .

Yours etc.,
Ratna Biswas,
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.

*“In truth, there was only one Christian,
and he died on the cross.”*
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 296 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2016

The surrender ritual

WE may be pardoned for not sharing the enthusiasm of the MUA Government on the much-glorified surrender ceremonies which have happened once too often under the watch of the present Chief Minister. Militant outfits are in simple language criminal gangs who wear the aura of respectability by giving themselves some high sounding names that have a ring of patriotism and make them appear as freedom fighters. These names then become fancy acronyms. Now we have lost count of the number of outfits operating in the Garo Hills. Each time one group surrenders, there is a fringe section that remains intransigent because the pay-off is not so good since the person might not have been a leader. So he refuses to surrender and becomes a leader of another factional outfit with the fire power to expend and become a thorn in the flesh of the district administration and the police. In another year when he becomes the established leader and gets a better deal then he might surrender. That the Government makes this charade look "respectable" by the presence of Chief Minister, other ministers and/ or the top police brass at the surrender ceremony is unfortunate because in plain language it is the glorification of criminals.

These militant outfits have created a reign of terror in Garo Hills for over a decade. Some outfits have been playing footsie with one or other politician and we know who they are. The outfits would not have survived without the patronage of the powerful. The Chief Minister has been sending out regular warnings that politicians who are hand in glove with militants would be exposed. So why is the FIR filed by a particular candidate who was intimidated by the GNLA, working for another candidate, during the election campaign, not allowed to be pursued? But this question is better addressed to the police itself. What is the status of the case today? Are the police being told to go slow because the CM and that particular minister who is alleged to be close to the GNLA are now in the same boat especially when he is facing dissidence within his own Party? Is this the way to use militancy as a leverage to get compliance from political rivals? The people who fuel militancy in Meghalaya need to be exposed. Militants must go through the process of law and cannot be given amnesty by the Chief Minister and his Government. And it is a pity that Baljek Airport instead of being used for what it was created has now become a camp where militants live off the fat of the land on taxpayers' money! Will the High Court of Meghalaya step in to straighten the system?

LOOKING BACK

February 14, 1989

Identity Cards For All
Meghalayans Likely

The Meghalaya Govt has decided to introduce identity cards for all its residents as a step to check infiltration of people from outside. A formal proposal has been already forwarded to the Centre for its concurrence. Announcing this at an election meeting at Dawki last weekend Chief Minister Mr Purno A. Sangma said that the scheme consists of family identification cards which will be issued following a fresh census. The cards will be issued in triplicate, one to the family concerned, one copy to the local Syiem, Doloi or Nokma, and a third will remain with the State Government.

The basic responsibility for monitoring births, deaths and marriages will be given to the tribal heads. Small secretariats will be set up for the Syiems, Dolois and Nokmas so that proper registers can be maintained. This will ensure that tribal institutions are preserved and the traditional chiefs are given more importance.

Later speaking to this reporter he said that only card holders will be entitled to government jobs, admission in schools and

colleges, rations, etc. People coming to work in Meghalaya on deputation will have separate identity/ ration cards. The plan has already been put forward to the Government of India, and is likely to be set in motion once adequate funds are available. The State Govt alone will not be able to check Influx, the active cooperation of the people is also required, he added.

**Nagaland
Opposition Threat Of
Ignoring Governor**

The newly elected 17th Nagaland legislative assembly meets here tomorrow on a day's session for the swearing in of the members and electing the Speaker amid threats of "ignoring" the Governor by the opposition. As the inauguration of the house is scheduled with an address by Governor Gen. K.V.Krishna Rao, the opposition Nagaland People's Councils (NPC) legislature party leader Mr K.L. Chishi said the former being an "agent of the Congress (I)" had forfeited his all constitutional and moral rights to continue as head of the state.

The need to resurrect
a lost tradition

By Fabian Lyngdoh

of deep and wide trenches around it to protect themselves from possible enemies. There might also be a deep and long winding cave within the fortified nongbah, where women and children could hide in times of war. Then they demarcated a territory called 'ka ri-raid' around the settlement area, as large as they could acquire and protect. This was their political territory which also served as jhum fields which are the mainstay of their economic activity. A particular catchment area was selected, where cultivation or any form of destruction of natural vegetation was forbidden, and converted into a sacred grove to protect the water source for the community. The council of the chief maternal uncles of the founding clans called 'ka dorbar-longsan' was the highest political authority in the 'raid'.

A little away from the fortified nongbah, a particular area was selected and demarcated as the community graveyard. All the clans in the political community could construct their 'ki kpep' (funeral places) anywhere within their own family or clan land, but 'ki mawbah' (bone repositories) as the final resting place of the dead of all the clans should be constructed within the community graveyard, and no clan was allowed to construct a final bone repository anywhere else in the ri-raid which was meant for community settlement and economic activities. Any new immigrant clan was allowed to settle in the territory of the political community. But when people of such an immigrant clan had to perform the funeral rites of their first deceased member, they had to take due permission from the 'dorbar-longsan' of the 'raid', an act which is called 'thied blab' in some of the 'raids' in the Ri Bhoi region. 'Thied' means 'to buy' and 'blab' means a 'grave.' So, 'thied blab' literally means to buy a burial place, but conceptually it means to obtain permission from the political authority of the 'raid' to dispose of the dead body and to construct bone repository within the community graveyard and for the spirit of the deceased person to find its spiritual abode within the territory of the 'raid'.

Whenever any clan

performs the ceremony of 'ka thep mawbah' (carrying and depositing the bones of the dead into their final resting place), the head of the 'raid', usually the 'lyngdoh-raid' (ruler priest) together with other 'basans' (founding clans' political representatives) would stand at the entrance to the graveyard and inquire from the clan concerned whether bones of incestuous persons, condemned criminals and ostracised persons were included or not in the collection, and whether due religious rites to purify the bones of those who died of violent deaths were performed or not. All this was done to see that the community graveyard would not be defiled by the presence of disgruntled evil spirits. That was how the Khasi traditional society coped with the need to dispose of the dead bodies of deceased persons properly and honourably through socially established provisions and recognised religious rites.

Today, the Khasi traditional political community as described above is no more in existence. The 'shnong' (village) has taken over the place of the 'raid' as the basic political community. In every village today the community norms and practices on how to cope with the disposal of dead bodies of deceased persons properly and honourably through socially established provisions and uniformly recognised religious rites, no longer exists. It is a very unwholesome sight to see in a village or urban locality where there is a 'knap-thangbru' (funeral place) for the believers of the indigenous faith on one side of the village or urban locality, and numerous graveyards belonging to various Christian denominations on the east, west, north and south, that a foreign tourist might think that the whole settlement is primarily a graveyard. A great number of such villages can be found in the Khasi society today due to the emerging compelling circumstances.

Each human person is highly apprehensive not only of how he or she would be treated by the society while living, but also how his/her body would be treated by the society when he/she dies. Practically speaking, a religious

institution in today's circumstances is able to bind its members not so much by hope of heaven as by its control over the facility of providing proper and honourable disposal of the bodies of its members after their deaths. There is currently a popular idea of 'Christian lumjingtep', that is, those who profess to be members of a Christian church not for saving their souls but for the honour of a formal religious service and a place for their bones to rest at death. Therefore, to establish a new religion or to start a new church, a graveyard as a necessary religious infrastructure is required so as to be able to convince and bind the believers to the faith. It is on this fact that the much talked about purchase of land for graveyards in the 'law syiem' at Mawpat took place. The intention to provide an honourable resting place for the bones of the dead is genuine in the present circumstances though the way in which the lands were acquired might be questionable.

The Khasi society today can no longer bind itself to only one form of religious faith, but needs to think of how to resurrect the basic idea of a traditional community graveyard where every inhabitant irrespective of religious faith, theist or atheist, can hope to find a resting place for the bones after death. An example that is commendable to some extent is found in Mawbri village where this writer lives. In Mawbri village there is only one graveyard under the regulation of the local Catholic Church in which the dead body of every human person irrespective of religious faith, including strangers or non-Khasis whose relatives can no more be traced, can find an honourable resting place. Though Catholic religious rites are not performed for non-Catholics, but social service and a resting place are not denied to anyone who happens to die in the village whether Khasi or non-Khasi, theist or atheist. In spite of the low population density, the Khasi society today might have become so unjust that many persons do not have even a square inch of land to call their own while still living; but besides heaven, at least let everyone also have a terrestrial location to rest after death.

Chamber has not demanded anything for the business community of Shillong.

Yours etc.,
Sajjan Kumar Tharad
Hony General Secretary Frontier Chamber of Commerce

Climate
Change impact
on plains of
Garo Hills

Editor,
Every year the river Jinjiram and its confluence the Ringgi cause immense hardship during the monsoons by creating turbulence of flash floods and causing death and destruction. The changing course of Ringgi river towards the Shyamnagar valley are a major concern for the settled populace. Rise in the water level of Brahmaputra and Jinjiram in Phulbari, West Garo Hills, pose a detrimental threat in the years ahead. Even the downstream of Ganol river, near Damalgre and adjoining points, one can see the changing patterns of the course of the river. This happens due to excessive and unscientific method of 'Sand Mining' and extraction of mud beds from the river. As per the reports on Climate Change, half of Bangladesh will be

Is Punjab heading for a terrorism plague?
Pre-poll tensions grip
controversial state

By B K Chum

Controversies are an indivisible part of a functioning democracy. They erupt in hordes in election years and play an important role in influencing the course of politics. With eight months left in Punjab Assembly elections, the state is also witnessing controversies which have started polluting the state's religio-political atmosphere raising the question whether Punjab is heading for the eighties pre-terrorism situation.

An answer to the question cannot be attempted without having a close look at the happenings threatening to create an explosive situation in the state. The latest among such happenings is the May 17 attempt on the life of Patiala-based influential Sikh preacher Ranjit Singh Dhadrianwale in which he escaped unhurt but his aide Bhupinder Singh was shot dead by men owing allegiance to the Damdami Taksal, the fundamentalist seminary to which Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale belonged and now headed by the pro-government Hamam Singh Dhuma.

Another case is the last week's threatened armed clash between the radical Hindu and Sikh fringe elements which was, however averted.

In the first case, the situation is akin to the one that had developed in Punjab (about which today's young generation is not fully aware) before the decade-long eighties terrorism which crippled the state's economy, paralysed the state administration and the judiciary and turned Punjab into a graveyard of innocent people. It had its origin in the Damdami Taksal followers holding a demonstration against the congregation of Nirankaris in Amritsar on the Baisakhi Day April 13, 1978. It led to a confrontation in which 16 demonstrators were killed. The killings had their climax in the assassination of Baba Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankaris spiritual head. Parkash Singh Badal-led Akali government was in power at that time.

Call it coincidence or the outcome of the partisan games our politicians play, that the present volatility in Sikh politics has erupted when the Parkash Singh Badal-led Akali government is also in power. The ruling leadership seems to be on the horns of a dilemma to decide how to defuse the situation as in the election year it can neither afford to displease its supporter Damdami Taksal nor Dhadrianwale which has a large following and is also backed by a number of Sikh preachers. Its attempt to resolve the complex issue by involving SGPC has not so far borne fruit. SGPC chief Avtar Singh Makkar whom it had deputed to meet Dhuma and Dhadrianwale for striking a compromise between them has apparently drawn a blank so far. An angry Dhadrianwale backed by the opposition has sought CBI inquiry into the attack which the chief minister has refused to order. Punjab's shrewdest politician perhaps fears that if a CBI probe finds Dhuma's

supporters guilty for the attack, he would be charged by his opponents for betraying his loyalists. Dhadrianwale has now petitioned the High Court demanding a probe by the CBI into the attack on him.

For partisan reasons, the Akali leadership would not like to displease the Damdami Taksal. On the eve of 2012 elections it had sought and got the support of radical Sikh bodies including the Taksal and the Sant Samaj. In return it acceded to the radicals demand for raising a memorial in the Golden Temple Complex at Amritsar for those killed during Operation Bluestar. Sukhbir Badal had then defended the decision to build the memorial by asserting that "hundreds of innocent devotees who were trapped in the Golden Temple lost their lives during the Army attack in 1984. What is wrong if a memorial is built for them"? He carefully omitted to mention that Indian Army had raided the Complex not to kill innocent devotees but to flush out the militants who had converted the Sikhs holiest shrine into their fortified bastion for killing Hindus and Sikhs and backed by Pakistan's ISI for establishing an independent Sikh state Khalistan.

Facing all-round criticism including by his ruling partner BJP against the memorial, Chief Minister Badal had to clarify in the Assembly that such a memorial would be bereft of any pictures or photographs. But contrary to his assertions the memorial built by the Damdami Taksal was opened on April 27, 2013 and dedicated to Bhindranwale with his name inscribed atop its entrance.

Hypocrisy is the fine art our politicians excel in. Sukhbir who had supported the construction of the memorial by the radical Damdami Taksal but the Badals had avoided visiting it earlier in view of sharp criticism against its construction, paid obeisance at the memorial dedicated to Bhindranwale by visiting it on April 15.

The emerging volatile situation in Punjab is the result of the Akali leadership's "religion and politics are inseparable" doctrine. It found its echo in the developing confrontation between the right wing Hindu and radical Sikh fringe elements whose activities are spreading communal hatred in the State.

An instance: The right-wing Hindu Suraksha Samiti and All India Hindu Students Federation organized a 'Lalkar' rally - aimed at challenging the pro-Khalistan supporters - from Chandigarh to Amritsar on May 25. To counter the move, scores of radical Sikh activists held an 'anakh' (self-respect) rally and gathered on the Beas bridge to stop the 'Lalkar' rally from entering Amritsar. A clash was averted as the Hindu activists cancelled the rally at the eleventh hour with the police intervening. It later registered cases against unnamed followers of both the groups. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

PM should
visit more
often

Editor,
I echo the feelings of Mr DM Pariat in the letter, "The pothole and the PM" (ST June 4, 2016). Apparently it required the visit of the PM to the state to fill up potholes on all the roads that the PM travelled on during his visit here. One would like to add here that it was during the PM's visit that the entrance and exit gates at the Civil Hospital were kept clear off all the makeshift food stalls. The place wore a clean, congestion free and spacious look. The footpath was free for the pedestrians to use at ease unlike at all times i.e. prior to the PM's visit whereby one end of the footpath itself was blocked as it had been conveniently used by hawkers to set up their shops. Needless to say this inhibited free movement for passersby even forcing them to squeeze their way amidst heavy traffic. One must say that as of now the place is still clear of hawkers and makeshift stalls. But for how long? With the passage of time both the gates of the Hospital and footpath will again be crowded by

shops if the authorities concerned do not put their foot down and put a permanent halt to them. The reason I say this is because today a couple of hawkers have begun to throng the place carrying their goods in small baskets which will eventually translate into bigger boxes, if it is allowed to go unchecked.

One has no personal grudge against the hawkers nor does one have any intention of snatching away their means of livelihood. In fact one strongly believes that the hawkers need to be provided a space of their own so that they do not encroach and occupy any space they find convenient. One also strongly feels that the footpaths and roads in and around the city must be strictly used by pedestrians for free movement and not for makeshift shops. If truth be told, then it is not only the area around the Civil Hospital which needs to be free of congestion but several other places like Motphran, Iewduh etc., to name a few.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer DKhar,
Viaemail

Clarification
from FCC

Editor,
Apropos the article titled "Meghalaya's Inconvenient

Truth" by H. H. Mohrmen (ST June 6, 2016) the entire analysis on Frontier Chamber of Commerce is baseless and without any facts. The delegation of the Chamber met the Prime Minister and sought his intervention in the Smart City project, improvement of the National Highway 44, up-gradation of Umroi Airport and development of infrastructure. The Chamber also demanded that Central government must come up with policies for development of north eastern region taking into consideration local strength and opportunities.

In our memorandum, we have not mentioned about coal mining. Only during a verbal discussion we informed the Prime Minister that because of NGT ban on coal mining, the economy of the region has been badly affected and as such a comprehensive policy for development of the region is essential, taking into consideration local strengths and opportunities.

Mr Mohrmen has used unparliamentarily language by calling Frontier Chamber of Commerce as selfish. It is for information of the author that none of the members of Frontier Chamber of Commerce is involved in coal mining nor any coal related activities. Also we may mention that the

“When you stare into the abyss the
abyss stares back at you.”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 297 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2016

Tragedy in Mathura

A stark tragedy was enacted in Mathura. Adults have been dead or wounded. Two policemen were killed. Members of the Swadheen Bharat Shubhas Sena came to Mathura from Madhya Pradesh two years ago. They stopped to rest in Jawahar Bag in Mathura and then fortified the 280 acre piece of land storing arms and ammunition there. It ran its own shops, schools, a bomb factory and a community kitchen for 3000 people. The cult leader, Ram Briksh Yadav who claimed to derive inspiration from Subhash Chandra Bose planned to grab government land to build an Ashram. It is a breakaway group from a bigger cult around a figure called Jaiguru Dev. Yadav is supposed to have died in cylinder explosions caused by Satyagrahis belonging to the cult. They did it apparently to stop the police but had a reverse effect.

The government's role in this entire business is beyond comprehension. The police would not have evacuated the public park unless the court had ordered it. Why the police were unprepared to tackle the violent situation is hard to understand. It is reported that repeated intelligence reports reached the UP government about the forced occupation of land but the government paid no heed to them. The breakaway group was allowed to run almost a parallel administration in the city. The cult of Yadav is said to have powerful political connections in Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh in any case seems to be heading for political degeneration. The cult has been banking on mixing religion with what they claim to be their brand of patriotism. They have been entrenched in the holy city for two years but nothing had been done to discipline them. Hence the present murder and mayhem!

LOOKING BACK

February 14, 1989

Presidential Assent

The Meghalaya Urban Planning and Development Authority Bill, which was passed by the state Assembly as early as in 1986, is awaiting assent of the President even in the third year of its passing. Such colossal delays only make a mockery of the whole legislative process, 'apart from bringing to nought all the calculations and plans for which the intended legislation is conceived. This is not the first instance of such delays of Presidential clearance of state bills: the instances are multi- plying in recent years all over, a fact which should rather have worked for quicker disposal to lessen the impact of such unnecessary accumulation. For Meghalaya too this is not the first experience of such wanton delays, although this state has comparatively been fairly modest in undertking legislations. Meghalaya has invoked a legislation only when and where it is a must.

Urban development is a relatively recent concept to be actively pursued in this part of the country. Movement of people even in these hills from their traditional rural seclusion has started due to inter action of a variety of inevitable socio-economic' forces. And the result is haphazard growth of urban centres which have to be developed into planned "'township. And this is all that the bill that is held up in New Delhi has in view and this is also how an important development measure has to suffer by default. What is to be noted is that the bill in question is wholly innocuous and as such does not merit the delay meted out to its assent by the President. The proposed Shillong Development Authority as a result is not getting its green signal because of this hold-up, and

tbis is at the cost of much of the damage already caused to the planned growth of this capital-cum-hill city.

If a non controversial legislation like the one in question is also to be subjected to such delays, it is as well that steps are initiated to do away with the unnecessary requirement of the Governor reserving State bills for the President's assent. The Governor himself should be duly competent to do this job in respect of legislation on a subject which pertains to the State's own legislative competence. Only in rare cases may there be an exception if the legislation impinges on a "Union subject", in which case the Governor himself could intervene at the very stage of introduction of the bill concerned.

In Jaintia Hills
Electioneering Devoid of Personal Attacks

Electioneering in the Jaintia Hills has undergone a change for the better. The candidates belonging to a new generation as well as those who entered politics one year ago have their own style of canvassing. Personal attacks have become a matter of the past. Most candidates, addressed the people on policies and programmes of the their own parties. In quiet a few constituencies, mutual respect for one another was maintained. However, a handful of canvassers allegedly resorted to threat, blackmailing and the like. It is being openly questioned here whether or not Dr. R. C. Laloo is above board in this regard. The real contest is between the Congress (I) and Hills People Union which have fielded largest member of candidates. While each of the two expects a high number of winning candidates, public opinions seems to have gone against the HSPDP.

From ‘Hindi’ to ‘Hindustani’

The dream of having a common language of the masses or a lingua franca that connected every nook and breath of our great nation, while at the same time effervescing with the core essence of India and the age old Indian civilization, led to the adoption of Hindi as the official language in India. However, these efforts during the turbulent times after India's Independence from more than a century old British rule were not without opposition from the southern region of India where Dravidian Languages like Tamil, Telagu, Malayalam hold sway as the preferred languages for people to people communication. Any modern language that is vibrant and living and is widely accepted in the country by the majority of the population is also bound to evolve with time. The Telecommunication and Information Technology boom has now made it possible for Hindi to touch our lives in unique ways and at the same time direct its evolution by enriching its vocabulary. The newly added words may be from global languages like English, French etc. and also from the regional languages of India.

Much of this evolution or transformation of Hindi may be happening for good however, I would like to focus on another interesting facet of Hindi which is not so widely highlighted or is often downplayed by the so called 'torch bearers' of the language. This important and often overlooked characteristic of Hindi is the fact that the so called 'Pure' Hindi or the Hindi language taught as a part of the school and college syllabus in India, is seldom spoken as such, in any part of India. This is true for all the states even including the states that have been categorized as Hindi speaking states in India. This facet was brought to my notice by a Professor in Jawaharlal Nehru University during an informal interaction, where he argued that "chaste Bhojpuri or that matter of fact Punjabi, Rajasthani, Haryanvi, Maithillili etc. were as different to Hindi as chaste Assamese is". His

By Ranjan K.Bhagobaty

words appeared new and revolutionary to me, egging me on to search deep into the origins of Hindi and also my mother tongue Assamese. It was as if I was trying to re-discover India, in my own special way once again. This spark generated by the informal 'Chai ke upar charcha' in Ganga Dhaba of JNU campus, New Delhi met with another stream of thought when I joined Aligarh Muslim University for my Master's degree. A colleague of mine in AMU belonging to the Kishanganj area of Bihar told me that the language or dialect of Hindi spoken in the areas adjoining in and around his hometown known as 'Suryapuri' had high levels of similarity with the Assamese language. This information was a great revelation for me as till that age I myself had never found anyone telling me about the similarity of a form of spoken Hindi to my own mother tongue. My preoccupations with a basic bioscience subject i.e. Microbiology during my Master's degree did not permit me to continue my quest further. However, by that time I began to marvel at our great cultural and linguistic heritage and the great Indian civilization itself, which somehow connected every part of the nation with another.

I decided to check the validity of the informal information accumulated over the years with regards to Hindi by searching the World Wide Web and to my amazement, not only the facets about Hindi were found to be true, but I also discovered something more about the spoken form of the language which enchanted me even further. The spoken form or the form of Hindi widely used in mass media and Hindi movies is known as " H I N D U S T A N I " . Historically Hindustani has been also known as Dehlvi, Hindavi and Rekhta, and is the lingua franca of North India and Pakistan. This widely spoken language is derived primarily from the 'Khariboli' dialect of Delhi and incorporates a large amount of words from Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic and has two official forms: Modern Standard Hindi and

Modern Standard Urdu. The spoken versions of the standardized forms of Hindustani i.e. Hindi and Urdu are often indistinguishable with nearly identical grammar but they differ in literary conventions and in academic and technical vocabulary, with Urdu adopting stronger Persian, Turkic and Arabic influences, and Hindi relying more heavily on Sanskrit.

Before the Partition of India, the terms Hindustani, Urdu, and Hindi were synonymous; all covered what would be called Urdu and Hindi today. After India's independence in 1947, the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights recommended that the official language of India be Hindustani. However, this recommendation was not adopted by the Constituent Assembly. Hindi, a major standardized register of Hindustani, was declared by the Constitution of India as the "official language of India. The other major standardized form of Hindustani i.e. Urdu became the national language of Pakistan and is also officially recognized as a regional language in India. Urdu has official language status in the Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir, National Capital Territory of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, and West Bengal.

Whatever may have been our historical compulsions, it would have been prudent to adopt the spoken form of the language i.e. Hindustani (comprising of Hindi-Urdu) as the official language of India, as our collective architectural, social and cultural heritage seem to be deeply intertwined with this language of the masses. At this juncture however, it is also important to realize that compulsions similar to the ones leading to switch from Hindustani to Hindi as the official language at the time of Independence may once again be at play in our recent efforts to hurriedly rename major Indian cities. 'Bombay' became 'Mumbai', 'Madras' became 'Chennai' but were we able to erase some components of our collective History altogether? Or are these an effort to redefine Indian

nationalism? Do we still not feel proud of the 'The Taj Mahal' at Agra, in a similar fashion as we do for the 'Gateway of India' in Mumbai? In the global context also, neo-radical groups have emerged, that have even resorted to destruction of UNESCO recognized world heritage sites and cultural monuments in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

The term 'Hindustani' is still used to describe the language spoken in North India and is also the Hindi spoken or heard in Bollywood films. It is also used to describe several quite different varieties of Hindi spoken outside the Indian Subcontinent, such as in the Caribbean Islands, Fiji and South Africa. Much to the dismay of the so called puritan 'scholars of Hindi' a rapid shift from the Hindi taught in our schools and colleges is happening across India. Hindi News Channels including the news read in Government run Dooardarshan and popular TV shows are using an increasing number of Urdu words to replace the sanskritized standard version of the language. This change is inevitable and it has been even faster tracked by the social media boom.

So next time when somebody tells you to speak 'Shuddh Hindi' just smile back at the person and say that you speak Khasi-Hindi/ Assamese-Hindi / Marathi-Hindi / Malayali-Hindi etc. and you are as proud of it as he or she is proud of his or her Bhojpuri-Hindi, Punjabi-Hindi, Marwari-Hindi or in that same context an American is of his American-English, an Australian of his Australian-English. A language of the masses like music itself, which is constantly evolving with time, has a universal appeal that can transcend boundaries of caste, creed, religion and political borders. The all inclusive spoken Hindustani language was, is and will continue to be the 'true Essence' of this great nation. Jai Hind!!!!

(The writer currently working as :Senior Research Scientist R&D Department Oil India Limited, Duliajan, Assam)

TO THE EDITOR

Two contrasting
Assembly
constituencies

Editor,
A few weeks back, a local TV channel had expressly demonstrated the lamentable condition of a road which falls under the Ri Bhoi District. This road which beggars all description runs from Lad Umsav village enroute to Mawmih and beyond. It is mind-boggling to see that this motorable route, which skirts the scenic Umiam Lake and other notable landmarks such as Fernando Missionary institute, Ri Kynjai abode which is a popular destination of eminent personalities like Ms. Arundhati Roy, the Booker prize awardee and such other educational Centres like UCC College, is a spectacle of a regretful look. A more appalling motorable road will be hard to think of. Markedly, from the first hand interview conducted by the personnel of the TV Channel in question with the residents of these concerned villages, it transpired that this god-forsaken road is under the 11 Umsning Constituency which is represented by an MLA of Congress party. In fact, the affected villagers who have to religiously commute through this route stated that they have filed umpteenth complaints to those at the helm over the pitiable shapes of this specific road-way but their efforts, they affirmed, proved unavailing. It beats me how the invalid, the aged, the tender children

particularly the women during pregnancy travel over the bumpy tracts, interspersed with pot-holes and sudden sharp jerkings caused by the existing road surface? It must be a punishing experience of the poor villagers who have no other alternative linked communications. I hope the MLA concerned would address the people's concerns sooner than later.

I may draw a similar analogy as far as road maintenance is concerned: This is in pertaining to one of the constituent Assembly Constituencies in Shillong, namely the 18 West Shillong Constituency that is represented by an MLA of a regional party. In this Constituency, all can fairly see for themselves the smooth contour of nearly all the road networks; the damaged portions due to wear and tear are being progressively repaired. Some of these roads, mind you, were formerly under the jurisdiction of another Congress MLA before the re-demarcation of constituencies. This representative is also consciously working overtime to link every household cluster of households through a motorable pathway thereby ensuring that no vehicle is parked overnight on the main road. However, such noble attempts to bring about this vehicular connectivity to the unapproached houses due to adverse land topography are more often than not met with failure given the fact that some unscrupulous land owners where such an approach route needs to pass through are determinedly unwilling to

part with even an inch of their space for the over-all welfare and convenience of their nearest neighbours!

To call a spade a spade, a people's representative of such benevolence ought to earn plaudits from the denizens of the 18 West Shillong Constituency as far the question of road maintenance is concerned.

Yours etc.,
Jerome Diengdoh,
Shillong-2

Academia
afflicted by
insensibility

Editor,
Occasionally, the North Eastern Hill University is in the news, more frequently, because of internal disruptions such as strikes and agitations rather than that of academic excellence and achievements in research and innovations. Of course, one cannot deny that hard work and dedication of some faculty and students have raised the status of the university to earn it the sobriquet - University with the potential for excellence. A university ranking 15th among universities in India etc.

On the other hand, it ability to make progress is often impeded by the insensibility and authoritarian nature of some, in position of power, in the administration of this Institute. Such perturbing instances, inter alia, include harassments meted out to the research scholars in matters of extension of hostel accommodation owing to imperious and apparently ignorant dictates of the concerned administrators such as Provost and DSW. By UGC rule, a research

scholar pursuing PhD is allowed to get extension of his five years period to another two years subject to the strict examination of the progress, quality and productivity of his/her work in the particular field of research. The examination and scrutiny is done by a panel of experts of the particular area of study. In NEHU such students who have been given extension subject to the above procedure are denied extension of hostel accommodation. That is the worst crisis faced by genuine research scholars while struggling with the toughest and most crucial stage in advancing their innovations, arriving at conclusions, writing thesis, submission etc. In institutes like IITs, ISIs, TIFR, etc., students normally take seven years, but their quality of work and contribution is strictly monitored and examined. These premier research institutes have given thrust to the quality of work hence more time is given to the researchers. The aim is to trigger a change in terms of scope, intensity and quality of research in India to be in the same pace with that of top global institutes and to liberate our nation from the much decried abysmal backwardness that any Indian university does not figure among the top 200 universities in the world.If our "smart" administrators are conscious of these technicalities in the academia, they should not be too autocratic to disturb the conducive, academic environment. Our respected VC should look into such matters seriously.

Yours etc.,
(Name withheld on request)

Congress determined to get
Rajya Sabha seat from MP
BJP resorts to horse
trading to elect its
third candidate

By L S Herdenia

The Madhya Pradesh BJP by deciding to back an independent candidate for the Rajya Sabha has added an element of uncertainty in the elections to the Upper House scheduled for June 11. According to the strength in the MP Vidhan Sabha, the BJP can send two members and the Congress one. Originally the BJP decided to sponsor only two candidates but at the last minute it decided to back an independent candidate. It is said that decision to sponsor third candidate was taken at the behest of central leadership.

While on the basis of its strength the BJP is in a position to elect two but since it has sponsored the third, it cannot ensure his victory without manipulating defection from other parties, mainly from the Congress.

At present four candidates are in the field. They are Anil Dave, M.J. Akbar and Gotia of the BJP and Vivek Tankha of the Congress. For Dave, it will be second consecutive term M.J. Akbar a former journalist has been sponsored from Madhya Pradesh. The third BJP candidate Gotia is an ordinary worker of the BJP from Jabalpur. There is discontent in both the BJP and Congress over the selection of candidates. There is no opposition about Dave who is an active BJP leader. He is being rewarded for his excellent contribution in organising Vishwa Hindi Sammelan and "Vaicharik Kumbh" during the Simhastha at Ujjain.

"Vaicharik Kumbh" was attended by intellectuals from various countries. But a substantial section of the BJP has raised their eyebrows over M.J. Akbar's selection who is a rank outsider. As for Vivek Tankha, he is also not an active leader of the Congress. There is no doubt that he is an eminent lawyer who served as Advocate General of Madhya Pradesh and Additional Attorney General of the Government of India. While criticising the choice of Tankha, Congress leaders recall that two years' back he tried to get BJP ticket for Rajya Sabha but somehow it did not materialise. Besides he has excellent relations with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan. Tankha pleaded his case in the so called Dumper scam. The only qualification he has is in being the son in law of late Ajay Narayan Mushran, who was a minister in Congress government. Both the BJP and Congress are extra cautious and trying their best to keep their flock together.

The Congress convened a meeting of party legislators on June 6. According to media reports, there were tense faces during the crucial Congress legislature party meeting held at the PCC headquarters in Bhopal .Dinesh Ahirwar, remained absent without informing the party. The meeting assumed significance as top Congress leaders from the state, including Kamal Nath, Digvijaya Singh, Mohan Prakash and Suresh Pachauri, assembled to chalk out the party's strategy to win one of the three Rajya Sabha seats for which senior Supreme Court lawyer Vivek Tankha has been fielded. Even after the Bahujan Samaj Party's announcement of support to Tankha, the Congress is not taking any chances and is making all out efforts to ensure all the party MLAs reach Bhopal ahead of the polling day and cast their votes on June 11, the day of polling.

The Congress, which has 57 MLAs in the state assembly, needs 58 votes to win the Rajya Sabha seat. With the BSP's four MLAs backing Tankha, the Congress is in a strong position to win the seat. However, the absence of

Satyadev Katare, leader of the opposition who is seriously sick and Govardhan Upadhyay, and Yadvendra Singh, who couldn't attend the meeting due to some family problem, caused worries and apprehensions among the party leaders. Equally disturbing was the possible defection of Ahirwar. However, except Ahirwar, all the other MLAs who were absent had informed the state party president about their not being able to attend the meeting, the sources said.

The party discussed the election scenario. The party leaders exuded confidence that they would win the election. The party has already moved the High Court to seek a direction to the Election Commission of India to allow Katare and jailed MLA Ramesh Patel to cast their votes through postal ballot or messengers. The leaders stressed the need for training of MLAs, particularly the first-time legislators, on how to cast their votes properly. Party sources said former Union minister Kamal Nath will take care of overall election management while the state Congress president Arun Yadav will oversee the floor management.

The meeting decided to name Ram Niwas Rawat as the Chief whip for the election and another senior MLA Mahendra Singh was appointed as the election agent. The meeting was attended besides MLAs by the AICC general secretary and in-charge of MP Mohan Prakash, former union minister Kamalnath, former chief minister Digvijay Singh, former minister Kantilal Buria, former minister Suresh Pachori and PCC president Arun Yadav. The MLAs were told to read and closely follow the procedure for voting. The MLAs have been warned that the BJP may try to lure them or they may be prevented from reaching the assembly using dirty tricks. The MLAs have been told to be cautious till they have cast their votes. On the occasion a Power Point presentation was given to the MLAs regarding the polling process.

While talking to media, the state in-charge Mohan Prakash alleged that the BJP had violated democratic traditions by supporting an Independent candidate. He said, "the BJP is not having the numbers to get the third candidate elected. From where will the voters come? From Delhi? He asked. The PCC president Arun Yadav alleged that the BJP was a party which could use any means; fair or foul to win. "They are very good at horse trading", he said.

However the Congress party is happy that BJP may fall short of one more vote in the Rajya Sabha election. MLA from Devsar Rajendra Meshram may not be able to vote in the RS election following Supreme Court instructions. According to the Congress spokesperson JP Dhanopia, the Congress candidate Vivek Tankha has filed the objection before Chief Election Commissioner of India regarding the membership of the MLA of Devsar Rajendra Meshram.

Rajendra Meshram informed that he would miss the opportunity to cast his vote in the RS election. "Every vote in RS election is precious; I will witness the proceedings, but not be able to cast my vote" he said. In the assembly there are a total 230 elected members. BJP has 165 members including Meshram. The number of votes of BJP will be 165 because the speaker can vote in favour of his party. The Congress party has 57 members, BSP has four members and they are going to vote for the Congress. (IPA Service)

“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.”

--- Anatole France

The Shillong Times

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Modi in the US

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US has paved the way for nuclear commerce between the two countries. They have agreed to start preparatory work for building six nuclear reactors in India by the American firm, Westinghouse. That will be the first phase of the Indo-US nuclear deal struck more than a decade ago. India has also applied for membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). The BJP had previously stoutly opposed the Indo-US nuclear deal. It demanded a very tough nuclear liability law. But as Prime Minister, Modi has veered round to accepting the liability law which could enable Indian public sector participants to secure the insurance premium. It is generally agreed that India needs nuclear energy and technology to achieve its development goals. It is necessary also to combat global warming.

President Barack Obama has endorsed India's application for membership of the NSG. Climate change is a vital area in emerging Indo-US collaboration. Washington is committed to invest in India's renewable energy sector. India has joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) with US assistance. India is also a major defence partner of the US. India and the US have now struck a mutually responsive chord. But it should prompt New Delhi to take advantage of the amicable relations by asking for favourable terms on visas, trade and services from the US. The Chinese threat should not stand in the way of such endeavour. However, it remains to be seen how Modi clicks with the next US administration.

LOOKING BACK

February 14, 1989

Tame end to high drama in MP Congress(I) politics

The Madhya Pradesh High Court judgement in the Churhat Lottery case has abruptly changed the course of Congress(I) politics in the State, much to the bewilderment of the dominant section of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee(I). Mr Arjun Singh, who was steadily consolidating his position, not withstanding increase in dissident activities, suddenly realized that the ground was slipping under his feet. He, therefore, made a desperate attempt to cling to power by trying to convince the party High Command that there was no need for him to resign as the High Court had not passed strictures against him personally.

The fact, however, is that the judges of the High Court have passed severe strictures on Mr Arjun Singh on two counts. The judges said that Mr Arjun Singh should explain to the nation how he raised funds to build the huge mansion at Kerwa near Bhopal. The leader of the Opposition, Mr Kailash Joshi, in his petition to the High Court suggested that huge sums of money illegally earned by Mr Arjun Singh's relatives in the Churhat Lottery deal were utilised in building the mansion at Kerwa. The judges also were not prepared to believe Mr Arjun Singh's averment in the court that he did not know that the license was granted by the Government to the Churhat Children's Welfare Society for conducting the lottery as the concerned file was not put up before him. The judges rejected the plea with strictures against Mr Arjun Singh.

The High Court judgement itself was a severe indictment of the Churhat Children's Welfare Society which held eleven lottery draws without the sanction of the Government. The Society was permitted

to hold only one draw. The Society also had not distributed the prizes worth several lakhs of rupees. It committed several other illegalities. But the district collector of Sidhi exonerated the Society of the charge of violating the provision of the Lottery Act. The Society was also granted tax exemption by the government. The judgement accepts all the averments of the petitioner Mr Kailash Joshi and ordered an inquiry by an independent agency into the Churhat Children's Welfare Society affairs.

Mr Arjun Singh, who air dashed to Delhi on the day the judgement was pronounced, told the high command that as the State Government was filing an appeal against the High Court judgement, it was not necessary for him to quit office. He met the Prime Minister on the night of January 22 only to be told that he should resign. In fact, the AICC General Secretary announced the decision of the High Command that Mr Arjun Singh should relinquish office. This came as a shock to Mr Arjun Singh who immediately formulated a strategy of foisting his protégé, Mr Digvijay Singh, MP, as the next leader of the Congress Legislature Party (I), Mr Kamalnath, MP also was in favour of Mr Digvijay Singh. Mr Kamalnath had claimed that the Prime Minister had approved Mr Digvijay Singh's candidature. The High Command however, had already decided that either the Union Minister of State for Railways, Mr Madhavrao Scindia, or the Union Health Minister, Mr Motilal Vora, should succeed Mr Arjun Singh. AICC General Secetary Ghulam Nabi Azad and observers, Union Communication Minister, and Mr Darbara Singh, were asked to help the CLP choose the leader by consensus.

Of environment, ecology and tourism

By Patricia Mukhim

Tourism may be a money spinner but the carbon footprints it leaves behind are too horrendous to contemplate. To be fair to ourselves, this country does not yet have the technology to clean up the garbage that irresponsible humans generate on a daily basis. I have just returned from a trip to Pahalgam in Kashmir. The place is beautiful beyond imagination but the devastations caused by "Indian" tourists who have no idea of what it is to honour the earth and who to my mind are the most illiterate tourists in the world, are there for all to see. What is worse is that Indians want to look for God in every conceivable space and turn every mountain and river into an abode of their gods and goddesses where they must go for their pilgrimage.

This month of June the Amarnath Yatra will start from a place called Chandanbari in Pahalgam. The amount of garbage that will be generated while pilgrims trek up and down that 13 km route is indescribably humungous. Most of that garbage finds its way into the robustly beautiful white waters of the Lidder River and you cannot but feel the pain to see a pristine river having to carry the weight of human insensitivity. It's a great irony that the people who walk miles and miles to find God could not care a damn about the destruction of a part of this universe which is where the God's reside. Pahalgam town is much smaller than Shillong but the number of hotels/guest houses had come up at such a frenetic pace that it took a concerned citizen to PIL seeking a moratorium on hotels in the town. Hence the administration identified a place about twelve kilometers away and just by the side of the Lidder River. They called it New Pahalgam. Now, again, there is a rat race to construct as many guest houses/hotels in this new location. From March to October is the peak tourist season, so the guest houses are all fully occupied even though most of them don't meet standard protocol

The slow but sure destruction of Pahalgam is there for all to see, but who will halt this pace of development? The locals are happy to earn their livelihoods taking people on pony rides up the mountain path to what

they call New Switzerland (even names are cultivated these days). Even a pristine destination like Aru Valley now shows signs of fatigue. These places reminded me so much of our own Mawlynnong and Nongriat (Double Decker Root Bridge) and of what is likely to happen very soon if the footfalls to these cherished sites are not controlled.

On June 9, the Meghalaya Institute for Natural Resources (MINR) under the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority organized the Green Volunteers Conclave in Shillong as part of the World Environment Week Celebration. Listening to the presentations from individuals and groups from different districts of the state - Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi district etc., and the kind of activities they have taken up to restore the environment in innovative ways, was very heart warming. There were those who had taken up school kitchen gardens and used novel methods of vertical farming. They used the vegetables for midday meals in school. I was part of a 3-member panel of judges to see who deserved the first, second and third prizes based on their innovation, work done and presentations made. The presenters who included school children were very enthusiastic and spontaneous. Nothing was forced and they seemed to enjoy working to restore nature. A young lady from a school In Ri Bhoi said she is doing her best to create awareness about caring for the environment because she can foresee a time when people might have to carry oxygen cylinders for breathing if there are no more trees to absorb all the carbon that we humans and our activities generate.

A teacher from Ramakrishna Mission School Sohra while sharing his story said that the school is a completely plastic-free zone. The students also regularly clean up the tourist sites in and around Sohra. The teacher has also started a campaign around the schools in Sohra to give up covering their text and exercise books with plastic.

There was a presentation from Mawtyrshiah, Jaintia Hills where a group is trying to promote eco-tourism in very innovative ways such as designing footpaths in the shape of trees and banning all non-bio-

degradable substances and promising to use only eco-friendly materials by 2018. Another presentation from West Khasi Hills was from an individual who has been growing different kinds of saplings and distributing them for planting within his own village and the adjoining areas. There are no dearth of people who care for the environment. It is the MBDA that has brought them under a common platform so that they are provided assistance to scale up their activities and sustain their efforts.

I was particularly impressed by a gentleman who has single-handedly tried to conserve some of the indigenous species of fish in Meghalaya. He has used modern technology to map the kind of fish that are available; those that are under threat of extinction and what is to be done to conserve those. Needless to say we would not have heard these amazing stories if not for the Green Volunteers Conclave.

There are however, some sad stories too. A member of the Synjuk Seng Samla Shnong (SSSS) from Ri Bhoi district showed graphic pictures of the huge piles of garbage that are emptied into the Umiam Lake by the rivers Umkhrah and Umshyрпи. That is a painful sight and it shows the callousness of the people living upstream about the fate of those who live downstream of the rivers. The idea that Meghalaya is home to the tribals who are a community with shared values and a shared future is now blown to smithereens! And mind you the very instruments that are meant to protect us tribals are being used against us by unscrupulous fellow tribals and by the District Councils!

I am speaking here of the Sixth Schedule which had created the Autonomous District Councils. I don't find a single clause in the Sixth Schedule which talks of conserving the environment for the larger good. That is why coal mine owners and their pompous legal counsels flaunt the Sixth Schedule at us and mock all of us, almost telling us to 'shut up,' because the Sixth Schedule allows them to exploit the earth beneath, the forests and the rivers. It is appalling that the Councils lease out rivers to individuals to fish indiscriminately! Now why should one person have complete control over a

river and all its riverine lives and fish away everything? Who gave the District Council that right? The Council is supposed to ensure community rights over individual rights. It has gone and done the opposite. In fact it is high time that we challenge the Sixth Schedule in the Supreme Court before all our natural resources are creamed off by a small group of tribal elite. This same elite already owns 70% of Meghalaya's land and resources!

A senior government functionary while speaking at the Green Volunteers' Conclave wondered if we have become too rule bound and if we needed a law against everything so that our insatiable appetites are reined in. There are also those who question the wisdom of the NGT in banning coal mining and depriving the state of revenue. So are they suggesting that we continue with extractive, exploitative mining that benefits a few at the cost of many? And what kind of Government goes along with this extractive form of revenue generation that seeks to destroy our very future? Is this why we elect governments? Is this also why the elite service of the government are so well paid and looked after? Aren't they supposed to generate innovative ideas that are in the larger interests of the people of Meghalaya? Or should they be kowtowing to what politicians tell them. It's time for the people of Meghalaya to do a social audit of the bureaucracy and assess their contributions to the State since its inception.

Look at the tourist sites conceptualized by bureaucrats! Jakrem is all but a lost cause..all cemented up; its natural look all but gone! The Government sponsored hotels and guest houses are so unimaginative that they all look like shoe boxes. And yet they have traveled to the world's best resorts! Perhaps it because these bureaucrats get by without thinking! Is it time to get people from the market to deliver what they are asked to? It's also time for society to ask hard questions from this elite service. If all the ideas have come from politicians then why should bureaucrats get such a hefty package which is going to get hefty by July this year?

Tourism promotion in Meghalaya is fine but it needs to be fine-tuned and regulated. Meghalaya cannot go the Kashmir way!

Congress high command losing control of states

Senior leaders joining rebel groups

By Kalyani Shankar

Should the Congress Party be worried about the continuing erosion of its workers and leaders? Are the rats leaving the sinking ship? There is no doubt that the party is losing its organisational depth, more so since Modi came to power. There is rebellion brewing in various states. This week alone saw the exit of two senior Congress leaders - Ajit Jogi in Chhattisgarh and Gurudas Kamat in Maharashtra frustrated with the Congress leadership (read Rahul Gandhi). While Jogi, a former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, has launched his own outfit, Kamat wants to quit politics altogether. To add to the confusion, six Congress MLAs left the party in Tripura on Monday.

Significantly, the erosion had begun even before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls when leaders like Birender Singh (Haryana), G.K. Vasan (Tamil Nadu), Jayanathi Natarajan (Tamil Nadu) Giridhar Gomango (Orissa) K.S. Rao. R. Sambasiva Rao. Kiran Reddy and Jagan Reddy (all from Andhra Pradesh), Jagadambika Pal (UP) and Satpal Maharaj (Uttarakhand) quit the Congress. Late N.T. Rama Rao's daughter Purandeshwari ditched the Congress for the BJP. Others like Krishna Tirath (Delhi), Datta Meghe (Maharashtra), Jagmeet Singh Brar (Punjab), Avtar Singh Badana(Haryana) and Mangat Ram Sharma (Jammu and Kashmir) also quit. The leadership refused to recognise the brewing storm for the past two years, eluding itself that everything was alright.

Jogi's rebellion follows revolts in Assam and Uttarakhand where rebels left the Congress blaming the leadership for not addressing their grievances. Himanta Biswa Sarma was crucial to BJP's win in Assam while Uttarakhand's ex-CM Vijay Bahuguna almost brought down the Rawat government.

Though Kamat's decision to retire from active politics came as a bolt from the blue he represents the wounded sentiment of many loyalists. His exit would be a big blow for the party ahead of the civic polls next year. What should be worrying for the Congress leadership is that most of these leaders have been Pradesh Congress Committee presidents or general secretaries at one time or the other.

Why is the party facing this crisis? It is baffling that even now the Congress leadership has failed to grasp the seriousness of the situation despite rebels flexing their muscles in different parts of the country. The first is the leadership crisis. The party is confused about the role of Rahul Gandhi and his handpicked lieutenants most of whom have been imported from outside. Is he going to take over and If so when? What happens to Sonia Gandhi then? Will Rahul be able to get them votes? The confusion is complete as Sonia has taken a back seat leaving her son to be the defacto party chief. A reshuffle at AICC is

expected but adding to this ambiguity is the apprehension that Rahul might ease out the old guard. Rahul's experiment in tinkering with the Youth Congress, NSUI and other wings of the party have not been altogether successful so far. There is a grouse that his handpicked men have rubbed the seniors in the wrong way . In short, the confidence level in Rahul is not very high.

Secondly, the Congress leadership failed to see brewing storm in most Congress ruled states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Uttarakhand. Even Karnataka is not quite stable. The leadership had not detected the undercurrent while the rebels are directly pointing a finger at the leadership.

Thirdly, the situation is nearer to the situation which had hit the party in the late nineties. Just before Sonia Gandhi decided to take over the leadership in 1998, several senior and junior leaders like K.C. Pant and Aslam Sher khan, Dileep Singh Bhuria left the Congress. Mamata Banerjee floated the Trinamool Congress. Sonia's entry had arrested the erosion and she could not only unify the party but also bring the Congress led UPA to power not once but twice from 2004 to 2014. After Modi's entry neither the mother nor the son are able to provide the confidence to the party that they could get them votes.

Not much has been done to nurture second rung leadership. For months the Congress leaders from Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana and Chhattisgarh have been complaining against the PCC chiefs. In Punjab, the leadership was ultimately forced to choose Capt. Amarinder Singh as the chief ministerial face for the 2017 polls. Even in the current Rajya Sabha nominations indicate that leaders like Kapil Sibal. Chidambaram and Ambika Soni, belonging to the old guards are not out.

Fourthly, the proposal to setup an advisory council is ridiculed with some wondering what was the role of the Congress Working Committee then or why not revive the Parliamentary Board.

Many senior Congressmen are worried at this state of affairs and fear that the Congress may sink further if corrective measures are not taken before it is too late. There is urgency in putting the right man for the right job and restructure the organisation blending a mix of young and old. There should be change of style of functioning of the leadership. The party workers have to be enthused with prgorammes and schemes at the ground level. The present confusion about Rahul Gandhi's role should end so that he can plan for 2019. The 130-old party should not allow this existential crisis to continue. Living in the past is not the answer and working for the future is the way to go forward. This is the time for reckoning. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Where is their CSR?

Editor,

The article by H H Mohrmén on World Environment Day and his observations on the PM's maiden visit to Shillong is really an eye opener and reflects the truth of the matter. The NGT ban on coal mining has been making news and this was surely an opportunity not to be missed by businessmen representing the Frontier Chamber of Commerce and another equal partner representing cement factories and going by the name of Confederation of Industries of Meghalaya. Interestingly a conglomerate of headmen under the banner of Synjuk Ki Waheh Shnong from East Jaintia Hills took the same route. My question to all these businessmen and their partners is, what have you contributed to the overall welfare to the poorest of the poor in Meghalaya? Have you ever given them

an oppurtunity to grow within their own economic sphere or have you been hobnobbing for NOCs from the Dollois and Headmen, right up to the JHADC and the State Government to loot and plunder the wealth of this state for your profit and economic interests?

If you talk of providing employment in the numerous cement plants then why aren't our people the young and talented youth with a technical degree not employed in those firms? Just appointing people as low-grade workers doesn't justify their so called employment. Moreover, these business groups have never come out to experience the harsh realities faced by the villagers but only crave for subsidies and tax benefits. What have you done to the villages affected by the recent cyclonic calamity? Have you ever provided any master plan to protect the environment? These groups need to introspect whether they are here to serve their own business interests or to positively develop this

State and its people.

Yours etc.,

Dominic S.Wankhar

Shillong-3

SOS, Mukul and dissidents

Editor,

The infamous leak of the SOS by Dr Mukul Sangma to the AICC which alleges that DD Lapang and VH Pala met with senior BJP leaders to pull down the Congress led MUA government, in the national media followed by the local ones is more than what meet the eyes. As per the goings-on it appears that the internal rumblings in the Congress are not taken to well even by the High Command. The AICC is well aware about the situation in Meghalaya and how the BJP is perching to gain from this. The mother-son due of the Congress High Command has a task in hand. Though this dissidence is a replay of several such witnessed in the past, it cannot be taken lightly, more so when the BJP is eyeing every option for another possible coup and the Congress is no

longer in power at the centre. It is also speculated that the recent visit by BJP MP and newly crowned BCCI President, Anurag Thakur to Meghalaya is a move by the saffron leadership in this direction. Thakur's visit to the State was on cricketing matters after assuming charge as President, BCCI. By deputing an observer to the state can the AICC address the dissidence given the current political formulation in the region, state and centre? The dissidence in the present scenario is attributed to the stalled cabinet reshuffle under the incumbent CM. Those who are expecting cabinet berths have started to feel that time is running out for them and they are eager to be in the hot seat with the Assembly elections slated for 2018. This is indeed a bizarre situation here where dissidence crops up from the same Congress brigade despite running the government with full majority. We don't need coalition parties to bring down a government. This is going to put the AICC in a

spot of botheration - to whom the dissident Congress MLAs from Meghalaya run with their grievances, like children running to their mother, every now and then. This actually puts a real question mark on the integrity, if not directly as of now, of the AICC which is taken to be 'holier than the Bible' by the

Congressmen from the state.

Yours etc.

PK Dwivedi

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

“He felt that his whole life was some kind of dream and he sometimes wondered whose it was and whether they were enjoying it.”
--- Douglas Adams

The Shillong Times

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The UK and the EU
THE UK will shortly have a referendum which will decide its future. It will find out what popular opinion is on the UK continuing in the European Union (EU). From the economic point of view, the UK will do well to remain in the EU. But the attitude to the EU in western countries may cause an out-swing. The UK is one of the most open societies which has been to its good. It was as an aftermath of the two destructive wars that the EU was formed to prevent a repetition of the menace. The Union has been a success. The EU is a prosperous bloc. Its members are knit together by strong economic ties. There is a common European market which has pulled down many trade barriers. It accounts for 45% of the UK’s exports and 53% of its imports. If the UK quits the EU, it will suffer immensely as it will lose easy access to one of the largest markets.

Business from other countries like India as a rule goes through the UK serving as a link with a huge market. If the market slips out of the UK’s grip, investment in that country will taper off. London is one of the world’s most prominent financial centres. Exit from the EU which is known as Brexit will no doubt undermine the country’s economic stability. Scotland and Wales are no doubt lukewarm about the Brexit proposal. Exit from the EU may even cause disintegration in the UK. Insularity will doubtless add to the growing problems of the country.

LOOKING BACK

February 14, 1989

Special body to review Govt. college teachers’ pay scale

The State Govt is soon going to set up a special committee to review the problems of fixation of pay sales of the government college teachers. The committee will go into the whole gamut of issues which have remained pending for over a decade.

The Committee has been directed to come out with appropriate solution within March Next. Earlier the Deputy Chief Minister Mr D D Lapang who is in charge of education portfolio, summoned senior officials of the Education Department for reviewing the grievances of the govt college teachers.

As regards payment of arrear DA and other allowances to deficit school teachers. Mr Lapang asked the Education Department to work out requisite financial involvement and place the necessary funds for payment within the next month.

Meanwhile, a report from Tura said that the Tura unit of the Meghalaya Govt College Teachers' Association has decided to extend full cooperation for smooth conduct of the ensuring NEHU examin-ations. The Association in its emergent meeting held on Monday took stock of the situation in the wake of receipt of WT message from the Education Department assuring them of looking into their grievances.

A Prophetic Dream!

New Delhi: Feb 14 Can dreams be prophetic? A Florentine youth once dreamt that he had been bitten by a stone lion in front of a church entrance.

Next morning the young man told his friends about the dream and they decided to test fate.

A crowd of on-lookers gathered by the church, the young man thrust his hand into the stone lion's jaws, the next minute he gave a cry of pain. He had been bitten by a scorpion that lay hidden in the cavity "you may very well call that a prophetic dream. But a bit of reasoning will show that prophetic

dreams are no more than coincidence" says Soviet dream expert Dr Vasily Kasatkin.

Azad says high command has not asked him to quit

Bihar Chief Minister Mr Bhagwat Jha Azad today scotched rumours that the party high command had asked him to step down. On his return from a week-long stay in Delhi, Mr Azad told newsmen at Patna airport that he would continue to carry out the jobs assigned to him by party president Rajiv Gandhi.

He would try his best to serve the people of the state, he added. Asked about cabinet expansion, Mr Azad said he did not discuss it with the central leadership. He parried a question on his talks with Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi asking "when politicians meet, what do they discuss."

To another query he said the legislative session had to be prorogued first before convening it. The session was adjourned indefinitely on February 2 without transacting any financial burliness. Reiterating that he had been always ready to redress the grievances of his party men, Mr Azad said it would be in the best interest of the party if 'we sink our difference and work together to strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Avadh Assam Express to be terminated in WB

The Avadh Assam Express will be terminated at West Bengal for the next five days in view of the bandh call by the Bodo Students' Union in Assam. The train, running through Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, terminated at New Jalpaiguri in North Bengal in view of the proposed 120 hours Assam bandh, official sources here said. The train will run from New Delhi, to New Jalpaiguri during the period, the sources said.

Lessons we learn from the Chipko Movement

“What do the forests bear? Soil, Water, and pure air” one of the songs and poems written by Ghanashyam Raturi, the Chipko poet, still echoes throughout the Himalayas.

To many of us “Chipko” which means ‘to hug’ or ‘to embrace’ in Hindi evokes pathetic images of poor village women desperately trying to protect their forests from the axes of greedy contractors, by hugging the trees which was their only means of economic survival. What happened 43 years ago in 1973 in a small hamlet in Chamoli district of Garhwal when women activists staged protests against tree felling by literally ‘hugging’ the trees has today become the starting point of a conservation endeavour that was firstly ‘pro-poor’ and above all ‘women centred’. What message did the Chipko movement have for its forerunners? What lessons do we learn from it? Perhaps these are the questions that cross our minds in the light of new environmental issues that are plaguing the world today.

Chipko was only one of a series of ‘forest-based,’ peasants’ conflict that emerged as a protest against Colonial Forestry which was basically ‘Commercial’ in its motive and had ‘Forest for Revenue’ as its objective. Throughout Colonial period, popular resistance to state forestry was remarkably widespread throughout the country in the form of small riots and forest conflicts . But what is remarkable is the fact that , Chipko has grown from being a ‘forest-based’ movement to becoming an environmental icon to the world today that has inspired ‘eco-feminism’ with a strong message ‘Our lives before our trees’.

Teaching a course on Sociology of Environment to the Post-graduate students at the University has often led me to probe over issues of the so called ‘Third World’ political ecology which in a way is directly linked to this movement and in the process it also gave me an insight towards understanding gender analysis of resource use and the growth of environmentalism in India. Here the name of Dr. Vandana Shiva comes to mind as she was instrumental in developing international literature on the subject of eco-feminism in India. One of the most comprehensive of her works has been Staying Alive: Women,

By Rekha M Shangliang

Ecology and Development (1989), in which she critiques “development” as a type of neo-colonialism that exploits and oppresses both women and nature.

FOREST RIGHTS AND INTERVENTIONS

Examining the movement closely we find that the ‘core issue’ that sparked off the movement in its initial stages was simply a “struggle for economic survival” by the village poor specially the women who were denied access to forest rights. By the mid-1990s, the numerous environmental movements that had emerged in the wake of Chipko were then centred against the exigencies of the developmental state as India embarked on rapid economic growth through trade liberalization. It was late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi who for the first time linked poverty with environment through her powerful statement -“Poverty is the biggest pollutant” in the Stockholm Conference held in Sweden, on June 5th 1972. It is true that in developing countries like India, issues of environment are basically issues concerning the poor and their access to natural resources therefore unless poverty is rooted out, environmental issues will continue unabated. This is true even in the case of the tribals of the North East who are reeling under the pressure of land alienation, denial of forest rights and non-accessibility to land and forest resources due to forces of development. The worst sufferers are rural women who have been dependent on forest resources for their daily sustenance and livelihood strategies.

Like other tribal communities, the Khasis have a deep rooted affinity with nature. The earth which is symbolized as ‘mother’ or ‘meiramew’ is looked upon as the caretaker of all the natural resources. Thus forest holds an important place in the social, economic and religious life of the Khasis. It is looked upon, as a well loved home, a game sanctuary and an abode of worship all rolled into one, around which their social, cultural and religious activities revolve. It is a familiar sight to see women and children setting off into the woods to collect edible fruits and roots. A typical day out for an average Khasi village woman would be best described as follows:

‘She carries her baby on her back, climbing the hills she sets off for the woods with a ja-song (cooked rice

products is another burden since they are dependent on bus services which are often irregular and poor due to inaccessible roads to the interior villages thus leaving the marketing and sale of produce to the men folk. This is further compounded by the fact that the women are primarily involved only in the lower stages of the value chain such as collection, cleaning, processing and sorting of forest produce but they lack access to or control over marketing of the produce. One finds an invisibility of women’s role in forest management and decision making which has led to an increase in economic hardships. There has also been an unhealthy trend of gradual shift over of Ri-raid (community land) to Ri-Kynti (private land ownership) as large tracts of land and forest has been taken over by an affluent section of the population for commercial purposes or for development projects thereby leading to not only a steady decline in the quality of communal land and forest but also marginalized women’s role in the use of common property resources.

While one looks closely at these issues concerning land, forest and resource utilization, one is struck by the similarity of a Chipko like phenomenon slowly invading our hills. One should remember that irrespective of its grassroots achievements Chipko had successfully emerged as a movement against commercial forestry besides evoking a strong sense of eco-feminism making it known to the world that women are closer to nature and therefore more sensitive to their needs of the forest. Women may not ‘hug’ trees today to save them from being felled but their silent protests and silent tears can make a difference if the policy makers and government are sensitive to their needs. Today if we are to learn from the Chipko, it is time we bring justice to the resource needs of the village women which would redefine a new morality in environmental concern. Let us be more sensible and look at the issue as a cultural response of people’s love for environment. Last but not the least let us remember that through the Chipko movement was born a ‘pro-poor environmentalism’ which addressed the resource needs of the poor in particular thus empowering the local communities to manage their resources

(The writer teaches at the Dept. of Sociology, NEHU, Shillong)

packed in a leaf) salt and some dry fish (ktung). Going to the forest virtually takes her the whole day so besides collecting twigs and fuel wood and other forest products, she also spends the day washing clothes on the riverside in the foothills’.

As nurturers of the family line of descent, Khasi women have had a significant role to play in the domestic sphere. Her familial roles are well defined and her ‘glorifying status’ as a mother has furthered her roles and responsibilities towards meeting the immediate needs of the family. These roles include some burdensome duties and responsibilities which are part of their household chores such as carrying water, fetching firewood, washing clothes, collecting twigs and edible plants and roots which are carried out in the jungle skirting the village. This has partly been borne out of the fact that women have had a closer interaction with nature and this has enhanced the emotional bond with nature since it has helped them cope up with a number of economic hardships.

In the matrilineal Khasi society the issue of equitable distribution of benefits in indigenous management system has often been challenged. Though in principle the matrilineal rule of female inheritance and descent is followed, but customary practices are not gender egalitarian, as authority is vested in the mother’s brother (maternal uncle). Women can inherit property such as land but they lack the power to manage it. Describing the Khasi woman as the focal point of the household organization, academicians like Iptul Nongbri have not ruled out the fact that when it comes to the allocation of rights over land, a sharp distinction is maintained between ‘ownership’ and ‘control’. While ownership of land is transmitted through women, control invariably lies with men. Agriculture and sale of forest produce used to be the mainstay of the rural Khasi economy. Over the years, with the decline of forest cover, the Khasi rural women have been forced into local and migrant wage employment. As forests have dwindled, women still depend upon the remaining forests as supplementary source of livelihood for survival, especially in the lean summer months. They have to walk longer distances foraging into the forest for collecting and carrying back the produce as headloads. Marketing these

Modi’s US Visit; Reasonably productive

By Kanwal Sibal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accelerated relation-building with the US with his fourth visit to that country in his two years in office. Rhetoric notwithstanding, the leadership on both sides is obviously cognizant of the potential of the relationship as well as its limitations.

The US is very difficult to deal with because of its immense power, its assumption that others must subscribe to its economic, political and legal notions to merit the benefits of a close partnership, the constant pressure it applies for market opening and reforms, and its sanctimoniousness on human rights and religious freedoms.

The US no doubt considers India difficult as well, resistant to change, wedded to outmoded economic ideas - a hindrance in international trade negotiations - unwilling to make clear external political choices, attached still to notions of “strategic autonomy”. This makes the management of ties difficult.

If Modi believes, as he said in his excellent address to the US Congress, that India considers the US “an indispensable partner”, the purpose would be to garner more American support for his development ambitions for India encapsulated in various specific campaigns he has launched, respond to the aspirations of its grassroots achievements Chipko had successfully emerged as a movement against commercial forestry besides evoking a strong sense of eco-feminism making it known to the world that women are closer to nature and therefore more sensitive to their needs of the forest. Women may not ‘hug’ trees today to save them from being felled but their silent protests and silent tears can make a difference if the policy makers and government are sensitive to their needs. Today if we are to learn from the Chipko, it is time we bring justice to the resource needs of the village women which would redefine a new morality in environmental concern. Let us be more sensible and look at the issue as a cultural response of people’s love for environment. Last but not the least let us remember that through the Chipko movement was born a ‘pro-poor environmentalism’ which addressed the resource needs of the poor in particular thus empowering the local communities to manage their resources

(The writer teaches at the Dept. of Sociology, NEHU, Shillong)

remains to be seen whether the US, given the increasing tensions in its relations with China, will be able to persuade the latter to discard its unreasonable position.

India’s imminent entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) was positively noted in the statement, for which the road had been cleared by India signing the Hague Code of Conduct on ballistic missile proliferation.

Significantly, the two leaders applauded the completion of a roadmap for future cooperation under the 2015 US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. This suggests that the Joint Vision would be translated into practical steps in coming years, even though we have currently rejected the idea of joint patrols in the South China Sea.

Significantly, while repeating the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and exploitation of resources as per international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and settlement of territorial disputes by peaceful means, a specific reference to the South China Sea has been omitted this time, perhaps to avoid needling China unnecessarily before the NSG plenary. Contrary to uniformed speculation that India may sign one or more of the US proposed foundational agreements during the visit, even the finalised Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement was, somewhat surprisingly, not signed.

With the US Congress moving legislation to treat India on a par with NATO allies and Japan with regard to defence supplies, the joint statement notes for the first time, the US recognition of India as a “Major Defence Partner” (the legal implication of this is unclear) and as such the US “will continue to work” toward facilitating technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

The understanding reached under which India would receive licence-free access to a wide range of dual-use technologies in conjunction with steps that India has committed to take to advance its export control objectives suggests that the US has been pressing us to make our export control legislation more stringent, even though we have already aligned it with the NSG and MTCR requirements and are ready to sign the Wassenaar Arrangement. No new project was announced under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). The intention to deepen cooperation on cyber security has been reiterated.

On combating terrorism, the joint statement contains the usual robust language which has not got translated into actual practice in our region so far, though the finalisation of an arrangement to facilitate the sharing of terrorist screening information is a new element.

Calling on Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the 2016 Pathankot terrorist attacks to justice adds to pressure on the former. No new element figures in the joint statement on bolstering economic and trade ties. Not surprisingly, WTO issues were not mentioned. All in all, Mo-di’s visit has been reasonably productive.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary)

TO THE EDITOR

Rampant mining activities pose threat to Garo Hills

Editor,

My congratulations to Achik Youth Council AYC) who woke up to the occasion, coming out with evidences on sand banking in Garo Hills. It is a horrific sight. This is not a new thing; it has been going on for past several years. I have seen the scenario right from Meena Bazar to Haldiganj where there are over 100 such stone and sand quarries. But the pertinent question is, who gave them the permission and who is responsible for this devastation of beautiful Garo Hills? Is District Administration & Divisional Forest Officer not aware of this environ-

mental degradation?

My memory goes back to late seventies when as one passes through the area one can see the whole hill covered with white cotton flowers. Those days Garo Hills Cotton Ginning Mill, Phulbari used to purchase and sell cotton to Japan (being one of the best cotton in India). Meghalaya cotton won gold medal on all India level in 1979, Today, it is an altogether different story.

It is sad that even while having eyes we prefer to be blind most of the time and adopt a “None of our business” attitude, little realizing that we are allowing a handful of people for their self interest to destroy our treasure, pride, ecology and environment. Don’t we realize that ecology and environment are going to hunt us down in the near future? It is true that all these years we have

been disturbing the “environment” in the name of so called development. It is now turn for the environment to disturb us. Today, world leaders are truly worried about the environment and eco-system.

Meghalaya is a land where everything is possible. We have departments but no policy to implement, no power to act upon. Thank God the National Green Tribunal (NGT) rightfully stopped coal mining. In this case if the concerned department does not act on the sand and stone quarrying then should it not be brought to the notice of the NGT? I fail to understand why we the Deputy Commissioner and his staff, the Divisional Forest Officer, Mining Department in the district when they cannot take action against rampant destruction of nature. Why

are they mute spectators, washing their hands off responsibilities. Who they are protecting and whose interests are they working for?

This is high time for the Garos to protect the land that they belong to. If we are not going to protect our land than who will? It is high time that we get into action for tomorrow may be too late. My humble request to my fellow Garos and all the genuine inhabitants of the land is to voice our concern and make the Government wake up and take action.

Yours etc.,
Dev Areng,
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 Uma Ramachandran

Little Diya, all of 5- years old, grabbed my smart phone after I took her picture at a recent dinner party in our community. I watched, fascinated, as she used her tiny fingers on the touch screen to go to the 'gallery' on the gadget, flick her fingers rapidly across the screen, locate her photograph, and tap on it to enlarge it.

Her delighted squeal as she saw her face on the screen was infectious -- I burst out laughing. But, amidst the admiration for her being able to effortlessly use a hi-tech gadget, a tiny alarm bell of caution went off in my head -- are our children losing a vital part of their childhood to such gadgets? I went back a quarter of a century, when the personal computer was a big thing.

My late father-in-law, a renowned poet, playwright and author, would often call out to his young granddaughter when he was stuck with a technical issue with his desktop computer. She would march up the stairs, turn the keyboard towards herself, all of three-and-a-half-feet tall, and imperiously type out the WordStar command that he was looking for, and stomp away.

He would turn to me, sitting reading a book close by, and smile admiringly. Windows and Bill Gates were not on the scene yet. Today, all that seems too simple. It may not even find a mention as a prodigious act of a child. Our childhoods were so completely different. We used to do things like climbing trees, and settling on branches for hours, munching on guavas or wining at the sourness of unripe mangoes. Fly kites, spin, play holly-colly, hopscotch, seven-stones,

Blindman's Buff -- these were far more wonderful and clever than all these super smart gizmos -- because we had to use our imagination and people skills and voices and laughter to make them all work. All these things that seem so ancient and low tech were so full of life.

We were out in the fresh open air (not much of that around these days, you would say), getting our feet muddy, our hands wet, and our heads heated up in the scorching sun. (Yes, we had a sun even back then). Summer holidays were meant for being out of the house as much as possible, with intervals only to eat lunch or tiffin, before we rushed back with the marbles clickety clicking in our pockets tennis balls clutched in our

scene. Thank god! And yes, there were really hot days then, too -- it is not a recent invention!

Late evenings, the time after dinner was spent under the gooseberry trees listening to Aaji telling us ancient mythological stories, which made us all use our imagination to try and

stepping out into the open or interacting with other humans. Making a child sit in front of the television to shut them up or keep them occupied has become passé and old-fashioned -- you now hand out iPads and smart phones and gaming consoles. Experts say the way the children's brains are developing these days have changed because they do not spend time outdoors doing physical activities.

We adults are not setting good examples. Gone are the days of opening one's eyes in the morning to rub one's palms together and over our eyes to have a good day, or to do a namaskara and pray, or to gaze at our loved one's faces fondly, even as they slept; or to let one's dog out to the balcony or the courtyard, or to gaze out of the window at the scene outside (which has also become so ugly and cluttered, but that is another story).

No. The first thing we all do is to sleepily reach out for our smart phones and check out all those meaningless postings on Whatsapp or Twitter or whatever is your cup of tea. Then comes the actual cup

visualise a scene -- Arjuna hitting the eye of a wooden fish with only the reflection on water as a guide, or Bheeshma lying on a bed of arrows by the battlefield... scenes from the Jataka tales, or the heart-in-the-lump feeling when we would 'see' Jatayu being killed as the loyal vulture tried to stop



sweaty palms as a reserve for in-between dull moments. No sitting indoors with video games or films or even cartoon movies to save us from 'overheating, sunburn, dehydration' and all that -- the ubiquitous TV had not yet appeared on the

Sita from being kidnapped. Glorious stuff. Images. All merely from stories being told by a human being. There was no other way. These days, children spend more time staring at screens and handling a mouse than

of tea and other routine stuff. Our children are watching all this and imitating us -- to be seen staring blankly at dimly-lit screens the very first thing in the morning is an okay thing, they must think. Children are showered with hi-tech

gadgets. Reading from a book? Old fashioned and not the 'in' thing to do. Much easier to shortlisting an Enid Blyton tale (the simple favourite of our era), or Tolkien, or a J.K. Rowling novel on a gadget. And when such gadgets are confiscated from children as punishment, they throw a 'tech tantrum' -- which is now being described as having an 'iPaddy' -- what are we coming to?

So, going back to my childhood, climbing trees, playing with children outdoors, listening to stories being told by Aajis -- what

did it give us that is different? For one thing, it fired

there were no gadgets to be



up our imagination, and sharpened our curiosity towards the world around us. The breathing space between activities, underlined by the fact that

away from such devices for a lunch or a bathroom break seems more like being performed in a trance rather (Contd on P-VII)

News items show widening East-West gulf

Asia contains literally four billion people. So it's kind of weird that every time I visit the West, people say: "You're from Asia? I met a guy from there once; I wonder if you know him?" The really weird thing is that I always do.

Talking of East-West issues, at a writers' festival in Singapore recently, the authors' panel and audience were given five minutes to answer a question: What topics should never be covered in children's books?

The Westerners in the room gave identical answers: Nothing should be banned! All censorship is evil!

The Easterners in the room wrote long lists of unmentionables including cannibalism, violence, politics, religion, sex, kissing, underpants, democracy, feelings, and so on. I asked for a second sheet of paper to list individuals and inappropriate vegetables.

East and West are so different. A couple of days later, a reader sent me a viral Instagram video of a man in Sydney who spontaneously tried to run up an escalator which was moving down at a high speed. The crowd, most members of which were using the escalator at the time, raucously cheered him on as he risked their safety.

In Asia, he would have been severely tut-tutted by observers and arrested by the authorities, possibly even facing the death penalty for incitement to commit

Snigdha, Sukanya, Anamika and the like. Families with Indian roots make up less than one percent of the US population but win the spelling contests every year.

As a South Asian, I can reveal that we're good at spelling because of our unsPELLable names. Our version of Scrabble says that if your tiles don't make a word, you can still get 50 bonus points if you use them to name your child.

At the same time, Google revealed that the most searched for "how to spell" request in the US state of Massachusetts was Massachusetts. Internet conversations must go something like this:

Asian: "Hi, where are you from?"

Massachusetts Resident: "Hang on, let me just Google that."

Not that Westerners aren't smart: they are far ahead of Easterners in cultural mores. A hot new difference concerns gender. Asians have to use the toilets that match their biological gender, whereas my Western friends think that's an outrageous demand.

Four-year-olds at a school in the British city of Brighton are told that they are not boys or girls but can choose their gender. This strikes me as risky, as small children change their minds all the time.

9:00:05 "Do you need to use the toilet?" "No."

9:00: 25 (dancing as we get on the bus) "DAD! I need to wee! Now!"

But I quite like the idea of being "gender-fluid". For

example, it's well known that lightning kills six times as many males as

females. If all guys wore dresses on rainy days, many lives would be saved. I might write a children's book about it: The Day Mr Lightning Found No One to Fry.

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

By Kunal Dutt

In a first of its kind restoration, a dedicated team of experts brought traditional craftsmanship with industrial precision to return the gilded finial to 16th century Humayun Tomb here after the iconic mausoleum's crown was knocked down in a storm two years ago.

The 18-ft ornamental ensemble, consisting of Sal wood core and 11 copper vessels topped with a brass piece was given a coating of 22-carat gold to match its original crowning splendour, but it took more than a year to restore the World Heritage Site its pristine glory.

The celebrated monument which served as an architectural inspiration for Taj Mahal, was hit by a massive storm in May 2014 which had dislodged and damaged its old finial.

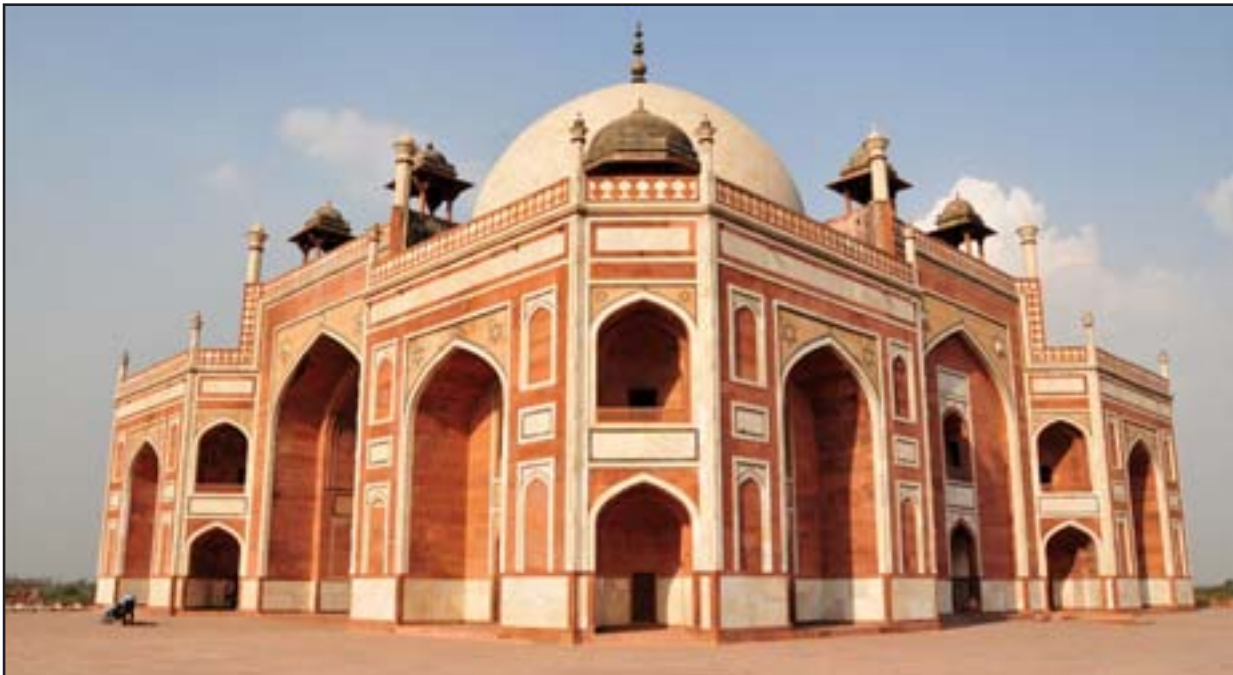
Archaeological Survey of India then commissioned Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) to begin work on the new finial on December 31, 2014.

"By March last year we had installed a makeshift finial, as we did not want the dome to be left bald. The challenge before us was to restore the finial to its original splendour with original composition," CEO, AKTC India, Ratish Nanda, said.

According to ASI archives, the finial was last dismantled and repaired by the British in 1912, who also did a documentation of the object, which helped the team in its reconstruction.

Nanda, a conservation architect, says "a motley team of artists, craftsmen,

Humayun Tomb finial: How the king got crown back



architects, engineers and scientists worked on this project to return the famed mausoleum its crown jewel."

"In the finial, the 11 copper vessels, covered with a gold finish, were in a friable state and had been repaired several times over the last five centuries. Each of the

vessels was weighed and studied separately to allow comparisons with the original profile and carefully map the damage," he said.

"The biggest challenge was lending the gold finish to the finial as it was in the original. And, that is where Titan Industries came into play and they not only

funded the restoration but also brought in their expertise in jewellery and watch-making to execute this project to the finest scale," he said.

The AKTC CEO claimed that this gold restoration was "first of its kind" work in India, as far as monuments are concerned

and over "3 kgs of pure gold was used" in the project.

"And, while scientists and engineers worked out the metrics and modalities of the project, carpenters, coppersmiths and goldsmiths laboured on getting the old craft right as per our requirements. It was a perfect marriage (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career in Insurance

After economic liberation in India, many private corporate and career option have flourished and one such career option is in insurance filed. Insurance has been an integral part in one's life as it helps in many ways. We are always familiar with term like Life Insurance and companies whether under government or purely private have capitalize on life insurance and they are doing business and at the same time also helping people in many ways. Insurance means being covered or protected against any hazards of life. It is a financial agreement that binds two people to certain obligations which is known as Policy. One who buys insurance/ gets insurance coverage is the policy holder or insured and the one who sells the policy is the insurer.

All Insurance companies come under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) which is established to regulate, promote and ensure orderly growth of Life and General insurance industry in India. Posts and designation related to the fields are Development Officer, Insurance Agents, Composite Agent, Insurance Surveyor, Actuaries, etc. Some of the courses related to insurance are BBA Insurance, Diploma in Capital Marketing and Insurance Management (DCMIM), Diploma in Insurance, Diploma in Insurance and Risk Management (DIRM), International Post Graduate Diploma in General Insurance, International Post Graduate Diploma in Life Insurance, MBA Insurance, MBA Risk and Insurance, M.Com specialization in Banking and Insurance, Master of Insurance Business, Post Graduate Diploma in Banking, Insurance and Financial Services Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Insurance and Risk Management , Post Graduate Diploma in Insurance Business Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Insurance Law, Post Graduate Diploma in Insurance Management , etc.

The foremost choice to open a career in this field is to start as an insurance agent. They are the people who advice the individuals and enterprises about insurance protection to their health, life and properties and sell the policies to provide protection against financial loss. There are about 30 insurance companies in India. The major government companies are Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation (GIC) and Postal Life Insurance. Minimum qualification required for joining these companies as insurance is senior secondary where a student must be 12th pass. Higher qualification is always seen as additional advantage. One has to pass the entrance examination conducted by the Actuarial Society of India, Mumbai. Students who have passed 10 + 2 or equivalent exam are eligible. License is needed to work in this field which can be achieved through a training programme.

Though the minimum qualification for the insurance agent is 12th but for other administrative and management posts higher qualification like graduates or MBAs are preferred. Personnel attributes which are essentials are like good communication and networking skills. One needs to have pleasant personality and friendly behaviour with others to get more success

Does a career change at 35-40 in India make sense? Shweta Patwardhan finds out

Fulfilling forgotten desires



Shiva Morey a 4- years old financial advisor completed an innovative course in Gerontology (study of interdisciplinary practice with older adults) from Tata institute of social sciences in Mumbai. He said, "This course have helped me personally in understanding my parents and professionally by helping me better understand the needs for the future for my clients.

This new perspective has also given me courage in starting my own old age retirement home, thereby giving me a new career direction" This begs the question, as we get older, do we lose our creative juice? Why are most business ideas come to us when we are in our 20s and very few in 40s?

What stops us? So what goes wrong over the years? According to Amrita Prakash an actor and director of short films," I think we lose our sense of imagination, because society and education that only encourages a structured way of thinking kills our imaginations. The most creative people in my office are 19- year olds" This statement finds weight in our everyday life too. For example, most of the top companies were created by founders in their early 20's or even teens like Google, Dell, Flipkart, Alibaba, Facebook and so on.

According to Uttara Mone, principal from Rachna Sansad school of Music," In six years around 600 students have graduated most of which are adults and our purpose was to address the unfulfilled desires that people could not fulfil in while planning their job, finance, family and so on. Most times, adults are either engrossed or over-comforted

in their daily chores that they are not able to take courage to pursue their unfulfilled aspirations.

Also many times the social obligation pulls the adult back to their routine". We can surely say that youngsters are more creative as they have more time at hand, less responsibilities, wider

white information exchange. How can we even start to identify our next endeavour? For starters it is advisable to start a new hobby skill over the week-ends or after work.

Or take a resolution to take up one creative activity in a year that you haven't learnt before. According to Cara D'Souza a student from centre for Lifelong learning, TISS, "There are many individuals at 40, who want to come out the corporate world; we have to make arenas for them. There is lack of infrastructure for adult learners. I also believe that Mumbai University must have a centre for



horizon and social group and physically stronger to run around.

ing in his medical lectures to keep the audience entertained than just black and

Humayun Tomb finial: How the king got its

(Contd from P-VI) of traditional craftsmanship and industrial precision," he said.

Elaborating on the process of gilding, he said, "For the copper plates, six-eight layering of gold was used which was done manually, while the precious metal was deposited on the brass piece through electroplating," he said.

The tomb of the late Mughal emperor stands in the centre of a square garden, divided into four parts by causeways ('charbagh'), in the centre of which ran shallow water-channels.

The red sandstone double-storeyed structure sits majestically in a landscaped complex that has been dubbed as the 'Dormitory of the Mughals' owing to presence of several other graves there. It neighbour the famous shrine of Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya in south Delhi.

The AKTC is currently working on the construction of the "country's first" sunken museum at the iconic Tomb site, which after its completion in 2017 will showcase the heritage of the Nizamuddin Area over the last seven centuries.

"The old finial will be the centrepiece of the new interpretation centre here and every detail of it has been documented," he said.

Nanda says that the British while repairing the finial had also installed a lightning conductor which was also knocked



during the 2014 storm. A makeshift lightning conductor was then installed by the ASI soon after the storm had rendered the monument vulnerable.

On the composition of vessels he said "Titan commissioned manufacturing of copper sheets of required 99.4 per cent purity, as impurities in the copper would result in the deterioration or peeling away of the final gold layers. On the availability of copper in required purity and thickness a traditional workshop in the Shahjahanabad area was employed for further work."

"Master craftsmen skilled in the traditional process of gilding gold onto copper were identified and several rounds of experimental gilding carried out and subsequently tested for various factors, including durability," he said.

The Sal wood core in fact goes another 4 ft deeper inside the dome to anchor the finial, and Nanda said, "We were able to get the wood, with the make and the age that we were looking for from merchants in Delhi only."

The celebrated monument was inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 1993, one of the three such sites in Delhi, the other two being – Red Fort and Qutub Minar.

Centrally-protected, the Humayun's Tomb annually receives a footfall of 2 million including over 5,00,000 children.

Technology bane or boon?

(Contd from P-VI) than taking a refreshing break.

Children don't seem to be having fun these days -- and it is not my untrained nostalgic self that is saying this -- psychiatrists across the globe are coming up with more and more disturbing findings that all point towards gadgets and troubled childhoods. There is a huge increase in the number of young children suffering from addictions to gaming, cell-phones and gadgets.

Dr. Vivek Benegal, professor of Psychiatry, head of Centre for Addiction Medicines says, "These addictions (to gaming and gadgets) are similar to substance addictions, like alcohol or drug dependence. If a person starts drinking, smoking or abusing substances at 16- years of age, then there is an 80 per cent chance that they will become addicted, or will develop problems with alcohol and drugs. But if they start doing these things at 25- years of age, then there would only be



a 5 per cent chance that they would develop problems. I want to transpose this example to the use of gadgets -- the same thing applies -- if you start using gadgets at 16, and become addicted to it, chances are that you will develop problems in real life..."

It is not as if all modern hi-tech inputs are bad. It is just that they have to be rationed out properly. The use of the mental faculties during an art class -- drawing and painting and colouring -- helps massage the brain, and makes it do well in mathematics. Various other outdoor activities help develop the brain in ways that gadgets and gaming consoles cannot. What is frightening is that children are becoming more and more numb to real-life situations, thanks to gaming and virtual reality situations.

The more they kill, destroy, annihilate, decimate, nullify threats, the more they move away from compassion and mercy. It's very simple -- how can you value life when you can destroy it so easily on your screen?

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, June 12, 2016

Moon square Sun on your solar return chart is indicative of mixed results this year. As professionals you may feel the heat of recent developments in the market. Some of your efforts could be thwarted by a turn of events and you would need to put in additional effort to bring things back on track. Be flexible and don't let this undermine your self-confidence as some matters will pick up pace. Loved ones would stand by you giving support and extending help. Your interactions even at the workplace will be fruitful. Some happy events will mark your domestic life. Romance could lead to you taking your marriage vows.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

A more intense approach to relationships can be expected in this period. It is time to cut the fat by eliminating activities that aren't fulfilling your needs. Halfway measures will not be enough, so dig in and decide where you are going to invest your energy and where you need to pull back. When you concentrate your forces on one task or with one person, you can reach levels of fulfillment you haven't previously known. You would discuss issues objectively with those close to you. You would reach out and make new connections. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and join new courses to improve your professional skills and efficiency.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You would realize that unsolved issues and puzzling situations are now becoming clear. All that is really needed is action, and you have plenty of energy to utilize. Your social life is likely to increase and bring you in contact with more influential, powerful and helpful people. This phase highlights friendship, love, romance and children in your life. Your emotional brilliance will shine through as long as you do not react too quickly. This is a good time to build your skills, to get organized, and to attend to your health and your well being. A sense of humor allows free expression without anger or wounded egos.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

Realistic levels of optimism and confidence are with you, and you are able to attract fortunate circumstances into your life. Making progress can be difficult but not impossible. You could even feel trapped by your daily routine with the emphasis on getting every task done right. You would rather be doing more exciting things. Someone enters your life on a whirlwind of emotional intensity. Take advantage of the stabilizing results you can obtain just by being extra helpful and caring. You may feel as if you are running out of time in your quest to free yourself from a challenging situation, but you have more time than you think.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

New responsibilities are likely to present themselves and you would take them more seriously now. You would learn about your own personal strength. There are likely to be times when you feel on edge, volatile, or even threatened. You may be able to get in touch with your internal motivations. A tendency to want to control your life through some form of manipulation would be strong at this time. Meeting with obstacles in your path, however, can force you into the position of using all of your resources to fight back, and you can discover resources you never knew you had in the process.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Matters related to higher education, religion, and publishing proceed smoothly. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training and further your education. You would work in association with well-experienced people and would use your best talents and efficiency. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. Financial benefits are stronger than any other time now. Duty and work commitment could come before pleasure, and a tendency to work more or harder is likely. As long as this doesn't reach workaholic levels, you will be just fine.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

This phase sees your energy and confidence increase dramatically. Things will not go in your favor if you resort to tactics to get what you want. At times, you could have

problems staying calm, cool, and collected. Buried resentments come to the fore and demand to be dealt with. It would be favorable to have good team spirit and be more tactful and obliging with your co-workers as this brings harmony and team spirit at the work place. You spend time with your beloved and go on trips, shopping, fun or even a journey. Intimacy and warmth are powerful stimulants for you during this phase.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

You would be able to see the world in practical terms and structure your life and ambitions accordingly. Opportunities to travel arise and adventure tends to seek you out. Some restlessness is likely, mainly because of a deep feeling of wanderlust. You are more able than ever to see the "big picture" and less inclined to sweat the small stuff. You may be asked to state your intentions or urged to get serious. A strong period for romance and fun is indicated. There would be new associations and beginnings as new opportunities and changes are on the cards.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

The planetary configuration brings more physical and laborious work. You could be stressed while meeting people's expectations and approval. Outdoor activities appeal more than ever, and an opportunity to travel somewhere exotic could drop into your lap. You have a greater desire to get away, expand your horizons, and broaden your life experiences. This influence often correlates with a time when you are more able to get away from the daily routine--more options open up, or you have more free time to do so. Do not isolate yourself when you're feeling down. People will support you, or at least listen, when you share your feelings.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You are artistic, stylish and your judgment is sound and you would participate in glamorous events. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental and caring. Your domestic life is comfortable as you make the family relaxed and secure and devote time with them. You are full of energy and indulge in arts and crafts. Try to compromise and adjust and take a soft approach when meeting people. You would be recognized and you work would be praised and rewarded. Give yourself a new fitness routine and healthy diet program to build on your energy.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You would maintain a balance between emotional feelings and practicality. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status. You probably should be on the lookout for a tendency to create your own financial stress due to extravagant spending habits. Your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Confidence is the key--faith in the universe and in your ability to do the right thing instinctively will take you places now.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You may need to re-adjust your plan of action. Errors in judgment made now are likely due to impulsiveness and in overlooking crucial details. You could have so many new ideas that you do not have time to implement all of them. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and enhance your reputation and public standing. You would have the ability to work on financial and monetary pursuits. Good returns from overseas business are on cards. Your style of communication and efforts bring favorable results on your romantic life.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You could seek distinction and strive towards perfection in your work. Efficiency should be your goal now. Relationships are dynamic and when a difference arises, you are quick to settle it, and have little patience for sweeping matters under the rug. Your close personal relationships are lively and full of conflicts and resolutions or reconciliation. You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. The seeds you plant now, you will reap later. Surprises surrounding intimate matters, shared finances and resources and financial support may be in store. You could pay attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue of monetary gain.

“*The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly - that is what each of us is here for.*”

--- Oscar Wilde

The Shillong Times

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Road deaths

ROAD transport and highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has talked of countless road deaths. Governments try to downplay it but Gadkari is an exception. Stress is laid on helmet law and the legislation behind it. Non-governmental initiatives are more effective than governmental efforts in this area. Needless to say, two wheelers cause more damage than cars. Gadkari's ministry has released a report called "Road Safety in India in 2015". In 2015, 400 people died every day on India's roads. It was 382 in 2014 and 390 in 2011. More vehicles are now on the roads and new highways have been built which partly accounts for the increase in the number of casualties. However, Gadkari blames engineering defects and laxity and corruption in the issue of driving licences. Contracts for road construction are given in exchange for contribution to political party funds. Engineering quality is also not given due attention for the same reason.

It may be said that Gadkari has released the report by way of an apology. He had recently condemned the lack of political will preventing the passage of the road safety bill. Vested interests botched efforts to computerise operation of highways and ensuring transparency. India is second only to China in the list of road fatalities. Gadkari hopes that the number of deaths will go down to a half by 2020. If he means it he will deserve the highest compliment.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Why frustration among people?

The 40th Republic Day has come and gone it has been celebrated officially with great éclat. In Delhi, where the President took the salute, the Day was observed with solemnity and grandeur. In States, parades were held in almost all the important towns and cities, followed by cultural programmes Ministers or top bureaucrats in States under President's rule presided over these functions and took the salute, they exhorted the people to maintain unity and frustrate the efforts and designs of the subversive elements.

At most of the places these celebrations were observed as a sort of a formally undertaken every year as a matter of routine. But did the people in general feel enthused in any way by these celebrations? I talked to a number of people and I found that they were indifferent and the frustration was writ large of their faces. This feeling of indifference and frustration was not because they did not understand the significance of the Republic Day but because of the economic and other hardships they have to face in daily life. Soaring prices, black marketing, adulteration and non-responsive administrative machine have added to their general frustration. At the top, there is mounting corruption, which has seeped into the administration at all levels and the people are made to feel everyday that nothing can be done without greasing the palm of some one even in trivial matters.

In addition, the public feels that their leaders, who openly vow to serve the people, are always at loggerheads, trying to serve their own interest and malign their political adversaries. All sorts of allegations and counter-allegation are being traded against one another, irrespective of the fact whether they are correct or otherwise. In the continuous battle between the ruling party and the Opposition

Internal conflict in the Congress and realisation of BJP's dream

The storm in the Congress party is over and Dr Mukul Sangma may have overcome the leadership crisis, but the threat now for the party is whether the BJP's 'Congress-free Meghalaya' slogan becomes a reality. After the BJP had won the Assam assembly elections it is now gung-ho on how to decimate the Congress party in the next general elections. And while the Congress leaders are still trying to lick their wounds from the internal fight within the party, the BJP is beginning to lay the necessary step to make the party's dream come true.

The bipolar or tri-polar leadership crisis, the Mukul-Vincent-Lapang faction, the Mukul-Vincent-Preston or the Mukul-Vincent-Pynshgain faction within the Congress has done a lot of damage to the party. The problem with the Congress is that one out of every two MLAs in the party is a potential Chief Ministerial candidate. Even old warhorses like D.D. Lapang and Rowel Lyngdoh who should have been satisfied with their achievements and get ready for retirement are still on the race for the top job in the state. This is also what makes it difficult for the Congress High Command in Delhi to decide, because everybody has his own axe to grind and nobody puts the party's interest above their own selfish interests.

Vincent Pala is in catch-22 situation; he has a secret desire to be the Chief Minister of the state but he also knows that even if he is elected as the Congress leader in the house he can remain as Chief Minister of the state for six months only. After a lapse of the six month's he has to be elected from any legislative assemble constituency and this is not an easy proposition. Who amongst the incumbent MLAs will sacrifice their seat for him for the sake of the party's stability? That is a million

TO THE EDITOR

PM in Capitol Hill

Editor,

I was able to listen at first a little casually, but as it proceeded , with rapt attention to the PM's very powerful address to the joint session of the U S Congress. At the outset I have to congratulate Mr Modi and all Indians for such a deeply thought out, well delivered and well received speech, enriched as it was with quotes from great men like Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Swamy Vivekananda, Thoreau, Martin Luther King and former Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Indeed it was an audience's delight. It sought to search deeply into the history and background of these two nations, reaffirming the strong basis of our mutual friendship and shared values. That the entire Congress was on their feet more than half a dozen times in a standing ovation and over two dozen clapping interventions speaks for itself. The very appropriate, well thought out, and more than that, well constructed and delivered with total finesse the dig, a backhander if there ever was one, at the opposition of both countries was a gem. Nancy Polaski and Paul Ryan, the leaders of the two political parties there were squirming in their seats as must have been the case with our very own Ghulam Nabi Azad , all of

whose puerile obstructionist tactics were well known. Congratulations Prime Minister you have done us proud ! The sincerity and the gravity of the address stands out in marked contrast to the irresponsible utterances of the loose cannon Donald Trump.(thought first of calling him Duck, but refrained as it may hurt that lovable character's admirers) and closer home our very own Rahul (again resisting to call him Pappu as it may adversely affect my relations with the canine world - that being the name of my favourite dog).. While one is systematically destroying the Republican Party in America the other is dealing a similar fate to the Congress Party in India.. The P M's flawless and lucid delivery of the speech has surprised many, but they underestimate his perseverance towards self improvement. It has also disappointed the cocktail circuit and their mouthpieces in some of the English language T V channels at being denied their sniggers at everything about Modi. Flawless delivery? Well almost. Someone could whisper in his ears that the correct pronunciation of 'is'-- is not 'iz'!

Yours etc.,
Lt Col (Rtd) Anjan Datta,
Shillong -4

Do hawkers own our footpaths?

By H H Mohrmen

Himanta; for old time's sake, but is he willing to sacrifice his membership in the Lok Sabha? If Pala plans to engineer the split (and his background is engineering anyway) then he will have to resign from his membership in the Lok Sabha before 2018 and his second term as the member of the Lok Sabha from Shillong parliamentary constituency will only end in the next general election which is in 2019.

It may be worth mentioning that it was the by-election to the Umroi constituency and subsequent change of government in the state which has catapulted a mere Executive Engineer in the PWD to the political limelight. And throughout the political drama Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma (then Congress MLA from Assam) was part of the team which helped the Congress win the election and also helped install the Congress-led government in Meghalaya so Pala and Himanta are no strangers to each other.

Pala may have the support of at least all the four independent MLAs from Jaintia hills who are now associate members of the Congress party, but a leader of his stature will certainly have some more Congress MLAs from Khasi hills supporting him. And it is an open secret that Pala is very close to the BJP leadership in Delhi. Dr Sangma already has three MLAs with him so if at all he is planning to split the party it will be easy for him to have the numbers. But the problem with Dr Sangma is that the BJP already has an alliance with the NPP in Garo hills and obviously they already have the winning formula.

While the Congress leaders are fighting among themselves, the BJP is already in the process of realizing that the Party's goal is within reach. Dr. Sangma may see it differently but the truth is there for all to see that a united opposition to the Congress is the party's worst nightmare in the state and even in Garo hills. The

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, I wish to air my concern about the dangers faced by pedestrians especially the school going children who have to risk their lives while passing by the Shillong Civil Hospital Road. They are forced to walk on the main road and rub shoulders with the passing vehicles because the foot path meant for them (pedestrians) have been totally occupied and blocked by the hawkers who run their daily businesses. Why is the District Authority so lazy and incompetent about keeping an eye on this dangerous and hazardous day to day activities. Is anyone listening, please?

Yours etc.,
Banylla S
Shillong-4

Problem of smaller denominations!

Editor,

I find it extremely necessary to touch upon a perennial problem of shortage of 100 rupee notes and other smaller denominations in Tura. The ATMs are mostly only loaded with currency notes of Rs 500 denomination and the customer is forced to withdraw amounts in multiples of the same. Being an entrepreneur myself, I know what an arduous task it is to get banks to give you

recent by-election to the Tura Lok Sabha seat is the classic case in point and this will repeat if the regional parties in the Garo hills remain united.

Now the next move towards making the BJP dream come true is to plan its move in the Khasi and Jaintia hills region of the state. The Khasi and Jaintia Hills have never been a Congress stronghold anyway and the voters in these regions are unpredictable. This is where Pala could be a better bet for the BJP. But the only dilemma is that Pala is not a member of any regional party. However, Pala can engineer a split in the Congress party and replicate what Himanta did in Assam and join en mass with the BJP, then that will be the end of Congress and Dr Mukul Sangma after 2018.

The end of the Congress influence in the state will also happen if the BJP could enter into alliance with the regional parties in the Khasi and Jaintia hills. If the party really wants to see a Congress-free Meghalaya, then it should make sure that the opposition votes do not split. As long as there is a split in the opposition vote share, it will always be advantage Congress.

If the Congress really wants to stop the BJP from making its dream of a Congress-free Meghalaya from happening, then the first and the foremost duty of the leaders of the party is to bury their hatchets and plan for the next general election. It is obvious that the Garo hills region is within the reach of NPP-BJP alliance and if the Congress wants to stop the BJP-NPP alliance from taking over Garo hills, Dr Sangma needs to work extremely hard. The Khasi Jaintia unit of the party also need to put their heads, their hands and their hearts together to win the 2018 election. The BJP's Congress-free Meghalaya is looming large over the state's horizon and only the Congress can prevent that from happen.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request
Hawakhana, Tura

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

India's Outrage Industry Ouch! We are touchy

By Poonam I Kaushish

George Bernard Shaw famously said, “Censorships exist to prevent anyone from challenging current conceptions and existing institutions”. An apt adage amidst the swirling controversy raging over Bollywood film Udata Punjab which bares the brutal reality of the drug menace in the State. Obviously, the Central Board of Film Certification or Censor Board feels by ordering 13 cuts including the word Punjab as “it affects the State's sovereignty”, sic, the problem will go away. It's called being patriotic!

Failing to realize it has cut its nose to spite its face. The issue is not whether the Bombay High Court strikes down the Board's order and bats for the film makers but that India is earning the ignominy of being a paradise for those who take offence. Thanks to its flourishing outrage industry.

At a drop of a hat X,Y,Z or the Government is offended by a film, book, joke, wit, satire, humour or defiance is treated as a monster and banned. Never mind if this makes public discourse impoverished and toothless. Whereby, life is lived in the slim strip called the official.

In recent times India has had a surfeit of censorship. Many films, artworks even cartoons which pokes fun or is not in sync with our leaders thinking, cause and outlook is not only banned, vandalized but worse every view is considered corrupting the mind and an act of sedition.

Innumerable artists, writers, film makers or officials have faced taboo, been given a mouthful, barred and forced out in a country which prides it self for being the birthplace of so many apostles of peace and non-violence ---- Gandhi, Buddha and Mahavir.

If one doesn't like a film just collect a crowd and burn the theaters where it is shown. If you don't like a novelist's book get the Government to ban it or issue a fatwa against the author. Tamil Nadu banned noted actor-director Kamal Hasan's 100 crore magna opus Viswaroopam which deals with the issue of terrorism in 2013 on the fallacious that it would hurt the sentiments of 'unknown' Muslim groups and create a law and order problem.

West Bengal's maverick Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee banned celebrated novelist Salman Rushdie from coming to Kolkata to promote a film based on his book 'Midnight's Children', ostensibly, for security reasons. He flew back to London disgusted. The Rajasthan Government registered an FIR under the SC/ST Atrocities Act against famed sociologist Ashis Nandy for his controversial remarks on SC/ ST corruption at the Jaipur Literature Festival three years ago. Said he, “It is a fact that most of the corrupt come from OBCs and SCs and now increasingly the STs”. Predictably, livid Dalit icons BSP's Mayawati and LJP's Ram Vilas Paswan forced Nandy to approach the Supreme Court which stayed his arrest.

What to speak of innocuous cartoonist Assem Trivedi who was arrested for sedition by Mamata in Kolkata for publishing a series of cartoons highlighting corruption in India. He was later freed under a wave of protest. Before him another of his tribe famed Shankar cartoons of Ambedkar in NCERT school books were posthumously removed. Notwithstanding if India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, called sedition laws “objectionable and obnoxious”.

There is no gainsaying it is not only the Government but also our self-styled police, public at large and petty minded organisations who have usurped the moral right to decide what is good for society. Of course, with the powers-that-be backing them to the hilt surreptitiously. Last year in Kashmir the separatist issued a Fatwa against an all-girls rock band saying it was Un-Islamic while the VHP protested against women modelling dresses bearing images of Hindu Gods. And its women's wing, the Durga Vahini harassed women who were smoking and drinking in a restaurant in Mangalore recently.

Notably, this once again raises the ante on Article 19(1) (a) which grants a citizen the right to freedom of expression. Raising a moot point: Is India amidst an era of cultural intolerance? Is the polity afraid of the brutal reality being in full public glare? A clash of ideas in our public life? Over the years censorship is a weapon in the hands of the State to make people agree with its ideology. Often the Censor Board functions to impose the State's notion of 'Indianness' and nationhood. As the reach and power of films in India is massive, the Government makes it its business that people see what it wants them to see.

Forgetting, that anyone with internet access can see endless amounts of pornography all it takes is typing three letters “sex”, while the Censor Board has long discussions on the permissible duration of a kissing scene in a movie. Again in the film Do Laphzoon Ki Kahani it has asked the producers to restrict the kissing scenes from 18 to 9 seconds! I am not saying that we should legalize pornography, but in today's age the Government and its minions have to understand that this generation exercises their right to freedom of speech and expression.

True, Governments across the globe have used religion, violence and other powerful techniques to support their censorship efforts. But what is offensive varies from country to country, religion to religion, even sect to sect. Notwithstanding many countries provide certain protection against censorship.

Clearly, in a milieu of competitive democracy, the tragedy of it all is that the political class exploits the common man's emotions and only looks at what will help popularize it more with its vote bank. Even if its amounts to heading towards an era of intolerance and cultural terrorism. Shockingly, the culture of taking offence has acquired an epidemic proportion, and we are moving in a direction where nothing, it seems, is a safe topic. How else does one explain the Maharashtra's Shiv Sena forcing cancellation of Pakistani Ghazal singer Ghulam Ali's concert in Mumbai and disrupting a meeting for revival of Indi-Pak cricket ties.

Importantly, no quarter should be given to those who fan hatred among people and communities. In a mammoth one billion plus country there would be a billion views and one cannot curtail people's fundamental rights. It is imperative for the public to decide. One is free not accepting the view of others, it is a matter of perception, a statement objectionable to a person might be normal to another. ---INFA

“What you do today can improve all your tomorrows.”
--- Ralph Marston

The Shillong Times

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NEET premature for Meghalaya
THE National Eligibility Entrance Examination (NEET) -- a centralised entrance for the MBBS, BDS and PG medical courses has created a stir in states where large sections follow the State Board syllabi for the Higher Secondary Course. In the last week of May this year President Pranab Mukherjee gave his assent to the Ordinance brought by the central government following the Supreme Court ruling, which called for holding NEET from this year itself. The passing of this Ordinance means that the Supreme Court ruling has been ‘partially overturned’ and state governments will now have a year to prepare for the NEET examinations, which will be held from the 2017-18 academic year.

CBSE used to conduct All India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT) until 2012, when the central government introduced unified test for the medical admissions. These tests were scheduled to take place from 2012 onwards, but had to be deferred by one year due to opposition from various states and private colleges. More than 80 cases opposing the NEET were filed by February 2013 (two by state governments and rest by the private and minority institutions). While the private institutions were concerned about the ‘loss of control over admissions’, minority institutions were worried about the ‘erosion of the minority character’. NEET was held for the first time in May 2013. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court in a verdict on the validity of the NEET examinations held that the ‘MCI and the Dental Council of India lacked the legal authority to control admissions to MBBS, BDS and PG courses across the country’.

A review petition challenging this judgment was filed by the MCI on October 23, 2013. On April 11, 2016, the constitution bench of the Supreme Court recalled the 2013 judgment, which had raised questions over the legal standing of the MCI and the DCI in conducting such exams. The apex court order also revived government’s December 21, 2010 notification for holding a single common entrance test through NEET with a clarification that any challenge on the issue would directly come before it and no high court can interfere in it. On April 28, 2016 the Supreme Court paved the way for holding of NEET in two phases for the academic year 2016-17 with May 1 AIPMT exam to be considered NEET-1 and NEET-2 for those candidates who have not appeared in the first phase exam.

The Ordinance passed in by the Central Government, however says that NEET examinations can be held only from the next year. It is ironic that Meghalaya has chosen to stick to NEET from this year onwards much to the discomfiture of students from the State Board who are not familiar with the CBSE syllabi.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Confrontation Not Yet

The Bodo agitation in Assam has lately been taking a menacing turn. The 120 hour bandh called by the leading faction of the All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU) commencing from 5 A.M. on Feb. 16 bids fair to thoroughly paralyse normal life in a strategic area of the north eastern region and that for a long and continuous spell of days, the longest ever given to such bandhs for a show of strength. What adds a degree of grimness to the whole prospect is that yet a seemingly more extremist organization, the United Tribal Nationalists Liberation Front (UTNLF) has also decided to observe a bandh for during the same period, not necessarily in conflict with the other bandh planned by the ABSU. And, as for the third Bodo organization which is the oldest of all the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) Also cannot afford to be totally unconcerned about the impending massive demonstration it having itself also organized on its own similar bandhs earlier on almost

identical demands. What is really disturbing is that a section of the agitationist impatient of the almost deliberate unwillingness on the part of the authorities to respond meaningfully to the tribal demands.

NEET for eligibility to pursue MBBS/ BDS in Meghalaya
Editor, I would like to draw attention to recent advertisement of Directorate of Health Service, Government of Meghalaya which reads: "Student pursuing MBBS/ BDS courses against state quota seats will be made through National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) to be conducted

After our failed attempt at launching Rioters Anonymous in the city, my alter ego and I settled down to a life of quiet desperation. He realized that his constant negativity has started to have less of an effect on me, and I realized that I am forever “married” to the pills my shrink prescribes for me. He alleviated his hopeless ennui by counting imaginary stars, and I, quite content with his current mental state, kept as far away as possible from him. I went about with my life, and he went about his. We seldom crossed paths, that is until a few days ago when he went ballistic again. Again, like always, it was an article in your esteemed newspaper that triggered his outburst and, holymolly, was it a violent one?

We can all agree that, weather wise, it has been a beautiful summer, thus far, this year. Of course, we have had our share of rains, thunderstorms and squalls, but, overall, it has been sunny and pleasant. My alter ego and I have enjoyed our morning walks, short drives, incidents of road rage, parking violations, debates with the clueless traffic police, staring contest with the out-of-control cab drivers, short jabs with the Evel Knievels on two wheelers, and, being a man of refined tastes, our evening “oh be joyfuls”. Yes, my secret is out, as a man of high stature, and who is a legend in his own mind, I enjoy my poisons—raw or diluted. No, I am not a “wino”, but an aficionado of fine “time travel juice”. Frankly speaking, in this time and age, almost everybody has jousted with the “lunatic soup”, one time or the other. If you hobnob with the nose-in-the-air elites, the stay-under-our-thumb politicians, our sweet-self-conceited-and-arrogant bureaucrats, and the I-want-my-free-stuffs plebes, you have to partake in the festivities of enjoying the “giggle water”, else you will be considered an outsider, a puritan or a rigorist.

And believe me my alter ego hates being any of that or being relegated to the bench; he has to be the center of attraction, the cynosure of all eyes. He loves to attend parties and get-togethers, where our all-knowing Masters indulge in esoteric discussions about “*Erwin Schrodinger’s thought experiment showcasing the problem of Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics*,” the influence of late Tupac Shakur on the hip hop music culture in the post cold war era United States, the minutiae of Bob Dylan’s best work, or the effects of Delta, Vega and Theta on Options trading. Yes, we love to talk about those topics ad nauseam. It makes us feel intellectually superior, part of the sanctum sanctorum

and, simply put, cool! Of late, there has been a lot of hullabaloo about closure of liquor stores in the city based on an amended rule promulgated by the Meghalaya excise department. While my alter ego and I don’t want to get into a debate on the merits or demerits of this dictate—we think it will end up being a big nothingburger—we do want to have, for the sake of my sanity, a better understanding of the rationale for this amended rule. I am sure our brilliant bureaucrats have done the due diligence, evaluated the pros and cons of the changes being implemented and considered the law of unintended consequences, to reach the decision they have.

According to [press release No. 663/15](#), “...*Cabinet has approved the proposal by the Excise department for amendment of the Sub rule 2 of Rule 183 for regulating the location of various IMFL and beer retail off license or retail on licenses. Under this amendment, no IMFL or beer retail off licenses or retail on licenses would be issued in areas within a distance of 200 metres from any place of public worship or educational institution or hospitals and also no license would be granted for retail sale of liquor or any other intoxicants at any site situated within 100 metres from the midpoint of any national highway or state highway.*

For the purpose of this rule, such part of national highway or state highway situated within the limits of any city, town or municipality or town committee the distance from the midpoint of any national highway or state highway shall be 50 metres and shall not cover the retail on license, he said. A time of six months have been given for all the existing liquor shops that fall within these distances to comply in as far as shifting their shops are concerned...

Now, and I don’t know why, maybe my shrink has the answer, my alter ego has lost his mind after perusing the amended rules. He has haranged me for the last couple of months about this issue. I have tried everything humanly possible to shut his voice down, even increasing the dosage of my pills, but to no avail. Yesterday evening was especially brutal; I had a particularly vicious verbal duel with my alter ego, that has left me mentally drained, emotionally exhausted and physically weakened.

I arrived home late from work, the traffic madness already had me on the edge. From the outside, the house looked serene. On stepping in, I immediately felt something amiss. It felt like standing in the eye of the storm—everything looked calm and quiet at the center, whereas it was absolute madness at the periphery. He allowed me a few moments to settle down my frayed nerves, before he

By Dolorem Ipsum

made his presence felt. He was very direct in his request to me, “This cannot wait any longer; you have been ignoring me for the last couple of months. Now, I’ll not take ‘No’ for an answer. You have to discuss this issue about the amended excise rules with me.”

My head was already hurting, and I thought to myself, “Let him vent it out, and you can ignore him.” Hence, I replied, “Ok, go on.”

“The amended rule states, ‘...*no IMFL or beer retail off licenses or retail on licenses would be issued in areas within a distance of 200 metres from any place of public worship or educational institution or hospitals...*’.”

“Ok. So?” I said. “So? So? Really? Can you help me understand, if a person will be allowed to sell liquor, after getting the license, of course, at 200.01 meters? If so, what changes when a shop is moved from 200 meters to say 200.01 meters? What is so sacrosanct about 200 meters? Will the places of worship, the educational institutions or the hospitals be less affected by the ruckus created by the drunks at 200.01 meters, than at 200 meters? Are places of worship the holiest at less than or equal to 200 meters and are measurably “less holy” at 200.01 meters; therefore, buying and selling of liquors will be allowed at that distance? Will an institution of learning remain an institution of learning at and up to 200 meters and be something else at greater than 200 meters? What about the hospitals, will doctors be more attentive to their patients, if hospitals are located at > 200 meters from a liquor store, but will the same hospital be less of a hospital and become a butcher shop, if the hospital is <= 200 meters from a liquor store? So, are the ills of liquor addiction acceptable at 200.01 meters, but they aren’t at 200 meters? Will alcoholics give up drinking if a shop is located at 200.01 meters, or will the number of drunk driving incidents decrease at 200.01 meters? I am sure, there must be a good reason behind 200 meters being the magic number? If so, why? Was there a study conducted, which proved that 200 meters is the number to target? Why not another arbitrary number, say, 196250.35 millimeters, or 214.6219925634 yards, or 643.8659776903 feet or 7726.3917322835 inches?”

“Uh huh” is all I could muster, but the alter ego did not like the response. So, I continued, “You know what, I don’t have answers to your questions, go ask the excise department. And, frankly, I don’t care. In India, there is something called a ‘jugaad’. Have you heard of that term? In India, when and if people want to drink, they will find a way to get that drink, even if

prohibition is in effect. Do you think that “lunatic soup” is not available Nagaland, which happens to be dry state; do you think the alcoholics in Bihar aren’t drinking, or do you think the “giggle water” is not available in Gujarat? Do I have to spell out the answer for you?”

“So, you agree with me that this change of rule is eventually going to be a fruitless endeavour?” replied the alter ego.

“No, I didn’t say that. I said, I don’t care, and people have their ‘jugaad’. Our Masters have their ‘jugaad’, our bureaucrats have their ‘jugaad’, our elites have their ‘jugaad’. They don’t care about this amendment to the excise rules. Laws are only meant for the plebes, the upwardly mobile and the elites are above the law.”

“Ah, beating around the bush and ignoring my questions again, I see” said the alter ego. “Ok, never mind, let me continue. The amended rules also state, ‘... *no license would be granted for retail sale of liquor or any other intoxicants at any site situated within 100 meters from the midpoint of any national highway or state highway...*’ Sorry, but did anybody clarify what the excise department means by “*from the midpoint of any national highway or state highway*”?” Do they mean the middle of the road or the median? Again, what is so sacred about 100 meters? Will the truck drivers have second thoughts about parking their trucks in the middle of the road and buying the “giggle water”, if the store is at 100.01 meters? Maybe they will reason with themselves, “*You know what, 100.01 meters is too long of a distance to travel for buying hooch. If only the store were at 100 meters, then I could have hopped, skipped and jumped to it for a quick shot.*” Yep, I can so see them making that argument and changing their behavior. Can you not? What if they buy their poison from a legitimate liquor store and drink while driving? Who will prevent that from happening?”

“Whatever! I don’t know, and I don’t care.” I responded. “Keep on ignoring my questions, but you are not getting away so easily, this time. Do you know how the distance is measured?” he continued. “Is it walkable distance, drivable distance or the shortest distance?” “It doesn’t matter... remember ‘jugaad’... people with the right connections will find a way to figure out a loophole with the new rules.” “Exactly,” the alter ego replied. “Initially, it seemed that the de-facto measurement standard was ‘the shortest distant’. And the shortest distant between two points, on a flat plane, is a straight line.

According to many residents of Rynjah, a liquor store has been operating in their area by flouting the excise rules openly and no action has been taken by the authorities. It seems, based on the shortest distance calculation, this store should have been shut down by now. However, it is still operating and is turning the residential area into a “drunkards’ alley”. Now, after repeated complaints, somebody from the excise department visited the spot to ascertain facts. According to that person, walkable/drivable distance is used as the unit of measure, and the shop is more than 200 walkable/ drivable meters away from the nearest Church. When asked if the excise department will allow a liquor store to operate, if the store abuts a religious institution, but the walkable/ drivable distance between the two are greater than 200 meters, the person answered, wait-for-it, ‘Yes’.”

“So what? Their rules, their decisions. We anyway have no say in it.” I responded.

“You are quite dense, aren’t you?” was his terse reply. He continued, “So according to you, the liquor store that is operating < 200 meters away from B. K. Bajoria school is just fine?”

“As I said, their rules, their decisions. You have to live with it. You weren’t asked to vote on this measure, so you don’t have a say on this. Tomorrow, if they reverse their decision, because the politicians realize their folly, then, again, it will be ‘their rules, their decisions’. The quicker you understand that you are just a tax donkey to them, the easier will it be for you to get back to your normal self.”

“What about the madness that ensues in the road towards Polo, every Friday and Saturday, when people park their cars willy-nilly just to buy their weekend fix. You are okay with that too?” he retorted.

“Who is complaining about that problem?” I asked. “Are the people who are stuck in the jam complaining? No. They are just blaring their horns and smoking inside their cars? Are the traffic police issuing traffic tickets to the violators? No. They are busy mis-managing traffic? Are the politicians complaining? No? Are the bureaucrats complaining” No. Matter of fact, some of them are breaking the same rules they have legislated. So, who is complaining? Nobody. Stop trying to save people. Stop trying to be a Savior. You cannot save anybody if they are determined to destroy themselves. Only you can save yourself.” I pretty much screamed in disgust.

“So, isn’t there a better way to implement this rule without using arbitrary numbers and capricious decisions.” he deadpanned.

“Of course, there is,” I replied, “but who is going to listen to our proposals. The bureaucrats and the politicians are our Masters,

and what they decide cannot be questioned by the plebes. For e.g., instead of using an arbitrary number, they could have used zones—a residential zone, a school zone and a hospital zone cannot have a liquor store, only a commercial zone can. Now, what qualifies as a residential zone—a zone where residential houses abound; a school zone—where schools dominate; a hospital zone—where hospitals predominate; a commercial zone—a zone that is considered downtown, where malls, shopping centers, etc., predominate. Now, what do we do if there is small school in a commercial area? In that case, err on the side of caution and don’t issue a liquor license. Think people first, businesses next. If that doesn’t work, then evaluate the possibility of allowing online purchase of liquor and remove all brick-and-mortar liquor stores. If all these ideas don’t work, then ask the citizens to decide. Allow some form of direct democracy. After all, aren’t we told that the will of the people matters? So, allow the people to decide. Residents of certain localities in Shillong have decided to not allow liquor stores in their area, then why can’t people in Rynjah decide that, too. But, therein lies the rub. If peoples’ will reign, then, the elites lose control. They cannot flout the rules, right, and they become powerless. So, how do you stymie peoples’ will, you act as their Master and be arbitrary and capricious.”

Slowly, very slowly, my alter ego was beginning to realize the futility of losing his mind over all this, and he nodded his head in silent acquiescence and said, “I guess that’s why Cloud 9 at Hotel Centre Point now has a liquor license, even though they were shut down initially.”

“Bingo, see... tell me what exactly has changed between when they were shut down and now? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. They are still in the same location, still next to a school and a religious institution. So, how did they get their license back? Greasing the palms? Maybe? Maybe, behind closed doors, the rules have silently been revised by the excise department, without anybody being even aware of it. Or, maybe, they got a special exemption. There are always exemptions from the rules and policies for the well-connected, you know.”

The reality of being a “nobody” finally dawned on my alter ego, and, it seemed, the epiphany crushed him mentally, emotionally and physically.

As I slowly walked away towards my room, I could hear my alter ego mumble to himself—“we are just puppets, dancing to the tunes of the puppet Masters.”

“Ain’t that the truth, my friend, ain’t that the truth,” I mumbled to myself, as I slowly closed the door behind me.

statutory status to the concept of Uniform Entrance Examination for all UG and PG admissions, while providing a relaxation to the State governments in relation to only UG admissions for this year [2016-17] in view of their difficulties. The ordinance was required because the Supreme Court was on vacation and both Houses of Parliament had adjourned sine die on May 13. The ordinance came after pressure from State governments, which had opposed NEET on the grounds of disparity of syllabus and differences in regional languages.

Medical and dental college aspirants got some relief (but not in Meghalaya) on June 7, after the government decided that seats in state government medical colleges and government seats in private medical colleges would not be allotted on the basis of the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) this year.

One thing the government and the Department should understand is that NEET examination will be based on Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and they follow negative marking. In

Meghalaya 90 percent schools follow MBOSE syllabus. If government is bent on conduction NEET (2nd chance, which is on 24th Aug. 2016) 90 percent aspiring students are going to be deprived. If the government insist on NEET, then it would not be possible for MBOSE students to cover CBSE course in two months time. It is not understood as to why when the state is getting a chance to conduct its own examination, it is opting for NEET at least this year. If the government so desire they can conduct both NEET and State examination simultaneously. When the state is reeling

under massive shortage of qualified doctors, introducing NEET at this juncture will be a reverse process for the state. In any case NEET is going to be introduced as common entrance test for medical aspirants from next year all over India. So, my sincere request would be to the state Government and the Directorate to give a chance to all budding aspirants when there is a provision to conduct state examinations. Please do not deprive MBOSE students and shatter their dreams of becoming a doctor. It could be anybody’s child. Yours etc., Dev Areng, Tura

You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, "Why not?"

--- George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 303 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2016

The Orlando massacre

AN American-born man who has pledged his allegiance to the ISIS gunned down 50 people early Sunday at a gay nightclub in Orlando. This is the deadliest mass shooting in the United States and the nation's worst terror attack since 9/11. The gunman, Omar Mateen, 29, of Fort Pierce, Florida, was interviewed by the FBI in 2013 and 2014 but was not found to be a threat. According to FBI, Mateen called 911 during the attack to pledge allegiance to ISIS and mentioned the Boston Marathon bombers. Mateen carried an assault rifle and a pistol into the packed Pulse club about 2 a.m. Sunday and started shooting indiscriminately. After a standoff of about three hours, while people trapped inside the club desperately called and messaged friends and relatives, police crashed into the building with an armored vehicle and stun grenades and killed Mateen.

Apart from the easy availability of guns, questions that are raised across the world today is, 'what triggers such an act?' Is it a deranged mind that is set off by radical religious ideology? Ideology that condemns gay people as being ungodly and sinful and who therefore deserve to die? That ISIS sympathizers have reacted by praising the attack only goes to show just how radicalized Islam itself has become. A shocked President Obama called the shooting an act of terror and act of hate. Indeed Mateens act reveal the difficulty in addressing a new style of terrorism: violence partly inspired by the Islamic State but not directed by its leaders. In America, reaction to the human tragedy has evoked a range of opinions. While gun violence often polarizes people into camps that condemn the idea of easy availability of fire arms and terrorist attacks unites countries in grief and resolve, Orlando defies these positions. Donald Trump, the Republican presidential nominee has used this incident to call for a ban on Muslim immigration even while expressing his empathy for gay people. Obviously both positions are aimed at winning votes. Hillary Clinton his rival has been more measured in her comments. America at this juncture requires serious introspection on gun laws and of on dealing with radical religious fundamentalism that is taking root in its soil. But remarks such as the kind mouthed by Donald Trump on Muslims per se could result in more hate crimes as fundamentalists hardly use logic. They are driven by hatred and ideology. It's a complex world that requires a more complex set of political skills to run the country, any country! Those skills are found wanting, even as dysfunctional individuals run amok! We are looking at a grim, unsafe future.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Bodo extremists engaged in guerilla warfare

Bodo extremists are engaged in guerilla warfare in this trouble-torn district of western Assam in pursuit of their demand for a "Home land". The militants have killed at least 17 people over the past one week, while scores of houses, bridges and vehicles have been set ablaze. Disruption of rail and road links, snatching of weapons from police and attacks on government employees and property characterize the violence let loose by them in what seems to be a prelude to the 120-hour Assam bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) from five am tomorrow. "The extremists are using guerilla tactics" Assam's Director General of Police, Mr . S. V. Subramanian, told reporters at the circuit house here when asked to explain why his men could not control the violence. The extremists give the slogan "our war has begun" said a CRPF inspector carrying out combing operations in

search of extremists. The state administration seems to be helpless in face of the violence by the extremists, on the plea of "inadequate forces." According to Home Minister Mr Bhriгу Kumar Phukan 23 companies of paramilitary forces - about 2,300 men-have so far been deployed in the district, but this was inadequate to meet the demands of the situation. The Assam Government has asked the centre for ten additional companies of CRPF, of which six companies have so far been dispatched. Two of these companies would be used to escort trains while the other four would be used to maintain law and order in the district. The army has also been asked to stand by to aid the civil administration during the 120 hour Assam bandh starting tomorrow. The poor morale of the police force is evident from the fact that in at least three cases they offered no resistance when attacked by extremists.

Gender status and forms of rape in Khasi society

In the Khasi traditional matrilineal system, the statuses of men and women were not defined in terms of sex or gender, but in terms man's role as maternal uncle and leader of the clan, and woman's role as mother and resource of the continuity of the clan. Hence, the statuses of maternal uncle and his sister or niece were positively correlated and complementary to each other. A rise in a woman's status was supposed to correspondingly give rise to the status of the maternal uncle, and a rise in the social status of the maternal uncle was supposed to give rise to the social status of the mother, sister and niece as well.

However, the status of the Khasi man as father and husband, and the status of the Khasi woman as wife played very little significance, and divorce was taken lightly because a father was not an institutionalized provider for the family, but he was only a friend, a co-procreator, and an honourable ambassador of his clan to his wife's clan in the marriage transaction. In the strictest sense, the father's presence or absence has little to do with the honour and security of the family and its legitimacy, culturally and legally.

In this kind of social set up, not only divorce, but also rape was taken lightly. There were two forms of rape in Khasi society. The first is called 'babor' that is, when a man forcefully and violently has sex with a woman against her will. In the past, the usual remedy for this kind of rape was to force the rapist 'ban ri', that is, to take the victim as his wife and maintain her if he is unmarried, or to beat him severely and impose a fine if he is married. But in both cases there was no observable social stigma attached to the victims of rape. Many rape victims were outwardly living normal lives as time dimmed their pain though they might be inwardly tormented by persistent distress. The second form of rape that was not conceived of as rape was called 'pynbor kurim', when either, a minor girl was allured to marry an elderly man without her informed consent, or when an adult

By Fabian Lyngdoh

woman was forced by the maternal uncles or mother to marry a man of their choice against her will on reasons best known only to them. There are many cases where a young woman had to desperately flee from village to village to escape a forced marriage, but ultimately she had to submit because the society had no remedy against the overwhelming control of the family.

The Khasi woman's role was to provide for the continuity of the social membership of the clan by giving birth to new members as a breeding cow. Her honour depended mainly on the number of children she could bear especially daughters, irrespective of whether she had a regular husband or no regular husband, and irrespective of whether she had married on her own will or had been forced to marry as a consequence of rape. But victims of rape in the Khasi traditional society very rarely committed suicide because according to the Khasi thought it is better to live somehow than to die at all. By the birth of children, the victim of rape became reconciled to her fate and accepted the status of motherhood with cold comfort. But such a forced marriage usually ended up in adultery, divorce and remarriage, or in the early death of the woman due to 'ka jem rngiew' (sheer ill luck) or due to illness induced by persistent distress.

The gravity of the evil of rape can be seen only when the rich and the powerful become the victims. The rape of Lucretia, the beautiful wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, by Sextus the wicked son of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (the Proud), the King of Rome, and her suicide thereafter, brought about the end of the monarchy and the establishment of the Roman Republic under the authority of the Senate in 510 B.C. On the other hand, the rapes of thousands of the poor and the lowly were set aside as negligible collateral casualties of the male sex instinct. Leave aside the theory of the rebirth of the 'atman', every human person has been given an opportunity to come into this world only once. So how can the

society allow any human beast to shatter into pieces that only one opportunity of the poor and lowly human beings to live honourably and contentedly?

The fault is not in the stars, nor does it lie only with the individual criminals, but lies deeply with the kind of society that breeds such human beasts. In primitive conditions, rape seems to be a natural and instinctive phenomenon. The hens fertilized their eggs through some form of rape. When a bitch is in heat, a phenomenon akin to forced polyandry seems to occur; and when the cow is on the heat, a phenomenon similar to gang rape always takes place. Likewise, every human being would be a potential rapist, thief, robber or murderer in the absence of adequate social controls. The problem of rape is elusive to reason, to law, or to any human authority because there is no means by which reason can be instantly infused into everybody's mind. Not even divine grace would miraculously infuse involuntary and instantaneous mass conversion however intensely we may cry or pray.

As a preventive measure, modern society has to keep watch whether the current system of education only breeds self-centred individuals with a sense of unrestrained freedom and bereft of conscience. We have also to be mindful of the new set of corporate patriarchy which subtly degrades and victimizes womanhood in the guise of empowerment and freedom. On the other hand, the curative measure is embroiled in a faulty legal system, in which, to the perception of the professional lawyers, cases of rape and murder might appear not as social problems to be solved, but only as normal occupational opportunities, in the same way as the taxi drivers may view human beings as mere passengers whose value is worth less than the carrying charge of a quintal of potatoes in a sack.

Every human being is a combination of three natures: he is basically an animal manifested through his instincts; he is a social being manifested through

his rationality, and he is a spiritual being manifested through his morality. When any man becomes a serious and persistent enemy to the society, he deserves capital punishment as a social being. But as he is also a spiritual being, there is a contention that capital punishment should be abolished, and life imprisonment should be given in its stead. Criminals convicted of rape and culpable homicide should be sentenced to life imprisonment if not to death, regardless of the logic of defence lawyers. Most of the crimes, including rape and murder, were committed by persistent criminals who had been released several times from jail on the plea of repentance and reformed life. How long would the society be fooled by such bluff and put the lives of innocent people in danger?

As far as the Khasi society is concerned, a convicted criminal who had become a serious enemy to the society, should be disowned by the kur and handed over as a slave to the power of the State. That was the Khasi tradition. There are instances in the history of the Khasi tribe when the kur had handed over its own member who had become a hardened criminal to the power of the 'raid' or 'hima', to be tied hands and feet and thrown over the cliff. That was also one the main reasons why the syiemship was instituted in the political community to take charge of 'u tangon u lymban' (punitive instrument). But what we ordinarily observe today is that the kur itself would stand as the defence lawyer to a criminal member, or to arbitrate for hushing up the matter even if that criminal had raped and murdered his own sister or niece, on the plea of saving the kur's honour. It is a foolish idea of honour that the Khasi ancestors could have never thought of. Jennifer War and Glenn C. Kharkongor had rightly said that it is our continued silence that could be one of the factors contributing to the increasing sexual violence against women and minors in our society (ST. May 25th, 2016). Let us break the silence and do away with the false sense of kur's honour to save the society from further havoc.

leaders across religions are all concerned about propagating religious beliefs but how many of them have initiated a call for the believers to follow the path of righteousness in protecting the environment. If each and every believer of whichever religion along with its religious leaders join in a mass movement for creating awareness and involving the believers in doing small acts towards cleanliness and contribute towards eco-friendly way of life, perhaps then we have served God and can be proud of our faiths. As a Christian myself I believe the church can play an important role at least in initiating the much needed zero littering campaign among its believers. So can the Hindus, Muslims, and other religious groups too. Children going to the Sunday school don't litter inside the church premises but when they go to school, as soon as they come out they would fling the chips packets and chocolate wrappers all around. Now what values of clean and righteous habits are being preached to them? I hope that the religious groups will come together and start practicing what they preach and bring the much-needed repentance and revival in the habits and lifestyles of

Not in My God’s Name

By Nasreen Habib

It was 'Latin Night' at popular nightclub Pulse in Orlando, Florida. 20-year-old Luis Velma who operated the Harry Potter ride at Universal was there, having a good time on a weekend like many of us. But what turned a regular Saturday night into a terrifying one was the presence of Omar Mateen, who in the deadliest mass shootout in America, gunned down 50 people and injured 53 others. It was also the month of Ramzan, where many Muslims around the world fast from sun-up to sun-down, a time for self-reflection and rejuvenation. America was also celebrating a month of gay pride, but one in which unfortunately the community was the target of a deadly attack.

Mass shootings are not a rarity in America, thanks to the rampant gun culture. Where else does a third of the population own a gun? The gun industry, whose annual revenue amounts to around 13.5 billion dollars enjoys substantial political clout. Presidential candidate Donald Trump in one of his election rallies impressed audiences with a simple logic, the best way to stop terrorism is to arm all the 'good' guys with arms all around. Effectively, the 'right to a gun' is the most important one of all in America. Now, after the shootout, Americans might go on a gun buying spree like they did after the San Bernardino shootout, assuming that more guns and not less is the answer to the solution. National Gun Victims Action Council, a voluntary organisation, conducted simulation experiments that showed inexperienced gun users more often than not shoot innocent people or get shot by the criminal or even by the police. But thanks to fanaticism of a different sort, Christian fanaticism in the face of Islamic threats, all caution will be thrown to the wind.

A 38-year-old Indian-American Mainak Sarkar had a PhD in mechanical engineering from UCLA. In a shocking incident, he first killed ex-wife Ashley Hasti at her home and then his former professor William Klug at his work before taking his own life. Now, consider this: If Mainak was in India instead of America where buying a gun is as easy as getting popcorn from a store, would the unfortunate incident still have taken place? We may never know for sure, but a gun in the hand of a disturbed person is a recipe for disaster. Only, it is highly avoidable.

The 29-year-old Omar Mateen was a New York born resident with parents of Afghan descent. According to reports, he had never been directly involved with the Islamic

its believers and hence live up to the saying, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

Cleanliness has to originate from the place of worship and spread to our very surroundings. If purification of the one's body, mind and soul is the way to approach God, then how is it justified when we litter our surroundings with filth and garbage? Is cleanliness confined inside the religious premises only?

Yours etc.,
Nicholas J. Khamani,
President
Partners of Pla Iew Club,
Shillong

Dangers of mono-cropping

Editor,
Crop monoculture, or in other words the common practice of mass production of genetically similar crops/plants over large agronomic areas repeatedly for years have significant negative

State though he did owe allegiance to it. When asked by investigators about a possible motive, Mateen's father's reply was simple, 'It had nothing to do with religion'. I only wish this was true. Instead of asserting over and over again that no religion in the world teaches us to hate one another, we need to understand why so much hatred is being propagated in the world in the name of religion. Both Islam and Christianity do not support homosexuality and see it as a sin is the dominant refrain. Does this effectively mean that we can't be religious and yet more accepting of other identities? I sure hope not! For religion too is not unequivocally one thing, and is open to a multiple interpretations. And, if we are condemned to only be allowed to adhere to one dominant narrative, then we need to rethink religion altogether. I am not being radical here, just practical.

All of us live in multi-ethnic societies with people of all religious beliefs and sexual orientations; can we really co-exist together without respect for each other? Religious leaders wield a lot of influence and can do a world of good in today's high pressure lives; why are they then advocating violence against homosexuals or anyone for that matter? Why are they not talking about inclusiveness, empowering women and other pressing issues? It has been reported that Mateen was influenced by an imam of a local mosque who advocated 'death threat' to all homosexuals. The Westboro Baptist Church was no less vitriolic, a message on its twitter handle read 'God sent the shooter'. More than religion itself, we need to be wary of its 'interpreters'.

Liberal spaces are shrinking as absurd justifications about what the Holy Books say or doesn't say are widely debated. We have forgotten to assert that humanity is the most important religion of all. Let's not justify killings in the name of God; we need to stand against both Islamophobia and homophobia. Replacing one evil with another is no solution. If we truly want a saner world to live in, we need to gather in solidarity and emphasize time and again that the rights of minorities, religious or otherwise, are important. The right to dissent and to hold views that are not in accordance with the popular narrative are welcome, even necessary in democratic societies. We might hold the morally superior view that American gun culture is the real culprit, the truth is: it is easier to criticize them. It is much more difficult to look inwards.

impacts on the agricultural biodiversity around the globe. Modern industrial agricultural practices with the extensive use of synthetic agro-chemicals like synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, artificial plant hormones and other associated chemicals; over application of irrigation water, made to order seeds have cumulative impacts in the erosion of local, regional and global agricultural biodiversity. Due to such industrial practices, large numbers of locally adapted cultivars, germplasms, seed lines and crop varieties has been lost in epic proportions and has now developed into a global challenge with respect to our future food security. It is important for all the nations across the globe to seriously introspect on the various factors responsible for the loss of agricultural biodiversity? and the global challenges to food security. Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu,
Lethbridge AB Canada

“My dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody; they were my refuge when annoyed - my dearest pleasure when free.”

--- Mary Shelly

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 304 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2016

Unkind Cuts

THERE is a perceptual conflict between film makers and film censors over what should or should not be shown in cinema. A chairman of the film censor board in the UK, Lord Trevelyan made a mockery of his censorship by publishing a book called, “What the Censor saw” by printing the scenes cut by him. But Indian censors refuse to see light. A film called “Udta Punjab” had been mauled by 13 cuts but the Bombay High Court had made an enlightened move by striking down all but one of them. The court has also made some pertinent observations. The mandate of the Central Bureau is to certify not to censor. Because of the confusion in the minds of Delhi’s mandarins, it is also called the Censor Board. The High Court also regretted that its time was wasted with such a trivial issue which could have been settled by those involved in the film or by public debate. The court has left censorship of creative arts open. The film in question had some scenes showing drug abuse and having use of expletives. Showing drug abuse does not mean defending it. A film like “Dum Maaro Dum” is a serious condemnation of drug abuse though it showed the stupor of drug addicts. Expletives have been part of the language of modern literature and deleting them does not cleanse the prevailing spoken idiom. What is all the more regrettable is the intervention of political elements as happened in the case of a film called, ““Aarakshan” which had absolutely nothing objectionable in it.

The main question is whether the Central Bureau of Film Certification has been reasonable in imposing cuts in films. It is of course arguable if the need for freedom of speech and visuals can apply to rank obscenity or bad mouthing in films. Films need not be educative and they should not be under greater restraint than fiction. Cinema is literature on celluloid. The corollary is that such cuts may go to any extreme bringing fascist tendencies into play.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Market corner

Children and harassed parents making a bee-line for the books stores and stationer shops with long lists in their hands and shouting for the attention of the salesmen (who have a harrowing time trying to cope with the rush) are a common sight at the beginning of the new academic year. For these parents and students, we present current rates of stationery available at the main markets in Shillong.

Exercise books to write one's first ABC or new thesis are cheaper by the dozen. Hard bound exercise book of 128 pages (no4) costs from Rs. 22 a dozen (Rs 2 per book for the medium quality) to Rs. 48 a dozen for the better quality. While the medium quality copy books cost Rs. 30 a dozen (no.5), Rs. 32 a dozen (no.6) and Rs. 40 a dozen (no.8) the better quality ones cost Rs. 72 a dozen (no. 6).

A cheaper alternative is available in the form of MECOFED exercise books which are priced at Rs. 1.65, Rs. 2.35 and Rs. 3 for the 96 page, 144 page and 192 page book respectively. Prices of unbound foolscap registers range from Rs. 30 a dozen (Rs. 3 for one) for no. 4 to Rs. 32 a dozen (Rs. 3.50 per book) for the no 5 ones. Here again, MECOFED comes to the consumers' rescue with registers priced at Rs. 2.25 for both nos. 3 and 5. Foolscap sheets sold loose cost between Rs. 3.50 and Rs. 5 per ream.

Laboratory note books are quite steeply priced at Rs. 48 a dozen (Rs. 4.80 each for 72 page and Rs. 55 a

dozen (Rs. 5.50 each for 80 page of medium quality to about Rs. 16 for an 80 pages premium notebook. Brown paper to cover the exercise books and registers costs about Rs. 10 and 5 for a bundle of 12 and 5 sheets respectively.

Pencils are priced from Rs. 10 a dozen to Rs. 18.24 a dozen. Erasers cost anything from 50 paise to Rs. 3 each. Price of foundation pens for students ranges between Rs. 5 to Rs. 18 while ink costs around Rs. 4.50 a bottle.

Other accessories like paint boxes cost about Rs. 15; geometry boxes of Vijay and India brands cost Rs. 10-12 while the Globe boxes cost Rs. 15 and the Omega ones a whopping Rs. 28 and prices of dissection boxes range from Rs. 65 to Rs. 125 depending on the quality and brand. Chart paper costs about Rs. 2.50 per sheet and glue costs about Rs. 3 for a small tube of 25 mg. A set of sketch pens would cost about Rs. 9. Slates to be scrawled on by the toddlers cost about Rs. 5 and a box of chalk cost about Rs. 4. Lunch boxes and water bottles which form an essential part of any student's school kit cost anything from Rs. 8 to 25 for the former and about Rs. 4-18 for the latter depending on the quality, design etc. And to put all this load into, school bags made of canvas and rexine also are available in the market. While medium sized canvas bags cost about Rs. 20, the large seized ones cost about Rs. 35 and rexine bags with multiple pockets and clasps cost Rs. 55 and above.

Tracing the story of an innovator

By Omarlin Kyndiah

Engineering Service has this to say about Mr. Kambel's innovation: "It is definitely an improvement on the conventional cremation practices followed till now i.e burning pine wood. There is a lot of saving in consumption of wood, which besides saving costs ensures conservation of our precious natural resources".

Mr. Shullai's wonderful creation has earned him many awards which includes the Third National Grassroot Technological Innovation & Traditional Knowledge in 2005, Silver Harmony Award in 2008 and the (L) Lakhon Shullai Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011.

Born in Jwai on 8th February 1934 to (L) Nesimai Shullai and (L) Mahim Rymbai, Mr Shullai dropped out from school after Class II due to ill health. Then his father asked him to learn the craft of goldsmithy. However, soon he realized that it might affect his health further. So he asked him to take up the profession of an artisan. By 1961 Mr. Shullai came to Shillong to work under the guidance of (Late) Mr. Lakhon Shullai, the then President of Sein Raij Niamtre Shillong. After a brief stint he worked as a mechanic under (Late) Bah Ling Jyrwa. But as he could not manage to make ends meet, he moved back to Jwai and took up the job of repairing sewing machines, guns and watches etc. Mr. Shullai's innovative skill is first seen when he developed a Camera made of Cardboard that can take twice the number of photographs of a normal Camera. Soon his name spread as a backdrop and lighting expert for the theatrical show during the annual Bamphalar festival organized by the seven localities of Jwai at their respective Yungwaleih (community hall). Recently, Panalair locality celebrated 100 years of the existence of their Assam type Yungwaleih constructed in 1916. Prior to this it was a thatched house.

Mr. Shullai's life took a turn during the Chinese aggression of 1962 when

he joined the Civil Defence Training organized by the Government of India at Sein Jaintia Hall, Shillong. In this training, he gained experience about the mechanism of fire control. The first hand experience which he gained made him think about innovating the system of cremating the dead under Niamtre. The idea of cremating the dead has emerged from the pre-historic times side by side with the idea of burial. However, man's forefather believed that if the dead was cremated it would make the passage of the departed soul to heaven easier. There is an abundance of evidence of this belief throughout the world from archeological point of view. No wonder many tribal societies practice cremation.

According to the Niamtre belief, once the mortal remains are cremated the soul stays in the abode of U Tre Kirof (God) known as 'Soorkep'. The followers of the Niamtre believe that the departed souls must be respected and it is the duty of the members of the family concerned, of the clan and the community members to see that the departed is not cremated in an open space. A crematorium and a burial ground must both be respected with an element of spiritual sanctity.

Mr. Shullai had already seen that when the dead were cremated in the open space fumes sometimes engulfed the immediate neighborhood. Secondly, he felt that the society expects one to respect the departed and the dead should not be burned in the open space nor buried. It was this which motivated him further! Probably in his sub-conscious mind there was a concern for environment. Whatever may be the case, he began his journey to fulfill his dream project of creating a new system of cremating the dead under proper fire control which would incur less wastage of firewood and man power. He would do so without disturbing the Niamtre tenets. It took him three years to design his dream project. However, it further took him eight years to convince the conservative elders of Jwai to accept the new system of cremation because they did not want

the technology to take over tradition. This fact illustrates the patience in him to persevere for the welfare of society.

The first Crematorium was inaugurated at Jwai in 2002. Since then many Eco-friendly Crematoriums have been built in Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hill, Ri Bhoi District and even in Garo Hills. This great contribution has also been recognized by the Forest Department of Meghalaya, which has acknowledged the potential of this model being an absolutely environment friendly one. So much has the potential of this been realized by the Forest Department, that so far the Department has funded no less than twenty such crematoriums to be constructed throughout the State. Under this scheme, very recently such Crem-atorium was inaugurated at Byrnihat, Lawsohtun and Nongphoh. There may soon be a day when this model's significance will be accepted in other parts of the country too where Open Wooden Pyre Cremations (WPC) are so common. The adoption of this eco-friendly crematorium which is a Closed Wooden Crematorium (CWC) will undoubtedly serve mankind and help in protecting the environment to a great extent.

It goes without saying that Mr Kambel Shullai is an icon and a true role model for many individuals. For the youth and very young people, here is a person who stood against all odds of life, braving ill health, paucity of resources and without any formal education, but having made such a mark in society that generations will remember and reap the benefits of his innovation. The youth of today should imbibe these qualities from him and ensure that small hurdles in life are but stepping stones to success. Let us all remember Mr Kambel Shullai not only on this day but every day. He believed in simple living and high thinking. We salute Ma Kambel Shullai for his wonderful creation!

(The writer is the General Secretary, Sein Raij Niamtre Shillong)

Why are the women of Meghalaya so anaemic?

By Sandra Albert

The prevalence of anaemia among women is often used as an indicator of nutritional well-being of society. Meghalaya state has some of the poorest nutritional indicators in the northeast region. The most recent district level family health survey (DLHS-4, 2013) reports the prevalence of anaemia as 71% in children (6-59 months), 42% in adolescents (15-19 years), 54% in women (15-49 years) and 64% of pregnant women. Thus more than half our women are anaemic. Initially anaemician can be asymptomatic (no overt manifestation) or it can cause weakness, easy fatigue, pallor, breathlessness, palpitations and headaches.Iron deficiency anaemia is detrimental to the growth and mental development of children. Among pregnant women there is a definite association between anaemia and poor maternal outcomes such as increased risk for heavy blood loss after delivery and low birth weight among newborns.

Iron is required for the production of haemoglobin, a protein present in red blood cells, responsible for carrying oxygen from our lungs to every cell in our body. In the absence of iron the body fails to make enough haemoglobin or red blood cells, resulting in iron deficiency anaemia. Although anaemia can result from other causes, the majority are related to iron deficiency. Anaemia can also result from deficiency of other micronutrients like vitamin B12 and folate and from genetic factors (haemolytic anaemias). All of these alternate causes are prevalent in Meghalaya but we do not know to what extent. But iron deficiency remains the most frequent cause of anaemia in our state. Iron deficiency results from low dietary intake, low absorption or from conditions that cause chronic blood loss (eg. worms or ulcers).

Were Meghalaya's people healthier in times past? It appears so if one refers to the earliest anthropological records of the Khasis, where they are described as a short statured but well-nourished tribe. Of note with regards to the subject of anaemias PRT Gurdon's (1914) observation that Khasis used pots made of iron for cooking vegetables. The use of iron vessels in the past was not surprising as iron smelting was once a thriving local industry. A research article in Current Science, that used radiocarbon dating and other techniques to assess ancient iron slag from the Khasi hills reported evidence of continuous iron smelting in the Khasi Hills spanning 2000 years. Like a remnant of this ancient art, until a few years ago, one could observe a few blacksmith workshops along the Mylliem highway but suddenly they seem to have all disappeared! Over the years consumption patterns have changed as have cooking processes. In the present day iron vessels have largely been replaced by the ubiquitous aluminium vessels. Observation of Khasi kitchens and jadohshops demonstrates a fondness for aluminium utensils which Khasi women take pride in keeping ashine. Thus almost insidiously a potentially superior indigenous practice got replaced by something shiny and white.

Do cooking patterns and utensils matter? A clue to this can be seen in a study among the !Kung bushmen of Botswana, Southern Africa who used iron cooking vessels in their normal cooking practices. Investigators reported low prevalence of iron, folate, and vitamin B12 deficiency among this group, when compared with more economically advanced populations. This despite some of them having parasites such as hookworms (that often contribute to anaemia through chronic blood loss). The absence of anaemia among the !Kung was attributed to the dietary iron intake being supplemented by iron derived from their cooking

pots. A downside was documented among the Bantu tribe who inappropriately used these vessels for brewing alcoholic beverages, where it proved harmful as it contributed to iron overload.

The government's health departments have been trying to ameliorate the high prevalence of anaemia amongst our people through two measures; one to give iron supplements (pills) to all pregnant women and more recently the newly introduced weekly iron supplementation scheme among adolescents and children. When a person is iron deficient, it certainly warrants some form of urgent amelioration such as providing iron supplements. But can or should this be a long term strategy? Questions of public health relevance should ideally be addressed on the basis of well-designed studies that produce good quality evidencethat is relevant locally and within contexts. Sadly this is not something we as a nation pays sufficient attention to, our health research budgets are miniscule to say the least. But on the topic of iron supplementation and anaemia there is some emerging evidence that questions old accepted notions.

In a handful of controlled studies from Africa, investigators have found that dietary iron fortification resulted in a significant increase in disease-causing gut bacteria that cause diarrhoea in children supplemented with iron as compared with those without dietary iron supplementation. Those given iron were found to have increased markers for intestinal inflammation. This is noteworthy as one of the most commonly given anecdotal reasons for "non-compliance" with iron supplementation in pregnancy in Meghalaya is intestinal irritation and stomach upsets. In other words iron supplementation is not as harmless as once assumed, it can alter the normal profile of gut microbes and promote potentially disease causing microbial flora. Recently another interesting association was reported by researchers in Karnataka; pregnant women who were not anemic but who took the routinely recommended iron supplementation gave birth to low-birth weight babies. The authors conclude that rather than a uniform approach, an individualised approach to iron supplementation in pregnancy may be warranted.

There is an additional side that needs to be considered, it is not just the presence of iron in the diet but also the ability of the body to absorb it as a nutrient. For instance one's diet may have sufficient iron but its absorption (bioavailability) can be hampered by the immediate drinking of tea with a meal. Tea in particular interferes with absorption of iron from vegetable sources. On the other hand simple measures like squeezing lemon juice (ascorbic acid) or consuming other vitamin C rich items along with a meal can improve iron absorption from the food being consumed.

The Food & Agriculture Organization of the UN reiterates that a nutritious diet is the best approach to combat all forms of malnutrition. While food supplements can be used for specific dietary deficiencies in the short term, interventions that are food based and involve dietary diversification are proposed as better alternatives. A few NGOs in Maharashtra have demonstrated how anaemia can be improved through home kitchen gardens. Through this intervention, anaemia among not just women but other members of families improved considerably, average consumption of vegetables increased and medical bills reduced. Sustained alternative efforts such as improving dietary diversity through kitchen gardens, wild edibles, delaying tea drinking after a meal, and awareness raising measures need to be made in parallel to current efforts so that long term sustainable solutions can be found.

(The author is the Director, Indian Institute of Public Health Shillong, PHFI)

“I do not want to die... until I have faithfully made the most of my talent and cultivated the seed that was placed in me until the last small twig has grown.”

--- Kathé Kollwitz, O Magazine

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 304 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2016

Delhi Rumbblings

THE AAP government's decision to appoint 21 MLAs as parliamentary secretaries has been rejected by President Pranab Mukherjee. The party has put the blame on Delhi's lieutenant governor. There seems little substance in the Kejriwal government's attack on the Centre. The President has refused to give assent to the amended Delhi Members of Legislative Assembly (Removal of Disqualification) Act 1997. The amendment was brought in to protect the Delhi government's appointments. It feared that the post of the parliamentary secretary could be regarded as an office of profit. That could disqualify the MLAs in question. Previous court judgments had declared such appointments as unconstitutional. Some earlier Delhi governments had made such appointments. But that does not validate the Kejriwal government's stand. The AAP had always held it was more scrupulous than others. The Constitution has the threat of disqualification. The office of parliamentary secretary is not an exempted post from the risk of disqualification on grounds of being an 'office of profit'. The AAP government did say that the parliamentary secretaries appointed would not be eligible to remuneration or perquisites of any kind. That did not include use of government transport for official purposes and office space. Later it wanted the posts to be exempted altogether.

If legislators become aides to the ministers, that undermines separation of powers between the legislature and the executive and upsets the system of checks and balances. That makes the AAP's case unsustainable. Maybe, the appointments may improve governance. But that should be made within the constitutional framework.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Sangma defends Railhead project

The Meghalaya Govt appears to have decided to go ahead with the much debated Byrnihat Railhead project. The State cabinet recently gave the green signal for revival of the project which has been lying in cold storage for nearly five years. The State Chief Minister Mr Purno Sangma when approached for his comments on the issue, strongly defended the move. He told Shillong Times on Tuesday that the proposed rail-head which would be located right on the fringe of the inter-state border, would contribute enormously to the development of the State. He said the issue should be examined dispassionately from all angles and a sensible approach adopted instead of harping on empty sentimentality.

Putting at rest the fear of influx from outside, Mr Sangma said that the system of family identity cards, which would be introduced before the completion of the railhead, would take care of the problem adequately since only legitimate Meghalaya card holders would be able to find jobs, admission in educational institutions et al. Separate cards would be issued for tourists, people working on deputation and others on temporary assignments in the state. The responsibility of checking up on the village population would rest on the tribal chiefs, he told.

"Merely influx is not the question. If the railhead is located just outside

Meghalaya, it will still contribute to influx and we will still be at the mercy of Assam for the movement of goods. It is not the location of the railway station that will encourage influx, it is for us both the Government and the people, to devise methods that safeguard the interests of the people without hampering development". Mr Sangma asserted. On the apprehension that the introduction of the new rail link would mean that lands would be taken away from the people, Mr Sangma said that this fear was unfounded. "The beauty of the scheme is that the entire length of the track will be in Assam. Only the station proper will be just across the Assam border, in the State of Meghalaya. So no lands will be wrested from the local people."

He said that a rail-head in Meghalaya would ensure that essential commodities are readily available at rates which could be from ten to thirty percent cheaper. The state has to conserve its money resources so that much needed funds can be allocated for projects like education and housing. "We are committed to development of the state as well as the preservation of the tribal ethos" the Chief Minister said. "The rail head is a step towards progress that we should be proud to take." The railhead goes not pose a threat to the tribals of Meghalaya. Rather, it should be seen as an important link in the chain of national integration, he added.

Hawkers may have rights but what about responsibilities?

By Patricia Mukhim

There are enough bleeding hearts to take up the cause of hawkers in this city and beyond it, but there is none to speak of the rights of the pedestrians. Is it fair that the whole stretch of road from Motphran right up to Paltan Bazar be turned into a hawkers' paradise even while pedestrians have to walk on the road and face the risk of being run over by the multitude of vehicles that throng the area? This is also the busiest area of the city with bazaar buses, Tata Sumos and taxis crowding over each other. The person riding in a vehicle might not face the plight of a pedestrian. And this city actually still has a huge number of citizens who don't own a private vehicle. I would invite those who shout out for the rights of hawkers to take a walk around Motphran down to the Khasi Hills District Council and see if they would still like to propose that hawkers continue with their right to open a shop wherever they want.

The hawkers have got a stay order from the courts in the same way that those who have encroached on the Wah Umkhras have done. It makes me wonder what sort of legal counsel the Government has since all cases are won by private individuals. I cannot recall the Government winning a single case so far. Government officials, including senior ones have been dragged to court and berated in the open court but the Government can still not afford to pay a legal counsel that can help it vacate stay orders, which on the face of it, militate against the larger good of the citizens of the State. Where in this country would you find encroachers getting a stay order so they can continue to build and stay on as illegal occupants on encroached land? Can the law be on the side of the illegal occupants? What kind of law is that?

It has often been said that the rule of law is not visible in Meghalaya. This

Speaking of the rule of law, these days we also have young people who set up bars in their cars. These open air bars have resulted in huge fines accruing to the police department. The closure of some of the bars in the city has pushed regular tipplers to turn the darker areas of the city into evening bars. When social drinking is prohibited because of some silly order from the Excise Department you are bound to have people making the best use of the open air where no law enforcer can intrude. So these days we have the entire stretch of the Shillong - Umiam (Barapani) road turning into a car bar. No policeman ventures on this road at night. Or they don't care to do so! At the Umiam Viewpoint every morning those who sweep the place have to collect hundreds of beer, whisky and vodka bottles. There is no place in this city where you will not find liquor bottles by the roadside. We are a

citizenry that is out to break the law. If there is a signage prohibiting littering such as the Fire Brigade roundabout, you will find garbage thrown right there. It's a different matter that garbage collection system has all but collapsed in most localities today.

On Thursday, the Dorbar Shnong of Mawlai and Mawiong along with the MLA met with the Municipal authorities and the Urban Affairs minister to draw the attention of the Department to the Marten dumping ground which apart from the stench has also turned slushy. The trucks leaving Marten carry with them a whole lot of mud and muck which is deposited on the highway. The question to the MUDA/ Municipality is: Why is the road leading to Marten not black-topped? Why is the place so badly maintained? Are there no funds for maintenance of Marten? Why is everything so decrepit and at breaking point? Where is the urban governance going? Can we have an answer from the Urban Affairs Minister? What is really happening in the Government? Does anyone really know? Is anyone accountable?

These days not much work is getting done since the Government is unwell and is apparently undergoing treatment in Delhi. In the meantime the public is bearing the brunt of this impermanence and a sort of policy paralysis which has hit the MUA Government since May 19.

So the hawkers are now one up on the Government and they have some socialists to back them up. The trouble with the socialists is that they are good at stirring and fomenting anarchy but do not really have a solution to any problem. So if the hawkers are allowed to set up shop anywhere they want, do they also enjoy the inalienable right to litter the place? And the moment the district administration comes down on the hawkers then there is this familiar plea that they are poor and no

one can take away their livelihoods. Fine argument but can the socialists who are also the cheerleaders for the hawkers, please allow them to set up shop in their localities or right in front of their homes for starters? That would be a good example of, "Charity begins at home." Since these cheerleaders also live in some of the posh localities of Shillong it would be interesting to see if the Shnongs within which they live would allow hawking as a full time activity.

Frankly speaking, the Government here has been sleeping for a long time. It only wakes up in spurts and when it is put on the mat by sundry pressure groups. The Government should have demarcated areas that are out of bounds for hawkers for the simple reason that footpaths are meant for pedestrians, not for hawking. Every city in the world has an identified flea market where hawkers can peddle their wares. Why is the Meghalaya Government taking forty years to identify such a place? And if after having identified the place and developed it, the hawkers refuse to move there then I believe the Government needs to get tough and ensure that the footpaths are cleared of hawkers. And in this there can be no communal divide. A hawker is a hawker whether he/she is tribal or non-tribal. The same sets of laws should apply in both cases.

I guess by now people know my politics. I have no patience for Leftist ideologies that have failed across the world but are sought to be enforced in this lawless state. I believe in the rule of law and anyone who contravenes that rule of law ought to be punished. If individuals and groups are allowed to violate the rule of law then anarchy will prevail. There is already a certain level of anarchy in Meghalaya and I have pointed out the reasons why. We need a strong government that can enforce the rule of law and not be intimidated by larger than life pressure groups/ activists.

"Modi US visit : Reasonably productive" (ST, June 1, 2016). PM Modi's whirlwind five-nation tour appears to have got off to a good start. Travelling five nations in 140 hours and meeting various diplomats and signing numerous deals and delivering one of the finest speeches in the U.S. reveals the fact that Modi is intent on making India strong on the international front. He is touring many nations to uplift our economy and in turn to improve the quality of life in India. Strengthening ties with selected countries is the hall mark of our PM and this will benefit India strategically. He has raised India's profile immensely and made it a trading partner for every country in the world. Ocean economy, space cooperation, cyber security and nuclear commerce are some of the important issues to be discussed at international platforms. It is hard to believe, how PM can manage so much work, so many trips, so many meetings at international level. Modi is a true Indian, working tirelessly to do the best for the country and the people and deserves our compliments.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Via email

PM's whirlwind tour

Editor,
This refers to your article

Distance Education In The Not Too Distant Future

By Ananya S Guha

The other day when the board class ten results were declared a neighbour mentioned that her domestic help's daughter had failed her examinations and the father beat the girl up. This probably happens in India regularly one way or the other. Beating up the girl child is not new. I was affected by the statement as the question of examinations and 'failures' needs to be properly addressed. Education is not very cheap in private schools, and all government schools are considered by parents to be 'not up to the mark.' In this case it is a private school of dubious quality, but the parents must have had a difficult time funding the education of the child in this case. The mother is a domestic worker, and the father is a mechanic in a garage on a part time basis. Now in this situation what are the means and ends for the child, where the ambience is not at all suited for learning, where the younger brothers were once victims of child trafficking; where getting beaten up by parents is a regular affair. Life must be as bad as hell for the children, and the parents who hardly have time to look after their children, and also schools such as these pay the teachers a pittance, in turn teaching is poor. The teachers may not be qualified or trained teachers either.

Failure in examinations is a shame in our society. The stigma of 'drop outs' is another problematic aspect of education and its dynamics. How do we

promotion. Educational policies, must take into account literacy, school education, higher education and also the opportunities provided by open and distance learning which is still considered by many to be second rate. They do not understand the technological nuances of open and distance learning, student management there and the chances it gives to address failure in schools and college, as well as to give fresh opportunities to the much maligned 'drop outs'. Why do such people drop out is the question, in the social and economic matrix. For example does everyone know that the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India allows school drop outs without a ten plus two certificate to do graduation, after undertaking a six months preparatory programme, in commerce or the humanities, with an alternative in mathematics? How many know that the same university offers Associate Studentship up to 32 credits, that is four courses, for students who might have missed out on a subject say, Economics in college? True the end of education is a Degree, but the bias towards it must also be challenged, for the sake of deriving sheer pleasure in learning.

The teacher's task at whatever level is to engage with students, whether by teaching, guidance or counselling. If the responsibility comes to a halt in the classroom, then any teaching or for that

The University offers a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education for college or university teachers, or those who desire to be so, in the form of very practically oriented academic programmes.

redress such problems? Vocational education is yet to get the impetus it deserves. Even now, although educational boards in India have vocational streams at the plus two levels, the 'elitist' students are in the sciences, commerce and then the humanities. Vocational means the world of dirt, repair, smudges and garages. Prior certification of skills is not thought of, and this is an imperative in the unorganised sectors. The linking up of Industrial Training Institutes with vocational courses in conventional education is an absolute necessity. The point is that there should be no hair splitting between 'vocational and professional, 'the latter largely meaning management, law, computer sciences or engineering sciences. What is 'professional' depends on the needs and skills of the learner, whether it is cognitive or students endowed with practical skills. With all this talk about skills education, we have to enunciate and adopt a larger framework in the country for students who may not be intellectually oriented or gifted, but possess skills in practically applied work.

Education is still fragmented into primary, secondary, tertiary, higher education and so on. It is the duty of every educator to think holistically in terms of education, and the linkages between school education, higher education and training of teachers. True there are refresher and orientation courses for college and university teachers in India, but these are done perforce to obtain certificates for the next

matter learning will suffer from a gap or a hiatus, where the transaction is two way and didactic. Distance and Open Learning attempts to make this learner- centred, rather than teacher -centred, where the experience of teaching is not self congratulatory. I have delivered a brilliant lecture today- but how many have understood it, how do we follow it up for the 'weaker' student?

The thinking that education is a linear progression is based on false premises. The very student who does outstandingly at the Masters or the Research levels, also studied at school and will probably reminisce fondly upon his or her school teacher than some of the university or college teachers. On the face of it education has to do with the head, but it is also the heart as well. If we can work linkages and clear logical connections between school/ basic education, literacy, higher education, and distance education, then we will have holistic references to education. Again the example of the Indira Gandhi National Open University! The University offers a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education for college or university teachers, or those who desire to be so, in the form of very practically oriented academic programmes.

We are tired of listening to statistics. The common one is - out of the 25 percent eligible for higher education, only thirteen can actually get admission into colleges. Seats are too less. In the not so distant future distance education both at school and college should take over the reins of education.

“Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night.”
--- Edgar Allan Poe

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 305 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2016

Time for Modi to speak up!

THE plight of Khasi people who are citizens of Bangladesh for all practical purposes and who have been living in their ancestral land at Nahar Punji of Srimangal Upazila in Moulvi Bazar for over 75 years has suddenly turned controversial. These 700 families have been issued eviction notices by the Dhaka Administration. It is not known why this has happened suddenly unless it is a reaction to India's recent decision to hasten the sealing of borders with Bangladesh, especially in the Assam and West Bengal sector. After the BJP-led Government took over the reins of government in Assam, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has been making this issue of sealing the border with Bangladesh a top priority of his Government. Recently Sonowal has said that the latest technology would be adopted to seal the India-Bangladesh border. The BJP is fulfilling its poll promises to the people of Assam. However, this was step was expected to generate adverse reactions and repercussions from across the border. Unfortunately, this time those who are paying the price are the kith and kin of the Khasi people of Meghalaya.

In 2006-06, the Bangladesh based Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) had conducted a study on the Khasis residing in 11 Upazilas of the greater Sylhet District in the Northeastern region of Bangladesh. According to the government census of 1991, the Khasi population in Bangladesh is 12,973. However, there is a lot of controversy over this number. The existing accounts of different sources show a discrepancy as well. It is in this context that the SEHD conducted a socio-economic survey of the Khasi people which has come out in the form of a book - The Khasis of Bangladesh: A socio-economic survey of the Khasi people. The Khasis of Bangladesh have always lived in villages called punjis. These punjis are normally located on the hillocks. There are 85 Khasi punjis in Bangladesh. SEHD conducted the survey with the involvement and cooperation of Greater Sylhet Indigenous People's Forum (GSIPF). The report presents a brief history of the Khasi people and important information on their present status, population, social system, education, livelihoods, etc. Up until the time of the study there was no controversy about the fact that the Khasi people in Bangladesh are full- fledged citizens of that country and are part of its socio-economic statistics. How have they suddenly become aliens now? This is an issue that Prime Minister Modi needs to immediately take up with his counterpart Sheikh Hasina Wajed, provided he is sufficiently briefed on this issue.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Centre asks Mahanta to hold talks with ABSU

The Centre today urged the Assam government to initiate a "dialogue" with the All Assam Bodo Students Union which has launched an agitation for a separate state according to home ministry sources. The Bodo agitation was the high point of the discussions Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta had with home minister Buta Singh. Mr. Buta Singh stressed that the State Government should urgently initiate a dialogue with the dissatisfied sections for mutual confidence building. Mr. Mahanta who was assisted by State Home Minister Bhriгу Phukan, agreed with Buta Singh that the strategy of maintaining peace and launching a political initiative should go hand in hand. Reviewing the situation arising from the Bodo agitation. Mr Mahanta

thanked the Centre for readily responding to the State's request for Cetral forces. Accordingly, eight Central Reserve Police force battalions have been dispatched. **B'desh bill for tribal autonomy** Dhaka, A Legislative Bill was introduced in Parliament tonight to grant limited autonomy to the tribal people in the three trouble Hills Districts in South Eastern Bangladesh. Prime Minister Mr Ahmed who introduced the bill in the house said this historic step would bring about a political solution to the outstanding problems facing the tribal people in the Chittagong hill tracts, The introduction of the Bill was a clear manifestation of the Ershad government's sincere will to settle the tribal issue once for all, he added.

Ranking scam jolts Nitish Kumar's image

By Arun Srivastava

In the land of scams, yet another scam, and this time the "rank scam" has surfaced with a bang. A caucus of politicians, bureaucrats and unscrupulous businessmen has been running the show for some years now. The unscrupulous activities of the caucus or education mafia in common parlance, might not have come to peoples' knowledge, if the rank scam was not exposed. The operation of the caucus would start at the admission level when they lure the students with the promise of a bright job opportunity and a shining future. They would charge a sum of Rs 50,000 from aspiring candidates at the time of admission. In case of girl students, the charge was a bit higher keeping in view the needs of the marriage market. But in some cases the operators were considerate towards the girl students as educating girls would add to brochures. The caucus controlling the education in Bihar ensured that the Intermediate merit lists in Bihar were manipulated. They have been working in a systematic manner for at least six years to deny the genuine meritorious students their due. There is no denying the fact that the clout and the grip of the caucus on the education department became more firm and effective after launching of the Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan. The scheme provided them with the right ambience and opportunity to loot the exchequer on the plea of empowering poor, especially the women, the core group of Nitish Kumar. Though the government statistics claim that the state has performed miracle in making not less than 70 per cent of the children literate the latest expose, the "rank scam", makes it explicit that the claims are not based on facts and are indeed dubious in nature and content. The scam might not have been exposed had the 13 rank holders in Arts and Science streams of Bihar

Board not appeared before an expert's team for authentication of the marks obtained by them in the wake of a media exposes pointing fingers at their merit. Interesting the two toppers Ruby Rai and Saurabh Kumar from Vishnu Rai college failed to answer. Ruby pronounced Political Science as 'Prodigal Science' and described it as a subject related to cooking in a video. Even Saurabh, the science topper, was unaware of electron and proton. Saurabh had secured 485 out of 500 marks. Rai had secured 444 marks out of 500 in the Arts stream

V R College has a 100 per cent result in the Class 12 exams every year. Students from rural areas and from lower middle class backgrounds, seek admission to the college. The college is managed by Baccha Rai, a person close to Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar and Union Minister Giriraj Singh. The officials of Bihar School Examination Board confess that all 1,007 students of the college secured first class in the Class 12 exam. This is amazing. Significantly 222 of them got identical marks. In fact last year, the BSEB was forced to review the results of the college following uproar over 200 Class 12 science students writing identical answers. The picture of Bachcha Rai with Nitish Kumar sparked fresh buzz about the scam-accused principal's wide-ranging political connections. Incidentally all the top politicians have been trying to disown him, but the fact remains that he is the product of the political system of the state. The modus operandi of the owner Bachcha Rai has been quite simple. He would befriend the chairman of the BSEB and he in turn would do all the leg works for Rai. Even the inquiry committee set up earlier gave a clean chit to the college. Former BSEB chairman A K P Yadav said the results of college were stayed five to six years ago after questions were raised in the Bihar assembly over its students' high scores. In fact over a dozen politicians are in this business. Former minister

and strongman RJD MLA Surender Yadav owns two colleges in Gaya district. Another former RJD MLA Mahesh Singh Yadav runs an unaided private college in Gaya. Several BJP, JD-U , RJD, Congress and Lok Janshakti Party leaders own unaided private colleges in the state. They use their political clout and connection to promote their education business. After this controversy, Bihar Education Minister Ashok Choudhary admitted to the presence of an 'education mafia' in the state. Last year, 459 of 463 students of the SNNR College in Begusarai district and 582 of 601 students of the BRS Mahila College in Samastipur district got a first class. All 127 students of the Iraki Girls Intermediate School in Nawada district and 63 students of the St Teresa Balika High School in Bettiah district scored a first class. The numbers of students with high scores from such colleges saw a significant rise after Bihar government linking students' performance to funding. It was a part of the government's decision to provide incentives to unaided schools and colleges, but the scheme was misused. Under the scheme an unaided private college gets Rs 4,000 annually for every candidate securing a first class, Rs 3,500 for every second class result and Rs 3,000 for third class results. Of the 63 students who made it to the Intermediate Arts merit list in the last three years (2014-16), only one is from Patna. During the same period, just six students of the state capital made it to the Intermediate Science toppers' list which comprised of 80 students in all. In Intermediate Commerce out of 45 only 11 were from Patna. Unaided private colleges mushrooming across the state are experts in ensuring high scores for their students. Many times, the same college produces state toppers in all subjects. Most of the private colleges are managed by powerful leaders from different political parties. After the exposure of the scam Bachha Rai surrendered to the police. Police has registered

TO THE EDITOR

Of hawkers and the law

Editor, You said in the article titled "Hawkers may have rights but what about responsibilities?" (ST June 17, 2016) that, "If individuals and groups are allowed to violate the rule of law then anarchy will prevail." Here's the deal. Brutality from the police and the municipal is in direct violation of an Act called The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 of the Indian Government. Illegal imposition of fines, confiscation of goods and not to mention the usage of filthy language by representatives of the Government, is an everyday reality for hawkers. You say they are the culprits behind the congestion and pollution in Shillong? Well, the way I see it, roads are made bigger for vehicles and space is also devoured by the rampant construction of buildings, particularly huge commercial complexes. Who is Shillong slowly being designed for? People with vehicles? The private sector? You ask us to take a walk around Lewduh, well, I actually do that on an everyday basis yet I don't encounter any problem whatsoever with regards to space. In fact, since I'm one of those who come home very late, as a woman, I feel even safer walking through those hawker-filled lanes since they are never dark and deserted. By the way, the aforementioned law also specifies that street vendors cannot be evicted from natural markets (of which Lewduh is one). Furthermore, it is truly a bad idea for hawkers to set up shops near my house like you suggested, because my locality is unfortunately not commercial and hence, would not be profitable for them. So, as much as I would want them to come and give me company, I doubt they'd agree since they have a livelihood to be concerned about and not mingle with us in our "socialist" homes. And excuse me but blaming hawkers for polluting the streets is just plain absurd. Most of the waste in commercial areas comes from big shops and I know for a fact that hawkers get their respective spaces cleaned every day. The waste issue in the world would exist with or without hawkers. It is more about the disposal of waste that we should be thinking of

and the consumption patterns of our society. Just because waste is not visibly there, doesn't mean it isn't a problem. The Pacific Ocean, as we know, is full of waste materials from the United States, massively destroying the fauna and flora of that environment. The only thing that the middle and upper-middle class of Meghalaya could think of is the sight of Shillong as a smart city which, in case you weren't aware, feeds on extractive industries and not to mention, is a perfect manifestation of class segregation. What is often forgotten is that hawkers are service-providers who are part of the informal sector, and they heavily contribute to the economy of the state. I don't know about you, but I like my vegetables, junk food, fruits, kwai and cigarettes straight from the streets. So it's not only a case of hawkers needing us but us needing them more. What I urge you to do is to please go through the National Act that I referred to which clearly states that a Town Vending Committee needs to be formed in each locality to carry out surveys and finally decide on vending regulations, including waste. In fact section 34 of the Act states that the Committee needs to look into the capacity

Analyzing the Assam election results

By Kishor Kumar Kalita

Though many have argued with different connotations and auguries, but finally the term 'Change or Parvartan' made the remarkable pathway for an incredible election victory for BJP and its allies. Except that the vision document promulgated by the Bhatratiya Janata Party and the allies did not assert any specific policy or programmes as a promise in their election rally. Therefore, it may be presumed that the political diction campaigned metaphorically for regime change had a deeper impact on the electorate that eventually threw away the enduring Congress rule from the state. Moreover, apart from mesmerizing the common electorate with an euphonious word, this election has proved the efficacious role of some non-traditional element,i.e. the role of both media and social media and also established some contemporaneous hypothesis that were spread across through different formal and non-formal instruments. The Myth of Change: The eradication of Congress rule from the state can be analyzed as a result of a desperate wish of the common people to be emancipated from non-governance and misrule that have been in practice for the last couple of years. The tradition of unabated corruption prevailing in every sphere of governance, hegemony of a particular group of people in overall state politics and above all irresponsible attitude shown by the minister and bureaucrats in last three consecutive terms made the Congress rule bitter for the masses. This has developed a countervailing opposition towards the Congress government and eventually people wanted the total removal of such malpractices by replacing the government with a new one under which they can respire openly. In such a context, the term 'change' embodies nothing but a window, through which people could exert for air and thereby save themselves from drowning in doom. Presumably, the common electorate hardly considers the quality and transparency of the new government before casting their vote for a regime change. The 29.5% electorate that exercised their franchise for regime change just wanted a pragmatic government which instead of looking for their own benefit would give attention to public welfare. Religious Polarization: Two undisputed common apprehensions, the first one is the rapid demographic change occurring in the state due to the unabated infiltration from neighboring Bangladesh, particularly the Muslims and other one is the gradual increase of the numbers of Muslim dominated seats in the state politics, have been in the public discourse for a long time. It is the topic of discussion and debate by different actors to raise the issue of minorization of the indigenous people of the state. The result of the last Assembly election has literally disapproved the last apprehension of the local indigenous people of becoming minority both in the context of language and ethnicity. This has been totally subdued by the visible aggression of Hindutva campaign which gives little space to sub-nationalism and issues of ethnic identity. It would be worthwhile to mention about the State Language Movement in 1960, immediately after which the indigenous people of the state expressed their integrated stand against the Bengali aggression and strongly mobilized the demand of expulsion of all illegal Bangladeshi infiltrator irrespective of their religion. The assurance of conferring citizenship right to the Bengali Hindu infiltrators by the BJP just before the last election has diluted the above- mentioned stand and virtually marginalized the issue. If the Congress party does not represent the indigenous people of the state irrespective of their language, religion or ethnicity concern and similarly if the AIUDF is considered as a political front that gives space only to the Muslim minority, then the counted 34.2% Muslim population of the state (according to the 2011 census) can hold religious domination only in 40 seats (this time the Congress and the AIUDF party has succeeded in 26 and 13 sits respectively). In contrast to this equation the non-Muslim population of the state, which includes Bengali speaking Hindu refugees, Assamese speaking Hindus, Bihari, Marwari, Sikh, Christian, Bodo, Rabha, Adivasi Tea community etc still can affirm at least 86 seats in their favor. This makes it clear that the threat to the non-Muslims in respect of retaining political dominance over in the electorate politics is nothing but a created myth that was intentionally mobilized by different spin doctors to arouse the sentiments of non-Muslim voters. However, the Muslim vote was not consolidated and strategically no clear attempt was made to do the same. The result has established the fact that if there had been a pre-designed policy to consolidate Muslim vote against the BJP led alliance, then the alliance would have lost a number of seats due to such consolidation. But the idea was not in practice. Rather, a good number of Muslims stood for BJP in many constituencies and thus proved the said consternation as a fabricated one. Though both the AGP and BPF have captured important stakes in the present government, the compromise they have made with the BJP may invite wretched consequences in near future. The AGP came to power riding on a wave of Assamese sub-nationalism that was remarkably inclusionary; its appeal was not only to the Assamese speaking population- among whom their support appears to be near-total-but to many segments of Assam's diverse population. But unfortunately this regional party has gradually lost its inclusionary character and within a period of thirty years of its formation reduced to a party of an exclusive nature. Instead of creating more spaces in the regional politics, the party made electoral alliance with the BJP in 2001 Assembly election and thereby provided the saffron party insidious access to the affairs of state. The AGP could not escape from the harm emanating from this alliance which eventually displaced the party from the position of a big brother to a non-existent little brother. On the other hand the strategy adopted by the BPF, always to get engaged with an alliance that has the maximum possibility of government formation may topple its own existence in the BTAD.Seemingly, the Bharatiya Janata party, which holds a strong notion of greater nationhood and centralized political structure, would try their best to degenerate the influence of the regional political entities and eventually recede the spirit of regionalism. How the regional parties of the state at this juncture would maintain their strength and existence, is a matter of great concern. (The author is a practicing advocate in Gauhati High Court)

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.

Internet Saathi programme has transformed lives of women through digital education.

Somrita Ghosh tries to find more about it

Twenty-five-year-old Kamlesh Kumari, a resident of Sirmathura village in Dholpur district of Rajasthan, is deeply engrossed with a tab, searching for child healthcare tips while her four-month-old daughter sleeps on her lap. Educated till Class 8, Kamlesh craves for knowledge. With mobile phone internet in the village, she has now found a new ray of hope for gaining that knowledge. A confident Kamlesh not just surfs the internet but also teaches other women in the village how to leverage the web.

Google India's digital educative initiative, Internet Saathi, under Helping Women Get Online campaign has been transforming lives of many women like Kamlesh in the villages of Dholpur. The internet, which seemed a distant dream to village women, is now just a touch away.

"The usage of the internet among women in India is lower than most countries in the world. Only one-third of India's online users are women. This gender disparity of internet user base was the big concern that we wanted to address," said Sapna Chadha, marketing head of Google India.

"We launched an initiative called Helping Women Get Online that was aimed at encouraging women to use the Internet in their daily life," Chadha told IANS.

While the Internet users are growing at 56 percent, the growth rate of women Internet users is only 27 percent in rural India. Through Internet Saathi, Google aims to bridge the gender divide in technology which currently puts women in rural India at further risk of getting marginalised in society.

Internet Saathi, which was started in 2015, has now reached around 4,000 villages with 1,900 trained 'saathis'. Google is adding up to 500 additional 'saathis' per week. More than 100,000 women have been trained so far. Under this initiative, Google conducts various outreach and educational programmes.

Not just Kamlesh, the initiative has brought changes in the lives of many other



Helping women get online

women, like Gayatri Devi who has been a 'saathi' since November 2015.

"I never had the oppor-

educate women so that they can earn their livelihood," said Gayatri.

The programme includes

trained over 1.5 million women on the basics of the internet.

Internet Saathi sends women out on bicycles, armed with a smartphone and a tablet, to let women in villages experience the net.

"We're already seeing this change come about through the Internet Saathi programme. The internet saathis have become change agents in each village -- they take a lot of pride in helping other women to learn the Internet. Their social status has improved drastically and they are well respected even by the men of their families and the village heads," Chadha

said.

Mother of two children, 28-year-old Aarti Jagon has been an Internet Saathi since November 2015. She is now an expert in the Internet and has taught around 450 women of the village how to use it.

"From healthcare and hygiene to cooking and design, I have learned a lot from the Internet and I am now teaching other women. I am grateful to the initiative for making me self-dependent," beamed Aarti, adding that she now earns Rs 2,000 per month for her contribution towards the initiative.

One of the key reasons for low adoption of Internet among women in rural India was low awareness. Moreover, there were hurdles like affordability, social norms and low literacy rates.

"Their inhibition to use a computer was very high but the smartphones' friendly appeal and ease of use have made it easier for them to try it. In order to drive broader access and continuity in

usage after the training, Internet-enabled devices like tablets and smartphones are also placed within the school premises, community centres, self-help group meeting venues, agriculture centres, PHCs and the like for optimum exposure and learning among the community," Chadha explained.

In the last 10 months, Google India has been active in villages across five states in India, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and is expanding the programme to four new states -- Assam, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

"We provide the devices and the training material to the 'saathis' and train them. The final roll out of the programme which comprises members of self-help groups and women's federations is overseen and facilitated by Tata Trusts through its field partners on ground," said Chadha.

With local women trainers, the Internet Saathi has been successful as it ensures continuity in the process of learning and imparting hands-on training to women and children in villages, making it a highly scalable and sustainable programme.

(The writer was on a visit to Dholpur on an invitation from Google India. She can be contacted at somrita.g@ians.in)

Outsourcing brains to phones

Suddenly realized that when I wash food by holding it under the horrible yellow water that comes out of my tap I am really just adding an extra dose of carcinogens.

Funny how we do things without thinking.

Case in point: A reader sent me a news report about an unobservant man who collected the wrong child from school. Joseph Fuller, 65, intended to pick up his grandson, but took an unrelated boy home instead. The child confirmed to school staff that the old man was his grandfather before going off with him.

Fuller's wife made him take the child back to the school in the US state of South Carolina.

This lends weight to the theory that these days we drift through our days using our prehensile brain stems, with our actual cerebral matter switched off.

Example: The day before writing this, this columnist was amazed to see ducks flying, having forgotten that it's chickens which cannot fly.

Correction. A colleague who grew up on a farm tells me that chickens can fly if you throw them in the air hard enough.

But then one could argue that EVERYTHING can fly if you throw it hard enough, including pigs, elephants, buildings and the like.

But anyway, the mental dozziness epidemic seems to be real and it seems to

b e disguise world-wide. themselves. At a court in P a k i - as overpriced s t a n g i f t shops recently, or over-

picking up the grenade in question and pulling the pin. Fortunately he was not seriously injured in the ensuing explosion, although the judge was knocked off his chair.

Everything said or done in a court is really important so you have to be careful. A lawyer once told me he was in a court where people kept talking, so the judge said: "The next person who speaks will be thrown out." "Hallelujah," shouted the prisoner.

Scientists say the problem is that we have outsourced the work of the brain to our phones. It's worth remembering that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone but refused to have one in his study, saying that no intelligent person would want one around when they were trying to work.

Social media makes us particularly stupid. Every day we see people announcing that a Facebook quiz had determined that they are intelligent/cool/not a moron -- without realising that their decision to give credence to a Facebook quiz proves the exact opposite.

Last year Beatles drummer Ringo Starr did a Facebook quiz called Which Beatle Are You? And it told him he was John Lennon. Serves him right.

One day last week I had no phone for a whole day and walked through the world noticing all sorts of intriguing and curious things. For example, why do soldiers on duty in airports wear green camouflage gear? Shouldn't they

b e disguise world-wide. themselves. At a court in P a k i - as overpriced s t a n g i f t shops recently, or over-

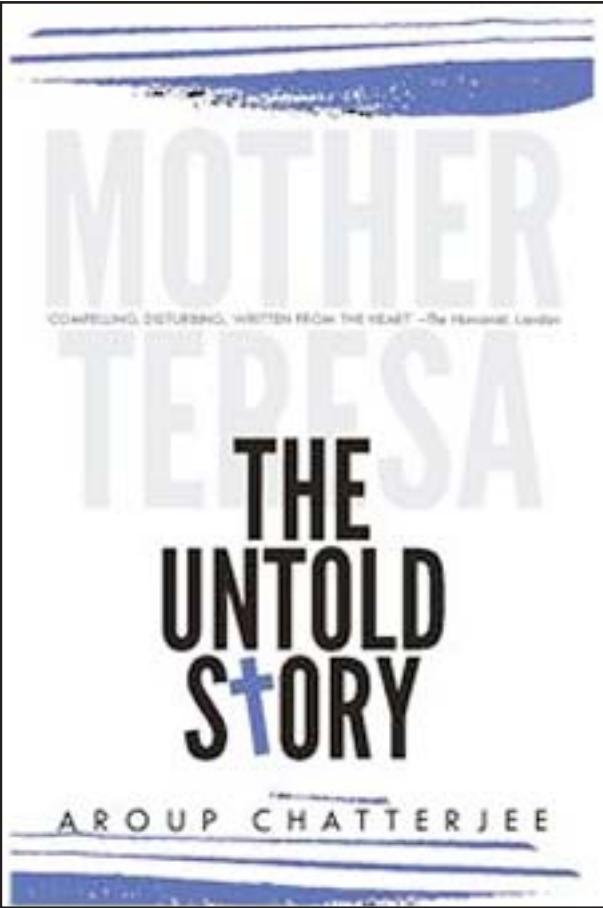
b e disguise world-wide. themselves. At a court in P a k i - as overpriced s t a n g i f t shops recently, or over-

weight tourists? And why do we wash food in dirty water to clean it? And is the girl I picked up from school really my daughter? She seems bigger than when I last really looked at her.

By Vishnu Makhijani

Mother Teresa's planned sainthood is in an "uncharted" place as the miracle attributed to her was denied by the so-called cured person, says Britain-based author Aroup Chatterjee, whose work on the Albanian-born nun questions the very basis of her work in the City of Joy, for which

in an uncharted place as a retraction or denial of a 'miracle' by the 'cured' has never before happened in



she received the Nobel Peace Prize. "Mother's sainthood is

the history of the Catholic Church," Kolkata-born Chatterjee, who describes

himself as a "militant atheist", writes in an updated version of "Mother Teresa - The Untold Story" that was released in the eastern metropolis recently.

The reference is to Monica Besra, a tribal living in a remote village about 500 km from Calcutta (as the author consistently refers to the city rather than the renamed Kolkata). It was claimed that on September 6, 1998, a day after the first anniversary of Mother Teresa's death, she had been cured of a massive tumour after two nuns tied on her body an aluminium medal that had been in contact with the Mother's dead body, and prayed all night.

Soon after Mother Teresa's beatification on October 19, 2003, Besra challenged the miracle and said she was cured by medicine.

After the retraction, Chatterjee, a London-based physician writes, he sent messages to the postulator of Mother Teresa's cause, Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, "asking how the Vatican would deal with this conundrum. I suggested that they should start afresh with a new 'miracle'."

But, says the author, "de-

spite the unprecedented rejection of the miracle by the 'cured' and by every other quarter, including doctors and the government, the Vatican gave two fingers to Indian opinion and secretly proceeded with canonisation."

In December 2015, the Vatican announced that Mother Teresa was well on her way to becoming a saint in September 2016 as a second 'miracle' was proven -- a Brazilian man had been cured of brain tumour/abscess when his wife is said to have prayed to her.

"As I had expected, this time they chose a different hemisphere and a different continent. Also, the identity of the cured will be kept a secret till the last moment, though the 'cure' happened in 2008. The Vatican does not want to repeat the mistakes it made with Besra," Chatterjee writes.

He also says that the selection process for the Nobel Peace Prize is "deeply flawed" and being opaque and beyond criticism has made it even more susceptible to influences.

"Although the Peace Prize has had some worthy recipients, especially the institutional ones...I believe the award is deeply flawed.



Mother Teresa accepting the Nobel Peace Prize. (A filer photo)

Being opaque and beyond criticism has made it even more susceptible to influences. I am not convinced that it has an effective fact-checking machinery either, as its methods are somewhat quaint," Chatterjee says.

He notes in this context

that Mother Teresa's year of birth is one the few things in her life "that is not shrouded in mythology, but the Nobel Committee has got that wrong".

"In one of their main official handouts, given to institutions about various peace laureates, it is given as 1914 when it should be

1910," Chatterjee writes.

"The Peace Committee is now on an over-correction drive and is desperately seeking out non-white and non-Christian recipients. The sentiment is well-meaning, but flawed. Some worthy people have got the prize (such as Malala Yousafzai and Shirin Ebadi)

but mostly recipients have been non-worthy, such as Wangari Maathai and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf," he writes.

So, how did the book, first published in 2003, come about?

"If anything, I was positively inclined toward her. But, by 1988, three years after (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career in Insurance-II

Many people are reluctant to join insurance career because they think they have to be only selling policies and remain as a sales person. Sales is a necessary element, however insurance is a service everyone needs hence many people may make their career in insurance sector. We thank our readers for their feedback and question related to insurance. After talking to different individuals we could feel that many people are not aware of some institutions which are related to insurance. In this edition we are publishing about some institutes which are related to insurance sector.

Insurance Institute of India: The Insurance Institute of India formerly known as Federation of Insurance Institutes (J.C. Setalvad Memorial) was established in the year 1955, for the purpose of promoting Insurance Education & Training in the country. Institute qualifications are held in esteem both by the regulator and the industry. In its role as an leading education and training provider I.I.I. is closely associated with all the segments of the insurance industry which includes Insurance regulatory authority of India, public and private sector insurance companies.

National Insurance Academy: National Insurance Academy (NIA) is a premier institution devoted to equip the insurance industry with the best of talents. Its close association with the Insurance industry provides the 'real life'

reference to its training, education, research and consultancy activities. NIA was established in 1980 jointly by the Ministry of Finance - Government of India, Life Insurance Corporation of India, General Insurance Corporation of India, The New India Assurance Company, National Insurance Company, United India Insurance Company and The Oriental Insurance Company on 16th December, 1980 in Mumbai to be the institute of excellence in learning and research in Insurance, Pension and allied areas. The Academy was shifted to Pune on 4th June, 1990 with the state-of-the-art facilities for learning and research.

IRDA: Following the recommendations of the Malhotra Committee report, in 1999, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) was constituted as an autonomous body to regulate and develop the insurance industry. The IRDA was incorporated as a statutory body in April, 2000. The key objectives of the IRDA include promotion of competition so as to enhance customer satisfaction through increased consumer choice and lower premiums, while ensuring the financial security of the insurance market.

There are ample opportunities in the field of insurance and hence young people from our region may try to get involved in the sector for a vibrant career. One must plan well and choose the

profession as initially its challenging. The best part is people with less academic qualification may excel in insurance sector as agents or consultants and earn good amount of money.

Updates: NEET: Students may appear in NEET 2 who has not appeared in AIPMT or NEET 1 which was held in May. Following the recent Supreme Court order, there will be National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for admission into medical and dental colleges in India. This is organised by CBSE. Exam would be held on 24th July. There will be one paper of 180 objective type questions. Questions will be asked from Physics, Chemistry and Biology and exam duration will be 3 hours. Aspirants may apply on or before 25th June.

Free Online Course on Animation: The National Film & Television School is offering free online course to explore animation. This course doesn't require any existing, specialist animation skills or equipment. In this four course, applicants will learn animation techniques, including stop-motion, 2D, CGI, and pixilation, with award-winning animators. The course will start on June 20, 2016.

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

By Veturi Srivatsa

Once the All India Tennis Association (AITA) decided that it will not deny Leander Paes his record seventh Olympic Games, they had to go with the mixed doubles pairing of Rohan Bopanna and Sania Mirza to make all the three players happy.

AITA can now breathe easy, having experienced how messy things can get four years ago when they could not get Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi to play the men's doubles at the London Games.

Long before the selectors flew into Delhi for the meeting, the decision was already made and it was presented to them as a fait accompli for their ratification, not for any tinkering.

That's precisely the reason Paes stressed more than once before the selectors met that he had full faith in



Anil Khanna

AITA President Anil Khanna, who is not a selector.

Poor chief selector S.P. Misra. He sat next to

For AITA everything revolves around Leander Paes

Khanna at the media briefing without having to say how the pairings were arrived at. Khanna hogged it all, using up as much air time as he could, talking about the rising standards of Indian tennis, mentioning the names of all players he could remember.

He kept saying what a great player Paes is and what his contribution to Indian tennis is, even as he lauded



Bopanna for earning for the country the men's doubles entry by finishing among the top 10, thus making it clear what the Bengulurean did was for the country - not for himself.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) rule has a rider, the doubles players who qualified for Rio on their own steam could choose their partners but the national federation had to approve it. So, both Sania and Bopanna picked their partners and informed AITA in writing and wanted it to be ratified.

Bhupathi, with whom he has had a running battle; Paes is not exactly liked by the younger lot too.

To say Paes is selfish and self-centred is uncharitable. Yes, in the last few years, he is expending all his energies to stay afloat on the circuit with his body not co-operating with his spirit and for good measure he keeps reminding tennis fans what an honour it is for him to play for the Indian flag. Did some other icon say it every now and then?

It was no secret that both Paes and Bopanna wanted to pair up with Sania and both said that was their best chance to win an Olympic medal. To achieve what he exactly set out, Bopanna put a spanner in the works by telling AITA that he would like to partner Saketh Myneni, ranked 125th in doubles a month before reaching his best ranking of 114, though he had just started playing after recovering from a shoulder injury. It was kid stuff, frankly.

Grand Slam title at Roland Garros and in the process completing a career Grand Slam. The authorities were caught in a bind and had to given in to Bopanna and Sania.

To pacify all, AITA, which in the past refused to add a sixth player to the Davis Cup squad, picked a seven-member team to play South Korea in Chandigarh next month to allow Paes to join at his own request. That means he will play doubles with Bopanna.

In the last year or so, AITA exempted Paes from playing in the zonal ties and he himself was not keen because he was on pursuit to collect points to improve his fast crashing doubles ranking.

For ATA, everything revolves around Paes and Khanna thinks if there is any residual acrimony after the selection, Chandigarh is the right place to bring about a working relationship between the two stalwarts.

Will Paes really go to Chandigarh to play? Some say keep your fingers crossed.

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



Needless to mention, given a choice, both Bopanna and Sania would rather not partner Paes and the reasons are public knowledge - the lack of chemistry. It is not only with these two and Mahesh

What did the selectors (Khanna?) do to sort the issue out without seriously hurting anyone? They were firm not to allow the situation to get out of hand like they did before the 2012 London Games.

Bopanna knew AITA had no option if they want Paes to play with him, though it was keen that Paes partnered Sania to have the best shot at a medal, the elder statesman of Indian tennis having won his 10th mixed doubles

Mother Teresa's sainthood and Nobel questioned

(Contd from P-VI) I went to the West, as soon as I mentioned Calcutta, people started talking about her and leprosy, beggars and destitutes, limbless people lying on the street, et cetera," Chatterjee told IANS in an interview.

"I was mystified and perturbed. So I wanted to look into it...still I thought she was a superb lady who was not faultless, but somehow, this image of Calcutta had permeated the world imagery," he said. "I thought it was probably a kind of offshoot or a corollary of her image and it was not her doing."

In 1994, Chatterjee approached the production company of Pakistani British writer Tariq Ali for making a documentary on Mother Teresa and the outcome was the BBC production, "Hell's Angel", presented by journalist and writer Christopher Hitchens. Chatterjee describes it as "the very first attempt to challenge the

Teresa myth on television".

"I obviously thought I won't let go here...let's delve into the lady's activities and all that," Chatterjee said.

The result was an account The Times Higher Education Supplement described as "Necessary, Well-Documented".

"It's a historical document. If in 100 years someone wants to research this woman, they can come to my book, they will have to love her or hate her," Chatterjee said.

How did he anticipate the response to the book's re-release?

"I have to do what I have to do. People have taken so many risks for so many things, it would be cowardly of me to back out," Chatterjee responded.

(The writer can be contacted at vishnu.makhijani@ians.in)



‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, June 19, 2016

Your confidence would get a boost as Moon conjunct Saturn on your solar return chart. Promotion, betterment or switchover can also take place especially if you go looking for one. A novel perspective in present ventures will ensure that the project moves on well-oiled wheels. If there is any plan of diversification or expansion of the same then you would meet with success. During this period you will feel a deep transformation in your attitude towards money and physical possessions as you find that you do not place as much importance on them as you did before. You seek security not so much from physical possessions as through family and friendships.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



Your career, reputation, and public life are influenced by the planetary combination. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this period. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. Reliability and creativity will take you places now. The more willing you are to put yourself in the limelight, the more positive the rewards. You are outgoing and your initiative is stronger than ever. You would brilliantly and effectively handle difficult projects at work. Business associates bring good news and lucrative terms and opportunities.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



Friendship, love, romance and children are highlighted. You would have new attitudes towards family, finance, and social relationships. Home and family matters capture your attention and are a strong source of pride. It is a time when worldly matters are not as important to you. Use this energy to find ways to improve your interpersonal relations and your home and work environment. You might be a bit of a showman at this time. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and for joining new courses to improve your professional skills and efficiency.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)



With communication, creativity and judgment you gain money and influence in business ventures. Success brings status and respect as you dominate the professional scene. This is the right time to participate in community events and share views, ideas and feelings with people around you. This phase brings rewards and recognition in your professional life. You would also work hard with an inclination towards more detailed work, and it can get to you at times. Personal projects are on an upswing. You are in a position to inspire others through what you create.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)



A period of hard work and effort is in your forecast. You would be taking on new responsibilities and will enjoy the challenges. A new set-up in an existing home or a new home altogether may be part of the picture in the coming weeks. There will also be a sense of renewal and reinvigoration with regard to your domestic routines, comfort, and feeling of security. This is a phase when you have an increased awareness of your need for a solid foundation—a place to return to when the rest of the world gets to you. Do not isolate yourself when you are feeling down. Friends and loved ones will support you and listen to you when you air your feelings.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



Practical matters come into strong focus and demand attention. An opportunity to expand on a global level arrives now. You would have more energy for work and your daily routine tend to speed up now. You are required to do a balancing act, and something big is in the pipeline. There may be some confusion about your dreams and ideas regarding your career. Give yourself time to digest everything before you make a move. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, especially in the company of a loved one. You instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Increased energy for health routines and work is with you.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



There may be debates and discussions in family and you may face some opposition. You are likely to exert your energy and initiative into actively pursuing a rewarding love life, social amusement, and pleasure in general. You have

a likeable and competitive temperament. There is a stronger desire for creative endeavors, athletics and risk-taking pursuits. It might be hard for you to work with others in a harmonious manner and a few conflicts are possible. You especially enjoy games that involve competing with others on a mental level. You have a stronger need than usual for intellectual stimulation.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



This phase brings good-luck for love and romance. Ego confrontations with family members are possible now, but the best way to handle this is to do your best to strengthen your relationship with your family and your home base. This is a time to do what you can to build trust in your family life and a strong foundation within yourself, so that regardless of what you meet in the outside world over the next weeks, you have a secure place to return to. Besides spending more time tending to domestic affairs, the focus can be on cultivating and nourishing your inner foundation that support you and your growth.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



Associates at work might find you less sociable, as you are busier than ever and you focus on your activities and your needs. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you status. You can improve your love life by bringing more understanding and sharing views with each other. You are more inclined to seek a broad understanding of people and of your immediate environment. Concentrating on listening, connecting, communicating, and learning is your best bet now.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



This period brings new horizons in your romantic and love life. You explore and search, make new connections, and pay attention to your immediate environment. Give other people a little extra time and attention, notice their efforts on your behalf, and strengthen your connections. You are more curious and alert than usual, and you could be quite busy with work. Much energy is expended in understanding and adapting to your immediate environment. Siblings, neighbours, close relatives, friends, and co-workers may play a more important role than usual in your life. You are eager to investigate new things, whether scientific or technical.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



The planetary configuration promotes your luck in work related areas. You would be especially fond of home and family life. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental now. Loyalty and sensitivity in your relationships are more important to you. There would be a bright opportunity to travel, learning or the publishing of a project. Getting your finances on track will be necessary at this time. Do your best to avoid letting emotions rule over good judgment when it comes to expenses and other financial matters. Share your thoughts and feelings with others and you may be surprised at the support you receive from close friends and loved ones.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



Pay close attention to performance, it will be rewarded and continuity to perform work would be visible to senior colleagues and people in authority. You will have the ability to build up financial and monetary pursuits and can expect good returns from overseas business. 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. There may be a development of romance at your work place. You turn your attention on fitness and diet programs.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



There would be happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening of your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background. Your dreams and ideas about intimacy come into focus, but could also bring the flaws in this area of your life to light. An income boost is likely in this period. This is a phase when you have an increased awareness of the physical world of the senses, and this is a time to start fresh in terms of how you arrange your life in order to feel a sense of value and worthiness. It is also a wonderful time for taking moments to please yourself through earthy, tactile, and comforting endeavours.

The key to realizing a dream is to focus not on success but significance - and then even the small steps and little victories along your path will take on greater meaning.

--- Oprah Winfrey

The Shillong Times

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Changes in civil aviation policy

THE new civil aviation policy of the Government of India introduces welcome changes. Some of them are major, some minor. The most-criticised 'S/20' clause has been done away with. Steps should be taken to abolish the requirement for having operated for five years to fly overseas or having at least 20 aircraft to be able to offer such services. The two clauses in question enabled existing private airlines to operate where new entrants could not. The policy also tries to improve regional connectivity to help domestic consumers. Minister of Civil Aviation Gajapathi Raju rightly calls it the "centre-piece of the new policy". But there still are a lot of drawbacks. The government has rightly decided to invest in developing 50 no-frills airports to serve "unserved" areas mostly flying planes linking up 2-tier and 3-tier cities to promote connectivity. But there is a price ceiling of Rs 2,500 for a one-hour flight. The government has offered to subsidise private airlines if the fare exceeds the fixed ceiling. The subsidy can come only from a fresh cess imposed by the government. Investments in infrastructure are welcome but not arbitrary price curbs and bureaucratic interference.

What the government should do is to clear the way for entrepreneurs to move into the civil aviation sector removing all manner of hurdles. Steps should be taken to minimise anti-competitive practices among individual airlines. The government has gone a few steps forward but there is still a long way to go to remove all shortcomings.

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Confrontation not yet

The Bodo agitation in Assam has lately been taking a menacing turn. The 120-hour bandh called by the leading faction of the All-Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) commencing from 5 A.M. on Feb. 16 bids fair to thoroughly paralysis normal life in a strategic area of the north-eastern region and that for a long and continuous spell of days, the longest ever given to such bands for a show of strength. What adds a degree of grimness to the whole prospect is that yet a seemingly more extremist organization, the United Tribal Nationalists Liberation Front (UTNLF), has also decided to observe a bandh for during the same period, not necessarily in conflict with the other bandh planned by the ABSU. And, as for the third Bodo organization which is the oldest of all the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) also cannot afford to be totally unconcerned about the impending massive demonstration it having itself also organized on its own similar bandhs earlier on almost identical demands.

What is really disturbing is that a section of the agitationists impatient of the almost deliberate unwillingness on the part of the authorities to respond meaningfully to the tribal demands, has lately launched upon a violent course which should make the authorities and the concerned public alike seriously at thinking. The AGP government, its Home Minister Mr Bhriгу Phukan to be precise, has very prudently decided even at this late hour to invite the tribal leaders for talks, but the same is proposed to take place only on Feb. 28. What is urgent is that efforts should be made to see that the impending bandh call is withdrawn in the meantime or at least deferred for the time being until after the proposed talks will have been over. We hope a sense of urgency would dictate all the parties concerned to act with utmost responsibility. It is primarily the responsibility of the Home Minister, who is well-armed with enough law and order complements at his command besides the Army as stand-by in aid of his Police, to move with utmost discretion in the deployment of these forces irrespective of the bandh taking place or not. A show of strength on the part of the authorities has a tendency to provoke extremists and trouble-mongers in such a situation which has to be guarded against at all cost. And even if the proposed bandh is not or cannot be abandoned for any consideration, the proposed talks offered by the AGP government should not be abandoned at any rate.

The cup that cheers All the good properties of tea, the great name in this region, has been compressed into one single news-capsule released by the UNI, from New Delhi. Its anti-cancer property should bring cheer to this region which is also conspicuous by the incidence of this deadly disease. Results reported from Japan say tea taken could be responsible for lower incidence of stomach cancer. Studies in China shows tea reduces serum cholesterol triglycerides, while some reports suggest tea reduces hypertension. And there are a lot more properties too in tea! Toothpaste containing a two per cent tea infusion prevents dental decay, as indicated by experiments in China. All these sound too good and too many to be true and yet we would love to hope that all is not a all that propaganda only. But in any case, it is bound to boost tea consumption which should be a net gain after all.

The Significance of ‘3’ in the Khasi Pnar tradition

By H H Mohrmen

Perhaps this is just a random thought on this very unfamiliar issue of the unique tradition of the Khasi Pnar people which has to do with numbers. This could also very well be a precursor to many more studies on this subject. There is a folk story on how the Khasi Pnars lost their alphabets while crossing the river during a flood, but what about numbers and counting? What happened to our numbers, do we have our own numbers before we used the Roman numerals? This would be a very interesting study, but before we go further in trying to understand the significance of number three, let us start with this one story I heard when I was a kid. This particular story is about a ghost which is fond of playing a number game.

This particular story is about a ghost call ‘ka Lyngkhooh.’ To begin with let us try to understand what ‘ka lyngkhooh’ is. The word Lyngkhooh in Pnar parlance not only rhymes with ‘Tyngkhooh’ which means knock or accident but it also means coincide. When two or more similar events or occasions clash it is called lyngkhooh. So for example if rather unexpectedly two and two meet, that is lyngkhooh. Again if we translate ‘death anniversary’ in Pnar will be (lyngkhooh dap snem wa iap). Lyngkhooh will therefore mean coincidence and when something which is expected happens. But in this context lyngkhooh is a ghost which can only cast its spell or attack when it chances to meet a group people.

When we were kids before going to the forest to collect firewood and wild vegetables or going to the river for swimming, our elders would advice us that we should see that the total numbers in the group should always be in even numbers. We should not walk in odd numbers but we must always pair up in twos, fours, sixes and so on and so forth. Going to the forest or rivers in the company of odd numbers of friends is dangerous

because of the ghost called lyngkhooh. If this particular ghost finds kids loitering in the forest or away from the village and the numbers in the group is odd, then it will cast its evil spell on one in the group and the most unfortunate of them all will fall sick and suffer. But there are times when being in an odd group is unavoidable. On such occasions, if the ghost happens to find us then our elders also teach us how to trick the ghost.

Lyngkhooh is the kind of ghost which when it walks from one place to another during the night would also carry fire so sometimes people would see it from a distance. It uses the same path humans do although we cannot see it except for the fire it carries. And whenever it meets a group of fellow travelers in the company of odd numbers, say; if they are in the company of three, then Lyngkhooh will count “one; two; three, the third one is for me or one; two; three and third one is mine.” If friends in the group fail to respond then the fate of the number three friend or the unluckiest of the friends will be in danger. The most unlucky of them all will be cursed by the Lyngkhooh and the person will suffer and sometimes even die, if not treated.

But thankfully we were taught how to trick the ghost. We were advised by our elders that whenever we wander into the forest or out of the village, if by chance we meet Lyngkhooh than when it starts counting one, two, three and the third one is mine, then in response we should also immediately count one, two, three and counting you it makes us four. The ghost can only strike if the party walks in odd numbers. So by counting the ghost as one of us we are able to hoodwink it and therefore it has no other option but to keep quiet and let the group proceed without harming anyone, even if the numbers of people in the group is odd.

There is still a large section of the population in the Khasi Pnar society who believe that it is not

advisable to photograph a pregnant woman. Also the Khasi-Pnar people never get photographed in threes because they believe that one from the three would die an early death. To know more about this taboo of a pregnant woman being photographed we should consult those officials engaged by the government to take photo ID of the people for their EPIC. Traditionally elders in particular would make sure that people pose in twos; fours or more for photographs because it is consider a taboo for a threesome to be photographed. If this again has any link with the belief in ka Lyngkhooh, I am not sure but come to think of it, at least Aadhar is safe here because it only takes the fingerprints and the photo of the retina and not photographs per se.

When the traditional healers treat people with health problems according to the traditional healing system, the number 3 is very important. The few a traditional healers I know who treat burn injuries would ask the patient to visit them three times and at the end of the mandatory three visits, they would only provide the patients with medicines and ask them to apply it themselves. The same process is being followed by the traditional healers who treat fractures. They would treat the patient three times and expect the patient to make the mandatory three visits only. After that the medicine man will only provide them ointment for massaging the pain. Traditional healers will also treat a person with snake bites thrice only and not more than that. In fact any traditional healer will only make three attempts to treat the patient. If he or she does not show any signs of recovery then the healer would advice the patient to visit another healer.

In the traditional religion many rituals are performed in cycles of three. For instance, while doing oblation rice beer is offered three times. When one tries to protect a person from an evil spell cast upon the patient, the healer will only curse three times

‘Phuit the sabuit/Phui skue’ and the evil spell will go.

As a kid when I heard for the first time that the Khasi and Jaintia Hills region was called the land of the thirty kings and the twelve chieftains (Ka Ri ki Laipheу Syiem bad Khadar Daloi), I took it literally and thought that there were indeed thirty kings and kingdoms in the Khasi hills. It was only when I grew up that I understood that ‘thirty’ is only a symbolic number and means something else. In both the Khasi and Pnar parlance whenever we try to describe the innumerable numbers of plants and animals, we would say the thirty types or the thirty varieties of plants and animals (ki laipheу mrad; ki laipheу mreng or laipheу jait ki dieng etc). People certainly can count more than thirty and our ancestors also knew very well that there are hundreds of animals and plants, but they use ‘thirty’ to represent that which cannot be counted. This is a very interesting fact.

Of course thirty is not to be taken literally in this context. It is obvious thirty means uncountable or innumerable. So does that mean that thirty is the last number up to which the Khasi Pnar can count? They could have very well said thirty thousand plants and animals, but when our ancestors use thirty only, what does that mean and why is this question important?

In fact there is something unique about the Khasi Pnars and their belief in odd numbers even in their own creation stories. The group of sixteen was divided into nine and seven; the nine huts remain in heaven and the seven climbed down to earth. The numbers are always odd. The most common setting of monolith is that of three standing stones and one flat stone, so number three is always popular even with the formation of the iconic phenomenon in the community - the monolith. And on a lighter note, why are we afraid of the Asdhar number when even the ghost counts us by our numbers?

own backyard. Is this not an irony? I want to ask Modi where has his 2014 general election statement (that people from neighbouring Bangladesh who observe Durga Ashtami and speak Bengali are Mother India’s children), gone now when Hindus, Buddhists and others in Bangladesh are butchered. If India does not raise its voice against the persecution of minorities in Bangladesh, who were earlier part of the undivided Indian peninsula and have been included across the border following partition, then which country on earth is going to speak on their behalf?

Modi’s government is found wanting to show the same eagerness, which it displayed when Indians were held captive by militants in warn torn Iraq and Yemen. In the earlier cases, the NDA government left no stone unturned for the safe return of Indian nationals whereas in this case it has not even aired its concern about the inhuman acts in its neighbourhood. Modi should take the example of America – a country he visited four times after assuming office and which he believes fulfils his government’s dream goals, that USA too has raised its voice about the situation in Bangladesh.

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong – 1

The Euthanasia Option

By Kathie S. Decruse

Is it all right to take away a life and play God, or is it all right to save a man’s life against his very own will? In the ordinary sense of the word, Euthanasia refers to the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma. “Whatever happens, there is no happy ending.” It is not always rainbows on the other side. The law must recognise this and the legislature must come up with effective guidelines, stringent but reasonable.

When a person, say a paraplegic or more so a quadriplegic, one who is completely paralysed from neck down with only excruciating pain to feel, decides to give up on his life because the quality of the life he is living is deteriorating to an unacceptable level complete with misery and intolerable pain, it is obvious to anybody that it is not a passing whim. Will the law let him live this undignified, demeaning and pointless life, denying him the release he so longs to escape to, only possible by euthanasia; or will the law become flexible enough to let him find this release, amounting to the right to die?

It is a major decision to give up on one’s own life. When one is mentally sound but unable to do anything for himself, depending on strangers and family member completely, becoming a burden and where there is no amount of hope to grip on to for a better future, it becomes extremely difficult for him to stay happy. Bentham’s utilitarian principle of maximising happiness and minimising pain becomes a ‘dry lather’ in situations like these. And of course, who can forget the dire wishes of people who want to die with dignity but are denied it by their own government, who go off to die someplace else where release will be given to them legally; but who wants to die in a foreign country? The satisfaction of ‘dying peacefully in one’s homeland’ is quashed just like that for them.

Moreover, denying the Right to Die for the terminally ill patients who have no hope to get better in the future goes against the Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights as well as Article 8 of the same i.e., the first prohibiting the inhuman/ degrading treatment, the second stating the right to respect for private and family life. In my personal opinion, I strongly put forth the suggestion that the Government, be it the Legislature (parliament), the Executive or the Judiciary, must allow Euthanasia to be legalised with certain important guidelines. These guidelines must not specify who will be eligible for Euthanasia, but it must be looked at on a case-to-case basis. Not all patients are mentally sound, not all are brain-dead and not all have similar conditions. But a yardstick must be laid down in order for any foul play to occur. The government must look upon this matter with utmost diligence and come up with not one but multiple solutions. The law must be framed in such a way that those who really deserve the release and who desire it get it. Just like Horace had said, “To save a man’s life against his will is the same as killing him.”

Yes. We need Euthanasia to be legalised. It must be there are certain cases where people are in a permanent comatose, who are brain-dead because of the terminal degenerative illness, for those are in a complete vegetative state, who are completely hopeless, especially those who are too

immobile to even flex a body part or bat an eye. Human existence thrives on activity. They can do something, physical and mental. Once this shuts down, one is just breathing but no more living, no more human in its fullest sense- just a vegetable.

There is a need for humane, civilised and socially oriented outlook and penology. The futility in debating this, over and over, without reaching anywhere only juggles with the lives of those who deal with tremendous bone-wrenching pain, which not only excruciates their very existence but those who are close to them. Legal arguments are fine but they should not forget that a life is affected by the decision they come to – a decision that goes against the terminally ill, the paralysed, condemning them to a “life” of increasing misery. I’m sure the judges have heard it all before but action needs to be taken. “Facta non verba” is how the saying goes, deeds not words. It is very easy to say and write all the opinions, but to put one self in the shoes of those who suffer every day, who wake up only to be reminded of the helpless life they have to live with, only to have pain and sympathy as permanent companions, it is hard. How then should the law deny them this very right?

Almost every country is at a tussle with which side wins and which loses. The prime basis of recommending the government to look into the matter and make necessary steps is to consider the concept of Euthanasia as a part of a human right. The Right to life must include the Right to die, although having strict and reasonable guidelines to be followed both by the Legislature and the Judiciary. In this regard, eminent lawyer Ram Jethmalani said that the right to die is a part of a wider concept of liberty. The whole nation of the state controlling your life and death is grotesque. Equally radical is Dr Appa Ghatate, a Supreme Court lawyer who agreed that the right to die should be included in the Indian Constitution as a fundamental right. The very idea of the state controlling your life is absurd.

However, even if the parliament or the people’s court will be the final judge to decide on the legality of passive euthanasia in India, it does not exempt the Judiciary from performing its orderly functions. It must collaborate and cooperate with the Parliament on the said practice and decide together on its legality, thus avoiding biasness. The Judiciary must give the other organs of the Government a supportive shove in order for things to take a serious turn, instead of prolonging the decision-making, not only affecting the patients who are terminally ill but the nation as a whole.

To conclude, the Government must also ensure that the euthanasia option is a choice and not a duty. It signifies the choice and autonomy of a person over his life, by his own self-determination along with strict guidelines of being eligible for euthanasia. It will extinguish the unnecessary threats of other terminally ill people who still want to live, by letting them know that even if the right to die is a choice given to the terminally ill, it does not indicate to a duty whatsoever. Whatever may be the reason, Euthanasia must be legalised, saddled tightly with stringent guidelines which will not allow the ambitious to take advantage nor the meek to fail on trust it.

“My bounce-around life had taught me that dreams were dangerous things - they look solid in your mind, but you just try to reach for them. It's like gathering clouds.”
--- Kirby Larson, Hattie Big Sky

The Shillong Times

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Exit Rajan
RBI governor Raghuram Rajan has refused to remain for another term. His predecessors served at least 5 years in office. And he is decidedly one of the ablest and most brilliant. He is also an outstanding economist and his talk at the London School of Economics on the global economic crisis caused a stir. His quitting after 3 years is of course prompted by political tension. He was having differences with finance Minister Arun Jaitley and other BJP leaders. His stand on intolerance made him further unpopular with them. He will now go into academics and teach at Chicago University. His departure is another case of a continuing brain drain for which the Modi Sarkar is responsible. Rajan pulled India out of the global slowdown and stabilized the economy. He also stabilized the rupee and curbed inflation. The moves that he took stimulated the country’s economic growth. Rajan also went all out to fight bank NPAs. If he continued, he could have effected a major reform of the banking sector.

There may be critics of Rajan’s policy as RBI governor. But the fact is that global investors and international rating agencies go by it. Rajan’s exit will impair credibility for the Indian economy and sap investor confidence. He would have stayed on if the government had not practically eased him out. The government is keen on a smooth changeover and will take time to find a replacement. It is confident that there will be no sharp volatility in the exchange rate as a result of Rajan’s exit.

LOOKING BACK
February 16, 1989

Britain snaps diplomatic ties with Iran

Britain today froze diplomatic relations with Iran in a strong protest against the death threat issued by Ayatollah Khomeini against Indian-born author Salman Kushdie.
"We have decided that in the present circumstances, we cannot build up further our embassy in Teheran," a Foreign Office spokesman told journalists here. The statement came after Iran's Charged Affairs in London was summoned and told that Britain viewed the Iranian spiritual leader's edict as "totally unacceptable".
The Foreign Office step also followed unsatisfactory talks in Teheran between Britain's envoy Mr. Nicholas Browne and a senior Iranian foreign office official. Britain currently has three diplomats and four supporting staff- including three temporary employee-at its Teheran embassy.
Today's development comes as a major setback to ties between the two nations and widens a 48-hour old diplomatic rift over Mr. Rushdie's controversial novel "The-bias-phemes Islam. UNI adds from Bombay: An anonymous caller this morning rang up the United News of India office here and issued threats to bomb British Airways planes and executive prominent Indians for speaking out against Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini who had called for the execution of Salman Rushdie for his novel 'Satanic Verses'.
The caller identified himself as a spokesman of a little known group he described as the "Iranian Guards" and said attacks would be carried out on all British planes in India until Rushdie came out of hiding in England. The Indians who the caller said would be executed were poet Dom Moraes, Gandhians Usha Mehta, Hindustan Andolan chief Madhu Mehta and

Inner Line Permit and its politics in Manipur

By Ibu Sanjib Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The ILP or Inner Line Permit is a document that is issued by the government of India for inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period. This owes its origin to the British administration, in the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873 which controlled movement of British subjects into certain areas of their dominions. In independent India it has been seen both as a security measure as well as an effort to conserve the ethno-social demographics of certain societies. Presently ILP system is in place for entering Nagaland, Mizoram and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.
It is with this background that the recent controversy regarding imposition of the ILP in Manipur must be understood. Manipur, with the city of Imphal as its capital, has a total population of 2,166,788 persons according to the 2011 census. There are a number of ethnic groups in Manipur. The major ethnic groups of Manipur are the Meiteis, the Meitei Pangals (Muslims), Nagas, Zomis and Kuki. It is bounded by the Indian states of Nagaland to the north, Mizoram to the south and Assam to the west; it also borders Burma to the east. The Meiteis (Meiteis), who live primarily in the state's valley region, form the primary ethnic group (60% of the total population) but occupy only 10% of the total land area. Their language, Meiteilon (Meeteilon), (also known as Manipuri), is also the lingua franca in the state, and was recognized as one of the national languages of India in 1992. The Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) also live in the valley; the Kukis, Nagas, Zomis and other smaller groups form about 40% of the population but occupy the remaining 90% of the total land area of Manipur. Out
The ILP hinges on the edifice of ethno centricty driven by the narrative of territorial homelands with historical roots and identity . Today Manipur and indeed large parts of NorthEast are actively engaged in the "us versus them" debate. While self assertion movements ideologically seem all encompassing in parts, eventually most of them fall prey to the low hanging fruit of exclusion politics. Manipur seems no different. The present struggle for the ILP is centred around the Imphal valley which is dominated by the Meites. The Meites are a resilient race which has a rich cultural heritage as well as long association with history. The Imphal valley is surrounded by hills which are inhabited by the Naga tribes mostly of Rongmei and Tangkhul stock . Historically, while the Meiteis and the surrounding hill tribes enjoyed a cordial relationship, the question of Greater Nagalim or unification of all Naga inhabiting areas in recent times has become a perpetual thorn in this cordial relationship. Because of this burgeoning conflict, the hill tribes have mostly been immune to the issue of ILP. The other major ethnic group in Manipur, the Kukis, too refuse to be drawn into this struggle with their sights on their own battle for an independent Kuki homeland.
In such an environment Meities of the Imphal valley have a fear of being eventually outnumbered in
their own lands. The overwhelming voice of the movement has been that ILP will ensure that outsiders will not be able to buy land in Manipur. A large part of the social narrative of Imphal valley today is that of "foreigners" of Bangladesh, Burma and Nepal taking over their traditional land and livelihood. Thus, ILP seems to be a last resort against this "onslaught" of the outsiders. Incidentally at this point it would be worthwhile to note that Manipur already has its law that forbids non-tribal people from within as well as outside the state from buying and owning land in the tribal/hill areas in Manipur.
Yet the question of ILP itself would not limit itself to the question of entry rights alone. The demands also are supplemented by calls for granting Scheduled Tribes (ST) status to the Meiteis which would in effect turn Manipur into a complete tribal state. Such demands are rising more frequently in North East now, even sections in Assam demand tribal state status. This is seen as a guarantee against invaders from outside. However in the case of Manipur, granting of ST status to Meities, would have far reaching consequences. An equality of status among the hill tribes and the plains people will have its own ramifications in the socio political narrative of Manipur .Today there is a trans border unification of imagined communities which are not limited to the Nagas alone . A unified community cutting across territorial boundaries also seem to take shape among the Kukis as well . At this juncture, if the Meiteis are given ST status, these identity assertions would indeed take new dimensions which are very
problems. So why blame the hawkers? Let us try to understand their problems. That is our responsibility. Yours etc., Rev N.B.Diangdoh. Shillong-4
The Chief Minister's statement that the KHADC has been delaying in issuing No Objection Certificates for getting various developmental projects ahead is true. This comes in the wake of the Prime Minister's direction to all Union Government Ministries that states have to clear pending projects or else they shall be liable for cancellation and those projects be given to other states. Most of our rural areas especially in parts of Garo hills, West Khasi hills and Jaintia hills do not have access to proper and motorable roads and the public representatives seem contented to allow such neglect so that they can keep promising the moon to their electorate. I have been to a number of places where one would have to trek for almost three to four hours on foot. We can well imagine how those in emergencies have to bear the difficulties. Now with the ADCs getting direct funds from the Central Government it is important that MDCs' initiate projects in improving their constituencies. Development can never reach our rural folks if road connectivity is absent and we hope the CEM KHADC himself knows this better. Yours etc. Dominic S. Wankhar Shillong-3
The writer concludes her column calling for a Govt that enforces the law on those individuals and sections of people such as the hawkers who are victims of a biased system. I am shocked at this suggestion and I thought for a while and told myself that Darwin has said it well, "Survival of the fittest." Well for the Shillong city will it be, " Survival of the Elitist".
Though I have not been participating in the hawkers' movement yet but this issue has always been on my mind as I see them on the road every day. This Issue cannot be solved in just a day or two or by prescribing a formula because so many related issue are entangled thus resulting in multiple
developed , systematic and a clean city with this section of people- the hawkers being thrown out because they are nobody's responsibility is something that I don't agree to.
Secondly, the writer's argument in blaming the Govt for not being the victor in the court room and the role of the law in India particularly in Meghalaya, made me think that yes the rule of law here is disgusting and disheartening be it with the judiciary or the administration. One cannot also deny that often it is the high and mighty- the creamy layer who manipulate the rule of the law. For instance, in the Wah Umkhras issue which the writer has pointed out , the Court stay order, from my perspective is not the victory for the encroachers or the low income tenants and also some hawkers who live there on rent even though they are projected as winners, but it's actually the owners of the land who are wealthy business families who are the real winners. I would imagine if permission to construct a Five Star hotel is given to the owners these tenants and hawkers would have been kicked out by now.
If the writer is so concerned with the rule of the law and the many issues she has mentioned then what about the law and the rights of the hawkers and the weak state law that is trying to deny them their rightful place as guaranteed by the Constitution? This is why I have mentioned that the rule of law here is disheartening and therefore the state law is being questioned.
Thirdly, the writer emphasizes on the space to be given to the hawkers where she is pessimistic about and also further challenges the " Socialists"

TO THE EDITOR

Why blame hawkers?

Editor,
Apropos the article by Patricia Mukhim, "Hawkers may have the rights but what about responsibilities". (ST 17, June 2016), firstly I do agree that the footpaths and the roads in Shillong have become a problem for pedestrians as the writer has argued. But this issue is not just a problem for the Shillong pedestrians. It is also a problem for the so called hawkers from their perspective. Who are these people who are categorized as hawkers? I ask this question because it seems to be missing in the column. They just don't spring up from somewhere but they are the vast sections of people in the country who are victims of crony capitalism and its selfish economic policies that has made their survival on this earth a nightmare .These hawkers are part of our society and they have never chosen to be hawkers but are compelled to.
These hawkers as we see them every day would sit or stand on a given small space withstanding the heat, wind and the rain. That is why I disagree with the writer in her words to, "open a shop", because these hawkers don't have the means to do it if you go strictly by what it means to open a shop. Therefore the hawkers have chosen to operate in their own viable way of selling their goods so that they may survive and feed and educate their families. In fact many young educated students today come from these hawkers' families. Therefore to dream of Shillong as a

Rajan exit no surprise in Modi milieu
BJP would prefer pliant head in RBI

By S. Sethuraman

The Modi Government, and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in particular would have a sense of relief, with the decision of the globally-acclaimed Dr Raghuram Rajan, Governor of RBI, to return to academia, at the end of his three-year term on September 3, saving them embarrassment from a rejection of extension of his term.
His brief statement on his decision, "after consultation with Government" gives the case away, namely, that Modi Government was not inclined in his favour. Whatever the "good work" done by him, as Mr Jaitley puts in obligingly while also trying to make it appear that it is Dr Rajan's decision which Government "respects". The Finance Minister added that decision on Dr Rajan's successor would be announced shortly,
Dr Rajan's announcement late on Saturday afternoon came as no surprise to astute observers of the goings-on in Modi Government, in the context of the unrestrained personal attacks on his three-year stewardship of India's central bank by the BJP protegee, Dr Subramanian Swamy, and the calculated silence on the part of the Prime Minister or his colleagues to repudiate even baseless charges hurled by Dr Swamy.
Also, apparently, Dr Rajan sensed the Government's mind in the manner of its setting up a panel headed by Cabinet
of the developments in the financial sector he had involved himself in, such as clean-up of the stressed banking sector and other reforms, but the Government was not ready to retain Dr Rajan even for a limited period as he wished, though some reports appear to suggest it was Dr Rajan who was not willing for a longer term extension.
Though Dr Rajan will still be at the helm over the next two and a half months and it should help him steer over the spillovers from volatile global financial markets, especially if the UK referendum vote on Brexit on June 23 went in favour of exit from the EU, which is most unlikely, his decision o return to the academia as early as September, when his three year-term expires, has had an unsettling effect both at home and abroad.
Dr Rajan's global reputation as an economist with an innovative mind and the admiration he has earned for the RBI through his monetary management over the last three years contributed a great deal to the current macro-economic stability that India has achieved in the aftermath of the 2013 exchange rate crisis, along with growth recovery.
One of the major gains from Dr Rajan's intuitive approaches such as attracting NRI foreign exchange deposits, helped to build-up a strong cushion in India's foreign exchange reserves, whose level had gone up to a level as high as 360 billion dollars in recent
Even more, the fall in oil prices came as a windfall for the Modi Government to cut down fuel subsidies and beef up its finances enabling Finance Minister Mr Jaitley to adhere to his fiscal consolidation targets in fiscal 15 and fiscal 16 and establish his credibility and contribute to macro-economic stabilisation in the aftermath of low growth of economy.
Secretary to select Governor or Deputy Governors of RBI, a new mechanism though Dr Rajan was also to be associated with it. And there seemed to have been no attempt to persuade Dr Rajan to reconsider his position.
In the three years of his Governorship, Dr Rajan earned the reputation of controlling inflation, bringing it down from double-digit to single digit levels on a trajectory of disinflationary process. Undoubtedly, a steady fall in world oil prices facilitated the monetary policy management and holding down current account deficits on a sustainable basis, along with measures he had announced on the first day of taking over on September 4, 2013 for mobilising NRI deposits on foreign exchange account.
Even more, the fall in oil prices came as a windfall for the Modi Government to cut down fuel subsidies and beef up its finances enabling Finance Minister Mr Jaitley to adhere to his fiscal consolidation targets in fiscal 15 and fiscal 16 and establish his credibility and contribute to macro-economic stabilisation in the aftermath of low growth of economy.
Dr Rajan would have liked to "see through" some
weeks. Dr Rajan has also put in place an arrangement for smooth redemption of some of these deposits totalling around 25 to 30 billion dollars in the latter half of 2016.
Government is expected to name a successor to Dr Rajan in August and there is general hope that there would be broad continuity in the prudent monetary policy that has evolved under him. At the same time, the Modi Government would expect a new head to recalibrate monetary policy toward greater emphasis on growth.
But there would be both economic and political challenges for the Modi Government from now on, even if India remains a vibrant economy with the highest rate of growth, given the rising inflationary expectations and lack of private investments, which could even trigger a spurt in public investment, to revive allround confidence.
Already the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has begun focussing on winning the UP election in 2017, which could largely determine also the outcome of the next Lok Sabha election in 2019. Thus, fiscal and monetary policies would be tune to the political objectives of the BJP leadership. (IPA Service)

“*They say dreams are the windows of the soul–take a peek and you can see the inner workings, the nuts and bolts.*”

--- Henry Bromel

The Shillong Times

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Politics of statehood demand

MEGHALAYA is a stare created out of the shared vision of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo people. The stalwarts of the Hill State Movement must have had a long term vision on how to develop the state into a patch of beauty and grace, to borrow late Prof GG Swell's famous words. It is therefore absurd to suggest that this state which is a mere 22,249 square kilometers should now be further truncated only to meet the narrow, short term goals of some political aspirants who are short on real issues. Meghalaya ahs no dearth of pressure groups each with an aim to occupy the political space by raising the communal tempo. Today, what the citizens of Meghalaya need are sustainable development models which had hitherto not been envisioned. This envisioning process should have involved politicians across the political divide. There cannot be too many differences in trying to work out a model of development which is equitable and for the greater good of the people of the state.

The fact that Meghalaya has depended on extractive industries such as coal and limestone mining both of which is environmentally degrading and extracts a heavy ecological price shows that since attaining statehood no government has really paid attention to the idea of sustainable development. Meghalaya is essentially an agrarian economy with huge potential for horticulture. This sector has not received adequate attention even though it has the capacity to create manufacturing industries and thereby promote entrepreneurship. Even in tourism which could have been a major revenue earner, the government has not developed a professional approach to the business. Each government has been driven by tactical short term objectives while strategic long terms goals are given short shrift. Perhaps the very nature of politics in this country which is governed by five-year tenures is in itself a major lacuna. It is in this lacuna that people with a selfish motive choose to launch their political careers and sell their communal rhetoric. Many such individuals have come and gone but the plight of the people has remained the same. What makes these political wannabes believe that bifurcating Meghalaya is going to turn it into a paradise? Can they share their vision and long terms goals beyond the rhetoric? And why do such demands mushroom before the elections?

LOOKING BACK

February 16, 1989

Troops Move in as Bodo ultras step up violence

Troops moved into three troubled districts of Assam today as Bodo extremists stepped up their violence as a prelude to the 120 hour statewide bandh, called by all Bodo Students Union, from five am tomorrow.

The extremists blew up railway tracks in two places, burnt down several houses and road bridges and killed at least eighteen people in the past one week. Troops were deployed in Kokrajhar and Nalbari in Lower Assam and Darrang in Central Assam as the police found it difficult to cope with the "guerilla tactics" adopted by the extremists, Director General of Police Mr S N Subramaniam told newsmen at Kokrajhar. The extremists fired on a truck at Safanguri in Kokrajhar district last night killing a labourer.

They also attacked a forest protection force camp at Haltugaon but fled when the securitymen fired back. They left one gun, one pistol and some bombs.

A portion of the track between Harisinga and Udalguri stations on the NF Railway's Rangiya Rangapara section was

uprooted last night rendering suspension of train services in the section.

A Tezpur report said the extremists burnt down four wooden bridges linking Tangla-Udalguri last night disrupting communication in Darrang district.

The State Transport corporation buses plying from Tezpur to Tangla and Udalguri were withdrawn.

UGC scale for ICAR scientists

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research ICAR has prepared a comprehensive proposal of payscales for the scientists working in the council. The proposal is under the consideration of the government, an ICAR officials release said here today. The release says the proposal conforms to the pay scale package formulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for lecturers, readers and professors. The release has described as distorted some reports in the media in regard to the government's policy on conceding the scientists demand for UGC payscales.

Whatsup

By Paramjit Bakshshi

in Karma, and are good in convincing others.

Some were trying to start a chai pakora, chole-batura, dosa& samosa, barfi, chakli and dhokla shop, which I had to stop.

They are excellent in corrupting everyone, and my staff is being bribed by them.

I am having difficulty in controlling the graft and corruption in Hell.

They never complain as this place seems to be better than from where they came.

I am having such a hard time controlling and dealing with them.

I am therefore requesting, "O GOD, PLEASE send them back to earth as soon as they arrive - for re-birth."

So now you know - "why Indians are the only ones that are re-born."

This set me thinking a bit. I wondered how Meghalayans would behave in Heaven and Hell. Perhaps our story would be as follows:

Angel Gabriel comes to the Lord and says, "O Lord I have to talk to you. We have some Meghalayans here and they are creating problems. They have cut up all the beautiful tress in heaven and have sold them to Satan to keep his hellish fires burning. With all this degradation the temperature of heaven has gone up O Lord. What am I to do?"

The Lord replies: "O Gabriel, for heaven's sake, use your brains. Don't come to me with all these minor problems. All Meghalayans are my children, and you will have to find a way to deal with them. Anyway you can always send the troublesome ones to hell, although I am not sure whether Satan will want them, there too. It appears he is also having some problems with them."

Gabriel responds: "But Lord you have not heard my full story. After the forests were finished by them, they have started mining coal. All my rivers are being polluted now. Believe me Lord, I have tried very hard and even came up with the New Gabriel Testament (NGT) to ban all mining but they are adamant that something called the Sixth Schedule has precedence over it. Does it really O Lord? They tell me that

destruction of heaven for prosperity isn't really a sin. In fact they boast that they destroyed their earthly paradise but still made it to my heaven on some reservation or quota system."

Before the Lord could answer Gabriel, his phone starts to ring. The Lord picks it up and says, "Hello."

"It's me Satan, O Lord, sorry to disturb you, but I was just wondering if Angel Gabriel is with you. He is not answering his phone."

The Lord not being in a mood to handle any more disagreements, instructs Angel Gabriel to return to heaven and talk to Satan one on one.

So Angel Gabriel dials the number to hell and says. "Hi Satan, I believe you were looking for me."

"Looking for you, is that what you think? Actually I am looking for coal because my fires are all going out. I believe you have come up with some NGT shenanigans. My people are getting so comfortable here that they want to now engineer a coup and take over the administration of hell. Even you dear Gabriel cannot afford to allow such nonsense."

Gabriel says, "Well, the Lord told me that you were having some problems, but I didn't realise they were so severe. Anyway I still can't help you because I am still trying to sort out some pressing heavenly issues. With all your demand for fuel, my heaven is turning into hell and believe me I couldn't sympathise or help you even if I wanted to. Bye Satan."

"Don't hang up Gabriel", screams Satan in desperation, "Listen these are not my problems alone. Sooner or later my problems are going to affect you, and it is better that we co operate."

"How is that Satan?" counters Angel Gabriel somewhat incredulously.

"Well", says Satan, "some of these Meghalayans have very big egos."

"Tell me something new", interjects Gabriel, "some of them even told me that Heaven is their birthright, even if they turn it into hell."

"Believe me, Gabriel", says Satan, "after a while these guys will not allow a distinction to be made between Heaven and Hell"

"Well if you are trying to

tell me about a cold hell and involve me in your problems then believe me I am not that stupid", says Gabriel a little self righteously.

"No, no, no, Gabriel I am not talking environment. You think environment can be a issue in hell. It is politics I am more concerned about. You see Gabriel, you being the guardian of Heaven, are not used to politics. But believe me, with roughly all the politicians in my jurisdiction, it is politics which scares me."

"What you say is somewhat true Satan, but you better explain things to me properly," says Gabriel.

"Well it's like this. I have heard some alarming news from my informers. They tell me that Meghalayans are experts not just at playing with the environment but at toppling governments too. They used to do this very often back on earth. Mind you such toppling games were just sport for them, because though they did not improve matters for them the political playoffs sure provided gossip and proved a source of nail biting suspense for all the Meghalayans."

"Well considering how badly you run things I would not be surprised if somebody topples you Satan", says Gabriel.

"Now, now, don't go all goody goody on me Gabriel. You know if they succeed in toppling me it isn't going to be good news for you too", says Satan with wicked smile.

"How so, Satan, I don't have any problems with politics in heaven, yet."

"Well now with the dual posts having received a boost, please don't be surprised if some of my guys now want to unseat you too. We'd both become jobless" warns Satan just before Meghalayans sever the phone connection built by the tech savvy Indians.

Well now you know why Meghalaya is a seamless combination of heaven and hell. We are very adept at creating hell in our little heaven both politically and environmentally and are perhaps destined to live in this state of limbo forever.

May a little humour see us through?

The writer can be contacted at bakshshi03@rediffmail.com

Confusion reigns as Brexit looms large

Will Scotland secede from little Britain?

By Arun Srivastava

Just two days ahead of the crucial referendum which would decide the future of the Britain and draw out a fresh contour of the geopolitics of the region, as a last ditch attempt the USA has floated the rumour that Scotland will quit the United Kingdom if the vote on June 23 goes against remaining in the European Union and would have another referendum on declaring it as an independent country.

Incidentally the first person to come out with this revelation has been the Britain Prime Minister David Cameron. Three days back while participating in ITV debate Cameron underlined the risk of Scotland leaving UK after Brexit and also cautioned the Britons that there was a 'deeply patriotic' case for the UK remaining intact and within the EU. He reminded voters that a vote to leave the EU may lead to a second Scottish independence referendum and increase the UK's instability. Incidentally, Cameron's remarks contradicted his assertion last year that there was no case for a further Scottish referendum, but also raised a crucial question for Scottish voters: what will the vote on 23 June mean for their future?

The people in Scotland would vote for independence in case the UK was forced to leave the European Union against Scots' will .The ICM survey for Scotland has revealed that if the UK voted for Brexit then in that case 52 per cent of Scots would support a new referendum on breaking away from the UK and 53 per cent would vote to leave. However, the political situation prevailing at the ground level makes it clear that Britain's departure from the European Union would not necessarily increase support for Scottish independence. The Scottish people are also not too happy with the prospect of a fresh referendum. Nevertheless there is a feeling that the Britons must adopt a pragmatic approach towards the Brexit. Interestingly, the recent surveys have shown that majority of Scots back the Remain campaign, with the latest Kantar TNS poll putting support at 71 per cent, with 29 per cent wanting Brexit.

In fact, the situation is being complicated by the leadership of the Scottish Nationalist Party. Their position owes more to the personal equations with the leaders of Tory or Labour parties. In the last parliamentary elections, the SNP has outwitted Labour in the Scotland. In fact, based on this the detractors of Jeremy Corbyn had questioned his leadership quality. It is also being rumoured that the EU might be more welcoming to a Scotland seeking membership after Brexit. The Scotland would replace the UK. But the political sources outright reject any such possibility. They are hopeful that the situation would take some positive turn just ahead of the final poll. There is a general feeling that surfacing of the possible situation where Scotland votes for Remain but the rest of the UK or England drags Scotland out by voting to leave, would bound to influence other counties. Little doubt the prospect of Scottish independence will add to the uncertainty surrounding the Brexit would compound the headache for politicians and might spark a resurgence of similar efforts in other regions. In an apparent contradiction of SNP, claims that the forthcoming referendum could take Scotland out of the EU against its will, the study also found that 60 per cent of Scots can be classed as Eurosceptic, with only one-fifth happy to "leave things as they are". The Scottish people have different views. They by and large hold the view that powers of EU should be reduced. Based on the annual Scottish

Social Attitudes survey carried out in January this year, around 43 per cent of respondents want the EU's powers reduced.

The only worry of the Scottish people has been in case they support Brexit in that case in future the UK will start dictating terms and Scotland will be in disadvantageous situation. Scotland intends to maintain its own independence. True enough the pro EU forces and political parties have been giving too much publicity to this contradiction. Questions about Scotland's economic security and how the country would manage the competing and challenging demands of the EU and the UK are also being raised. Apprehensions are also being expressed that it would threaten to plunge the Scottish National party's government in Edinburgh into crisis. With conventional wisdom still in a state of confusion there is no need to jump to conclusions. Backroom political strategists are at work to foil any such move. It is worth recalling that back in 1975, when the UK last voted on Europe, Scots were pro-EU by 58 per cent to 42 per cent; but the English actually voted pro-EU by a much larger margin of 69 per cent to 31 per cent, and only two out of the 68 UK counties Shetland and the Western Isles voted no.

The possibility of another political fight so soon after the referendum could be a nightmare scenario for whichever Westminster politicians were left in charge after the June 23 vote. Many regions of the UK are more pro-Europe than the nation as a whole, partly because they disproportionately benefit from schemes such as the EU's European Regional Development Fund.

In the case the UK opts for Brexit, the Scottish parliament could become more powerful. The campaign to leave the EU is seen very much as a Conservative Party project, and in Scotland there are an awful lot of people who will say 'Well, if the Tories want this, I don't.' It is important to note that in 1980s, the Scottish National Party, which had a history of opposing the EU membership, changed too.

Interestingly some of the politicians hold the view that Scotland should be independent but at the same time are not ready to choose another referendum [on independence] on the basis that the rest of the UK had chosen to do something damaging for the rest of the UK. In fact Professor James Mitchell of Edinburgh University said the situation was "difficult enough" in 2014, when the Scottish independence referendum was held. "But the idea of trying to sell the message of Scottish independence in the context of Brexit would be very, very difficult". A majority of Scots voted against independence in 2014 but the SNP has since enjoyed a huge surge in popularity and won all but three of Scotland's Westminster seats in the last general election

Scotland has the right to demand its independence after the Brexit. But the moot question is: Would the UK Government give Scotland another independence referendum after a Brexit vote? The possibilities are farfetched. The SNP must win a mandate at the 2020 general election or the next Scottish Parliament elections in 2021. There is rumour that Scotland may join the EU. But question is also being asked: Would an independent Scotland be allowed to join the EU?

One issue which is receiving less attention is the future of the United Kingdom. The fact remains if the United Kingdom votes to leave the EU, it may not stay united for very long. The UK is made up of four "countries", England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. (IPA Service)

“Dreams come true. Without that possibility, nature would not incite us to have them.”

--- John Updike

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 310 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2016

India and NSG

INDIA'S pursuit of membership of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) smacks of old world diplomacy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been on an odyssey visiting world capitals and conferring with top diplomats. Foreign Secretary Jaishankar has gone to Seoul to get China on India's side. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that China in principle had no objection to India's membership of the NSG. But then China came out with a public snub.

Why has India spent so much time and energy on this mission? It is more than likely that in November, Donald Trump will be President of the US and leader of the so called free and democratic world. The thing is that India has secured more or less all benefits of the NSG. Membership is just symbolic. And the political changeover in Washington should not make any difference. India's diplomatic gamesmanship over membership of the NSG may not have required any special dexterity.

India has already rubbed China the wrong way by getting exercised over Japan causing estrangement between Delhi and Beijing. Japan has offered to sell ballistic missiles to Vietnam. Relations between China and Vietnam sometimes hit a rough patch especially as it extends a hand of deceitful hostility to that. While having tiffs with Washington, Beijing aims at deepening a strategic relationship with it. China is not so dear to India with pinpricks on the Line of Actual Control and its cordiality with Pakistan. India is trying to boost its image through diplomacy. China may only prove inscrutable over the NSG exercise.

LOOKING BACK

February 17, 1989

Cong (I) in crisis: Inept handling

The Congress-I today faces its worst ever crisis, indeed, a bigger question mark than ever before has gone up over its future. The recent happenings in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar and presently in Gujarat and Rajasthan are no doubt uppermost in mind. But dissidence is not new to the Congress. Time and again, the party has witnessed disagreement, even sharp wordy duels, over policies and personalities. The Gaya Congress in 1922, for instance, saw a head on collusion between the Pro-changers and the No-changers C.R. Das, Motilal, Nehru, V. Patel were the prochangers. They wanted the war of independence carried into the legislatures with battle cry: Destroy from within Mahatma Gandhi and his supporters opposed the move and came to be called No-changers. With Gandhi in jail, the Congress giants seemed set for an easy victory. But they were worsted in debate by Rajaji and Rajendbabu and in the voting by the delegates. Gandhi emerged as the party's unrivalled leader. Das was so shaken by the defeat that he resigned from the Congress Presidency.

The Haripura and Tripura Congress sessions in 1938 and 1939 respectively brought into the open the struggle between Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose for leadership and created a major crisis. (Rivalry between the two started at the Karanchi Congress in 1930) . Having presided over the Haripura session, Bose offered himself for re-election on the precedent established by Nehru's presidency of two successive terms. Mahatma Gandhi opposed Bose's candidature and put up Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a veteran Congressman, as his candidate. Bose triumphed and Gandhi proclaimed the victory of the young leader from Bengal as his own defeat.

Office Of Profit

Cutting nose to spite face

Cutting one's nose to spite one's face. This adage rang true last week as Arvind Kejriwal's AAP Party got caught in a legal quagmire over the appointment of 21 Parliamentary Secretaries to Ministers on 13 March 2015. A week later an RTI activist filed an innocuous complaint to President Pranab Mukherjee that under the Delhi Members of Legislative Assembly (Removal of Disqualification) Act 1997 there was no provision of appointing a Parliamentary Secretary to a Minister and they held an Office of Profit.

Last Monday the President rejected the Delhi Government's amendment to the Act which sought to make the position of Parliamentary Secretary in the Delhi Assembly "retrospectively" exempt from the definition of "Office of Profit". Predictably, Kejriwal decided to brazen it out by asserting his MLAs were not receiving any "pecuniary benefit, office space, car or perks and are working for free" as Parliamentary Secretaries... and are his Government's "eyes, ears and hands". Sic.

True, the Assembly was within its powers to bring an amendment to the Act but given Delhi's special status as a Union Territory, a Bill passed by the Assembly is not considered an applicable "law" unless it is passed by the Delhi Lieutenant Governor and the President of India.

At one level, there is no gainsaying that this outrageous episode is an exercise in political onepmanship between Modi's BJP and its bête noire Kejriwal's AAP. The former drawing blood and the latter battling for political supremacy.

Basically, even as the BJP and Congress quibble over the 'extra-judicial appointments', the ball is in the Election Commission's court which has to decide whether the terms and conditions of appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries constitutes an "Office of Profit." Whereby, it can

By Poonam I Kaushish

nullify the appointments and call for fresh elections. According to some Constitutional experts if what Kejriwal avers is true, then AAP's Parliamentary Secretaries office were not holding an "Office of Profit" as there is no monetary benefit attached to the appointments. Obversely, if their appointment letters included any monetary benefit, the office would be considered an "Office of Profit". Thus, "the offer of pecuniary gain is the test, even if the person declines to take that benefit".

Besides, under Article 102(1)(a) and Article 191(1)(a) of the Constitution, a person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of Parliament or of a Legislative Assembly/ Council if he holds an "Office of Profit" under the Central or any State Government, other than an office declared not to disqualify its holder by a law passed by the Parliament or State Legislature. The Delhi MLA (Removal of Disqualification) Act, 1997 did not include the post of Parliamentary Secretary as an "exempted post".

Questionably, is it going to be the end of the road for the 21 AAP MLAs in the office of profit controversy? Undeniably, the issue is not legal, but primarily political and Kejriwal should take it head on. The AAP MLAs should resign and seek re-election. Just as Sonia Gandhi did in 2006 when she resigned from the Lok Sabha and sought re-election, instead of fighting a legal battle on whether her position as Chairperson National Advisory Council was an office of profit or not.

The Supreme Court too has underscored that the issue was not whether an MP or MLA of an office in question received any remuneration but was potentially in a position to receive some remuneration. The word profit connotes the idea of pecuniary gain. If there is really a gain, its quantum or amount would not be material; but the amount of money receivable by a person in

connection with the office he holds may be material in deciding whether the office really carries any profit.

Adding that if the Government had the power to appoint and remove a person, then the office is an office of profit even though the person is paid out of the funds of the Corporation. On the other hand, if the Government does not possess this power, whatever control the Government may have over the person in other matters, would not suffice for the purpose.

Consequently, even from a purely legal/technical point of view, the MLAs are in violation of the norm against legislators holding any office of profit under the Government. Interestingly, "office of profit" is not defined anywhere. Courts have been passing judgments wherein a vague pattern has emerged. The philosophy behind this prohibition is that MPs or MLAs should be free to function independently of the Executive.

By accepting an office of profit, theoretically they become subject to pressure by the Executive. Arguably, if nearly half the House becomes part of the Executive, then the business of legislators holding the Executive accountable suffers. Certainly, not a happy state of affairs.

Besides, it does not behove any Government to try and overcome the limitation on the size of the Council of Ministers, 10 per cent of the strength of the House by accommodating legislators in a quasi-ministerial position by giving them positions such as Parliamentary Secretaries.

According to Constitutional expert Durga Das Basu, "The principle underlying this disqualification is that there should be no conflict between the duties of a member of the Legislature as such and his private interests and that the indebtedness of a member to Government is incompatible with his independence as a representative of the people"

Be that as it may, the moot

point is: has the term 'office of profit or office of no profit' become another facet of corruption? Has it provided a legal seal to bribery of our Right Honourables through arbitrary fiats declaring offices of profit as non-profit? Enabling MPs and MLA's to enjoy juicy lollipops of power? Wherein one may not take any salary but enjoy royal perks, more than making up for it? Who needs a salary!

Instances are a plenty at the Centre and the States wherein MPs or MLAs who cannot be accommodated in the Cabinet are compensated by being appointed as Chairmen of various corporations and commissions enjoying the status of Cabinet or Minister of State.

Look at the absurdity. A MP as a member of the Air India board takes no salary but enjoys amazing perks - unlimited first class travel and entertainment. Or, when legislators as members of various Standing Committees get public undertakings to pick up the tab for their five-star hotels, shopping, gifts et al.

The situation is worse in the States. The MLA-Chairmen lord over State Boards and Commissions and merrily convert them into their private fiefdoms of mini-Ministries with full staff and freedom to poke their noses into all deals -- buying, selling, price fixing etc. Clearly, the latest controversy on the Office of Profit saga is a classic case of '100 chuhe kha ke billi hajj ko chali', as this applies to all Parties, BJP, Congress, JD(U) Samajwadi, BSP, RJD, BJD etc. It has spotlighted the recurring abuse by the powers-that-be of its authority to distribute patronage at will by nullifying the basic object of Article 102.

Thus, it is time for the Government to desist from appointing legislators to 'offices of profit' and merrily promoting legalized corruption. Parliament needs to debate the issue threadbare. Private profit must not be permitted in the name of public service. --- INFA

Silent Anarchy

By Ananya S Guha

The other day I read in the newspapers how an Indian lady fought for the rights of street children. She took them to a restaurant in Delhi's posh Connaught Place to treat them on the occasion of her birthday. A tussle ensued as the staff were not willing to entertain what they thought were 'shabbily dressed' children. The matter reached such a point that it went to the Police. The version of the restaurant owner was that she wanted a 'free' treat for the children. After that the lady came back to stage a protest with her entourage of ten to twelve, hapless, I'm sure, children and sat in front of the restaurant till midnight.

This episode underscores three issues. The first is of course the growing phenomenon of street children. In the city of New Delhi one sees them in rags, begging or trying to pester someone to buy newspapers and trinkets. Even in Shillong, their condition is abysmal, from taking snuff to desperately collecting beer bottles. Secondly, the point of being 'shabbily dressed.' This is an instance of sheer insensitivity and class high handedness which deserves punitive measures in a supposed democracy.

Thirdly, the version of the owner, that the social worker demanded the food free of cost, a statement which she has denied, even if true, is not a criminal offence, and it is high time that such money spinners think of some cause and altruism. They should remember that corporate or no corporate responsibility, they are living in a highly aware and sensitised society, where a large section of the people are fighting for rights of others, in the midst of hatred, mayhem and killings.

If basic love and compassion has no place in a society or country, that society can only be thrown to backwaters of primates. The action of the restaurant owner and his insensitive staff shows how some people of so called metropolitan cities are mired in their cash strapped cultures and have no feeling for the city they live in.

As per the newspaper reports the Delhi Government has rightly taken strong note of this episode and a Government release said it will do all it can to issue strictures on the restaurant owner. However, this is doubtful. The rich and tax evaders in India have a way of getting rid of problems they are entangled in. The power of plutocracy is sovereign. Money speaks and pays.

preceding his retirement, he is unlikely to be rehabilitated to his normal post. He might be a broken man by now. I pray that no extreme and unlikely thoughts creep into his lacerated psyche. So who is to blame here?

Notably if the Election Commission, a Constitutional entity, (Constitution being the mother of all laws) currently headed by Mr. Zaidi, an IAS Officer of forty years administrative experience and a person of professional integrity, holds the view that sting operations need not be construed as clinching evidence in any allegation as to merit punishing an accused, then where do we place this State Govt. officer in question? In a word, can sting operations be considered prima facie evidence to punish anyone?

Yours etc.,
Jerome Diengdoh,
Shillong-2

Perennial LPG problem

Editor,
Apropos the letter of Salil Gewali regarding

In the midst of this the wily guts of the lady social worker is admirable. This may be one case, but there are hundreds of others in the country playing such isolated but just roles. Slowly this is how an edifice of social justice and equity can be built. This is the light in the country, which is otherwise pitched in darkness, because of excruciating poverty that we can look forward to. It is also noteworthy that both state and central judiciaries play pro active roles to address the condition of distressed children, or children in broken homes. In one such judgment a State Bench speaking of children in homes where marital relations are estranged, said that parents must cement relations only for the sake of the children who are the worst sufferers in such contexts.

The episode which I have cited above, based on a newspaper report that I read should arouse the conscience of people who profess ideology, talk of egalitarianism, and mouth platitudes about the state of poverty in the country, even as this silent anarchy of the rich and the upper classes continue unabashedly.

Education for street children and similar drop outs must be a priority on our education agenda. It must be a concerted effort by our state governments and there must be a national policy to implement it. It may not be the conventional syllabus of other boards, but through a relaxed entry point, say ten or twelve or fourteen years standard syllabi can be evolved by respective state governments and education departments. Respectability will be given to the National Education Policy, and this will wean such children from activities, the implications of which they are not aware of. In some Shelter Homes in Shillong education is provided to such distraught children or children from broken homes. Thanks to missionary work, efforts are being made in Meghalaya and also in schools of Kolkata such as Loreto Sealdah etc. Individual efforts must be lauded, but such efforts must have official support of state governments.

Talking about education reaching the people who are in crying need of it, it must reach children and people who need it the most, not necessarily to get best grades, but for social and psychological comfort. The worst thing that can happen to educational policies is to gather dust, as has happened in the past.

shortage of LPG in Shillong I would like to wholeheartedly second the views expressed by him. LPG is no longer a luxury but a necessity hence we should be assured of regular supply. And if LPG is in short supply then the issue should be addressed by the authorities on a war footing, akin to the steps taken during times of emergency. Whatever be the reason for the crisis, logistical or actual shortage, the consumers are not expected to commiserate. In fact the matter should be resolved between the administration and the gas agencies. These meetings did take place and some assurances were given, but to no avail. I know the gas agencies too are trying their level best but if there are shortcomings they need to address those for the benefit of consumers. I appeal to the authorities and the gas agencies to streamline the supply or take other necessary action.

Yours etc.,
Chandan Das,
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.

“Human beings have an inalienable right to invent themselves.”
--- Germaine Greer, O Magazine

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 311 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2016

NEDA- politics or development?
THE North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) has given a fillip to regional political parties who hitherto were cocooned in their respective states. A common regional political platform is a much needed model for the North Eastern states because our destinies are connected. We can change our friends but not our neighbours. Meghalaya and Assam cannot grow separately. Nor can Assam and Nagaland be at loggerheads constantly. If the people of Nagaland are talking of a shared sovereignty with the Indian nation then the North East needs a shared vision for overall development particularly in road connectivity and tourism. Tourists are best teachers of how an inter-state circuit works. They would want to do as many circuits within the shortest possible time. If road connectivity is poor and infrastructure is wanting and if any of the eight states turns into a rogue state that calls a bandh at the drop of a hat, then all plans of a robust tourism network are pulverized. Hence Assam's intent to pass a law against bandhs and strikes must be emulated by all.

NEDA could also become a conflict resolution platform and help resolve the protracted and contentious border conflicts between states (Assam-Meghalaya, Assam-Nagaland) without turning the issue into a political football match involving huge egos. Then there are states like Manipur where differences between the people living in the valley and those in the hills seem insurmountable. Here too the NEDA could become provide a platform not just for political parties but also for civil societies from both sides of the divide to come together, start conversations with each other and thrash out issues in a spirit of give and take. It has oft been stated that we cannot leave important issues to politicians only for they have the propensity to foul up rather than resolve issues. Indeed the NEDA has huge possibilities for the region but one hopes that its vision is larger than just vote-capturing and politicking. Such a narrow vision would fail the aspirations of the people of the North East. And those who join the NEDA must themselves spell out this broader, more inclusive vision for the region. In the North East we must swim together or we will sink separately.

LOOKING BACK
February 17, 1989

UGC frames code of conduct for College, University teachers

The University Grants Commission has framed a code of professional ethics for university and college teachers which it desired. The code adopted after wide ranging discussions with the teachers representatives covers aspects like a teacher's obligations towards the teaching profession, students, colleagues authorities, non teaching staff, guardians and the society. The code says the teacher should adhere to a responsible pattern of conduct and demeanour expected of them by the community, seek to make professional growth continuous through study and research, perform their duties in the form of teaching, tutorials, practical and seminar work conscientiously and with dedication, encourage students to improve their attainments, develop their personalities and at the same time contribute to community welfare. Cooperate with the authorities for the betterment of the institutions keeping in view the interest and in conformity with dignity of the profession, adhere to conditions of contract of service and work to improve education in the community and strengthen the community's moral and intellectual life. The UGC in a release here urged the

university authorities to keep in mind the code while framing service conduct rules so as to help the higher education system.
Manipuri urged to shun family planning
Manipur Education Minister Mr Y Irabot Singh ahs advised the Manipuri people not to accept family planning programme as their population was already small. Mr Singh said the centre did nto consider their demand for inclusion of Manipuri language in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution saying that their population is very small. "If the Manipuri population increases up to one crore or more then government might consider the demand" he said while inaugurating the 28th annual session of Manipuri Shahitya Parishad at Sibsagar in Assam on February 12.
Bomb scare in Guwahati-Calcutta Airbus
The Indian Airlines Guwahati-Calcutta airbus was today thoroughly searched on landing here following an anonymous call that a bomb had been placed in it. The airbus was taken to the isolation bay and searched but nothing was found. The phone call was received about fifteen minutes before the arrival of the plane, officials said.

Govt functions in silos but people are an integrated entity

By Patricia Mukhim

From my own understanding, the biggest critics of the Integrated Basin Development and Livelihoods Programme (IBDLP) envisioned by the Chief Minister sometime in 2010 are those in the Government. The reason is simple. The IBDLP commonly known as the Basin Development Programme assesses the holistic needs of communities. What do rural communities need apart from a livelihood? Their lives are an integrated whole and comprises the need for clean drinking water (Water Resources Dept) an ecology that sustains their agricultural practices (Forest &Environment Dept), more innovative ways of creating organic manure so they can wean themselves from the chemical fertiliser and pesticides- driven agriculture they had practised for decades. They also need to know the current health of the soil in their farmlands and how not to lose their healthy topsoil due to heavy rains (Agriculture, Horticulture & Soil Conservation Department). Some who wish to take up Fisheries also need the same kind of support system and not just the Fisheries Department to help them. They need to remain healthy and well nourished so they can pursue their livelihoods (Health & Community and Rural Department for rural sanitation etc). Communities also require constant training and mentoring to understand marketing challenges. They need to know that individual efforts pay short term dividends but when they become a strong farmer's federation they stand to gain more from the ability to decide market prices without being exploited by middle men who end up making the most profit. There are NGOs that specialise in such training/mentoring and the Basin programme itself has created the Meghalaya Institute of Governance that is intended to build the capacities of communities. Hence the people in the MIG have to have the passion and dedication of social workers and spend more time in the field than in the offices with computers. In that respect one must commend the efforts of the North East Slow Food and Agro-Biodiversity Society (NESFAS) whose field operatives are people-friendly and have been able to work in tandem with communities and learn from them instead of pushing their urban-bred attitudes on rural folks. This is because the NESFAS staff (though they are very few in number) are themselves constantly mentored and trained by those who know what community work actually entails. NESFAS's ability to convince schools to start kitchen gardens to meet their midday meal needs is an effort that should be replicated in all schools and not just those in rural areas. This also connects students to the soil and to nature - an activity that is so far removed from the curriculum of schools today. The best field operatives of NESFAS are those with a Social Work background but who also belong to a rural community themselves and have not forgotten their roots. Often one finds that an urban bred kid is most inadequate to work with rural communities because they first have to unlearn so much of the urban biases they carry. The education system today is taking our children away from real life challenges. Children don't even recognise the vegetables, leaves and herbs that kept their ancestors healthy. They don't know the medicinal herbs that their parents and grand-parents can readily identify to stop bleeding and the wounds from going septic in case of a cut or a fall. They will step on medicinal herbs that heal dysentery and diarrhoea without knowing how precious these are. This is the fast food generation which carries the scars of that junk food culture. Our education system is imperiling the lives of this generation because it is taking the kids further and further away from the grim realities of life. Today's generation particularly the urban youth will grow up becoming part of the problem. This is a challenge for governments in this country and in our State. But does the government here have the capacity to tackle these multifarious challenges? Perhaps Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma thought of this integrated approach to development when he conceived of the IBDLP but neither his colleagues nor the bureaucracy, (barring a few), have the capacity to translate that vision into action. The IBDLP is a bold

initiative which imagined that the Departments would CONVERGE in order to provide the best services to the people. But that was not to be because each Department exercises its own clout and wants to play around with the funds allocated to it the way its sees best. Hence efforts are so fragmented that they fail to address the needs of communities because of the simple reason that the community needs all the Departments to work in tandem and not separately or independently. Departments need to collaborate rather than insulate themselves into little kingdoms. But this is easier said than done. The Indian bureaucracy is a monolith where the inmates work harder to protect their own interests. They are hardly bothered about the interests of the people they are expected to serve. And how can anyone going around with the security paraphernalia that distinguishes him/her from the common person ever work with those persons right there at the grass roots. It is a defective, dysfunctional system and the 'intelligent' Chief Minister of Meghalaya did not just stumble into the idea of the IBDLP but it must have been a concept he envisaged after several visits to rural Meghalaya and listening to the plight of people there. The IBDLP is meant to be a model where a comprehensive form of assistance (an entire value chain) would actually reach the rural stakeholders (not beneficiaries). Dr Mukul Sangma did not imagine that he would meet so much resistance from his own Government - a Government that has a standard answer to every demand for funds - No Funds. It is very evident that the model of governance in this country which is a legacy of the British Raj is not designed to serve the needs of our rural communities. The civil services lack one important criterion. The officers do not know how to engage in a conversation with ordinary people. They carry a body language that seeks compliance from all and an impatience to listen to others because they think they know it all; have been there; done that. With this attitude how can they ever succeed in implementing pro-people, pro- poor interventions? It is to circumvent the inertia of a static bureaucracy that the IBDLP allows lateral entry for people with the expertise, commitment and a background in social work and social mobilization processes. Alas! In the absence of a driving force with the same passion and commitment, these young people have developed a 'sarkari' mindset more at home with their laptops and desktops but not so comfortable in the rural outback. Studies have shown that excessive engagement with the internet embodies today's individualistic and diffused society. This group of young workforce engaged (not employed) by the MBDA should be spending more time with the communities and helping them understand the wealth of resources that are still available and planning with them how those resources can be employed for community good as opposed to the pursuit of individual good which is rapidly becoming the rule in most villages. When villagers plan a development model with a holistic perspective they will also realize that not all the community resources they thought belonged to them actually do so. They will realize that large chunks of the land, forest and water sources do not belong to them anymore. Then they might start asking the right questions and get the right answers. That is part of the empowerment process - a process where people will then begin to assert their rights! For far too long our rural folks have allowed others to do the thinking and speaking for them. And those who claim to speak on their behalf are all urbanites who hardly know the indignities of poverty. Development of the human mind and ability to question the system is the greatest empowerment and if the IBDLP succeeds in this significant mission then it would have achieved its noble mission. For far too long, Governments have pushed in subsidies and people have unquestioningly accepted those. The IBDLP through its several verticals has the capacity to transform people into stakeholders who can actually take on the system! Is the CM going to allow the IBDLP to be the Change We All Want To See? The IBDLP is not short on critics outside the Government too. I would suggest that those critics point out specific contentious points where they find the programme not working and why. Just being generic or mimicking what someone else is saying amounts to gossip. And gossip is not the same as criticism.

Congress factionalism reaches its peak in Karnataka High command needs to intervene to save its government

By Kalyani Shankar

The Congress party's latest headache now comes from Karnataka, the biggest Congress ruled state, after it tasted such rebellion from Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand and Puducherry in recent times. Karnataka is heading towards a political crisis after the chief minister Siddharamaiah dropped 14 of his ministers last week and inducted 13 new ministers. The major reshuffle came soon after the Rajya Sabha elections after the Congress won three of the four Rajya Sabha seats and four of the seven seats in the state legislative council's biennial elections. These elections saw allegations of blatant corruption and cross voting. Siddaramaiah has reshuffled his Cabinet for the first time in three years. In the 224-member assembly, the ruling Congress has 123 MLAs. The chief minister as well as the Congress leadership in Delhi should have expected this reaction from the ministers who had been dropped. As one former Congress chief minister claims, it is easy to add members to the cabinet but difficult to drop them. Obviously Siddharamaiah has ruffled the feathers and annoyed senior and well-established leaders like matinee idol Ambareesh, Srinivasaprasad and others. In fact he had dropped leaders from various castes on health and other grounds. Kannada film star Ambareesh, who lost his Cabinet berth, has resigned as MLA and more might follow. Angry followers of Ambareesh, and other senior ministers who lost their job like V Srinivasasa Prasad, Quamarulla Islam and Baburao Chinchansur, have hit the streets in Gulbarga, Mandya, and Mysore. Siddharamaiah is now struggling to deal with the volatile situation, as there is an open war between the senior Congress leaders and the chief minister. The Congress leadership in Delhi failed to assess the situation even after former External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna gave his assessment during his March meeting with the Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. Krishna is reported to have conveyed that things are dangerously on the slide in the southern state. At the root of all this tension is the 'outsider' tag of Siddaramaiah, who had come from JD(S). He had done little to assimilate his supporters with the Congress workers. Until Siddaramaiah had joined the Congress in 2005, he had been a staunch anti-Congress politician playing his innings in Janata Dal. Even after 12 years, the local Congress leaders still regard him as an outsider who does not know the Congress party's culture. They complain that at least half the cabinet are old friends of the chief minister who had switched sides when he joined the Congress and all his close ides and advisers are also from the Janata Dal background. His caste politics of tilting towards backward classes has also distanced traditional Lingayats, Vokkaligas and Scheduled Caste voters from the Congress, his detractors say. The simmering discontent in Karnataka Congress against Siddaramaiah had intensified since March when nearly 50 per cent of the party legislators skipped the crucial Congress legislature party (CLP) meeting. The Congress High Command faces a catch -22 situation. It can neither get rid of Siddharamaiah nor keep him in the saddle. Speculations about Siddharamaiah's removal have surfaced time and again but the chief minister had used his outsider card to beat his detractors. If he is replaced, Siddharamaiah will exit with his supporters which means the government would collapse. Continuing him would mean continuing the crisis leading to a possible defeat in 2018 polls. The Congress high command has the difficult task of not only fire fighting but also taking steps to quell the dissidence besides keeping the flock together. This is where the difficulty comes when the party is weak and more and more rebels are surfacing in the Congress ruled states. Karnataka has always been known for its factionalism. There are various groups, which do not see eye to eye. The party High Command has to find ways of balancing these factions and find a leader acceptable to all factions. With the Congress versus Congress fight going on in the ruling party, the BJP is watching the fun. Lacking strong local leadership, the BJP had succeeded in Assam and elsewhere by importing senior leaders from other parties. It had improved its vote share from 18 per cent to 43 per cent in the 2014 polls in Karnataka. With former chief minister B S Yeddyurappa returning as state BJP president, the possibility of the Lingayat strongman wooing the rebels is the reality. He had declared in April when he took over as the state BJP chief that his main aim was to make 'Karnataka free from Congress' . Siddharamaiah has realised that he need not heed the Congress High Command particularly after the party lost the successive polls in important states like Haryana, Maharashtra and now Assam. The immediate task for the Congress leadership therefore is to pacify the rebels. The second is to rein in the chief minister. The third is to pacify the various groups and factions in the state Congress. The fourth is to chalk out a strategy about how to woo the various castes and hold on to the present vote bank. Senior party leaders caution that if the situation is not taken seriously, there is fear of a repeat of the Uttarakhand-type situation. The Congress needs a course correction to rectify the situation. Karnataka is the only big state it is ruling at present and the party cannot afford to lose the state. (IPA Service)

Yours etc.,
Fabian Lyngdoh,
Viaemail

TO THE EDITOR

On the issue of street hawkers!
Editor,
The issue of street hawkers has entered into an interesting public debate triggered by Patricia Mukhim's article, 'Hawkers may have rights but what about responsibilities' (ST. June 17th, 2016). I wish to contribute to the debate with no particular intention of siding with the motion or the opposition, but to state the facts as they are. The PWD roads and Municipal footpaths were constructed for general public purposes, and not for private individuals to set up stalls for selling either material goods or services. As P D Nongrum said, emotions should not blind our judgements in trying hard to justify the unjustifiable, because the PWD roads and SMB footpaths are not natural markets (ST. June 20th, 2016). I agree with Rev. NB Diengdoh that the hawkers are part of our society who were compelled by circumstances to be hawkers (ST. June 21st, 2016). Cow dung is a valuable matter which a farmer would lovingly handle with his bare hands to fertilize his crops. But the same matter would be menacing dirt if it happens to be in a Church yard's lawn or in the school compound. A colourful plastic bag is a beautiful thing to carry clothing, books or other items, but if it happens to be in a roadside drain it would be an eyesore. So it is said that dirt is nothing but ordinary matter in the wrong place. Likewise the hawkers who crowd the streets and footpaths are ordinary and respectable citizens, but happen to be in the wrong place. Should we encourage respectable citizens to remain in the wrong place forever? Moreover, the hawkers in the streets of Shillong do not constitute the vast sections of the poor on this part of the earth. The vast majority of the poor are struggling for their livelihood in some other rightful places.

I believe that Patricia Mukhim's article is a purely rational and legal expression, and not a moral treatment of the issue in question, and she is right on that line. Rationally and legally speaking, a criminal who committed a heinous crime and is convicted by the court to capital punishment, must be executed whether he is rich or poor, powerful or weak. The President's act of pardon in such a case is not based on rational argument, but on extra-legal and moral considerations. Likewise, rationally and legally speaking, some selected individuals have no right to set up private business on the public footpaths; hence, they should be evicted, and there is no question about it. How they should be evicted is more of a moral question than a rational one. Whether they should be evicted straight away, or be provided with alternative locations, or be economically empowered through other non-objectionable enterprises, is the joint responsibility of the society and the State. I had made some suggestions on

this issue in the article, 'Solving Shillong's manifold problems' (ST. October 8th, 2014). It is good to have sympathy with the hawkers for being compelled to earn their living in the wrong places, but it is not a charitable act to make them believe that they are engaging in businesses in the rightful places. I agree with Omarka Laloo who expressed positive comments on the actions of the Jowai Municipal Board to evict roadside vendors from the footpaths at Jawmusiang Jowai, who are sometimes motivated to remain there by sheer greed, ignorance and lawlessness, with the sole motive of earning money at any cost with no thought for peace, health and development (ST. June 22nd, 2016). Sometime ago a woman who had claimed a particular spot in the street at Motphran in Shillong as her private property had badly assaulted another poor woman who attempted to spread her wares there. The very idea of working for the poor and

solution either because in any kind of social system there are inherent loopholes. Working for the poor is to empower them in whatever way we can to be in their rightful places, and not to encourage them to remain as matter in the wrong place, as that would only devalue their real human dignity.

“It has never been my object to record my dreams, just to realize them.”
--- Man Ray, O Magazine

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 312 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2016

The Brexit referendum

NOT many could foresee Britain's exit (Brexit) from the European Union (EU). More than 17.4 million people voted in the referendum on Thursday to sever ties with the European Union, and about 16.1 million to remain in the bloc. It was a win of 52 % against 48 % who voted to remain with the EU. This also means that the United Kingdom is divided down the middle and is no longer so united in ideology. Political analysts see Brexit as a historic decision which would reshape world politics and create tremors In the European continent and the West. Prime Minister David Cameron who led the movement to remain within the EU has accepted defeat graciously and announced that he would step down by October this year. As expected the markets were the first to feel the shock waves. The British pound plummeted and stock markets bore the brunt of the referendum. Nigel Farage, known to be racist and anti-immigration, led the exit EU campaign. The Brexit referendum has also created a Domino effect. Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon said that Scotland might go in for an independence referendum considering that Scotland voted overwhelmingly for remaining with the EU. Shell-shocked European leaders particularly, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany have said that the British vote would further limit their ability to move forward with economic and political integration, a process that had all but stalled anyway.

Britain is the first country to leave the 28-member EU which has been struggling with its immigration policy over which large section of Britons disagreed the most. The Middle East crisis has led to an unprecedented influx of migrants last year. The overall migration figure of 330,000 people in 2015, more than half of them from the European Union was what triggered the referendum. Gripped by xenophobia Britons felt that their national identity was under threat and that influx was putting enormous pressure on schools, health care and housing. Besides, the UK's reducing clout in the economic affairs of the EU was what pushed Britons to reclaim their lost pride. In India the RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has allayed fears of any major financial shocks or policy shifts. But the toll that Brexit will take cannot be readily assessed.

LOOKING BACK
February 17, 1989

Nagaland PCC(I) urged Govt. to solve underground issue

The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (NPCC-I) has urged the state government to take positive steps in paving the way for a peaceful solution to the longstanding problem of underground rebels. Describing the underground rebels as an "inalienable part of Naga community", NPCC (I) emphasized on an approach based on humanitarian and political considerations.

In a resolution adopted at a joint meeting of NPCC(I) executive and legislature party held last Monday, the party called upon all sections of the people to sink their differences and join hands to help resolve the problem. NPCC(I) also asked the state government to enforce total prohibition in the state and prohibits exhibition of video films. The measures were suggested in view of rising drugs abuse and alcoholism, and NPCC(I) release said.

The joint meeting congratulated the people of Nagaland for extending support to the Congress(I) during the recent Assembly polls and sought their cooperation in fulfilling the election commitments.

Don't say it with chocolate always

If you love someone don't always say it with chocolates as the results might prove fatal Patriarch

Aimana, realised this when his gift of a chocolate caused the death of his grand daughter yesterday. The one-year old child choked to death after eating the chocolate the grand father had gifted the child on her first visit to her ancestral home. The childe, Molamma, was rushed to the Kottayam Medical College Hospital, where she was pronounced dead. The grand father was on the first visit to his in law's house after her birth and he had presented the chocolate as his first gift to his grand daughter.

MCTA meet to be significant

The 15th Annual General Conference of the Meghalaya College Teachers' Association will have a greater significance this year as the Chief Minister, Mr Purno Sangma as well as the Deputy Chief Minister Mr D D Lapang, who is also in charge of education will be addressing the conference. The recent decision to the State government to implement the UGC scales of pay along with other allowances has been welcomed by the association.The organizers are expecting a large number of delegates from Shillong and outside who will discuss their problems and try to find solutions so that the quality of higher education may be improved, it is learnt.

The BJP or the Congress 2.0?

By Rahul Saikia

During his recent swearing-in ceremony in Guwahati, the new chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal concluded his speech with the popular nationalist slogan 'Jai Hind'. Also present on stage was the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who ended his own speech with the contrasting regionalist slogan 'Jai Axom'. This piece of theatrical juxtaposition - the nationalist acknowledgment of regionalism (and vice-versa) - could either have been purely coincidental or cleverly orchestrated. Whatever the case, it does perhaps point to a larger process of negotiation between the BJP's 'Hindu nationalism' and various forms of 'Assamese nationalism'.

This article explores Assam's contemporary political landscape as a larger negotiated space (of co-operation, compromise, and contestation) between the nationalist BJP and various regional political stakeholders. The first argument here is that these nationalist-and-regionalist negotiations could limit both the BJP's nationalist agenda (of the Hindutva variety) in Assam, even as they stifle various Assamese nationalisms (of the anti-mainland variety). To some extent, the aim here is to reassess certain concerns over the negotiating powers of local political parties vis-a-vis the central government. That said, the second argument here is that these contemporary negotiations do not necessarily represent an altogether new (or inspiring) political paradigm in the region.

The BJP's defeat in Bihar was partly attributed to its inability to project itself through a popular local alliance - which exacerbated its already authoritarian and divisive image. In contrast, the BJP's electoral strategy in Assam was to successfully negotiate the state's complex demographics by variously acknowledging, attracting and accommodating a plethora of local stakeholders and their respective ethnic constituencies. These succesfull negotiations with local stakeholders include - the alliance with the AGP and the BPF (to secure Assamese Hindu and Bodo votes); the projection of Sarbananda Sonowal as chief minister

(to project a pro-tribal stance); the poaching of Hemanta Biswa Sarma (to attract erstwhile Congress supporters); the decision to field a relatively large number of Muslim candidates (to shed the party's communal image). For their part, the local political parties tapped into the BJP's formidable national image and resources to remove a common enemy in the state Congress government.

These electoral negotiations also seem to reflect a larger process of cultural negotiation between various nationalist-and-regionalist forces in the state. In a recent article, the senior journalist Shekhar Gupta observed how RSS workers in Assam have gradually managed to re-orient Assamese nationalism away from its erstwhile 'anti-outsider agenda' (against both Bengali Hindus and Muslims) towards a predominantly 'anti-Muslim immigrant' rhetoric. This in turn illustrates how the RSS has managed to partially subsume the Assamese nationalist movement into the larger fold of its Hindu nationalist agenda. In other cases however, it is the RSS which has been compelled to accept certain moderate aspects of Assamese Hindus - with the latter still remaining indifferent to Hindutva projects like beef politics and the Ram temple issue.

To some extent, these political and cultural negotiations suggest that Assam's complex demographics could compel the BJP and the RSS to dilute its Hindu nationalist agenda (to the relief of liberals), even as local parties like the AGP and the BPF could use their alliance with the nationalist BJP to ward off the potential threat of radical Islam and illegal influx (to the relief of conservatives). Still, such a hypothetical balancing act is fraught with its own obvious communal dangers - as the potential growth of right-wing Hindutva could simply work to intensify the growth of radical Islam (and vice-versa) within the state.

Moving on, it should however be noted that these national-and-regional negotiations do not represent an entirely new political paradigm within the north-east. After all, successive Congress

governments in Assam have similarly accommodated various regional movements (e.g. with the BPF and the 'minority vote'). In a somewhat similar vein, one of Modi's first post-electoral announcements in Assam was the granting of ST status to 'Hill Bodos' and 'Plain Karbis'. That the BJP is pursuing a similar path of selective patronage illustrates how it can only realize a pan-Indian sense of political legitimacy by accommodating various regionalist aspirations. This perhaps explains the prime minister's recent multicultural overtures - speaking Assamese, playing Khasi drums, saluting local football heroes - all in an attempt to publicly project himself as the benevolent and all embracing figure-head of the nation. In this regard, there is something about Narendra Modi's savvy PR campaign which seems to echo Jawaharlal Nehru's own erstwhile engagements with various regional cultures to secure the legitimacy of the Congress as 'the' pan-Indian party.

These similarities with the Congress suggest that the saffron party might gradually adopt a more pragmatic multi-cultural stance within the north-east (except perhaps with regards to one particular community). Supporters of the BJP will further insist that the party's stated priorities - modest nationalism, economic growth, government efficiency, political decentralization - represent a superior political model compared to that followed by the Congress. At present however, there still seems to be one worrisome similarity between the two national parties - i.e. their shared tendency of selective political patronage and puppetry over local parties, politicians and movements. With numerous reports and rumours that the BJP is pursuing precisely such a strategy - of 'winning over' so called dissidents from rival political parties - it is difficult to claim otherwise (e.g. the recent Uttarkhand fiasco).

Citing these similarities between the Congress and the BJP, a young Shillong businessman and friend recently explained - 'See it is all about buying and selling in the end. Before there was only one buyer [national party] and now there are two buyers...so basically nothing much has changed'. This political logic does not

apply to all politicians. Still, the implication here is that the larger national parties routinely 'poach' (to use corporate terminology) those local politicians who eagerly 'switch' their own political loyalties in order to ensure continual central patronage and funding.

This particular form central patronage which disrupts elected state governments reveals the more depressing side of centre-state negotiations. On one level, it takes the sheen off the national parties and their loud public proclamations to foster and respect the political autonomy of the states. At the same time, it also reveals how some local politicians are willing to abandon their own political parties and local constituencies simply to ensure continued central patronage. Given its largely 'informal' and 'top-down' nature, it also is unlikely that this kind of central patronage extends beyond a small clique of local ministers, family members, local businessmen and party workers - thereby excluding the vast majority of common people.

These political trends strengthen the growing public perception that both the national and the local parties are more concerned with 'staying in power' than securing the welfare of the people. This in turn has led to renewed public calls for genuine grassroots mobilizations to represent various excluded sections of society (i.e. the remaining 80%). Some of these emerging grassroots movements therefore serve as important facilitators of public resistance and self-empowerment in the face of mounting government failures.

Given the power of the central government, it is often cited that local politicians find themselves compelled to blindly follow certain diktats coming out of New Delhi. Even if this is the case, these local politicians still command considerable local power and resources to pursue various strategies of economic development, social welfare, communal harmony and efficient governance within their respective constituencies. Whether they will actually pursue such locally relevant developmental strategies is entirely their own choice. Still, it is a choice which will not go unnoticed - either by the central government, their local constituencies and various grassroots movements.

Britain's EU-exit adds to global uncertainties
India can ride out storm and reset special ties

By S. Sethuraman

The United Kingdom, in a historic vote on June 23, decided narrowly by 52 per cent to 48, to exit European Union (EU) it has lived with through four decades of a contrived special relationship. The decisive "Leave" vote throws the global financial markets into another spell of turbulence and adds to uncertainties on movements of stocks, currencies and capital flows. Growth recovery in world trade could also suffer.

Though markets rolled all over and there could be some negative impact on trade and finance flows for several countries not excluding India, RBI Governor Dr Raghuram Rajan had already drawn attention to emerging risks in his last policy review on June 7 and cited the country's fundamentals to ride out the consequences.

In a statement within a few hours of the UK result announcement, Dr Rajan said RBI would take all necessary steps, including liquidity support (both dollar and INR), to ensure orderly conditions in financial markets. The central bank has been maintaining a close vigil on market developments, both at home and abroad, in the run-up to the referendum in Britain.

Dr Rajan in his latest statement noted that markets were trying to factor the consequences of this development which had already led to sharp corrections in financial markets around the world. "The Indian economy has good fundamentals, low short term external debt and sizeable foreign reserves. These should stand the country in good stead in the days to come", he said.

Similarly, a statement from Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley, who is abroad, said India was well prepared to deal with the short and medium term consequences of Brexit: "Our macro-economic fundamentals are sound with a very comfortable external position, a rock-solid commitment to fiscal discipline, and declining inflation. Our immediate and medium-term firewalls are solid too in the form of a healthy reserve position".

But the vote for "Leave" has landed Britain in a political and economic crisis, considerably weakening the position of Conservative Prime Minister Cameron, who led the campaign to "Remain", and shaking up the markets, the once-powerful Pound tumbling and damaging the image of the world's leading financial centre, London.

The U K economy had been performing reasonably well recently, among advanced nations, despite its current account deficits which peaked to -5.2 per cent of GDP in 2015. IMF had projected 1.9 per cent growth in 2016 and 2.2 per cent for 2017 on the assumption of the country continuing as part of EU.

This would have to be revised down in the light of substantial negative factors that would result from the victory of euroceptics. The British Government and the Bank of England would be expected to gear policies to ensure stability and reduce uncertainty, whatever the future may behold.

Britain would have to negotiate the terms of its withdrawal from EU once it determines a date even while all this would involve a considerable churning up in

politics. Mr Cameron who lost the referendum faces a rival in the leading voice of the "Leave" movement, Mr Boris Johnson, Conservative MP and former Mayor of London. Mr Cameron has already offered to resign taking responsibility for the defeat of his "Remain" campaign.

The exit has also delivered a shock to EU which has to keep its pack together - especially countries within the euro zone (single-currency union of which UK was not part). The vote has been viewed by economists as diminishing the roles of both UK and EU with its thirty odd member-countries.

Mr Johnson making a powerful case talked of Britain taking back its "destiny" and believe in what Britain can do in global trade and finance. The other central figure in the "Leave" campaign has been Mr Nigel Farage, UK Independence Party leader, who has built his political career on leaving the EU. He said the "war had been won". Mr Farage in fact calls June 23 as the real Independence Day for Britain.

Irrespective of changes that may occur on the British political scene in the near future, the referendum has had an unsettling effect for scores of countries with a historic relationship with London. But Britain has first to gear its policies toward stability and reducing uncertainty. An IMF analysis found that the economic effects of an exit would likely be negative and substantial for the UK.

The United States had taken great interest in promoting continuance of Britain's EU-partnership. Indeed, the possible risks from a negative vote in Britain had led the Federal Reserve, among other factors, to go slow with its rate hikes. The coming months would reveal how Britain negotiates its withdrawal from EU and re-sets its economic and political relations with the United States and other advanced nations and the rest of the world. Detached from EU, It would have also to follow WTO rules on trade and related disputes.

Indo-UK economic relations have been solid. India has over recent years enlarged its business ties with UK and is now the leading investor there. For many countries including India, UK had held attraction being part of the EU facilitating access to all countries of the single market for trade and investments. This access to European markets was a key driver for Indian companies going to UK.

Though Indo-UK bilateral trade was relatively limited - worth 14 billion dollars both ways in 2015 - it is one of the seven top countries with which India has a trade surplus. Leading Indian business organisations feel Britain's exit from EU would create considerable uncertainty for not only Indian businessmen with possible adverse impact on investment but also for movement of professionals to that country.

There is some concern among the large segment of population of Indian origin - migrants - given the strident tone of campaigners for quitting EU and the fears they had evoked of Britain being flooded with illegal immigrants from the Middle East who had crossed over into EU. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Counterfeit rule of the people

Editor,

Apropos the letter "A house divided against itself cannot stand" (ST, June 17, 2016) by Aiborlang Nongsiej by and large encapsulates the popular belief of how things turn out to be when Governments remain "stable" or become "unstable". This kind of argument sounds reasonable but is far from the truth in my perception as our democracy has become a wonderfully crafted ruse. Not so long ago we have somehow divorced the results of elections from the formulation of policy. We have been brainwashed into thinking that we are doing something important when we vote when it is just a distraction and a collective ego trip. In all honesty, can we possibly believe our votes will change anything of importance? For me, the answer is No. I think that elections give us a false sense of having a stake in the system. That is not the case. In fact, common villagers have a far more realistic approach to elections as they see them as nothing more than an

extended festival of feasts to be enjoyed while they last with no expectations for the future.

Most of the decisions that determine the course of our lives are not taken by our political leaders or bureaucrats. These decisions are made remotely by lobbies and other forces that have no name who gnaw at the entrails of Government. And Government in turn sucks the lifeblood out of the people through taxes especially from the middle class, who buy things they do not really want or need but just to be one up over their neighbours while struggling to repay the loans they take to buy these things and doing the jobs they hate.

And what about the poor? Theirs is a daily war for survival with all the odds stacked against them. That a large majority of them still manage to lead honest lives is a daily miracle. Hence, I am grateful to them for continuing to do so, for I can well imagine the repercussions if one day they decide to stop doing this. In my view therefore this is the present state of our "Democracy" and I think that things will remain the same at least till the foreseeable future irrespective of who leads the pack of our so-called leaders.

Yours etc.,
Donaldson Shanpru
Shillong - 2

Food and healthy lifestyle

Editor

There has been a global awareness about healthy life style and consumption of healthy foods around the planet among the consumers. Several consumers are even ready to pay extra money for procuring high quality food rich in specialized nutrients. As such the global nutraceutical and functional food industries have gained momentum with respect to investments, improvements in food technology and food research, generating rapid employment and bringing rich dividends with respect to foreign exchange for producer countries. For example, nutraceutical bread is a specialized and value added food product containing specialized constituents beneficial to consumer health. The ingredients incorporated into such new value added products have rich medicinal properties and can reduce the risk of specific health problems like cardiovascular diseases. Some of the ingredients incorporated into nutraceutical bread could be whole wheat/barley/maize/

soy flour, sorghum bran, hemp hearts, flax seed, fenugreek seed or sunflower seed to mention only a handful to enrich the nutritional content and medicinal properties of the final bread product produced. The ingredients of nutraceutical bread is not just limited or restricted to these constituents only but vary according to modern research and development and new innovations emerging rapidly in the realm of nutraceutical and functional food industries around the globe. South and South East Asian nations are rich in food biodiversity and strong agricultural heritage has huge potential for developing nutraceutical and functional food industries to take a stake in the international global market worth several billion dollars. Also SouthAnd South East Asia have a rich heritage of research and development, skilled personnel, technological innovations, hence initial investment in the nutraceutical and functional food industries can pay back rich dividends for the country in the not so distant future.

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

Top CEOs committing suicide under work stress, writes Shweta Patwardhan

Increasingly, scores of well educated, highly paid CEOs, senior managers of multinationals and those working with PSUs are taking their own lives due to stress and inability to cope with a life. On May 16, 2016, 47-year-old Vineet Whig's, COO of Britannica committed suicide by jumping off from the 19th floor of Belvedere Park tower in Gurgaon's DLF phase-2 area.

A note was found from Vineet Whig's, COO of Britannica, pocket stating that he was fed up with his life, Vinit Vij, lived with his wife and three children in an apartment in Tower C and allegedly jumped off from the top floor of the same tower at 8 am. On April 28, 2016, Sudhindra Murthy, 57, a senior manager, working with the bank's JP Nagar branch in Bangalore.

He was allegedly harassed by seniors over recovery of loans. Last year alone, Wall Street saw more than a dozen suicides. In India, many CEOs and senior managers have taken their lives and at the time of writing this story reports indicated that the Chief Conservator of Forests, Haryana, Ajay Kadian had jumped off a 6th floor hotel room in a presumed suicide.

Life can be stressful and especially so when one has



superior. Things started going wrong from day one - the superior with whom she had a dotted line reporting



allegedly climbed the ladder and become a senior professional in a company. And yet, despite years of experience in professional field and not to mention the maturity that comes with greying hair, hundreds of persons across India prefer to end their lives leaving their near and dear ones askance.

Fortunately Usha Fernandes did not end her life though. She was working in a large corporation with an edgy and dogmatic

and the bulk of assignments, began to assign work she had completed to a junior to check, rather than checking it herself.

When Fernandes complained, with her senior superior flouncing out of the room saying it is her prerogative how she handled her staff. Initially Fernandes ignored the harassment, sometimes she would push back; and eventually, it came to a point where it started affecting her performance. As pressure to

Pressure to perform

perform piled up, so did the harassment.

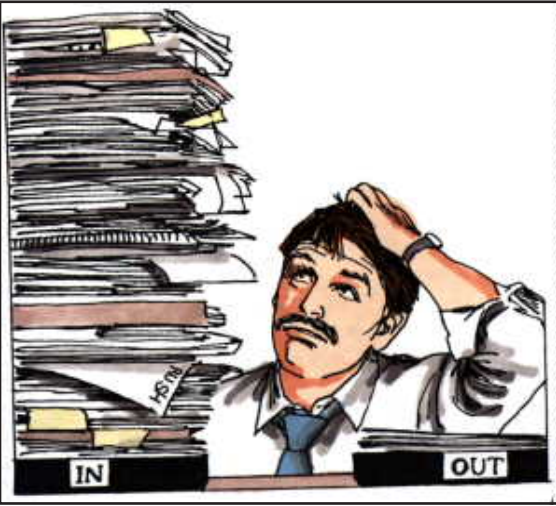
One day, she woke up in the middle of the night, bathed in sweat and short of breath. She remained in hospital for two weeks on account of a heart attack and finally quit the toxic job.

"Initially I did not take it seriously; I thought my work would speak for me. I never realised it was systematic harassment; nor did it cross my mind to quit. In hindsight, I think could just have told the woman to take a flying leap. But it took me many years to even think it!" says Fernandes.

For Menaka Shivaji, sexual harassment was an extra ingredient in an already deadly cocktail of de-

manding clients, hectic schedules combined with short deadlines. A superior who insisted on sexual favours before evaluating her work and an indifferent management just meant that she felt she had "no choice but to quit and move cities, because I was so traumatised," says the 32-year-old insurance professional.

Fernandes and Shivaji



to take their own lives. There are reasons behind this inability to communicate and end life.

Harish Shetty, a Mumbai based psychologist, "We live in a highly pressurised society with practically no safety valves." According to Shetty one of the biggest fallouts of globalisation is the breakdown of the family system which has left people, adults and children, rudderless and without safety nets.

(Contd on P-VII)

We need three types of relationships

"We need to talk," my wife says. I sit nervously on the edge of a chair. She continues: "I want to hear your views on the comparative merits of the warp propulsion systems of the Millennium Falcon and the Starship Enterprise in tedious detail." For ten seconds, I am the happiest man who ever lived. And then I wake up.

Today, boys and girls, we discuss relationships. Rule one says that marital relationships are complex but must be taken seriously.

A man who suspected his wife of cheating put a spell on her, according to a recent news link sent by a reader. When she met her secret lover for a tryst in a minibus, the magic caused them to become physically stuck together. The lover, speaking from inside the vehicle in Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya, pleaded for release: "I will give you all my goats." The husband uttered the words that broke the spell, the Nairobi newspaper reported.

If spells and goats are too dramatic for your own relationship, try Britain, which goes to the opposite extreme: it is considered a serious criminal offence to speak impolitely, even during extreme marital discord. One man filed for divorce 15 years after his wife stopped talking to him entirely, communicating only in phrases scribbled on little yellow post-it notes, the New York Times reported.

I men-tioned this story in the office and several men went quiet, apparently finding this prospect quite attractive. Of course the present writer was not among them, being married to the most amazing woman in the world, and I would write that even if

she wasn't dictating this sentence to me.

The second category is work relationships, which can be painful to unravel. So I admire a woman in China who recently decided to seek adventure by simply asking for an official I Resign Form (that's how it's done in that country) and writing: "Because the world is big." The term became a viral catchphrase. You can answer any "why" question with it and sound deep and enigmatic. "Why do you take sugar in your coffee?" "Because the world is big." "Why are you so ****ing annoying?" "Because the world is big," and so on.

A third category of relationships are casual ones - but they too can change your life, I learned from another recent news story. A man in the US state of Oregon was a regular consumer of Domino's pizza. When he failed to order for days, staff went to his house, got no answer and called police, who broke in and found him in need of medical help. Commentators reported the irony that fast food addiction saved his life. No one mentioned that it may have nearly killed him in the first place.

This reminded me of a press release I once got from the Chinese government saying that it had rebuilt the wrecked historical temples of Tibet, forgetting to mention that they were the ones who had smashed them up.

But going back to that New York Times piece on divorce, one Briton applied for divorce on the ground that his wife regularly served tuna casserole for dinner. The judge approved it. Why? Because the world is big.

What is Sialkot Saga all about?

The Sialkot Saga is about two men, Arbaaz and Arvind, who grow up in very different worlds. While Arvind grows up in Kolkata in Marwari aristocracy, Arbaaz fends for himself in the underworld of Dongri. They do not realize it but their lives are connected by an ancient secret. Their quest for that secret, unfortunately, will have repercussions for everyone else. Given that their lives are described during the 63 years between 1947 and 2010, the setting of the book is Bombay (now Mumbai) and Calcutta (now Kolkata).

Have you met the real life Arvind and Arbaaz? Do they exist?

I have met people who have elements of Arvind and Arbaaz in them. The two characters are amalgams of various characteristics that I observed in various people. I would hope that neither of the protagonists is entirely like someone that I know because both are crooks!

How different is this one from The Krishna Key or The Rozabal Line?

My first book in the Bharat Series, The Rozabal Line, was a theological thriller. The second, Chanakya's Chant, was a political thriller. The third, The Krishna Key, was a mythological thriller. With this fourth book, The Sialkot Saga, I wanted to explore the world of Indian business. The topics that I cover tend to change but at the core the DNA is the same... history, mythology, business, politics, human

In Kolkata for a book signing session, Sudipto Maity catches up with Ashwin Sanghi, the best selling author of three novels. The duo discusses his latest book, The Sialkot Saga, the characters from the book, Ashwin's love for anagrams and how he dealt with rejection. Excerpts from the interview:

‘The Sialkot Saga is set between 1947 and 2010’

nature.

Tell us a bit about your research process for this book.

Believe it or not, my research started with an Excel spread sheet! The first column of that spread sheet plotted the years from 1947 to 2010. The next two columns calculated the ages of the two protagonists, Arvind and Arbaaz, in each of those years. The next column plotted what was happening in India—politically, economically and culturally. The last column plotted

what each of the protagonists would have been doing in that time period. The ancient track involving Ashoka, Samudragupta, Harsha etc. was the easier bit. The more difficult part was in trying to get the contemporary history of India right. Books were able to provide recorded accounts of key historical markers but I needed more. Things like movies, music, restaurants, celebrities and culture are usually never part of the historical narrative while it is these very things that pro-



vide the flavour of that time. I was only able to fill those gaps with extensive interviews with people who had lived those years in those cities. With each reading or interview, I would jot down even more ideas. It finally resulted in a plot outline that ran to over 10,000 words.

How much time did it take you to write this book, The Sialkot Saga?

A little over 30 months, including the research and writing.

Why did it take you four years to come up with another solo book?

The stew of this story has been cooking for over three years. I wanted to set a business story against the backdrop of post-independence India. The problem was that the project was so vast in scope and ambition that other projects kept coming in the way. As a result, completion of this book got held up on several occasions to make way for other books.

So your first book released almost a decade ago, in 2007. Do you think your story telling abilities have enhanced over the years?

I have come to the conclusion that writing a book is a set of trade-offs. A trade-off between research and story; between fact and fiction; between history and mythology; between pace and style; between plot and character. In the process of making those choices, the option that one picks get enhanced while something else is given the go by. When I was writing The Rozabal Line, I had mountains of research that needed to be presented. It meant compromising on the story. I have always

maintained that commercial fiction writing is not an art, rather it's a craft. Over the years, I have begun to appreciate the craft but personally, I am still work in progress. I only aim for a little improvement with every successive book.

You love anagrams, don't you? How and when did it start?

I was always a good Scrabble player. I would often rearrange a given set of letters repeatedly, attempting to make as many words as I could using all the letters. That's where the inclination comes from.

Was there a specific reason to go with Shawn Haigins, apart from the fact that it is an anagram of your name?

By the time that I completed writing my debut novel, The Rozabal Line, in 2006, I had already been in business for over 20 years. The decision to use a pen name was nothing more than a desire to compartmentalize my life so that my entrepreneurial dimension would remain distinct and separate from my literary one. However, I had not thought about an appropriate pseudonym to use until I actually completed the novel. As you know, there's an abundance of anagrams in my novel and the idea struck me: why not use an anagram of my real name as a pseudonym? Hence my first novel was written under the name Shawn Haigins, a perfect anagram of my real name Ashwin Sanghi. When Tata-Westland decided to publish the novel in India they insisted that it had to be published under my real name given the fact that the novel in question involved a sensitive subject. I continue to use the pseudonym Shawn Haigins on my Facebook page but my books are marketed under my real name only.

When you discuss theological thrillers, invariably Dan Brown crops up. Was he an influence?

Oh absolutely. The Da Vinci Code was one of my favourite books and I read it several times during the period 2003-2004. The Rozabal Line was written during the years (Contd on P-VII)

“The only sense that is common in the long run, is the sense of change-and we all instinctively avoid it.”

--- E. B. White

The Shillong Times

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The NSG fiasco

A great deal of money and energy have gone to waste. So has Prime Minister Narendra Modi's much-vaunted diplomatic savvy. His expensive visits to numerous countries and seemingly persuasive talks with the top leaders have gone up in smoke. India showed confidence about securing membership of the Nuclear Supplies Group (NSG) but finally failed in the mission. It will not be right to put the blame exclusively on China. Modi did talk to President Xi Jinping of China but apparently he had not cut through Xi's inscrutability. Where External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj got the impression that China in principle had no objection to India's joining the NSG, she alone can tell. In the event, China and several other countries blocked consensus at the elite group which controls transfer of nuclear technology in the world. Mexico which Narendra Modi visited to win it over pressed for a "criteria based process" for allowing non-NPT members into the NSG along with Switzerland, Brazil and Turkey. New Delhi was surprised as these countries had given the impression of being on its side. India and Brazil have shared interests in climate change and energy needs. Turkey pushed for clubbing applications of India and Pakistan together. Pakistan's application had not come up for discussion.

China scuttled India's move on what was apparently on technical grounds. A non-proliferation treaty (NPT) country is not allowed to be a member of the NSG and China insisted that it could not bend the rules. One wonders if India could argue a case for the rules to be bent and why Delhi was insistent upon refusing to sign the NPT after putting a moratorium on its bomb. India also supports the Comprehensive Nuclear Disarmament Treaty. Why Modi was so keen on membership of the NSG is hard to understand as India has secured all the benefits from the group.

LOOKING BACK

February 17, 1989

Arson, violence on first day of 120-Hour ABSU bandh Army stage flag march

Troops flag marched through the violence-torn Kokrajhar District as the 120 hour Assam band called by All Bodo Students Union began at five am today. The bandh marked by violence and arson failed to evoke any response in the state except in the Bodo dominated areas, officials reports said.

The reports said a powerful bomb planted at Tarang bridge in Kokrajhar District exploded a few hours before commencement of the bandh and blew up the railway tack. The explosion took place shortly after the Kamrup express crossed the railway bridge the North East express was held up at Kokrajhar and the Tinsukia Mail at New Bongaigaon following the explosion. The extremists also set fire to nine houses at Belguri in the same district besides some thatched hutments in Udalguri Bazar. Attack on Police was reported in at least two places.

An army spokesman said the troops carried out flag march at Sessapani, Salakti, Gossaigaon, Srirampur, Kokrajhar town and New Bongaigaon. The flag march continued till six pm in Kokrajhar town, he added. Director General of Police S V Subramanian told newsmen that eleven cases of arson were reported between last night and early today from Kokrajhar district.

He said the bandh had no impact in the state except in Kokrajhar district and Udalguri subdivision. Shops and establishments

downed their shutters in Kokrajhar and Udalguri subdivision. All vehicles were off the road and government offices remained closed. The bandh was called to press for a separate homeland for the Bodos. The extremists tried to set fire to a bus in Bijni but police foiled their bid. They hurled a bomb at a police party in Udalguri but no one was injured.

Central leaders implicated with Bodo agitation

Assam police high-ups have claimed that some incriminating documents seized from a hard core Bodo extremists suggested involvement of a few Central Ministers with the on-going agitation for the creation of "Bodo land".

A spokesman of the State Police told newsmen here that a diary obtained from the possession of the Bodo Volunteer Force supremo Mr Sonaram Baglari clearly implicated that Union Minister of State for Home Mr Santosh Mohon Dev. Although neither the diary was shown to the newsmen nor any details furnished, the spokesman said that the entries in the diary revealed that recent ABSU decision to suspend all economic demands and concentrate only on its three political demands was taken at the behest of Mr Dev.

Mr Baglari, was recently arrested in Kokrajhar District. The ABSU has decided to hold a bandh on Feb 24 in protest against the arrest.

Limestone Mining: In the name of customary practice

By H H Mohrmen

It is indeed ironic that while I was on my way to take part in the celebration of the World Environment day and planting few saplings around the Sohkhha Higher Secondary School, campus I also witnessed a brazen destruction of the environment near Amtapoh junction on the Amlarem Dawki road. Limestone mine owners in the area have caused the blatant violation of the law and destruction of the environment. In a situation like that one can't help but wonder if what we are trying to do will even compensate for the damage that was done in one hour by the limestone miners in the Nongtalang area. It takes years for a sapling to grow into a tree but it takes just a moment for the machine to uproot a full grown tree and the overgrowth around it.

After the intervention by the Hon'ble High Court limestone mining was stopped for some time in the mining area at the Amalrem sub division; but after due deliberation the Court in its wisdom allowed the limestone mine owners to continue with their activities and to export the extracted mineral on the basis that limestone mining is a customary practice of the people in the region. The Court is considerate of the miners' plight and accepted their plea that it was a customary practice of the people and allowed the miners to continue with the traditional practice. Indeed, limestone mining in the area would have been a sustainable activity and there would not have been any hue and cry against it as such, had we continued with the traditional system. But what is happening now in the limestone mining area of Nongtalang and Satpator area of Amlarem sub division is in stark contrast to what it is meant to be and the mining in the area is everything except customary.

An environmentalist from Delhi who visited the area recently was taken aback by what she had seen all along the Amtapoh Nongtalang portion of the

Jowai Dawki road. She called me and questioned as to how we could allow this to happen. The New York Times which carried a story on the limestone mining in the Nongtalang area few years back calls it a mining system where the entire hill is gouged out for selfish ends. The magnitude of the damage that has been done to the environment is so extensive that only those who have visited the area would be able to comprehend it. The damage is enormous and the sheer size of the destruction would not have been possible if mining is carried out as per customary practice.

Forests have been cleared, trees uprooted and where there was once a hillock we now see a chasm and where it was shallow we now see hillocks. This had happened because there is no authority to regulate and monitor this activity. In the absence of any regulation people can do whatever they like without any inhibition. There were limestone quarries very close to the National Highway 44 (E) and one can now see a chasm where there was none earlier which also poses a threat to the passersby. There are also no guidelines on how to put aside the top soil removed during mining so that it can be used later on. Mining is random and haphazard with no consideration of how to take care of the precious top soil. This continues till date and even after the Hon'ble Court's intervention mining practice in the area is not as per customary practice as ordered by the Court. The question is whether the Court can pass an order without inspecting ground realities and only by listening to lawyers pleading on behalf of the miners.

How can mining using huge chain excavators be called a customary practice? Since when did our ancestors start using heavy machines as their mining tools while mining

limestone? The mere use of huge machines in the mining process proves beyond any doubt that limestone mining in the area is not as per customary practices anymore. If mining had continued as a customary practice one would not expect the use of any machine (not to mention monstrous machines) but instead more human labour would have been used as practiced by our ancestors since time immemorial, but that was not to happen.

If the limestone mine owner would have continued mining as per customary practice as directed by the Court, it would have been a sustainable practice and the activity would continue for years to come and more importantly the impact on the environment will also be less damaging. On the contrary since the miners use heavy machines and even used explosives, the damage to the environment could be very well beyond repair too. Unlike the customary practice, the present mining system is not sustainable and very soon minerals will exhaust and leave behind barren, desolate land in the area. If the limestone miner would have continued with the traditional practice it would not only be sustainable but many more people would have to be involved in the mining activity. Traditional mining would have involved and benefited a large number of people instead of using monstrous machines which ultimately benefit the rich people who give out machines on hire to the miners in Nongtalang and other places.

Excavators are hired at around Rs 60,000-70,000 per machine per month. Add to that the salary of the operator which will be between thirty and forty thousand rupees per month and money is concentrated in a few hands only. Machines also cause maximum damage to the environment in a short period of time when compared with customary practices which only use human hands. And had we

continued with customary mining we would also have had to involve maximum number of labour instead of machines. Ultimately the locals would have benefited. But good sense is yet to prevail amongst the mining operators and people continue using huge machines in spite of this being illegal as per the recent court order.

Despite the Court the miners still use heavy machines and illegal explosives to extract limestone in the Nongtalang and Satpator area of Amlarem Sub division. It is ironic that it was the limestone miners themselves who had pleaded with the court to allow them to continue their activity since it was a customary practice and when the Court granted their plea, the same miners do not comply with the orders and continue to violate the court order blatantly.

We therefore request the High Court to see that there is no violation of its order and that the order is obeyed in letter and spirit. If the mining is to continue as per customary practice then all chain and heavy excavators are to be removed from the mining site, because the machines have no business being there when the mining is supposed to be carried on as a customary practice as per the court order. The people of Meghalaya particularly those involved in the mining business are known to have penchant for violating the law. And even as we read this piece even coal trucks continue to transport coal from coal mine areas to Guwahati or other destinations in total violation of the law. Even with regard to limestone mining the mineral is exported to Bangladesh even when the weighbridge in the area is not operating. The question is how is the limestone weighed? Ultimately one hopes that the miners will respect the law and after all it was on their plea that the Court has been lenient. One hopes that they continue mining according to customary practice both in letter and spirit.

TO THE EDITOR

Beyond Brexit

Editor, Apropos your editorial “The Brexit referendum” (ST, June 25, 2016), my view is that this will facilitate better focus on decision making and efficient administration. It is a fact that the British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path. It is clear that Brexit will harm Indian companies in Britain since Europe is the best market for them. India is currently dependent on its development based on total Western model and support, with nations such as USA, UK leading in doing businesses with us. The drop in the pound is likely to result in an increase in Indian students choosing the UK as a destination for higher education as this will make studying there significantly cheaper. Britain should now make the best use of its membership of every other international club. Our Indian policy makers should consider Brexit as a change to improve our trade ties with Britain. On the other hand Britain will certainly become great in the coming years in development and in improving the lives of its 65 million people.

Yours etc., Vinod C Dixit Ahmedabad – 15

Beware of corporate hawkers

Editor, We have read several opinions and suggestions on the hawkers' issue lately. While some consider them a burden, others generously pour out their sympathies. The letters by Rev N. B. Diengdoh and Fabian Lyngdoh are very thought-provoking. Well, the hawkers undoubtedly deserve our compassion because they are poor. But at any rate, they do not reserve the right to encroach upon the public places and thereby cause inconvenience to the pedestrians. Ms. Patricia Mukhim, in her beautiful article, has correctly pointed out how hawkers pose as a huge stumbling block for the public and also in the free movement of the bazaar vehicles and so on.

All opinions are truly helpful to arrive at the logical conclusion. Indeed, compassion, morality, rationality and legality are fundamental ingredients to deal with any kind of thorny issues. Incidentally, of late, my attention is drawn to what has been less discussed but it is going to make a dent in the whole sphere of trading system and the market economy. In the process our beloved hawkers, who struggle to make ends meet, will be pounded to dust.

For the past several years, not just our outside roads and footpaths but the very threshold of our mind and inner emotions have been invaded by a swarm of national and international companies that sell a whole lot of items ranging from handkerchiefs, socks, pan masala to latest mobile phones, high-end computers, washing machine, micro-ovens, or anything under the sky. Flipkart, Snapdeal, Amazon, Infibeam, India Mart, Ebay, HomeShop18 are few that have already become household names. They parade their merchandise which unmistakably greet us with every single page we open on the net.

With a sufficient dose of glamour, they have already encroached upon the inner space of our mentality which the poor hawkers can't ever dream of. These companies employ every possible crafty scheme to increase our temptation to buy more and more. Here even a lazy boy goes crazy to quickly click the mouse to order for an item that just caught his fascination. Many have already become shopaholics due to marketing strategies of these giant online companies. Their offers are endless and so are their alluring coupons which hardly fail to entice simple-hearted people to walk into their traps. No wonder online shopping is A craze and the items are offered at fairly lesser prices too.

But how these online companies have been

impacting the socio-economic status of each regular retail trader, petty hawkers and the society at large is matter of a serious concern. All will agree that they will not only eat into the business opportunities of the poor hawkers but they have already sent shock waves in the normal retail trading system and also the wholesale bazaar. Systematic surveys might throw up a lot of information that might push the regular market businessmen into the depths of depression. Again, a chain of retail shopping malls is another roaring phenomenon of metro cities which is slowly making inroads into small towns like ours. Reliance, Big Bazaar, Bharti Retail, Hypercity Future Group are some fun-filled shopping stops that will not let you to pay even a glance at the normal shops in the market, not to speak of sweaty vendors on the streets. Exotic baby candies to a variety of trendy dress materials, and an array of vacuum cleaners to heart-throbbing music systems, TVs and so on and so forth are attractively on display in these fully computerized AC shopping palaces. Our impoverished hawkers or normal market traders cannot at all match up to these big companies.

Just check up your personal purchasing behaviour over three to four years. How many times have you visited Big Bazaar

It's a question of when, not whether on NSG

By M J Akbar

A significant change has taken place in our quest to become a participant in the Nuclear Suppliers' Group [NSG]; it is now a question of 'when' rather than 'whether'. The United States, which has over the last year become an influential advocate for India's case, believes that this will happen by the end of this year. The White House said as much after the Seoul plenary this week, where India's membership was discussed. A final decision is awaited.

On the eve of this NSG meeting, nations like Canada which were once either wary of, or hostile to, our nuclear programme, publicly argued for our admission on a priority basis. The word used was "soonest". This has been their refrain from Washington, London, Paris and Moscow. All the major nuclear powers, barring China, want us in.

This has not happened by accident. It is a dividend of a new development in our diplomacy: the pursuit of clear objectives with relentless vigour and self-assurance, determined by a calendar conforming to our interests rather than the sluggish movement of international norm. Multilateral bodies which require consensus on such issues have traditionally pushed problems into the open space of undefined time. It goes without saying that little suits the diplomatic calm better than the status quo. We faced institutional inertia in MTCR [Missile Technology Control Regime], and, earlier this month, overcame it with support from friends.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi challenged the NSG status quo with a careful argument that included our commitment on climate change, given at Paris last year, where we promised 40% non-fossil power generation capacity by 2030. This argument turned powerful friends into allies. They understand the logic: India is ready to do more than its bit on climate change, but the world must then support India's participation in nuclear commerce.

The second reason is India's record on non-proliferation. We know that China's resistance, described as "procedural hurdles", is its desire to protect its strategic friendship with Pakistan. Beijing's formal contention, however, was that India must sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] before it can become a member. Why have the other nuclear powers, America, Russia, France and Britain, refused to buy this line? Because India's track record on non-proliferation has been exemplary. There has never

ever been a single whisper against India, which began building nuclear capability in the mid-1950s.

Pakistan, in contrast, has a history of proliferation. In 2002, President George Bush named Pakistan as a nuclear hotspot in his State of the Union address. The definitive book on the subject is Deception: Pakistan, the United States and the Global Nuclear Weapons Conspiracy by Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark. The blurb notes that "Pakistan in fact betrayed the West, building a vast nuclear arsenal with US aid money and selling the technology to other countries while giving shelter to the resurgent Taliban and al-Qaeda". Its most famous nuclear scientist, Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, nicknamed "Typhoid Murphy", sold knowhow for cash - sometimes disguising greed in ideology. In an extraordinary dénouement, Khan was forced to acknowledge his crimes on public television on 4 February 2004. He was running a black market in nuclear technology for clients as diverse as Libya and North Korea. It was obvious that he could not have done this alone, but he was made the fall guy by the military. President Bush said: "Khan has confessed his crimes and his top associated are out of business." This confirmed that he did have associates. Bush added, "President Musharraf has promised to share all the information he learns about the Khan network, and has assured us that his country will never again be a source of proliferation." Even Pakistan's President had to admit his nation's culpability. Khan's pay-off was both literal and physical: he was allowed to keep the cash he had made on the side, and shunted off to quiet retirement instead of prison.

Contrast this with a statement made by NSG in 2008, where the institution accepts that India has contributed to "widest possible implementation of the provisions and objectives of the Treat on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons". Nothing more needs to be said, particularly within NSG. For anyone to raise non-proliferation as an issue against India in order to protect Pakistan must be the ultimate irony, if not an outright joke. And the fact that even China's objection was about process rather than eligibility is evidence that India's credibility is not in question.

Diplomacy is a long game. We have delivered results quickly in matters like missile technology. Membership of NSG is only a matter of time, and not too much time either.

counters? Then, what will be the fate of the illiterate hawkers who have taken this profession not out of choice but out of compulsion to fill their stomachs?

It is a very a dangerous trend where the rich are getting richer while the poor are impoverished and deprived in every respect? Will this sad tale of disparity melt the heart of the government?

Yours etc., Salil Gewali Shillong-2

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

“*There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.*”

--- Nelson Mandela

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 317SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2016

Heat on the Taliban

INDIA'S permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Syed Akhruddin said at a Security Council debate on the UN American Assistance mission in Afghanistan that it was sheer folly that the new Taliban leader, Moulavi Habibullah Akhundzada had not been designated as a terrorist individual. India wanted sanctions to be slapped on this person. It supported New Zealand on the issue. Akhundzada had become the leader of the Taliban after Mullah Akhtar Mansur was killed in a US drone attack. However, US State Department spokesperson Mark Toner has said that Akhundzada was not on any kind of terrorist list. Syed Akhruddin, the Indian envoy said that groups and individuals perpetrating violence against the people of Afghanistan and to its government cannot have safe havens and should not be allowed to exercise control and wield influence over any part of Afghan territory. Previously India had condemned the UN Sanctions Committee for taking a selective approach as on the Jaish-e-Muhammad chief Masood Azhar.

All this seems strange against the background of twelve Nepalese people killed in a Taliban attack in Kabul. They were security guards at the Canadian High Commission. India has offered whatever assistance it can to Nepal. Afghanistan has accused elements within the state structure of Pakistan of helping most terrorist groups active in the region. Akhtar Mansood, the previous Taliban leader, had a Pakistani passport. In this context, US passivity on the sanctions issue seems intriguing. Talks with the Taliban for peace is no longer a realistic idea.

LOOKING BACK

February 17, 1989

Britain snaps diplomatic ties with Iran

Britain today froze diplomatic relations with Iran in a strong protest against death threat issued by Ayatollah Khomeini against Indian-born author Salman Rushdie.

"We have decided that in the present circumstances, we cannot build up further our embassy in Teheran." A Foreign Office spokesman told journalists here. The statement came after Iran's Charged Affairs in London was summoned and told that Britain viewed the Iranian spiritual leader's edict as "totally unacceptable."

The Foreign Office step also followed unsatisfactory talks in Teheran between Britain's envoy Mr Nicholas Browne and a senior Iranian foreign office official. Britain currently has three diplomats and four supporting staff - including three temporary employee at its Teheran embassy. Today's development comes as a major setback to ties between the two nations and widens a 48-hour old diplomatic rift over Mr Rushdie's controversial novel "The satanic verses" - celebrated book which Muslims the world over allege blasphemes zislam.

UNI adds from Bombay: An anonymous caller this morning rang up the United News of India office here issued threats to bomb British Airways planes and executive prominent Indians for speaking out against Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini who had called for the execution of Salman Rushdie for his novel "Satanic Verses". The caller identified himself as a spokesman of a little known group he described as the 'Iranian Guards' and said attacks would be carried out on all British planes in India until Rushdie came out of hiding in England.

The Indians who the caller said would be

executed were poet Dom Moraes, Gandhian Usha Mehta, Hindustan Andolon chief Madhu Mehta and Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray.

Seven including 2 killed in bomb blast

Two people were killed and five injured in a bomb blast in Batala police district (Gurdaspur) early this morning. Elsewhere in Punjab an Assistant Sub-Inspector of police and four other were killed during the past 24 hours. Eleven extremists were arrested. A powerful bomb, planted on a road near Kala Afghana village in Batala police district to ambush a security force patrol exploded killing two people and injuring five others. They were bringing the body of a relative from Civil Hospital from Amritsar. Those killed were identified as Amar Nath and his mother Chinodevi. Police officials claimed that the bomb was planted to ambush a Border Security Force patrol party which often passed by the village around midnight.

Janata Dal to continue same foreign policy

Janata Dal president Mr Vishwanath Pratap Singh said today the present Indian foreign policy would continue if his party was voted to power. Mr Singh told newsmen here 'we have differences with the Congress(I) on several issues but we see no reason why the foreign policy should be changed.'

Non-alignment and friendly relations with all countries will continue to guide us in running the foreign affairs of the country, he said. Mr Singh said Indian foreign policy had withstood many crises in the internationals arena and had been widely accepted by the countrymen.

Demand for new states in the North East

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

Of late, there has been a persistent demand for a separate Garo homeland that is being voiced with much intensity across the Garo dominated areas of Meghalaya. As the movement grows in pace, it is perhaps pertinent to look into the history of state reorganisation in India and place North East in that paradigm. The history of states reorganisation goes back to the freedom movement of India. The earliest comment on states organisation or reorganisation came from Mahatma Gandhi who opined that states should be divided on the basis of linguistic differences. This was based on his own experience of Congress witnessing a massive fillip when it starting releasing periodicals in their own languages. It was a belief on these experiences which saw Gandhi as one of the first supporters of linguistic separation. However immediately after independence, the Dhar commission was formed which negated the need for division along linguistic lines. This was followed by the JVP Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitarammya committee which too rejected division of states along linguistic lines.

A major shift in stand towards state organisation came in 1952 when Potti Srimamlu succumbed to a 56 day hunger strike demanding creation of a separate Telugu speaking state. Once Andhra Pradesh was created out of the Telugu speaking provinces of erstwhile Madras state, the floodlights opened towards new demands for creation of newer states. Finally, the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 signalled the creation of 14 states and 5 Union Territories (UTs). Yet this did not end the clamour of new states and the hopes and aspirations of people for separate statehood continued. In 2000, three new states of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh were formed; in 2014 the newest state of India, Telengana was born.

The history of statehood formation in North East has not been any different from the rest of the country. At the time of independence, North East was composed of the Province of Assam in existence since 1912, the princely states of Manipur and Tripura and the North Eastern Frontier Province (NEFA). In 1949, Manipur and Tripura became Union Territories eventually becoming states in due course of time. Nagaland was created in 1963 while Meghalaya came into being in 1972. The Mizo hills of Assam were converted into a Union Territory in 1972, which eventually became a full-fledged state in 1987. NEFA which was named Arunachal Pradesh too, became a full-fledged state in 1987. As in the rest of the country, North East continues to shimmer with demands for a separate homeland ranging from ideas of a separate state to sovereignty. Bodoland, Khamatapur (Assam), Garoland in Meghalaya are fermentations of those ideas that continue to dominate the troubled political landscape of the North East.

Yet, it would not be sufficient to see the present demand for a separate homeland on the basis of history alone. The debate has to be seen on the twin paradigms of how the new states have fared since its inception and also the ethnographic landscape of the NorthEast. The three states that were created in 2000, were carved on the basis of backwardness rather than linguistic considerations. Yet the results have not been too encouraging. Despite having huge mineral and natural resources, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand have not been able to focus on development. Today, Chattisgarh has become a hotbed of Maoist activities. The government has taken many steps to improve the lives of the people. Educational hub in Dantewada, for example, seeks to redefine how Maoist areas in India are perceived, yet a large ground remains to be covered. While states like Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan have marched ahead either on growth or human development index, the newly carved states continue to find the right path towards growth. At the same time historically smaller states like Kerala, Nagaland and Mizoram

continue to post impressive numbers in terms of human development. These states have phenomenal literacy rates for example. But one glance will make it amply clear that most of these come from the traditional structures that these states have had. For example, among the tribes in North East, impressive literacy numbers can be attributed to the fact that missionaries have had a positive influence in these regions.

At the same time, however, it must be understood that debate centred on small states cannot be seen from the point of development alone. There are advantages towards a small state that cannot be denied. A smaller state brings administration closer to the people. The administration has a greater understanding of issues on ground. A smaller state ensures lesser diversity, not only in terms of ethnicity or language alone, but also economic systems. For example, a separate Bodoland would have different areas of focus compared to the government of Assam where the economics revolves around tea and oil. Thus, smaller states ensure better economic policies.

However, while looking at small states and the North East, one has to account for the ethnic diversity that North East has. Every tribe of NorthEast has a collective imagination of a homeland which is rooted in territorial identity. However this "collective imagination of a homeland" often clashes with the "collective imagination of a homeland" of another. For example the area, claimed by the Bodos as "homeland" is also claimed by the Koch Rajbongshis, for example. The Greater Nagalim dream of a homeland spans across a number of states and spills over to the neighbouring country of Myanmar as well. A new Kuki identity being spun across Manipur seeks to weave those across the international borders. Or at other times their "collective imagination of a homeland" stands opposing to the modern territorial boundaries. For instance, the Garos are spread across Meghalaya and Assam. If a new Garo state is introduced

out of Meghalaya, then the dreams of the Garos of Assam stand unfulfilled.

One must also remember that declaring new state in North East is difficult because the ethnographic compositions seek to indulge themselves in a vociferous us versus them debate. If one looks back into the history of the North East, the first statehood demand from Meghalaya came precisely because the Assam cabinet chose to impose itself on the rest of the hill people. The "us versus them" debate is real because the ties of ethnicity are not encompassed to territory alone but the rights within the territory and the economic resources. The Kokrajhar riots of 2012 were less of one community against another and more of the fight of two economic systems -one sedentary; the other which followed a non sedentary cultivation. At the root lies the fundamental issue of land rights, forest rights, the depletion of community grazing centres and a burgeoning population that stands unemployed. Thus ethnographic tensions stemming from territorial aspirations, have found a place in the socio-political landscape primarily because of the economic rationale.

Hence, any move towards creating a new state or a demand for a new state has to be seen on these parameters. A new state is not a question of administrative ease alone. Nor is it a question of fulfilling the idea of a collective homeland. It would need imaginative policies like formation of a Garo Cultural Council for addressing the Garo identity issue, which would encompass Garos from all regions without disturbing the present territorial compositions. In the long run, if a new state has to be formed, it has to be judged from multiple angles. There is no verdict whether a new small state would completely succeed or fail but the greater goal of any democracy is giving wings to the aspirations of the people. And it is with this premise that we must keep looking at the constantly changing narrative of the NorthEast.

(Views expressed by the author are personal.)

many especially our netas including our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in his 'Mann ki baat' dubbed the emergency imposed by our Late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in June, 1975 as dark days of Indian Democracy. But I must admit that for us the Aam Aadmi, it was the brightest days of our lives because during that emergency, trains left their departed and arrived on time. There was punctuality and full attendance in offices. All shops displayed the prices of their wares for the buyers to see. There was no cheating, no hanky- panky business then.

Yours etc
A. Pyrtuh
Shillong - 14

Who will redress our grievances?

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily I wish to bring to the notice of the Government the plight of students who have been deprived of their right to study or survive for no fault of theirs. They have

Far right succeeds in dividing Britain

Breaking up of the Nation looms large

By Amulya Ganguli

Brexit has shown the threat which the far-right poses to a level-headed nation such as Great Britain. One of the qualities which the Brits are supposed to have – whether they are English or Scottish or Irish or Welsh – is a strong commonsense.

The latest events in “this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England” put this belief in doubt, for Britain’s decision to walk out of the European Union (EU) is based as much on economic reasons as on ultra-nationalism.

It is the belief spread mainly by the right-wing forces that the “blessed plot” is being drowned in a sea of immigrants because of the relaxed EU rules which fanned the wind behind the sail of the quitters.

And, as in all such cases ranging from Shiv Sena to United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the fear of losing jobs to outsiders have added fuel to the flames of xenophobia.

Although the Conservatives have always been wary of immigrants, they were spooked this time by the ultra-conservative, anti-EU UKIP to put their hearts on the sleeve by promising a referendum on staying in the EU or leaving it.

The assurance may have enabled the Tories to win, which they might have done any way since Labour was being led by the unprepossessing leftist Jeremy Corbyn. But they were saddled in the process with the burden of referendum.

Having just won the Scottish referendum, there might have been little doubt about winning the next one as well. But the UKIP and other Little Englanders, including the Eurosceptics in the Conservative Party, seem to have touched a chord in English, if not British, hearts by winning the vote on cutting adrift from the rest of the continent.

The right-wingers are happy by giving their country an Independence Day on June 23 by their adventurism which may have been partly fuelled by the fear of asylum-seekers coming from Syria and Iraq. But the greater fear now is of Britain staying together in the first place.

The first to raise the possibility of another referendum is Scotland which now believes that it has a fair chance of breaking away from the rest of the country in the midst of the current turmoil.

In any event, having voted overwhelmingly for staying in the EU – like the city of London – the Scots want either to break away from Britain or remain in the EU, which will create a piquant situation of a part of a country defying the

referendum.

While the Englishmen on the far-right mull over this strange fallout from their xenophobic misadventure, they will also have to consider pacifying the Sinn Fein which wants a merger of Ireland with Northern Ireland to form a Great Ireland at the cost of Great Britain.

Evidently, the latter is moving far away from the times when the sun did not set on the British empire. Now it is threatening to cover in darkness parts of the “blessed plot” itself.

It goes without saying that the Brexiters did not anticipate such a tumultuous fallout. Like all believers in insularity, they presumed that everyone in the country will favour retreating behind the moat of the English channel and “isolate” the continent, like the old joke on foggy days, by pulling up the drawbridges.

It is evident that these blinkered Englishmen took it for granted that everyone in Scotland and Northern Ireland thought like them. Now they have realized that globalization has ushered in a new world. As President Obama said, the “extraordinary benefits” offered by globalization are also accompanied by “concerns and fears”.

These are not only about local trade and commerce being unable to face foreign competition – the customary apprehension of protectionists – but also of local culture being swamped by alien influence.

Both in the fields of commerce and culture, therefore, the Little Englanders have their fears. Hence, their paranoia about the red double-deckers of London being phased out along with the Englishmen's favourite diet of fish and chips.

True, Englishmen have long been worried about the impact of the European ways on their traditional lifestyle, including fox-hunting although the “sport” was described by Oscar Wilde as “the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable”.

But the possibility of the nation breaking up because of the decision to cut off links with the EU has led to the UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, being reminded of his pre-referendum promise of calling for another vote if the outcome was 52:48 for remaining in the UK.

Since the vote is 51.9:48.1. there is reason for another test of popular opinion, especially when the young are said to be feeling that they have been led down by the elderly.

Whether or not there is a second throw of the dice, it is obvious that referendums should be avoided unless there is a deep and palpable division on an urgent issue. (IPA Service)

out or are still studying in these institutes? I suggest that for such reckless or ill-motivated attitude of the Government - the concerned higher authority should single out the person (s) responsible person and put them behind bars.

Yours etc.,
Banylla S.
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.

“*They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.*”

--- Andy Warhol

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 318 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2016

BJP in the North east

THE BJP is forging ahead in the seven north eastern states. Its starting point was the most important state in the region, Assam. One doubts if even Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected his party to win such a massive victory in the disturbed state where ULFA militants' guns have not yet been spiked. The BJP has learnt from its success two things. Its success in Assam was largely due to its alliance with the regional parties, the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bodo Peoples' Front. Regional agenda came to the forefront. The BJP kept its national and Hindutva identity hidden. What matters most is an elusive factor called sub-nationalism.

Success in Assam has kept the BJP busy in the last few months building up anti-Congress formations. It has engaged in a campaign to oust the ruling Congress from Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram. In Tripura, the adversary is the CPI (M). Elections are coming in Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura in 2018. The BJP is allying itself with regional outfits in these states. The Northeast Democratic Alliance (NEDA) has been formed which is a local variant of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The NEDA comprises ten parties and has roped in ethnic groups. The region elects 25 MPs. The political atlas of the northeast may soon change with the Congress bowing out of four states. Okram Ibobi Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur for three terms, will have to hang up his boots maybe. With the largest number of militant groups rampaging in the state, economic blockades and clashes between the hills and valley, Manipur's political future is uncertain. Such instability merely threatens the Northeast's economic development which should be top priority.

LOOKING BACK

February 17, 1989

No immediate change in APCC(I) leadership

There would be no immediate change in the leadership of Assam Pradesh Congress(I) Committee, its president Mr Tarun Chndra Gogoi said. Mr Gogoi told newsmen here that the party high command had directed him to reconstitute the organization and it would be done soon, he said. When his attention was drawn to a newspaper report that Mizoram Governor Mr Hiteswar Saikia might take over the leadership of APCC(I) Mr Gogoi said that he had no knowledge of it. Moreover, he ws having good relationship with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who is also AICC(I) president.

Mr Gandhi had expressed his satisfaction over his work in the state Mr Gogoi said.

Karbi Anglong D.C. to focus on land, forest reforms

Settlement of land in the Karbi Anglong District will be made as per the need per family and household, and pattas will be issued to Government Departments after the completion of survey work settlement will be reviewed once the Executive Body is formed, according to the newly elected Chief Executive Member of the Council, Dr Jayanta Rongpi.

Speaking at a recent meeting at the District Council Session Hall in Karbi Anglong, Dr Rongpi called for "maximum exploitation" of forests in a scientific way and stressed the need to encourage "forest based entrepreneurs" and small scale timber industries. He also called for fixing the quota for small scale timber units and raising royalty

rates. He also said that Agricultural schemes should be formulated in such a way that financial institution like NABARD, Coffee, and Rubber Boards etc. can give proper assistance so that Jhum cultivation be discarded by farmers, and wet land cultivation becomes viable and attractive. The CEM called for cordial relations between the State Government and the Autonomous District Council, and asked officers in the district to go through the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to facilitate the smooth execution of various schemes.

Total lunar Eclipse on Feb20

A total lunar eclipse will occur on February 20 night and the celestial drama will be visible from all over the country, according to Mr A K Bhatnagar, director, Positional Astronomy Centre (PAC) here. Mr. Bhatnagar said the eclipse would begin at 19.13 hours and end at 22.51 hours IST. The totality would last from 20-26 hours to 21-45 hours.

While initially the eclipse would be visible in Asia Australia, New Zealand, in the western half of North America and the Pacific ocean, the latter part would be seen in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the India ocean, Africa except western parts, Europe except the Siberian peninsula and the western pacific ocean.

Mr Bhatnagar said the last total lunar eclipse was observed from the country on October 1,1986 and would be again visible on February 9, 1990. The PAC has made in arrangement fort observing the eclipse with a powerful telescope.

Bara-khynraw: Khasi traditional cooperatives

Tradition should not be seen and discussed only in terms of the rights and prerogatives of traditional heads or chiefs, but it has to be seen in all aspects of the socio-economic and religious life, as well as the traditional knowledge system of the community. In the socio-economic sphere, the Khasis in the past had understood the concept of what is today called as 'micro finance', and the profitability of cooperative societies or self help groups (SHGs) which were called 'ki bara-khynraw' in Ri Bhoi region. In each traditional village, there might be two or more bara-khynraw according to the population. In one bara-khynraw there might be twelve to fifteen members of strong unmarried young men called 'ki khynraw' who constituted the main workforce; two smart and attractive unmarried young women called 'ki khyllud'; one elder who was the general manager of the group called 'u baheh-khynraw', and two elders who were the assistant managers called 'ki symbud baheh-khynraw'.

U baheh-khynraw was the leader of the group, and was looked upon as the proprietor of the labour company in the external affairs. The young men were the workers, on whose physical strength the status of the group depended. The purpose of 'ki khyllud' was to assist in the personal needs of the young men and ki baheh-khynraw, such as serving them with betel nuts from time to time; drawing spring water to quench their thirst in the heat; bringing their 'jasong' (tiffin bags) to a proper place when u baheh-khynraw announced the lunch time; gathering and distributing their 'ki knup' (rain shields) when the rain was falling, and other miscellaneous services to ease the young men in their toil and sweat. But the most important purpose why ki khyllud were included in the group was for a psychological reason. The presence of two smart and attractive young women would enlighten the spirit of ki khynraw by igniting their sex instinct and sublimating the energy to a healthy competition among them to work harder and behave responsibly as respectable men so as to win the hearts of these two models of desirable

By Fabian Lyngdoh

womanhood, or just to attract their admiration for a passing feeling of potency and manliness. The young ladies would occasionally help the young men in the actual work in a leisurely way; while the young men talked romantic things and cracked pleasant jokes to them the whole day long to keep the tempo of the work in high spirit. In a way, the purpose of ka bara-khynraw was to function like a college with ki baheh-khynraw as professors to provide practical training to the young men to learn economic production skills as well as the art of responsible adulthood.

The bara-khynraw that had first started work at the beginning of the agricultural year would qualify to sponsor and lead the 'Lakhympong' dance of the coming year in the 'Raid' (political commune). Under the leadership of ki baheh-khynraw the group worked from day to day in the farm lands of the members each in turn, and when one full round was completed, they would go and work in the farm lands of those who might hire them. The hiring of ka bara-khynraw to work in the farm lands of other people in the village or outside the village was called 'ka paiñ-nong'. The wages that the members earned through 'ka paiñ-nong' were pooled in the common fund. After each 'paiñ-nong' they would again work in their own farm lands according to the turn of each member. In this manner, they worked every day in their own farm lands as well as earning common fund for the group in terms of money during the whole period of the agricultural year. The function of u baheh-khynraw was to unite and lead the group and to negotiate for ka paiñ-nong. It depended on the physical strength and diligent of ki khynraw and the negotiating skill of u baheh-khynraw and his assistants, that the group earned popularity and being hired for ka paiñ-nong regularly throughout the year.

The two young women would openly show equal attention to all the young men in the group though secretly they might have their own lovers among the group or outside the group which they would reveal and express publicly only during the Lakhympong

dance. Equal wage was paid to ki khynraw, ki khyllud and ki baheh-khynraw in ka paiñ-nong. Moreover, at the turn of the group to work in the farm lands of these young ladies, ki khynraw would work harder and show more muscles and strength to impress their parents. Ki baheh-khynraw too worked leisurely with more rest periods for smoking and eating betel nuts because they were much older than ki khynraw in age. The young men would never be jealous, but instead they respected and obeyed them because they were the teachers, philosophers and guides for their graduation to responsible adulthood in the society.

Without ki baheh-khynraw, unmarried young men could not establish ka bara-khynraw only among themselves because the parents and maternal uncles of the young women would not permit them to associate in a bara-khynraw without the guidance and counsel of elderly members as leaders. Therefore, each bara-khynraw consisted of the physical strength of young men, the guidance and regulation of elderly men, and the sex-appeal of young ladies. If only one girl was included in a bara-khynraw she would be feeling lonely and insecure; hence, each bara-khynraw had two unmarried girls of the same wavelength in thoughts and feelings so that they could talk feminine matters with each other, and also serve the group with confidence and feeling of security. They never included three girls in one group because jealousy and division might breed among them, and many girls were not included because then the productive credibility of the group would be reduced and no one would hire the group in ka paiñ-nong, as equal wage had to be paid to all members. Hence, the presence of two unmarried young women in each bara-khynraw was the norm.

At the end of the agricultural year, when harvest was completed, u baheh-khynraw would convene a special meeting to settle the account and financial matters of the group, and to decide how to utilize their common fund. Most of the time, they usually decided to go to the market as a group for purchase of goods as well as a pleasure trip and a picnic once in a year. They might

decide to purchase two quintals of dry fish to be made into 'ka ktung tyndong' (fermented dry fish in bamboo cylinders), two quintals of salt, washing soaps and other commodities which were meant to last for the whole coming year, according to the size of their fund. The rest of the fund was divided equally as pocket money or for purchase of personal belongings like clothes, umbrellas, sweet scented hair oil for the girls and other personal effects.

In the past, the people of Ri Bhoi went for marketing to the Pantuli Bazar across the river Umsiang which is now in Assam. Those who could not afford to go to the Pantuli Bazar would go to the Sehkma Bazar which was situated at the common boundary of the three 'Raids': Nongtham, Thaiang and Namcha. In later period, beginning from the advent of the British rule in the Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills, the people of Ri Bhoi had gone to Ka ĩewduh (Bara Bazar) in Shillong for their purchase. On returning from the market they would divide all the goods equally, and then close the account with a zero balance to the satisfaction of every member of the group. The particular bara-khynraw which had earned the right to organize and sponsor for the Lakhympong dance would also spare fund for the expenses to be incurred during the dance. This group gained no tangible economic benefit by getting the right to sponsor for ka Lakhympong other than honour and credibility of the group for ka paiñ-nong in the next agricultural year.

After the Lakhympong dance, the group would reassemble and enroll new members if some of the young men got married during the courtship dance. New young ladies would also be inducted if the previous ones had gotten married. The various groups would then compete to be the first to start functioning, in order to get the sanction of the Raid's political authority to be the organizer and sponsor of the next Lakhympong. It would be good if this traditional spirit of unity, cooperation and discipline could be replicated in the present generation of the Khasi society.

TO THE EDITOR

economist has already suggested that one of the options Britain could follow in the wake of Brexit vote is the Norway model. Norway along with Liechtenstein and Iceland are members of European Economic Area (EEA). They have access to the single market while staying out of the EU. If Britain is to leave EU but join EEA, it will be a half-in-and-half-out arrangement, and the long term impact on either side will be minimal. Once actual talk begins, grounds for compromise could emerge.

Yours etc.,
V K Lyngdoh,
Via email

UK's exit

Editor
Brexit is not just going to end up in the exit of UK from the EU. The referendum is going to have far reaching impacts than just exit of Britain from the European economic forum. Whether Great Britain will continue to remain as Great Britain or United Kingdom in the near future is a million dollar question. The referendum of Scotland to remain as part of UK was won with a thin margin with

Jokers in a Democracy

By Babet Sten

An oft used slogan that the current Union Government and its friends keep shouting these days is the slogan "Congress-free India". I usually end up laughing so much that I fall off my chair. Let me tell you why. For one, this is like wishing for day without night. Congress strengthens the BJP and vice versa. The Congress' many failures and its endless corruptions have given people very little choice but to vote for the seemingly lesser evil i.e. BJP. It is the same with the Meghalaya state Congress as well. Everyone (BJP and regional 'chamchas') can now make a concerted and repeated attack against Mukul Inc., quick to make use of public outrage and Facebook exasperation for gains in 2018. It is a terrible method of politics and the cheapest one available to the wily and unethical politicians. Now if the Congress did not exist would BJP have much to tout about? The answer is no. They can only say that they are good, if Congress is positioned in the public eye as bad. In states that have given people third way alternatives we have seen that people have turned towards those fronts readily, namely Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Bihar, Delhi, Kerala, Tripura and I am sure the list will grow longer with each passing day. People should not wait for Congress or BJP to save them. Both these national parties are the play things of the wealthy and powerful and they win and lose if they win or lose favour with big businesses and the corporate world.

It is interesting to note how money determines how loud the winners are and therefore how noticeable they become for the public. Donations to the big parties from big business are the key driving force behind many wins and it is so sweet when the investments fail like they did in Delhi and Bihar. On that note, though he is a Congressman I think we must today appreciate the silence of Manmohan Singh. He was a PM who did not want to see his face everywhere nor to speak unnecessarily. People ridiculed him as a puppet of Sonia Gandhi but he is first and foremost intelligent, thoughtful and, most importantly, humble. Manmohan represents the old gentleman uncle who believes in certain secular and progressive values. Contrast him to the current incumbent and one sees the death of the quiet Indian and the emergence of the aggressive loud one. This is sadly a stereotype which is so common in the city I live in today - Delhi. I sometimes meet quiet humble people here (particularly in my field) and they surprise me because they have been driven into such a minority. The aggressive nationalists and cantankerous fundamentalists have hijacked our voices. They have also robbed women of their agency. They scoffed at Manmohan Singh because they perceive that he was being controlled by a woman. That is the real reason. They have no problems that their own

significant support for Scottish independence. The western media strongly suspects that Brexit will strengthen the demands for a new referendum for Scottish independence once again. If Scotland follows the independence path, can Ireland be far behind? Whatever may be the future, socio-economic or geopolitical consequence, I view this as a historic justice. Great Britain and for that matter all the European colonial powers have been responsible for the partition of so many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America; the most prominent being the

Pradhan is a pawn of men like Adani and Ambani.

In our Khasi culture, humility is a very important trait. It is considered to be a great virtue and one worth having. This is generally true even today. But the most tragic part is that instead of changing the bad traditions, worthy beliefs like this are being gradually replaced. We seem to respect officious and arrogant men much more than a few decades ago. We readily elect such persons to important posts and the ones who pass an exam (whether civil, judicial etc) suddenly start thinking that they have got the divine right to look down on everyone else. If this is what it means to be an officer or minister; if this is what it means to be "modern" it is better to go back to the forest and live in peace and decency. Earlier such pride was offensive to a community and people would actually punish (even with death!) such an offense or slight that they felt was directed towards them. We constantly read the papers about villagers being ostracised (shah kyntait shnong) for minor mistakes; why is it that we dare not do the same to people who lie and steal public money? Today we make it a point not to be seen to be irked in case it offends the offender! Is our indignation only towards the poor and meek?

The point I am raising is that politics today is being run by vested interest groups not our interests. Only that can explain why 100% FDI is a good thing now when it was supposedly a bad thing three years ago! These people who are going around chanting names and being overly zealous about Right wing politics are very passionate and it is nice to see optimism but sadly it is misguided optimism. Now our political opposition are thinking up ways to undo Mukul. The petty inner politics of the Congress itself are helping them in their plans. I think as people who stand to lose much if the government topples we must make a declaration to topple whichever government emerges out of that mayhem! Any government formed in such a manner is undemocratic. You might love or hate Mukul Sangma but he is a legally recognised elected member of the state assembly. Pulling out all these cheap tricks to remove him is unconstitutional. We must also take a stand. Let us declare to boycott and ostracise such people who indulge in unfair and illegal means! Their arrogance can only be pricked if we stop feeding it.

2018 is not too far away and many new entrants and traitorous old timers are licking their lips at the thought. Already it seems certain the regional parties are going to join up like in Assam. Conrad Sangma's recent win gave us a glimpse of possible tie-ups in the future. But that aside, let us remember our declaration and remind these jokers that they serve the people not themselves.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada

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

“*This is your time and it feels normal to you, but really, there is no normal. There's only change and resistance to it and then more change.*”

--- Meryl Streep

The Shillong Times

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Isak Swu Rebel or Nationalist?

THE man whose name is taken each time we mention a faction of the most enduring Naga insurgent outfits - the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) is no more. Isak Chisi Swu a person who might never have handled a gun in his life plays the role of a seasoned diplomat and a deacon in the outfit. He prays before and after each meeting. He advances well considered arguments at the negotiating table with the Government of India. And Swu has stuck on to the outfit since it's birth in 1980, because he believed in the legitimacy of the movement for a sovereign Nagaland. Swu joined the Naga National Movement in 1958 when he was just 29 years of age and remained constant until his death, never for once giving up hope that the idea of a shared sovereignty with "India" is possible albeit through protracted negotiations. Those from the Indian side who have sat across or around the negotiating table have developed a respect for this gentleman who gave up his whole life to a cause he believed in and without raising his voice or pushing his agenda beyond a point. The discussion always ended on a conciliatory note. In a state wracked by tribal loyalties, Isak Swu was respected by all tribal groups across Nagaland.

Swu was influenced by Nagaland's renowned freedom fighter A Z Phizo who pushed the Naga plebiscite of 1951. He joined the Naga National Council (NNC), that same year and was appointed its foreign secretary. Swu held this post for seven years but the Shillong Accord of 1975 signed by a section of NNC leaders and the National Federal Government of Nagaland on one side and Government of India on the other was what soured relations. The NNC and NFG agreed to give up arms and carry on a non-violent struggle. At the time TH Muivah and Isak Swu were in China. In 1980 Muivah, Swu and SS Khaplang formed the NSCN. Khaplang broke away from the group in 1988. The Khaplang faction retains the NSCN acronym but with the suffix 'K' in brackets. The NSCN (K) earlier agreed to the ceasefire with Government of India but reneged from that agreement in March 2015. The NSCN (K) continues to operate from the Kachin Hills of Myanmar. Now that Swu who is the guiding force is no more it remains to be seen if the NSCN(IM) will maintain that conciliatory stance which has resulted in several rounds of talks, the last one not just with the NSCN(IM) but with several stakeholders of Naga civil society to help flesh out the Naga Peace Framework singed in August 2015. Swu's continued blessings would be needed as the peace process reaches what is seen by many as the last mile.

LOOKING BACK

February 18, 1989

Ranji trophy
Bombay 145 for 1 Delhi
swamp Orissa

Bombay's opening pair of Lalchand Rajput and Shishir Hattangadi featured in a stand of 145 runs on the first day of the Charminar Challenge Ranji Trophy Tournament against Uttar Pradesh here at the Wankhade Stadium. The home team was 145 for one wicket at lunch. Rajput (59) was brilliantly caught in the gully by Vishal Singh Yadav off R. P. Singh in the last over before the break. Ravi Shastri, who took charge of team when Dilip Vengsarkar repoted sick won the toss and elected to bat. Brief scores: Bombay (first innings) 145 for one (S Httangadi battign 80, L Rajput 59, S Manjrekar batting zero, (R P Singh 1-40). Meanwhile at New Delhi, Delhi were in complete

command against Orissa as they bundled out the visitors for 161 and then piled up 122 runs without loss at stumps on the first day of the four-day Ranji Quarter final here today. Medium pacer Manoj Prabhakar stole the limelight as he brought the Orissa batsmen down on their knees, claiming six wickets off 24 overs. Delhi openers Manu Navayar (57) and Raman Lamba (56) continued the good work done by Prabhakar and were going strong at the draw of stumps. Put into bat by the hosts who won the toss, the Orissa batsmen never found themselves at ease against the fiery bowling of Prabhakar who maintained a tight line and length.

Street hawkers: A problem or the solution

The whole debate regarding the right of hawkers is actually a fight for space in Shillong with the driving question being: to whom does the city belong? This raises the question of legitimacy of claims on the part of the hawkers and tries to contrast it with those of the pedestrians, putting them in conflict with no hope of a consensus. But I feel that this is a false dichotomy meant to blind the people from real issues. However, first let us tackle the issue of legitimacy of hawkers' claim to public spaces like the footpaths. This can be done by analyzing the two specific terms, that of "street vendors" and "vending zone" and understand their implications on the claims of street vendors/hawkers.

Even in the highly flawed Meghalaya Street Vendors Act, 2014 a street vendor "means a person engaged in vending of articles, goods, waters, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to general public, in a street, lane, side walk, footpath, pavement, public park or any other public place". What this definition implies is that street vendors are recognized as such because of their occupation of public spaces such as footpaths unlike the regular shop owners who have their business establishments on private plots. So questioning hawkers occupying public spaces like footpaths is in fact, doubting the very veracity of the definition itself. One may raise the objection on the ground that the definition of hawkers maybe based on the present reality but their occupation of footpaths has to be assessed on the basis of probable future uses. They may be defined as those who occupy the footpaths presently but should they be allowed to continue to do so? It is here the definition of vending zone becomes important. Vending zones are "an area or place or a location designated as such by the planning authority for the specific use by street vendors for street vending and includes footpath, sidewalk, pavement, embankment, portions of a street, waiting area for public or any such place considered suitable for vending activities and providing services to the general public". As such even the Act that the state government has passed clearly states that street

By Bhogtoram Mawroh

vendors/hawkers have a claim to footpaths since in a vending zone these are the spaces that they would naturally occupy. So the street vendors/hawkers' claim to footpaths is legitimate and is backed by appropriate law as well.

But even after all this a complaint can still be made against the street vendors/hawkers, that is, although they may have legitimate claim to the footpaths, their claim should be curtailed because it disturbs the general public environment, i.e., congestion and traffic jams. The point in question here is-are the street vendors/hawkers the real culprits behind the congestion in Shillong? And will removing them free the roads and make life easier for pedestrians? There are many reasons regarding congestion of roads in Shillong and primary among them is the tremendous increase in private vehicles without adequate provisions being made for parking space and infrastructure. Mothphran is quite notorious for this with the road going to Jeep Stand totally overwhelmed by parking of private vehicles. An important thing to remember is that street vendors/hawkers occupy a very small space on the footpath, around a couple of feet or so. On the other hand, a vehicle parked, even a two wheeler, occupies more than double this space. So why is it that the street vendors/hawkers are being targeted when they not responsible for hindering the smooth flow of traffic? Furthermore, new buildings should only be allowed if they provide for adequate parking space. But is it being followed? What about buildings that are encroaching on footpaths? Are the owners of these units being taken to task? So it can be seen that the real culprits are never chastised or discussed even, but the softest targets are being punished. Is this fair?

So if someone believes that removing hawkers will reduce congestion and lead to free flow of uninterrupted traffic then they will be hugely disappointed. The real solution could be a substantial improvement in the public transport which will reduce the number of vehicles plying on the road while also providing a wide range of choices for inner-city mobility to the general public. This will not only improve business for public cabs (contributing to their livelihood) but also make

use of the various buses that were purchased under JNNURM which are currently lying unused. Is the misuse or the non-use of public buses purchased under a public scheme not an issue of corruption? That's food for thought.

A further and more important aspect to the above arguments are the questions as to whether the hawkers/street vendors can be a part of the solution and, finally, can they contribute to the economy in some way which justifies supporting them? Regarding the first question, I submit that street vendors/hawkers in fact make the roads safer for pedestrians. If one were to walk along the GS road they would realize that because of the iron railings the footpaths have become very narrow making two way traffic very difficult. When there is a rush pedestrians inevitably will be forced to spill on the road. If the logic of removing street vendors/hawkers on the assumption of their safety is accepted then this would mean that the pedestrians are also in danger. The solutions may lie in increasing the width of the footpath or allow pedestrians to use the road. Street vendors/hawkers by virtue of selling on the edges of the road would force the speed of the vehicle to be reduced making it safe for the pedestrians to walk. In this way they can be a part of the solution.

Lastly, there is the issue of the contribution street vendors/hawkers make to the economy of the state. Many studies in different parts of India have shown that the business generated by the street vendors/hawkers is highly significant. In this piece I would like to go more into the hypothetical issues (an empirical study will be attempted in the future). One of the common complaints that the Meghalaya Government has is that they have very limited financial resources. They may have public money to go on foreign tours for educational purposes and raise the MLA scheme from one to two crore rupees but there is no money for the public! Increasing revenue generation is therefore always touted as a very important concern. The street vendors/hawkers play a very important role in this.

The street vendors/hawkers come from the very poor and marginalized section of the society, whose consumption is very low, i.e., they have low demand. This section

constitutes almost half of the state's population. Therefore, an increase in demand among this section will increase revenue significantly. Demand will increase once the purchasing capacity increases which has to follow an improvement in their socio-economic status. This again can happen when the livelihood in which they are engaged is supported. Unlike the upper class whose consumption transcends state boundaries, the consumption of this section is restricted to the local economy. Also many of them have links with the rural economy which also gets boosted because rural products find a wider market. This again boosts rural demand. All of these will eventually enhance revenue generation and make the state financially healthier. This does not ensure total self-sufficiency for the state, but with stronger local demand the economy can be expected to do much better. With improving socio-economic status, the street vendors/hawkers can improve their business and become future investors into the state economy. Unlike investors from outside the state, the benefits of investment will remain within the state.

With economic benefits available by supporting street vendors/hawkers why does the government want to follow the opposite route, i.e., depending on central grants and private investment from outside the state? The reasons are very simple: by following a model of growth driven from outside the state, it keeps the common people dependent on the political class who by giving freebies during elections can garner their support. And secondly, by courtting private investment from outside kickbacks are guaranteed, i.e., crony capitalism.

Therefore, the street vendors/hawkers are not the problem, they are in fact the solution in many ways than one can possibly imagine. But right now they are being used as a punching bag by those who have a stake in keeping the real issue hidden and the state economically backward. There are close links between the right of street vendors/hawkers and that of the general public on the city's spaces while imagining a more humane city and a just development for all. Is it then wrong to stand for the right of the street vendors/hawkers?

Brave New World

By Ananya S Guha

The world is changing because of the internet and the breakneck speed with which it generates information. That information is there on the world wide web for everyone to happily lap up. Cut and paste is also today's syndrome of paying deference to that information that is just under your nose, long or short, or at the tip of your nippy little fingers. So if you have to write on anything from a birthday speech to Sigmund Freud, hey presto you cut and paste, paste and cut, add, delete, edit whatever you can. That information is not necessarily knowledge is glossed over by practitioners of the internet, and information is passed off as knowledge. Children do project work with the cut and paste theory and apply it assiduously to practice. Teachers accept it. Papers are shamelessly written by scholars using this method. Has the internet nullified creativity, originality and the thinking processes? In social network sites, which were originally established to reconnect with old friends people post photographs of themselves, their cats, their dogs, their breakfast and lunch. Of course everyone has a right to do so; we are after all sharing information with a clean narcissistic drive. Nothing wrong with that! Or showing off about the places you have visited, the hotels you have stayed in. Why not? We are disseminating information in an information-driven society. However when information is distorted, facts cleverly changed then social networking sites play roles of spreading the viral infection. So can news sites on the web. The media explosion is there for everyone to see. From the formal, to the non formal to the informal where news reporting is personal-personal visit, eateries, dress, journalism has become clichish and highly personalised. Anything wrong with that? No one says so. But interference with facts, posting doctored photos, cutting and pasting cleverly add not only to discomfort, but the discontinuance of what the internet was meant to serve-knowledge, education, creativity. Instead of cut and paste if teachers taught children how to tap creative resources by means of the internet, we would be contributing to the world of education. The world of work also has a direct connection with the usage of the internet.

The rise of the parallel media in the form of social networking sites is in itself both good and bad. This is put rather simplistically, but parallel media has the potential to spread rumours, and incite feelings. Also it throws caution to the winds-reprehensible use of language, slander, disrespect are some of the highlights. It is a new found weapon, almost to say: look there, I have the guts to say anything. That is not guts, that is bullying and muscle power, under the guise of the subtleties of a brackish information power. E Learning has become unlearning then. The concerted move in education would be to harness the internet as a solid educational tool right from school education to higher education. It has the potential to teach by way of free and open resources, the potential for academic advising and counselling and the power to have group enabled discussions, think of yahoo or google, google plus etc. Skype can be used for education, not only to interview celebrities! We have education at our tips, thanks to the internet, now is the time we must cash on it in a country like India, where only a the ‘ smart ‘ have the benefit of smart classrooms. What about rural poor school children? Are they less computer savvy?

The curious, exciting world of the internet is slowly turning into a commodity of expression and oddities of perversity. By aligning it with mobile phones, we are on the threshold of taking it or not to the creative world of education- where learning is both a treasure and a pleasure. Children should revel in its insights, not its oddities, adults not its perverseness. Recently I read a paper on ‘ Plagiarism’. That is enough to indicate what the world has now come to. People are writing papers on plagiarism,with citations! That is a warning good enough, and added to this software is devised to combat the rising menace of plagiarism, thanks to the internet. In this rather inverted world of information, technology and knowledge, how do we hold high our heads and say that the world is still not in chains, broken by narrow domestic walls, as Tagore would argue? An international community of terrorists is known to be ‘ successful ‘ because of its savvy use of technology; students and researchers are manacled by cut and paste. It is really a brave new world that we have today. The proverbial double edged sword is a clever interweaving and interplay of text and context. The narrative of the internet is a sordid story of appropriate use and abuse. The world of education must show the way for apposite use of technology to harness growth and development of children, students, and to foster a vibrant creative spirit.

help the public identify them in such grievances. It is hoped that the administrators look into these issues because the good reputation of NEIGRIHMS would indeed be ruined because of such uncouth staff. Yours etc., Mebaaihun Blah, Viaemail

BSF not needed in Pyndengrei

Editor, I was surprised to learn from the media that the Border Security Force (BSF) is setting up a camp at Pyndengrei, Nongstoin near the bypass on NH 44 (E) (ST June 25, 2016). As one who hails from that region and with a fair knowledge about the place, I see no point in setting up such a camp in that area. I agree with the KSU, West Khasi Hills district who protested to the DC on the matter, especially with the KSU President who argued that Nongstoin is a place where only minor crimes occur and these crimes can

I wonder, after how much more devastation, will we wake up to preserving our heritage, our local architecture and pride in being different. We cannot let Shillong lose its natural charm and purity. It is time we raise our voices against devastating developments. Yours etc., Vidushi Chaturvedi, New Delhi

Uncouth NEIGRIHMS staff

Editor, While most of the service rendered by NEIGRIHMS are highly commendable, some inadequacies must be addressed. In a recent experience, the wait seemed endless in the cardiology department, so my ailing 83-year old grandfather, my husband and I decided to return home. When we asked for the patient's card to be returned, we were made to run from one staff to another since none seemed to know where it

me to be using the cemented road on the one hand and lamenting for the ravaged hills on the other? With our numbers constantly rising, it seems our needs are outpacing our capacities. Drinking water, electricity and then other civic amenities like sewerage, roads, and bazaars-all are under tremendous stress. But what is most bizarre is human greed.

We must define our urban necessities which we cannot do without. The rest is greed-if we do not distinguish between the two now, our existence will be in peril. However, the builder mafia seems to be catching up here too- like elsewhere-constructing ultra-modern concrete structures with glass exteriors reminding you of unimaginative, ugly cosmopolitan cement jungles. Go to Police Bazaar and see for yourself, the new high brand clothes' store taking up more space than the neighboring modest looking stores, to give you one example of what I mean.

Development versus Devastation

Editor, To someone coming from Delhi, Shillong is nature's bounty! Greenery in abundance, sparrows and other birds, variety of flowers and butterflies enliven the little child even in a grown up. I was beauty struck! The small quaint looking cottages, winding lanes and clean lakes look very inviting to a wearied and fatigued denizen from the capital. It is indeed another world. The scenes changed when I visited the outskirts of Shillong. On my way to Chherapunji and Moylningnong village and back to Shillong, the images that hovered around me were those of mountains after mountains disrobed. It reminded me of impoverished men and women standing with open palms amidst opulent surroundings of Delhi. Was it not hypocritical of