

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”

—Winston Churchill

## The Shillong Times

Vol.No: LVIII No. 52 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2015

### End of an era

MR Hoping Stone Lyngdoh's demise will leave a different kind of void in Meghalaya's political landscape. He belonged to that era where corruption was not kosher and remained true to his conscience until the very end. Hence he stood tall and was respected by the people of West Khasi Hills in particular and of the State in general. Lyngdoh's name is associated with the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) which he led for several decades. Many believe that with his demise, the lion which is the symbol of the HSPDP, will no longer hold sway in West Khasi Hills. Indeed, in recent times we have witnessed the fortune of the HSPDP flagging. Perhaps it is Hoping Stone Lyngdoh's inability to move with the times which has retarded his Party's progress. Whether anyone agreed with him or not Mr Lyngdoh believed that uranium mining would sound the death knell of the small tribal population of Meghalaya and he could not be convinced otherwise. He stood firm with the Party that he founded and despite several attempts to bring about a united regional front, Lyngdoh always backed out from such formations either because he doubted the sincerity of the proponents of such a front or because he was not given a leadership position.

As Home Minister of Meghalaya for a brief period, Mr Lyngdoh could not achieve his dream of resolving the border disputes between Meghalaya and Assam. This also speaks of the fact that Lyngdoh had a one-track mind and was not distracted by the pursuit of personal aggrandizement. This disposition allowed him to hold his own although his fellow legislators felt that he often was obstinate beyond reason. His single-minded pursuit of the agenda for a separate Khasi-Jaintia state either shows his political naivety or his desire to make the HSPDP a different regional outfit and therefore relevant. Yet Lyngdoh never stood out as a one-man army. He carried his followers along with him. Whether this spirit of inclusiveness, consultation and inner party democracy will continue henceforth remains to be seen.

## LOOKING BACK

February 25, 1988

### Postal telecom tariff hike

The opposition in the Rajya Sabha today walked out in protest against the proposed increases in postal and telecom tariffs.

The walkout came after Minister of State for Defense Mr. Santosh Mohan Dev strongly defended the proposed upward revision in rates as necessary to meet the part of the increasing costs of the services. Even after these increases there would have to be a budgetary support of the order of Rs. 150 crores, he said.

Opposition members said the hike in postal rates just before the budget was anti people, unjustified and affected the common man in a year when the drought had already hit the populace badly.

Most members who spoke also said that it was unfair that both the railway budget and the postal hikes should have come on a single day, placing a burden of over Rs. 1000 crores on the people.

Earlier the Government today announced increases in the telecom and postal tariffs to yield an additional revenue of Rs. 549 crores a year.

The revision of telecommunication tariffs alone would fetch Rs. 500 crores, according to a statement made in Parliament today.

The revision of postal rates, which would yield an additional Rs. 49 crores a year, covers inland letter, envelopes, money order and registration charges.

The statement was made in both houses of Parliament by Minister of State for Defense Mr. Santosh Mohan Dev, on behalf of Communications Minister Mr. Vasant Sathe.

Justifying the increases, the Minister said the demand for telecommunication service was increasing phenomenally and the waiting list at present was well over 2 lakhs. For meeting this demand, huge investments had become necessary. Similarly, in postal services there was a need to find adequate resources to finance developmental schemes.

The Minister also said that even after the proposed revisions, to take effect from April 1, the index of telephone rates with 1961 as the base (100) was only about 530 as compared to the wholesale price index which had risen to 745 with same base year.

### Phormen greets people of Jaintia hills

On the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the creation of the Jaintia Hills District on Tuesday, the Meghalaya Education Minister, Mr. John Deng Pohmen greeted the people of the Jaintia hills District.

In his message Mr. Pohmen called upon the people of the Jaintia Hills District to work in unison for accelerated development of the District and the economic upliftment of all its people.

# Some points to ponder on the 'Ar-Maloi' (dual post) issue

By Fabian Lyngdoh

Some said that 'The Prevention of Disqualification (Members of Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya) Amendment Bill, 2015' intrudes into the domain of the District Council, while to the unprejudiced minds this Bill concerns itself with the MLAs in the Legislative Assembly, and not with the MDCs in the District Council. The Bill does not imply that no MDC should at the same time be an MLA, but that no MLA should at the same time be an MDC. Under the District Council's law an MDC may be allowed to be at the same time an MLA, but under the proposed State law, no MLA is allowed to be an MDC at the same time. So it is not the State law that intrudes into the domain of the District Council, but it is the prejudiced minds of those who support the present Executive Committee of the KHADC that intrudes into the domain of the State Legislative Assembly. Organisations like 'The Synjuk Rangbah Shnong' have nothing with which to involve themselves with this Bill of the State Legislative Assembly unless they have some private concern with the incumbent MLAs-cum-MDCs and are personally affected by it.

The Indian law in general does not permit a person to hold two or more offices of profit under the Government at the same time. Each one of us has on an average only thirty days in a month, and twelve months in a year. If a person is paid for thirty days in a month as MLA, and thirty days in a month as MDC then that person is being paid the wages of sixty days for a month that has only thirty days. Surely such persons, like Thoth the Egyptian god, must have tricked Re, the supreme God and invented twelve extra months in a year to lay twelve extra golden eggs in their salary pass books. Isn't this a glaring injustice in the eyes of everybody?

It is unbecoming of those political representatives who are personally affected by this Bill to say that its purpose is to weaken the fight for the

'jaidbyrniew'; a fight for whom and against whom? It was opined that the Federation of Tribal Dorbars (FTD) was constituted with an objective to fight against actions of the State Government and the Central Government which some of the MLAs-cum-MDCs termed as external forces. The MLAs-cum-MDCs by being MLAs are corporate members of the State Government, probably holding other posts in the State Government besides holding posts in the District Council. If the State Government is an external force seeking to destroy the Khasi tribe then why did the previous leaders fight so hard to achieve a Hills State? Why do all Toms, Dicks and Harrys now aspire to be MLAs in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly and spend crores of rupees to get elected? It would have been better for the Khasi Hills to remain an Autonomous District with a strong District Council within the State of Assam.

It is also opined that the Legislative Assembly has passed the Bill in spite of the protest by a minority opposition party. But the opposition party in Indian politics whether in miserable minority or in honourable minority would always oppose the official Bills brought in the House by the Treasury Bench. If the Treasury Bench has to listen to such logic of the Opposition Bench, then no law can be made anywhere in this country.

This amendment bill of the State Legislative Assembly does not bar anyone to be an MDC and 'lead the jaidbyrniew' as someone has ardently asserted. It is very simple. What they have to do is to resign from the post of MLA and lead the jaidbyrniew as MDC. It is not necessary that a person should at the same time be an MLA if he thinks that he is called to lead the jaidbyrniew as MDC is there is a sincere will to do so. Those who think that it is more honourable to be MLAs than MDCs (that is what really is in everybody's minds) then let them resign from the post of MDC as those gallant gentlemen had done. The Khasi society, in any constituency is not lacking in competent leaders to

replace them as MLAs or as MDCs, and our people would not be sorry with bye-elections, but they would always be heartily cooperating with festive mood, especially if bulging money-bags are involved in the fray.

These MLAs-cum-MDCs got elected to both the posts not because the people loved them so much, or because there is a dearth of leaders in their constituencies but because being the MLAs, they had the power to threaten with hell even those who supported them in the MLA election if they do not support them again in the MDC elections too. They had also the power to promise the heavens to those who did not support them in the MLA election if they come and support them in the MDC election. As I said earlier, the will of the people exercised in fear and ignorance is not democracy but slavery.

Some of these MLA-MDC incumbents may say that they had spent lots of money in both the elections to get elected; hence it is an injustice to compel them to resign before the expiry of their terms. But the Election Law has earmarked the limits of expenditure they had to incur in both the elections, and if they had spent crores of rupees to get elected then it is their own concern which they should not transfer to the jaidbyrniew. If they attempt to show in black and white that they had spent crores of rupees to get elected, then they deserve not sympathy but disqualification of both the posts.

It is also opined that since the PIL filed by Ms Agnes Kharshing is pending in the High Court, so the Legislative Assembly cannot pass the Bill. The Judiciary cannot bar the Legislature to make necessary laws at any time, on grounds of pending cases provided that these laws are reasonable and do not contradict the basic tenets of the Constitution itself. This mat-

ter is clear in the Supreme Court ruling in T. Cajej Versus U Jormanik Siem, Case No. : 394 of 1960. The High Court passed an order staying the operation of the order of the District Council dated 7/07/1959 to suspend U Jormanik as the Syiem of Hima Myllem, on the ground that the appointment and succession of a syiem was not an administrative function of the District Council and that it could only act by making a law under Paragraph 3(1)(g) of the Sixth Schedule with the assent of the Governor. In an appeal, the Supreme Court on the other hand, ruled that where executive power impinges upon the rights of citizens it will have to be backed by an appropriate law; but where executive power is concerned only with the personnel of the administration it is not necessary - even though it may be desirable - that there must be laws, rules or regulations governing the appointment of such personnel. Hence the power of appointment falls within the power of administration of the District Council, and with the power of appointment of personnel, hence the power of removal would necessarily follow as a corollary. Meanwhile while the issue is sub-judice, the District Council passed 'The United Khasi Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Chiefs and Headmen) Act, 1959 (No. 11 of 1959), which came into force in October 1959. The Supreme Court ruled that there is now a valid law empowering the District Council to remove a syiem, and that a syiem would therefore be a chief within the meaning of this Act.

It was 62 years ago in 1953 that the Disqualification Clause of the Representation of People's Act 1951 was relaxed as a stop-gap arrangement because of the lack of competent leaders to fill up the posts. The Khasi society is not so miserably illiterate to make this special concession still relevant today. So, even if a Bill cannot be effective now, it should definitely be enforced from the next term onwards to save the jaidbyrniew from the dishonour of being an illiterate society lacking competent leaders.

## Financial Inclusion Key driver to inclusive growth

By Moin Qazi

The hype over the RBI cutting the repo rate to boost economy and markets notwithstanding, the Modi government's highly ambitious financial inclusion plan—the Pradhan Mantri Dhan Yojana (PMDY) seems to have lost its sheen after the initial euphoria. Under the government diktat the banks worked at a frenzied pace to chase targets and opened a record number of accounts. But the very objective of opening these accounts has been lost as the majority of these have not seen any transactions.

The extent of financial inclusion remains staggering. Out of 600,000 villages in the country, only about 30,000 have a commercial bank branch. Till recently, more than 50% of India's population did not have any bank account and more than half of the total farmer households did not seek credit from either institutional or non-institutional sources of any kind.

Access to finance is critical for a country's development - it is as much a part of a country's basic infrastructure as access to roads, or electricity, or the Internet. Ample evidence indicates that economies with deeper financial sectors and well-functioning financial systems perform better. Moreover, access to finance is an important contributor to inclusive development. Poor households in particular need access to a broad range of financial services — savings, insurance, money transfers, and credit — in order to smooth consumption, build assets, absorb shocks and manage risks associated with irregular and unpredictable income. Without access to good formal services, the poor must rely on the less reliable and often far more expensive informal sector. A growing body of evidence confirms that gaining access to finance has a positive impact on household welfare.

India serves as an ideal case study with over 60% of the adult population operating outside of formal financial services, according to the World Bank. India has 600,000 villages, of which only 74,000 have access to banks. Financial inclusion efforts by the government focus on trying to increase the number of brick-and-mortar banks, creating a massive network of banking correspondents to target rural areas, and installing more ATM branches — one within 15 minutes walking distance of every Indian by January 2016.

A growing body of evidence confirms that gaining access to finance has a positive impact on household welfare. However, the financial services usually available to the poor are limited in terms of cost, risk, and convenience, requiring the poor to, on occasion, tap into other assets, such as livestock, building materials, and 'cash under the mattress', when the need arises. Cash under the mattress can be stolen or lose value as a result of inflation. A cow cannot be divided and sold in parcels to meet small cash needs. Certain types of credit, particularly those from moneylenders, are extremely expensive. Rotating savings and credit clubs (the international variant of the Indian *bishi*) are risky and don't allow much flexibility in loan amount or in timing of deposits and loans. Deposit accounts of formal financial institutions require minimum amounts and may have inflexible withdrawal rules. Loans from these institutions have collateral requirements that exclude many poor borrowers.

The prevailing view in financial inclusion literature is that people in developing countries resort to informal services because they have no other option. While their irregular and low income,

and often distant location, makes low-income adults in emerging markets unviable clients for formal providers, the majority of them prove to be regular users of multiple financial services. They often prefer informal services due to the enhanced value that locally delivered financial services provide that formal services cannot.

Financial inclusion is delivery of banking services at an affordable cost to the vast sections of disadvantaged and low income groups. Unrestrained access to public goods and services is the sine qua non of an open and efficient society. As banking services are in the nature of public good, it is essential that availability of banking and payment services to the entire population without discrimination is the prime objective of the public policy. By financial inclusion we mean the provision of affordable financial services, viz., access to payments and remittance facilities, savings, loans and insurance services by the formal financial system to those who tend to be excluded. In the policy framework for development of the formal financial system in India, there is always an emphasis on the need for financial inclusion and covering more and more of the excluded population by the formal financial system.

There are five factors which reflect the need of financial inclusion in rural India. These are:

Inability to access financial services; Lack of access to safe and formal saving avenues like banks; Lack of credit products in which investment can be made; Lack of remittance products which makes money transfer a cumbersome affair; Lack of insurance products which makes risk management a distant dream for poor.

Financial inclusion enables poor people to save and to responsibly borrow—allowing them to build their assets, to invest in education and entrepreneurial ventures and to improve their livelihoods. Poor people save, borrow, and make payments throughout their lives, but to use these services to their full potential, to protect their families and improve their lives, they need products well suited to their needs. Bringing this about requires attention to human and institutional issues, such as quality of access, affordability of products, sustainability for the provider of these services, and outreach to the most excluded populations.

Financial inclusion should not end with just opening accounts. The customer must make this account his financial diary and conduct transactions which can grow into a credit history. Or else all these accounts would remain deadweight. What needs to be done is to make more and more of these accounts actually transactional, and actively transactional. Once in a way the subsidy also comes in, so that's the first set of transactions. But after that, what is important is getting the customers used to the habit of saving, getting them to use formal channels for the remittance of money and then, through the way the money comes into the account, building some kind of credit analytics and making small loans and micro insurance available to them.

The real challenge is to encourage poor people to actively use a variety of formal banking services (including savings, credit and remittance) so that their dependence on costly informal channels such as moneylenders is greatly reduced. What is needed is a holistic framework and infrastructure support focused on four core dimensions of universal financial inclusion — affordable products; viable and reliable delivery models; diverse customer needs; and multilingual financial education programmes.—INFA

## TO THE EDITOR

### History indeed repeats itself.

Editor,

A time tested adage which says: 'History repeats itself' is not just a clichéd view but a veritable fact proven by the latest unceasing waves of refugee influx in tens of thousands from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and even from our neighboring Bangladesh into the rich Western European Countries. These insurmountable waves, which have assumed the dynamics of a Tsunami surging into Europe is well beyond one's imagination and has caught everybody by surprise. Against this backdrop, the historians can well recall that nearly 500 years ago when the Turks had threatened to conquer Europe with their brute force of deadly arsenal, thereby de-Christianizing the whole of Europe, the great Pope Pius V perceived that the impending threat was a real one. To check the Turks' power and cruelty, this Pope had called upon the Catholic European nations to unite and stem the advance of the frenzied Turks. Hence, on October 7<sup>th</sup> 1571, the Christian army under the leadership of Don John of Austria engaged the Turks in a fierce naval battle upon the waters of Lepanto off the mainland South Europe and after three hours of furious fighting the Turks

were completely routed, thus ending their long standing domination of Eastern Mediterranean.

Hence what the Ottoman Empire had failed to accomplish through an armed conquest, now precisely 444 years later, Europe is being overwhelmed by silent invasion through the massive and unremitting inflow of refugees who lead the children and women at the fore-front in order to sear global conscience. Coincidentally, to add insult to injury to this embattled continent, Saudi Arabia has offered to build 200 mosques across Europe for the migrants reaching there. Conversely, it is no less bewildering that all the affluent Middle East Arabs countries have virtually kept their doors firmly shut to their fellow Muslim asylum seekers. This perhaps indicates that there is a covert motive on the part of some Muslim countries to avenge the defeat suffered by the Turks at the hands of European Christians more than 400 years ago. Hence, the erection of a strong razor wire border fence by Hungary to keep at bay the unending encroachment of refugees into its country ought to serve as a wake-up call for entire Europe.

This ongoing unsavory experience suffered by Europe is also perhaps due to divine exertion for its declining and degrading sense of morality where same sex marriage is widespread and legalized even in a conservative Catholic country like Ireland. Moreover, hardly a few decades ago Christian preachers and priests used to come from Eu-

rope to enlighten us about the qualitative essence of Christianity but now the reverse has occurred and religious men from the so-called third world have to fill the vacuum. It is also an irony of fact that while the saintly Pope Pius V had painstakingly organized a Christian expedition to defeat the Turks in 1571 the incumbent Pope Francis has instead urged every Catholic family to take in one or two families of these refugees. To do so without properly screening their bona-fide entity may have detrimental consequences. This papal enunciation may not go down well with many discerning Roman Catholic families, not excluding me.

Yours etc.,  
Jerome Diengdoh,  
Shillong-2

### Cleanliness issue again!

Editor,

I wish to convey my thanks and appreciation to Ms Ampareen Lyngdoh (Minister) and the Urban Affairs Department for having heard my voice through this medium and space. I saw this in the News capsules - "Urban Affairs Department to conduct special cleaning drive on the stretch of the road from PGT/Shillong Commerce College up to B.K. Bajoria School on October 2 from

7:30 am. In this connection the said road has been declared as 'No Entry' from 7:30 am till the end of the cleaning drive." Such swift action has given much credence to the Public Opinion in this State which otherwise would have fallen on deaf ears. I want to thank The Shillong Times for publishing our letters in the interests of the public at large.

Yours etc.,  
R N Rymbai,  
Shillong-8.

### Netaji files!

Editor,

It is a stupendous decision to declassify the Netaji Bose files in West Bengal by the Chief Minister. I am actively involved in this movement with others like Chandra Kumar Bose, Anuj Dhar etc. Now the question is how long will the Central Government wait to declassify the 150 odd files! The excuse that foreign relations would be hampered is not tenable. Truths should be unveiled. The so called paid historians have distorted the facts and our children are misguided. A country can never prosper with distorted history! Why were some of the files destroyed? Who are people responsible for such crimes? All the classified files are our national documents. I hope Prime Minister Modi immediately opens the files for the NATION as he has invited the family members and other leaders for a discussion in this context.

Yours etc.,  
Anjan Kr Das  
Shillong -6

*"Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will."*

— Zig Ziglar

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 53 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2015

### Crisis in Nepal

IT is surprising that the present turmoil in Nepal has been triggered by India attacking the new Nepal Constitution officially adopted on Sep 20. The Constitution should have been welcomed by Delhi as it had been long time coming. Without it Nepal could not have achieved political stability. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his visit to Nepal had in the past endeared himself to all parties in that country, even the Maoists. But his remarks about the Constitution have made him so unpopular that youth burnt his epigies in Bhaktapur. India's concern about the Madhesis may be legitimate but it should not have caused bitterness between Delhi and Kathmandu. There are several political bodies in Nepal itself which are fighting for the Madhesis. Former Maoist Prime Minister, Baburam Bhattarai resined from the Maoist party saying that injustice had been done to the Madhesis which needed to be redressed. Vice President, Paramananda Jha also issued a statement accusing the state of discriminating against the Madhesis. In view of it, Modi's remarks about the Constitution need not have been made.

Meanwhile agitation has mounted in Nepal. Madhes continue to drop the border with India impacting rise in the Kathmandu valley and the interland. With supplies running low, youth cadres of major political parties are sweeping up as the India sentiment. All Indian TV channels have been taken off air and moves are afoot to stop screening of hindi films. Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Ranjit Rae said that there was no blockade by India nor was India against Nepal's Constitution but such statement carries little convictions with angry Nepalis. On his return from the UN, Narendra Modi will have to go for all kinds of damage-control measures or his neighbourhood policy will be in tatters.

### LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1988

### Phukan fears fresh agitation in Assam

The Assam Government wants the Centre to expedite the implementation of the Assam Accord on a faster pace, otherwise an atmosphere for resumption of the Assam movement is very much on the cards. This was expressed by the Assam Home Minister Mr. Bhriku Kumar Phukan while talking to Shillong Times here yesterday.

Mr. Phukan was very critical of the centre's role for the delay in amending the Immigrant (Migration Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1983 even though the bill was introduced in the last session of the Parliament. Mr. Phukan also demanded that the electoral rolls of Assam should be updated in line with the amendment since a large number of foreigners are included in the rolls.

When asked to comment on the recent allegation of the AASU that the AGP Government was equally responsible for the non-implementation of the Assam Accord, Mr. Phukan said both the AGP and the AASU have the same goal so far as the implementation of the Assam Accord is concerned.

Mr. Phukan made it abundantly clear that at no cost the Assam Government would allow the Meghalaya Government to set up polling booths in Assam territory.

Asked about his comments on the recent spurt of violence in Karbi Anglong by some anti social elements. Mr. Phukan told that the state Government was aware of it and strict measures were being taken to prevent the recurrence of violence.

Asked about his opinion on the Centre's request to

Mr. Mahanta to persuade the AASU to call off the oil blockade. Mr. Phukan said that the Chief Minister was negotiating with the AASU and added unless the Centre agreed to the AASU's demands, nothing positive could be achieved.

### Security tightened in Assembly after heckling of Minister

Security arrangements in the Meghalaya Assembly premises have been further tightened following reports of an incident of heckling and abusing of a Minister belonging to the HPU (B) group on Wednesday.

According to reports, a group of person, mostly women, from Cherrapunjee button-holed PHE Minister Mr. S. P. Swer in the Assembly corridor and expressed their displeasure over his decision to join hand with the UMPF. Some of the women allegedly hurled choicest abuses on Mr. Swer. Reports said the Minister, who stood unruffled, also received severe threat. The group it is reported, told Mr. Swer to return to the HPU or else face consequences. He is reported to have said "I shall consider the matter."

Report said that Congress(I) MP Mr. J. E. Tariang whisked him away. Later security men took control of the situation.

Meanwhile, the Assembly Secretariat has decided to withdraw all premises passes and issue fresh ones only to the genuine persons in need of it. Watch and Ward staff of the Assembly have been directed not to be lenient towards anybody. Even the staff of the Assembly Secretariat have been asked to carry their identity cards.

# When ambition clouds good sense

Patricia Mukhim

The State Government has done well to prepare the Prevention of Disqualification (Members of the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya) Amendment Bill, 2015 and to get it passed by the legislature recently, despite heated protests from the opposition benches. The Act which takes effect from October 1, 2015 effectively puts paid to the pernicious legacy of allowing one person to be both MLA and MDC. Opposition to this Bill was expected. In any case the Opposition in this State and in the country is not known for 'constructive opposition'. They oppose because they have to, so one cannot take their posturing too seriously. For the State Government it was a way of averting another court verdict which would have pushed it to come up with a Bill within a stipulated date.

Given the judicial activism of our era it was only a matter of time before the courts would have taken a call and passed a judgment in favour of the public interest litigation (PIL) filed on the issue of dual posts - i.e. one person as MLA and MDC, since this has created a peculiar situation and conflict of interests. This was most evident in the case of HDR Lyngdoh who was both MDC and MLA and was also the Minister in charge District Council Affairs. When the question of the Village Administration Bill of the KHADC came before the Government, Lyngdoh had to torpedo some of the clauses although he must have been part of the formulation of the Bill as MDC. How is it that it took so long for people to figure out that it is actually sheer ambition and the need to keep opponents at bay which prompts MLAs to also contest as MDC? Naturally HDR Lyngdoh was also the first to resign.

Defending the Bill in the Assembly, the astute Dr Mukul Sangma who was accused by the Opposition of actually ambushing those MLAs who are also elected MDCs, said, "There is no question of ambush or malafide intention. The legislation is required and its purpose is to set things right in sync with the spirit of the Constitution so that we will not be caught unawares and confronted by any situa-

tion." Sangma was probably trying to retrieve the lost space of the executive and legislature which in recent times is being appropriate by the judiciary. The PIL is likely to be decided in favour of the citizen who is challenging the idea of dual legislative posts. Adding to the dilemma of the Councilors is another PIL by RTI activist and leader of the Mait Shaphrang Movement, Micheal Syiem, seeking the abolition of the District Councils which he had publicly argued have become redundant and merely a second tier legislative body which has failed to meet the aspirations of the people.

There can be no two views that the District Councils have become redundant after Meghalaya attained statehood. The Councils have neither the resources nor the vision for development. Their inability to manage their finances over the decades has made them forfeit the right to run primary schools and rural health care centres. Now all that the Councils focus on is how to get direct central funding since the State Government has over the years starved them of funds and because they have failed to develop a revenue model for their sustenance. The Councils employ several people but most of the appointments are political in nature and therefore superfluous. The Councils were intended to be a bulwark against the onslaught of a mainstream Assamese culture at a time when the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills were part of undivided Assam. This vanguard role ended the day Meghalaya became a separate state and was ruled by the tribal representatives. If we continue to have district councils even today, we are implying that the State Government cannot take care of the interests of the tribes. But is that a fact?

If it comes to conservation and promotion of our culture then I believe that the Art and Culture Department has that primary role and also the resources to make that happen. In any case culture is not a static thing and human beings don't need an external agency to act out their cultural practices. So far the

state of Meghalaya has allowed us a free space for the expression of our culture. The various folk dances and cultural cum religious festivals receive the generous support of the state. The only time that Khasi Hills District Council wanted to take up a grand project called the Monolith Festival and also to create a Heritage Village the project allegedly ran into a scam. The Heritage Village at Mawphlang is badly maintained. At the moment it is the State Government that is pushing funds to make the place presentable for the International Mei-Ramew Festival. So to my mind the district council is an institution that has outlived its utility. One only wonders as to whether any serious evaluation and academic study has been conducted to assess the relevance of the councils today. If not, why not? Institutions that have become decadent and are there to serve the interests of a few tribal elite cannot continue to be resuscitated. The Planning Commission is one good example. It is a faulty decision to conceive of a central planning body for a country that claims to be a federal structure. Similarly, if the district councils have become just a waiting room and training ground for MDCs to get elected as MLAs, then the question is whether they really play an important public role.

Another very familiar scenario is that of an MLA not wanting to cede political space to a second rung leader to contest the MDC elections. Often, if that space is given then the MLA usually has a pact with the MDC that he would not usurp the former's preeminent position. The people we call leaders in politics are actually not leaders in the true sense of the term. A leader serves his/her people and they are his/her prime concern. Leaders are not insecure little despots wanting to wield power permanently if possible and bribing people to get re-elected. If there were no perks why would anyone spend so much money during elections? This point was very cogently argued by Fabian Lyngdoh in his article, "Some Points to Ponder on

the Ar-Maloi (dual post) issue (ST September 30, 2015). It is no trade secret that our elected representatives enjoy their tenures because they hardly serve. If they did serve we would not have to murmur about the condition of our roads, water supply, education and health care. On the contrary those in the Government enjoy such excellent perks plus the VVIP status that they would never ever want to lose it. Hence if the MDC gets ambitious and throws in his/her hat in the legislative assembly election, there is a real fear that the person could win that election and upstage the former MLA. This is THE reason why most MLAs don't want another contender in the district council elections. Simple. No rocket science to figure this out! All this bunkum about people wanting to elect them for both posts is political crap!

The reason why the present KHADC, CEM, PN Syiem is digging in his heels and posturing as the champion of the poor, brainless, paranoid, illiterate, uneducated, illogical, perpetually threatened 'Jaidbynriew' of which I am one, is because this is a golden opportunity for him to challenge the present CM, Dr Mukul Sangma. If Syiem comes out victorious with his VAB he believes the numerically superior Khasi-Jaintia community would unequivocally reelect the Congress Party in the 2018 election of which he would by then have become the undisputed leader and therefore the Chief Ministerial candidate. Do we wonder then why Dr Sangma saw through this chicanery much before we did?

We watch the antics of these politicians and wonder why we deserve them in the first place. Like most logical Indians I too believe that parliamentary democracy with its quirky electoral politics has failed us. But like they say, the alternatives might be worse. My futile wish is that the electorate wakes up and takes the money offered during election and vote for the most deserving person. This was tried out in Kenya and Vietnam and it worked. We should spread this message in Meghalaya too.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Clarification from RLSSCO

Editor,  
The recent letter appearing in the Shillong Times captioned "Notice to Sanbor Shullai" (ST September 29, 2015) by T.R Skhemlon is a political conspiracy against Mr Sanbor Shullai to tarnish his image. Mr T.R Skhemlon is unaware of the fact that the plot of land where the RLSSCO building is standing was allotted to Mr. George Arthur Warjri as he was the General Secretary. The said plot of land stands till date in the name of the General Secretary and not under the name of Mr Sanbor Shullai as alleged. It is also clarified that the land is being used for the purpose it was allotted for, and is still the property of the RLSSCO, an NGO, and neither the building nor the plot of land is being used by any individual.

Yours etc.,  
H Rynthiang,  
Asst Gen Secy,  
RLSSCO

**Editor replies:** The letter by TR Skhemlon was published in good faith and in public interest. This newspaper takes an impartial view of issues and has stood for the larger public good and not for or against any personality. What the public wants to know is why a public utility such as a Sports and Cultural Club should violate the MUDA building bye-laws. A clarification from the Club on this issue rather than a spirited defence of the MLA Sanbor Shullai would have been in order. We expect a Sports and Cultural Club calling itself an NGO to be political and not be politically aligned or inclined.

### MeECL's poor service

Editor,  
The discovery of electricity is one of the greatest achievements of man. Its use has made our lives so comfortable that, today, scientists in all countries are using it for all purposes. Electricity has helped to remove darkness and increase human activity. In short, the use of electricity has changed our lives to such an extent that life without it is almost unthinkable. But the MeECL does not seem to understand this. The power supply in Jowai Town is pathetic. Taking into account the huge bills that we have to pay it seems like we have been cheated. It has become a routine for power to go off several times in a day. This shows that the Corporation is incapable of providing uninterrupted power supply.

I request those in power to rectify this error so as to avoid interruption in power supply. Such failures makes us the customers lose faith in the capability of MeECL to render quality service.

Yours etc.,  
Iahmi Khyriem  
Jowai, West Jaintia Hills

### Where is the small change?

## Political delicacies

By Nora Chopra

### SURESH PRABHU EARNS PRIME MINISTER'S DISPLEASURE

Suresh Prabhu who was inducted in the Narendra Modi cabinet with great fanfare has landed himself into serious trouble. Prime Minister is extremely upset with Suresh Prabhu over the series of rail accidents that have taken place of late. PM recently summoned him and has told him in clear terms that if these accidents continue, he is sure to lose the railway ministry. He was so scared after the last accident that he did not even face the media. At the meeting held on accidents, he chaired the meeting but was conspicuous by his absence at the press briefing done on accidents leaving the media fretting with anger. Prabhu who was to be the Sherpa for the PM at G 20 to be held in Antalya in Turkey on November 15 and 16, has been dropped by PM. Adding to his woes is the recent goof up on the railway time table. The time table which was to be released on October 1, is perhaps not ready. There was no single printed copy of the time table available till twelve midnight on September 30, leaving all the passengers totally confused and bewildered. The passengers had no idea when their trains would arrive or depart.

### RAHUL GANDHI FORCED TO CAMPAIGN IN BIHAR ELECTIONS

As pressure mounted on the Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi, he has been forced to reverse his decision of not campaigning in Bihar. In view of the failure of the Champaran rally, Rahul had decided to withdraw himself from the campaign which he was to lead in Bihar. Rahul had been forced to cancel his Bihar tour after his experience in Champaran rally last week. At the Champaran rally there was hardly any crowd and only one thousand were listeners mobilised by the Bihar PCC chief Ashok Choudhury and general secretary CP Joshi. Rahul is extremely upset with both Choudhury and Joshi. Sources claim that both got a firing there and then by Rahul. Meanwhile the absence of Nitish Kumar and Lalu Yadav from the Congress rally has only further irked the Congress VP. All this had compelled Rahul to decide that he would no more campaign for the party in Bihar. But because of the pressure mounting from within the rank and file of the Bihar Congress, he has no option but to campaign.

### JOURNALIST SWAPAN DASGUPTA MAY BE REWARDED BY BJP

Swapan Dasgupta, once a journalist but now the BJP ideologue, is all set to head the country's biggest news agency the Press Trust of India replacing the top honcho and a Congress favourite M K Raazdan. It has been a sad tale of sychophancy for both Dasgupta and Raazdan. Dasgupta quit his job to become the BJP ideologue and adviser just in quest of getting a Rajya Sabha seat. The BJP which is used to promoting its saffron media persons had gifted Chandan Mitra, a newspaper baron with a Rajya Sabha seat for converting it into another BJP mouthpiece. The BJP even made another journalist with RSS background a five year stint in Rajya

Sabha.. This gave rise to hopes of most pro BJP journalists and hectic lobbying began. Many journalists have quit their jobs for getting a share in the BJP booty. Poor Raazdan courted proximity to the Congress for last ten years lobbying for Rajya Sabha but the Congress is yet to give nomination to any working journalist. It has only obliged media barons or media baroness.

PRIME MINISTER SHEDDING CROCODILE TEARS FOR HIS MOTHER

The poor mother of Narendra Modi is really an unlucky mother. While she spends her days in penury in her home town, her prime minister son cries for her in a foreign country. In an interaction in San Jose he told the audience that his mother worked as a house maid to bring him up. Till now the entire world knew that his father sold chai to bring him up. Now he tried to gain sympathy by shedding tears for his mother whom he has abandoned. His mother has not stepped into the luxurious and sprawling residence of her prime minister son. But he has only to offer tears for her. By bursting into tears, he is unlikely to get sympathy. Instead political circles are only amused and some opposition leaders were heard laughing. A senior MP of his own party was heard saying that PM shed crocodile tears.

M A D H U S U D A N MISTRY WOOING SURJEWALA AND SCINDIA

The Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh Madhusudan Mistry who is known to be the blue eyed boy of Rahul Gandhi is these days busy lobbying hard with Randeep Singh Surjewala or Jyotiraditya Scindia. After getting the indication that he may be dropped in the next reshuffle, Mistry has taken to the well known route of sychophancy. These days Madhusudan can be found doing some buttering and flattering Surjewala and Scindia to maintain his position. Mistry has already adjusted Surjewala and Scindia's supporters in the 30 member observer committee he has been asked to constitute for the 30 districts of UP. Out of the 30 members, nearly half of them are from Haryana mostly Surjewala supporters. Even ailing workers have been made a member who can not even move out of their beds. Chakravorty Sharma who just had a heart operation and advised bed rest for 2 months is a member.

ASHOK CHAVAN TURNS REBEL CONGRESSMAN

The Maharashtra PCC chief Ashok Chavan who is on his way out, is now in a rebellious mood. He refused to come to the kisan rally when he was asked to contribute money towards the rally, he refused to give money and he even refused to participate in the rally. Ashok Chavan was not the only one who absented himself from the rally but the entire Maharashtra PCC was conspicuous by its absence. Except for the erstwhile chief minister Prithviraj Chavan and the CLP leader Vikhe Patil, all the others boycotted the rally. Prithviraj wants to become the CLP leader and Vikhe Patil is waiting to grab the PCC chief's post. (IPA)

Why do we keep hearing of shortage of coins? It started with the 10p, 50p coins which now we don't even use anymore much less consider the same as money. It has gradually led to the disappearance of the ₹1, ₹2, ₹5 coins as well. The same excuse of shortage is given by all. But where exactly is the shortage? From the Bank's side? The consumer's side? The RBI? Does the Government not have a role here? Isn't it high time somebody looks into this problem? (Or asks the right questions to the right people?)

I salute the MUDA authorities for coming up with a solution to the problem but if they do this, isn't it the same as shopkeepers giving us sweets as change? But then again, I guess nobody really cares enough to ask questions on trivial matters involving trivial sums of money when there is always bigger fish to catch.

Yours etc.,  
Joe Oliver Mae Ryan  
Lyngdoh  
Rajagiri Business School  
Kochi, Kerala

**Will ISL and HIL help India do well internationally? Veturi Srivatsa tries to find out**

Footballers and hockey players feel they are seeing some "ache din" thanks to the pro-leagues in the two popular sports in the country, not taking cricket into consideration.

Are these leagues just a business promotion or are they taking country's hockey and football to the next level? Both the leagues have seen crowds flocking to the stadiums, but the lurking danger is whether they go the Formula One way once the initial glamour wears off.

Brazilian greats Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos are out to do business in Asia and in the process, they think, the region could prosper. They are not apologetic about their staggering statements.

Ronaldo is planning to open 30 football schools in China pouncing on the idea of Chinese President Xi Jinping, a known football fan, wanting his country to develop into a world beater and also one day host the World Cup. The two-time World Cup winner feels China has mass base and determination and all they now need is right kind of training.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not expressed any particular liking for either football or hockey, cricket being his preferred sport as he was president of the Gujarat Cricket Association.

Ronaldo says apart from the business angle he is attracted by the sheer number of football fans and players in China and the government's focus on the development of the sport.

How often have we in



# Ache din for players!



India heard such pious statements from big-time European clubs promising to open football academies in Kolkata, Goa and Delhi?

Right from now beleaguered FIFA chief Sepp Blatter, who famously stated some years ago that India was a sleeping giant, to every Tom, Dick and Harry visiting India has issued certificates of wealth and talent, but bemoaned the lack of basic infrastructure to execute the plans. Worse, the All India Football Federa-

tion (AIFF) still does not have its own academy, all they have is empty promises by the Goa government to allot land.

Now Roberto Carlos comes to join the ISL team Delhi Dynamos as player-coach and says his aim is to make India the champion team of Asia. The Brazilian stalwart has gone a step further by setting a deadline for his ambitious plan. He honestly believes within "one or two years Indian players will witness an evolution like

never before." Really? Some confidence, this!

As if to buttress the argument of Carlos, Elano Blumer, the highest scorer in the ISL last year, says having so many Brazilians in the tournament is a positive sign because it is going to improve the quality of Indian football.

Ask the hockey players turning out for the Hockey

and hockey players?

This is best explained by hard-boiled football pro Sunil Chhetri.

Chhetri is not over-elated at his going down the hammer for Rs.1.2 crore. He said this isn't the first time he has crossed the eight-figure mark as a pro. At 31, he thinks his parents know more about money and investments more than him.

leagues, each questioning the soundness of the other.

In this festive season both the Hockey India League (HIL), in its third edition, and the second Indian Super League (ISL) are out to attract eyeballs. The healthy rivalry should help both and in the process if the Indian hockey and football benefit, nothing like it.

reckon with the price the marquee players are valued in the ISL, even if they are no longer hot properties internationally.

While most overseas marquee players in ISL are paid upwards of close to Rs.5 crore when the top Indians are valued in lakhs, only a couple touchingly close to the



India League (HIL) and they, too, will tell you how it will benefit Indian hockey in the long run.

What do the two leagues mean to the humble football

HIL has come to stay with the hike in the purchasing power of the franchises in the third edition while there is still some confusion over the two pro football

When it comes to payouts, the Indian Premier League (IPL) is unmatched or so the market analysts perceived. But they did not

eight-figure mark.

For instance, someone like Italian Alessandro Del Piero could command in his first (Contd on P-VII)

## Your net addiction and WW-III

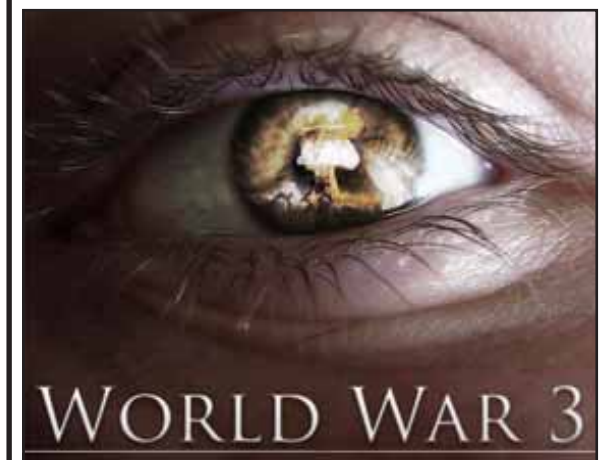
I spend so much time on the internet that Amazon.com has replaced its "You May Also Like" recommendations list with a pop-up note saying: "Turn this off and go for a walk, you fat lazy slob."

It's hard to get us 21st century people, especially males, off our screens. Our wives sometimes try to get us to move using the trendy word "Yolo," which stands for You Only Live Once. But this doesn't work in Asia, where most people believe in reincarnation. "Stop bugging me, I'll log off and do something in my next life."

I began to realize just how serious a web-surfer I was when I detected three signs of being a net junkie: 1) The links on every webpage on the whole internet are dark red which

with the pilots hanging out of the cockpit windows shouting: "Hey! Wakey-wakey."

The same week, there was a newspaper story about a guy who hijacked a night flight in France to take him to Geneva. The French air force had to escort it because the entire



means you've clicked them before, 2) Your entire "best friends" list is of people you've never met, and 3) Your "bookmarks" list is longer than an actual book.

Of course, I myself am not a problem addict, although I must admit, during my brief visits to the real world I spend an inordinate length of time annoyed that real life doesn't have a "back" button. Massive design oversight there.

If you do have internet addiction, a service set up just for you is [netaddictionrecovery.com](http://netaddictionrecovery.com). Yes, it's online. My wife thinks that camps to beat web addiction should be physical places. True, but who's going to go to them

unless

**The Funny side**  
By  
**Nury Vittachi**

looking at a screen is strangely exhausting. I saw a news report recently about a flight in Wuhan, central China, which couldn't land for 30 minutes because air traffic controllers had fallen asleep at their screens. The report didn't say how they eventually managed to wake them, but I suspect the Boeing 737 "buzzed" the window of the airport control tower

Swiss air force had gone home. Switzerland has a longstanding "we're not playing" policy on wars, so they clearly haven't internalized the fact that military action is not a nine-to-five thing. World War III's going to be interesting. "Guet nacht, esteemed enemy combatants, it's five o'clock, time to go home to relax with a plate of raclette and some online extreme yodeling videos. See you tomorrow!"

My hope is that whoever organizes World Wars will delay the start of the next biggie until the whole thing can be fought in Minecraft world or Sim City. Then all those hours I've "wasted" can be put to good use.

Until then, the good news is that human society is adjusting to the existence of screen

addicts. In Chongqing, China, someone has painted markings on the pavement to create a slow lane for people who walk while staring at phones. Actually, I suspect some sort of "Chongqing Association of Snatch-Thieves" has painted those lines for their own convenience.

Should one risk it? Sure. You only live once. Or twice. Or thrice.

**Slick fashion wears in both formal and casual segments catch the fancy of today's men who too unfailingly love to groom themselves and admire their mirror image. Pramita Bose reports on the latest trends**



Going by the age-old metaphor, Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, many may surmise that the two are naturally opposed to each other and

must behave differently as per their gender-specific characteristics.

But this is not the case always as case studies suggest. For if you thought that

shopping is purely a favourite feminine preoccupation, then think twice. Even men can shop till they drop and their rack-raids are not rigidly restricted to grabbing grocery items of daily utility from the shelves.

Slick fashion wears in both formal and casual segments too catch their fancy and grab attention to lend their wardrobes a much revamped look. From this tendency there also has emerged a herd of fops and dandies who unfailingly love to groom themselves and admire their mirror image at any slightest pretext.

"The concept of Indian men in love with his dressing table is nothing new.

For even the good old rajas, Maharajas, their warriors and subjects would adorn themselves in gaudy garments and dazzling jewellery. The contemporary image of a suave, clean-shaven, metrosexual man is only an extension to this," elucidates Mumbai-based fashion designer Masumi Mewawalla.

"And adding more warpaint, colours and layers to further louden this get-up comes alive the modern-day 'peacock man', who is conspicuously concerned with his ruffled, feathery outfits and 'pancaked' appearances. He in fact never tires out of checking himself frequently

on the transparent glass and don't be surprised even if he shows his narcissistic side. This new-age species is bold, stylish, young and mature," she says.

Jodhpuris, waist-coats, Nehru jackets with breeches, balloon trousers, Patiala pants and the constantly 'in-vogue' blazers will dominate the menswear line this season, predicts Masumi. As to the palette, she enlists blues, maroons and wines as the perfect pick, while fabrics like linen, silks and velvets remain the hot favourites, she declares.

Unleashing such unmatched charms of men on

the ramp are the ongoing fashion fests. Exuding glamour and chic sensuality, even men turn on the heat to be dapper and desirable!

Kolkata's eminent menswear exponent Sharbari Datta recently unveiled her sparkling wedding range along with a fusion line at the Kingfisher ULTRA Bengal Fashion Week. Models cavorting in unique colour-blends took the glittering evening to a crescendo with highlights of dark grey, silver, blue, red, beige and sandalwood in radiant splashes.

The graceful feline sashay in gorgeous finery subtly reminded the onlookers of the imminent festive



favour. Well-known for her ethnic touch, Datta derived her ideas from folk art, shlokas (religious chants), foliage, ancient allegories and poetry, intricately crafted with fine ariwork and

kantha stitches. The result is a magical frame of traditional Bengal oozing out from every corner. The veteran draper meticulously played with fabrics such as pure (Contd on P-VII)

By Gajal Gupta

# New-age nanny for Indian kids

With technology fast becoming an integral part of people's lives, parenting has also undergone a sea change in the last few years. In nuclear families, parenting apps are helping couples raise their offspring in a much more efficient and secure way.

Today there are a number of smartphone apps to make parents' life simple and more organised as far as kids are concerned.

For example, the "mycity4kids Family Organiser" app helps parents search for right activities and content related to their kids.

Launched in October 2010, "mycity4kids" has become an indispensable mobile platform for several mothers.

"The idea for 'mycity4kids' struck me when my kids were six and two, respectively. Like other parents, we also used to dwell on how difficult it is to find appropriate things to do or places to go to where our kids could acquire new skills or just have a fun time," said Vishal Gupta, the co-founder of the app.

The USP lies in the app's unique mother-focussed content around which it has built the largest community of parents.

"We would like to become the indispensable mobile platform for today's multi-tasking mother by giving her access in one place to everything she needs and can learn from the shared experiences of other parents," explained 40-year-old Gupta who lives in Gurgaon.

The app offers highly utilitarian features like a "Family Calendar", to-do lists, upcoming events,

kids resources and parenting blogs that parents can access on the go to share their parenting responsibilities actively with others.

"Being the first-movers in this category, we had to face many challenges in its initial stages and to create a unique business model," Gupta added.

This app is available for

children and keep a tab on their activities inside home or while they play in the neighbourhood park.

Considering child safety as a main concern, another app "Northstar" provides a platform for parents and schools which can be used to track the location of school buses.

This mobile app is used



both Apple and Android users for downloading.

The app currently caters to parents in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune.

Soon, it will expand its reach in other cities. In the last one year, "mycity4kids" website has received 20 million page views by nearly 3.5 million parents.

There are some other apps too for parents.

For instance, "Family Tracker" helps parents track the whereabouts of their

to keep track of the children's location as they commute between school and home.

There are also apps like "Dr. Panda's Hospital" that teach kids how to nurture pets at a young age and help them become sensitive to others.

Another app named "10 Monkeys Multiplication" helps children master tables from two to 10 in a fun and engaging way.

(Gajal Gupta can be contacted at gajal.g@ians.in)

By Natalia Ningthoujam

She hails from Arunachal Pradesh, stays in Assam, and is making a headway internationally by showcasing the handloom prowess of culturally-rich northeastern India. After displaying her tribal creations with a modern twist in London, Yana Ngoba is now eyeing the runways of global fashion capitals Paris and Milan.

Ngoba presented her collection in collaboration with designer Nabam Aka, also from Arunachal Pradesh, as



Yana Ngoba

a part of the London Fashion Week's off-schedule show Fashions Finest. And the 28-year-old is thrilled with the response.

"Our collection highlighted the northeast region's handloom, especially the loom made in Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal, Nagaland...even muga of Assam. We used them to create gowns, dresses, skirts and ornaments.

"People (in London)

loved it. They couldn't believe people in India could be so different," Ngoba said in a telephonic interview from Guwahati, where she is based now.

She said that the buyers associated Indian fashion

pleasantly surprised when they saw her bright-coloured range of apparel in the form of gowns with slits or deep neck and skirts with jackets paired with accessories and ornaments made of bronze, silver, old Indian coins and bamboo canes.

"People in London asked me 'Which country are you inspired by?' I said 'India'. So, they were confused. They said that they have always seen people wearing saris (in India). I said 'No. We are from northeast India and have a different culture'.

"We even showed pictures and videos about our culture. Most of the things were sold out. We also got orders in bulk," said the designer, who has been in the industry for over a decade.

Ngoba, who had showcased her creations at another fashion week in Britain last year, now wants to explore other international markets.

"Milan Fashion Week is not yet confirmed. But I'll make sure it is. It is a dream. Fashion comes from all the big cities like London, Milan and Paris; so we thought of hitting those ramps first," she said.

A regular participant in northeast festivals in the country, she says Indian fashion weeks can wait as



she would like to get a taste of the international platform first.

"When I see Indian fashion weeks, most of the fashion designers focus on international fashion...like evening wear or dresses. So, I thought that maybe we should do international fashion shows first," she said.

People from northeast are considered to have a distinct sense of style and often, their fashion seems to be influenced by western trends.

"We get things mostly from Bangkok if they are not

our traditional attire. If you notice, since our forefathers' time, fashion has been important to us. They were always decked up from head to toe...be it headgear, ornaments or colourful clothes. That's our personal style... something different from the rest of the world," she said.

Any fashion picks from the northeast region?

"Maybe you can start with the jewellery pieces. The ones made with coins will go well with sari or salwars too," said the designer, who wants to work with more weavers across the country. (IANS)

# From Arunachal to Milan, Paris

## Meanswear: A dandy band

(Contd from P-VI) silk, tussar and raw silk for her elegant collection.

Another menswear specialist Manish Bansal pegs his winter festive line with a quirky theme. His is a canine

paired with striped blazers and ankle-length trousers. More inclined towards tailoring commercially viable costumes, the couturier stresses upon the affordability factor in his kitty.



"We have a wide price band that fits into almost all budgets and diverse income-groups. It's nothing like being upmarket exclusive or upscale-oriented. I want to reach out to a larger cross-section of the society with my creations," he wishes.

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan is his man of choice "because he is the living legend and I love his sense of style," he reasons.

Designer Dhruv Kapoor walks the line of flamboyance, confidence and a state of untamed freedom this fiscal in his bespoke collection for men. His menswear piece on the runway of late strutted down a knee-length charcoal coat over basic formals and was accessorised with an official bag. Another white scuba hooded jacket with leather facing was a great innovation for the men's formal stock. A riot of hues was poured in with a well-justified combo of navy blue and bottle green with the right amount of tarnish tints and burnt yellow.

"We maintain a niche clientele who are bold enough to pull off the clothes. See, we have deliberately kept our men slightly more submissive compared to our women as our garbs underscore the softer side of men and suppress their male ego. The collection is easy, sporty, handy and plucky in character," he volunteers.

A mix of oversized coats, jumpsuits and plate sweatshirts tagged as 'SNOB' governs his display array and the designer has decided to lay focus upon re-inventing the dinner pants in scuba fabric by giving it a more relaxed and a sporty aesthetic appeal. Since dark tinges continue to monopolize the palette, the designer consciously chooses blacks and bottle green with a hint of acid yellow, rust and pale blues to tally with the diktats in trend. (TWF)

## Ache din for players!

(Contd from P-VI) season last year as much as say Mahendra Singh Dhoni does after six years in the IPL. That's saying something for the universal popularity of football even if the cricketers are seen as demigods in India.

If Dhoni can boast of winning all the three ICC Cups in shorter formats and taking the Test side to the top of the heap, Del Piero's credentials are no less impressive considering his achievements with his national and Italian club Juventus.

The biggest problem the AIFF is facing is how to merge the IPL and the I-League to make a more attractive property for football stars to get attracted like China is doing.

The jury is still out. Many top India footballers, including the iconic Bhaichung Bhutia, feel the I-League should be preserved and protected if Indian football has to survive.

Their fear is ISL will soon become a haven for unwanted European stars. With six overseas players and five Indians in a line-up how is it going to help Indian football, they ask.

Reading the mind of the AIFF bosses, quite a few I-League clubs have shut their shops and some others likely to follow suit. Their argument is why should they pay the players so much for a three-month I-League and that, too, to a tired lot after a two month ISL? The AIFF may as well look to make ISL a 15-team round the year league as many overseas players want.

Hockey has no such worries. There is scope for increasing the number of teams and once Pakistani players also join the caravan, it will truly be a global league.

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

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

## 'STAR - GAZING'

Sunday, October 4, 2015

Some ups and downs would be felt as Moon square Mercury on your solar return chart. You may find yourself busy in all kinds of communications and new work in this area can be initiated. At times your words may become more aggressive so you need to take care in what you write and say. There could be some feeling of insecurity that you may have to contend with on occasion. Routine matters will progress smoothly. At home and amongst friends too you would feel grounded in your relationships and the support you can count on. Be careful when travelling and don't ignore health ailments however minor they may seem. Finances will be stable.

**Aries : (March 21 - April 20)**

This is a favorable time for you and will provide a boost to your career and professional life; a phase that gives you fame. Joy is ahead supporting you in every field of life as you make progress. Now you have courage and vitality to activate your plans so take advantage. Your influence among people and in gatherings is remarkable you will enjoy good relationships with professional associates and in your circle of close friends. Your business proposals will get highlighted and you will have new contracts at your doorstep. Health will improve if you take requisite care.

**Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)**

You may be able to draw attention to yourself in the progress of your career during this phase. If looking for betterment or a job switch, you may get a chance in the first half of the week. Your financial requirements may soon be solved. Chances of social interaction and family gatherings among family and loved ones will give happiness and joy. You may go for a short personal journey or professional trip. There are indications of renovation or purchase of a new home or work place. Sudden expenditure may not be ruled out. Health of self or mother may require your attention. Take care in travel and pay attention to travel details.

**Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)**

Being intensely perceptive you are able to make the most of opportunities that come your way. You may get better chances of improvement in money matters in the second half of this week. You will be able to present your views convincingly and hold your own in group discussions moreover these ideas will be well received. You are more expressive and forthcoming in personal relationships. If you are going to purchase a home, make financial enquiries and relook at your budget first. Avoid taking loans for some consumer item. Your health may improve but that of your life partner needs some attention.

**Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)**

The planetary position reveals that monetary matters and financial situation need basic care. You may get engaged in some unusual deal that may not be profitable for you. Some mischievous person may deceive you in some dealings related to money matters so exercise due care. If you play your cards right you can work on projects that are already in progress, and finish these with a flourish at your work place. There are balanced energies within you which are reflected in personal relationships and creative ventures. Take care in family relations take a soft stand to keep away the conflict raised by misunderstandings in family and avoid hasty decisions.

**Leo : (July 23 - August 23)**

Your prospects in fields related to education, research work and admission in professional courses is better. Your imagination is ignited and those in films, sports or music will do very well. Your creativity gives impetus at your work place and you are spurred to redecorate your home. Your friends and well wishers will extend a helping hand towards you. You make romantic gestures and draw your beloved closer to you. You may have to undertake travel connected with some concern or issue and you will be happy to know that things are working as per your plans.

**Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)**

Be prepared for a complete change in matters related to your profession, residence or career. You may think of purchasing some property and you will consult this issue with your family, it will help you in getting financial aid from there. You may have some sudden unforeseen expenditure. Relations with family members and loved ones remain stable. You find love in a

friendship and this friendship flowers into a beautiful affair. You take a short break which rejuvenates you and affords you a new vision to make future plans.

**Libra : (September 23 - October 23)**

Some good opportunities come across in your professional life and the planetary configuration will be quite inspiring which will enable you to mark fulfilling achievements in many areas. Futuristic plans will be made and financially you will do well. It is time to let your hair down, relax and also let your impulsive side come forth. Take care of your relations with your siblings and keep your communications open and loving. You may experience a state of self enlightenment and it will be useful in achieving peace of mind. Health will remain good.

**Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)**

A phase for monetary gains is ahead and you will land a deal with lucrative financial gains with ease. Professional and career goals may be achieved if you take timely action and avoid inopportune delay. Your social contacts grow to become more dynamic. You are spiritual and religious and you might find someone with a similar nature to accompany you towards a new goal and you will feel inner satisfaction. You will find solace with your family or at home and you will want to devote some time with children to rejuvenate. A hectic schedule will keep you on your toes. Health will be good.

**Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)**

There is a great opportunity for you to find stabilization drawing from the strength of the people around you. You will enjoy your work and get benefits from lucrative financial deals. New dimensions are waiting to be discovered. You intuitively understand the working of colleagues at your work place however do not over estimate your powers to control others as it may lead to an unfriendly atmosphere so take care in dealings. Health of children should be looked after. In the hustle and bustle of activity do not ignore signals sent out by your body; give it due attention and care.

**Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)**

The combination of stars indicates mixed results for you. This is likely to give you some unusual circumstances in your professional life. Matters relating to finances will give you delayed results and the projects at your disposal may not be completed in time. Those in the creative field will find that their creativity is peaking all of a sudden and they will prove their mettle convincingly. You will be caught up in a heavy work schedule but will handle it all with seeming ease. An affair is also indicated for the unattached and those in a relationship will strengthen their bonds with their beloved taking the relationship to the next level. Travel will provide you with excitement and fill you with new hope as you see new developments unfold. Health will remain stable.

**Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)**

You may have good chances of promotion in your career during this period and a congenial environment will prevail all around you. As a creative person you will find a way to do the things that you have been planning for some time. Financially you will do well but your extravagant nature will not allow you to save much. Some sudden expenditure may be required on the domestic front. Some property deal may give you profits in the near future. You may plan a foreign tour and you would get a chance to move further ahead. Children will do you proud. Health problems if any will get sorted out.

**Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)**

It may seem as if all eyes are focused on you. Take note that others are going to be more appreciative of all that you do, and even openly acknowledge this. You will find that matters your way as you have your say. Your friends and well wishers will provide you tremendous support. New associations will be profitable and pave the way into new spheres. Your imagination would be flying high. Financially you will do well but your extravagant nature will not allow you to save much. If you've been thinking about sprucing up your home a little bit, this is the time to do it. Your sense of aesthetics is also high, and you might work wonders with your decorating. Romance is in the air and you will find yourself in the midst of an exciting affair. Travel undertaken during this period will benefit you in the long run.

*"If you're going to be a winner in life, you have to constantly go beyond your best."*

— Robert Kiyosaki

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 56 SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2015

### Meghalaya's sanitation concerns

IT is no surprise that the toilets built under different centrally sponsored programmes have failed to take off in Meghalaya. There are several reasons. Every programme must be preceded by social mobilisation. People should themselves be demanding toilets as a matter of right instead of Government pushing them to construct one. The amount of subsidy provided by the Government is insufficient for constructing the conventional toilet with septic tanks et al. Besides, these type of toilets consume a lot of water which is a scarce commodity in the rural areas. Wherever toilets have been forced on people it is seen that they are used for everything else except for the purpose intended. When drinking water itself is hard to come by, how can people spare water to throw into their toilets? Wherever the jungle provides cover people still use them as a natural hub for their ablutions. At times a simple hole is dug in the ground and the top is covered with cheap tin material.

Experiments have meanwhile been conducted in Myrdon Village, Ri Bhoi where bio-digesters are being used to convert the faeces turned into manure. Here septic tanks are no longer required. This reduces the cost of building a toilet. Another advantage is that not much water is required in such toilets. This is the model that needs to be promoted across Meghalaya. Up to this point these bio-digester toilets are being treated as a pilot project. Indeed scientific innovations are the need of the hour. Rampant defecation is one of the root causes of diseases like Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Typhoid etc.. Much of our water bodies in Meghalaya contain high levels of pollutants and faecal matter. This is borne out by a study conducted by the World Bank some years ago. Nothing much has changed between then and now. Toilets are still not a priority in the rural areas of Meghalaya. In the urban areas, the septic tanks flow directly into public drains and water bodies. These are dangerous practices but the Government seems ill inclined to tackle the issue head-on. It is now the onus of the Dorbar Shnong to ensure that all their residents not only construct but also use their toilets. This is the single most important step in achieving Swachh Bharat.

## LOOKING BACK

February 27, 1988

### West Bengal denies Sikkim CM's charge

The West Bengal Government has refused Sikkim Chief Minister Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari's charge that the BSF and CRPF jawans from the State had fired indiscriminately towards Sikkim injuring five people across the State border.

Official sources today said that on Tuesday while the security forces raided the GNLf hideouts, the militants crossed over to Sikkim and fired at the jawans indiscriminately. Despite the provocation the jawans did not open fire.

The sources said instead of providing logistic support to the GNLf activists had the Sikkim Government reacted to West Bengal Government's repeated requests to check in flow of explosives to the militants via Sikkim the GNLf movement would have been contained by this time.

A report from Darjeeling said the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police of Sikkim's South

District held talks with the senior police officials of West Bengal but did not lodge any complaint.

Earlier, Sikkim Chief Minister Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari sent messages to the Prime Minister, the Union Home Minister and the West Bengal Chief Minister complaining that the BSF and CRPF jawans from West Bengal had fired indiscriminately towards Sikkim injuring five people, including two girls, in South District.

### IMDT amendment shortly : Buta

Efforts are underway to bring before the current session of Parliament an amendment to the Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal Act, 1983, Union Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh said today.

He gave this assurance to his Assam counterpart Mr. B Phukan to ensure that the oil blockade threatened by the All Assam Students Union is not carried out.

# Oh for the love of the Jaitbynriew!

H.H.Mohrmen

I believe these two years are very critical for the people of the state particularly the Khasi-Pnar community. It is crucial because there is so much development insofar as our political and social system is concerned. First of all the NGT order which banned unscientific mining of coal, followed by the Rangbah Shnong issue which we are yet to come up with a solution to resolve the crisis, then the MUDA issue cropped up and finally like a bolt from the blue the Act which bars MLAs from being MDCs also. I think the only other turning point in the history of the Jaitbynriew to which we can compare the current situation was the hill state movement.

Let us start from the last issue on my list and that is the bill which debars a person from holding the dual posts of MLA and MDC. Once the Bill was passed in the August house things fell like a pack of cards. One after the other 'ar-maloi' representatives started to send their resignation letters to their respective ADCs. But what amused me about the development is that none of the 'ar-maloi' representatives opted to retain their membership in the Autonomous District Council. All of them chose to retain their membership in the Legislative Assembly; not the other way round. The question is why do they consider being a Meghalaya of the Legislative Assembly more important than being an MDC. Even the stand of the present CEM of KHADC is also questionable because he wants to keep both memberships in the ADC and the Assembly; which he cannot. The truth is he is yet to set his priorities right and hence he is unable to decide which membership is more important than the other. Otherwise he would have been able to choose by now.

PN Syiem should know that he has just one option and he has to be clear with himself and decide where his heart is. If his heart is in the Council then he should vacate his membership in the House; there is no other way. The public are not dumb. Everybody knows why most of the representatives are quick in deciding to quit their membership in the Autonomous District Council. Members chose to

retain membership in the legislative assembly not because they love the jaitbynriew very much, but because in their books their order of priority is something else which is not the jaitbynriew. The jaitbynriew has become a convenient scapegoat in politics! It reminds me of the patriotic songs that we would sing as school students to kindle the flame of patriotism in Khasi it says:

"Ri Khasi; Ri Jaintia nga iei eh ia pha/ Ka Ri kaba iei uba rim uba jah/ Ki tymmen mynhyndai la ngam iohi shuh/ Jingkyinmaw ia ki kan ym duh.

And the chorus says: *Ri; Ri nga iei eh thoin thoin la ka Ri, Ngin kiew shakliar/Shaphrang ngin mih.*

Umpohliw jingstad ngin ioh dih."

With due apologies to the composer of the song, I would like to share with the readers of this esteemed newspaper my own rendition of the song which is of course inspired by the latest political development in the state. My own rendition goes like this:

"Ko Shuki; Ko Shuki nga iei eh ia pha, Ka shuki ka nam; ka burom bad ka spah,

Ki tymmen mynhyndai lada kin dang im ruh/ laka shuki te ngam long duh.

Then the refrain goes like this:

Shuki nga iei eh tang iaka shuki/Burom ngin beh/ Ka spah ngin lum/Kat ka shuki te ym don shuh."

With deference to the non-Khasi readers, the burden of the song (new rendition) is that for any politician what ultimately matters is not the people (jaitbynriew) but the chair or position they hold which gives them access to power and wealth. The latest political development in the state only repeats the same old lesson that we already know, that irrespective of their affiliations, politicians will only choose positions of power, status and money over everything else.

So all the drama with regards to the issue of Rangbah Shnong, MUDA building byelaws and others are but gimmicks by them from the roof of the jeep or a treetop or otherwise, they are all meant to make fools of us voters. A lay person who is

bewildered with the development expects that they would choose the Council over the Assembly if they really are serious about the issue that the jaitbynriew is facing, but the chair is much dearer. In fact this a crucial time for the jaitbynriew! The need of the hour is such that we should have all the seasoned politicians in their respective Councils to lead the jaitbynriew from the predicament. But they chose the Assembly instead. Is there anything which is more important than the chair?

With regards to the MUDA issue, a lay person that I am, I also understand that the state is in immediately needs of building laws to ensure that buildings are safe for those who own the houses and live in them as well as for the neighbours around the building. We all read with heavy hearts the report of the unfortunate incident which caused the untimely death of two victims caused by a landslide in Shillong. The two precious lives could have been saved if we had building laws in place and if the laws are adhered to.

A visit to Iewduh and Police Bazar area is enough for anyone who wishes to see what happens in the absence of any building byelaws. Look at the concrete buildings that are mushrooming in the area without any plan. There is not even enough space to separate one building from the other. Forget about space between buildings, there is not even proper drainage and space to walk; every inch of land is occupied because of the absence of any laws and regulations for construction of houses and shops in the area. We would also not have people building their houses on the banks of the rivers or streams if we had building laws in place. The predicament of Wahumkrah is because of the absence of any building laws prohibiting people from constructing houses adjacent to the rivers. The state is in immediate need of building byelaws and it is immaterial which authority formulates and regulates these laws as long as we have safe and secure

buildings and a pleasant environment around us.

We also need laws for new township development which will regulate development of new residential areas in cities, towns and even villages. New residential areas are coming up in the suburbs of the town and even in bigger villages, but there are no laws to regulate this development. Land owners sell land at their own whims and fancies and sometimes without making provisions for roads. And even if there is a provision for roads the size of the road is a single lane one fit only for one light vehicle to ply on. Look at the new residential areas that are coming up without any kind of planning in our towns and city. Are these the kind of residential areas we want to live in? The new housing areas that are coming up are crowded without any planning at all. Is this the kind of our neighbourhood we want?

The recent developments have also made people wonder which authority is in control of what subject in the state? Which are the subjects that are under the jurisdiction of the State and what are Council's subjects? No wonder people are beginning to question even the relevance of the ADCs in the contemporary society. And the resignations of the seven MDCs from the membership of the Councils only confirms our doubts about the relevance of the ADCs. The resignations only confirm the fact that being an MLA is a greater priority than being MDC and that the Councils are less important when compared with the Legislative Assembly.

People also question the timing of the passing of the legislation barring MLAs from holding the office of the MDC, but that is just an excuse. That which is wrong has to be made right and the timing is irrelevant. What is important is the lesson we learn from the developments - that in the eyes of the politicians there is nothing more important than power, position and wealth. Jaitbynriew is just an excuse politicians use when they feel that their popularity suffers a beating.

## If Left doesn't accept God, it should try Godfather

By M J Akbar

This must rank as one of the funniest stories in a long while. The Marxist candidate for mayor for the municipal election in Bidhannagar, next to Calcutta, on 3 October was the now-venerable Asim Dasgupta, who served as finance minister of Left Front governments in Bengal for more than a quarter century; but this is not a joke about how the mighty have fallen. In fact, it goes to the CPI(M)'s credit that it does not permit anyone's ego to interfere with a party diktat. If a lofty finance minister is ordered to try for a suburban mayor's job, so be it. The joke lies elsewhere.

Comrade Dasgupta is canvassing in the old-fashioned manner, door-to-door. According to the Indian Express, he tells citizens, "Don't forget to vote. And make sure you're there early in the morning...because that's when we expect the trouble and disruption by TMC [Trinamool Congress] hooligans to be the least." He also distributes a pamphlet captioned 'Nijer Vote Nije Deen', or, 'Cast your vote yourself'.

This is uproarious for anyone who lived in Bengal between 1977 and 2011, when the Left Front held what seemed to be interminable power. In every election, the Marxists supplemented their vote, and ensured victory, in precisely this manner. Their cadre would, with the confidence

tality", in which once you were taken into the charmed circle you remained there till God sent summons? Since the Marxist icon Stalin did not believe in God, he solved the problem with a periodic purge, but that option is not available to Bengal's Stalinists.

Irrespective of localized results in a municipal poll, it is unlikely that the red flag, currently at limp half mast, will flutter under the leadership of tired old men. The interesting question is this: can leftists ever regain the space vacated by them in India's electoral equations? Has pseudo-Marxism in India become as passe as Marxism internationally? The last outposts have fallen. China's Communists have egalitarian intentions but no longer believe that they can create prosperity through old, formulaic prescriptions. Cuba's Raul Castro is beginning to see the light of radiant religion. He welcomed Pope Francis to his country by signalling that he could return to the faith. The pillars of Marxism have crumbled, leaving only good intentions behind.

The secret of Bengal Marxist longevity lay not in doctrine but in a party machine. Their nemesis, Mamata Banerjee, understood this, which is why she simply usurped enough parts of that machine and adjusted it into her own networks. Simultaneously, the

*The secret of Bengal Marxist longevity lay not in doctrine but in a party machine. Their nemesis, Mamata Banerjee, understood this, which is why she simply usurped enough parts of that machine and adjusted it into her own networks. Simultaneously, the challenge of poverty is being addressed by political forces that owe nothing to the left, and view this as a national mission rather than as part of an international revolutionary project. In Bengal, Mamata Banerjee wins because she has the support of the poor.*

## TO THE EDITOR

### History indeed repeats itself

Editor

I write in protest against the letter from Jerome Diengdoh, "History indeed repeats itself" published in your esteemed newspaper. There is no comparison between the Turks that Diengdoh cites and present day REFUGEEES (not armed soldiers) from war-torn Syria, caught between ISIS and Assad's thugs. Citing history is inappropriate, because modern warfare and modern refugee situations are historically unprecedented. Yes Europe has been kind, but Europe also has rational self-interest in mind. The Syrian refugees are already educated and skilled. The Germans have an aging population. They need skilled workers.

The demise of European Christianity has solid historical roots in the Church's cruel persecutions of perceived enemies and in its religious intolerance (crusades, the burning of witches, etc.). In some ways European secularism is kinder towards the outsider. It does not behoove us to

adopt the postcolonial racist mantle to protect Europe from the dark outsider it has always rejected. Nor does it behoove us to ignore the history of colonialism and post-colonialism in trying to understand present day Europe vis-a-vis the Muslim refugee.

Having said this, it is frustrating to non-Muslims to witness the blindness that many practicing Muslims have towards the history of their faith. The history of colonialism has made the accusation "racism" very potent. For fear of being accused of racism, many Europeans are leery of expressing this obvious truth -- that just because Europe did awful things to the former colonies, does not mean that people from those colonies are necessarily virtuous. To worry in case ISIS slips in its foot soldiers among these Muslim refugees into Europe, is indeed a very reasonable fear and one that should be dealt with.

The challenge before Europe today is formidable. This challenge lies not in accommodating the Syrian refugee, but rather, in distinguishing between the Muslim jihadist and the Muslim refugee.

Some Europeans (the British included) are to be commended for their hospitality towards the refugees -- especially those who have taken them into their own homes. I cannot imagine the people of the North-east showing this kind of personalized kindness and compassion to the dispossessed ethnic minority refugees who slip through the borders from Bangladesh. To be illegal is not the same as being immoral.

Nations which show kindness to the poor and the dispossessed -- especially to the outsider (within bounds of reason of course) -- end up enriching themselves spiritually. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "It is in giving that we receive."

Yours etc.,  
Deepa Majumdar,  
Via email

### Shillong's speed breakers

Editor,

Why do speed breakers in Shillong not have white coloured markings? Perhaps the authorities are taking for granted that all the

people who drive their vehicles have memorized all the speed-breakers, which is not tenable. It is customary as per traffic regulations to mark the speed-breakers with white colour. One should never think that a driver can always control the speed of the car on the NON-MARKED speed-breakers. Several factors like poor eyesight, preoccupation, non-stop traffic etc might cause a driver to bump into a NON-MARKED speed-breaker and which may result to fatal accidents and hazards. I had once personally witnessed a fatal accident by a Sumo car on Delhi-Agra Highway where there was no marking on a speed-breaker. I urge upon to the concerned Department to look into the matter.

Yours etc.,  
Anjan Kr Das,  
Shillong-6

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

of hooligans protected by state police, capture polling booths where they believed the vote would go against them. Officials manning the voting centres were intimidated if they did not collaborate. It is always fun to hear a shrivelled pot calling a whistling kettle black. Bengal's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is doing unto CPI(M) precisely what CPI(M) did unto others. It is almost impossible to imagine Bengal's Marxists as advocates of fair elections. But defeat works wonders. It can even make you virtuous.

The odd thing is that four years after losing Bengal the Marxists have still not understood why. One phrase sums it up: Old Doctrine, Old Men. The Leftists have neither reinvented their philosophy to restore their equation with the young, or retired the old men who have long passed their sell-by date. Asim Dasgupta is 69 now. In other words, he was 40 when appointed finance minister. Why has CPI(M) not made a 40-year-old its candidate for mayor in Bidhannagar? Is it because the party does not have too many members who are young and capable? Or is it because they still suffer from what might be called the "Soviet Politburo men-

challenge of poverty is being addressed by political forces that owe nothing to the left, and view this as a national mission rather than as part of an international revolutionary project. In Bengal, Mamata Banerjee wins because she has the support of the poor.

For three and a half decades Marxists treated Bengal as their citadel, and it was a pretty effective fortress. Strangely, leftists never once believed that the doors of a fortress can also open outward; that it can be a secure base from which a realm, or an ideology, can expand. Instead they closed the doors upon themselves and retreated into an arrogant smugness.

Parties, like individuals, can become bed-ridden for many reasons; many have died an early death because of irrelevance. When an obituary of the Indian Left is written, it will be said that it died of complacency. It was not homicide, really. It was suicide.

Is it too late for recovery? No. But the Left does not need a doctor. It needs a miracle. Miracles require God. If the Left will not accept God, it should at least try a different Godfather.

*"It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."*

— Mark Twain

### The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 57 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2015

## Climate Policy

FINALLY, India has unveiled its Climate Action Plan for 2030. It is a sensible but challenging policy, aiming to fulfill its commitments without undermining the country's economic development. It has refused to give way to global pressure so that its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) can be achievable. The three components of this goal are, first, to cut emissions by 33% to 35% by 2030. The proposed cuts should be welcomed. Moreover, India expects to generate 40% of its power from non-fossil fuel-based sources so that it can absorb 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. Strengthening INDC would enable India to press for a fairer distribution of responsibilities between developed and developing countries at the Paris meeting. India believes that affluent nations should do more to fight a threat of its own making.

To achieve even reasonable targets, India faces formidable challenges. Widening the forest cover would create fears in this country about the availability of agricultural land. Afforestation schemes attach great importance to trees which have considerable ecological value. It helps significantly in precipitating rain and the country's agriculture depends very much on a good monsoon. But the country views it only as a source of income. The Compensatory Afforestation Bill assumes that it would recreate the complicated and layered forest system. Furthermore, renewable energy which is very much on the blueprint is costly. The infrastructure for it is still inadequate and the public have not yet warmed up to it. So, while the big picture is encouraging, a great many glitches remain to be removed.

### LOOKING BACK

February 28, 1988

## GNLf bandh enters 18th day : violence unabated

GNLF militants shot a Block Development Officer, ambushed a BSF party and hurled a bomb at the T.V. transmission centre as the forty-day "Gorkhaland bandh" entered its 18th day today.

Official sources said the death toll in yesterday's encounter near Kurseong rose to two when a GNLf militant succumbed to his injuries in hospital today.

With this, 36 people including four security men were killed in violence and police firing during the current bandh.

The militants raided BDO Mr.N. Bhutia' house at Garubathan in Kalimpong subdivision and attacked him with kukries and fire arms. He was admitted to hospital in a critical condition.

A GNLf militant was injured in an encounter following an ambush on a BSF party at Khokla bustee in Jaopaguti. The BSF party was going to Khokla on poll duty for tomorrow's panchayat election.

They fired about twenty rounds while the BSF returned 26 rounds injuring hardcore activist Kamal Lama. He was, however, carried by his comrades.

Meanwhile West Bengal Chief Minister Mr. Jyoti Basu today expressed in Calcutta grave doubts about the Centre's stand on the violence perpetrated by the Gorkha National Liberation Front in Darjeeling and its discussions which were being held with GNLf leader Subhas Ghisingh.

Mr. Basu said at the CPI (M) state headquarters here that the centre did not even condemn the violence resorted to by the GNLf since the start of its bandh on February 10.

Reacting to Union Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh's statement in Parliament yesterday, Mr. Basu said that the Centre had ex-

pressed its inability to send back some of the CRPF companies which had been withdrawn from Darjeeling as demanded by the state government.

"But why are they (Centre) not condemning the violence, killings and arson : What is the mystery behind it ? What is being discussed with Mr. Subhas Ghisingh by the Centre", Mr. Basu asked.

Though the bandh evoked little response in Darjeeling, violence on the part of GNLf continued. The issued was now being discussed inside and outside Parliament, he added.

### NEHU Scholars to demonstrate tomorrow

The Research Scholars Welfare Association of the North Eastern Hill University will observe a black flag day on February 29 and demonstrate in front of the Vice-Chancellor's office to press their demand for enhanced fellowship.

The RSWA also propose to hand over to the Vice-Chancellor a copy of a memorandum which it had addressed to the Prime Minister.

In a press release the General Secretary of the RSWA Mr. Vanlalruata Rengsi said the fourth Pay Commission (1986) totally ignored the research fellows who continue to be paid a paltry Rs. 800 to Rs. 1000 per month.

The demands of the RSWA include revision of fellowship to Rs. 2000 for Junior Research Fellows, Rs. 2500 for Senior Fellows and Rs. 3000 for RAS besides CCA and HRA in all cases, including of research work experience preceding permanent placement as "period-in-service", and adequate working conditions.

# Archives of Khasi National Dorbar Proceedings

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

In the context of the present cultural and political pandemonium it is worthwhile to revisit the past through the various proceedings collected and published in the form of a book entitled, 'Ka Thup Jingkyinmaw Ia ka Khasi National Dorbar' compiled by JK Tariang. The Working Committee of the Khasi National Dorbar Hall has done the right thing at the right time by publishing these detailed proceedings and putting them in the public domain so that the younger generation can fathom how the founders of our modern society displayed their skills and decorum while presenting their proposals and resolutions expressing their clear understanding about inductive justice and democracy of Khasi Dorbar. Above all, it also helps to understand the reason behind the then movement that brought the Khasi community into one political identity.

I consider this particular book as authentic evidence with valuable insights on the former days of Khasi political culture. It's a must-read-book for everyone particularly for every social and political player including those who question the Indian identity that we now possess especially those brethren who are now in Bangladesh or somewhere else. This book should lay to rest all the rumours that attempt to blame the architect of the Sixth Schedule J.J.M Nichols Roy as a sole schemer that brought the Khasi & Jaintia Hills District (British Areas) and Khasi states into one platform within the Indian sub-continent, while on the other side praising Wickliffe Syiem a person who abdicated his responsibility and the core subject matter (the people). By reading through the speeches of various chiefs of Himas, Raids and Villages, I can understand that the evolution of the Khasi National Dorbar originated from people's expectation for an ideal and moderate governance that can accommodate and accord necessary protection to the

unique Khasi culture and community.

At the time the Khasis were also at the crossroads anticipating a possible transition of governance in the whole Indian sub-continent. Fearing alienation, disintegration and acculturation, few visionary leaders took the initiative that led to the foundation of The Khasi National Dorbar which also served as a Legislative Council to convince the Royal Commission that the Khasi states too like other native states are now organized and able to govern themselves.

As an effort made by these gentlemen to mobilize public opinion amidst difficult communication system of those days, I hardly find any reason to attribute political motives or agree to the allegations of self-centredness by anyone. Also there was no better option than what these leaders have decided in order to give us a better legacy today. Those who think otherwise are wrong because they have misread the progressive minds of that time. During the various meetings from 1923-29, the primary concerns of those leaders was on the "Ka Aiñ Jinglong-Khun-Hima ha Ri Khasi" or citizenship law in Khasi states (I prefer sonship law to convey the appropriate intention for the word 'khun') and "Ka Aiñ-Bri-Khyndew" (Laws pertaining to different types of land). Secondly is the matter of issuing authority of Sanad to various Syiems and Chiefs by low ranking officials. Thirdly, the intention to merge Khasi states with other provinces besides, the need to change certain rules and regulations to accommodate women participation in the Dorbar and governance. These are few of the issues besides many others concerning Khasi society. Apart from the chieftains and heads of all Himas, people, sordars, prominent personalities involved in the above were Join Manik Syiem, Olim

Singh Syiem, Kmuin Manik Syiem, J.J.M.Nichols Roy, Joab Solomon, Rai Sahib Hormu Rai Diengdoh, Assiam Lyngdoh, U Chandra Nath Roy, etc.

In the words of the Secretary of the Dorbar, "Our land all along has its own laws or system of citizenship or sonship in the Hima in all Khasi states. Unless these laws are written down, they will only remain in the minds of people with everyone giving his own version".

Rai Sahib Hormu Rai Diengdoh said, "From the beginning, ownership of every Hima lies with the people. They installed a Syiem and Hima is not a rightful land of the Syiem. The Syiem was implanted on the top like a flower". Borkusañ Syiem of Khyrim also reiterated the same saying, "Initially in Ri Khasi there existed villages with their own Lyngdoh (priest) and then they looked for the Syiem and thereafter a tax or contribution to support the office of the Hima". One by one every leader from every nook and corner echoed the same feeling with regard to this issue that people are the primary owners of land and then followed the division on the types of land and forests in every hima. Therefore, this law of citizenship or sonship particularly refers to the situation that any person has the same right of citizenship when he moves from one Hima (state) to another on account of reasons or situations unavoidable for that person and he/she should get same and equal treatment from the administrator of the Hima (state). It is also interesting to note on the definition of 'Khasi' and 'criteria for membership' as indicated in these laws it states that, "A Khasi is a person male or female (1) Born from a Khasi parent, (2) either one of the parents is a Khasi and (3) Anybody who has married a Khasi. Whereas, the criteria for membership in the Hima (state) is (1) by birth, (2) by marriage and (3) by having his house or land in that

Hima (state).

Looking at these forgotten traditional laws, I feel the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution evolved because of these old laws that those leaders wanted to streamline and perpetuate among their people. Mr. J. Rynjah, CEM of United Khasi & Jaintia Hills DC in his speech on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1952 says "A nation is not a mere mob of people but organized people. In the DC there is ample scope to carry forward valuable laws for the good of everyone". Therefore, the core issue lying before the District Council should be on these issues rather than attempting to emerge as another alternative government in a traditional mould but with all the fancies of an urban jurisdiction. In the pursuit to become influential, we have lost track somewhere and discarded essential practices and traditions. Let us forget, what we have actually forgotten, the future that we wanted apart from technological advances, is the social fabric postulated in these forgotten laws.

On the issue of sanad, the Syiem of Sohra said, "From the very beginning when the British came they recognized our system and duly issue a sanad sealed and signed by the Governor General of India, but subsequently the authority that signed the sanad has been transferred to the Governor of a Province and now to the Deputy Commissioner and in the future by a much lower staff perhaps. This shows the derogatory attitude towards the Khasi states and chiefs". It is in the interest and pride of the people to elevate the status of Khasi states when the recognition comes from the highest authority such as the Governor General.

Finally it was J.J.M Nichols Roy's desire and advocacy that persuaded the Dorbar to change certain rules in order to make room for women's participation in the same process of governance by foreseeing how to equate them with other women of advanced cultures of the world.

Yours etc.,  
Rasputin Bismark  
Manners  
Kolkatta.

### Is God deaf?

Editor,

What some call a religious right or a spiritual awakening can be utter nuisance to others! Of late many religious groups have sprung up out of nowhere and proclaim to behold the manifestation of the Lord. But if they had some common sense they would know that this so called self-proclamation can also be a complete annoyance to the ones whose ear drums are being bombarded by the "Shout to the Lord" call. This message is intended for Potter-net whose presence in Mawkhar National Dorbar hall has caused the entire neighbourhood to shake their heads in dismay! Many of the inhabitants including the elderly, the sick and babies living within the periphery of the hall are finding it difficult to bear the high decibel sound emanating from the services sometimes for as many as three times a week. We humbly urge the Dorbar Shngong to look into this matter seriously and dialogue with the group for the convenience of all. We also urge Potter-net to respect people's spaces and rights to avoid any unwanted exchange. We praise and shout to the Lord, but surely the Lord also hears a quiet whisper of a genuine heart.

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request  
(Concerned resident of Mawkhar)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Etymology of the word 'Dorbar'

Editor,

The word dorbar is commonly used by the Khasis and Jaintias for their traditional institutions for running their village administration. But the concept is not followed by all. In Jowai, only recently we switched to Dorbar and in a hasty manner. Formerly, the local clubs of the different localities run the administration of their localities. There are conflicting views about the origin of the word 'Dorbar.' Some say the concept is perhaps borrowed while others are of the opinion that it is an indigenous word inherited from the ancestors. The origin of the word Dorbar is from the Persian (Iran) word 'durbar.' The court council of the King of Persia (Iran) is known as durbar. It was brought to India by the Muslims.

Yours etc.,  
Stelin G. Laloo  
Jowai

## A prophetic sermon!

Editor,

This refers to the writeup on "Traditional customs..." by WL Lyngdoh (Sep, 29, 2015) where he quoted Soso Tham "...Ngin sa long nong Gibeon ban thohdieng..." (we shall become woodcutters like the Gibeonites).

I have heard many speakers, writers, politicians, KSUites who often quote this particular phrase but I won-

der whether any have tried to understand what the venerable poet really meant because they all are trained to look only from the secular prism.

If I am not mistaken, Soso Tham belonged to a well known Christian family of his times and he knew his Bible. The Gibeonite story is found in Joshua 9. These people deceived Joshua by telling him that they came from a distant land though they lived just a few kilometers away. So Joshua made a peace treaty with them (without consulting his God). But just three days later he found out that they lied to him. He did not break the oath he made to them as it was sacred. But he cursed them, "Why do you lie to us...May you be cursed. From now on you will always be servants who cut wood and carry water for the house of my God".

The historical records show that the Nagas claim to be independent. They told the British that they had never been ruled by Indians and they want to be free. The Mizos knew that they came to these hills only 700 years ago. But the Khasis tried to prove to the world that they are much older than others. Most of their words have Sanskrit roots. Late J.J.M Nichols Roy had a brother by the name of Krishna. They claimed to have their own religion (no proof) and own script (no record) which they lost while crossing the sea or river with a Bengali who preserved his own (trying to prove they are as ancient as the Bengalis). Please note that this contradicts the heavenly

umbilical cord theory (sohpetbneng) which means they are from this place only.

The British records show that Khasi-Pnar people were first called 'mountaineers'. Later we became 'highlanders' or riwulum (mark the old paper, Pyrta U Riwulum). But today we are mere tribals (primitive). The Gibeonites were woodcutters for the house of the living God. The Khasi-Pnars are woodcutters for the 3 crore Bharatia gods and goddesses. It was in the land of the Gibeonites that God made the sun stand still so that Joshua can finish off his enemies. Is this too a reflection on this NE Indian group that once seemed to worship the sun and sent its advocate to the sun? Today all this is reflected in our confusion and our not being able to count our days correctly. The Church's stamp is clear when Sunday is called Sngi U Blei or U Trai and Wednesday became Sngi Balang (church day). But old animistic influences continue perhaps so we call Monday Sngi Nyngkong (First day). If Saturday is the 7th day, then Sunday according to this calendar has to be the 8<sup>th</sup> day (Bible calls it the first day).

But the most explosive impact is what made our ancestors call Friday - Sngi Thohdieng (woodcutter's day) and Saturday - Sngi Saitjain (clothes washing day). Is it the realization that we are cursed to be slaves forever?

Soso Tham gave us a prophetic sermon which we need to deeply ponder. Forget 666. We have already been stamped.

# Historical Background Of the ADCs

By B M Lanong

Records confirm that the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the North East found their place in the Constitution of India, as a result of the prolonged debates in the Constituent Assembly, culminating in the formation of a Sub Committee in 1947, to study and recommend mechanism to protect and develop the cultural, customary and other fundamental rights of the minority tribals in the North East. The Chairman of the Sub-committee was the then Assamese stalwart, Late Gopinath Bordoloi. It may be noted that a well known Khasi leader (late) Rev. J.J.M.Nichols Roy, who later became known as an architect of the ADCs was one of the members of a four-member Sub-committee.

The Sub-Committee, in its report, recommended setting up of District Council bodies in the Hill Districts of the north east region, which was subsequently debated in the Constituent Assembly and accepted. The Sixth Schedule was adopted in September 1949. However the inauguration schedule for the ADCs in the then 'auld lang syne' period went anti clock-wise too, beginning with the GHADC which falls in the present West Meghalaya today, in April 1952, with Capt. Williamson.A.Sangma as the first CEM and shri Mody K.Marak, the first Chairman.

Two months later, the composite UK&J Hills ADC was inaugurated in June 1952, with Mr Josingh Rynjah as first CEM and Fredishon War as its Chairman.

After bifurcation of UK & J Hills District into the Khasi and Jaintia Hills Districts respectively, the JHADC in East Meghalaya was the last to be created in November 1964. After formation of the formal Executive Committee, Mr Edwingson Barih became the first CEM and Showales K.Shylla, the first Chairman.

When the Sixth Schedule was incorporated in the Constitution of India, paragraph 3 of the Schedule specifically empowers in Para 3 (1):-

- (a) allotment, occupation or use of land.....
- (b) village or town administration.....
- (g) appointment or succession of Chiefs or Headmen
- (h) inheritance of property
- (i) marriage and divorce
- (j) social customs, among others, which manifest clearly the road map of the District Council in terms of its inclusive and exclusive authority on matters of their Cultural and Customary life, their land , property, their economy and their other related administrative concern.

What we witness today is a desperate attempt of the State Government to deliberately hijack this vital most pillar of the District Council, tantamounting to a serious breach, a negation and invasion of the sacrosanct tribal entity, including their constitutional rights for the sake of a cheap political agenda.

Will there be any justification or for that matter, any space left for the subjects of the District Council to follow and conduct themselves under the dictates of the State? Assuming that there arise any erroneous violations of any provision of the State law, by any chief or headman, which authority will determine, hear and decide? This definitely, is not the underlying philosophy of paragraph 12A nor of the Sixth Schedule itself.

**District Council Elections**  
In Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) the last election held was on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2009, ushering in the way for

Cong (I) party to form the Executive Committee. Woe-fully, life of the GHADC was extended at least three times, to allow the Congress E/C to occupy by default, for over one year and a half extra, in a most undemocratic and unconstitutional paradigm.

The quinquennial term of the ADCs are normally the same as in all other elected Houses in India. In Meghalaya, only during the 1975-77 emergency in the Country, the State witnessed an extension of its term for about a year, correspondingly so in the District Councils. Only during such extra-ordinary circumstances, extension or dissolution of the House as the case may be can occur. What this State government did now, in Garo Hills was another political circumvention for its benefit than anything else, which however, has left a very unhealthy precedent.

**The Anti-Defection Law**  
When I was in the Congress-led coalition government, I piloted an anti-defection resolution under the Scheme of the 10<sup>th</sup> Schedule, which was unanimously adopted by the State Assembly in 2011, urging the centre to incorporate the said law in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution of India, as done in the Parliament and in all the State Assemblies. The state government obviously did not follow up with the centre, since fishing in troubled waters is a paying adventure.

Defection which was an eyesore in the country during the pre 1985 era, is rampant today in all the three Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya. Only in KHADC, within a span of just about a year, there came about three Ruling Executive Committees, each round led by Mr Ardent Basaiamoit, Mr Adelbert Nongrum and now Mr Pynshngain Syiem as CEMs respectively. Amazingly, the same few MDCs who hold the magic trump card, artfully gambled to win a seat for themselves every time. For the principled and law-abiding, law is merely a formality. Because of a few others, the restrictions under the 10<sup>th</sup> Schedule are a dire necessity.

To tide over the ongoing imbecility, the UDP has worked out a formula to try for a quasi-judicial binding agreement with all its Candidates under the spirit of the Contract Act, which will be a great test in the Judiciary if there be any member who violates the deed, after winning the election from party ticket.

The current election to the GHADC slated for the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, will be a real litmus test for the people of Garo Hills, which could as well be taken as a precursor to another final event in 2018. Everyone is excited and waiting for the outcome. The countdown has already begun.

The ruling Congress is facing, for the first time in Garo Hills, after a series of cake-walk battles with the then minnows, a crucial fight to reckon with. All the parties are cornering the Congress party from all sides, mainly for taking everybody for a ride in the affairs of the GHADC, then the countless corruption scams with comparatively poor development, the many serious fall outs, due to partisan deal with the militant groups and total failure to deal with militancy, among others. The people of Garo Hills are desperately yearning for an early return of peace, normalcy and development of the halcyon days.

(The author is former Deputy Chief Minister of Meghalaya)

*"There is joy in work. There is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something."*

— Henry Ford

## The Shillong Times

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### Lacklustre GHADC polls

WHETHER it is the inordinate delay in holding the GHADC polls which has been postponed three times or whether the Garo people are pessimistic about the Council's performance, the emerging trends in Garo Hills shows a general indifference to the October 12 polls. No important issues are being raised in this election. There is of course a great deal of controversy around the issue of non-tribals contesting the District Council elections and also voting in it. Since no amendments have been brought about by the GHADC to debar non-tribals from contesting and voting in the Council polls, they cannot be made to take a bow out of deference to the wishes of the people. After all, there is such a thing as a constitutional propriety. Unlike the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Councils which are today in the eye of the storm vis-à-vis the Village Administration Bill, the GHADC already have an Act in place. But whether that Act is being implemented in letter and spirit is a matter of debate. The strongman of Garo Hills, PA Sangma who is also leading the Nationalist Peoples' Party (NPP) was turned away from a particular constituency for not fulfilling his earlier poll promises. Today, after many decades the only issue that Sangma has taken on board for the Council polls is the codification of customary laws and practices especially the one which decides who is a Garo. The prime agenda of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which gives sanctity to the District Councils is to conserve and promote customary laws and practices which can only be achieved through the process of codification. That Mr Sangma should talk about it only now suggests that he has not paid attention to an important point which should have been a well settled fact by now - that of establishing the Garo identity, until it came to taking on his beta noire, Mukul Sangma, the state Chief Minister.

This time there are 82 Independent candidates with West Garo Hills itself fielding 50 Independents. This is an indicator that even the aspirants have no faith in any single political party and therefore don't want to be seeing aligning with any. The Congress is not expected to have a cakewalk this time. The UDP with 13 candidates has already declared that it would align with the NPP. On their turn the NPP with 26 candidates are likely to align with their natural allies the BJP which has set up 6 candidates. The Congress on its part is inclined to join issues with Independents. Whichever way we look at this election it is going to be one big hotch-potch, no-holds barred contest. To add to the melee there are former militants in the fray! The next Executive Council of the GHADC will be a pot-pourri of parties pulling in all directions. A large section of the populace of Garo Hills have already stated that the District Council is a toothless, superfluous body that accommodates 30 self serving elites. Perhaps the time has come to review the working of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution now that the Schedule is well past its prime.

## LOOKING BACK

February 29, 1988

### Oil blockade continues for 2nd day

The sixty-hour oil blockade called by the Assam Students Union continued for the second-day today preventing the flow of crude oil to three Public sector refineries - Guwahati, Bongaigaon and Barauni.

The AASU activists have been picketing round the clock since five AM yesterday in front of all the pumping stations of the Oil India's Pipe line in the state which carries crude oil to refineries.

Official reports received here said picketing has so far been peaceful and no untoward incident was reported.

The AASU, one of the

signatories of the Assam Accord, called the blockade to protest the alleged failure of the centre and the state Government to implement the accord.

Meanwhile, the non withdrawal of the blockade by AASU even after repeated appeals had created an "embarrassing position" for the State Government.

Acting on the State Government's suggestion, the Centre has agreed to amend the Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunal) Act 1983 in the current session of the Parliament for speedy detection of foreign nations in the State as per Assam Accord.

# Why Saiden Village in Meghalaya started its own library?

By Bhogtoram Mawroh

On 3rd October, 2015, Saiden village, located near Nongpoh (headquarter of Ri Bhoi district) opened its own public library. This event is very significant for many reasons. Firstly, the opening of a library is happening at a time when libraries in general are facing a crisis of relevance. The growth of digitization and information technology has created alternative sources of information against the conventional ones like the library. The internet revolution which started more than two decades ago has brought about a rich plethora of sources which any library, especially one such as this, would find it extremely difficult to compete with. Apart from expanding the sources of information the most important innovation that makes the internet superior is the ease at which this information can be searched. A few key words typed into a search engine and one can have all the information they desire. And all of this can be done from anywhere and at anytime. Gone are the days when one had to spend long hours in the library searching for the books they wanted. This ease and extravagance of information is hard to beat. Indeed, the inability to compete with digital innovations that have made searching and reading easy is a general problem that libraries are facing all around the world. And secondly, there is a specific problem that has been making the news recently, the purported Digital India Revolution - the attempt to improve online infrastructure and provide internet connectivity to the remotest parts of rural India. All of this suggests that the odds are heavily stacked against a library, especially one that has started in a nondescript location. So is the library doomed to failure? Not at all, in fact the opposite is the case.

To begin with, the basis of all information technology are not the electronic equipments but electricity, i.e., power. Power is the juice that makes all these technologies function and without electricity none of the sophisticated gadgets will work. So in order for information technology to change the lives of the people, provision of electricity

is the prime requisite. However, just over half of the rural households in India use electricity as their primary source of lighting, i.e., almost half of the rural households have no access to electricity. In North East India, except Sikkim which has a very small population base and huge hydroelectric potential, a substantial proportion of rural populations are still living in darkness. The case of Meghalaya is much worse with rural electrification being lower than the national average. To make matters worse, access to electricity and enjoyment of reliable service are not the same things. Even in places that get electricity, it is only for a few hours. Furthermore, load shedding especially during the dry months is a major problem and a common recurrence in Meghalaya. The memory of the power crisis of the previous year is still very fresh. This means that around half or more people in the state are not able to take advantage of the benefits of information technology and as such they will be bereft of the benefits Digital India claims to bring about. This story is not Meghalaya-specific but will be repeated in most parts of rural India. Since access to reliable electricity is not the case at the present (though it is hoped that this should change as soon as possible) an approach rooted in fantasy is not helpful. But since the benefits of information technology cannot be accrued at the moment the argument that libraries are therefore relevant is also not the right approach. Arguing from the negative is not sustainable. So question arises as to what are the advantages of having a physical library?

Libraries retain one aspect which digital technologies have taken away from us - the human contact. Learning is not a solitary exercise. Though one can read alone, but if he/she wants to truly understand and grasp the full implications of what is being learned it has to be shared. Knowledge grows by debate and deliberations and therefore, it needs a space where people can come together. One can argue that information technology

does provide that space. The advance in information technology has brought the world closer. We can connect with anyone in the world (provided they want the same) which brings us into contact with people who share the same ideas. In this way ideas are exchanged, collaborations launched and relationships established. All of this is done without any physical human contact. This lack of human contact is further reinforced by another aspect of information technology - personalization, i.e., 'done by you, for you and on your own device'. It is the individual who establishes the connection for his/her personal interest through the medium of a personal device, i.e., computers or phones. The most important implication of all this is that it is persons (a homogenous group) who are coming together and not people (a heterogeneous group). And this is the biggest challenge to learning: learning progresses by engaging with those who have a different perspective rather than spending time with people who think in the same way. Additionally, the lack of direct contact can also hinder learning in another way. One may learn a lot from YouTube but it is not the same as sitting in a class. In a class one can directly interact with the teachers in a two-way process, which is what learning is all about. Here knowledge emerges out of interaction rather than it being delivered or imposed onto someone. Even when a two-way communication over virtual space is possible it is more productive when physical face-to-face contact is practiced. Skype has not replaced seminars and conferences where people from all over the disciplinary fields congregate at one place to discuss their work. In fact more of these kinds of seminars and conferences are becoming a norm. A library is a place where people can come into physical contact with each other. This physical contact in turn helps prevent knowledge becoming an incomplete and passive entity, an anathema to the practice and pursuit of knowledge. Library thus is

a dynamic social space where knowledge is not only disseminated but also created.

But maybe the most important appeal of a physical library and a public one as such is that it provides important social services. Internet is not a free commodity and the information that we access has a price tag on it. Depending on how high we can pay, efficiency of the service varies. Also many sites, especially academics-based ones are paid sites where payment is required to access materials from it. However a public library provides the same service to everyone. Here all are equal. The most important leveler though is the fact that even people who reside in areas that have no electricity can still enjoy the services of a library - you don't need electricity to be able to read a book, a candle light will do! A library provides knowledge to everyone irrespective of which class they belong to and which area they reside in. In many developed nations, e.g. USA, public libraries have become a place where the homeless come to read during the day time before returning to the streets or their shelters at night. Whether our libraries back home are performing this function is not known. But this demonstrates the capacity of libraries in promoting and delivering social well-being.

In Meghalaya more than 1/4th of the people are illiterate and almost half of the population resides in darkness. In a situation such as this the efforts of the people of Saiden village in coming forward to establish a public library is highly commendable. It has a great potential to act as a vehicle for improving the lives of not just the host population but of the surrounding areas as well. It is hoped that this effort will have an effect to galvanize others to start similar initiatives in the rural areas of the state and bring learning and education to everyone.

*(The author is a guest lecturer in the department of Geography, North-Eastern Hill University and also a co-coordinator of Thma U Rangli-Juki (TURA))*

## TO THE EDITOR

### Do District Councils matter?

Editor,

Polling for the elections to the Garo Hills District Council is to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015. In the Tura constituency, there are as many as seven or eight candidates

mostly Independents. The last few days has not seen very frantic electioneering by the candidates. In fact if one visits Tura at this time he will not even know that there is an election going on. This raises the question - Is the district council relevant anymore in the Garo Hills? Why are even the candidates so quiet during the elections? When you talk to people, most are not even interested to discuss these elections! However it is noticed that in all this quietness, some candidates are openly breaking the election rules. You will find candidates who put up their posters even on walls of Government property and defacing the place, yet no one from the Election Department seems

bothered about this. Many of the candidates have hired more vehicles than they are permitted to and every day hordes of people go around in these vehicles generally for eating and merry making. This is a time only to enjoy and nothing else while public money is being wasted.

Then we have a candidate who in spite of being a Government University employee is contesting the elections. I understand that when a Government University employee files his nomination, he has to provide a no-objection certificate from his employer (if he is a teacher) or he provides proof that his resignation is accepted by his employer (if he is a teacher or an administration staff). In this case I am told that he has done neither though he is a clerk in the University. But what is even more surprising is that during this election time NEHU is providing water to his residence in the official tanker of the University. Can an Institution get itself involved with a candidate or show its support to any one of the candidates as is the case with this candidate?

All this shows that no

one is interested in the District Council. It has lost its relevance and should be disbanded and crores of public money will be saved.

Yours etc.,  
Hondro Sangma  
Tura - I

### Nongstoin bye-election

Editor,

The aspiring candidates for the upcoming bye-election in Nongstoin Constituency are gearing up for the show. They will have to give it all their might and be well equipped for this battle royale as the whole state of Meghalaya is watching this election. Nongstoin constituency has been a strong hold of the HSPDP since the beginning and Late HS Lyngdoh who died recently has been its unvanquished hero. For several decades other political parties didn't stand a chance against the mighty king of the jungle or the Lion symbol of the HSPDP, but now other parties have a chance to prove if they can win the faith of the people of Nongstoin. We cannot deny the fact that money

plays a decisive role during elections but I urge the people of Nongstoin not to be fooled and get persuaded by money. It is the perfect time to choose not only good, honest leaders but also intelligent leaders who know the Law because representatives are lawmakers for heaven's sake. Being honest is not good enough to become a leader but dedication, humility and above all intelligence and competence to deliver are important criteria for any MLA. We need leaders who can make laws which benefit the public; laws which protect the customary rights of the people so that no customary practices will be snatched away by any Institution for lack of a written law.

During electioneering lots of promises will be made. Some candidates and political parties will even promise the moon but we have to be very careful for one false move in this upcoming bye-election then the future of Nongstoin will be in limbo.

Yours etc.,  
Micky Marwein,  
Via email

## Forgotten lessons from Dadri Fix administrative failures first

By Sugato Hazra

The latent fissures between communities explode and lead to loss of life when the attendant institutions meant for ensuring harmony fail to act. Institutions work efficiently in a well functioning state where law and order is generally maintained as per law and in an orderly manner. This also demands an efficient judiciary, which will inflict exemplary punishment in the shortest possible time to the guilty. Needless it to mention we also need other stakeholders and influencers who will fall in line with what the civilized code demands and not argue incessantly when the institutions take a decision.

Sadly India remains still a soft state as Gunnar Myrdal pointed out more than 40 years back. Here none of the above wish list operates properly. Take the case of Dadri for instance. There was some kirtan going on in a local temple. Somebody made an announcement of beef eating by Akhlaq and his family. A mob gathered and by 10 o'clock in the night on 28th September. The 100-strong mob attacked the house of Akhlaq. Akhlaq died while his young son Danish is fighting for his life. Clearly the gullible mob did never hear of a civilized state nor did they have faith in whatever is left of it in their area. They felt outraged and did not suffer from any qualms to take the law and punishment in their own hands.

The incident happened in the communally sensitive district of Dadri. According to the Indian Express reporter in another village in the district about a month ago three Muslim men were killed on the suspicion that they were cattle smugglers. It was also said that some small militant outfit of Hindus had been active in that area against cattle smugglers and cow slaughter. That the sentiments are charged up could be gathered from the umbrage local people took against media and visiting politicians to that area. Women and children attacked media persons who went to cover the incident. They made fun of the state government in Lucknow giving Rs 45 lakh as compensation to the family members of Akhlaq. The post event reactions of the state government merely helped increasing the gulf between the two communities.

The event clearly draws attention to dereliction of duty on the part of the administration. When sentiments are charged up and untoward incidents had taken place in the recent past what do we expect from the administration? Are they not supposed to round up those who had been responsible for fomenting the communal sentiments? Are they not expected to investigate the alleged cases of cattle smuggling and soothe the nerves of the agitated people? More so since there was the Muslim festival of Eid on 25th September and communal sensitivity was building there should have been precautionary steps. True, there cannot be police post everywhere but what about gathering timely intelligence. Clearly there was no effort to prevent untoward incidents in the sensitive district of Dadri.

What is curious is the reaction after the unfortunate event. Politicians of all hues queued up to be photographed with the affected family. Commentators and media persons kept churning out commentaries without ever questioning whether any preventive step was taken or

not. This is not the first such dastardly act in a village in Uttar Pradesh. In 2013 there was a much bigger flare up in Muzaffarnagar. Did the incidents there teach anything to the administration? Nobody bothered to respond let alone review. Instead we started bickering, a free for all of sorts. Politicians visited the family - it being just about 40 km away from the national capital Delhi the incident gave them an opportunity to figure in media. For media, too, with easy availability of logistics this became a good story to dwell on. Add to this, volumes of arguments on beef eating were churned out for adding to our knowledge. The Dadri lynching ended up as yet another nice story for all. Tragedy suffered by Akhlaq and his family made attractive headlines. For a change Akhlaq's mother found herself on the front pages of the national dailies. Family travelled in State aircraft to Lucknow and collected an amount which Akhlaq would not have ever dream of providing when alive.

Forgotten in the cacophony is the real issue. How should the administration act so that such incidents can be nipped in the bud? If within the stone's throw of the nation's capital having easy connectivity such incidents can take place what safety is there for our ordinary citizens living in far flung areas? Was there any way police could have reached the spot and saved Akhlaq? Did the police fail in gathering intelligence and having preventive steps? How did the police miss the role of one of its own official, a homeguard, in inciting people?

Instead of fishing in troubled water is it not the duty of the political class, of all shades, to sit together and devise ways and means to protect the lives and livelihoods of Akhlaq, or for that matter Amar and Antony as well - all living on the similar edge? Can the wisemen in our judiciary call the people in charge of administration to explain what were the reasons that they had failed to take necessary precautions in a sensitive area? Will anybody ask what was the police intelligence doing?

Busy as we are in seeking response from the Prime Minister, errors and omissions on ground will never be addressed. Not a single report on Dadri lynching has yet mentioned the issue of administrative failure; none of the august commentators has come out with suggestion on how to check repeat of such unfortunate incidents.

The disease that killed Akhlaq is not new. When this flares up and spreads this attracts attention. Ordinarily had it been in some far flung corner it would have by now been consigned to inside pages. Life is so cheap here in India. Like the six-year-old girl in a village in Bareilly who was killed by her father Chand Miyan for failing to keep her head covered while having food. The pretext of killing is religion. In reality it is frustration arising out of a meaningless life.

Do the politicians, commentariat or media pundits care to address the disease called poverty and light up these lives, which are lost in such tragic incidents daily in some corner of the nation? (IPA Service)

*"No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path."*

— Buddha

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 59 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2015

### Fact or Fiction?

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi told a gathering of German and Indian businessmen at an event organised by Nasscom that no place on earth offered the potential for creation and production like India at present. It may seem sheer hype to many who take a dim view of the situation in the country poisoned by violence and sectarianism. Their scepticism is stressed by the fact that the recently released India Rural Development Report says that 7% of the rural population is "very poor". But an UNCTAD report presents a bright picture about India's economic indicators. It says that the country's economy is expected to grow at 7.5% this year, driven by domestic demand and consumption as well as the improved fiscal position due to the lower oil import risk. Asia as a whole, said to be the most dynamic region and is estimated to account for almost half of the total global growth in 2015.

What is all the more encouraging is that the Indian economy is expected to grow faster than other major emerging countries, according to IMF in its latest World Economic Output Update. The country's growth, according to this report is expected to strengthen from 7.3% this year and last year to 7.5% next year. The IMF attributes the spurt to recent policy reforms, consequent rise in investment and lower commodity prices. As against it, growth in China is likely to decline to 6.8% of this year to 6.3% in 2016. All this may be music to New Delhi's ear but the glaring fact of the vast import-export gap between India and China can hardly be lost sight of. The elephant is still overawed by the dragon.

### LOOKING BACK

March 01, 1988

### No trust motion rejected

The 24-day old Congress(I) led coalition Ministry overcame the first trial of strength with predictable felicity when the State Assembly rejected a no-trust motion by 24035 votes. After voice voted failed to satisfy the opposition, the matter was clinched by division.

Winding up the two-hour debate on the motion, Chief Minister Purno Sangma defended the Governor's action in installing his ministry to office. He quoted from Sarkaria Commission Report and said that when all parties failed to secure absolute majority the Governor had two opposition: ask the leader of an alliance formed before the election or in the alternative ask the leader of the single largest party to form government.

Mr. Sangma emphatically said that he had the requisite majority on the day of the swearing in. He claimed that besides the Congress(I)'s 22, five Independent MLA had given written commitment of supporting his govt. Moreover the HPU leader Mr. B.B.Lyngdoh had also pledged support to his govt.

The Chief Minister said that the Opposition claim before the Governor on Feb 6 was untenable since "it is not for the General secretaries of the parties to stake claim but only leader of the Legislature party can make such a claim."

Mr. Sangma who made a brief and cogent reply, profusely thanked the Opposition Members for having expressed confidence in his leadership. In this regard he quoted from several RDF

Members speeches made during the debate.

The Opposition members while launching a tirade against the Mr. B. B. Lyngdoh for his "unauthorized" support to the present Ministry, wily nilly lauded Mr. Sangma. Among others who had some kind words for the Chief Minister are Mr. Korbar Singh, Mr. H.Donkumar Roy Lyngdoh, Mr. Martle Mukhim, Mr. Sanbor Swell Lyngdoh, Mr. B.G. Momin, Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh, Mr. G.S. Massar and Mr. P.D. Sangma.

### Break up of rupee

Out of every rupee, that the Government gets as revenue, 22 Paise come from excise, 10 paise from customs, 16 Paise from internal borrowings, 12 Paise from non-tax revenue and nine Paise from deficit.

Out of every rupee that is spend by the Government 19 Paise goes for the Central plan, 17 Paise for interest on loans, 5 Paise on the defence, and 13 Paise each on share of taxes and other non-plan expenditure.

Twelve Paise go for State and Union Territory plan assistance and subsidies.

### Cigarettes liquor spared

Cigarettes and liquor, two major money-spinners, have for the first time in recent years escaped the tax met much to the relief of smokers and drinkers.

In his budget proposals for 1988-89 Mr. Narayan Dutt Tiwari has spared these two groups of consumer who more often than not, had to bear the tax brunt.

# Some keys to the 'Government-versus-ADCs Deadlock'

By Fabian Lyngdoh

There are five main factors contributing to the conflict between the State Government and the District Councils with regards to the power of making laws concerning Village Dorbar and Village Headmen for grassroots governance in Meghalaya. The first factor is the existence two parallel authorities serving the needs and interests of the same territorial area and the same people. The second factor is the existence of constitutional provisions in Article 244(2) and the Sixth Schedule recognizing the distinct identities of the North-Eastern tribals and the need to allow them to administer their own affairs according to their own genius under the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). The third factor is the lack of clarity on the issue of territorial authority especially in the Khasi Hills where the core concern of the people is the independent private ownership over their lands without any intervention by the Government. The fourth factor is the lack of clarity in the objectives of the Government's proposal with regard to any intervention in grassroots governance which paved the way for the entry of unwanted and endless play of party politics to breed prejudices and divisions of opinions among the people. The fifth factor is the existence of agencies which are persistently projecting unhealthy conservative ideas on the basis of a general apprehension of the destruction of the tribe's identity by external forces. To deal with these conflict factors I would like to make the following suggestions:

The need to protect the cultural identities of the tribals as provided in the Sixth Schedule cannot be overlooked, but at the same time the need to build up equitable, transparent and responsible democratic governance at the grassroots according to the present requirements of modern democratic society can no more be ignored. Over reliance only on traditional institutions and customs in a modern day society would stunt the development of the tribe itself. The Khasi society needs to adapt itself to some healthy changes to sharpen the edge of the intelligence of the younger generation so that the tribe can survive in a competitive world. The District Council should not entertain unnecessary constraints put forth by non-statutory agencies with exclusivist traditional agenda, as that would hamper its efficiency in the ex-

ercise of its constitutional mandate. To solve the conflict of authority between the State Government and the District Council on the issue of grassroots administration, it would be good if the District Council enacts laws with regards to the constitution of the dorbar shong as a political and judicial authority limiting to administration of land and social customs. The State Government on the other hand, can enact laws for the constitution of village councils limited to the implementations of developmental programmes, providing civic welfare services to the citizens and maintenance of law and order in the villages and urban localities without touching anything on matters concerning land and judicial administrations. An exemplary integration seems to have been achieved among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh where the traditional institutions are given recognition by the Government with regard to customs and tradition; the statutory gaonburas and the village councils are entrusted with general administration of law and order and judicial functions; while the committees entrusted for executions and management of developmental works and civic welfare services are called panchayats.

In 2006, the Government of Meghalaya, vide Notification No. CDD.122/2006/3, Dated the 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2006, promulgated the 'Meghalaya Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme 2006'. The Governor of Meghalaya made the notification under sub section (1) of section 4 of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA). This scheme is being implemented under the NREGA Operational Guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India as modified by the Government of Meghalaya. The primary objective of the scheme is to provide livelihood security to the households in rural areas through guaranteed wage employment in unskilled and manual works, while at the same time creating durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of rural poor through works connected with water conservation and water harvesting; drought proofing, including tree plantation; micro and minor irrigation works; renovation of tradi-

tional water bodies; land development, flood control and protection works, including drainage in water logged areas; rural connectivity and any other work as may be notified by the Central Government. The Community and Rural Development Department is the Nodal Department for implementing this scheme. The implementing agency is the Village Employment Council and Line Departments of the Government. The Guidelines of the NREGA state that where Part Nine of the Constitution does not apply, local authorities as Government concerned will be entrusted with corresponding responsibilities. Since Part Nine of the Constitution does not apply to Meghalaya, the State Government has entrusted the responsibilities to the following three-tier local councils:

A Village Employment Council (VEC) was constituted in every village in which every male and female heads of each household is a member. The meeting of the VEC is chaired by a village headman, and a secretary for the VEC is elected by the members of the VEC from amongst the members. The VEC is the principal authority for planning and implementation of the schemes, and it is responsible for identification of the works in the village area and for executing and supervising such works. An Area Employment Council (AEC) was constituted at the cluster level comprising of villages within 2.5 km radius. The AEC consists of the traditional headman and two representatives one male and one female from each village. It was provided that the total members of the AEC shall not exceed 20 (twenty), and 30% of the members of the AEC must be women. The AEC is responsible for receiving applications for registration and for issuance of Job Cards. A Community Coordinator is appointed for each AEC to assist the Gram Sevaks and the VECs in maintaining the records and also to assist the Technical Assistants being provided at the Block level. All references in the NREGA Operational Guidelines to the Gram Panchayat (GP) shall imply the AEC, and all references to the Gram Sabha shall imply the VEC.

The existing Block Selection Committee was notified as Block Employment Council (BEC), and it is vested with the responsibilities of

the Block Panchayat. At the District level, the Governing Body of the DRDA was notified as the District Employment Council (DEC) and vested with the responsibilities of the District/Zila Panchayat. Men and women were actively involved in the meetings and management of the VECs and AECs. The scheme instilled community participation in development initiatives, in building up democratic justice through mandated inclusion of women in the VECs and AECs and in enhancing the capability of the individuals, the households and the community in economic production as well as in social leadership and social consciousness which are indeed the needs of the hour. The scheme has paved the way for attitudinal change among the people to accept positive democratic elements in grassroots governance; it has taught the village leaders to maintain records of various transactions in official procedures of public administration. The scheme has also made the rural folks including the women to be more assertive to demand for their rights and to complain against any wrong done to them.

These MGNREGS guidelines recognize the traditional village heads and the village dorbar, and the scheme has been in operation since 2006 till date with no objection from the traditional institutions or from the District Council against the scheme or against the guidelines promulgated by the State Government. Since these operational guidelines have been tested for nine years and the people in the villages of the Khasi Hills are comfortable with their provisions, the District Council may enact a law identifying the traditional village heads; while the State Government may enact a law for local governance concerning socio-economic development and civic welfare in the model of these tested operational guidelines, simply by converting the Executive Guidelines into a Legislative Act. By providing constitutional status to this arrangement which has already been in practice it may establish a balance between the emerging socio-economic requirements of the present society and the conservation of genuine tradition, and also guide the evolution of customs in such a way as it would be conducive to social development, justice and order in the society.

The existing Block Selection Committee was notified as Block Employment Council (BEC), and it is vested with the responsibilities of

### TO THE EDITOR

### Insensitive Prime Minister

Editor,

The insensitive silence of Mr Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of a secular India, on the "accidental murder" at Dadri, near Delhi last week speaks volumes of what he and his government think of the minorities in India. His actions or the lack of it actually sums up the uncaring attitude of this Government. In fact when he is the "Brightest Bulb" in the NDA chandelier, then you know the level of intelligence that this NDA government possesses. One may have observed that this bunch of "wise men" do talk in tongues, which makes them the laughing stock of many. The great "Aache Din" is a myth for most Indians. Mr Modi should know that for this nation to develop all Indians need to have a sense

of security and brotherhood. The only words most Indians have for the performance of the Modi led government is "Just Hot Air". At present we are thoroughly disgusted at the conduct of the Prime Minister who miraculously becomes tongue tied on issues when all Indians are looking for solace and directions.

Yours etc.,  
Tyrone D'Brass  
Tura.

### Of GHADC and politics'

Editor,

The news item published in the front page of the Shillong Times dated September 25 2015, captioned "Purno appeals to agitating Garos to consider State's socio-ethnic harmony" is a ridiculous, indigestible statement and an act of betrayal and dishonour to the

Garos people. The veteran politician and supremo of National People's Party (NPP) should have at least some thoughts before spilling the beans of anti-tribal statement which has deeply hurt the sentiments of Garo people. This is an irreparable damage to his political career and that of his party too. In his statement, a general appeal was made by trying to convince the Garo people not to oppose the participation of non-tribals in the upcoming GHADC election, in the interest of maintaining socio-ethnic harmony. This time the Garo people won't buy any of his balderdash, egoistic and irresponsible statements. He tries to convince the Garo people because his party has fielded a non-tribal candidate for the upcoming election. He might have thought that the Garo people can be used as a scapegoat for his personal vested interests, but not this time!

We are not against the participation of non-tribals in exercising their respective voting rights and contesting from the reserved seats for Meghalaya Legislative Assembly election but we request our fellow non-tribal people, not to participate in the GHADC election. It doesn't mean that we are communal in nature. Only politically motivated and opportunistic persons like Purno Sangma and the Congress Party are trying to exploit the situation trying to incite a communal flare up between the tribals and non-tribals. If the KHADC and JHADC have already barred the participation of non-tribals then why not in GHADC? Is GHADC different from the other ADC's? Does it not fall under the Sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution? We are only claiming what is our's for centuries! Where is the tribal centric party name tag, NPP? Or has it become a

National Pagla Party! No offence! We are already fed up and sick of Sangma's cheap and dirty politics (NPP) and others (Congress) played against their very own people. What is the major role played by his party MDCs as an opposition party during their tenure's in the GHADC? If they have worked for the welfare of the Garo society in protecting and safeguarding the fragile culture and tradition of the A.chik's, why is there still today no separate electoral roll? Why has the codification of Garo Customary Law not happened?

The GHADC totally lacks dynamic and patriotic leaders and is in shambles, full of corruption and anti-Garo activities. We are facing dire crisis of leadership. Garos should think wisely before casting their precious votes this time.

Yours etc.,  
Shoshon A Sangma,  
Via email

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

# Most nationalised banks in mess

By Nantoo Banerjee

For over two years, the government under both the previous Congress-led UPA and now BJP-controlled NDA, insisted that Reserve Bank (RBI), India's central bank, should slash prime lending rate and allow greater liquidity with commercial banks irrespective of the domestic inflation rate to promote industrial investment and growth. Both the UPA and the NDA governments were so upset with the RBI governor that they wanted to indirectly control the constitutional authority of the central bank and its credit policy direction through various measures to please business and industry and pursue the economic growth agenda against inflation that erodes the real value of currency and contracts the common man's purchasing capacity and happiness.

While the UPA was far less successful in making former RBI governor Duvvuri Subbarao, a retired IAS officer, fall in line even after giving him a two-year extension in the job, the current NDA government has more or less had its way to get the present governor, Raghuram Rajan, also a UPA recruit, to reduce lending rates by four times in one year to an aggregate 125 basis points or 1.25 per cent and released cash in the system. Surprisingly the government did not show similar enthusiasm to ensure that its own banks responded to the RBI gestures. Ironically, even industry which has been pressurizing the government on RBI rate cuts are almost silent when banks do not follow suit or use their own judgement on lending and deposit rates. The finance ministry says it does not want to interfere with the rate cut decisions of banks. The question one may ask: why is the finance ministry only after the RBI's judgement on credit policy that does not even fully influence on-ground rates?

The government has an answer which it does not want to state to embarrass itself and the management of public sector banks. The reason is simple. The government, the controlling shareholder of these banks, is also responsible for the overall operations of these banks. The fact is that most of these banks are operating badly. Sticky loans are running into a few lakh crores. No one really knows the exact volume as bank balance sheets rarely disclose the real status of sticky loans or non-performing assets, good portions of which get routinely restructured. Most borrowers, which are critical about high RBI rates, are generally silent on high bank lending rates. Big borrowers are also often big offenders. There are many large companies which borrow little from banks. Instead, they 'lend' their surpluses to other corporates using the 'investment' portfolio route. The gap between the credit and deposit rates of India's commercial banks is among the highest, implying the inefficiency of these banks. Most large global banks and institutions find a three or 3.5 per cent credit-deposit rate gap quite comfortable. Banks in India would like to have a cushion of six to seven per

cent, if not more. Also, it must be recognized that in most cases of large credit disbursement, the quality of the credit or the risk factor goes often by the government assessment of projects, their implementation schedules and profit projections. Take, for instance, the UPA regime highway projects under the 'build-operate-transfer' (BOT) model. The latest report by the rating agency, CRISIL, says about 7,500 km road projects are currently at high risk of either remaining incomplete or being abandoned due to huge losses. The government-owned National Highway Authority of India had awarded these contracts to private developers between 2009-10 and 2011-12 under the UPA regime on the BOT model. The projects now have an outstanding debt of Rs. 17,100 crore. The under-construction projects now require fund support of at least Rs 28,000 crore over the next two years to cover the cost overrun before completing them. What happens to the bank exposure in these projects?

Similarly, the aspect of political pressure on state-sector bank management can't be ignored. That explains why some business tycoons manage special favour from government commercial banks under a particular political regime. Some business tycoons are always seen as cynosure of certain national government. Top public sector bank management can ignore them only at the cost of their job. Many banks have fallen prey to such political pressure. This is an on-going problem. Some bank managements often take advantage of the situation to serve their own private interest. And, it may not be totally out of context, if one links such problems with the poor operational status of some of the state sector banks. Lately, the RBI has initiated 'corrective' action at the Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) on grounds that its management is unable to revive it. The public sector commercial bank posted a net loss of Rs.245 crore during June-September 2014. The bank's operations are being monitored by RBI every month. Its expansion and recruitment have been curtailed.

If banks are not keen on lowering the lending rates in keeping with the RBI rate cuts, it could be because they are unlikely to generate enough demand for loans for good viable projects. The latest RBI data reveals that the credit growth had hit a 20-year low in June, last, slipping below nine per cent, and has stayed around that level since then. The wedge between the deposit and credit expansion may have shrunk, but not enough to meet the expectations of the commercial banks. With large PSUs such as NTPC and PFC raising long term tax free bonds offering returns above 7.30 per cent, banks may find it difficult to get safe large borrowers from state sector enterprises. Thus, bank lending rates are unlikely to fall very soon despite the latest Reserve Bank gesture. (IPA Service)

“Land and sea, weakness and decline are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever.”

— John Keats

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 60 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2015

### The President Speaks

IT is reassuring that President Pranab Mukherjee has at least by implication taken a firm stand on the rumpus over the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri over rumours of beef consumption. The President underlined that diversity, tolerance and plurality were core values which kept India together and must never wither away. While many ancient civilisations have collapsed, the Indian civilisation has survived because of its core values, he emphasised. Pranab Mukherjee also paid a tribute to Indian democracy. The President's observations came in the wake of Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh calling the Dadri incident 'unfortunate' and promising action against those trying to break communal harmony. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley also said that such incidents hurt the country's image. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not yet spoken on the disgraceful occurrence. Why he has not is not yet clear. In the past, he had always defended secular values both at home and abroad. But his silence this time has enabled some bigots like Union Minister of Culture Mahesh Sharma and an MP like Sakshi Maharaj to put the blame on the unfortunate victim. Writer Nayantara Sahgal and poet Ashok Vajpayee have criticised Modi's silence on the Dadri incident.

The murder of Mohammad Akhlaq raises a whole host of controversial issues. There may be a lot to be said in favour of vegetarianism. But it has nothing to do with the RSS brand of Hindutva. And singling out beef eating for condemnation and legal proscription decidedly reeks of religious fanaticism. It has no medical validity nor does it come of love for animals. As a former Hindu Supreme Court judge said, cows are not the only animals. It may be argued that banning consumption and sale of beef militates against the basic principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Murder for eating beef should not escape severe penalty. What is astonishing is that the state governments which have banned it are trying to force other state governments to follow suit. Is the Indian President a voice in the wilderness?

## LOOKING BACK

March 02, 1988

### Govt. may consider introduction of meters in local taxis

Meghalaya Transport Minister Mr. Arison Marak has said that the State Government would give a fresh look to the question of introducing meter system in the taxis of Shillong.

In a statement in the State Assembly on Monday, he said that the Govt. would review the matter so as to ease the problems of the commuters. He said in the past the proposal did not work out because the taxi operators found it difficult to repair the damaged meter cables locally. All repairs had to be done in Calcutta. Now the Govt was prepared to examine the idea of opening a workshop either in Shillong or in Byrnihat for such repair works.

Mr. Marak who was replying to a Zero Hour discussion on the issue, also informed that the fare structure of the taxis would be revised in view of the recent rise in petrol cost.

The Minister informed that the point to point fare structure had been issued by the Govt. Under the law only six passengers were permitted to sit in a local taxi. Some cases of overloading were reported to the authorities and penal action, including fines or suspension of permit, were taken. He said police officials not below the rank of Sub Inspector were authorized to check the local taxis against

violation of the stipulated conditions.

Earlier, Mr. Korbar Singh (HPU) while raising the matter, highlighted the "great harassment" meted out to the commuters by the cabbies, who refuse customs when the route does not suit them. He said overloading in taxis and running in shuttle system were the order of the day. While the public were suffering, the law enforcement authorities looked the other way, he stated.

### Loan mela shortly in Tripura

Tripura Chief Minister Mr. Sudir Ranjan Majumdar today said that the proposed loan mela would shortly be held in the state. Speaking on the motion of loan mela in the State Assembly the Chief Minister said it would be held as per the Reserve Bank of India's guideline in this regard and the loans would be given only to those below the poverty line.

Welcoming the Government's decision opposition leader and former Chief Minister Mr. Nripen Chakraborty expressed his doubt whether the loans would actually go to the 'real needy'.

# ITM 2015; Meghalaya's mega event

By Patricia Mukhim

we get closer to the event.

Interestingly, while the rest of the world is all agog about the event, there are still many here who have not heard enough about the IMR and would like to know more about it. So how should NESFAS get the story out? The reality is that NESFAS has a very small band of dedicated workers who are trying to put together this humungous event. They cannot be burdened with creating a publicity blitz. Yet this is also the reason why most local people do not yet feel a sense of ownership of the IMR, when in fact they should proudly do so. After all, this is about Meghalaya and its people and their ability to host an international event! It is no mean feat. So NESFAS must get the good news out and fast. The other day while attending the 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Air Force at the Eastern Air Command I shared with a few officers about the IMR. They were very excited and wondered how they could be part of it. Earlier while at the Assam Regimental Centre for another programme I shared the same story. They too were interested but none of them knew how to get in touch with NESFAS. I hope that in the flurry of activities that are sucking up the energy of every member of the team, they do not forget that the public of Shillong are their most ardent fans.

I ask myself (as a media person who is now quite long on the tooth) whether we are able to see the impact of this significant event and whether we need to tell the story loud and clear but all I see is a fascination for bad news, sad news and failures. Politics consumes our energy. Stories such as the one I am talking about today are billed as "soft stories," to be covered by one of our female reporters if we have one. Our male colleagues are too busy chasing politicians and political stories because that gives them a sense of importance, even if there is nothing exclusive about the stories. And then we also have hang-ups about anything positive appearing in our newspapers. Perhaps

we need to ask the readers whether their reading tastes veer around news that is all about doomsday predictions! The answers might surprise us.

Yesterday I visited the Sung Valley below Puriang, about 7 kilometers from Mawryngkneng. This is a valley that produces the best upland rice in terms of taste. There is no road to cover the 7 kilometer distance and only a tough Willys Jeep of the (2<sup>nd</sup> World War variety) can make it through this treacherous track. Yet people go about their farming with a smile, each passer-by stopping to speak to the other and enquiring about each other's welfare. This place is known for its fertility and one could see tomatoes being grown over hundreds of acres. The tastiest guavas grow here and if one visits the Mawryngkneng market on Lew Pomtiang, their weekly market day one can pick up loads of guavas at a very decent price. But they don't get too far because in Police Bazar all one gets to see are imported guavas that take a hell of a long time to reach here and don't have the scent or the sweetness of the local ones. If only communication was better and people could transport their organically grown fruits to the city we would be a healthier lot. In fact the Sung Valley is a food bowl for much of East Khasi Hills. But many of us have perhaps not heard of this place although we might have frequented the fanciest locales of the world. Indeed Indians (and Meghalayans, particularly politicians) know more about London, New York and Bangkok than their backyards!

There is much to learn about Meghalaya. For instance the blue flowers that dot the hills and valleys around Mawiong-Sung and are called Jakhei by the local people only flowers once in twelve years. It last bloomed in 2003. Between October to November is when the flowers bloom. After that the plant dies off and does not resurface until after 12 years. I wish we had a stamp made of this rare flowering plant species

or that botanists from our local universities would take some interest to research and inform us as to why the 12-year cycle happens with this particular plant. In fact this is a good story to weave around our tourism narratives and the flowers would make an attractive picture for our tourism fliers and folders.

So far as NESFAS is concerned it has been doing a lot of work with creating school gardens so children learn not only to eat but also to grow what they eat. This is also meant to address the nutritional needs of children which Government supplied midday meals have not been able to provide. Their band of social work graduates and researchers have been working relentlessly with farmers in the villages of Meghalaya and Nagaland for now (NESFAS hopes to extend its reach to Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and the tribal areas of Assam as well), in what can be described as a cross-fertilizing teaching-learning experience. The core idea behind NESFAS and Slow Food is to rediscover those crops, vegetables, herbs, fruits, seeds, nuts and the huge varieties of mushrooms et al that the younger generation has forgotten about or is beginning to forget. To survive climate change and its vagaries, agro-ecologist feel that we need to go back to nature and this is what NESFAS is trying to do in this verdant biodiversity hotspot of the world.

As of now we are told that several international chefs are in town to understand the local cuisine and to try and weave something more daring out of the tried and tested culinary arts that we are familiar with. Taste is something that tempts. A spice here and a herb there could alter taste considerably and make that difference between a passionately cooked food and one that is put together as a matter of duty. The Italians believe passion is what drives the world. No wonder the Slow Food Movement originated in Italy and Carlo Petrini its founder can talk animatedly for hours on the philosophy of food!

As we gear ourselves for this world event, NESFAS deserves a thumbs-up for attempting a bold, brave and audacious initiative!

## TO THE EDITOR

### Development bypassing us!

Editor,

I was born in Shillong and have grown up in the vicinities of Mawbah (Barapathar), Upper Mawprem and Jhalupara. Every locality in Shillong is traditionally well maintained with good, open roads, street lights, proper parking facilities, and a clean and hygienic environment. I wonder why the same type of maintenance and facilities are not available in my area. I also wonder whether the authorities are even bothered to visit and see the negative growth and the reverse development that is happening in the areas of Mawbah, Upper Mawprem and Jhalupara. The entire place is turning into a disgusting, filthy dump yard. There is no proper parking facility. The number of shops stretching from Jhalupara till Mawbah point is increasing like a family of cockroaches. People do not have proper roads to walk on as the footpaths are illegally captured by business establishments. Dozens of cars and bikes are parked in the middle of the road (or anywhere where the owner of the vehicle fancies). The road leading to T.B. Hospital turns into a party zone at

night with illegal parking of cars that come from every corner of the city and people drinking in them and dumping alcohol bottles and rubbish right in the middle of the road. Why can the State Government or the Municipality or the Cantonment not address this nuisance? To make things exponentially worse, there are no functioning street lights and the entire area appears like a haven for drug peddlers at night. The road along Upper Mawprem is dismantled, broken down and the pot holes are filled with water. People cannot walk on this road, and vehicles unfailingly create jams and obstructions. Even undeveloped and obscure villages have better roads than these. It is only a matter of time when these streets will turn into a river - if authorities continue to remain silent. I have been living all my life in Shillong and have seen the maintenance and the facilities available in the neighbouring constituencies as well. On studying and comparing my locality with others, I cannot understand a few basic things - Why are we being deprived of good roads and street lights? Why can't a small building be built for these road side vendors and a parking place be constructed along those huge pockets of land

that have become gigantic dustbins? As a simple citizen who has seen other localities develop in the course of time while his own locality has been going down the drain, I want to ask - Why has my locality been neglected so badly by the Government?

Yours etc.,  
Bikram Thapa,  
Via email

### Appointment on compassionate ground

Editor,

It is disheartening to note that appointment on compassionate grounds in our State Government has been dispensed with from November 24, 2010 vide Notification No Per (AR) 62/2009/54 dated December 2nd, 2010. My experience with many families of the deceased, who had once served in the State Govt. but unfortunately passed away while in active service, I can see no possible justification why our Govt. has adopted such an extreme step since there are many a genuine case where such appointments could well fall under the realm of rationality and humanitarian consideration, especially when we take into cognizance the abysmal economic conditions of the needy sections of the society. There are several in-

stances when the head and the sole earner of the family employed in the State Govt. dies in harness at a time when the dependants are not gainfully employed anywhere else. Such victims find themselves in deep distress given that appointments on compassionate grounds are done away with. The survivors are left in a state of a gut-wrenching poverty in these days of acute unemployment crisis in private sectors, leave alone placement in any Govt. departments.

Again, I can't help wondering while the same policy of compassionate appointment is still in practice in the Central Govt. offices whereas our State Govt has put a blanket ban on it. I'm also at a loss for words as to why the Federation of Meghalaya State Govt. Employees, which champions the noble cause of its fellow brethren didn't efficaciously react to this critical existential issue by voicing its opposition before the last Meghalaya Fourth Pay Commission, 2007. I hope the Federation will read between the lines of what is intended herein by urging the Govt. to re-consider this quashing of compassionate appointments by premising their arguments on humanitarian and legal grounds for justifiable cases.

Your etc.,  
Jerome Diengdoh,

### Cow politics may decide Bihar polls

## Development agenda is out once again

By Kalyani Shankar

No one thought that beef and meat ban or reservation would become main poll issues in Bihar but now the major political parties are battling with these two contentious issues while development - the mantra of both Prime Minister Modi and chief minister Nitish Kumar have gone to the background. The cow, revered by the Hindus, has now been turned into a political weapon.

It is common knowledge that even an innocuous thing could trigger a communal incident. But what happened in Dadri was much more than that as mob lynching of 50-year-old Mohammad Akhlaq over rumours of consuming beef in Dadri area of Uttar Pradesh has shocked the country. The incident has become a major issue in electioneering in the far away Bihar. This is bound to have its echo in the 2017 U.P. Assembly polls too. What is unfortunate is that politicians of all hues are trying to exploit the incident for their vote bank politics. While the BJP is trying to consolidate its Hindu votes; the other so-called secular parties are eyeing the Muslim vote bank. Fringe elements on both sides have become active disturbing the law and order in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere.

Look at the number of leaders from all over the country making a beeline to Dadri to make provocative speeches. In the process the affected family is running from pillar to post for safety while it is the duty of the state to protect the citizens. Ironically it was Delhi chief minister Kejriwal who said "Who benefited from this? Not the Hindus. Not the Muslims. Only political parties and political leaders benefited from this incident," after meeting the victim's family forgetting he was also one of them.

Take the case of Samajwadi party. The U.P. chief Minister Akilesh Yadav is busy getting ready for the 2017 UP polls. In fact many see the Dadri incident as a rehearsal for the Assembly polls as it suits both the BJP as well as the Samajwadi Party to polarize the voters.

For the record the chief minister has dismissed the criticism of his government saying the SP would 'never do politics' on such incidents. "Since SP government came to power there are some forces trying to create one or the other atmosphere," he alleged after meeting Akhlaq's mother Asgari, brother Mohammed Afzal and daughter Shaista. Although he has promised a compensation of Rs 40 lakh, house, complete security to the family as well as a job to one family member, obviously the family does not want to remain in Dadri. By the way, where is the SP chief Maulana Mulayam Singh Yadav?

The Bahujan Samaj Party, on the other hand, has blamed the ruling Samajwadi Party for its inability to control the law and order situation in the state. "Both, the BJP and the SP thrive in an atmosphere of communal hatred and this has been proved by this incident. Both the parties worked hand-in-glove in such situations," Mayawati claims.

### Shillong-2 On Shillong Golf Course!

Editor,

Kindly, refer to the remarks of Barnes Mawrie (ST Oct 3, 2015) captioned, "Golf course or garbage dump?" It is the same old story in spite of the best efforts to keep the course clean. Huge expenditure is incurred every month in employing security guards to stop footballers and cricketers who spoil the greens and fairways. The gardeners (mali) have to pick up the litter every now and then. Dustbins are either stolen or van-

The BJP speaks in different voices. While the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had condemned the incident and Home Minister Rajnath Singh has asked the Uttar Pradesh government to present a report on the incident besides sending an advisory to the state that there should be zero tolerance, there are shriller voices emerging from some other ministers like Mahesh Sharma and controversial BJP MLA Sangeet Som. Bihar BJP leader and chief ministerial aspirant Sushil Modi has come out with a statement that the BJP will enforce the cow slaughter ban if voted to power.

The BJP is looking to the reverse polarisation. Cow slaughter ban and reservation are two issues the BJP hopes to benefit for consolidation of its vote bank. It helped the BJP in the 2014 general elections and it is unlikely to benefit the saffron party in the ongoing Bihar elections. Already there is counter to Lalu Prasad Yadav's statement that "many Hindus eat beef" from former BJP minister Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav. He called it an insult to the 'Yaduvanshis' to whom the cow remained a sacred animal.

The Congress, which has lost its core voters in UP and Bihar claims that it was a politico-ideological murder committed by some people who are trying to change the narrative of the country. It questions why the government should dictate about what people should eat, what they should wear, how they should talk and has appealed to all right thinking people to stand up against it. The Congress should remember that Gandhi was clear cow slaughter cannot be used as a weapon for a political issue despite his vaishnavite belief.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen leader Asaduddin Owaisi, who is trying to expand his influence in UP and Bihar questioned Modi's silence on what he called a "pre-planned murder" after visiting Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, to console Mohammed Aqlakh's family.

Communist Party of India general secretary S Sudhakar Reddy said his party is surprised at Modi's "silence" on such "irrational and intolerant" killing of innocent people.

The Trinamool Congress which is also looking to Muslim vote bank has questioned why Prime Minister Modi is silent on the issue.

What one should worry about is that it is not the issue of cow protection but mob lynching and the overall direction where politics is going. This new and ugly politics is turning into a majoritarian versus minoritarian tug of war. Unfortunately, the voice of the moderate elements is not heard as the extremists on both sides are emerging shriller. The voice of tolerance and accommodation are getting lost. The son of the lynched victim is right when he says do not try to divide the communities. If you cant unite at least stay out. (IPA Service)

Who is to teach the public? What else can we expect of an open space which is easily accessible to the public unlike other golf courses which regulate entry? Last March, 2015 about Rs 60 lakh worth of field machinery was destroyed in a fire - possibly a case of sabotage. Such is the situation that the caretakers of the course are seriously considering a system of regulating entry of the public through a gate system. Suggestions are welcome to set things right.

Yours etc.,  
A. H. Scott Lyngdoh  
Director Golf,  
Via email

"Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced."

— John Keats

**The Shillong Times**

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**Film censorship**

THE Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) had so far assumed the role of Cato the Censor in Roman history. It chopped scenes, deleted words, inserted warnings and sometimes banned an entire film. But now there is a silver lining. The Chief of the CBFC, Pahlaj Nihalani has recently relented to the extent of allowing film makers to be the guardians of the morality of viewers. But it is a limited gain. The permission granted to the film makers will be subject to a final supervision by the Board. Nevertheless, one should be grateful for small mercies.

The CBFC has so far been the final authority in deciding what can and cannot be shown. It has its guidelines. If a film smacks of an anti-national or anti-religious stance, it goes to the can. All this is done in accordance with an antiquated law dating back to the 1950s. The Cinematographic Act of 1952 curbs the freedom of expression which was previously granted to the press and to the cinema in order to preserve "the sovereignty and integrity" of the state. The priorities have changed over the years. The same ban does not apply to the internet which can show uncensored films. The ridiculous moralistic stance of the CBFC has sometimes serious consequences impairing artistic values. Even films internationally acknowledged meet the Censors' scissors. A mature democracy should not allow such interference. On the other hand, the liberty to be granted should not be allowed to degenerate into licence. Films which offend against the religious sensibilities of a community or sour India's relations with other countries should be put under a strict scanner.

**LOOKING BACK**

March 02, 1988

**Bhutan to act against GNLF**

The Bhutan Government has directed its local authorities to take all measures so that the GNLF activists could not operate from that country.

Home Secretary Mr. Krishnamurthy quoting a communique from the Centre said the Bhutan Government has also instructed its local authorities to co-operate with West Bengal police in dealing with ten GNLF miscreants.

He said the activists, for quite some time, were on rampage in Jaigaon area of Jalpaiguri district along the Indo-Bhutan border. The activists were crossing over the Bhutan whenever they were chased by the security forces.

He said the GNLF supporters were disrupting the vehicular traffic through the only road to Bhutan via Jaigaon and added, "Bhutan Government is helping us dealing with the activists."

Meanwhile GNLF militants made an abortive bid to blow up the vehicles of the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police by planting mines as the forty day, "Gorkhaland bandh" entered its 21st day today.

Official sources said District Magistrate Mr. D.P.Patra and Superintendent of Police Mr. Pradip Kumar Sahay were going to Siliguri to meet the Governor when the security men spotted a remote land mine near Eklegar under Jorebunglow police station. The security men defused the mine recovered the switch box from a nearby jungle.

Half an hour later another land mine exploded at a nearby place when a police van was passing. However, no damage was done because of the explosion.

The militants fired two rounds at Chowrasta here to scare away the people chased then when they

were planting a bomb in front of the tourist office.

They burnt down a high school near Jorebunglow and a veterinary hospital at Garubathan in Kalimpong and hurled a bomb at the SEB transformer at Mirik bazar causing minor damage.

Meanwhile, a GNLF poster here warned the students and state Government employees of "dire consequences" if they attended schools and offices violating the bandh.

The primary teachers organization here has urged the students not to attend schools violating the bandh.

However, the first day of the ICSC's examination passed off peacefully.

There was an acute shortage of essential commodities as the bandh continued for the 21st day.

The GNLF bandh was in protest against the West Bengal government's "atrocities" on the hill people.

Delhi surgeon separate Siamese twins

A pair of Siamese twins having two hearts and two stomachs but a common liver were successfully separated after a fourteen-hour rare surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here late last night.

The six month old conjoined twins, born to a woman of a village in Uttar Pradesh's Almora district, were operated upon by two teams of surgeons who carefully separated the lover which was fused in a 'bizarre' fashion.

Lodha sworn in as Chief Justice

Mr. Justice Guman Mal Lodha was today sworn in as Chief Justice of the Guwahati High court.

State Law Minister Mr. Surendra Nath Medhi High Court Judges and Lawyers were present on the occasion.

**Sleeping With The Enemy**

By Paramjit Bakshi

At a lunch the other day, a lady was narrating the story of a recent marriage, between a Marwari boy and a Khasi girl. She highlighted the fact that this couple, with great mutual understanding had built two kitchens- a vegetarian kitchen for the boy, and a separate one for the girl, where non-veg food could be cooked. The question which came to my mind and which I asked was, "how do the couple kiss?" Everybody laughed because they thought I was being funny, yet nobody knew the answer. I was actually curious, and truly wondered, if the girl had to run to brush her teeth, every time they felt the urge to get intimate. My non imaginative mind could think of no other solution.

The story is illustrative of the barriers which limit interaction between communities. When two people belonging to different communities interact, they automatically define the boundaries of their interaction. Across communities, it is considered inappropriate, to question the norms that define the other person's culture, because it often leads to conflict. Yet the fact remains that, it is people from outside our own communities, who can spot the quirks in our thinking more keenly. Left to ourselves we often defend our societal attitudes - irrational though they maybe- out of a mistaken sense of loyalty to our community. Thus we remain Marwaris, Punjabis, Khasis or Nagas but rarely ever become human. Our concerns are limited to our community, our state, our religion and national concerns remain the furthest from our minds. On a larger scale our nationality also restricts us, and even when we call ourselves Indian, Pakistani or English, we rarely rise to be what we all truly should be: human beings with concern for all other human beings.

Children born out of mixed marriages can be bridges across this divide, but as is evident from the couple of articles appearing in the ST, they are rarely permitted to be. No community truly accepts children born out of such unions. Some like Mukul Sangma have court cases filed against them, while others, such as some erstwhile student leaders, become overly rabid and communal in proving their allegiance to one half of their identity.

Yet the problem of identity is much larger than that concerning mixed unions, or their progeny. It begins when somebody asks you the question, "Where are you from?". A person like me has no answer to such a question; neither do many people, one knows and is friendly with. In my case my father came from West Punjab (and not as is often said West Pakistan, because Pakistan was not a country when he lived there), lived and worked across the country as an army officer, and settled post retirement at Dehra Dun - a place I visit but barely know. Having spent most of my life at Shillong, I am sure I would raise many an eyebrow, if I claimed to be from Shillong. Yet there are cases much worse than mine. Parents or grandparents of many such people came to Shillong, when Meghalaya was not even formed. When they came they had rights, which their children no longer enjoy. They can no longer buy land, or apply for jobs, or even fearlessly voice concerns about decisions concerning their lives. They belong to Shillong but unlike most "locals", to borrow a phrase from the title of Mark Medoff's play, are "children of a lesser God". They have no umbrella of tradition to shelter under. Not only God, but it seems that the Indian Constitution too, works in mysterious ways, taking away rights of some people, in giving privileges to others.

Taiye Selasi, writer, in her brilliant TED talk titled "Don't ask me where I am from, ask me where I am local" speaks for such people who like her, are "multi local" - people who feel at home in the town where they grew up, or the place they live in currently and even another city or two. She says it is not history which defines who we are, but our experiences. She mentions a significant meeting with Irish writer, Colum McCann who told her, "All experience is local, all identity is experience". The experiences of all the people in any place being similar: whether they are of traffic jams or inflation, the lack of infrastructure or corruption, of curfews or of the glorious weather, how is it that some are considered more local than others? One can-

not but concur with her when she says, "The question where are you from, or where are you really from, is often code for why are you really here."

In this day and age of human mobility, where it is not just marriage but sometimes mere enchantment and disenchantment with a place, or often a job or opportunity, or social or national upheaval, which brings people to a place, or forces them to move elsewhere, it is disconcerting to see people who have merely lived in one place, appropriating the public voice which should belong to everyone. Democracy which we all purport to champion, is a system which is supposed to treat everyone equally, and one cannot claim the benefit of old tradition and modern democracy in the same breath. Nobody today parks a bullock cart and a car in the same garage. When we attempt to do so, even legislation such as the VAB, gets jammed in a legal quagmire.

The sad part is that even people who are educated, have travelled a lot, and are considered intelligent; still wear inflexible thinking hats. In fact, sometimes one thinks that the uneducated farmer is more progressive. What does a farmer do, when he finds the soil on his patch of land, becoming less fertile and the crop yields diminishing, year after year? Does he keep tilling the land mindlessly just because he is emotionally attached to it? Fortunately, though uneducated, he realises that his land requires fresh nutrients, and replenishes these from outside, by adding either chemical fertiliser or what is generally and distastefully referred to as 'cow dung'. Both these are alien to his soil, and smell bad compared to the aroma of freshly dug earth, but do wonders for his yields. It is thus surprising to find educated people, emotionally tilling for solutions to modern problems, in the exhausted meadow of tradition and ignoring, workable solutions merely because, they lack the halo of custom.

Whether it is migration at the global level, or at the local level, one needs newer perspectives to look at the real issues. Today a lot of people are alarmed at the massive migration of Mus-

lims, to what is predominantly a Christian Europe. However the same people were hardly distressed, when countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq were air bombed to kingdom come, and when American and European soldiers (migrants in uniform) armed with the latest weapons roamed and killed there with impunity. The former was invaded under the guise of punishing Osama Bin Laden, who was never caught there and the latter, for the fictitious WMDs. As one writes this, a hospital has been bombed in Afghanistan killing 22 people, which the Americans initially called "collateral damage"- a cleverly coined euphemism for civilian deaths. The mess created by the West, in these areas and in the Middle East as a whole, has now come home to roost. European leaders have been courageous in allowing this migration, in spite of the realisation that some terrorists, would have undoubtedly slipped in. To see democracy in action, one has to see Germany where one and a half million refugees, are supposed to settle. Both the protests and the counter protests on the issue are reflective of a healthy democracy.

It is in our own backyard that democracy has failed. Although keen to avail every democratic benefit, this society has been reluctant to restore well deserved rights or even a voice to minorities settled here for generations. In Europe, the Muslim migrants will soon have the same rights as their hosts, but here the rights taken away, are unlikely to be ever restored. It must be admitted though that a glimmer of hope is raised, by some courageous local voices over this issue, in this newspaper. Just as it needs to be admitted, in the case of the couple one began the story with, that the twin kitchen concept is a big step in the right direction. In any union the most private parts are not what they are thought to be. It is our minds and hearts which somehow remain the most closed and private, and opening them truly is where the challenge really lies. Without this just societal or marital cohabitation, is metaphorically, merely "sleeping with the enemy."

*The writer can be contacted at bakshi03@rediffmail.com*

**Search for an acceptable approach to regional constitutional problems**

By Morning Star Sumer

The news report (NDFB celebrates 29th anniversary in Sonai) which appeared on page 4 of The Shillong Times issue of October 6, 2015, had not faithfully quoted me. The actual sentences as spoken by me read, "The problem in Boroland is not a religious one. It is a fight for land and land rights which is the basis upon which politics is built. Without land rights there can be no country" and, "...we need to discuss the issues of good governance threadbare before taking a decision on a course of action to ensure good governance through the law courts and NOT (REPEAT) NOT through the barrel of a gun"! The media may not have space enough to reflect truthfully the views of serious speakers and writers who vent their views through it. It is, therefore, opportune now, to broadcast the ideas that must have created such outfits as the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) which is singular among such outfits. These ideas may also bring us face to face with the truths that have been hidden from public view. These truths relate to the incontrovertible facts like the indigenous people's right to land ownership. By no stretch of imagination can a civilized society argue against the right of indigenous people to govern themselves according to their own genius as sanctioned by the Constitution of the country within which such indigenous people happen to live. The fathers of our Constitution, under the guidance of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (the chief architect of India's Constitution), had wisely enunciated the principles upon which our laws should be made, and, as more light might be shed over those laws, to reconsider and amend them to suit the climate of the times when people have to face the vicissitudes of life's experiences on this planet. It has ever been my belief that good governance is the acme of a civilized polity while good governance itself should be the fruit of civilized laws. Therefore, I have always stressed/emphasized the truth that good governance should be within the constraint of the laws that the people have given to themselves.

The Constitution of India has sanctified the right of indigenous people to govern themselves by incorporating Schedules V and VI under its wings. The indigenous people of Meghalaya comprising the hills districts of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills make up a total population of 18, 19,311 according to STATISTICAL HANDBOOK MEGHALAYA 2010-2011 based on the data compiled during the 2001 census enumeration. The estimated indigenous population of Boroland based upon the result of the 2001 census would not be less than 14 lakhs within the BTADs area. But Meghalaya has been enjoying the fruits of the Sixth Schedule since 1952 while the indigenous people of the BTADs are only now beginning to come within the ambit of the Schedule; that too, under the shadow of insurgency/militancy forced upon them by the callousness of the powers that be till now. Why this anomaly?

The anomaly has been existing for so long because of the intransigence of both the Assam and Central Governments. The Assam government had the agenda of wanting to have sway over a state with multifarious population - to the detriment of the state as a whole - while brazenly ignoring the rightful claim of a large group of indigenous people like the Boros to their own rights as enshrined in

the Constitution! The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) should not be the only solution to the Bodoland issue. The Bodo people have the right to govern themselves as they may wish under the provisions of our Constitution! In the past the Bodo people had suffered grievously because of the intransigence of governments.

Now, it seems, the Central Government is becoming more reasonable by agreeing to discuss the demands of the Bodo people on the basis of constitutional provisions and the NDFB outfit is also more accommodating. We see this situation as an improvement in the climate of the environment for negotiation for peace. The magnanimity shown by the Central Government is not lost on the leaders of the NDFB. It is for the Central Government to take swift action to do justice to the Bodo people. However, the magnanimity may lose its shine if there are any signs of wavering on the part of the Central Government.

The recent political developments relating to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are also sure to impact the demographic statistics of states if we are not alert to ensure that non-indigenous immigrants should not figure in the Register.

As Ranjan Daimari a.k.a. D.R. Nabla had said at the 29th Anniversary function, "The demand of separate state of Bodoland is not only for the Bodos but for the all round development, peace, unity and integrity of the whole communities residing in the proposed separate state of Bodoland". However, the Central Government should not continue to procrastinate, but, should act decisively and swiftly to remove all apprehension. There should be no room for deviation. In the past the Central governments were seen to have betrayed whatever promise had been given to the outfit. Now it is time to bury the past and turn a new leaf.

One should not fail to commend the BJP-led NDA Central Government's act of magnanimity in agreeing to discuss the Bodo problem with the NDFB especially when one considers that the government had the duty to put down with a firm hand under the provisions of the IPC any group that take arms against the state. It shows that there are some sane elements among the powers that be that lent restraining hands to make them see the rights and wrongs of such action through right perspectives. Some sections of our people raise a hue and cry over the exemption to the NDFB leader by allowing him to have his own body guards in a designated area. Only those who might have witnessed the grand event on 3rd October, 2015 to celebrate the 29th foundation day of the outfit could truly appreciate the extent of respect to the outfit shown by the Bodo people on that day! The Central Government has certainly shown that it is open to serious discussion on the Bodo people's problem, given the right climate in the environment of discussion. Reason and logic have not yet lost their relevance in the rhetoric of politics. Both sides should keep the ball rolling to the finish!

Postscript: In an article written by me under the caption, "Annexation by Immigration?" which appeared in the column of The Shillong Times issue of August 22, 2012 one aspect of the Bodoland issue was thoroughly discussed. It relates to the changed demographic imbalance which is visible when the indigenous population was reduced to a minority.

**TO THE EDITOR**

**Education for the disabled?**

Editor,

The Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, Mr. Krishan Pal Gurjar, as reported in your newspaper on the 9th October, stated there were 2.68 crore Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Country. This figure was made available by the Ministry in its letter No. 5-01/2013-DDIII of 20.03.2015. The Minister did not mention that his Ministry had allocated only Rs 66 crore for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Disabled as per its letter No. 22-23(05)/2012-DD11/V of 12 June 2015 for the year 2015-16. By simple Arithmetic the Ministry offered only Rs 24.62 per Person with Disabilities for his/her Education. And for the entire Disabled population of Meghalaya the money allotted is only Rs 31 lakh. Dwar Jinkyrymen's expenditure in 2014-15 was Rs 27 lakhs and there are eight other Centres for Education of the Disabled in Meghalaya. As per the Funding Scheme (DDRS) the Ministry is to offer 90% of the financial requirement but where is the allocation, Mr. Minister?

Yours etc  
Sajjad M Ali,  
Via email

**Stop urinating on the streets!**

Editor,

What's with men? They may be potty trained at home, but when it comes to public spaces men seem to go with the flow, without even looking for a toilet. Is it the lack of public convenience or just the, 'I don't care a damn attitude?' Just yesterday while walking back home from college, I happened to see a man urinating right 'outside' a public toilet. It struck me as a kind of repellent freedom. Irrespective of the fact that women, girls and children were passing by, what gives them the right? Just because they are men! It is not about toilets; it is about a lack of civic sense.

Gandhi, who is still a symbol of constructive change in India, wrote in 1925 issue of his weekly newspaper 'Navajivan', "To pass urine anywhere on a street, at any place not meant for the purpose, should be regarded as an offence." I wouldn't go so far to say that it represents a male colonisation of public space and that you're all marking your territory like Randy Tomcats, but women live here too! There are many other reasons that this behaviour is a problem. It smells gross!

Shopkeepers who are set next to popular spots find their business declining as odour waxes. The high context of ammonia and acid in urine damages paint, wears away at stone and kills any enterprising plant life that may be trying to survive. But perhaps, more important are the social ramifications for the exposure of male genitals in public spaces.

Even after the warning signs, availability of public toilets and tiles with the images of various deities stuck or painted on the walls of the street nothing seems to deter them- men will just turn to a wall and go! It's high time to stop this ritual. To all those men who think letting out in public is not a big deal: You are not desperate toddlers; you are adults. Please act like one.

Yours etc.,  
Damini Thapa,  
Via email

**Maintain safety of tourist spots**

Editor,

After ten years I recently visited Cherrapunji and noticed that before reaching the Cherra bridge the road is very badly exposed with stones and gravel and no black topping visible. This could easily lead to flat tyres or some other kind of accident.

When we reached the famous Cherra falls, we found the stairs broken down. A senior citizen, or a child could easily slip may slip and fall down the gorge. Several people were taking pictures at that spot. If anyone slips and falls, the person could lose his life. Some tourist guards should be posted at these tourist spots as some people under the influence of alcohol could well slip and fall since the protective railings at the viewpoint are missing. Tourists don't mind paying entry fees and people come to visit this place from every part of the world. It's a shame to see such dilapidated and ill-maintained tourist spots which indicate that the Tourism Department does not care about the views that tourists carry back with them. Also the local people of Cherrapunjee don't seem to have a stake in keeping their tourist spots clean, well maintained and safe.

Yours etc.,  
Vikash Kumar,  
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.*

Entertaining soldiers in the high ridges of the Siachen camp with her popular chart busters was an exceptional experience for Akriti Kakar, as she reveals to TWF correspondent Pramita Bose

Instances of celebs visiting the Indian army and entertaining the soldiers in their base camps are not rare. Recently joining this dedicated band was Bollywood singer Akriti Kakar who has chartbusters like Saturday Saturday from Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania and Iski Uski from 2 States to her credit. What is noteworthy in her case is that she not only covered the entire treacherous terrain from Leh to Siachen up in the Himalayas but also braved inclement weather and battled health issues.

"It was to attend the Independence Day celebration alongwith the Indian troops stationed in the lofty mountain range. The invitation came from the Big FM channel while I was going through an interview session in their office," Kakar informs.

"I grabbed it instantly as I thought this was going to be a lifetime opportunity for me. Given the sensitive nature of the area in the highly militarized zone I and my team were heading to, I knew it would be a never-before experience for us. Obviously people in general can hardly expect such an opportunity to fulfill dream like this," she reminisces.

Diving into an incredible expedition could also be crazy, but Kakar never dithered on her resolve. By her own confession, this was the toughest trip she had ever taken.

"We first boarded a flight to Delhi from Mumbai and then from the capital took a transit plane to land at the Leh airport. We did a night-stay as the oxygen level was considerably low. We were initially served with water to



# Music in the high mountains



quench our thirst and hydrate ourselves. Then we underwent a full-body medical assessment wherein our blood pressure, heart-rate and oxygen level were exam-

ined and noted down," she remembers.

Despite a downward bumpy ride looming large, she and her musician-team travelled for a good five-six hours from Leh (situated at an altitude of 10500ft) to Partapur (a village in Leh Ladakh district) and then took another four-hour drive to the Siachen Base Camp (located in the glacier region of Jammu and Kashmir province).

"It was tough as the roads were not properly built and only a week before, a landslide had ripped through the landscape and forced us to pass through a broken mountain path for three hours. We were now slowly inching towards the Khardung La Pass at a height of 17,582 feet which is the world's second highest motorable pass. We stopped at North Pullu base camp for lunch and I almost fainted with the fatigue of the journey. The army doctors immediately took me inside a tent, made me pop two tablets and administered an injection which finally aided in stabilizing my condition. The dizziness also disap-

peared magically. I had almost imagined that I would suffer a brain haemorrhage, literally!" she recalls. Matters worsened when her percussionist was sent back owing to his waning state of health.

It is true that when we regale in the beauty of nature, we seldom think about its fury and the harsh, raw aspects of the wilderness. But for Akriti, she witnessed both sides of the story. "Even in that weak health condition, I could feel the grace of nature in its pure form. The sky has a shade of blue that we can never experience in the plains. Albeit there was no sign of green vegetation but the barren mountains were covered with patches of brown, purple, grey limestone hues...as if we were watching a fascinating movie! In between, we came across some gigantic statues of Lord Buddha standing tall in staid silence and overlooking the mountain gorges.

"Small freshwater lakes and saline lagoons were also seen scattered here and there, while a huge desert suddenly came up from nowhere to surprise us completely. The rare two-humped camel, snow-peaked mountains and local Ladakhis with sun-burnt skin and piercing eyes drew our attention," she sums up.



Applauding the unique initiative of hosting a cultural concert to commemorate India's 68th Independence Day at the highest battleground of the world, the 29-year old singer belted out popular track after track for the spirited soldiers. "The moment was special for me

and I had specially written the lyrics of a single called Shukriya for the occasion," she reveals smiling.

The high point of her stay in the Siachen region, Akriti admits, was the time when they were rehearsing for the programme around an open-air bonfire and jamming alongwith the musicians. "Though our lung-power weakened, given the prevalent acute atmospheric condition, we gritted our teeth to carry on for the sake of our men in uniform who live on the edge daily for our defence, thus risking their lives at the altar of duty," she concludes. (TWF)

# Juggernaut rolls on

In a unique initiative that may change the way India reads, books would soon be available to nearly 200 million smartphone users at the tap of their devices.

'Juggernaut', the new venture of Chiki Sarkar, former publisher at Penguin Random House India, launched recently, will be powered by audacious strategies harnessing new technology, while still not abandoning the classic printed book, which will continue to be part of its portfolio.

"So the traditional book remains very central, especially for our literary and big name authors, and we are being distributed and warehoused by Hachette, a major publisher here with massive reach," she said.

But expect innovations like serialised novels, shorter chapters, appointment reading (what to read at midnight), genre fiction, and other experiments to draw in intensive phone-users who may not be reading anything in the form of a book at the moment.

Sarkar, who believes that "the book is under great threat in India", is hopeful that the new venture will change the way books are read in India. "There's the paper book, the e-book, but along with that, there's life on the phone," said Sarkar. Initially publishing in English and Hindi, the new house hopes to branch out into a new Indian language every year.

E-books, according to publishing industry sources, account for only 7-8 per cent of their revenue.

Launched by Sarkar, Publisher and Founder, Juggernaut will have a CEO in Durga Raghunath, who has come from Network 18, where she founded Firstpost.com and went on to become CEO of Web 18, thus indicating the digital thrust of the publishing start-up. It is for the first time

that marquee names from corporate India including Infosys co-founder and the man behind the

Aadhaar biometric identification project, Nandan Nilekani, Managing director of Fab India William Bissell, and Neeraj Aggarwal, MD of Boston Consulting Group, India, have invested in a publishing house.

"Much of traditional publishing is broken. Commissioning, marketing, sales. It's an opportunity to build from scratch," said Raghunath. Juggernaut is betting on a large number of mobile Internet users for the success of the venture. While reading habits in Japan are an inspiration, Sarkar and Raghunath know this readership ex-



Chiki Sarkar of 'Juggernaut'

ists only in theory at the moment.

Sarkar said, "We have managed to attract a whole range of new writers who have come to us solely for the phone, for example — voices from genre writing, entertainment spaces, and those who have already carved an online life for themselves."

Those who have published in the old format are interested too. "Previously published authors and celebrities whom we might naturally put into the physical format are also very excited to have an additional, extremely promising, new life for them that allows them to build their own communities, and market their books in new ways," she said.

Backed by an array of marquee investors, who have already put in Rs 15 crore in the venture, and armed with a novel strategy to create a niche for itself in the publishing industry, Juggernaut is set to roll. (PTI)



# Indian tennis rides high on Hingis

The year 2015 has seen Indian players Leander Paes and Sania Mirza win 10 titles alongside Swiss tennis great Martina Hingis. The association has been as fruitful for Hingis as it has been for Indian tennis.

Hingis, the youngest-ever World No.1 in women's singles, has won a whopping seven trophies so far this year alongside Sania while her association with Paes has yielded three Grand Slam mixed doubles titles.

The 35-year-old Hingis is at the fag-end of an illustrious career that saw her win five Grand Slam women's singles titles.

While age and injuries has left her a pale shadow of the formidable singles player she once was, Hingis'

superb run this year has certainly bolstered her trophy cabinet and those of the evergreen Paes in the twilight of both their careers.

Sania meanwhile, has not been able to establish her credentials as a top singles player. But she has done well in the doubles circuit and 2015 will certainly be one of the high points in her career.

Born in Košice in the former Czechoslovakia - now a part of Slovakia -- Hingis, it seems, was always destined for greatness.

Both her parents were accomplished tennis players and her mother Melanie Molitorová had decided that her child would take up the sport while Hingis was still in the womb.

By Ajeyo Basu



## Martina Hingis: Career highlights

- \* Became youngest women's Grand Slam winner by taking Wimbledon doubles title in 1996.
- \* Youngest-ever women's player to be ranked World No.1.
- \* Has won seven consecutive doubles titles with Sania Mirza.
- \* Has twice made successful comebacks from retirement.
- \* Claimed three Grand Slam mixed doubles trophies with Leander Paes in 2015.

Hingis' parents dedication to tennis led them to name their daughter after another legend in the women's game - Martina Navratilova.

The Swiss star did not disappoint her parents.

Hingis was 15 years and nine months old when she

won the Wimbledon doubles title in 1996 with Helena Sukova, making her the youngest Grand Slam champion of all time. The following year, she became the youngest singles Grand Slam winner of the 20th century when she clinched (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

# Air hostess as career option

Some of us are fond of flying especially when we see birds in the sky or any other flying objects like planes. People have dream to travel by air though many can't make it as it is costly than other mode of transport. One of the fascinating and glamorous career options is being air hostess and many young girls opt for the career because of the exciting experience of flying, visiting different places, interacting with different kinds of people on board and for the very attractive pay package. This is a highly demanding job which requires a lot of patience and involves odd duty hours.

The air hostess is called the first person to welcome a passenger; her welcoming smile and greeting acknowledge every passenger. Inside the aircraft, she seems to be here, there and everywhere, greeting every passenger, guiding each to his or her seat, helping a passenger get settled, coordinating security personnel, giving directions as and when required and doing a myriad things. Like air hostess there are flight stewards who are male. It does not mean that only girls can join this profession; there are ample opportunities for male candidates too.

Educational qualification for this career is plus two levels passed but people with higher qualification can also opt for it and they have more opportunities. Though there are no very formal courses but it is one of the hospitality sectors so degree/diploma in this regard is also beneficial. Like air hostess there are flight stewards who are male. The applicant should be physically fit with a pleasing personality. Strong communication skill with knowledge of different languages is an added advantage for the aspirants. Selection is done by different companies who are associated with flying business by various means.

charge a high amount, so aspirants must be careful before talking admission in such institutes. I have seen many young people from the regions who are serving in different airlines including international airlines who did not take admission in training institutes which advertise in a big way.

There are some training institutes who groom people to join this career. Aspirants must select the institutes carefully before taking admission in those institutes. There are many institutes which advertise for the training of air hostess but many of them have failed to make air hostess. One must be careful when they prefer to take admission in any of the air hostess training academy. In last few years some of the institutes have made good amount of money in the name of air hostess training but they have failed to give employment to their aspirants. As the institutes

India and for Indian nationals only. Candidates should be a student of 1st year of Graduate Engineering or MBBS courses or 1st year of Masters Degree in Geology/ Geophysics or MBA. Candidates should have obtained minimum 60% marks in 12th standard or 60% in graduation. The last date for submission of duly completed application form is 15th November.

**O N G C Scholarships:** Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited is offering 500 scholarships each worth 48,000 per annum to meritorious SC/ST students. Out of this 50% are reserved for girl students and scholarships are open for studies in



For further details and career planning aspirants may call at 98640 55558 or send email at bkranjan@gmail.com

By Bhagyashree Sagar

# A spin to the modern love tale with mobile apps

Single and ready to mingle? But don't have a clue where to find your dream match. Enter dating apps, which are ready to give you a wide field to choose from and more, all within a safety net.

It's time to move over mobile apps selling clothes and groceries, for there is love, at least a chance at love to be found on dating apps, which have sprung up in India in recent months and are claiming to be doing well.

Dating apps like 'TrulyMadly' step in, calling itself the safest dating and matchmaking platform for Indian singles today.

The rationale behind creating the app meant to cater to an Indian mindset, available for Android, iOS and Windows users, is revealed by Sachin Bhatia, CEO and Co-Founder of TrulyMadly who says a visible shift in social and cultural norms is being witnessed in India, which makes it the right market for such an app.

"There are independent minded girls who want to date beyond the confines of cast, creed and religion.



All they were asking for was a safe environment to do this. That's what we are

Founder and CEO, Woo. Even 'TrulyMadly', with over a million users

these apps are going all out to ensure that the match making happening is fool-proof, like

'TrulyMadly' does a social profiling based on Facebook, LinkedIn to weed out profiles of married people who may get in. Their target audience is clear- Singles looking for love.

Keeping in mind the fears of women users, 'Woo' offers features like masking the names of female users and displaying only initials, masking

workplace details so that women should be in complete control of their experience on the app.

Menon of 'Woo' points out an interesting pattern, that of the younger generation keen to take over reigns of matchmaking in their own hands.

"There are a lot of people between the ages of 25 to 35 who want to take the whole matchmaking process into their own hands, rather than entrust it to family." Since avail-



attempting to build," Bhatia said.

Another Indian matchmaking app, 'Woo' available for Android, iOS users, in its recently released television commercial sets the idea straight- the love of your life maybe be right around you, but you'll never know and that's where the app will help.

"Demanding careers, long commutes, with time being life's most precious currency where meeting someone special becomes quite challenging and people are acknowledging that.

"Luckily, India has adopted technology as the same pace. With over 1 million users on Woo and around 10,000 matches forming everyday, we can see how people have embraced this new approach to making connections," says Sumesh Menon, Co-

is out with their TVC which coins a new term, 'Boy Browsing'- girls checking out men along with their best friends.

"The TVC is a part of TrulyMadly's ongoing Bestie campaign, which highlights how the dating app is available round the clock, like a girl's bestie, to point out all suitable boys for dating," says Bhatia of Truly Madly.

What's more is that



The rationale behind creating the app meant to cater to an Indian mindset, available for Android, iOS and Windows users, is revealed by Sachin Bhatia, CEO and Co-Founder of TrulyMadly who says a visible shift in social and cultural norms is being witnessed in India, which makes it the right market for such an app.

able matrimonial platforms didn't appeal to them, there was the need of a modern approach to finding love and a life partner," he says.

And there may even be good news for proponents of classic ideals of romance, for some matches made on these apps are finding their way up to the marriage altar, that too with the full works. These apps have testimonials and wedding invitations sent to their offices to prove that!

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

## 'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, October 11, 2015

**Venus square Saturn on your solar return chart indicates some mixed results but overall the year would be a satisfactory one. How you communicate would become important so it's beneficial to do your research and be armed with fact rather than base your work on assumptions. Financial decisions would be easier to make as you have the ability to go into details. There would be vibrancy in personal relationships and family plans will begin to take shape and even actualize. Health matters of yourself and a loved one will need special attention.**

**Aries : (March 21 - April 20)**



A lot of excitement, pleasure and romance is on the cards. You focus on having fun, and expressing yourself creatively. Your romantic affair gives you a big boost of confidence. Moreover your personal magnetism runs high to be admired and adored. You express true feelings, ideas and plans without being afraid of consequences. You attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with unapproachable people in authority. You achieve great success in competitive situations. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful. Strong chances of finalization of a property related matter.

**Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)**



This phase may put on lot of pressure on you. A positive and creative approach brings gain and resolution in old conflicts and work situations. However later on the dust will settle down and you will look up with a lot of hope. This is a time to do what you can to build trust in your family life and a strong foundation within yourself. You are most likely to express your social, romantic, and artistic qualities through an intellectual appreciation of art and cultural pursuits. You might make short trips, visiting friends and relatives. It's a great time to open up conversations with loved ones, when it comes to matters related to love and romance.

**Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)**



The planetary configuration promises an excellent period. You can charm many with your strong personality and soft approach. With inner strength and hard work, you can transform a breakdown at work into a breakthrough. It's time to let go of obsolete patterns and routines and have a new vision for the future. Your mystical and enigmatic personality attracts some interesting people around you. You will spend a lot on clothes, furniture, and entertainment. The areas of life where you are most likely to express your social, romantic, and artistic qualities are through an intellectual appreciation of art, cultural pursuits, and literature.

**Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)**



Money and domestic issues will take centre stage as you grapple with these issues. Your main concentration will be to make domestic relationships and the home environment harmonious and peaceful. You are proud of your ideas, and very good at expressing them with ease. This will enable you to make progress at work. You make face a setback or face some obstacles as far as finances are concerned. You are more likely to pay closer attention to your physical appearance and mannerisms, aiming to improve and enhance your attractiveness.

**Leo : (July 23 - August 23)**



Your courage and confidence will keep your hopes alive. You will need to attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with unapproachable people at work. On the other hand enhanced energy and a renewed feeling of confidence favors you. You are highly motivated to make money this enhances much energy for new money-making projects. Romantic matters come to the fore and the single will find that they are drawn towards someone in their social circle. Activities related to communication such as journalism, literature and fine arts are prominent.

**Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)**



There is increased creative energy within you which provides the necessary dynamism to complete your projects with élan. You might play with various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one source for monetary gain this time however make sure that you read the fine print. Your communication abilities will largely be applied to professional worldly ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects or social standing. Relationships take on a fun tone

now. Friends and lovers take priority for most of the time. Health reads fine.

**Libra : (September 23 - October 23)**



Travel, contacts and communications are the keywords at this time. Opportunities and invitations from overseas take you on an unplanned journey. You are full of hope and enthusiasm as you make new beginnings at work and home. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. Activities related to communication such as journalism, literature and fine arts are prominent. You express your feelings to your beloved and will be happy to find that they are reciprocated. Your health or that of someone close will cause some anxious moments.

**Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)**



An action oriented phase keeps you busy throughout. Public relations work, interpersonal relations and other such endeavors are highlighted now. It is more about how you express yourself than the specifics of what you are saying that helps sway others to your point of view. You will also show aggression in your dealings but make sure that this does not get out of hand. As such, this is a great time to open up conversations about topics such as those revolving around the sharing of power, intimacy, and finances. Your friends and well wishers would be supportive.

**Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)**



This is a period of mixed results for you where you will have to deal with emotional disturbances. There is likely to be more activity, movement, contact, and communications with co-workers now. It is best to go ahead with your work and avoid confrontations or arguments. Think twice before you speak. Financial prosperity or social success may come through your business associate at this time. You are inclined to learn new work skills, or to improve your skills and output in terms of work. Children will bring joy and happiness.

**Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)**



This is an excellent phase where communications, affair and fun activities flourish. You can expect something new. You would be able to make good use of your talent and communication skills and impress people around you. This brings some new opportunities. Your career prospects also improve as you bring about changes in your work style and interact in more positive way with your colleagues. You make great strides in your career as you win accolades and gain recognition for your work. You may have a desire to redecorate your home. Family life will be very harmonious. Romance is in the air and you enjoy the time spent with your beloved. For the unattached a roaring affair is in the offing.

**Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)**



New associations will boost your career in a big way. You plan in an unorthodox way and get appreciation from your business associates. At the work place your continuous efforts will bring fruitful results. You have many overseas opportunities to boost your security and comfort. You may find yourself in a position in which there is a blending of the financial with social or public affairs. You may be assigned to complete a task and travel overseas. A lot of travel, meeting with influential people will boost your moral also. Your family also cheers you up and you have a holiday together or spend time with them. You extend your hospitality to family and friends.

**Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)**



A change or betterment in career is strongly indicated this also brings better financial prospects. Your style of communication boosts your magnetic powers. Let others know they can depend on you. People notice and admire you for your pleasant and cheerful personality and this brings new job opportunities or assignments. 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. Obstacles in your life may be overcome by bravery, self-assertion, and directness. You get good financial returns from investments and insurance. Monetary transactions would be beneficial if you research and focus. Romance is very much on the cards.

## Indian tennis rides high on Hingis

(Contd from P-VI) the Australian Open. She also achieved the distinction of becoming the youngest-ever World No. 1 when she displaced injured German legend Steffi Graf from the top of the rankings.

She is also one of the youngest players to enter the International Tennis Hall of Fame. But a series of injuries forced her into retirement in 2003. Although she made a comeback in 2006, she was not the same force in the singles. But her return to competitive tennis was a successful one since she won the 2006 Australian Open mixed doubles title with Mahesh Bhupathi before clinching the Italian Open later in the year.

She received the Laureus World Sports award for comeback of the year in 2006. Hingis' career ran into trouble in 2007 when she tested positive for cocaine at Wimbledon. Maintaining her innocence, she decided to retire again rather than fight the charges. In January 2008, she was suspended for two years by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

The Swiss star made a second comeback in 2013, this

time strictly as a doubles player. She won the Miami Open the following year alongwith Sabine Lisicki, and reached



the final of the 2014 U.S. Open with Flavia Pennetta.

At the beginning of 2015, she decided to team up with Paes and Sania. And the rest, as they say, is history. (The writer can be contacted at ajeyo.b@ians.in)

*“The old believe everything, the middle-aged suspect everything, the young know everything.”*

— Oscar Wilde

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 63

SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2015

### GHADC election: Outcome uncertain

VOTING to the 30 member Garo Hills District Council is taking place today amidst huge uncertainties. While the campaign has been low key and a general sense of disillusionment prevails over the performance of the Council, the fact that non-tribals are contesting the polls and also voting for has created a public outrage which political parties are taking in their stride instead of addressing the issue upfront. There have been a series of disruptions to public life in Garo Hills on account of bandh calls to protest the District Council elections. The situation in Garo Hills breeds a sense of despondency about whether anything good can come out of the polls. Indeed, voting for its own sake is a no-win situation. People vote because they expect those who are elected to deliver on the pre-poll promises, whether that be for the state or the council elections. But the fact that peoples' aspirations are far from being met and that Garo Hills continues to remain in a decrepit state and under the thumb of militants is enough evidence that the elected representatives have failed their people repeatedly.

This election is seen as another exercise that will install a new set of elites who will pretend to run the Council for the next five years bit with no clear-cut objectives and no roadmap in sight. The story is the same with the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Councils too. Most of the productive time of the councilors is spent in toppling games. The executive councils are changed frequently not because they fail to deliver but because of political manoeuvres. When the EC is formed by a party or parties that are not in sync with those in the State Government, it remains unstable because the State Government does not wish to see an opposition party ruling the Councils. The District Councils are not bound by the 10th Schedule of the Constitution which has put an embargo on floor crossing and switching political sides by state legislators. Somehow the anti-defection law was never passed by the Councils for obvious reasons. They don't want to lose their flexibility to walk in and out of an EC whenever it suits them. In fact if the Councils are allowed to carry on with their tasks, the anti-defection law is imperative for bringing in sanity among the Councillors and allowing them to concentrate on real issues. As of now the voting public don't see any perceptible change in the ground situation through the presence of the District Councils. It has become a mere five year rigmarole and people too discuss the same issues without really raising the pitch. This is the unfortunate part because people ultimately are the losers in this zero sum game!

### LOOKING BACK

March 03, 1988

### PM promise probe into Zail's charge

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi today promised inquiry into the alleged offer of Rs. 30-40 crores to former President Mr. Zail Singh for use in the presidential election. The Prime Minister told Speaker Mr. Balran Jahakar that he would follow “his instructions” after the latter observed that it was a serious matter that needed to be probed for finding out the truth.

The reference to Gyani Zail Singh statement in a newspaper interview was made by the Prime Minister during his reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the address of the President to the joint session of Parliament. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi congratulated the former President for having made the disclosure.

He said he would ask the Home Minister to find out where this 30-40 crore is and also how this money

was to be utilized in the presidential election.

Mr. Gandhi : I do not have the text of the interview to quote the exact words used by the ex-President. Mr Dandavate : I have a copy of it, should I lay on the table for the benefit of the Prime Minister. Mr. Gandhi : If I remember correctly, he specifically mentioned some names, who are no longer members of my cabinet.

When the Prime Minister announced the enquiry there were shouts and counter shouts from both sides, some opposition member suggestion to the chair that they should enquire into it involved the question of country's security. Some others were suggesting a house committee should go into the matter.

When Mr. Gandhi finally said it would be inquired into, his statement was received well from both sides with thumping of desks.

# The Future We Want: A Farmer's Perspective

By H H Mohrmen

Moosakhia is a village of 94 households under the Amlarem sub division of West Jaintia Hills District. This small hamlet is now on the list of the only village in the both East and West Jaintia hills district selected by North East Slow Food and Agro-biodiversity Society (NESFAS) to host foreign delegates. Moosakhia which is about 14 KM from Jowai will be visited by some of the international delegates who will attend the International Terra Madre (ITM) or the International Mei-Ramew festival on November 6, 2015.

NESFAS and Society for Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE) which will help facilitate the community to host the delegates had conducted meetings, awareness and studies to prepare the villagers for the event. But the very important study entitled ‘Understanding Indigenous Concepts of Happiness and Well-being’ was conducted by NESFAS at Moosakhia village on behalf of the Indigenous Partnership for Agro-biodiversity and Food Sovereignty (IPFAS). The study led by Pius Rane and Merrysha Nongrum used participatory digital story telling workshop designed to reach community consensus about a framework for happiness and wellbeing.

The objective of the study commissioned by IPFAS is to look for answers to questions like what are the modern indigenous pathways to well-being. How is this pathway similar and different to existing global narratives about human well-being? Is happiness and wellbeing a valid barometer of how indigenous communities around the world are faring? The study was conducted to for the residents of the two villages of Moosakhia and Samynnon.

The key finding of the study was the description given by people of the area about wellbeing and happiness as ‘ka bha ka miat.’ When there is ‘ka bha ka miat’ everything is well and good. It is also interesting to note that the wellbeing that the people are talking about is at the community level rather than at an individual level. When the people speak of wellbeing in the Khasi-Pnar context, very often it is in the context of the community ‘ka

bha ka miat uba bun balang’ or ‘ka bhalang.’ In the Khasi-Pnar concept of wellbeing, each and every individual contributes to the wellbeing of the community and the ultimate goal is to achieve the wellbeing of the community.

According to the study there are nine factors that contribute to ‘ka bha ka miat’ in the community. They are unity and cooperation, agriculture, education which includes moral education at the family level, tradition and culture, land, sacred forests, environment, governance, market. The community considers unity and cooperation as the most important factor to achieve well being and happiness and the study also established that they totally depend on land and agriculture for their livelihoods. Another important finding is that the village still has community land and even in cases where land is privately owned, the community has a tradition where the land owners allow members of the community to use their land.

When the residents of the village who are mostly farmers were asked what it is that they are proud about their village for? Or why would people choose to visit their village? Ma Loren Pakshang one of the elders of the village boldly said, ‘My village is the most beautiful place in the world and it is situated in a very unique location.’ He also said ‘he is proud of his village because clean air still blows around their hills and he is happy that he could still breathe in fresh air every moment. He is also glad that pure and crystal clear waters still flow from the streams and in the river Umlane of the village. He is proud of his village because Moosakhia is located on the top of the hill from where one can see the range of East Khasi hills to the west and the hills of both East Khasi and West Jaintia is divided by a deep gorge from where the river Umgot flows to Bangladesh.

He then proudly narrated the story of the village, how their ancestors had migrated from Pamchadong area in the War Jaintia and crossed Amwi (river Thlumuwi) and settled at a place called Raji Umlane. They lived in the area and farmed the land us-

ing jhum cultivation. Their main crops were rice, millet and sesame seeds (nei-iong and nei-lieh) till an epidemic attack drove them in hoards from Umlane and they went in search of a better place to live.

The first migration settled in the place now called Moosakhia and those who left Umlane later went to settle in a place now called Samynnon adjacent to Moosakhia. The village derives its name from the monolith in the middle of the hamlet and it is believed that the standing stone was raised using dry cucumber stalks as a rope. Hence the name ‘Moo’ which means Stone or rock and ‘Sakhia’ which mean cucumber. Ma Loren also proudly told us that the sacred groves lum Syrapad to the north and lum Jyllieh to west are the ‘u Ryngkew u Basa’ or the divinities which protect the village. The story has it that it was Jyllieh who had warned the people of the epidemic which had struck their former village in the past.

Ma Realsing Muksor is proud that they still continue with the farming activities and majority of the villagers are involved in rice and vegetables cultivation as well as keeping livestock and bees. Broom stick cultivation is also a popular activity now, although people of the area are beginning to experience the impact of the activity on land, forest and the environment.

When asked what is the kind of future they want for their village, all the village elders interviewed were proud of their village and they were prouder still because they are now an open defecation free (ODF) village. Since the beginning of this year they have been able to maintain cleanliness in the village because it is also a criteria set by NESFAS for host villages. They are proud of the green hills around them; of their springs, rivulets and rivers and crystal clear water that is running down the hills; they are proud of their paddy fields and their farmlands. They wish that in the future fresh and clean air will keep blowing on the hills and over the valleys. They also wish pure and crystal clear waters would continue to flow on their streams and

rivers. They hope they would be able to farm on their land and enhance their production and continue to take care of their livestock to improve their livelihood.

On the next question of what they want for their children, one of them said that he sent his grandson to study in Jowai and at the same time during vacation he took him to the fields and showed him the tricks of the trade of different farming activities. In fact ma Loren is pleased that his grandson had very recently called him to plan how they are going to spend the coming Durga puja vacation. Ma Realsing also has a son who is currently studying in Jowai. He too wants his son to come back to the village and hopes that he makes the best use of what he had learned from the school and college to improve farming activities, enhance production and improve the economy of the family.

This is the story of a typical village in Meghalaya and I think it depicts the story of an ordinary villager who is proud of his land and what he is doing. It is a story of an indigenous person who loves the hills and valets around him, who lives and plays in the streams and rivers. It is a story of one who knows the stories of all hills and forests around him and also a person who knows every animal, plant, fish and insect in his area by their names. It is a story of a person who lives in the nature and the nature lives in him, and one who continues to learn his lesson from the greatest book in the world- Nature.

The story also represents the hopes and aspiration of thousands of Meghalayans living in thousands of villages in the state. It is about a villager whose wishes his primary needs are fulfilled and most importantly to have clean water and fresh air. It is about people who want better education for their children and who want their children to come back to the village after their studies. It is a story of people who know the kind of future they want for their children and the village they live in. The fate of the farmer and state are entwined and their future lies not on extractive mining but agriculture Mr Chief Minister.

## IVF – A Mother's Side of the Story

By Pauline M

Recently a friend revealed to me that her daughter was born through IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) and quickly added, “Please don’t tell anyone, it’s a small town”.

The size of the town is definitely not the problem here!

I have met many women across the country who hesitate sharing such information. And I am yet to identify if this is because of the centuries old social stigma associated with infertility or the new age pressure of altruism, and therefore everyone constantly advising you to adopt a child. Or just plain stupidity.

I am the mother of two, conceived through IVF. Let alone hesitate, I am particularly proud of having “survived” it. Here is my side of the story...

I was diagnosed with Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) at 35. I hadn’t even heard of it before my diagnosis. Today I believe I in every 5 Indian women suffers from it. Since infertility is one of the more damaging symptoms of PCOS, further investigation of my reproductive system was conducted only to reveal that I also had blocked fallopian tubes and stood no chance of having children without medical intervention.

Did I want children? Yes. Was I obsessed about it? No.

Did I come from a family that obsessed about it? Definitely not. In fact, they were rather keen that I adopt than go through any pain, physical or mental.

I chose IVF for many reasons. Firstly because I viewed my situation as a medical condition, not a stigma. If one of my kidneys was to fail, I would have looked for options - first, to cure it, then to replace it. Similarly, I was keen on trying to have my own child first before considering the option of adoption or choosing to remain childless. I have no false belief of superior genes being passed on knowing well enough that children of “normal” parents too can be born differently abled. Besides, I have immense respect for parents who adopt. I know many closely. But I also have equal respect for couples who choose not to have children. It is a matter of personal choice which was my reason number two. I have heard many snide remarks being made about my choosing IVF. “there are so many orphaned children in need of a home or the amount of money you spent on IVF could have changed the life of an orphan”. I repeat, it is but a matter of personal choice.

3 years. That’s how long it took.

Over 500 injections (some of which had to be self-injected which meant an extra dose of courage being needed), hundreds of pills (to be taken as per a meticulous

schedule), dozens of blood tests. Not to mention 3 failed IVF transfer attempts.

I know of many women who are unable to take the pain or pressure and give up after one attempt. I don’t blame them, it takes tremendous courage. Some of the tests I had to go through, like the Saplingography, was excruciatingly painful to endure (and spell!). The injections made me ache all over. My skin was always bruised. The pills gave me terrible mood swings. I was irritable most of the time.

The mental agony was no less. Family were supportive but constantly advised me to give up seeing my physical condition. The discomfort of lying bare in front of strangers and being probed by doctors for who I was but a clinical case; the pressure before test results were out; the heartbreak when they came out negative. The desperation - reading ever online article with anything to do with increasing my chances of success, trying everything that sounds remotely helpful, saying every prayer in the book. Post my first embryo transfer I lead a very active life thinking that would help, for the second attempt I lay motionless in bed for 3 days hoping that would help, by the third attempt I had given up and just did as I did on a normal day. None worked. Then there is the pressure of the expenses associated with the procedure. Each failure felt like hard-earned money being flushed away. When I look back I am unsure which hurt more, the physical or the mental agony of it.

Chances of success, I am told, are largely dependent on a woman’s medical condition and age. I believe they are solely dependent on a higher power or luck. There are women who conceive in their first attempt, there are some who never make it. But there are none who come of it untouched.

It is a pity therefore, for women to feel the need to hide it. The courage, endurance and perseverance that it takes to get through even one attempt is tremendous. I laud women who “survive” it. And whether the procedure is successful or not, I wish women who lived through it remember that like a tigress each scar, physical or mental, is a stripe earned. And I wish for people around her to appreciate her choice, recognize her strength and stop making her feel like less of woman or less of a mother. Trust me when I say it wasn’t the easy way out.

*(The author does not wish to promote or denounce IVF. This write-up is a mere reflection of her personal views and is not to be taken as medical advice.)*

shrubs like Lantana camara which is more powerful to dominate and aggressive. Slash and Burn or shifting cultivation eliminate the species from their natural habitat. The species may extend their growth into the degraded forest lands also but when the dense forest area with a closed canopy cover up they cannot withstand the adverse conditions which will hamper their growth and ultimately die out.

Strobilanthes echinata is observed to be the only species of Acantheaceae Family that are commonly grown in higher altitude, while the other species of the Family are growing in lower altitude under tropical and Sub-tropical regions. It is suggested to the Govt. of Meghalaya to establish some Strobilanthes Botanical Gardens in those areas where

they are commonly found for preservation and Demonstration of this unique plant. For additional information regarding Strobilanthes echinata the following persons of the respective localities where the species is found can be contacted:

- 1.DFO, Silviculture Division, Lower Lachumeire, Shillong.
- 2.Mr. Chess Sohtun (Kut Village)-9856640923
3. Mr. Kitbok Kharsunai (Puriang Village)-9862082249
- 4.Mr. P.Kharbuli, Shillong-9436312639
- 5.Mr.Patric Lamare, Jowai-9856652521
- 6.Mr. B.P. Marwein, Shillong-8575436621
- 7.Mr. W. Nongsiej, Shillong-961519724

Yours etc., Messrs B.P Marwein & W.Nonsiej, Via email

### TO THE EDITOR

### Inhuman treatment

Editor

The State Coordinator of EDUSAT under the Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT), Government of Meghalaya left for heavenly abode a few days ago. His friends, well-wishers and colleagues attended his last rites at his native village- Ialong of Jaintia Hills.

His untimely demise is a loss not only to his family members but also to his friends and colleagues. However, we are pained to know the ‘inhuman’ treatment meted to him by the Director, DERT during the period when he was critically ill and hospitalised. The Director vide Order No. DERT/EDUSAT/21/2015 dated 3.8.2015 had replaced Mr. C Lhuid with one Mr. Pde as the Coordinator. Not only were files removed from his office but all furniture, telephone, fax machine and other office materials were shifted to the office of the new incumbent. Keys of his office room were collected from the hospital. Based on the allegation that the Utilisation Certificate was not submitted by the Late Mr Lhuid the Director went to the extent of sending her staff to hospital and

demanding the full amount alleged unutilised, fund from his parents. What an ‘inhuman’ act!?

All faiths insist that ‘compassion’ is the test of true spirituality and that brings us into relation with God. The Golden Rule says, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophet”. Is ‘compassion’ alien to our modern way of life?

Yours etc

Kyrshanlang Khonglah  
New Hill, Jowai  
West Jaintia Hill District

### A rare phenomemon

Editor,

Strobilanthes echinata - A wonderful plant which flowers once in every 12 years is flowering this year in the Sung Valley between East Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. This letter is to provide additional information to those who could not follow the Khasi newspapers regarding the flower. This ordinary flower which grows as a shrub blooms during the month of September-October reportedly flowers only once in every 12 years. In Meghalaya it is found in villages of Umgot River Valley at Kut and Mawpyrshong Villages.

The plants grows well in the Sung Valley which covers the areas of East Khasi and West Jaintia Hills Districts. It is also found in Khlieh Tyrshi and Mith Myntdu villages of Myntdu River Catchment and Shangpung village which is a part of the Um Umurem River Valley of West Jaintia Hills District. The actual areas of distribution of this species is yet to be explored. The scientific name of this unique flower is Strobilanthes echinata and belongs to Acantheaceae Family. This Species is locally known as U ‘Tiew Jah khei’ or U ‘Tiew Ia-Khi in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The other species belongs to the same family are Strobilanthes acrocephala, Strobilanthes pectinata, Strobilanthes griffithiana, Strobilanthes rubescens, strobilanthes nobilis, Strobilanthes simonsii etc. which are abundantly grown in lower altitude regions of regions.

The geographical distribution of allied species endemic to Western Ghats also grows abundantly in Shola forests in Nilgiri Hills (Eravikulam National Park adjacent to Munnar) which literally means the blue mountains, and got their name from the purplish to blue flowers. The scientific name of this genera in Western Ghats is Strobilanthes

kunthiana and its vernacular name is known as Neelakirinji which means blue. They once used to cover the Nilgiri Hills and Palani Hills like a carpet during its flowering season as the habit of this plant is gregarious in nature. The last flowering of Neelakurunji in Kerala and Tamil Nadu is 2006.

Strobilanthes echinata species is endemic to Eastern Himalayas and Sub-Himalayas and is widely confined in Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Indo-Myanmar Region etc.

Habitat & Soil types: Strobilanthes echinata do not thrive well in type of soil having impermeable rock strata but they prefer well drained soils where the following grass species such as Eulalia quadrinervis (L a n g k y n p i a t / L a n g t o n g k h a r), Andropogon gryllus (Langtylli), Erianthus fulvus (Langkhar) are commonly found. But they do not grow in those areas covered with grasses such as Dimeria fuscescens (langkseh), Arundinella khasiana (Langtohriah) etc. as these grass species prefer marshy areas.

Vulnerability- This species is moderately Light demanding and they are likely to be suppressed by exotic

*“Every man must do two things alone; he must do his own believing and his own dying.”*

— Martin Luther

## The Shillong Times

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### On West Asia

DURING his visit to Jordan, President Pranab Mukherjee made significant comments on West Asia, which were evidently the views of the Indian Government. On Iraq, he stated that India was committed to non-interference in internal affairs of other countries, a continuation of the Nehruvian policy of dynamic neutrality. He echoed Mahatma Gandhi's view that Palestine belonged to the Arabs as England did to the English and France to the French. It has been traditional Indian policy. But it should not be extended to persistent Hama-Israeli clashes in the Gaza strip and the Western Bank of Jordan. Recently Delhi has established diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv. The two countries look to economic collaboration and India is interested in receiving defence equipment from Israel. The new emphasis should be on equidistance without compromising India's long standing amity with the PLO.

Syria is a thorny issue. India and Jordan resolved that the Geneva 1 consensus which accorded a role to both the Assad regime and the opposition in forming a transitional government should defuse the Syrian crisis. But if India sees Russian intervention and air strikes as directed towards controlling the IS, the US will not be happy. Russia backs the Assad regime and had previously vetoed UN intervention in Syria. It is doubtful if Russia will act according to the Geneva 1 consensus. India's tacit support to Russian air strikes may not be in line with President Pranab Mukherjee's advocacy of the Geneva 1 consensus for the resolution of the prolonged Syrian crisis causing death and destruction.

### LOOKING BACK

March 04, 1988

#### Purno tells Ministers to curtail Govt. expenses

Meghalaya Chief Minister Purno Sangma has directed all the cabinet colleagues to eschew "ostentatious expenses" as a step towards streamlining the financial management in the State.

In separate D.O. letters issued to the Ministers on Thursday, Mr. Sangma virtually banned lavish lunches and dinners at Government expenses. He also made it clear that no alcoholic drinks are to be served in official parties. Dinners and lunches only to be thought of as "special occasions" and for "selective" minimum invites.

Sources said the Chief Ministers has also put a moratorium on the frequent tours outside the State by the Ministers. He has directed them not to rush to Delhi in the slightest pretext. In case they had any official business to take up in Delhi the services of the Resident Commissioner based at Delhi should be utilized. Normally Ministers are required to frequent Delhi for attending some meeting or the other. Mr. Sangma told the Ministers unless they are specifically required by the Central Govt., they should ask the Resident Commissioner to represent the State.

Mr. Sangma laid stress on making their tours purposeful. He directed them to undertake tours throughout the state and not remain confined to their constituencies. He has also asked them to furnish him with an advance copy of their tour programmes.

In a bid to refurbish the image of the ministry, the Chief Minister has instructed the Ministers to maintain punctuality, discipline, courtesy and prompt redressal of the public grievances. The Ministers must remain responsible for ensuring an administration free of corruption.

In this connection, he told them to appoint a Vigilance Officer in every department under their care. The Vigilance Officer should not be below the rank of Deputy Secretary or Joint Director who also should be the "nodal officer" for attending to public grievances.

Mr. Sangma asked the Ministers to hold a monthly review meetings of their departments. The dates for such meeting should be fixed in advance so that no invitation need be extended to the concerned officials.

The Chief Ministers impressed upon the Ministers the need for taking disciplinary action against corrupt and lazy government servants.

#### Janata-Lok Dal (A) merger

The long awaited process of position consolidation will begin here on Saturday with a formal decision by Parliamentary board to admit into its fold, the Lok Dal (A) led by Mr. Ajit Singh, MP.

According to party sources, an understanding to this effect was reached here today at a meeting between Janata Party chief Mr. Chandar Shekhar and Mr. Ajit Singh, who took over the president ship of Lok Dal after the death of his father Charan Singh.

Though Mr. Chandar Shekhar is understood to have agreed to vacate the president ship of the Janata Party for the former Prime Minister's son, the latter is expected to be appointed first as the 'working president'.

Mr. Chandar Shekhar will finally bow out of the office he has been holding for the last ten years at the joint conference of the two parties, were Mr. Ajit Singh will be formally elected as president of the united party to be called Janata Party.

# Traditional Food: Importance and Threats

By Melari Shisha Nongrum

Following the article on ITM 2015: Meghalaya's Mega Event, I would like to also state that truly NESFAS deserves a salute for its work in promoting 'Slow Food' in the state and region. For the past few years, NESFAS with the tireless efforts of its founder and former Assistant President IFAD, Phrang Roy, has organised food festivals in Mawphlang that show-cased the cultural cuisines of the state. It was interesting to note that there was so much diversity in the type of food that was brought to these festivals from different parts of the state by the Khasi, Jaintia, War, Bhoi, Maram and Lyngngam people. These food festivals raised the consciousness of the people to uphold and preserve our own food. The consciousness was seen even among government departments when in 2010, the Department of Horticulture in collaboration with KJP Assembly (Jingiaseng Kynthei) and Martin Luther Christian University organised a festival showcasing indigenous food, fresh fruits and vegetables from across the state in Shillong. In the following years, we have seen many other traditional food festivals being organised in other parts of the state as well. The International Terra Madre to be held from November 3 to 7, 2015 in Mawphlang would definitely be a platform to highlight to the world the diversity of food practices of the state and region.

Though at one level, we are proud of our traditional food to be showcased in such events, but there is another reality that exists; a reality where traditional food is being threatened. In a study conducted in 8 villages of Pynursla Block, the *jhum* cultivation that is practiced in these hills where as many as 60 varieties of crops can be planted at the same time, being meeting the basic needs of the indigenous communities, is being replaced by broom grass cultivation. Broom grass is a type of crop where for its cultivation all other trees and shrubs need to be cleared. Thus the forests are cleared for its cultivation. This type of monoculture reduces biodiversity in the environment. Biodiversity being the fundamental factor for survival of traditional food,

its disturbance results in the loss of flora and fauna which includes wild edibles that are part of the traditional food. (Wild edibles are foods that may be vegetables, fruits, tubers, greens, mushrooms etc., that are found in the natural environment which people can harvest for consumption).

Due to the climatic conditions in Meghalaya, green leafy vegetables are perennial in the state. Studies reveal that wild edibles greens like *Jamyrdoh* (*Houttuynia cordata*), *Jarain* (*Fagopyrum dibotrys* D. Don), *Jiakeng* (*Ilex acuminata* Benth.), *Jaut* (*Allium schoenifolium*), *Jatira* (*Corydalis sibiricus*) to name a few are abundant in the forests of the state. Many of the wild edibles have high nutritional content. For instance, *Thylliej masi* (*Ficus cuneata*) and *Skhor Blang* (*Plantago major*) have high content of calcium, and *Tyrsim* (*Commelina diffusa*) and *Kynbat Dkhiew* (*Oxalis corniculata*) are rich in iron.

In the communities of the study area, the consumption of wild edibles is decreasing as there is a shift from food crops to cash crops, most commonly broom grass cultivation. As indicated earlier, forests are being replaced by broom grass thereby resulting in forests becoming further away from villages. This creates another difficulty for women who always bear the responsibility of harvesting wild edibles as they have to spend a lot of time walking long distances in the steep terrain. One woman stated 'Even though I want to eat a particular wild edible, many times we don't cook because I have to go far away to harvest them.' Historically, the nutritious needs of indigenous communities were met by the diversity of their traditional food, generated by their bio-diverse environments. Today, these bio-diverse environments are affected by adverse human activities which put the food and nutritional security of the communities at risk. Moreover, as harvesting of wild edibles decreases, the people have become more dependent on markets. It has been seen in the study area that dependency on markets is very high as 87% of the households are dependent on markets

for their food. These households did not plant food crops nor did they have any kitchen gardens. As the area does not produce any food crops, all the vegetables are brought into the local markets from different areas. During the lean season where cash in households is minimal, the purchase of food would also be minimal thereby affecting availability of food at the household level and nutritional security is at risk.

Knowledge about traditional foods is fundamental to the preservation of the traditional food practices. Such knowledge is often accumulated over generations and reflects the way people learn and live in their environment. Generally, indigenous people have a close relationship with nature as they live in an environment where their needs such as food and medicine are largely met by the forests and environment around them. Knowledge about one's own traditional food has a bearing on the consumption patterns of that community. The knowledge of mothers about the attributes of wild edibles was found to be poor. Many mothers did not know the value and attributes the wild edibles around them. A wealth of knowledge is created through the interaction of people with their environment over the centuries but a decrease in this interaction with nature creates a gap in the continuity of traditional knowledge about their environment. Worldwide, among indigenous communities, it has been documented that there is a knowledge erosion about the food and medicinal systems within the indigenous communities. For example, among the Tohono Odam indigenous people of the United States of America, modern lifestyles have led to erosion of traditional knowledge about their agriculture and food systems which has resulted in the Odam people having the highest rate of adult onset of diabetes in the world. However, Tohono Odam people are making efforts to revive their traditional food practices.

Another factor that could affect the knowledge about traditional foods is the education system. The

present education system does not appreciate traditional knowledge which is often seen as outdated and irrelevant in the present context. Therefore the decrease in the knowledge of traditional foods could also be attributed to this dominant paradigm. This dominant paradigm is being promoted through awareness programmes on nutrition or child rearing practices either by government or non-government organisations. Women or mothers who are the key persons in child rearing need to be knowledgeable about good child rearing practices. Good, locally available food including wild edibles should not be neglected. For instance, nutrition education on foods should focus not only on vegetables such as carrot, pumpkin, papaya, spinach and other related market foods but also on rich wild edibles. Often, mothers feel that it is only the vegetables named above which are good sources of vitamins. Most often, they are not aware that the wild edibles are good sources of vitamins. When a mother was asked about the vegetables that she and her household consumes, she mentions 'potato, beans, sometimes carrot and pumpkin' I probed into whether or not she consumed *jali* and *jarem* (wild edibles), she shyly said 'yes'. Who is to be blamed for this attitude? Are we ashamed of our wild edibles, *u Jangew*, *u Jathang*? How many of us in the city consume wild edibles? How many of our youth know of the common wild edibles? In the long term, this neglect leads to the loss of knowledge about one's traditional food and wild edibles.

It is imperative therefore that we are not only proud of our traditional food when it showcased in international forums but let us learn and be aware of our food and our wild edibles so that we can not only preserve our traditional food for its aesthetics but be food and nutritionally secure because of our own traditional food.

(The author teaches Social Work at Martin Luther Christian University and has conducted extensive research on food habits and nutrition among the rural population of Meghalaya).

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Did SI Marbaniang really commit suicide?

Editor,

The Mission Statement of the Meghalaya Police goes like this, "We, the Meghalaya Police as Sentinels of Law, envision creation of a Safe and Secure Society."

Kudos to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the death of Sub Inspector (late) Pearly Stone Joshua Marbaniang headed by SP (City) Vivek Syiem which has come to a conclusion that pressure was exerted on SI (L) Pearly Stone after he detained 32 coal laden trucks at Patharkmah which compelled him to commit suicide. As a result of the investigation, the SIT arrested five persons on Wednesday Oct 7, 2015 including a Block Development Officer, leaders of an NGO and a govt contractor. I am Pearlystone's friend who grew up studying together and sharing the same dreams. I have been updating myself on the progress of this case only through the media. But after a long waiting period of 90 days plus an extension period, the SIT has come up with nothing conclusive. I cannot imagine my friend in uniform who

was a strong person with impeccable integrity succumbing to pressure from civilian persons. This raises a lot of questions which must be investigated. I can't help but question the credibility of the investigation and the chain of command and procedural system that has been put in place in the State Police Department. As a build-up to that tragic incident, did the entire burden of responsibility of managing the outpost fall solely on him? Was there a reporting channel for next course of action? Or was he given a 'dressing down' or humiliated by his seniors (who were present at the outpost for Republic Day) for doing the right thing? One wonders whether his superiors stood by him or whether they reprimanded him for taking the right stand. Was there a proper hand-over of the outpost or was he just sent there as a filler since there was no Officer to man the post? One also needs to question if pressure from five persons was enough to take down one Officer and that too an OC of an outpost? If these are the loopholes and inadequacies in the investigation and the State Police then the safety and fate of all Sub Inspectors of the same State Police is at stake and urgent reforms of the Police Department

is imperative. Along with the above discrepancies, the credibility of the investigation can be questioned by the sheer number of inquiries, contradicting reports, the evidence or lack thereof, of not being able to trace the uniform, allegations of tampering of evidence and the duration of the enquiry.

The case became messy when the Forensic team reached after the incident and all evidence was tampered with. Where is the SOP (Standing Operating Procedures) while dealing with their own personnel? Why was it not followed? Is there even an SOP? Or is this the first-of-its kind death in the history of Meghalaya Police? Normally in all such cases relating to the military/ paramilitary/ CRPF, a proper Court of Inquiry (headed by a Senior Officer) is ordered to investigate and question all witnesses and their statements recorded. An all out effort should have been made by the Superintendent of Police of the District to find out why an officer under him was murdered or drove him to commit suicide. To lose one's life in the police force is a very serious matter. And to add salt to the wounds, the conclusion that he committed suicide was drawn the very

next day, even when the uniform he was in, which is a very crucial piece of evidence, remained untraced. Amidst all this confusion and heartache, one wonders, what is the dignity of the uniform earned by inspiring candidates like SI (L) Pearlystone at the North East Police Training Academy? Is this the respect he gets? All this could have been avoided if the system knew exactly what professional guidance and directions to give the young energetic officers and serving personnel who want to play a role in the State forces. Finally, I appeal to the higher authorities to leave no stone unturned to bring justice to SI (late) P J Marbaniang, so that our faith in the Police Department is restored. Late Pearlystone was a man of integrity and sincerity. He was hardworking, physically and emotionally strong and kept his family happy. I can vouch for that.

Yours etc.,  
U. Nongsiej,  
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.

## My vote of confidence for the abolition of ADCs

By Albert Thyniang

If there is a referendum for the abolition of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) I will vote for it and also lend my signature if there is a campaign for the same. Kudos to Michael N Syiem for filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the High Court of Meghalaya questioning the relevance of the ADCs in Meghalaya. The Hon'ble High Court which has done a lot of good for the State in the short span of time of two years has issued notice to the Attorney General of India. That means the lawsuit has a lot of merit. It is true that ADCs were a fruit of intense debates in the Constituent Assembly that led to the formation of a sub-committee chaired by Gopinath Bordoloi, of which Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy was also a member. Ultimately the Constitution of India recognized the ADCs as mechanisms to safeguard and promote the culture, language, customs and other rights of the minority tribals in the North East. To state in short, besides other ADCs in the North East, the GHADC, KHADC and JHADC are an offshoot of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

It must be remembered, however, that the ADCs were given constitutional status under the undivided state of Assam because hill tribals were minorities in those days. The members of the Constituent Assembly thought it wise that these minority tribals should be protected and the ADCs were recognized as the tools. However, now that the undivided Assam is no more, the ADCs too should cease to exist. In fact, this was the practice. Whenever, a major tribal group obtained statehood ADCs were abolished for that tribe because that particular tribe was no longer minority. It has become majority. It has ruled itself. The responsibility of protecting and promoting the culture, language, customs, practices, and other interests has passed on from the ADC to the State Government.

Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh were initially included in the Sixth Schedule but when they were given statehood they no longer had ADCs. Similarly when Mizoram was elevated to the status of a Union Territory the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971 was amended and the Mizo District Council was abolished in 1972. Presently in Mizoram district councils exist only for ethnic minority groups, the Pawis, the Lakshers and the Chakmas. Similarly in Manipur the Parliament also constituted six Autonomous District Councils for the tribal people living in the hills of Manipur. Likewise, in Tripura there is only the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council. As we know Tripura is not ruled by tribals but by Bengalis who constitute 70 percent of the state's population.

Now let us see the present Assam. It has ADCs and other similar arrangements for tribal groups like the Karbi, Bodos and Rabhas. It is clear, therefore, that the ADCs in the North-East India are meant for minority tribes who do not have the right of self-rule.

For strange reasons, in Meghalaya, though we have our own State Government we continue with the ADCs. When the state of Meghalaya came into existence it would have been logical that the ADCs should cease to exist. The powers of the GHADC, KHADC and JHADC should have been naturally and automatically replaced by the state government. The state of Meghalaya was created precisely to protect and promote the culture, language, customs and other fundamental rights of the Garos, Khasis and Jaintias. Am I wrong? Then what is the point in carrying on with the ADCs? They have become redundant, irrelevant and hence outdated. They no longer serve any useful purpose. It's high time they are relegated to the pages of history. The sooner the better! Instead I would suggest that the Government establish

ADCs for other most backward and neglected groups in the State, like the Lyngngam for example. The distinct and distinctive culture, customs and language of this tribe is in danger of becoming extinct.

As pointed out in Michael Syiem's PIL and reported by this paper Meghalaya has a total of 86.1% tribal population and therefore, the 'exploitation, subjugation and oppression' by any other people does not arise now. The major tribes in the State have the right to protect themselves as the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly has 60 MLAs, out of which 55 are exclusively reserved for tribals. Obviously only pro-tribal legislations can be passed. Furthermore, according to the present law, the law passed by the State Legislature supersedes that of the District Council. In case of conflict, the law passed by the District Council shall be null and void.

Another important element in the PIL is the fact that as per the federal structure, only the Centre and State Governments are vested with executive, legislative and judicial powers. In Meghalaya there exists this peculiar parallel government system - the State and the District Councils. This is the reason for the present stand-off between the State Government and the District Councils with regards to the Meghalaya Building Bye Laws, the Meghalaya Local Administration (Empowerment of Traditional Institutions, Traditional Bodies, Headmen in Governance and Public Delivery System) Ordinance, 2015 and most recently the Prevention of Disqualification (Member of Legislative Assembly Meghalaya) Amendment Bill, 2015.

The last legislation, a relief for many concerned citizens, ends the unhealthy practice of dual posts - MLA cum MDC simultaneously. The hurriedly passed law (now given assent by the Governor) came at the time when the Government expected that the Meghalaya High Court would pronounce a favourable verdict to the PIL filed by Agnes Kharshing, president of Civil Society Women's Organization in October last seeking disqualification of eight MLAs cum MDCs. The dual post holders had maintained that they are immune to any law. But the activist, through the court reminded them that as all citizens of this country, they are no exception. The eight legislators were already drawing salary as MLAs before being elected as members of district council (MDC). Therefore, the 'office of profit' law applies to them. It does not discriminate anyone.

Seven legislators have already resigned after the law was passed by the Legislative Assembly on September 24. The one who remains defiant is CEM of KHADC, Pynghngainlang Syiem. The Mawsynram MLA and MDC, who speaks one voice as MLA and another as MDC (CEM), faces the ignominy of being disqualified as MLA or MDC by the Governor. I will certainly clap my hands!

About the irrelevance of the ADCs, it is clear from the resignation of the MLAs who are also MDCs from the latter post. If they consider the District Councils as institutions meant to protect the indigenous practices, customs, language, interests, et al then why did they relinquish the MDC membership? Why did they not quit the MLA posts? This amply shows that that they can work better for the indigenous people as MLAs than as MDCs. Their action proves that the ADCs are redundant, superfluous, irrelevant and outdated. Or dare I suspect that the self-proclaimed and certified champions of indigenous people have their eyes on funds rather than interests of their people? Caught red handed!

*“There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self.”*

— Ernest Hemingway

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 66 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2015

### Society at the crossroads

TRADITIONAL leaders are at the heart of custom and culture in the sense that they play a prominent role in efforts to preserve them. The problem is that traditionally the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo communities followed an indigenous faith and all three practiced matriliney. Colonisation brought with it Christianity with its strongly etched patriarchal principles. The society was immediately divided over faith. Tradition also meant that the political leader was also a religious head as in the Khyrim Syiemship and the Dolloiship. Traditional governance systems lacked democratic principles because one half of the population was left out, never consulted and not allowed to hold office. By some stroke of wisdom the traditional chieftains decided to accede to the Union of India in 1948 after signing the Instrument of Accession. The Constitution of India became the magna carta of a democratic set-up and with it came universal adult suffrage.

Unfortunately this enlightened practice was restricted to the election of legislators and members of the district councils. Election to the grass-roots governance agencies – the Dorbar Shnong continued to be by selection and women who are otherwise entitled to contest for constitutional posts continued to be kept out of the Dorbar Shnong. Traditional leaders exist within a distinct territory and a socio-political organization over which they exercise governance, power, authority and influence. The village is the most common unit of social aggregation where traditional leaders operate. Initially a typical village would have about 100 to 200 people organizing various aspects of their livelihoods under the leadership of a village chief. Today things have changed and populations are not homogenous. There are diverse communities also wishing to be part of a participative governance system which is a constitutional right.

The Dorbar Shnong of the Khasis have evolved over time in that they have a Constitution to guide their actions. The Garos already have a village administration act but for the Jaintia people the Dorbar Shnong is a recent concept. People have regular interface with the Dorbar Shnong which has emerged as a grass-roots administrative unit looking after the civic amenities of people within its jurisdiction. Their reference point is the Dorbar Shnong, not the Syiemship or its hierarchies. The attempt by some tribal elite to take the society back to the pre-colonial days when universal adult suffrage was unknown and only a few clans elected the syiem and myntris is regressive to say the least. Amidst all the confusion that is engulfing the tribal society of Meghalaya today, this attempt to put back the clock appears most anachronistic and a complete anti-thesis to what the young, aspirational generation is in quest of.

### LOOKING BACK

March 05, 1988

#### Telecom Technicians to continue stir

Tele communication technicians all over the country will continue their strike till all their demands are met, Bharatiya Telecommunication Technicians Union General Secretary K. Madhavan Nair said here this evening.

In a press release issued here Mr. Nair said the statement issued by the National Union of Telegraph Engineering Class III is not at all binding on issues of technicians all over the country.

He said even though there was some understanding in the demands put forward by the Union and Department, no official order had been issued by the de-

partment.

The employee are on a tool down-strike from February 15.

Meanwhile, reports received from Calcutta said telecommunication employees all over the country will be on an indefinite strike from Monday next in support of their six-point demands.

The National Federation of telecommunication Employee gave a call for indefinite strike demanding, among other things, absorption of casual labourers and implementation of Supreme Court's verdict in this connection.

# Are we Indigenous?

By Wankitbok Pohshna

This caption of my article is also the question which always lingers my mind. Are we indigenous? What characterizes an indigenous race and culture? As per the United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs, State of the World's Indigenous People's concept 'Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. This historical continuity may continue for an extended period reaching into the presence of one or more of the following factors:

a. Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them

b. Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands

c. Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.)

d. Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language)

e. Residence in certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world

f. Other relevant factors

On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and are recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group)

Based on the above concept and observations, we the Khasi, Jaintia & Garo peoples are indeed indigenous tribes in this great nation of India, as we categorically have in history our unique system of occupation of ancestral lands, unique system of self-governance etc. However with the advent of globalization and invasion of modernization, this uniqueness has been a disturbing factor in recent years. There is a state conflict on the issues which determines us to be Indigenous communities. We are at war with the state machineries on varied issues.

The recent tussles between the Autonomous District Councils, the constitutional bodies under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution to protect the rights of the indigenous people and the State Government of Meghalaya, (also a democratically elected state created on the lines to protect the uniqueness of the indigenous inhabitants of Meghalaya), has left us dumbstruck to ascertain who is right and who is wrong. They have both failed to elaborate the issues of existence. Their failure to protect the unique system of self-governance of the indigenous tribes has resulted in the intervention of the Hon'ble High Court of Meghalaya to question the derivative powers of traditional institutions - the Dorbar Shnong. The ruling wasn't necessary if our forefathers had codified our practices way back in 1952 or in 1972. Their shortsightedness has resulted in a conflict which seems to be never ending. Yet before we deliberate on this point of conflict, let us understand our uniqueness as an Indigenous tribe(s).

The resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 September 2007 has clearly defined the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 3 of the UN declaration states that 'Indigenous peoples, have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'. Article 4 states that 'Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions'. Article 5 states 'Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State'. Article 8.1 states that 'Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture'. Article 10 states that 'Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No

relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

In the same vein Article 18 states that 'Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision making institutions. Article 19 says, 'States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them. Article 20.1 states that 'Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

Subsequently, Article 27 says, 'States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

When the Panchayati Raj system was introduced in India in 1992, Meghalaya was specifically not included into the Act, since the system of Dorbar Shnong was already in place, which was prevalent since time immemorial here. Even late Prime Minister Late Rajiv Gandhi had stated that since the States of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland already have their traditional institutions, they could be exempted from the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts. Such institutions are time tested and have evolved with the times. No doubt the existing practice has its own de-

merits, which can be corrected if warranted. Yet with all such provisions in place, why are we the Indigenous tribes of Meghalaya always in conflict always about our very own existence. This is a question we all need to ponder upon. Do we feel alienated in our own land? Is our system flawed? How and in which way do we correct it and in whose interest do we do so. Who then is to correct such faults?

When the Sixth Schedule was framed (1947-1949), it was done so after an informed debate by the then constituent assembly which allowed the ADC's to function in their present form except within Municipal Areas. However, Part 1 then and now, which is in the Myllem state should be subjected to Municipal laws only, while for other purposes for which the District Council is constituted it should remain subject to the Councils. But what went wrong in 1969-1972 was the inclusion of Para12A in the Sixth Schedule which has led to total chaos. What is Para12A and what relevance does it have for the indigenous community here?

In layman's term para12A would have not been problematic if we had accepted the Hill State of Meghalaya created on 21 January 1972 in letter and spirit, keeping the interests of the indigenous community uppermost. Para12A has rather become a bone of contention between the ADCs and the State Government since then, and now it has created confusion among the indigenous community. We have almost forgotten that we are indigenous and that we are protected by our rights. The movement of Synjuk ki Nongsynshar Shnong ka Bri u Hynniewtrep (SKNSBH) or the Federation of Tribal Dorbar (FTD) should remember that we represent an indigenous community and our very own existence is protected under the UN declaration of 2007 to which India is also a signatory. Therefore the modus of bringing a permanent solution to this conflict should be with the state machinery. If, however such definitions aren't clear enough for the stakeholders of our times to understand, then the Centre or any independent institution should help to clear the air instead of endangering our unique indigenous system. We need to find an effective and permanent solution to the foreboding question of our identity.

(The writer is Executive Member Laitumkrah Dorbar Shnong Pylun)

## Shillong And Orthodox Modernity

By Avner Pariat

Personally I think that if one wishes to delve seriously into the "phenomenon" of Shillong and the history of the people who live, or have lived here, we have to try to understand the impact of Modernity on the (pre-modern) societies that lived on this Plateau. Modernity is a term loaded with implications. Modernity here, as I take it, is a "project", which came with the Colonialists, with the British. Modernity, for this purpose, is the creation of a modern, oft "alien" culture, within the civil settlement that has come to be called Shillong.

However, there is a lot of phobia here around this term "pre-modern" which is often times as good as saying "pre-colonial". In many cultures the world over, and indeed in most parts of India, vast repositories of knowledge are dedicated to the study of all-manners of anti-Colonial/post-Colonial works, or works that explore the "after effects" of Colonialism. However, in Meghalaya (dare I say North East in general?) this rather old theme has still not really caught on. The answer why this is so is, probably, connected to our favourite activity – Church. From the few articles that I have read along a Post-Colonial perspective, originating from here, it seems obvious that only certain things can be weighed up. The erstwhile foreign government and its policies (of education etc) can be targeted. It's still a bit taboo but fair game now (you will have people to defend you now). However, European missionaries and their works are, strictly, off-limits except if you happen to be European. Then that's fine.

I am troubled by how people talk about the past. Our "pre-Modern" forerunners are still considered by many of their living descendants today to have been bumpykins, always "in the dark" (kiba sah ha kjangdum). Various religious congregations still actively pursue this agenda which is essentially a Colonial one: namely to demonise the "tribal" past and to only consider history from a European starting-point. Without romanticising them, it seems clear, today, that the "tribal" ancestors had their own "light" (jingshai); an intelligence and local knowledge which had evolved over centuries and which was particularly suited to a particular locale.

With the urban settlements established by the British (Sohra, Jowai, Shillong etc), a new knowledge system came up here as well. Very quickly, it must have become apparent to many "pre-Modern" locals that things needed to change for the future. They were, more or less, excluded from this "brave new world" by virtue of being born into a different culture, a different "race". However, another access route to Modernity was available and that was by entering into the

folds of the Church.

The Church ostensibly did not discriminate and accepted all who were willing to 'change' (this is debatable, of course). This non-secular path led to a place at the table of the "new" and "enlightened". Services like education and medicine were/are the missionary's forte. Clinics/dispensaries and schools are always the first to be set up in any mission-field. It's a tried and tested formula and many, especially, elderly people speak fondly of their first encounters with this new "faith". Material conditions inevitably changed and the Church was crucial in that transformation especially beyond the European-dominated urban wards. The "good life" awaited those who gave up their "barbarity"; they could become 'made' men/women, working in offices, hospitals, schools: new symbols of social status. The sad thing, though, is how we have come to demonise the pre-Modern in our embrace of the Modern. I am not advocating for a return to the "noble savage" way of living. People back then, must have surely taken up the many new ways of living and embraced technology because it made their lives more comfortable. However, we must surely maintain some reservation with the assumption that all 'new' things are good things.

Perhaps, some people might have qualms with my closely identifying Church with Modernity. It is, in this instance, a lens to work with and might have aberrations. However, it is misleading to dismiss the impact they have had on us, working in tandem. Much of our "natural" Conservativeness in this society could be due to the fact that most of our encounters with Modernity are given to us directly by the Church or "reviewed" by it, before our eventual consumption. Along simple lines, the modernity experienced by many in this society is a Conservative one because it is intimated to us by the Church and its auxiliaries. Forgive me for equating Church with Conservativeness but I have yet to see otherwise. For me, Khasi society today and Church are often inextricable. Which is why I am dismayed but not surprised when people can go around calling ours a "Christian state". In our experience of polity, it really could be justified. Perhaps the main reason could have been because "development", in particular, "tribal" development was not really a major concern for the British authorities who first came here. On a final digressive pathway, I want to recommend to people that we should not be offended when others go around agitating for a Hindu state/nation. What would Hindu Rashtira look like? Maybe something like a Christian Rashtira. Maybe both are already here!

begin building empires for themselves. How is it possible when they are supposed to be serving the people of the state who elected them?

There are hundreds of young people looking for jobs. It might not be possible for the Government to offer each of them a job, but certainly they can quench their thirst to a great extent if the people in power are committed to the promises they made while campaigning for their election. Today you are in power; if you don't build and prepare their future now, you can never expect a better state and society from them tomorrow.

The young people of our State need special attention today. Their ques-

tions need to be answered not just with words but with actions; not just with promises but by fulfilling them. The change in the lives of young people will bring about a big change in the society. Hence the government needs to wake up and bring about concrete solutions.

Yours etc.,  
Dibacor Chisim Sangma  
Sacred Heart Theological College Mawlai Shillong - 8  
Phone 9615518873

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

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Shillong no smart city!

Editor,

Shillong growing smart is an illusion and another political hype encouraging funds to be misappropriated and misutilised and where scams and open favouritism for jobs is the call of the hour. Here skill development leads to generation of hawkers and lawmakers are floundering around building laws. Here wood merchants are running havoc depleting forest reserves and running heavy machinery next to living rooms and bedrooms. The river banks are being encroached upon at will and narrowed down to such an extent that flooding is being reported which was never in the news before. Natural resources have come as a boon for a select few, fattening their purses but as a bane for the larger lot leaving such an ugly environmental scene behind that outsiders had to drop in to stop it and save the inter-

ests of the Jaitbynriew! May the Good Lord drop in and save all.

Yours etc.,  
Shinestar Lyngdoh  
Shillong - 14

#### Supervision required while making roads

Editor,

I am happy to see that the pavements beginning from State Central Library down to GPO are being repaired and tiled. It took a long time for Shillong to see tiled pavements whereas Guwahati has done it much earlier. Anyway thanks to the Government! However, what I am concerned about is the quality of work undertaken which is not so good and lacks proper finishing. I just hope that these tiles will not come out or get displaced as in Police Bazar area. I noticed recently after a no-

rains, that these pavements are not well leveled hence rain water accumulates at some points. This is public property and assets which will be used for a long time to come. As such, the implementing department should regularly inspect the works taken up such as the ration of cement to sand, the thickness, level or gradient, finishing, etc. so that these vital foot paths will last at least 3 - 5 years. This is my humble and urgent request. Please listen and hear!

Yours etc.,  
R.N.Rymbai,  
Shillong-8

#### Cry of the Young

Editor,

Few days back, I was approached by a youth with a question - 'Why are so many young people in our state not employed, in spite of their qualification and competence?' I was

not able to give an appropriate answer to his question, but it made me reflect about it. I am sure this question of one young man is the question of many other young people of our state. This is a serious issue that the government needs to address. The right to work is a fundamental constitutional right of every person who is capable of working. If youth are considered as the future of the society and of the country at large, why is the Government not giving them the right place in the society? Worse still in some places they are even considered a threat to the society. But even if they pose a threat that calls for serious introspection on the part of the Government and society because, they have a reason for behaving the way they do. Looking at the lifestyle of some of the people in authority in our State makes me wonder how within a few months of assuming power they

*“Forgive me my nonsense, as I also forgive the nonsense of those that think they talk sense.”*

—Robert Frost

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 67 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2015

### Arab-Israel conflict

THE conflict between Palestinians and Israelis has erupted again and 37 people have been killed in two weeks. Israel has started setting up roadblocks in Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and deploying soldiers in cities across the country to combat the worst spate of violence in months. Palestinian officials have condemned Israeli security measures which are considered the most serious clampdown in the Jerusalem area since the Palestinian uprising (INTIFADA) a decade ago. The Israeli roadblocks were a sequel to the violence triggered by Palestinians killing three Israelis and inflicting wounds on several others a few days ago. The hostilities are over Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. Some of the bloodshed has spilled into Israeli territory. Palestinians are angry with what they see as Israeli encroachment on Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound also revered by Jews as the site of two destroyed Jewish temples. They are also highly dissatisfied with the failure of prolonged peace efforts to achieve Palestinian statehood and Israeli settlement building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

There seems to be no end to these intermittent violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians. In spite of Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu's occasional pacific gestures, his country regards Jerusalem, including the predominantly Arab east captured and annexed in 1967, as its indivisible capital. Netanyahu is also miffed at the recently concluded nuclear energy deal between Iran and the US and the Western powers. The rise of the ISIS has added to his truculence. On the other hand, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas regards the blockade as a violation of international law. The Hamas have threatened continuation of the Intifada. It is in India's interest to see that peace prevails in the region despite the country's long commitment to Palestine for the Palestinians.

## LOOKING BACK

March 06, 1988

### Jaichandra assumes office

Manipur Chief Minister R. K. Jaichandra Singh who has sworn in after midnight last night, today said that his ministry would be expanded within a few days.

Talking to UNI he said it would be a two-tier ministry. Mr. Singh said his new government would stress on development of industry, agriculture, electricity, education and solving unemployment. The government would also firmly deal with insurgents and maintain law and order, he said. Mr. Singh also said he would try to weed out corruption from political administrative levels. For this he required the support of the people. He said he would go to Delhi soon after the Assembly session, starting from March 7, is over. Mr. I. Tompak Singh, former minister of education and Mr. Soso Larho, former minister of agriculture, were also sworn in as cabinet ministers yesterday.

Earlier, ten members of the United Democratic Party (UDP) led by Mr. Ngurdi Oten merged with the Congress (I) last night.

This was announced by Union Home Minister Buta Singh at the meeting of the Congress (I) Legislature Party. With this the strength of the Congress (I) in the 60 member Assembly rose to 49. Meanwhile, Manipur People Party (MPP) President Chandam Manihar Singh today expressed shock at the removal of Mr. Rishang Keishing from the chief minister ship of state saying it was “murder” of democracy. He said this could happen to any Chief

Minister of Congress (I) ruled states. The regional party and the confidence of the assembly could not be forced to resign in a democratic country.

According to informed sources Manipur Governor K.V. Krishna Rao and the local army authority had urged the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to remove Mr. Keishing for his alleged connection with the underground National Socialist Council Nagaland (NSCN).

Mr. Keishing became the second chief Minister to be removed for his alleged connection with underground extremists. Mr. Rajkumar Dorendra Singh was removed from Chief minister ship in 1982 for his connection with People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK).

### Janata party approves merger of Lok Dal (A)

The Janata Party today formally decided on the merger of the Lok Dal (A) into its fold to accelerate the process of wider consolidation of opposition forces.

The party's parliamentary Board, which approved the initiative of its president on the unification of the two parties, authorized aim to finalize the modalities of the merger which would come into effect shortly.

The Lok Dal led by former Prime Minister Charan Singh's son Ajit Singh, PM, had accepted the name of the Janata Party, its election symbol and flag, thus virtually dissolving its separate identity of his party into the Janata Party.

# Deconstructing Khasi nationalism

By Patricia Mukhim

For the average Khasi the concept of nation is not India but the Khasi nation called, “Ka Ri” and its people called “Ka Jaidbynriew.” These two words are used effectively during elections and when politicians and interest groups want to ignite a sense of nationalism such as in the present context when the society is caught in a spasm of ideological pain. That the idea of grass-roots governance system for administering basic civic governance and development work is sought to be enmeshed in an exclusivist, traditionalist framework is deeply problematic. Many of those who have held office in these traditional institutions consider the framing of a Grassroots Administration Bill by the State Government as an infringement on their customary rights, thereby painting the State Government as an alien power that seeks to demolish the idea of Khasi nationhood. But this dichotomy needs to be resolved because the debate is simply draining our collective energies. A time has come to take a call. We have moved on in many other aspects of life unquestioningly but remain intransigent on the idea of the Dorbar Shnong and how it should be constituted. In a democracy it is important to support only those institutions that are constituted through universal adult suffrage. Anything else is a contravention of the democratic principles enshrined in this country's Constitution. We cannot continue to sustain an oligarchy that takes shelter in the fig leaf of tradition when we have accepted the broad principles of democracy no matter how faulty it is because the alternatives are worse.

CW Watson's essay on Multiculturalism is an eye opener. Watson argues very effectively that what we call a national culture and tradition are specious and should be subjected to intense interrogation instead of being accepted unquestioningly. The Khasi society today is sought to be portrayed as one that is paranoid about the loss of a ‘national’ Khasi culture or Khasi self image, or Khasi idiom or Khasi creed which springs from a strong conviction that one's own sense of self respect, one's own set of moral values and political principles which one wants to pass on to future generation seem to be in jeopardy. To the traditionalist the crisis of the Khasi nation, is in this sense a personal crisis since one's own sets of beliefs and consequently one's self esteem are being implicitly denied. But this is the argument of ethnic minorities in reverse. In fact the fear rests on a false premise of what Khasi

culture and tradition are, beyond a very superficial level, specious entities when compared to state laws and national political institutions where the term ‘national’ implies sovereignty. Hence this should make us question the source of those strong emotions and attachments which, it was suggested above, we all, to some degree feel in relation to the notion of our own native

culture is and how it affects individuals. Watson states that culture itself is a catch-all word and to many it is simply a distinctive way of life. But when people were questioned on the substantive content of this culture the answers in each case differed according to who is being asked to define the culture. Watson therefore concludes that the summation of what is culture is spurious in character.

Perhaps an easy way to test this is to ask oneself what are the common features, moral and political principles, cultural reference points which one shares with fellow Khasis. The more one thinks about it the more hard-pressed one is to come up with a defining commonality. Today most Khasis are bound not by culture but by the socio economic background, education, occupation and religion, all of which have stronger influence on behaviour and attitudes. We can observe very easily how such influences often mean that despite differences in language, we often have more in common with others across state and national boundaries than within them. However, if one persists in searching for that distinctive Khasi nationhood one either ends up with the banal and the trite – such as the Khasi value system which everyone waxes eloquent about but hardly anyone practices. Of course we have the superfluous connections such as a common food habit, dress, dance and song etc., which people of other cultures also claim as theirs in their ideal form. Further, any claim about the continuity of cultural forms would be found on close historical examination to be unsustainable, since, in fact, the symbols and forms of culture have always been in a state of flux and have undergone substantial change over the centuries.

In that case Khasi culture and tradition are, beyond a very superficial level, specious entities when compared to state laws and national political institutions where the term ‘national’ implies sovereignty. Hence this should make us question the source of those strong emotions and attachments which, it was suggested above, we all, to some degree feel in relation to the notion of our own native

culture and tradition are, beyond a very superficial level, specious entities when compared to state laws and national political institutions where the term ‘national’ implies sovereignty. Hence this should make us question the source of those strong emotions and attachments which, it was suggested above, we all, to some degree feel in relation to the notion of our own native

tradition. It may well be that what we are responding to is not at all a cultural tradition, let alone a national culture but simply familiar institutions which Durkheim calls ‘social facts,’ or conventional ways of doing things which are so intimate that they are second nature to us. Their very familiarity provides us with psychological security of the same kind as the use of our mother tongue, another social fact. For that reason alone, anything which appears to jeopardize their existence seems a threat to our own identity. Or to put it in the words of Forsythe's well-established anthropological sets of ideas, these alien elements appear to contaminate or pollute us.

But simply hanging on to what we regard as familiar, disguises the fact that we are constantly adjusting to changes in our social environment and learning to recognise new cues and how to act appropriately to them. Hence what we feel such a strong attachment to is not in fact a cluster of habits but the evocation of that state of sureness and familiarity which we are persuaded by authoritative others such as politicians, writers, media representatives, the personalities representing popular culture etc. Khasi culture is often tagged to powerful and resonant symbols such as songs (Khyriam u Pnar u Bhoi u War/ U dei u paid Khasi baiar or Helen Giri's, “Kane ka dei ka Ri jong nga/Ba la umnam u kni u kpa/ U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nangbah/ Dienjat jong ki hangne kan sah). Then we have the flags of various pressure groups such as the KSU and FKJGP with inscriptions therein professing loyalty to the Khasi nation and its heroic historical figures like Tirot Sing and Kiang Nangbah. Those who question this appropriation of the Khasi voice are considered “traitors.” For reasons unknown the Khasis would label such people as “dohlab” – the spleen an important organ of the human body.

If we were more conscious of the way in which these appeals are being voiced we would be less likely to succumb to the seductive power of Khasi nationalistic rhetoric and more inclined to interrogate the claims being made in the name of Khasi nation-

alism or Khasi national culture. Beyond the appeal to the commonly shared polysemic (word or phrase with multiple meaning) symbols – which can mean different things to different people, while still carrying the same emotional weight for all – what are the values and the institutions we are being asked to endorse, and are they in their present form as central to our identity as they appear to be for advocates of a Khasi national tradition?

It may so happen that when we have penetrated through the rhetoric of nationalism and tradition, there are values and perspectives which we do share with advocates of Khasi nationalism. In fact we may find ourselves accepting the styles and perspectives of the world which we have learnt through engagement with those whose origins and status in society are different from our own. And this would apply not only to styles lived by members of ethnic groups other than our own but to those of a different class, occupational group or even gender. Rather than take for granted received wisdom we have to make our values our own and the way to do this is through discussion, openness, the exchange of ideas and the learning of new habits. The threat to our social fabric comes not from challenges posed by seemingly alien traditions but from refusal to engage in discussion, an unwillingness to contemplate change and the misperception of what culture is.

That we now have several young writers expressing their views through popular media and that a kind of churning is taking place in Khasi society despite the attempts by some to preclude debate is a healthy sign. That the youth are exchanging opinions is a reflection that they imbibed the principles of democratic dissent and can therefore bring about social transformation. This is a cause for celebration.

The Khasi nation is coming of age and no single group can now claim to represent the collective voice of the Khasis. There are multiple voices and they are strong voices of reason and logic. Those who wish to lead this society cannot impose their views but must give ear to these voices of change!

## US action may promote fresh nuclear race in region

By Nantoo Banerjee

Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have received nothing afresh from President Barack Obama from his last hour-long meeting with the US president while according India's full support to the US climate agenda. But, Pakistan Prime Minister is hoping to strike it really rich during his proposed 22nd October meeting with Mr. Obama extracting an India-Iran style civil nuclear agreement with lately a more willing America. Talks between the two governments are on. The US had earlier rejected such a plea by Pakistan after it signed a treaty on civil nuclear programme with India in 2005. Paradoxically, top US officials now want America to keep itself more deeply engaged with Pakistan despite their critical analysis of the latter's rogue state image and go ahead with a nuclear deal. They argue that a civil nuclear agreement with Pakistan will enhance the US engagement with Pakistan to keep a closer watch on the country. Other international policy watchers, however, feel differently. They say the possible US civil nuclear engagement with Pakistan is intended to please not only Pakistan but also Saudi Ara-

ports suggests that America is exploring an option that could pave the way for a civil nuclear deal with Pakistan like the one concluded with India and Iran. The matter is expected to come up during Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's meeting with the US president on October 22. Both sides have so far kept the agenda on nuclear cooperation a secret. Interestingly, the US national security advisor has lately appreciated the Pakistan army's role in the ‘war on terror’. A US NSA spokesperson has reportedly stated that the US encourages efforts to strengthen safety and security measures and continue to hold regular discussions with Pakistan on a range of global issues, including nuclear security, counter-terrorism and international norms. It is said that the US could place new limits and controls on Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in return for “a version of the civil nuclear deal”.

India is worried because Pakistan has little respect for international law and practices. It is well known that Pakistan's former head of its nuclear programme, Dr. A.Q. Khan, sold nuclear technology to Iran, Libya

**Saudi Arabia, like Pakistan, is Sunni-dominated. It was very upset when the US concluded the civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Shiaite Iran. Israel too was initially unhappy, but accepted the American position after a top level diplomatic dialogue and adequate US assurance. Israel and the US have long been strong friends with the US contributing substantially with financial and diplomatic support to ensure the birth of the Jewish state.**

bia while preventing Pakistan from getting closer to China on nuclear cooperation. The US does not appear to be really concerned about India's apprehensions against such a deal.

Saudi Arabia, like Pakistan, is Sunni-dominated. It was very upset when the US concluded the civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Shiaite Iran. Israel too was initially unhappy, but accepted the American position after a top level diplomatic dialogue and adequate US assurance. Israel and the US have long been strong friends with the US contributing substantially with financial and diplomatic support to ensure the birth of the Jewish state. But, the Saudi kingdom, which is protected by US armed forces, could not be convinced. Now, a civilian nuclear deal with Pakistan, the only Islamic country with nuclear bomb and long range missile armoury which is also close to Saudi Arabia, may break the ice. The move will certainly hurt the sentiment of India which has little reason to trust Pakistan. Regarded as an epicenter of global and regional terrorism, Pakistan is trusted by few countries. Pakistan has been pursuing a civil nuclear deal with the US for over nine years without much success.

The US move has certainly upset India. Several other countries, including some EU and G-7 members, are also concerned about the sudden US tilt towards Pakistan on civil nuclear cooperation ignoring the latter's role in sheltering and protecting top functionaries of some of the most dangerous terror outfits and recruiting and grooming terrorists. All eyes are on the US as to how it reacts to the Pakistan president's renewed plea in support of a US-Pakistan civil nuclear cooperation deal on the lines of the one the US inked recently with Iran. Re-

and North Korea. Pakistan acquired the missile technology from North Korea under an exchange programme. China and Russia are also said to be concerned over the latest nuclear overture between the US and Pakistan. However, India is most concerned by such a possibility as Pakistan continues to be a major source of terror attacks on India. Though it is not clear if India has raised the issue with the US government, sources say that India may wait till the outcome of the Sharif-Obama meet is officially known. Such a development will certainly erode India's lately established trust and closer relations with the US. India's hope for a US support for a time-bound United Nations reform and the country's early membership of the Asia Pacific Economic Community would appear to be of little consequence. It may even mean a diplomatic shock for India's prime minister after all his attempts to win President Obama's confidence.

India has been playing to the tune of the US since the days of the Congress-led UPA government which forged the US-India civil nuclear cooperation deal, ten years ago. Over the years, India has been steadily tilting towards the US on important diplomatic and economic issues. India has offered full cooperation to the USA on counter terrorism, particularly in concluding the pending comprehensive convention on international terrorism. In his last meeting in New York with President Obama, Prime Minister Modi had sought the US support for membership of four global export control regimes. However, all these may look rather hollow if the US now engages Pakistan in a civil nuclear cooperation deal. (IPA Service)

## TO THE EDITOR

### Stop the noise pollution!

Editor,

I am a resident of Lapalang, Shillong but would like to bring forth the pathetic and inhumane condition of the residents in many parts of the city who are being forced to bear with inhospitable living conditions. An inescapable buzz and vibration emanating from noisy machinery engulfs the homes with the onset of day. That such machinery can be located in residential areas is highly questionable. How can the authorities allow noisy, coarse machinery to operate next to homes and residential areas? Given the size of the land holdings where almost next-door chitchats can be heard, the operation of these machines makes it literally impossible to keep out the noise and relentless buzz. The noise has disturbed the peace of the elderly and senior citizens of these areas. They cannot even relax in peace for take a nap. Even little children's sleep is disturbed! While such work could and should be done

using manual labour to generate employment for many, these timber merchants employ noisy heavy machinery to carry out the work thereby violating the peace and serenity of the area. Our problem is that geography acts in favour of some who prefer not to raise their voices while the rest are intimidated and apprehensive about their future, as was the case with coal and limestone where even the law-keepers were not spared. So I request the Hon'ble High Court to relieve the residents of Lapalang from this noise pollution by banning and seizing such machines operating next to homes and residential apartments as innumerable pleas and requests to the competent authorities have gone unheard and unattended.

Yours etc.,  
Joshua Kharkamni,  
Shillong

### Voidable act of MeECL!

Editor,

We the candidates who responded to Advertisement dated April 2, 2015 of the MeECL for the Post of Senior Law Officer and Law Officer were hoping that the interview would be conducted with fairness and without any malafide intention. But there was complete lack of transparency from the MeECL and we cannot but deduce that there were ulterior motives in the manner in which the interview was conducted. From reliable sources within the MeECL, all those previous applicants who have applied for the old post of law officers responding to Advertisement dated June 8, 2010 which had already been cancelled with the issuance of the new Advertisement dated would now be called and allowed to appear in the interview along with the candidates responding to the new advertisement for the new posts.

This act of MeECL is not justified and not legal as per procedure of law since the applications of the previous

candidates from the previous advertisement which has already been cancelled have no legal position in the eye of law, hence void. The MeECL should know that the applications of the previous applicants could no longer survive after the cancellation and as the post of Law Officers also which the previous candidates have applied for has been split into two parts i.e. the Post of Senior Law Officer and the Post of Law Officer and the criteria also is totally different from the old one as reported in The Shillong Times.

Therefore, this act of MeECL is highly objectionable and cannot be accepted by us in any circumstances.

Yours etc.,  
Candidates of Advertisement  
Dated 02.04.2015

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

*"The first half of our lives is ruined by our parents, and the second half by our children."*

--- Clarence Darrow

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 68 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2015

### New political alignments in the offing

THE Nationalist Peoples' Party (NPP) headed by former Lok Sabha Speaker Purno A Sangma secured 10 of the 29 seats in the recently concluded elections to the Garo Hills District Council. The results were a blow to the cocksure attitude of the Congress Party. Perhaps one of the reasons why the voters rejected the Congress is because the outgoing Executive Council of the GHADC had been utterly corrupt and those charges of corruption were sought to be buried in the mumbo-jumbo of legalese. Further, the elections which should have been held in March 2014 were postponed three times on the plea that the number of seats in the Council would be increased to 40 as per the tripartite agreement signed between the militant outfit - Achik National Volunteers Council (ANVC), the Government of India, and the Meghalaya Government. This increase in the number of seats requires first an endorsement by the Union Cabinet followed by a parliamentary amendment to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Ministry of Home Affairs had written to the Meghalaya Government that it need not postpone the Council polls on this issue and that the amendment for seat enhancement would come in due time. Since the truce with the two factions of the ANVC was actually initiated by the present Congress-led Government headed by Mukul Sangma, his inability to raise the number of seats before the district council elections was seen as his Party's inability to deliver. Hence it was no surprise that in Zigzag which is virtually a pocket borough of the Chief Minister and his MLA wife it was the BJP candidate who stole the show.

The BJP has for the first time won any seat in the Garo Hills District Council. Out of six candidates set up by the Party only one was elected. This is a salutary win for the saffron party. A week prior to the polls, the BJP national spokesperson in charge of Meghalaya, Nalin S. Kohli had stated that the BJP has only set up six candidates for the polls and that the Party was testing the waters and charting out a roadmap to the 2018 assembly polls. But once the results were declared on October 15 and the BJP candidate Bhupendra P Hajong won his seat Kohli and the State BJP was jubilant. Kohli stated that the results were a clear rejection of Congress and its "politics of non-performance." Kohli informed a section of the media that NPP and the BJP are working jointly to stake claim in forming the next Executive Council. Are the political winds now blowing in a different direction in a state that has always been seen as a Congress bastion?

### LOOKING BACK

March 06, 1988

### AGP support to Bharat Bandh doubtful

Eight senior opposition leaders including former Defence Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh today made a point appeal to the people for support to their Bharat Bandh on March 15 to demand Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's resignation.

At a joint press conference here, they, however said essential services like hospitals, and drinking water would be exempted from the All India strike in which students and workers from the public sector would participate in a big way.

Their 15-point charter of demands includes: steps against communalism and separatism, investigation into corruption at high places, remunerative prices to farmer, and provision of minimum wages to farm land reforms, introduction of electoral reforms and restructuring of centre-state relations.

Besides Mr. Vishwanath

Pratap Singh, the signatories to the joint statement were Janata Party Chief Chandra Shekhar, CPI General Secretary C. Rajeswara Rao, and CPI (M) General Secretary E.M. S. Nambodripad.

Mr. Chandra said the Telugu Desam and DMK had promised support to the bandh. However, he was not sure about the response of the Asom Gana Parishad.

He said the CPI (M) leader had approached the Lok Dal (B) for its support and its response was awaited. However, no efforts had been made to rope in the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Asked whether the opposition parties would carry forward their unity beyond the 'Bharat bandh' the Janata Party president said, our efforts will be to unitedly defeat Mr. Gandhi and his regime.

# A US-Pak nuclear deal would be a threat to India's security

By Kanwal Sibal

If a report in a US newspaper is to be believed, a US-Pakistan nuclear deal might be on the cards. The report says that such a deal is being considered around Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Washington this month. The report would not have appeared credible but for the evasive comment of the State Department on the subject and the official reaction of the spokesperson of our Ministry of External Affairs cautioning the US authorities against any such decision.

Ever since the India-US nuclear deal was signed, the Pakistanis, obsessed with the idea of parity with India, have been seeking a similar deal. Besides calling the India-US nuclear deal discriminatory, Pakistan has condemned it as threat to its security and warned that it would take all necessary steps to safeguard its interests. Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz aggressively reiterated this on the occasion of President Barack Obama's visit to India in January this year. By remaining silent, the US has only encouraged this absurd posturing by Pakistan.

Some western non-proliferation specialists have been advocating for some time a nuclear deal with Pakistan in order to remove its sense of grievance. They feel it would give Pakistan an incentive to limit the expansion of its nuclear arsenal and stabilise the nuclear situation in the sub-continent. Such advocacy is largely prompted by negative attitudes towards India which, with its historical opposition to the NPT, is seen as the one responsible for nuclearising South Asia. In their eyes, this is one way of denying India any one-sided advantage in nuclear status.

Until now, the US Administration has been differentiating India's case from that of Pakistan and disclaiming any move to offer the latter a similar deal, thought the tenor of its statements has not been sufficiently convincing.

In fact, both the US and China, to different degrees, have aided Pakistan in achieving its nuclear and missile ambitions.

In the past, knowing the China-Pakistan nuclear and missile nexus, the US has waived the application of its laws for larger geopolitical reasons linked to the combat against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan factor has, unfortunately, continued to condition US thinking on Pakistan's nuclear and other errant behaviour.

The US was remarkably soft with Pakistan on the AQ Khan case. It has tolerated Pakistan's tactics to obstruct discussions on the FMCT at Geneva at a time when fissile material control was still on the US agenda. It has overlooked supplies of additional Chinese nuclear

reactors to Pakistan in violation of China's NSG commitments.

One could speculate that having settled the nuclear question with India, this was one way for the US to allow Pakistan to be a beneficiary of external cooperation in its nuclear sector, as part of the traditional policy of "hyphenation". US agencies and think tanks have been propagating information about the frenetic pace at which Pakistan has been expanding its nuclear arsenal, without any visible reaction from the US government.

At one time, worried about the rise of radicalism in the country, the US was expressing concern about the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. But such fears are no longer being expressed. US conduct over the years suggests that it has favoured the idea of a Pakistani nuclear capability to balance India's. Remarkably, its compliance towards the Pakistani nuclear programme has continued long after the end of the Cold War.

Adding to all this, US treatment of Iran's nuclear ambitions contrasts strikingly with its handling of Pakistan's nuclear transgressions. While draconian sanctions have been applied on Iran, in Pakistan's case the US has argued that sanctions might hasten its slide towards failure as a state and increase the risk of its nuclear assets falling into the hands of religious extremists. This is specious logic as the US has not taken any precautionary step to curb the development of Pakistan's nuclear assets, including its decision to introduce tactical nuclear weapons in the subcontinent.

An expanded Pakistani nuclear arsenal is even more likely to fall into the wrong hands. US reaction to Pakistan's loose talk about using nuclear weapons against India has been, moreover, notably mild. It could and should have been much stronger. The hesitation to impose sanctions on Pakistan contrasts also with the willingness to impose sanctions even on a powerful country like Russia, including its most senior leaders and functionaries. What inhibits the US to strong arm Pakistan despite its provocations remains unclear.

The argument that for dealing with the situation in Afghanistan the US needs Pakistan's assistance is not

convincing. The US needs Russia even more for dealing with yet more complex and fraught problems as Iran and West Asia in general, including the rise of the Islamic State, not to mention the fall-out of mounting tensions in Russia-West relations.

It is mystifying why the US should want to politically legitimise Pakistan's nuclear conduct through an India-like nuclear deal. In India's case, the US wanted to make a geopolitical shift with the rise of China in mind. It saw India as a counterweight to China in Asia, but for this the non-proliferation issue which inhibited India's international role had to be resolved.

Pakistan is in fact China's closest ally. The geopolitical purpose of a nuclear deal with Pakistan will only legitimise the China-Pakistan nuclear and security relationships and undermine India's strategic interests vis-a-vis both these adversaries. The US has wanted to build a strategic relationship with India largely around shared interests in the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific regions in view of mounting signs of Chinese political and military assertiveness and its ambitious naval expansion programme.

Through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the development of Gwadar, Pakistan is facilitating an increased Chinese strategic presence in the Indian Ocean, which contradicts this US strategy.

According to reports, the underlying reasoning offered by the US, if correctly reported, is almost shocking. In return for an NSG waiver, Pakistan will be asked to restrict its nuclear programme to weapons and delivery systems that are appropriate to its actual defence needs against India's nuclear threat, and not to deploy missiles beyond a certain range. This implies that the US accepts that India's nuclear programme is Pakistan-centric and that it poses a threat to Pakistan.

The Chinese threat to India is being overlooked and the fact that India faces a double Pakistan-China nuclear threat - in view of the close nuclear collaboration between the two countries - is being ignored.

The US, it appears, would be comfortable if only India would be exposed to the Pakistani nuclear threat, not others. But then, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, according to its own leaders, is India-centric. Pakistan is not threatening China, Iran or Saudi Arabia with its nuclear weapons. Which

are the countries that the US wants to protect against the use of nuclear weapons by Pakistan?

Pakistan is developing delivery systems to reach any point in India. The US would apparently be comfortable with that, but not if it developed missiles of longer range. But whose security is US worried about if Pakistan did that? US itself, Japan, Australia, Singapore, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel?

China, we know, opposes India's NSG entry without Pakistan. It would seem the US would be willing to accommodate both China and Pakistan if the latter limited its nuclear threat to India.

By implication then, the US has no stakes in India's security from an unstable and adventurous Pakistan, despite our so-called strategic partnership. The timing of a nuclear deal would be odd too. It is now universally recognised that it is General Raheel Sharif and not Nawaz Sharif who really hold the reins of power in the country. A nuclear deal will be a reward for the Pakistan military and not the civilian power, as Pakistan's nuclear programme is under military control.

Does the US want to reward the Pakistan military for its operations in North Waziristan against the Pakistani Taliban and is this considered meritorious contribution to the fight against Al Qaeda and terrorism?

One would have thought far more important for the US and the West is the rise of the Islamic State and its ideology. Compared to which North Waziristan is a side-show. In any case, the Pakistani military is not fighting the Haqqani group.

Worse, while Pakistani is being accepted as an honest mediator in the Afghan reconciliation process, the Taliban showed its mounting force by occupying Kunduz. One hopes that the US report does not accurately reflect President Obama's thinking. If it does, it will show how hollow is the strategic relationship between India and the US, and why it would not be wise to trust the US.

The India-US nuclear deal will be eroded of much of its strategic importance bilaterally, as result. The US would have, in addition, administered a big political blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has gone out of his way to improve strategic understanding with the US.

But then, news reports are news reports, and they could merely be political kite-flying. In which case, the India-US relationship will not receive a big jolt for all the reasons mentioned in this article

(The author is former Foreign Secretary)

## Whither District Councils!

By Everton Lyngdoh

Micheal Syiem must be congratulated for showing the wisdom and guts to file a PIL on the issue of existence of district councils in Meghalaya. I recollect the efforts made by Micheal Syiem since the 1980s in his campaign-for this common noble cause. He will be remembered for his far sightedness and statesmanship he has shown during the last 30 year and his name will remain as long as these beautiful hills exist. The PIL deserves consideration on the following grounds:

The District Councils were set up in Meghalaya (the then composite state of Assam) under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India with the motive to provide self rule to the hill tribes of Meghalaya to emancipate themselves and to be at par with the rest of the state of Assam. Now that the same people have attained statehood we have our own legislators, our own government and a large brigade of government employees belonging to our own tribes. Self rule is hence attained. Therefore, the need for the district councils has become redundant.

As per the rules of 1952 of the district councils there was one CEM and two Executive members for each council. But as of today there are around 5 executive members in each council which has further increased the liabilities of the councils in terms of salaries, perk, etc. This has caused huge unproductive expenses to the councils that survive with grants from the state government and taxes from the general public, resulting in unnecessary losses to the general public, while in return the councils are doing nothing except political fights amongst MDCs.

The arrogance of the District Councils in Meghalaya is exhibited by their undemocratic acts. For example the professional tax being imposed by the KHADC is without justification. Professional tax is collected forcefully at source from all government employees and PSUs even outside its jurisdiction (normal areas of Shillong). By parting with a portion of their income the citizens do not get any services in return from the district councils with only tall talks about protection of customs and traditions.

By virtue of Para 12-A of the Sixth Schedule where laws of the state government prevail over the laws of the district councils, it is amply clear that the district councils are only a symbolic entity which deserve to be done away with.

The recent state of affairs in the district councils in the state, be it back door recruitment of staff, horse trading in KHADC, petty fights amongst regional parties for the sake of power in the District Councils, involvement of district councils' functionaries in anti national activities like being sympathizers of militant groups and involving in criminal activities, making demonic and undemocratic laws such as the Village Administration Bill, non holding of elections in GHADC for more than a year, financial crisis in the JHADC, land grabbing by MDCs in Jaintia Hills, etc. are all indicators of district councils being nothing but another power centre besides being an and outdated and problematic establishments. These are the establishments that pull our society backward towards a barbaric type of tradition, instead of allowing the society to prosper towards development to cope with the progressive living in the 21st century.

The District Councils are

not extending any services to the citizens of the Meghalaya. Power/ electricity, water, PDS, waste management/ cleanliness, housing, education, health and all basic services to mankind are done by the state government. The Professional Tax / Trade Licences, and other tolls/ fees collected by the district councils are not spent for the welfare of the people; instead the entire money is enjoyed by the MDCs who use the district councils as their personal kitties.

The latest attempt by district councils to regulate building construction is to add insult to injury. Regulating construction is not child's play. It involves engineers, architects, inspectors and a battery of ministerial staff to be appointed to man the establishment whereas the amount of revenue collected from the process is mere peanuts. In the process the white elephants will multiply and one fine morning we will find the district councils begging the state government to take back this problem like they did in the case of primary education in 1980s after they have corrupted the education system in the state. Or the district councils would outsource the building regulation to a profit making agency or vendor who will extort the public and add further mess to the system.

The tribals of Meghalaya at present are not the same as they were in the 19th and 20th century. We have progressed tremendously and we should be at par with the rest of the communities of the country in no time. As is being seen, most of the MDCs are amateur politicians and persons with narrow outlook. Hence, having district councils only obstructs our zeal to progress and blocks our aspirations by creating an attitude of dependency.

Series of Finance Commissions of the Union of India had taken a sympathetic view of the district councils of Meghalaya by extending several hundreds of crores of rupees to them to take up projects like waste management, health and sanitation, fisheries, education, social welfare, and promotion of art and culture. Alas! None of the district councils have garbage dumping grounds of their own, except Jaintia Hills and that too the ill-maintained dumping ground at Jowai. The district councils have mercilessly misused and abused the money by lavish spending for the leisure of the CEMs and the MDCs. Their wickedness has reached such heights that they shamelessly convert the money into MDC schemes, and share the booty amongst the MDCs. Ultimately when asked for the Utilization Certificates by the Government of India none of them could furnish the certificates. In this way they have created a bad name to the people of Meghalaya in the eyes of the Government of India and that is why they did not get even a sing pie from the 14th Finance Commission, whereas the states of Arunachal, Mizoram and other North eastern states are getting several hundreds of crores of rupees from the 14th Finance Commission.

The state Government could have saved thousands of crores of rupees had there been no district councils in Meghalaya and the same money could have been spent in development purposes for the benefit of the people of the state.

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Shillong's abysmal road conditions

Editor,

Shillong roads have gone from bad to worse. The PWD will of course blame the incessant rains but are rains a stranger to Meghalaya? In some areas the roads are so poor that driving has become dangerous especially if one is on a two wheeler. Yet there is no sign of any remorse from the State Government. Someone had rightly pointed out that the present PWD minister is also the State's biggest roads and buildings contractor. Isn't there a very blatant conflict of interest here? Why is the Chief Minister silent on this? Is it because he is no longer worried about what happens in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills since our own MLAs/ministers too don't care a hoot about what happens to

their constituencies? How is it possible that roads have to be repaired annually? What is the quality of work done that such frequent repairs are required? And where is the money allocated for road repairs actually siphoned off?

But what is so strange is the silence of the plethora of pressure groups and self-styled anti-corruption activists on this very critical issue of public utilities. They take up issues that are politically savvy and which give them media headlines but as far as roads are concerned they prefer to remain silent. Is it because many of our pressure group leaders are also Government contractors? Or is it because they are beholden to some people in the Government? The conditions of roads inside the different

localities of Shillong are far worse. For far too long the PWD (Roads) has not been held accountable. Recently the High Court of Meghalaya pulled up a section of the PWD technicians for slow completion of Rockside bungalow. That must have sent the jitters down the PWD hierarchy. Never before has the judiciary pulled up a Government Department and sought a report from it for poor service delivery. But that is perhaps because that particular building would become the residence of the Chief Justice of Meghalaya. Will the High Court also take suo-moto notice of the road conditions in Shillong and its suburbs? Of course the people of Jaintia Hills too have been crying hoarse about the decrepit condition of the road from Mawryngkneng onwards to Jowai and beyond.

They also wonder why the Jowai MLA and Minister RC Laloo remains a mute spectator to all this improper use of public money by the PWD Department.

Will the Chief Minister of Meghalaya also rise to the occasion and see that he replaces the PWD Minister? If not then the same fate that has befallen the Congress in the Garo Hills District Council will await the Party here. The Congress Party in charge of Meghalaya, Mr V Narayanaswamy should take note of his Party's failings in the State.

Yours etc.,  
C Kharkongor,  
Via email

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

*"It's choice - not chance - that determines your destiny."*

—Jean Nidetch

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 70 SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2015

### Judicial autonomy

THE Supreme Court has struck down the proposed National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) as unconstitutional. It is a reaffirmation of the independence of the judiciary. The proposed commission was to do away with the separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive. The autonomy of the judiciary, according to the Supreme Court, is fundamental to the guiding principles of the Constitution. Of course, the government can still file a curative petition against the Supreme Court's decision. Nevertheless, the verdict of the apex court is a landmark event. The NJAC was conceived to counteract the inefficiency of the Supreme Court and the instances of corruption which have recently come to light. However, better functioning of the judiciary cannot be achieved by crippling its independence. Judges are now appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India. The Chief Justice decides as a matter of fact. The executive proposed that the Commission should bring in persons of eminence into the voting exercise, with veto powers. But these eminent persons may not have any experience in the field. They can only be part of 'decision making, not decision taking'. On the other hand, it has to be admitted that judicial activism can be undesirable and may not actually protect the citizen from arbitrary exercise of power.

The judiciary should not merely assert autonomy. It has to live up to it. The NJAC was supposed to settle some long pending issues. Now all corruption and scope for compromise have to be eliminated. The incorruptibility of judges is no longer beyond question. Law's delay is a permanent malaise. The case of making the appointment of judges the prerogative of the judiciary may be unassailable. But there should be transparency removing doubt and speculation. It has to be acknowledged that in the last analysis the judge should sum up.

### LOOKING BACK

March 08, 1988

### Free for all in Supreme Court

The indefinite strike by the Supreme Court lawyers since February 18 appeared to fizzle out amid chaotic scenes in the court corridors today.

Senior lawyers opposed to the continuation of the strike wrestled with others and made their appearance in different courts. A free for all was witnessed outside the Chief Justice's court, where senior lawyers like Mr. Ram Jethmalani and Mr. M.C. Bhandare were prevented from appearing before the court.

Mr. Bhandare, who is president of the Supreme Court Bar Association which is opposed to the strike, was manhandled in the scuffle and had to be admitted to hospital with a fractured arm. Senior advocate Mr. Ram Jethmalani who wanted to enter the Chief Justice's court was also prevented. In protest, Mr. Jethmalani sat on a dharna in front of the court room.

Security people guarding the court room did not interfere, nor did they protect the lawyers who wanted to resume today.

Reacting to the incident, a meeting of all Supreme Court Judges under the chairmanship of Chief Justice, Mr. R. S. Pathak decided that court work would not be allowed to be disrupted.

Court registrar general Mr. S. Rao announced that entry into the court premise would be strictly regulated from tomorrow.

The lawyers and litigants will be provided adequate security and anybody causing disturbance will be severely dealt with.

Today's incident in the court premises climaxed the

factionalism among lawyers on the course of the 47 day old agitation by the Delhi lawyers who are demanding suspension of Deputy Commissioner of Police Ms. Kiran Bedi for the Tis Hazari incidents.

CM stresses on peace, harmony

Meghalaya Chief Minister Pruno Sangma has underscored the need for maintaining peace and harmony in the state as a stepping stone for accelerating the pace of development of the State. The newly installed Ministry had started working seriously towards that direction and he hoped that the police force would lend helping hand in maintaining law and order.

Police he said, must inspire confidence in the minds of the people "People should feel safe in your hands". Extorting them not to take their duties casually, the Chief Minister said they must not fear in taking unpleasant steps in the larger interest of the community.

He assured full backup to the police as long as they uphold law with a deep sense of dedication and uprightness. Expressing full confidence in the ability of the state police, he hoped they would prove to be smarter and more efficient in the future.

Earlier, the Director General of Police Mr. M.I. S. Iyer in the welcome address said that the present building housing the Police Station was nearly a century old. Built by the British, it was designed to accommodate barely 16 policemen to cover the entire Shillong Municipal area. At present 250 personnel were policing the same area.

# When Silence is Not Golden

By H H Mohrmen

Sometimes the saying, 'Silence is Golden' is apt and there are times when I tend to agree with the pop song which says, 'You say it best when you say nothing at all.' But Prime Minister Modi's stoic silence on the growing intolerance in the country is only going to embolden those fanatic elements whose only goal is to force their own beliefs and ideologies on others. In the span of a few months many precious lives were lost to hate related attacks in the country and this is only going to give India a bad name in the eyes of the world.

Salman Rushdie was right when he questioned why 'the all the while talkative' Prime Minister chose to ignore the killing and lynching of citizens who have different dietary habits and opinions and why he does not take control of the intolerant elements. It is really surprising that the Prime Minister who comments and tweets on every issue, maintains a stoic silence on this very important matter.

The more than one year campaign for clean and green India is yet to have any impact in different parts of the country but it seems like the Swaach Bharat of a different kind is making its mark in the country. It seems the attempt of this different Swaach Bharat is to rid the country of all culture and tradition which does not conform to that of the majority and also to do away with all the dissenting voices everywhere in the country. If the objective of Swaach Bharat is to clean India, then cleaning India of dissenting voices and cultures different from those held by the fanatic elements is making a huge impact on the society. Is this the new Swaach Bharat?

Selling robust economic agenda to the world is one thing but encouraging hate and intolerance in the society by keeping mum against the attacks is another thing. The Prime Minister who toured the world to sell India as a safe haven for investments is not going to attract investors if the country is not even able to guarantee basic human right to its citizen. The attacks and the silence will be counter-productive to his effort to attract foreign investments. In fact Modi will start losing his sheen and people will realize the true Modi behind the rock star image.

The saying also goes 'silence means consent,' so by maintaining a stoic silence on some very crucial issues are we to understand that Modi is also encouraging the fringe elements to raise their ugly heads in the society. Thankfully there was pressure from all around which compelled the government to act and it was this pressure which made Modi and his government succumb and ultimately

condemn the many incidents of hate crimes in the country. The credit goes to those writers, poets and artists who returned their Sahitya Academy awards in protest against the growing intolerance in the country. The protest forced the government to make a statement condemning the incidents. People not only returned their Sahitya academy award some even returned their Padmashree awards. This small gesture which was done silently forced Modi and his party to comply and condemn the atrocities that visited many.

Silence is not golden and now we realize that laymen and women can also make a different and protest can be of various

called his wife, instantly decide to take his own life just like that? There are just too many questions that the SIT left unanswered. Even if we give SIT the benefit of doubt and agree that P.J. Marbaniang shot himself in the head, there are still many questions that begs for answer. The other question is who has the gun or perhaps the right question is who has the more sophisticated or more powerful gun in this case? How can one compel an officer who has a gun on his belt to commit suicide (using his own gun) until and unless there are more guns involved in the incident? There is something wrong in this premise and I just don't get it.

Then there is also the

poor public services rendered to the people.

A well educated person recently took a photo of the landfill near Pynthor village where the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and the Jowai Municipal Board dumped garbage and posted the same on Facebook. The landfill has become an eyesore and a nuisance to the passersby travelling on the Jowai-Amlarem road. As expected the blame game started and the local media were first targeted for not exposing the issue. But the question is what have we done as educated persons? Have we addressed our complaints to the right authority? Or do we tend to use any easy available avenue to vent our ire just for the sake of doing it even it is a wrong platform. Although the West Jaintia hills now has a tech-savvy

## The use of strategic silence

By M J Akbar

The relationship between government and media is surely the most tempestuous fact of any democracy. The two represent parallel poles of power, but they are never really poles apart. Their moods vary, depending on circumstance, stretching from mutual admiration to suspicion, scepticism, cynicism and, in the worst case, hostility. Sometimes, their interests are in conflict. At other times, personality takes over, and the irrational ego interferes with judgement. There is always a sub-text of need hidden in the dynamics, and this need can be personal or institutional. It should, therefore, be a relationship that is handled with care. Too often, it becomes a victim of carelessness.

It is important to lay down a marker before we proceed. A democratic government does not have censorship as an option. There are no ifs and buts. Freedom of expression is a non-negotiable right. There are occasions on which journalism may become as yellow as the tongue of a hypocrite, and governments may have a list of grievances stretching from Kashmir to Kochi, but the only recourse is redress as permitted by law. The law does not, and will not, allow the brutal knife of a censor. Censorship is unethical, illegal and unworkable. What next?

There are structures in a democracy that have found a way around this, most notably self-censorship by individual journalists as the

art. A journalist should have the knowledge that helps fashion a question, and then catch contradictions in any evasive answer. It is a very dead interviewer who goes with a static list of queries, and does not possess the agility to ask the right follow-up. It is only reasonable to expect that the person being interviewed will only give that much of information which suits his or her interests, but there are ways of inducing out what has not been said.

Aggression is not the answer. Accusatory questions are meant to provoke an unguarded response, but any seasoned politician will deflect such bouncers with practised ease. The technique that I liked was the use of strategic silence. Ask a question, as gently and plainly as you can. There will be an answer. If you believe the answer has been inadequate, or selective, let silence reign, as if you are waiting for the answer to be completed. Interviewees find silence very difficult to handle. They almost inevitably try to fill the silence vacuum with something, and that something turns out to be the observation or story that brings an interview to life.

But this was far easier in an age when print media was dominant. A print interview has time on its side. Television has enormous strengths, flawed by a fatal weakness. Television does not have

*Salman Rushdie was right when he questioned why 'the all the while talkative' Prime Minister chose to ignore the killing and lynching of citizens who have different dietary habits and opinions and why he does not take control of the intolerant elements. It is really surprising that the Prime Minister who comments and tweets on every issue, maintains a stoic silence on this very important matter.*

forms. We cannot just continue to keep mum and not question and raise our voices against intolerant acts or injustice met on the others. Another case which requires public scrutiny is the murder of the police officer P.J. Marbaniang where the special investigation team concluded that it was a case of suicide. I am not an expert in the subject and I maintain that I am just a layman and as any other common man on the street I try my level best to understand issues that come to the fore and raise questions whenever it is necessary. In the case of the untimely death of the police officer, since the Special Investigation Team has brought the subject to the public domain citizens are entitled to raise questions on the findings.

If truth needs to be told then the suicide theory suggested by the Special Investigation Team is a difficult pill to swallow at least on two counts. How can an officer who till the minute before he died was active and performed his duty to the hilt, would all of a sudden decide to kill himself? How can this mood swing happen in a short span of time? How can a family man, a loving husband who had just

question of those more than 30 trucks that he dutifully stopped for violating the National Green Tribunal order. What happened to these trucks? Has any case has been registered against the owners of those trucks? What is the status of the case? Certainly the BDO or the leaders of the pressure group do not own these trucks and if at all they are involved in abetting suicide they acted at the behest of somebody. So the most important question is who owns these trucks? Why is the SIT silent on these trucks which were the real cause of the entire quagmire?

It is common amongst the people of the State to simply mumble and grumble about the bad roads and unsatisfactory services rendered by public institutions and now social media has come up like a new platform that people use to vent their ire or air their grievances. Facebook is one such media that people use to air their grievances but the question is why did people refuse to use the right platform to make their complaints. In the Khasi-Pnar parlance the common excuse is 'ba salia' or 'sniaw-boi' in Pnar as a reason for not making a complaint or raising our voices against injustice or

Deputy Commissioner who opened a WhatsApp page to enable the people to register their complaints directly to his office, yet the Facebookers still refused to use this avenue that is available now. Government redress of public grievances is a WhatsApp away now in West Jaintia Hills District so, people should make use of it.

The public particularly the educated sections of the population should come out of the bubble and break this culture of silence that is prevailing in the society. People should break this practice of speaking about issues concerning the public only in the bereaved family's house or other places where communities congregate and start filing complaint, RTIs, PILs and even WhatsApp the authorities concerned when there is injustice and when public services are not delivered. Let us do away with the 'ba salia' and 'sniaw boi' excuse and make the concerned authorities hear our voices. Let us stop mumbling and grumbling and start making our voices heard. Let us do away with this culture of silence that slowly kills this state. Let us remember that at times we need to shout and make our voices heard and also remember that Silence is not always Golden.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Let's save this bird species!

Editor,

Green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*), a majestic, endangered species of peafowls that are cousins of the more abundant and least concerned blue peafowl or Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), the National Bird of India is most possibly extinct in its wild habitats of North East India. The green peafowls have been the glory of the unspeakable beauty and grandeur of the North East, predominantly Manipur and Mizoram at one point of time. The species is currently believed to be extinct in the wilds in Southern China, North East India and Bangladesh as part of its former range and presently restricted only to small pockets of Myanmar,

Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. **R e l e n t l e s s a n t h r o p e n i c** pressures in the form of over hunting, capture for colorful plumage and habitat destruction are believed to be the major factors responsible for the loss of the species in the wild. In India, the species was previously found in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram and its distribution in Assam is not well recorded. However, there are no reliable reports of last sighting of the species ever in its core wild habitats of Manipur and Mizoram for over a decade. The only live specimens are available in the Manipur Zoological Garden at Imphal.

Based on my research, this is the only zoo in the entire India where green peafowl specimens are available for public display. Since this species was once known from the spectacularly beautiful North East India, it is important to educate the people of the region about their lost treasures from a glorious and organic past. It is painful to find such a beautiful species being lost in the wilds; and hence I humbly wish to advocate for addressing the concerned authorities through your esteemed daily to start a comprehensive captive breeding program for the species in North East for slowly returning the species back to its original habitat in the Indian subcontinent. Breeding population could be acquired

through neighbouring Myanmar and other South East Asian countries ?maintaining wild populations. Both green and blue peafowls and their hybrids are available in the EU and the US international pet markets as a colourful and attractive caged species. The breeding of the species is reported to be considerably easy and hassle free and should be looked upon as a viable alternative to return the species to the wilds of North East India.

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.*

quid pro quo of inducement. This, for obvious reasons, is hard to catch. The risk for media is that if this is once proven, then credibility is lost forever. Credibility cannot be restored by surgeons. If the audience loses its faith in a media product, then the life-cycle of that publication or channel is over.

The normal equation between a journalist and a politician is filtered through that most basic of all media tools, the conversation. It may come as a surprise, but sometimes the most productive chat can be off-the-record. This is the ultimate bond between politician and journalist, that of trust. Any journalist who breaks this trust is not worth a day's further salary. Similarly, anyone in public life who misleads in an off-the-record discussion is shallow: no one in power tells all, but you do not mislead or distort either. There are cases where journalists misuse such confidence, but they end up hurting themselves more than the person whose trust they have abused.

The more delicate problem is on-the-record interviews. The rules are straight-forward, but interviewing is still a subtle

space or time for silence. It is the journalist who inevitably ends up saying something, thereby letting his or her target off the hook. At its worst, of course, television encourages a screaming match on the assumption that an audience is more interested in a brawl than dialogue.

It is the job of media to ask questions, although the spirit of inquiry should never descend into the malice of inquisition. Politicians, naturally, resent this, as would anyone being interviewed by a heckler. But, equally, politicians should probably understand that their problems lie less in what a journalist has asked and more in their irresistible eagerness to say what they might later regret.

I enjoy the word "piquant". It has the succulent resonance of onomatopoeia. It is sharp, tangy, pleasant to the taste and yet can sting. There is no pique, or irritability, or ire, in piquant. The best question in an interview is piquant. And the best answer? Cool. Anyone who loses his or her cool has lost the interview.

*"If you do not expect the unexpected you will not find it, for it is not to be reached by search or trail."*

—Heraclitus

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 71 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2015

### For whom do they write!

A LARGE number of writers are returning their Sahitya Akademi Awards to protest against cultural dictatorship and limits imposed on freedom of choice by the NDA government. The BJP governments at the centre and in the states should beware. Three rationalists were murdered in Maharashtra and Karnataka. High ranking BJP leaders seem to approve such crimes. The revolt of writers and intellectuals gives rise to grave concern. It is astonishing that all this is happening in India today while the country went through an age of enlightenment in the 19th century. The hysteria over beef is simply sickening. Youth power is getting increasingly hostile to the curtailment of social and political freedom. The electoral prospects of the BJP have been dimmed by such fundamentalism. Besides, the attitude clashes with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's agenda for modernization.

But are the writers serving any useful purpose by returning the Sahitya Akademi awards? The Sahitya Akademi should not be considered a government body. If it is so, writers should have protested against it earlier demanding its autonomy and not accepting government patronage. The question also arises if the writers have been equally strident in condemning Muslim fundamentalism. Left cultural repression often went unnoticed. The expulsion of Taslima Nasreen from West Bengal did not arouse much indignation in West Bengal's literary circles. Writers should stop being one sided in criticizing the assault on freedom of expression. Nevertheless, there can be no excuse for the BJP's intolerance. E.M Forster held the liberal view that even if one did not agree with one's opponents, one should fight for their right to say what they did.

### LOOKING BACK

March 07, 1988

### Tripura CM accuses CPI M of fomenting disharmony

Tripura Chief Minister Suchir Rajan Majumder has appealed to the people of the state to cooperate with the security forces in flushing out the outlawed tribal insurgents.

In a five minute address over the Agartala station of All India Radio last night, Mr. Majumdar said the army, after its deployment last month, arrested several Tribal National Volunteer (TNV) extremists, but section of the political parties launches a slander campaign against the Army because they (the parties) apprehended that the security forces would now identify the "real extremists".

Urging the people not to heed to their baseless allegation, the Chief Minister said the parties frustrated after their defeat in the assembly poll, were trying to foment trouble and create disharmony among the tribals and non-tribals.

### Punjab assembly dissolved Mid-term poll likely

Punjab was set in the road to a mid-term poll today when the State Assembly was dissolved through a Presidential order.

The State Assembly had been in suspended animation since May last year when the Akali Dal (L) Ministry headed by Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala was dismissed and President's Rule imposed in the State in the wake of mounting terrorist violence.

The decision to dissolve the Assembly, which was in suspended animation, comes 48 hours

after the Centre released the five Sikh high priests and forty Jodhpur detenues.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs, which also reviewed the law and order situation in the strife torn state.

Informed sources said there were chances of elections being held in the State before the expiry of President's rule on May 11 as it was unlikely to be extended beyond that date.

President's Rule was imposed in the state on May 11, 1987, after the dismissal of the Surjit Singh Barnala's Government and extended for six months by an order issued in November.

The sources said if the Government decides to extend President's Rule in the state beyond one year, would have to certify that its continuance was necessary on account of difficulties in holding the assembly elections.

Punjab Governor Mr. Siddharth Shankar had told reporters yesterday that the State Assembly was not doing any legislative work and MLAs were merely interfering in the daily administration, particularly at the lower level in police stations.

The strength of the dissolved assembly was 115 and the party wise break up Shiromani Akali Dal (73), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (4), Janata Party (1), Congress (I) (1), Communist Party of India (1) and Independents 4. Elections to the state assembly were held on September 25, 1985.

# Research Crunch Relook vital for global leap

By Shivaji Sarkar

The call for 'Make in India' is sadly not being matched with research in the country. An area that the billion-plus nation is definitely lacking in is the research by the large corporate – foreign or Indian. The Government cannot shoulder all the research responsibilities. But beyond Government universities and labs not much research activity is being done either.

At the same time, research contribution of Indian universities with some exceptions has so far had a dismal record. Mostly these are repetitious and are carried out for merely obtaining a doctorate degree to get a career promotion.

The stipulation of regulators like the University Grants Commission in reality has meant that by hook or crook a university teacher must obtain a doctorate degree so that he/she has smooth promotional avenues, irrespective of the quality of the thesis or reasoning. It is well-known that such degrees can be purchased virtually off the shelf. There are many such shops running even in the national capital, Delhi. Though the degrees are genuinely issued by a university many may not strictly speaking be for research.

Teachers in universities are usually not serious about conducting in-depth research for many reasons including too many demanding procedures. The Association of Indian Universities statistics suggest a dire need for conducting research on emerging issues for the growth and development of the society.

The researcher is often unaware of advanced tools and techniques. The topics are too esoteric. The teachers consider the job of being a guide burdensome as the teaching load takes away most of their time leaving little for the teachers to update themselves.

Though some of these could be mere alibi, most teachers say that doing a

genuine research is difficult in the universities owing to lack of facilities. They also rue the compulsion of obtaining PhD for career progression. In most cases, PhD is no more a research, says the university fraternity. Despite that 14,000 PhDs are awarded every year!

There are good teachers but all need not be researchers. Forcing a teacher, who may not be genuinely interested in doing research, is a disservice not only to him/her but also to the nation. It is a severe drain on resources. Similarly, there are good researchers but their performance is evaluated on the number of classes they have addressed. This is impractical.

A reason often cited is that the country does not invest much in research. In reality, this is not true. The UNESCO figures state that India spent 0.81 per cent of its GDP on research in 2012, whereas the US spent 2.79 per cent and the UK 1.72 per cent. But India is simply not getting results as the US and UK.

Additionally, there is a great mismatch between input and output – patents, trademarks, quality research published in scholarly journals. For a PhD scholar to produce and publish a paper in 20-peer reviewed journals is a herculean task. It is just not the question of quality but it also requires networking, which most universities in this country lack.

Further, just imagine a person getting a PhD for finding out the silly number of micro newspapers published in the western part of a district in a northern State. This is happening in languages and many other streams. Even research in science lacks the seriousness it deserves if one is working in a university.

At the same time, some of the labs may be doing better and at least it can be said that not all is bunkum, when it is delinked from a doctoral degree. Today, India has its hydrocarbon map prepared by National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI). It is because of that study that oil and gas has been found in Rajasthan, Godavari basin and many other areas. It also has indicated the places where gas hydrates can be spotted. Similar achievements have been done by BARC, ISRO and some other labs. Even the Railways lab RDSO has helped it achieve unique standards.

It must however be remembered that what these labs have done as research was institutional activity led by a large team. That is the difference between universities and many of the CSIR, IARI and other government labs.

Yes, India has a problem that it has fewer researchers. But it is also true that some researchers who could not do well in the country have migrated and excelled in Germany, the US and many other western countries.

According to OECD data, India has 119 researchers per million of the population, compared to 1,564 in China, 2,706 in the UK, 4,605 in the US and 6,807 in Iceland. In terms of the number of researchers per 1,000 people employed, India, with 24 researchers, ranks below China (115), Japan (131), the European Union (231) and the US (324). This is an indication that somewhere the country has not been stressing on research despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for 'Make in India'.

With the corporate sector looking only at its profits and not coming forward to take the responsibility of

encouraging and supporting research, should the government alone shoulder the responsibility? Recall, the CSIR encouraged the development of the electric car REVA and instead a large private group made the best of it by owning it. Can the Government work all the time at public cost to boost private profits? No. It can only be a catalyst. But why should it bear all the costs and if the hard work is transferred should it not get the investment plus other costs be taken back?

These are many issues, which year for a discussion threadbare. India cannot simply follow the Chinese models to promote research in universities, as scientist Prof Yash Pal says. And not all universities can do research. Those which cannot do should be freed of this responsibility.

The Departments of Science and Technology will spend Rs 15000 crore (\$340 million), and Information Technology Rs 500 crore, amounting to 0.6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product in the next five years. Spending has not been a problem. How to generate results is.

In the past seven decades, India has done a bit. It is now time for consolidation of efforts to take a giant leap. This calls for a review. The compulsion on doctoral studies must be done away. It requires setting up of research pattern for the next at least three decades in all disciplines. Industry too not only needs to contribute but also must share costs in promoting specialized studies as it is the largest beneficiary.

An inter-disciplinary review to promote the culture of society-centric research is needed to take a leap in the global arena. The Government has to step in to have synergy in all spheres. Research is necessary but it has to have the right orientation and the right partners and not just the numbers. —INFA

Has Dadri botched BJP's chances in Bihar?

## Without Modi wave, it's advantage Nitish-Lalu

By Amulya Ganguli

After the completion of the first two phases of the Bihar polls, the indications are that the BJP's earlier hopes of piping the "secular" combination at the post will not be fulfilled. What is worse for the party is the growing belief that the end result may not even be a photo-finish. Instead, the chances are that the Janata Dal (United)-Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-Congress trio will have the last laugh.

Even if Mulayam Singh Yadav's prediction of a BJP victory is ignored as a case of wish fulfillment by someone who has cozied up to the BJP so that the CBI will be asked to go slow in the disproportionate assets cases against him, there were other signs earlier that the secular group may not have an easy run.

For one, the large attendance at some of Narendra Modi's rallies suggested that the Modi "wave" hadn't yet subsided and that his "jungle raj" barb against Lalu Yadav might have had an effect. For another, the emergence of two "third fronts" led by the SP and the Left, respectively, was expected to split the secular votes. For a third, Asaduddin Owaisi was expected to wear away some of the Muslim votes from the Janata Dal (United), the RJD and the Congress.

In recent weeks, however, the SP-led front has suffered a jolt with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) walking out because of Mulayam Singh's proximity to the BJP. Although the rupture will cause no more than a ripple in the election scene because both the SP and NCP are minor players in the state, it is not a good sign for the pro-BJP side.

In any case, the observers believe that the outlook is changing. What is apparently tilting the scales in favour of the Janata Dal (United), the RJD and the Congress is the Dadri

newed communal animosity in case the BJP returns to power.

There is little doubt that whatever appeal Modi's development plank may still have for the average person, the latter's first priority is social peace. It also goes without saying that the targeting of innocent Muslims causes great distress to the Hindus as well – something which the BJP is slowly beginning to understand, but not the RSS.

It is not only the strident communal agenda of the RSS which appears to have hurt the BJP in Bihar, but also the observations of the chief of the Nagpur patriarchs, Mohan Bhagwat, about a review of the policy of reservations. If a cue was needed by Lalu Yadav to widen the divide between the backward and forward castes, Bhagwat's ill-timed – for the BJP – comment provided it.

None of the subsequent attempts by Amit Shah and other BJP leaders to assuage the backwards (the forwards are with the BJP anyway) seems to have worked if only because the RSS sarsanghchalak was only articulating a long-held view of the upper castes that quotas favoured the undeserving.

Arguably, the MY (Muslim-Yadav) vote bank of Lalu Yadav, which makes up 30 per cent of the population – Yadavs 16 per cent, Muslims 14 per cent – is unlikely to have suffered any major division because of the BJP's efforts to woo the Yadavs via the likes of Pappu Yadav although 19 per cent of this community are said to have voted for the BJP in the parliamentary elections in Bihar.

In the last year and a half, however, much has changed with the Dadri and Nahan killings and Bhagwat's anti-reservations comments revealing to those who voted for the BJP last year that the party

### TO THE EDITOR

### A bizarre suggestion

Editor,  
There is no more bizarre suggestion that the one given by NCP leader and South Shillong legislator Sanbor Shullai that no party should put up any candidate in Nongstoin by election as a mark of respect for 11 time legislator and late HSPDP leader Hoping Stone Lyngdoh. According to Shullai any relative of Lyngdoh should get elected unopposed. This is extremely unhealthy for democracy and no one should pay heed to his most strange concept of paying tribute to deceased person.

When Clifford R. Marak, the founder of Garo National Council (GNC) and legislator from Chokpot, passed away there was a similar suggestion but all parties contested the by-polls against the wife of the deceased MLA. Shullai's suggestion is dangerous as sympathy can extend to jobs, to offices, to positions and to other areas. The government has already done away with 'compassionate' appointments because it is an injustice to meritorious candidates. Why does the NCP leader want to go back to the outdated practice? Compassion should not be mixed up with merit. Human feelings should not come to play while dealing with such an esteemed issue as constitutional and democratic elections. Let all parties and independent candidates contest the Nongstoin by-poll and the deserved winner continue the legacy of honesty of bah Hoping Stone rather than just hand over the seat to a relative. That would be a disgrace rather than an honour. If I were to be a relative of the late leader I would not want such

an eventuality. Elected unopposed! Oh no!

Yours etc.,

Albert Thyriang  
Tura, West Garo Hills

- 2

### Has Sanbor Shullai lost it?

Editor,  
Most of our legislators don't speak at all. Some speak out of turn and when they do they do a disservice to democracy by suggesting that a legislator who dies in harness should be succeeded by a close relative instead of by election. The legislature is a not a Syiemship to be inherited by the next of kin. Election to the legislature is to be guided by constitutional norms and if a sitting legislator does not know this basic principle of democracy it is shameful that he has been elected to represent an urban constituency of Shillong. That in this day and age people should try to promote and perpetuate dynastic politics is abominable. Large sections of the voters of this country are against the Congress Party for promoting family politics. Sadly this has also entered Meghalaya. We have the Chief Minister Dr Mukul Sangma and his wife and brother in politics. Now his sister-in-law is an MDC. Then we have PA Sangma of the NPP crowning his son Conrad Sangma (who did not contest the GHADC election but has been nominated) as the Chief Executive Members (CEM). Next we have two brothers Ngaitlang Dhar and Sniawbhalang Dhar as MLAs and the latter as

Minister. This is atrocious and the people of Meghalaya should not allow this sort of family domination to continue. In fact politics has become like a family business for many in Meghalaya. This has got to end! People like Sanbor Shullai reflect the mentality of those who have elected him!

Yours etc.,

SL Syiem,  
Via email

### Kudos Loreto Convent !.

Editor,  
The junior musical concert 'Reminisc' was simply amazing. The wonderful showcase of songs and dance of yesteryears displayed by the little girls of Loreto mesmerized the audience specially parents like me, whose eyes gleamed with joy to see their little girls all pretty and confident and so full of energy looking more like pop stars on stage. From the timeless classic rock and roll tunes like 'Crocodile rock', 'Common lets twist again' to the foot tapping disco fever like Boney M's 'Daddy Cool', and the ABBA generation and then adding a final touch to the show was the beautiful tribute to Micheal Jackson, the king of pop with his 'Heal the World'. We were speechless and the little hearts certainly won all of our hearts. We congratulate the entire Loreto family for bringing out the best in our child with strong ideals of faith, purity and wisdom.

Yours etc.,

Rekha M Shangpliang,  
Via email

### Poor service at Shillong GPO!

Editor,  
I went to Shillong G.P.O on October 5th and 6th to withdraw some money and I had to stand in a long queue. When I inquired, I saw that there were only two Savings counter since the counter clerk in the third counter was on leave so I waited for my turn which did take a lot of time and got my work done. The next day I had to visit the GPO again since I wanted to meet the manager or A.P.M and to my surprise even the A.P.M was on leave and the branch was running without any manager. I couldn't even get my pass-book updated since I was told there was no link. This really disappointed me a lot and I wonder what the higher authorities are doing or if there is any higher authority at all? Who manages the work of the staff? Are they even managed? I agree that Shillong G.P.O is now under CBS which is a good thing for us the public, but I feel the management should look at how to serve the public in minimal time and not harass us. If one staff is on leave, there should be other staff to take on the work. Customers should not suffer because of the staff who is on leave. The management should bring in more trained staff since it has taken the step to go for CBS, and most importantly make sure that since they have adopted the new system. There should not be any "link failure" problem which seems to happen very often in Shillong G.P.O, and provide us better service.

Yours etc.,

S. Bhattacharjee  
Shillong-3

*In the last year and a half, however, much has changed with the Dadri and Nahan killings and Bhagwat's anti-reservations comments revealing to those who voted for the BJP last year that the party is no longer as focused on economic growth as Modi claims on his foreign tours.*

lynching of a Muslim householder by a saffron mob who suspected the family of eating beef. The subsequent findings that they were eating mutton cannot but have deepened the sense of outrage at the murderous act of the Hindutva storm-troopers.

Only a few days later, another saffron vigilante group killed a Muslim accused of transporting cattle for smuggling in Nahan in Himachal Pradesh. These tragedies have been followed by a justification for the killings in an article in an RSS journal and by the BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj.

It is more than likely that these assaults on hapless Muslims by rampaging saffron group have cut the ground from under the BJP's feet by not only consolidating the Muslim votes in the favour of Nitish Kumar and Lalu Yadav, but also of the liberal-minded Hindus and others who are scared of re-

is no longer as focused on economic growth as Modi claims on his foreign tours.

Although the BJP is trying to pretend that it is currently second to none in its appreciation of India's pluralism – the Muslims can eat anything they want to, Union minister Venkaiah Naidu has said – it is Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar's threat to Muslims that they will have to forsake beef if they want to stay in the country, which is seen as reflecting the real mindset of the saffron brotherhood.

The ordinary people in Bihar, especially those living in the countryside, may not pay much attention to the decision of the Sahitya Akademi award winners to return their medals in protest against the climate of intolerance under the Modi regime. But, there is little doubt that the average Bihar will concur with the prize-winning writers about the grievances against the BJP. (IPA Service)

*“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.”*

--- Barnard

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 72 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2015

### Societal conversations

GET Together for Harmony – a programme conceived by a few right thinking people of Shillong during those tumultuous years of communal tensions in this city, has carried on like a ritual. This programme is held a couple day before the Durga Puja celebrations and the Central Puja Committee which is the brain behind this programme invites people from all faiths and all walks of life in a bid to spread the message of peace and fraternity. It is heartening that religious leaders of different faiths and denominations have honoured this noble call and expressed their solidarity with the organisers. Shillong is a pluralistic, multicultural society and it is incumbent upon its citizens to maintain and uphold this inclusive character of society because it is the only sensible thing to do. However, it is rather sad that this practice of creating a platform where people of different faiths can actually learn to appreciate one another’s religious and cultural practices are so few and far between. Meghalaya has a substantial chunk of Christian population but we are yet to see a Get Together for Harmony before the auspicious day of the birth of Christ. It would have been a great gesture to share the message of Christmas not just with Christians but also with those who have never heard of Christianity. All religions preach love, forgiveness and a healthy tolerance for the views of others. In a country like India with diverse cultures, languages, faiths and ethnicities it is even more important to break the barriers that divide people and to create opportunities for togetherness so that people learn to discover the common threads that bind people rather than stress on the differences.

India is today getting increasingly polarised on the basis of caste, creed and community. There are strident voices that equate Hinduism with nationalism and cannot accept that non-Hindu minorities too can be credited with nationalistic fervour. There is great need for societal conversations not just on days when different religions celebrate their auspicious occasions but also at informal gatherings. Even the idiom of inclusivity needs to be taught to our younger generation. We can only wish that many more such conversations take place in the city of Shillong where people will not just speak to each other through the media but talk to one another with respect and acceptance of diverse views.

## LOOKING BACK

March 09, 1988

### 12 killed in IAF plane crash

At least seven Air Force Personnel and five villagers were killed and several injured when an Indian Air Force plane crashed shortly after take-off from the IAF’s Charabatia Aviation Research Centre (ARC) near Cuttack today.

While the ARC Deputy Director told newsmen visiting the crash site that the Delhi bound transport plane was carrying a total of 9 personnel and a crew, Assistant Director gave the figure as seven.

While one of the villagers, Rabinarayan Patree, died on the spot when the aircraft caught fire, broke into pieces and fell on nearby villages of Mancheswar, Paikarapur and Bidyadharpur, four others later died in the SCB Medical College, Cuttack. They were Gandharba Tarei, Abiram Nayak, Jogendra Behera and Devendra Sutar.

The injured were first rushed to Choudwar ESI hospital from there eight were shifted to the Cuttack Medical College where two were in a very critical condition doctors attending on them said.

Five cattle had also perished in the blaze that gutted 40 houses and seven shops. The visiting newsmen saw an approximately ten km area strewn with burnt plane parts and

charred limbs. An ARC ambulance van was seen collecting whatever remains like rings and other articles that were found in the area.

A high level investigating team has already arrived in Choudwar from Delhi to make a preliminary investigation into the crash.

Besides the injured who were hospitalized many villagers, including students of the Chabalaswar Vidyapeeth (high school), receives minor injuries.

The presence of mind of the School’s headmaster Mr. Bidyadhar Parida saved many a student when they escaped through a rear route on his directions with only half a dozen of them receiving minor injuries.

Mrs. Gitarani Patree said she was eating when a piece of iron fell from the sky on her leg. Eye witness said Rabinarayan, who died on the spot, was eating in his shop when hot gasoline fell on him killing him instantly. The burnt shops included one tailoring, one cycle repairing and four eatable shops. Preliminary official estimate put the losses at worth about Rs. 1.5 lakh.

The Government has started relief operations in the affected area. Three day’s free supply of ration had been ordered and clothes were being distributed.

Barring the journey along the NH40 from Guwahati to Shillong which is somewhat smooth for distant travellers under the blessings of the critical 4 lane project, the road scenario within the city of Shillong is indeed in bad shape. Almost all the internal roads of almost all the localities in urban areas are in deplorable conditions. Be it Polo, Laitumkhrah, Nongmangsong, Nongrah, Pokseh, Iewduh, Laban, Lumparing, Nongthymmai, Nongrah just name it. Anyone would wonder what’s up with the PWD department which maintains the roads of Shillong city. Are they sorely incompetent or are they lacking in funds or is it mismanaged by opportunists as many have submitted through letters to the editor here. Even when such deplorable roads are repaired during festive seasons or for that matter during the winter months, they don’t survive the first monsoon which arrives early as May or June. The impact of the first rain washes off the wearing surface commonly known as the top layer of the road and thereafter by the end of September or so, large potholes dominate the entire length and breadth, which results in every road in every nook and corner of the city looking unattended and shabby.

What basically leads to such deplorable conditions is the question which we road tax payers frequently wonder? From a layman’s observations the main factors which lead to such pathetic roads is firstly the lack of proper storm water drainage. Secondly, the manner in which the roads are repaired without proper treatment of the affected areas, and thirdly the haphazard dumping of solid waste in community drains and main drains of the city. On the arrival of high intensity short duration showers, the unattended solid waste clogs the inlet of minor drains which leads to water spilling over the thin layers and wearing off the surface of the road. Such layers with improper bonding during the curing period lead to waste water spilling over from the drains to wash away the layered bitumen thereby exposing the second layer which is the sub grade/sub base layer. The Sub base layer is usually laid with graded stones and course sand, which has more tendencies to crack, if water penetrates continuously. Another factor which contributes largely to this effect is the manner in which the major drains in urban areas are structured, constructed and

repaired. When any drain is opted for repair, the easiest method used commonly is the plaster finish with raw cement coating to the drains and wall section. Sometimes the inability of the drain structure to withstand the flow of water gives way to cracks which leads water to seep into the soil layer.

On casual observation, we see that the reason which attribute to all these defects is either the improper management of the authorities who look into the affairs of roads/ drains maintenance or the lack of supervision on the contractors who execute improper construction at site. In areas where SMB usually does the maintenance work, there is utter confusion on the responsibility it has. Some drains are either monitored by the SMB or the drains adjacent to the bitumen road are supervised by the PWD. This duality sometimes leads to total neglect of the roads. But who is actually responsible for all this mess? Is it we the people or is it the department/s concerned? Well, both are to be blamed since most of us who live in urban areas lack civic sense. We hardly have second thoughts when dumping garbage onto the drains beyond our compound walls, or to dump concrete waste, metals, plastic bottles and many other things directly into the common drain without worrying for the consequences that follow. We barely think over where the waste goes. No doubt we are a hill station where drains flow naturally by virtue of gravity, to the streams, but we are least bothered with what happens downstream.

Almost all the drains in Shillong date back to the 50’s and 60’s and were constructed during the erstwhile Govt. of Assam. Since then not many drains had received an overhaul or a new recourse. When the JNNURM scheme was implemented during 2008-2010, there were few drains in the city which got a makeover through the much hyped scheme; however the manner in which the drains got that makeover also was basically the usual cement plaster finish. Some drains were even brush-painted with liquid cement during that opportune period. The

By Wankitbok Pohshna

drains could hardly last for 5 years and whatever money that was pumped then, went in vain. The after effects of such bad management by the concerned monitoring authority resulted in areas like Dhankheti, Laitumkhrah and Polo etc to flood whenever we have heavy rains. What alternate solution do we have? At present there is none and we have to bear the brunt with each passing monsoon with a hope that rains don’t last for a longer duration.

What about the blame that we people lack civic sense in managing our solid waste? Shillong is a city with at least 4-5 lakhs inhabitants and to make it a clean city, is indeed a huge task for any civic government. But that wouldn’t have been an issue for municipal administered areas as many would wonder. Very recently the Govt through its implementing agency the State Investment and Project Management and Implementation Unit had introduced the Green and Blue bins for household waste management. The scheme was such that each household in the municipal administered and municipality areas receive the free bins to segregate their waste at source in the comfort of their homes. The green bin was meant for biodegradable waste and blue bin was meant for non-biodegradable materials such as bottles, plastics etc. Each member through public awareness campaigns was initially given demonstrations on how to use the bins at home. The implementation agenda was such that the public was pre informed of the time and process in which the garbage would be collected. Each clustered locality was given a cycle of 3 times per week whereby 2 collection trucks would come to collect the segregated waste. When the process was commissioned in June this year, people got confused on the manner in which the waste was required to be segregated by them. However, the collectors were lenient during the first week to teach and explain the masses about the entire new collection process. But by the end of the month of implementation the process abruptly stopped and as usual there was only a single garbage truck coming in the early hours of the day to do the

usual garbage collection. Many of us failed to understand what exactly went wrong with the entire process of effective home solid waste management. Some even surprisingly questioned why is it that most schemes introduced by the Govt are usually short lived?

At a time when the entire country is on a ‘swachta’ mission to make the nation clean, such effective system of waste management should have indeed been extended to even non-municipal areas too, but here we have a system that could not sustain for even half a year in a small area. The irony is that the bins have themselves gone waste; people are either storing water or stuffing eatables at home. Many think back to the AUSAID years, which was equally short-lived here in Meghalaya and without a sustainable model.

What then is the need of the hour? Each one of us has to correlate our contributions that we make every day to the society as a whole. Either we have to be proactive in the decision making process of the Govt or to shoulder the responsibility of being the careful watchdogs. The 21st century has lots more to offer, yet we in Meghalaya are still craving for better roads and basic amenities leave alone free Wi-Fi zones. There are hardly any usable public toilets around; even the ones which are there are ill maintained. At the onset when emphasis is being laid to promote tourism, Shillong has much homework to do. A comprehensive and in depth cleanliness campaign is required to bring people from all walks of life to come together to work out on a mission to keep our surroundings clean. Just the cleaning drive organized by the various Dorbar Shnong is not enough to achieve the swachta mission.

While on one hand Meghalaya boasts of being home to the cleanest village in Asia, every visiting tourist passes by dirty Shillong to reach that cleanest village. If the collective responsibility of the people of Mawlynnong resulted in their attainment of the cleanest village tag, then surely the onus taken by the State Govt, the implementing agencies and the people of Shillong will one day make each visitor to exclaim, ‘Oh Shillong! Thou beauty, unsoiled and serene.

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True, maintaining law and order is the responsibility of the state governments. But how could the prime minister and his government escape the charge of abetting the despicable acts of his own party men and not taking any action against them at political and administrative levels? And how could he ignore the fact that the despicable happenings taking place since he took over as prime minister have created an atmosphere which has encouraged the Hindutva protagonists to communally polarise the plural Indian society by making inflammatory statements.

It is not the prime minister alone whose utterances and actions are making the headlines, some of his ministers particularly Finance Minister Arun Jaitley are also making comments which generate controversies evoking angry reactions. The latest is his comments on the return of Sahitya Akademi Awards by nearly three dozen eminent writers, poets and rationalists in protest against the spike in intolerance under the Modi government. Attributing motives behind the returning of awards, Jaitley described the writers step as “a paper rebellion against the government”.

Jaitley, whom the people of Amritsar had rejected in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, asked the writers “Is this protest real or a manufac-

tured one? Is it not a case of ideological intolerance? Jaitley needs to explain whether the actions and decisions his government takes are not manufactured and ideological which often create more problems than solve the ones the country already faces. Jaitley must be feeling embarrassed by his critics describing his performance as finance minister uninspiring. For instance, against the claims made by his party’s top leaders before coming to power to bring back several lakh crores of black money India’s tax evaders had kept abroad, but he has been able to repatriate just over Rs. 4,000 crore only. Prices have been rising which has also made it difficult for the housewives to run the kitchen. Economy has not shown the promised improvement despite the prime minister’s self-promotional foreign visits which have yielded more promises than actual investments. Modi’s other ministers are also making laughable statements. For instance, the Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma had on September 18 ‘proved’ his secularist (?) mind when he said “late former president APJ Abdul Kalam was an ideal nationalist despite being a Muslim”. He had also termed the writers protests a “larger political conspiracy”. Besides the Dadri and Ghulam Ali episodes, the second point in Modi’s statement last week was his description of Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal as “the Nelson Mandela of India”.

Though described as Punjab’s shrewdest politician, Badal’s modesty and humility are undoubtedly treated as legendary. He is always ready to help the needy. But are these qualities the main reason for Modi to describe him as India’s Nelson Mandela? Mandela had spent his whole life for fighting against apartheid and protecting the oppressed. Fighting for his causes, he spent most of his life in jail. Badal also spent many years in jail for the causes dear to him which needed to be fought for. The phrase “Necessity Is The Mother Of Invention” also applies in matters politics. The question is why Modi thought it imperative to bestow the Nelson Mandela title upon Badal now. Did he want to belatedly reciprocate the flattering remarks of being “India’s greatest leader” and a ‘Sardar’ made by Badal about Modi during his visit to Gandhinagar in September 2013? Or, was it because Badal has been pressurizing the Centre, but without any positive response so far, to help Punjab overcome its acute financial crisis which has made the state virtually bankrupt? The feeling that Punjab is being discriminated by the Centre has got accentuated after Modi’s announcement of the Rs.1.25 lakh crores special economic package for Bihar where the BJP is fighting its ‘life and death’ battle in the ongoing polls against the formidable JD(U)-RJD-Congress mahagathbandhan. A BJP defeat could create serious political and governance problems for the Modi government and the saffron party particularly in the 2017 assembly elections in some states including Punjab. Do Modi’s adulatory comments about Badal signal the beginning of efforts to assuage the aggrieved allies and woo new ones? (IPA Service)

## BJP's Modi narrative’ is going haywire

# Everyday secular India is fighting back

By B. K. Chum

To repeat Fortune senior editor Philip Elmer-DeWitt: “Some people make headlines while others make history”. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week set a record by making both. He described lynching of Dadri’s Mohammed Akhlaq over rumours of beef eating and scrapping of Pakistani artiste Ghulam Ali’s concert in Mumbai and Pune as “saddening and unfortunate” incidents.

A day earlier he had described Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal as “the Nelson Mandela of India”. Modi’s observations evoked one of his critics to satirically comment: “If you don’t have a sense of humour, you probably don’t have any sense at all”. It had started with the prime minister breaking his 16 month long silence after President Pranab Mukherjee’s remarks made in the backdrop of a mob including a local BJP leader’s son and some party activists lynching Dadri’s Mohammed Akhlaq. Mukherjee had said that “India’s core values of diversity, tolerance and plurality could not be allowed to wither away”.

Addressing an election rally in Bihar Modi without referring to the Dadri lynching advised “Hindus and Muslims to fight poverty, not each other”. Like his initial silence on Dadri lynching, he also later kept mum on the BJP’s ally Shiv Sena-sponsored ban on Ghulam Ali’s planned Mumbai and Pune concerts and the smearing of ink on the face of BJP’s ideologue Sudhendra Kulkarni for organizing the book release function of Pakistan’s former foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri.

Widespread outrage over Dadri lynching and Ghulam Ali’s concerts ban later forced Modi to speak on the two incidents describing them as “saddening and unfortunate”. He, however, asked, “what is the Central Government’s relation with these incidents?” He accused the Opposition of indulging in “pseudo-secularism” and politics of polarisation. Bizarre argument coming from the prime minister of the world’s largest democracy!

True, maintaining law and order is the responsibility of the state governments. But how could the prime minister and his government escape the charge of abetting the despicable acts of his own party men and not taking any action against them at political and administrative levels? And how could he ignore the fact that the despicable happenings taking place since he took over as prime minister have created an atmosphere which has encouraged the Hindutva protagonists to communally polarise the plural Indian society by making inflammatory statements.

It is not the prime minister alone whose utterances and actions are making the headlines, some of his ministers particularly Finance Minister Arun Jaitley are also making comments which generate controversies evoking angry reactions. The latest is his comments on the return of Sahitya Akademi Awards by nearly three dozen eminent writers, poets and rationalists in protest against the spike in intolerance under the Modi government. Attributing motives behind the returning of awards, Jaitley described the writers step as “a paper rebellion against the government”.

Jaitley, whom the people of Amritsar had rejected in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, asked the writers “Is this protest real or a manufac-

## TO THE EDITOR

### Fear psychosis grips citizens in Garo Hills

Editor,

The directive of the CEO, TMB, Tura dated Oct 1, 2015 to shopkeepers and traders to file affidavits on the alleged closure of shops and business establishments on August 14-15 last is unjustified. The CEO was referring to the order passed by the Hon’ble Meghalaya High Court dated May 27, 2015 in case no. W.P.(C) (SH) 127 of 2015, banning the calling of bandhs. Apparently the CEO, TMB, Tura has overstepped his official powers since he no longer holds judicial powers after the executive is separated from the judiciary. The display of his designations including that of Addl. District Magistrate (Judicial) in the directions issued to the traders and the shopkeepers while asking them to file affidavits is irrelevant. Hence the impact of his arbitrary orders to every shopkeeper and trader within the Municipality area of Tura to file affidavits “to his issue of show cause,” notice on imaginary grounds is far reaching. This action of the CEO, TMB is unjust and has caused irreparable loss, damage and in-

jury to the innocent traders and the shop keepers of Tura for no fault of theirs although they have complied to the directive as required.

On receiving the orders from the CEO, the Tura traders and shopkeepers rushed to the authorised stamp vendors to purchase non judicial stamp papers of Rs 10 denomination but within about two days this denomination ran out so the unfortunate traders ended up buying stamps of Rs 50 denomination. The number of traders and shopkeepers of various categories in Tura is over two thousand. The innocent traders and shopkeepers had to spend over one thousand rupees for preparation of affidavits and purchase of stamp papers, some even engaging legal professionals for drafting, taking him/her to the court of Judicial Magistrate for swearing the prepared affidavits. The traders were coerced to comply with the orders or else the business establishment would be closed down and the license cancelled. The meaning of ‘direction’ has been explained by the Hon’ble Bombay High Court in the case of

V.P. GILLS vs AIR, Vide-AIR 1988 Bombay 416.

The order of the CEO of TMB, Tura is violative of the Constitutional Rights of the shopkeepers and traders putting them in double jeopardy. There was no justified ground to take action on imaginary basis and misinterpretation of powers. It is apparent that the CEO TMB, Tura is completely out of touch with ground realities. The citizens of Garo Hills are in constant danger. They can be murdered, kidnapped, extorted huge amounts of money and do so with impunity. Even in their homes people are insecure! People in remote villages too spend sleepless nights. Coming to the arbitrary order of CEO, TMB, Tura where he ordered the traders and the shopkeepers to file affidavits for observing the bandh called by the GNLA, the point is that 3-4 days ahead of August 14, 2015 rumours had spread that August 14-15 was declared a bandh by the GNLA. The rumour had immediate impact on the panic-stricken citizens of Tura. Moreover, the main gate of Tura Super Market and the gate of Ringrey Shopping Mall were also closed. The alle-

gation that on August 14, 2015 the shops and the business establishments in Tura were closed is not the correct position. The fact was that the traders and the shopkeepers did not dare to open their shops and business establishments. The fear-stricken traders were further intimidated on seeing the gates of the Super Market and the Shopping Mall at Ringrey closed.

The High Court of Meghalaya might not be apprised of the actual scenario of Garo Hills where fear and insecurity has gripped the citizens. The High Court should direct the Government of Meghalaya to look into the grievances of the traders and the shopkeepers of Tura and also to provide security to citizens and get the reins over militant outfits who are operating without fear whatsoever. The High Court should also rein in the CEO, TMB, Tura.

Yours etc.,  
M D Sangma,  
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.

“True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us.”

—Socrates

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 73 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2015

### Ray of Hope

IN the state of gloom generated by fundamentalists, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a rationalist attitude asking BJP President Amit Shah to reprimand party leaders who spewed anti-Muslim sentiments. It is good that the BJP leadership has dismissed the communal talk by some of its members and functionaries as that of fringe elements. A notice was issued to party MP Sakshi Maharaj who seemed frenetic over the beef issue. But the senior leaders including Modi had not taken firm enough steps to silence the fringe elements. Union Ministers Mahesh Sharma and Sanjeev Balyan and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar threw a shadow over the party's commitment to the Indian Constitution. The political implications appear to have knocked some sense into the party with the RSS pulling the strings behind the scenes. Allies like the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) in J&K had been alienated. Foreign investors looked like getting cold feet. Civil society grew anxious about the country's health. The PDP-BJP alliance in J&K has threatened to fall apart. The Muslim vote bank is likely to turn away in the Bihar poll. Narendra Modi's recent bonhomie with German Chancellor Angela Merkel may ebb away. Islamabad and Rawalpindi might cash in on the hidebound orthodoxy of some BJP leaders to close the gap with Washington.

What is most significant during festival time in Delhi is to place the utmost emphasis on Narendra Modi's 'Sabke Sath, Sabke Vikas' programme. The cow should be a salutary and not a destructive factor. Governance for social and economic uplift is the thing. If fanaticism gets the upper hand, economic development will take the back seat. Goddess Durga should slay the evil.

### LOOKING BACK

March 10, 1988

### 7 Indians abducted into Bangladesh

Seven Indian nationals who were preceding from Barsora to Gomaghat in the West Khasi Hills along the border road within the Indian Territory, were abducted some people of Chandpur village in Bangladesh on March 6, according to a delayed report reaching here. Among the abducted persons were a woman with her six-month old baby.

On the same day a man from the Chamruber village, under the Barsora outpost, while going from Bomaghat to Barsora was stopped by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) near Rajai village, inside the Indian border, in a bid to kidnap him across the border. The person somehow managed to escape and reported the matter to the Borsora police station.

Immediately after the incident, a flag meeting was held between the BSF and their counterparts from Bangladesh for arranging release of the kidnapped Indian nationals. The BDR have not responded, when reports last came in.

In another incident recently the Nalbari Forests Beat Patrolling Party had to fire to ward off entry of about 200 Bangladeshi nationals into the Rogagora forest reserve, under the Baghmara police station in West Garo Hills. The Bangladeshis came to remove teak and sal trees from the forest. After the incident the intruders fled away, unhurt.

Some eight miscreants from Bangladesh armed with sharp weapons committed dacoity in a house at Sobaisora village, under the Baghmara Police station, and decamped with some valuables. They also assaulted two persons, including a woman, causing injuries.

Reports said two Bangladeshi nationals were

apprehended by the Rongsa Police in the West Garo Hills, at the Panda Forest Reserve and Rongra Bazar respectively. They were prosecuted under the Foreigners Act.

In another incident, two cattle-lifters carried away two bullocks from the cowshed of a village at Mahendraganj. The matters is under investigation.

### Commotion over LPG distribution

There was commotion over distribution of LPG cylinders at Dhankheti on Wednesday. Some ladies rushed to the DC and lodged a complaint saying that they had been denied LPG for ulterior purposes.

The DC sent some Supply Department officials for looking into the matter. Reportedly refilled cylinders were found in the show room which were later distributed to the waiting consumers.

Earlier, the management of LPG agency and some of the consumers had angry exchanges leading to summoning of police.

When contacted the manager of the agency denied the charges of hoarding and said that the cylinders were meant for customers who had booked them earlier.

### NSA to be used with restrained

Tripura Chief Minister Mr. Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar has said that the National Security Act invoked in the state for the first time last month would be enforced with restraint.

Announcing this in the state assembly yesterday while participating on discussion on supplementary budget for 1987-88 he ruled out apprehensions that it would be used for political purpose or personal interest.

# Pranab's West Asia Tour Firm tilt towards Israel

By Parul Chandra

Barely a fortnight after taking over as the country's Prime Minister in May last year, Narendra Modi spoke to his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu. Tweeting about the conversation, Modi said: "I spoke to PM Netanyahu. We value our friendship with Israel & will script a golden chapter in the history of India-Israel relations."

The Modi government appears to be well on its way towards inking this "golden chapter" with President Pranab Mukherjee becoming the first Indian Head of State to visit the country between October 13 and 15th.

Likewise, he became the first Indian Head of State to visit Palestine and Jordan too as part of his three-nation West Asia swing between October 10 and October 15.

But it was really the President's visit to Israel that saw New Delhi crossing the Rubicon. It marked, in a sense, the Indian government's decision to no longer be bashful about its close and growing engagement with Israel, notwithstanding its continuing commitment to the Palestinian cause.

In walking the diplomatic tight-rope and skillfully nurturing close ties with both Israel and Palestine in the years gone by, a certain degree of coyness had marked New Delhi's deepening ties with Tel Aviv.

Though it established full-fledged diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv in 1992, no Indian head of State or government had ever visited Israel. However, India had played host to a State visit by then Israeli PM Ariel Sharon in September 2003. It's noteworthy that the BJP-led NDA government was in power then, just as the party is leading the government at the Centre now.

For Israel, the long and patient wait for an official visit by a top-level Indian leader has borne fruit. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu in his speech at the special session of the Knesset in honour of President Mukherjee's visit described it as "a historic milestone in the advancement of the friendship between our two nations".

India, decided to shed its

diffidence on official visits to Israel by top leaders by earlier announcing that External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and PM Modi himself will be undertaking visits to the Jewish State in the months to come. After all, in diplomacy a good measure for assessing bilateral relations has always been the exchange of high-level visits particularly at the presidential/prime ministerial level. The reasons why New Delhi is willing to see bilateral ties move out from behind a veil aren't difficult to fathom—it's clearly driven by pragmatism, strategic concerns and economic needs.

India is keen to forge greater cooperation with Israel in sectors such as

though that has come to be the mainstay of the bilateral relationship with Israel notching around US\$1 billion in annual arms sales to India, ranging from a wide array of missiles to spy and armed drones.

Cooperation in the defence sector got a major leg-up after Israel rushed emergency defence supplies to India during the 1999 Kargil conflict. At present, Israel is India's third largest supplier of defence equipment.

One reason why New Delhi had refrained thus far from tom-tomming its growing ties with Tel Aviv were the traditionally warm and close ties that India had with Palestine. India was the first non-Arab state to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole

grant of \$5 million by way of budgetary support for the Palestine Authority and five projects worth \$17.79 million during the President's visit.

And yet, despite repeated statements by India assuring Palestine of its continuing support, it is unlikely that this will entirely assuage the latter's concerns as Israel comes to occupy an increasingly important position in PM Modi's foreign policy calculus.

After all, in July this year India chose to abstain on a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) vote adopting a report that condemned Israel for its 2014 'Operation Protective Edge', a military operation in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

India maintained it abstained as it is not a signatory to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) referred to in the UNHRC report. The grounds may have been seemingly technical but there's no denying the fact that the tide has increasingly turned in Israel's favour.

Israeli PM Netanyahu also took note of this in his Knesset address during President Mukherjee's visit. He said the growing friendship between the two countries "finds expression in the shift in India's traditional voting pattern in international forums which conveys what is actually taking place between our peoples, between our governments, between our countries".

A measure of the importance the current government is attaching to its ties with Israel also came through when PM Netanyahu noted in his speech that he frequently speaks to Modi on the telephone—the two have met on the margins of the UN General Assembly session. And that during their latest such conversation, Modi told him, "We want Israel."

Music certainly for Tel Aviv's ears but certainly not for Palestine as it anxiously watches old and trusted friend India's increasing tilt towards Israel. --- *INFA*

**India maintained it abstained as it is not a signatory to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) referred to in the UNHRC report.**

defence, agriculture, animal husbandry, drip irrigation, IT, cyber security, telecom, pharmaceuticals, solar energy, etc. Besides, the Modi government is keen to see Israeli participation in initiatives such as 'Make in India', 'Digital India' and 'Smart Cities'.

It is also keen to boost its trade and economic ties with Israel. From bilateral trade worth US \$ 200 million in 1992 comprising mainly of diamonds, merchandise trade diversified and touched US\$4.52 billion in 2014.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, there are around 300 Israeli investments in India, largely in high-tech and agriculture. Some Israeli companies have even set up R&D centres and manufacturing plants in India. Indian companies, in turn, are making their presence felt in Israel through mergers and acquisitions.

It is the defence sector

and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974 after which it had opened its office in New Delhi. In the backdrop of the President's visit to Israel and the expected concern this would evoke amongst the Palestinians, India has gone to great lengths to reiterate its support for their cause. During his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah too, President Mukherjee assured him that India's "principled support to the Palestinian cause" would continue while calling for a "negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital..." He also told President Abbas that it would continue to work with Palestine in whatever way it could.

India, always generous when it comes to loosening its purse strings for the Palestinians, announced a

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Beef party for cheap publicity

Editor,

My humble question to the so called secularists in India: Did not the Independent MLA Mr Engineer of Jammu & Kashmir hurt the sentiments of Hindu brethren by openly and intentionally throwing a Beef Party in the premises of J & K Assembly recently? Doesn't he deserve outright condemnation? It's not a Hindu Muslim matter but a desperate attempt to bring chaos in the society. Let's not fall prey to such elements. What followed in the aftermath is a natural outburst. Interestingly the ban on beef was imposed by the Hon'ble High Court of J&K. What if one throws a Pork party in similar way much to the amusement of Mr Engineer? It's a never ending process. Let's stop it. Eating habit is a personal matter and none should interfere. Are we living in a civilised society? Beef and pork is largely eaten in Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh but we have never experienced such arrogance in these states as shown by Mr Engineer Rashid who crossed all limits recently. One hopes that better sense will prevail and such nuisance for cheap publicity will come to an end.

Yours etc.,

Himalayan Gaire,  
Via email

#### Enough of fashion

Editor,

The news report about the arrest of a fly by night operator from Guwahati claims to be a promoter of North East fashion and even dared to forge the signature of the Deputy Commissioner, East Khasi Hills is appalling. The question is who is colluding with these elements from other states in almost all functions hosted by the Art and Culture Department, Government of Meghalaya? Aren't there enough young entrepreneurs in Meghalaya who are doing commendable work of promoting North Eastern fashion across the globe without much help from the Government? Why is the Government not keeping a list of such genuine fashion designers and promoters and using their talents constructively? Whenever Govt attempts or claims to do something for our youth here it always lands up in a scam. Isn't there a single thing that Govt can do right? Daniel Syiem for instance is one credible fashion designer who has put Meghalaya and the North East on the global fashion map. More people

know about us and our weaves and colours from Syiem's international fashion shows. The State should be facilitating the growth of his company and making him a brand ambassador but it seems that Govt is not too eager to promote local entrepreneurs particularly those with no political strings. State Chief Minister, Dr Mukul Sangma should take a call on this and ensure that the culture of consultants who frequent this state and see it as a honey comb is brought to an end. Meghalaya cannot afford to waste money on such worthless firms and individuals.

Yours etc.,  
JS Kharkongor,  
Via email

#### Shillong regains its harmonious tag

Editor,

The people of Shillong have come of age. They understand that peace is the foundation for tourism and allied activities. Hotels in Shillong are all booked until November end. Owners of guest houses and home-stays are doing brisk business and they are learning the tricks of the trade. The presence of the Rock On 2 crew in Shillong has also added colour to the city

and its suburbs such as Umiam lake and its picturesque surroundings. Then the NH 7 is coming up and a whole lot of musicians will converge here. There is an air of celebration all around. This is what makes a city tick. The only thing that requires some amount of organisation is the garbage collection and disposal. This should be the Government's priority. There is need for a scientific landfill for turning garbage into manure. Govt needs to use force if need be to get this going. We cannot have opposition to every project particularly those that address the common good. If the people of Meghalaya can get their act together and work with Government in facilitating garbage collection and disposal, tourism would boom and tourists will go back with happy memories.

As a resident of this city I am happy to witness the celebration of Durga Puja with such gaiety and abandon. May the Goddess Durga shower her blessings on this city.

Yours etc.,  
A Ghosh,  
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.**

# Modi's US Gambit

By Kanwal Sibal

Prime minister Modi's September visit to the US has to be assessed on the basis of the totality of our relationship. We have to build common ground with a country that remains the world's foremost political, economic, technological and military power. The US is our biggest economic and technological partner; we have institutionalised dialogues with it without a parallel with any other country; our people-to-people ties are the deepest compared to any western country; our military ties and strategic convergences are expanding. However, all is not smooth sailing, which makes engagement even more necessary. The US still arms Pakistan; its soft treatment of Pakistan on terrorism and nuclear issues sharply contrasts with the draconian handling of Iran; it is willing to accommodate Pakistan's strategic interests in Afghanistan by promoting the reconciliation process there under Pakistani auspices and with China's participation, which, in turn, opens the doors of a stronger Chinese presence around us.

We are courting US investments, but US investors are waiting and watching. They are impressed by Modi's ambitions and plans, but want faster implementation of promises, especially on the ease of doing business in India. The US has complaints about our trade, investment and IPR policies, especially in the pharmaceutical sector. From our side, we are concerned about the growing sentiment against outsourcing in the US, restrictions on movement of our professionals, visa issues, the long-pending totalisation agreement and so on. Modi's second visit to the US was aimed at galvanising India-US ties. To further his ambitious plans—Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Clean India, Start-Up India, Smart Cities, infrastructure development, indigenous defence manufacturing, cleaner energy and so on—engaging the US at the political, corporate and diaspora levels is important. The "hype and hoopla" surrounding his foreign visits because of his manner of engaging his interlocutors, the quality of his message, his oratory, his media-savviness, the attention he draws to himself, and the rock star treatment he gets from the diaspora, raises his domestic stature to the discomfiture of the opposition at home. This occasions the kind of criticism of his US visit that we have seen, that detracts from our larger national interest.

In New York, Modi met CEOs from the financial, manufacturing, infrastructure and media sectors, apart from a dinner meeting with 42 CEOs from Fortune 500 companies. No Indian PM has visited the Silicon Valley for 33 years, which is astonishing given the number of people of Indian origin working with great success there in the frontier areas of the knowledge economy. Modi's meetings with Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Apple chiefs were unprecedented. The impact of this on the young, urban population and the Net users is bound to be considerable. The image of a modern-minded, tech-savvy, social media oriented Indian Prime Minister carries a positive message in itself, apart from bolstering Modi's Digital India campaign for which he received some positive commitments of support. Of course, associated with these giants of Internet technology are serious issues of Net governance, security and law and order related matters involving the use of social media by terrorists et al, which require regulation but conflict with the principle of freedom of speech. The latest controversy in India over encryption of Internet communications has allegedly been fuelled by a US social media enterprise. For all of Modi's success in marketing India abroad, especially with the slowdown of the Chinese economy opening up opportunities for us, the real test of success will be at home. Most of what foreign investors seek, Indian investors want too. If doing business is made easy, our own investors could get fired up. If Indian investors start investing in India, foreign investors will automatically gain confidence and follow.

The government's difficulties with the land acquisition Bill and GST, the consequence of a lack of majority in the Rajya Sabha, has sent signals of uncertainty to would-be investors. These need addressing, and Modi's meetings in the US offered an opportunity to do so. US and foreign investors seek a predictable tax regime and are still concerned about retrospective application of our tax legislation; they want simplified procedures, less red tape, quicker decision making on tenders, more regulatory reform and faster infrastructure development. All these points were flagged by them to Modi, who must know that if the gap between promise and delivery is not bridged quickly, his pitch will begin to lose credibility, with costs both at home and abroad.

Modi's US visit supplemented the results of the first ministerial-level India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue in Washington on September 23. That meeting agreed that US and Indian entrepreneurs could cooperate in a new innovation forum to be established in 2016. A joint work stream on the ease of doing business has been launched. Accelerating progress in infrastructure collaboration has been emphasised. It was agreed that a US Smart Cities Infrastructure Business Development Mission will go to India in February 2016 led by the Deputy Secretary of Commerce. The US affirmed its readiness to assist our goal of providing skills training to 400 million people over the next decade. An early signing of a new five-year MoU on energy security, clean energy and climate change is envisaged. On the strategic side, the important gain was the Joint Declaration on combating terrorism. All in all, Modi's US visit was a success. The author is a former foreign secretary of India and former envoy to the US and Russia. (The author is former Foreign Secretary)

Love them or hate them, you have to live with them –the ad breaks of various kinds in this market-oriented society where manufacturers vie with each other for consumer attention. But how does the target audience take them, or the ad-makers justify them? **Pramita Bose** takes a look

We all need a break from our daily routine. But what about commercial time-outs, more precisely, ad-breaks? Does it distract you in the midst of your favourite mega soap, a thrilling movie, an animated debate, or a nail-biting cricket match? Well, certain things can't be controlled even with the 'remote' in hand.

The promotional ads — be it on TV screens, the FM radio channels, or in the Internet, especially while surfing the Youtube videos — are considered the biggest irritants.

But sometimes ad breaks act as a welcome relief too. Says copy editor Javed Aslam of a reputed print media house: "It definitely lends a temporary respite from our gruelling schedule. In between tuning in to the day's headlines and developing stories, ad commercials serve as a perfect respite from the trials and tensions of life. They offer an escape route."

For homemaker Ritu Singh, it's an apt excuse to wind up the pending chores. "On most occasions, we get glued to the idiot-box and become oblivious to our immediate surroundings. Ad-breaks come as a timely wake-up call to get up from 'couch potato' posture. In any case, it's extremely un-



# Take a break



healthy to sit at one place for long hours. If an ad interests me, I take a pause, otherwise I always prefer carrying on with the pending work," she admits.

Ads in newspapers take up a lot of space using reams of newsprints to woo their target-audiences via pictorial or message-composed adverts. "Sometimes print ads grab my eyeballs if they are presented with an innovative spin. But often they appear intrusive," feels retired banker Pranab Mondal. "Once in a while, half-page or full front-page fliers and

side bottom solus-posters are okay during festivities or while placing seasonal offers," he concedes.

Outdoor ads like hoardings, banners or highway billboards with electronic compilation and flex sheets with high-quality digital print easily draw attention as size does matter in this context. "They are huge, like giant screens, catch the eyes from a distance. If packaged interestingly, it touches a chord instantly. "I personally like the ads issued in public interest. It raises civic awareness and

long drive, zipping along a beautiful stretch, these ads on high iron frames simply look awesome under a vast open sky," finds PR professional Arunima Sen.

Then there are the ads which remind us of the grim truths we tend to ignore. The latest campaign launched by the leading luxury and lifestyle brand Shazé implores viewers to speak up against social stereotypes and reveal their individuality. Its baseline is 'Join the Labellion' which condemns a regressive mindset of objectionable profiling, branding and labeling. The powerful canvassing grips the netizens in a jiffy and holds them back from skipping it on the sheer merit of its content.

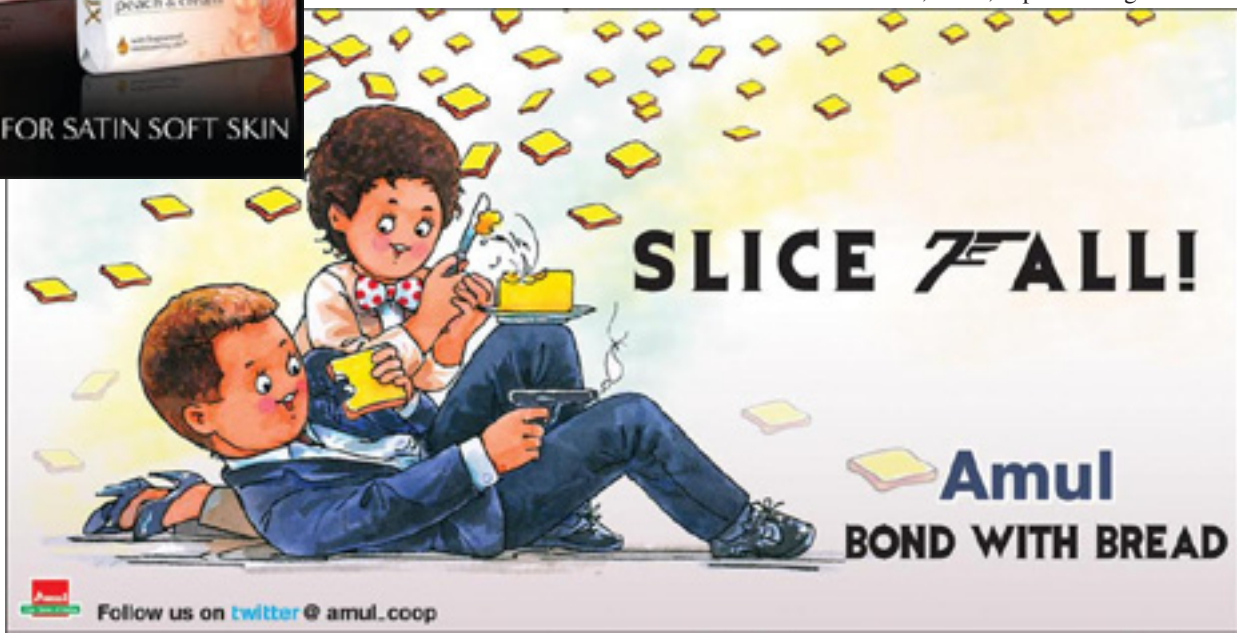
The new Nestle ad too

era to the contemporary e-age. Politicians and their parties too make a fast mileage when the election fever is on and slogans like 'India-Shining' or 'Ab Ki Baar Modi Sarkar' go viral with prompt effect. Ads capturing the flavor of current affairs also hit the bull's eye if treated properly and with the right kind of intent and attitude.

Ace cartoonist, actor, theatre personality and the brain behind many an 'Utterly Buttery Delicious' Amul ad — Bharat Dabholkar — stresses the importance of creative copy-writing and ingenious ideas over famous brand ambassadors. Gone are those days, when people would repeatedly recite punch-lines like 'Chal Meri Luna',

samajhdari hai' or hum the catchy jingles of 'Yehi hai right choice baby, Aha, Lehar Pepsi', 'Thums Up, taste the thunder', 'Washing Powder Nirma', et al.

"Today's ads are more technology-driven and less of content-oriented. Often young ad-filmmakers appear over-excited about the bulk of tools and avenues available at their disposal rather than focusing on scripts containing real substance. So automatically the aim diverts from a qualitative approach to delve into its quantitative aspect. As a result, they fail to narrate appealing stories to reach out to greater number of people," opines veteran ad guru Prahlad Kakkar. The Nike ads, topical Google doodles



also comes with a social angle. In the middle of a

narrates a story of its transition from the independence

'Hamara Bajaj', 'Lalitati's Surf Excel kharidne mein hi

and Tata tea (Contd on P-VII)

## Ancient wisdom can keep us from cursing

Your narrator was inspired to create a piece of Zen wisdom the other day: A journey of a thousand miles begins with: "Where's the @#\$%ing remote?"

Nine hundred and ninety nine miles later, the answer to this question for people with children is (a) in the fridge, (b) in the toilet, (c) in the dog, or, thanks to interstellar wormholes, (d) apparently in a galaxy, far, far away, never to be seen again.

Oh, and please excuse the "bad" language in the first paragraph. But I like using symbols like @#\$%^&, because readers can insert the "right" type of bad word according to their personal standards.

My family members are mild religious people whose strongest curse word is "bothersome", followed by blushes and apologies. My work friends are at the other extreme, and one former journalistic colleague surely popped out of the womb with the words: "What the @#\$% just happened?"

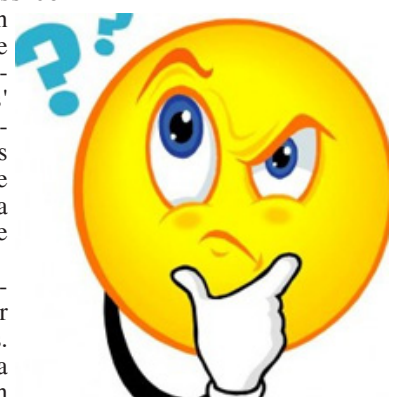
But you know what? Some people should never use bad words because it just sounds wrong in their mouths. Business commentators are an example. "Share prices fell a #\$\$%^-load of points" yesterday, an analyst said. Today's trading will see the index fall by a #\$\$%^ of a lot, he added."

Some professions have their own swear words. I was once at a meeting where an auditor used the term "non-compliant" and two shocked accountants put their hands to their mouths. If you want to upset musicians, call what they do "karaoke". And if you want to shock any doctor who enters your workplace, say: "Sorry, we don't serve homeopaths."

Psychologists say that cursing can alleviate negative feelings, so how can clean-mouthed people avoid missing out? I like the system used in the children's

Sapsucker, Rough Faced Shag, Red Faced Booby, Spangled Drongo, Agile Tit-Tyrant and the like.

The fact is that real life can be incredibly bothersome (sorry!), leaving you



in danger of losing your cool. But instead of cursing, keep calm by strengthening your inner spirit with modern day Zen sayings. Here are three that serve me well:

1) Good judgment comes from bad mistakes, so be sure to make plenty. 2) A good meal and three glasses of red magically turns any restaurant into a karaoke bar. 3) The most important lesson in life world is to just learn to let go. Except maybe for rock climbers. And trapeze artists. And arm wrestlers.

And people in tug-of-war contests. Oh never mind. But you can definitely use Zen on kids. When mine were smaller, I gave them a magically powerful piece of ancient wisdom which I'd just made up: "If the name of the day of the week includes 'day', something wonderful is going to happen." That helped them live charmed lives for years.

### The Funny side

And parents crossing the road with small children.

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I used to know a guy who used a list of avian species to express his feelings. For some reason known only to The Universe, the names of birds make really satisfying curses: Lazy Cisticola, Tufted Titmouse, Warbling Doradito, Brown Trembler, Paltry Tyrannulet, Yellow Bellied

After the Uber rape case a few months ago in New Delhi, do women feel safe travelling in on-demand cabs alone late evening or night? Many are wary. However, post-incident, the private cab companies went back to the drawing board to beef up their security aspects. **Madhumita Mookerjee** explores

# Safety net

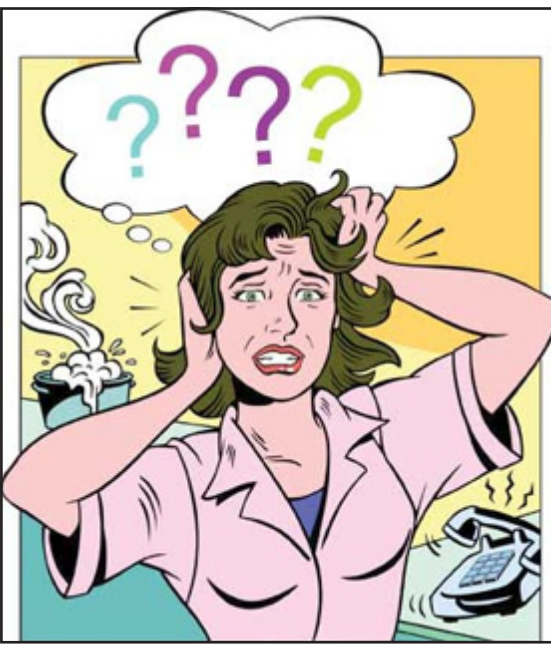
Almost five months after the Delhi Uber rape case, have young women become more pro-active in cities where these on-demand cabs ply?

Design professional Anwasha Raut, 29, who relocated to Delhi a couple of years ago, always carries a bottle of pepper spray and prefers to take a lift in a colleague's car rather than call a radio taxi on days she returns late to her Lajpat Nagar flat while her friend Suhana, who lives in Gurgaon, alerts her boyfriend immediately after boarding such a cab.

Malini Deshpande, 39, working with an information technology firm in Sector V in Kolkata's Salt Lake area, waits for her husband to pick her up from the airport instead of availing of an on-demand taxi on days she returns from a business trip, though her company makes arrangements for drop-back facility.

A few days back, a small

video clip went viral on social networking sites where a young girl hails a cab but walks to its front to click a photo of the number plate and driver before boarding, while in December last year itself, the central government had asked states to ensure that all unregistered taxi services cease operations.



On-demand cabs are a

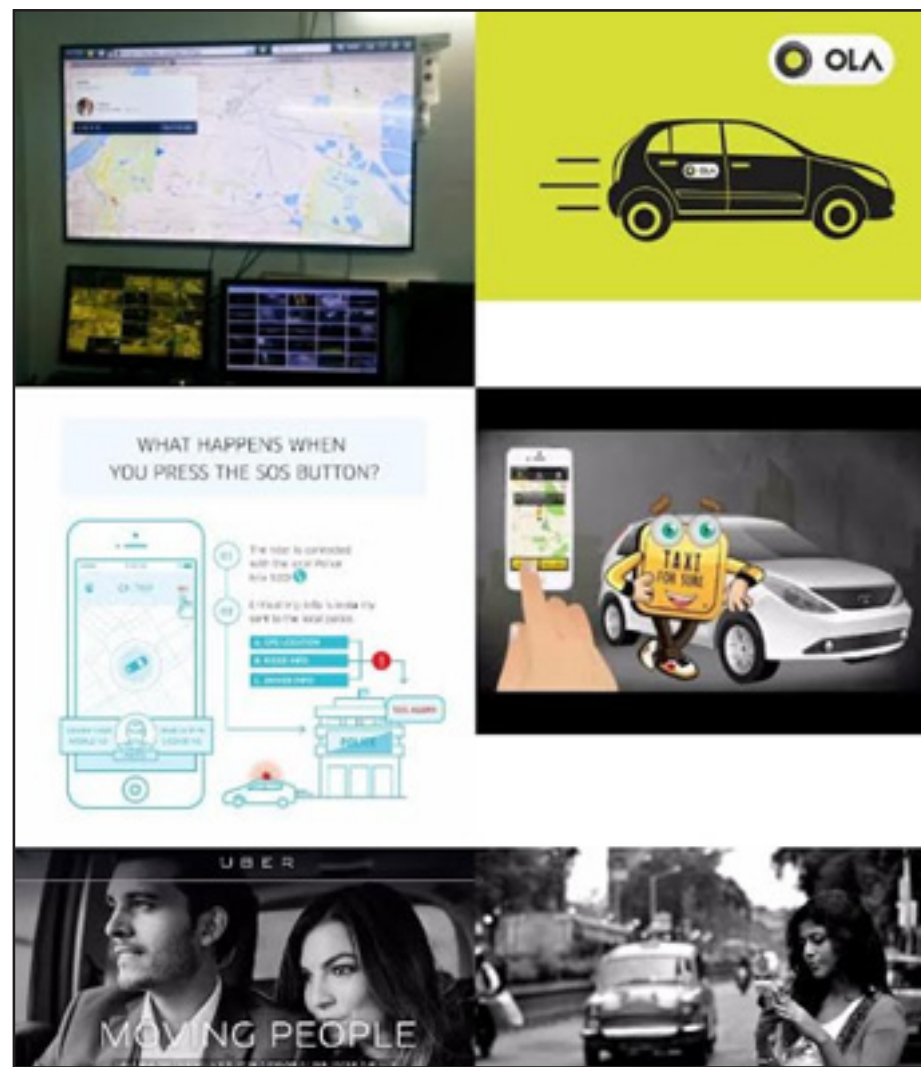
fairly new concept in India, though Meru Cabs started operations in the country in 2007. Today, there are more companies vying for a fair share of the market and brands like Ola Cabs, Uber, Mega Cabs and Meru Cabs all having top-of-the-mind recall for the young urban professional.

Travelling alone, returning late are common amongst urban women and at times unavoidable. In cities where cruising cab facilities are skeletal or lacking, the apps-driven radio taxi service has moved in to plug an urgent need-gap.

However, the Uber rape case brought back into focus the vulnerable and fragile environ in which young urban women function and it sent many of these new-age cab companies back to the drawing board to take a re-look at the existing security measures.

Binod Mishra, executive director, Mega Cabs, however, feels that despite the spate of unsavoury incidents, business has not been impacted "because the trust level of the customer is too high on the brand name. However, understanding of the model was inadequate".

Post-Uber, Meru Cabs, for instance, launched a special service for women in Delhi, called Meru Eve. "It is a cab service exclusively for women by women," Siddhartha Pahwa, CEO, Meru Cabs, informs, adding that every Meru Eve cab is equipped with 3G-enabled mobile phones with 'Himmat' (Contd on P-VII)



By Ranjan K Baruah

# Career options in hotel management

Hotel industry involves combination of various skills like management, food and beverage service, housekeeping, front office operation, sales and marketing, accounting. One may pursue courses related to hotel management in degree level or post graduate level to get a lucrative job in hotel industry. Minimum qualification required to go for a course in hotel management is 10+2. For certificate, diploma and bachelors courses 10+2 is sufficient. There are short term courses and post graduate diplomas which varies from three months to six months of up to one year.

National level entrances are being held for getting admission into government institutes like Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition or popularly known as IHM. Test consists of English, Reasoning, General Science and General Knowledge. The test is followed by interview for admission into reputed institutes. Course areas include food processing, food and beverages service, accommodation operation or front office, hotel accountancy, business communication, hotel engineering, computer, nutrition and food service, hotel laws, principles of management, sales and marketing management, human resource management, etc.

All those who are dreaming to join hotel industry should have a good organizational background, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, strong commitment and self-discipline. Some may get the job without having degrees or diplomas of hotel management but it is always good to have academic qualification related to hotel management. Some of the

courses related to hotel management are: B.Sc. Hotel Management, B.Sc. Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM), Bachelor of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Diploma in Hotel Management, Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Advance Diploma in Hotel Management, Diploma in Catering Science and Hotel Management, M.B.A. Tourism and Hotel Management, M.Sc. Hotel Management, M.Sc. Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Master of Hotel Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Hotel Management (PGDHM), Post Graduate Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology

**NCHMCT:** National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (Society) was set up in the year 1982 by the Government of India as an autonomous body for coordinated growth and development of hospitality education in the country. Initially, the Council was set up as the National Board of Studies in Food Management, Catering & Nutrition under the administrative control of Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Food) and subsequently transferred to the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India in the year 1984. It was rechristened as National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology.

**IHM in North East:** There are 3 IHMs in the North Eastern Region viz., IHM Guwahati, Shillong

and Gangtok. In order to encourage students of Northeastern States to come forward in the mainstream of hospitality education in the country, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has allotted reserved seats in these institutes.

**IHM Shillong:** The Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition's aim is to prepare well-rounded graduates for employment in hospitality industry, hotel, tourism sector, management and event management position at a global level. The courses focuses on hotel operational skills, management position in the tourism and hospitality industry and the skills needed for continued learning in a changing global business environment. Cpurses includes B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration, Trade Diploma in Food Production, Trade Diploma in Bakery & Confectionery, Craftmanship Course in Food Production, etc. Apart from these courses it also conducts short term courses under 'Hunar Se Rozgar Tak' which includes courses like Food Production, Bakery & Patisserie, Food & Beverage Service, House-keeping Utility, Event Facilitators. These courses are under Skill Development Programme and are for the local youths.

**(For further details and career planning interested may call 98640 55558 or send email to bkranjan@gmail.com)**

By Trisha Mukherjee

# Rushdie magic in new book

Blurring the lines between fantasy and magic realism, Salman Rushdie's brand new novel attempts a reconciliation of the human and the supernatural, the orient and the west and faith and reason.

Primarily set in New York in the United States of America, "Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights" revolves around Dunia, a female jinnia (genie), popularly believed to be creatures made of smokeless fire.

Spanning over a period of two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights, the author weaves stories within stories as he narrates Dunia's amorous affair with a mortal man named Ibn Rushd who later abandons her and the consequences that follow the birth of innumerable children out of the seemingly impossible liaison.

"This is the story of a jinnia, a great princess of the jinn, known as the Lightning Princess on account of her mastery over the thunder bolt, who loved a mortal man long ago... and of her return to the world... and then go to war. It is also the tale of many other jinn...and of the time of crisis, the time-out-of-joint which we call the time of strangenesses, which lasted for one thousand nights and one night more," the Booker Prize winner writes.

Following a long wait for Ibn Rushd, a philosopher unaware of her supernatural form, to return after he abandons her, Dunia slips through a slit between the two worlds, into Peristan or Fairyland.

Her brood, referred to as the Duniazat, continued to thrive, and as time passed by, they scattered across continents gradually losing track of their own origin and forgetting

one another's identities and eventually existence.

The only characteristic that was proof of their jinn descendancy was missing earlobes, and when Dunia returns to the mortal world, she searches out the earmarked descendants of her scattered tribe to "plant in their minds the knowledge of who they were."

Teresa Saca, Jinendra Kapoor, Baby Storm and Hugo Casterbridge are among the many successors of Dunia who Rushdie writes about in the book. The kind of storyteller that Rushdie is, his picturesque writing style, replete with metaphors and analogies, comes out significantly as he gives an account of the period of strangenesses.

"The influence of the jinn was everywhere, but in those early days, before they fully revealed themselves, many of our ancestors did not see their hidden hands at work...In a Romanian village a woman started laying eggs. In a French town the citizenry began turning into rhinoceroses. Old Irish people took to living in rubbish bins... A Russian official lost his nose and then saw it walking around St Petersburg by itself... Ants crawled out of a hole in a man's palm," he writes.

With jinns and collapsible portals between different worlds, the book is an oscillating ride between the genres of magic realism and fantasy, often evoking images from the collection of Middle-Eastern folktales "Arabian Nights," animated TV series "Aladdin" and fantasy novel series "Harry Potter."

Jinendra Kapoor's journey through the wormhole at the end of which he meets Dunia, for instance, is an instant reminder

of platform 'Nine and Three-Quarters' in "Harry Potter" that acts as a portal between the worlds of muggles and wizards.

Although Rushdie does advocate the cause of free speech and secularism through Ibn Rushd's attempts to reconcile reason, logic and science with God, faith and Quran, his argument is extremely subtle.

The novel is certainly engaging despite having drifted apart from reality significantly.

(Contd from P-VI) app that has video recording facility, panic buzzer, pepper spray, women helplines, speed dial for distress call numbers.

Meru further strengthened security with the introduction of additional features like 'Trip Tracker' and 'ICE' or 'In Case of Emergency' alert.

"From the beginning, consumer safety and security have been of utmost importance to Meru Cabs. Being pioneers in the industry, Meru has followed standard measures with all cabs being equipped with GPS, GPRS which could be tracked on a 24x7 basis," says Pahwa.

Ola Cabs, fresh after the Uber incident in January, unveiled an SOS button in its app, which, when activated, will send out all ride details in real-time, including GPS coordinates, to a pre-set friend or family member of the user via SMS and e-mail. "We are extremely concerned about ensuring security of all our passengers," says

Piyush Gupta, business head, East, Ola Cabs.

Ola's customers can also opt to share ride details with their loved ones proactively, without having to do so every time they take a ride, informs Gupta.

Ola also included a second layer of GPS in addition to the in-cab phone enabled GPS system already present in every cab registered on the platform.

"This initiative has been undertaken at a war footing and is nearing completion in most cities," Gupta says.

However, a Kolkata-based psychologist, speaking on condition of anonymity, says, "A lone woman is always a soft target not only in premium cabs but cruising taxis as well. Women customers, despite all the safety measures, will have to be more proactive because things can go wrong. What if the safety features don't work be-

cause of a technical glitch? At the same time, these cabs are here to stay because such services fulfil a key need gap. Recently, a female patient of mine attended office in a radio taxi during a political strike."

**Customer profile**  
Mega Cabs' business is heavily tilted (80%) towards serving individual customers as with all the other companies.

For Meru Service the target audience is SEC A, 30+ male while Meru Genie, being a younger and more economical product, the target segment is SEC A/B, 25-35 age group male.

Ola is more segmented. It offers three categories - mini, sedan and prime, with customers using the categories as per their needs. When they want to go a little far and require more convenience, they book a sedan. When travelling short distances, without much luggage, they use a mini. When on business, many customers prefer prime because they spend a long time of their day on road while working and so require the added convenience of a good vehicle.

**Apps-drive**  
The world of on-demand cabs is increasingly becoming apps-driven. So, is it

# Safety net

a fad or necessity?

It's the convenience factor swear the cab companies. Booking a cab at the push of a button, paying the bill amount digitally without even having to take out one's wallet, are some of the features that have made the apps a necessity.

Today such services are being marketed like any other consumer product with discounts and various offers too. "Whether you are in the service or consumer product industry, it's important to apply market yourself," Meru Cabs' Pahwa.

In recent months, the radio taxi industry has become increasingly competitive with the advent of new players giving customers a plethora of options. Thus, it is crucial to engage with the discerning customer and provide them with differentiated service offerings, exciting new features at attractive price points.

Mega Cabs' Mishra feels this is necessary to lure the customer what with too



many competitors.

Recently, Uber upgraded its technology in-app, including an SOS button so riders can immediately contact local authorities in the rare event of an emergency. Over this period, Uber says, its safety team has worked hard to enhance their SOS feature to be more robust and comprehensive.

"To that end, we have developed a bespoke solution which is ready to be rolled out across cities in India. Now, when a rider

pushes the SOS button, not only will they be connected with the local authorities over the phone but Uber's backend system will simultaneously generate a real-time 'SOS alert' that is sent directly to the local

police control room that responds to emergencies," Uber says in a statement.

The instantaneous alert contains critical information of the relevant trip and is projected on a dedicated screen in the control room of local law enforcement agency.

Deval Delivala, India Safety Lead, Uber says: "We are deeply committed to making transportation in India safer. We welcome the opportunity to partner with Police departments and other law and order agencies around the country to embrace technology and improve accountability in urban mobility for the benefit of millions of commuters in cities across India."

**Challenges**  
Operating on Indian terrain has its challenges. One is road infrastructure and unruly drivers with scant regard for traffic rules and second is converting car owners into users even though India's car ownership rate stands at 5% compared to 70% in the US," says an industry official. (TWF)



By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

# 'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, October 25, 2015

**Moon trine Saturn on your solar return chart denotes that positive developments will open up for you. Solution of complex problems will be found. You would bounce back with a surge in your confidence and start dealing with situations on their merit. You exhibit your practical and diligent side which helps you recognize and grab the new chances and breaks. Finances will be good even as sudden expenses could crop up from time to time. Travel will bring in desired results and contacts will create a congenial atmosphere for take-off. Meditation is needed for gaining deeper insight into personal relations and complex situations.**

**Aries : (March 21 - April 20)**

Your self confidence and outstanding personality may lead you towards achievement in matters related to your profession and finance. You will have an inclination for learning, higher education and gaining knowledge. Your professional requirements will be fulfilled and you will create an opening for enhancing your career. This is a phase when your charm and magnetic personality will prove irresistible to your partner. Your income will rise and financial dealings will prove to be beneficial at a later stage. Your communication skills will enhance your interpersonal relations. Both health and family life require greater attention so do not neglect these aspects.

**Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)**

Your stars in this phase predict that your career problems will soon be sorted out. If you are thinking of taking a step to bring about a change in your career then this is a good time to do so. Your expenditure may take a rise. There is a good time to go on a journey. Do not make any promises as the same may get delayed. Your health may need a little care so keep a watch and do not neglect even problems that seem small. You will enjoy romantic moments with your beloved. Time spent with children will be joyful.

**Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)**

The position of stars indicates mixed results. You will have to keep your wits in order to resolve career related problems. Professionally set your house in order on a priority basis. Your family and domestic problems will draw your attention and keep you involved so considerable energy and time may have to be spent there. You will plan to buy a property or to invest in real estate and funds may be arranged for the same. This is a time you need to look after your health and keep a close watch and take necessary steps and precautions.

**Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)**

Your financial issues will come into focus. There may be sudden unexpected gains and you may be on the lookout for new opportunities and profitable ventures. A professional or reputation matter will need your attention once you have addressed this issue, your work will be recognized and will be appreciated by your seniors. There is bound to be an enhancement in your image too. Entertainment and enjoyment are in focus as you rejoice with family as well as among loved ones. The unattached have much to look forward to as they are more communicative and expressive about their feelings.

**Leo : (July 23 - August 23)**

You will find good relations among loved ones and family and your children will show their respect and affection for you. Romance and love matters are expected to favour you and you may reignite your old relationships now. At your work place this is a right time to choose a better job prospect. Your seniors will respect and praise your work and you will gain popularity. In your monetary dealings you will find ready money at your disposal as fast earnings come your way. Your health related problems will disturb you; so take care. Be careful of the company you keep.

**Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)**

There are good chances of monetary gains and you may depend on the situation to create new things in the form of relations, profession or love. You may expect a gain in your professional relations and in personal relationships too. You find yourself to be more religious and spiritual minded. There may be an unexpected expenditure involved. You may go

on a pilgrimage to fulfill your religious desires. On the domestic front, the family environment will be invigorating and joyful. You may also be filled with a desire to take up some social work and you will find solace in this activity.

**Libra : (September 23 - October 23)**

The planetary configuration indicates mixed results for you and you need to put in your best efforts in order to get things organized. You may think of a better alliance and match in your personal as well as professional matters. It is better not to go on a long trip right now and if it is a necessity then care for your belongings and health. At this time you are in a position to have access to money and you will have to manage some surplus funds. Sudden unexpected money will come but there are openings for outlets also so spend wisely.

**Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)**

Your attention will be on your monetary funds and it will be better managed now. In order to enhance your image you may hone your interpersonal skills and establish important contacts. At this time you may have to spend more although your earnings will cover the situation. Your attention may also be focused on some spiritual gains. Your personal feelings may get hurt so avoid raking up past issues. Respect and affection will come to you from your family and you will enjoy a happy time among your children. Some good friends would come forward to extend their support.

**Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)**

Your luck will favour you in monetary gains involving matters at your work place. Some unexpected help is forthcoming in matters of your progress in financial or professional gains. This is a time you may develop good social relations. Personal and family relations will also improve. An atmosphere of change is indicated in property dealings and you may have to make some innovations in your plans. Some old issues related to real estate may get resolved. Your health will improve as you bring in some long overdue changes in your lifestyle. Spend some quality time with children and benefit from their company.

**Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)**

At this time you may enjoy a profitable dealing which will swing in your favour to give you monetary gains. You are in a position where you will make a little detour in your career so think wisely. Interaction with elders and their advice may further illuminate the path to success. There may be circumstances and developments which will bring about an overseas trip for you. Your partner may not support you in some matters so try to make the extra effort to strengthen your bond. Enhancing communications will help you tremendously in this regard. The health of someone in the family could cause some anxious moments.

**Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)**

You will be facing some unusual circumstances at your home or work place so try to maintain focus in all you do as well as an inner focus. Your thinking involves fear and contradictions in your actions and communications so keep your mind alert and do not think in negative manner. You will soon get out of the situation and be back on track. Devote some time in meditation and yoga. Your professional and monetary matters will get resolved and you may consult friends for the benefits to be gained. Your spouse will extend support.

**Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)**

Monetary and financial issues are expected to be your main objective at this time. You will have a suitable as well as a profitable venture at your disposal now and you will see that monetary gains are in hand. Your professional dealings will bear fruits and you will have chances of promotion also. Relations in the family will soar to new heights. Matters of romance and love are required to be wisely dealt with and the relationship will be filled with joy. You may decide to purchase some things related to home renovation. Your health requires to be looked after particularly while travelling.

# Take a break

(Contd from P-VI) ads are some of his favourite picks. acts with unpredictable presentation like those of 'jaagore' ads propagated by Tata Tea wins hands down for me. Also ads generating social consciousness like the government undertaken policy of 'Beti bachao beti padhao' - save and educate the girl-child, always interests me." Refusing to choose between a model and a celebrity to enact ads, fashion student and freelance stylist Tytus Pereira says that "I find any normal model, who is good at his/her job, appreciating as I can relate the ad better from a regular everyday guy's perspective. For example, I love all the Sprite ads."



There are some think-tanks who are iconoclasts and strive to demolish a set of preconceived notions and idols to bring about positive changes. Hence, socially-progressive advertising as true change-makers when being telecast or heard over the radio. Take for instance, the Cadbury Bourvita TV commercial which pays tribute to good habits and shows a mother training her son as a swimmer or an athlete, contrary to the popular notion of a father always playing a guide or a coach in life. Another TVC by jewellery brand Tanishq shows the wedding of a dusky bride, her daughter from a previous marriage and the new groom in her life altogether celebrating.

"Such ads increase my interest in the product and influence my decision. Fact is, I would prefer buying a product that is made in India as I want my country to grow and move forward," affirms Vinit Ahuja, pilot in a domestic commercial airline.

Content writer Nikita Sarmah says that "utility prod-

ucts with unpredictable presentation like those of 'jaagore' ads propagated by Tata Tea wins hands down for me. Also ads generating social consciousness like the government undertaken policy of 'Beti bachao beti padhao' - save and educate the girl-child, always interests me." Refusing to choose between a model and a celebrity to enact ads, fashion student and freelance stylist Tytus Pereira says that "I find any normal model, who is good at his/her job, appreciating as I can relate the ad better from a regular everyday guy's perspective. For example, I love all the Sprite ads."

"Stars as brand endorers understandably can enhance the saleability quotient of a particular product as they have their own brand equity to bank upon, but can they always guarantee the quality-content of products and services they are endorsing?" he argues. (TWF)

*"Every life has its years in which one progresses as on a tedious and dusty street of poplars, without caring to know where he is."*

— Max Muller

## The Shillong Times

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### Constitution versus Tradition

THE clamour of the conglomerate of Rangbah Shnong for a chief minister who is sympathetic to the cause of the "Indigenous Peoples" sounds like we are back to the days when the United Khasi, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills were districts under the State of Assam. Merely because there is an attempt by the Government to bring about a modern, progressive and inclusive Grassroots Administration Bill that looks at governance as a core issue and does not weave it in the web of tradition that is exclusivist in nature, does not mean that the Government is anti-tribal. Large parts of Meghalaya are no longer homogenous spaces exclusively inhabited by tribals and therefore any law or act that is implemented has to take cognizance of this present reality.

In recent months there has been a tug of war between the Autonomous District Councils and the State Government on the issue of passing the Village Administration Bill, 2015. The Bill is lying with the Governor who is taking time to seek legal and constitutional counsel on whether it is wise to endorse a Bill that is inherently ethno-centric and exclusive in a state that has a substantial chunk of non-tribal population. If such a Bill is passed, is it not likely to land the Governor in a legal tangle? Tradition which is a compendium of customary practices has its place in the private domain but if it is stretched to a point where governance is sought to be bound by its archaic diktats then it is bound to clash with the Constitution which has been debated at length before it was unanimously adopted. The Sixth Schedule which is a part of the Constitutional lays out some guidelines about how tribal areas lying within states that are ruled by a dominant non-tribal majority are to be given special concessions and some form of autonomy so that they can conserve and pursue their customary laws and practices. Before 1972, Meghalaya was part of Assam and hence needed that special protection. The quest for a separate state was essentially to enjoy complete autonomy to pursue a form of governance that kept the tribal interest at heart. Hence after 1972, the district councils had become redundant and ought to have been revoked. But political shortsightedness at the time has created a Frankenstein that is today fragmenting the polity and is threatening to create a political opinion that the State Government is the enemy of the people. This attempt to mislead the polity is dangerous and needs to be unmasked, the sooner the better.

### LOOKING BACK

March 10, 1988

### Nation wide swoop on smugglers

In a pre-drawn nationwide swoop 157 people were detained for smuggling and FERA violations.

The operation code named "searock" is still continuing. It is described, as the biggest of its kind so far.

The operation, which started shortly after midnight last night, was to detain organizers and financiers of smuggling, foreign exchange racketeers, and drug traffickers.

A total of 262 preventive detentions were issued under the COPEPOSA Act 1974 till this evening. Of these 189 were issued by the Central Govt and the rest by various State Govts.

The bulk of the orders issued relate to person involved in smuggling of gold. FERA violations, currency smuggling and drug trafficking.

The operations were jointly organized by officers of the Customs and Central Excise Department, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the Directorate of Enforcement, with the assistance of State police forces. An official spokesman said more people were expected to be detained during the course of the operation.

He said the operation was in pursuance of the Finance Minister's budget speech in which he asserted that the drive against smuggling, tax evasion and black money would continue.

### India will meet any threat to Siachen

India had made it clear that in case of any attack in Siachen area, Pakistan will get a befitting reply, Defence Minister Mr. K.C. Pant said in the Rajya Sabha today.

While the Indian troops are prepared to meet any threat to this area which is an integral part of India, the Government is in favour of a peaceful resolution of all bilateral issues, Mr. Pant said.

He was replying to questions on President Zia's reported statement that Siachen was engaged in a holy war.

Mr. Pant said strong words do not break stone. India had made its position clear. It would not like tension to build up in the area.

# Are ADCs becoming the community's heirloom?

By H H Mohrmen

The debate on the subject whether the district councils are still relevant in the state of Meghalaya has been in the public domain for a while. In fact the same question was asked the first time after Meghalaya was carved out as a separate state from Assam. But the question was not taken seriously till M. Syiem filed a PIL in the Hon'ble High Court to question if the tribals of Meghalaya still need the autonomous district councils to protect their rights, customs and traditions when we already have our own state.

It is sheer coincidence that this article was written on the first death Anniversary of late Promiwell Lyngdoh a man who had lived and worked in the two District Councils. His first appointment was as a clerk in the United Khasi Jaintia Hills District Council, Shillong and later when the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was instituted he opted to work as a staff at the JHADC Jowai till he retired as the principal secretary of the council. In a way he saw the building of JHADC from its initial stage till he retired as the chief bureaucratic functionary of the council.

It is important to mention him here not only because he is my mentor, but I have learned so much about the ADCs from him. So, when the debate about the relevance of the ADCs started after the PIL, it reminded me of the last discussion I had with him about the ADCs. On that particular incident when I asked him what was his opinion about present days ADCs (particularly the JHADC), with a heavy heart he said in Pnar (ka district council katni da khia dei khlieh yei tre). In English it means the ADCs are now in a precarious situation where the head is heavier than the feet.

This is a loaded statement from a true bureaucrat, a man who never spoke poorly about the institution which he had served his whole lifetime. The sign that the ADCs in the state had failed started to appear the day the state government took over the subject of Lower Primary school education from them. L.P. School education was the subject of the District Councils as per the Sixth Schedule but it was the L.P. school teachers in the entire state who had moved the first no-confidence motion against the ADCs, but we all failed to realize to gravity of the situation then. The main reason for the L.P. School

teachers protest against the ADCs which later also compelled them to demand that the state government take over Lower Primary education from the ADCs, was because of misappropriation of funds meant for teachers' salaries.

Then there is no end to allegations of corruption particularly in the JHADC and every Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report has always had adverse remarks about financial management or rather financial mismanagement in the ADC. To make matters worse the council has never put the CAG observations for debate in the house. The report was conveniently ignored by the Councils. And now we even have corruption cases against former CEM of the JHADC pending in the court.

It also reminds me of an amusing story that P Lyngdoh told me when the JHADC decided to contest the Supreme Court order banning the logging of trees and exporting of timber from the region in 1996. A dutiful bureaucrat that he was, he went to assist the CEM of JHADC to Delhi. When the battery of lawyers that the Council hired tried to justify that the forests in Jaintia hills were still intact and that the district still has a large area under forest cover, the opposite parties exhibited a remote-sensing map which was taken at different points of time and which showed the drastic decline of forest cover in the district. When the opposite party came up with convincing evidence, he jokingly said that they had no other option but to pack their baggage and take the next flight to Guwahati. We all know that only a small part of the reserve forest in the State is under the purview of the State Forest Department while a large part of the forests are under the jurisdiction of the District Council. So when the apex court intervened to protect the forest from timber contractors, it was because forested area in the State had dwindled considerably. Hence protecting the forests is again one area that the

ADCs had failed us. It continues even now despite the Court's intervention. The respective ADCs have time and again failed the people on their mandate to protect our forests and rivers in the state. Except for the recent bill on the traditional heads, the ADCs have done precious little in protecting the culture and tradition of the people.

Financial mismanagement, protecting forests, rivers and culture and traditions are not the only issues where the ADCs have failed us. Even recruitment of staff in the Council very often than not is unfair and nepotistic. Recruitments in the ADCs are made surreptitiously. Rarely would the EC constitute selection committees to appoint staff to the Councils. Even when selection committees were constituted only candidates related to the members were selected for appointment. Nepotism is rampant in the ADCs and till very recently there were still irregular appointments in the JHADC.

In the last ADC election I interviewed few candidates in Jaintia hills and asked them why they wanted to contest in the election. The common answer was - to be able to help people and bring some development to the area. Very few talked about protecting tribal cultures and tradition and still fewer talk about bringing laws and legislations to strengthen tribal culture and traditions. Of those interviewed none had even read the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Hence the ADCs have lost their meaning and now they are becoming mere political springboards - an opportunity for MDCs to leapfrog to becoming an MLA in the next election to the legislative assembly.

However, the question is - can we only blame the MDCs for the kind of ADCs that we have now? The onus is also upon us the electorate to elect our leaders and we have ourselves to blame for electing the kind of MDCs that we have now. In a democracy the public can only get the kind of representatives they

deserve. We have no other excuse but to blame ourselves for the kind of Councils we have today.

It has now become a trend in the community where we have this tendency of using the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution only to serve our selfish interests. We have claimed that our land rights allow us to do anything with our forests in the nineties when the Supreme Court ordered timber ban in the region. We again repeated that same mistake for more than four decades when we claim that we have every right to mine any minerals in the state without forest clearance of mining leases. Now after the NGT and High Court ban on various kinds of quarrying and mining, we plan to invoke paragraph 12 A (b) of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to do away with any national laws from the state. Is it not true then that the ADCs and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution are being abused only for the interest of the selected few?

The final question is - do we still need the ADCs now? If we say the ADCs are important to protect our tribal culture and traditions then the next question is, protect from what? Who is going to exploit us, when we are the majority in our own State? Why do we need protection when we already have a State of our own in which majority of the legislators are those belong to our own communities. And the next set of questions are - what are ADCs or what have they become now? Isn't it true that in the present day context the ADCs are merely a symbol of an institution which was mandated to protect the unique tribal culture and traditions? Whether the institutions have been able to fulfill that mandate or not is another question, but one thing is certain that tribal culture will remain or disappear with or without the ADCs. The ADCs are therefore becoming redundant except for the nostalgia that they are associated with. And if at all we still want to keep the institutions it is because it has now become a mere community heirloom that the general population wishes to keep for posterity.

## POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

### PRESIDENT PRANAB MUKHERJEE WORRIED OVER COMMUNAL INCIDENTS

President Pranab Mukherjee is a worried man. Mukherjee who has grown up in a totally different secular atmosphere of West Bengal and the Congress is said to be feeling suffocated in the sprawling palatial Rashtrapati Bhawan. Mukherjee who is a democrat is finding it very difficult to survive in this communal atmosphere and hence he had no option but to speak out. Sources close to him claim that if the PM does not speak out at the earliest and does not control his ministers, then he will have to think of some other option. Meanwhile his term ends in 2017 but then he can even register his name in history by taking some drastic option.

### NARENDRA MODI'S CLOUT FAILING IN BIHAR ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

The Bharatiya Janata Party is having a tough battle in Bihar elections with Nitish Kumar's graph rising rapidly... The BJP President Amit Shah whose future depends on the Bihar verdict is a desperate man these days. He is sitting in Patna and is personally monitoring the elections. The local leaders including Sushil Modi, the former deputy CM of Bihar is not being used. Shah is only transporting senior ministers or party leaders to Patna from Delhi. The way the BJP brought film stars like Ajay Devgan to boost the insipid campaign too turned to be a failure. He was booed away by the crowds. The decision to field the Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also out of desperation but soon realization dawned on Shah and the PM himself. Even then Modi had to cancel two meetings in the second round. He had to address about a dozen rallies but had to cancel most of his rallies. What is more scaring is that the local media and the bureaucracy are also supporting Nitish Kumar.

### PRIME MINISTER ANGRY WITH RAM VILAS PASWAN

Whether the BJP wins or loses in Bihar, three ministers of Narendra Modi government Ravi Shankar Prasad, Ram Vilas Paswan and Upendra Kushwaha are sure to lose their jobs. All three belong to Bihar and while Prasad is a BJP minister, the other two are NDA allies. Prime Minister Modi is extremely miffed with Prasad over his performance. Complaints are piling up against Prasad particularly from Bihar. He has come to be known as call drop minister. Despite the fact that the most crucial elections are on in Bihar, where it is a do or die for the BJP there is no connectivity and people are finding it very difficult to connect on phone. Same is the case with Ram Vilas Paswan. The PM is unhappy with him. Paswan is busy in Bihar trying to save his own bastion and vote banks. The dal prices have soared high like never before during elections.

Upendra Kushwaha, according to BJP insiders and IB reports has failed to consolidate his own votes. The Kushwaha votes are divided between Nitish and Kushwaha. A large chunk is all set to vote for NDA Paswan has reportedly told a social scientist from Bihar that he cannot even face his constituents after the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat made the statement on reservations and even after Dadri lynching issue.

Most Dalits are used to eating beef.

### CONGRESS HIGH COMMAND NOT ALLOWING MUSLIM LEADERS IN BIHAR CAMPAIGN

A K Antony's prescription is working in Bihar. Shakeel Ahmad the Congress general secretary in -charge of Delhi and Punjab and who is a Bihari himself, has been kept out of the campaign. Ahmad who is one of the architects of the congress strategy in Bihar has been kept out of the campaign because he is a Muslim. As per the recommendation of A K Antony, no Muslim should be seen or projected in Bihar and for Rahul every word of Antony is bible. Despite the demand for Shakeel from all over Bihar as he is the only Muslim leader of the Congress who has popular support, he is not allowed to campaign. But then Ahmad is not the only Muslim leader that the party has withdrawn from the Bihar campaign. Even senior Congress leader like Ghulam Nabi Azad who was given charge of Bihar was also withdrawn at the last moment. on the eve of election.

### THREE WAY BATTLE IN KARNATAKA CONGRESS FOR PCC CHIEF'S POST

With indications of a cabinet reshuffle in Karnataka, the PCC chief G Parmeshwar is all set to be inducted in the government giving rise to speculation of an overhaul of the Karnataka PCC. In view of this cabinet reshuffle and the PCC chief to join the government, hectic lobbying has already begun. While Rahul Gandhi is said to be backing Dnesh Gundu Rao, the minister for food and civil supplies in the Karnataka government. The son of the ex CM Gundu Rao joining the race is Shiva Kumar. the most arrogant minister in the state. He is being backed by S M Krishna. Krishna who had gone into hibernation has again become active and is actively backing Shiv Kumar. And S R Patil, the IT minister is the front runner and is ed by the chief minister Siddaramiah. The fight has now become the battle between the three top leaders Rahul Gandhi, chief minister Siddaramiah and former central Minister SM Krishna supposed to be close to both the Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Congress Vice President. Rahul Gandhi.

### BATTLE HOTS UP IN UTTAR PRADESH CONGRESS FOR NEW PCC CHIEF

The Uttar Pradesh Congress is vertically divided over the issue of who should be the next UPCC chief. While the present general secretary in charge of UP Madhusudan Mistry continues to back the present ailing PCC chief Nirmal Khatri and vice versa Khatri is backing Mistry who too is on his way out. Both Khatri and Mistry are for status quo. The other group which is led by the ex Congress minister RPN Singh and the UP CLP leader Pradeep Mathur, are for a change of leadership. The pro change group is again backing either RPN Singh or Pradeep Mathur or Pramod Tiwari. The irony of the matter is that both the groups have adopted the communication head Randeep Surjewala as their godfather. Both these groups are cosying up to Surjewala. (IPA)

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Littering, not our fundamental right

Editor,

I respect all religions and I have nothing against the celebration of religious festivals. But my contention here is the manner in which the participants in the procession of immersion of the idol of goddess Durga, heavily littered the Tura bazaar area and the roads surrounding the Tura super market leading to Babupara via SBI, and the whole stretch of road leading to Hawakhana junction. Left, right and centre there were empty plastic water bottles strewn all over the road, leaving little distance between one bottle to another. True, the constitution of India guarantees each and every citizen the right to preserve, practice and propagate their own religion, but surely, littering our own town in the name of celebrating religious festivals is not our fundamental right. TMB must ensure no such littering of our town takes

place in the name of celebration of any religious festivals in future. Swachh Bharat indeed!

Yours etc.,  
N.R. Marak,  
Tura

#### Big Brother SC

Editor,

The Supreme Court (SC) juried for its own cause partially against principal of natural justice. It is a cardinal judicial fact and truth that nowhere in the world "Judges Appoint Judges" under a self-made non-statutory Collegium system which has its own ingredients of varied nepotism, multiple favouritism, iron-curtained opaqueness, myopism, among others to name a few defects and it also shares usual and normal ivory-towered Indian Big Brother habits and practices like any other conventional "Selection Board" are not fully fault-free and flawless though no system is ideal. A Delhi High-Court Chief Justice

was not elevated to Supreme Court only because he was not in the good-books of the then CJI. Being a very much "inconvenient" and "independent Judge" is an open secret amongst the higher judicial circles in the country though he was made Law Commission Chairman as a "relief" and "propitiation" by the then errant CJI and the Government afterwards.

As a person having direct knowledge and very close interaction for last 40 years with the local level Munsif and Magistrate courts across the country up to the Supreme Court of India, it is my measured and weighed observations that there are black-horses and sheep clothed wolf judges with no exception to the Supreme Court who consciously sway and tilt keeping a hawk's eye for post-retirement posting with the State/Central Government(s) as well as with very promising and highly prospective litigants whose case is heard and decided by them - a very recent past case is the episode of an Ex-CJI facing disproportionate asset case.

However, the present day Collegium System is the best of the worst and better than the NJAC. On recalling the well known Biblical analogy that a doubting Thomas is better than (untrustworthy) Judas "shortly Thomas betters Judas, if the SC is willing for voluntarily and self-inspective corrective "check & balance" refinements. Let the Collegium System with all its inherent and inborn deficiencies and defects prevail and continue as necessary evil as the lone and only trustworthy hope of the commoners in the present day untrustworthy political system crying foul to capture and cage the Big brother SC by the NJAC Act which is trumpeted as cure and prevention rather panacea against all the judicial ills and diseases.

Your's etc.,  
Dr GJohn  
Dehradun

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

*"The level of our success is limited only by our imagination and no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."*

—Aesop

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 76

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2015

### Sharif's Rhetoric

DURING his visit to Washington, Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan, held out a package of assurances. Evidently, the Obama administration, with Afghanistan on its mind, put pressure on him to say that Pakistan's territory would not be used against any country and that attacks across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border would not be allowed. Sharif also told Barack Obama that his government would be proactive in taking action against Lashkar-e-Taiba and its affiliates. That will convince Washington of Islamabad's resolve to participate in the offensive to counter terrorism. At the same time, Sharif is reported to have produced evidence of Indian complicity in stirring up violence in the federally administered Tribal Areas, Baluchistan and Karachi. Nawaz Sharif emphasised that eradicating terrorism was an obligation of all countries in the region. The US was called upon to mediate, on such contentious issues as Kashmir which was a matter of bilateral concern. No doubt New Delhi's conditioned reflex has so far stymied negotiations on this prickly issue. India has however, reason to be upset about the US nod to a hydro-electric project in Gilgit-Balochistan. Sharif's unfounded charges against India have sharpened the antagonism. There is, however, evidence of a tilt towards Pakistan on the part of Washington. The US talks to the civilian government in Islamabad. But it should not be blind to the fact that the army headed by General Raheel Sharif is the real power in the troika ruling Pakistan. It cannot be unaware either of the secret link between the ISI of Pakistan and the terror groups operating on its soil. US efforts to persuade Pakistan to talk peace with the Taliban also create misgivings. The Haqqanis have long been at war with US and NATO forces. It is time the US pressured the Pakistani army into seriously joining a peace effort. Only that will soften New Delhi's face-off with Islamabad.

### LOOKING BACK

March 11, 1988

### New policies on 3 key sectors soon

Meghalaya Chief Minister Purno A. Sangma has said that the state government would announce in the forthcoming Assembly session a new policy on education, industrialization and housing. He said besides, agriculture and horticulture the present govt was determined to bring about qualitative improvement in its performance in this three sectors.

Mr. Sangma who was addressing a public meeting at Mission Compound here today, said that the education system should be so oriented that every tribal child grows with confidence, "I don't want that our children should grow up with an inferiority complex". He called upon the tribal students to inculcate the spirit of competition in life.

The Chief Minister said while the State Govt would make all efforts for providing jobs to the educated they should seek newer avenues of self employment. Unfortunately our State has not come up with industrialization so far. Although there is lots of scope, the govt would be very careful in setting industries. We will not go for major industries if we go at all we will go on a very selective basis, he announced.

He said emphasis would be laid on cottage small and medium industries based on local resources. Electronics industries would get a boost under the new policy. In keeping with his poll promises, Mr. Sangma said that an electronics complex would be set up in Jowai.

Mr. Sangma announced that the State Govt had decided to set up a museum and

institute of culture in all direct headquarters.

Referring to the congestion in the Jowai Civil Hospital, he said that another 25 beds would be added to its existing strength of 75. He said he is aware of the pitiable conditions of the State Dispensaries and PHCs and assured that the Govt was determined to bring about a rapid change.

Dr. R. C. Laloo presided over the meeting which was addressed among others by Mr. O. L. Nongtdo and Mr. J. D. Pohmen.

The Chief Minister visited the hospital, addressed the doctors and later held discussions with the district administration.

### Government had open door policy towards NSVN: Gen Rao

Nagaland Governor Gen. K. V. Krishna Rao today reiterated his Governments open door policy towards the insurgent groups and welcomed any initiative for ushering in permanent peace in the state.

Opening the budget session of the sixth Nagaland assembly, he repeated his Governments appeal to the underground to come forward and work for peace and prosperity of the state.

Gen Rao said his Government had upgraded several administrative centers into higher administrative headquarters in Tuensang, Mon, Zunehboto and Wokha districts to bring the administration nearer to the people.

# Dal Prices

## Govt misses people's pulse

By Shivaji Sarkar

Capitalism is at its zenith in a country which has a statute abiding by socialism. So the poor man's dal (pulses) is demanding a price - Rs 200-odd a kg, which millions of Indians can ill afford. The bottom line being the "promises" made by politicians in Bihar to bring down the price to Rs 100, which would be at least Rs 20 more than the price prevailing about two months back at around Rs 80.

Who gains? The capitalist dalwala! Instead of bringing down the prices to around Rs 30-40, about two years ago, politicians are willing to give the predatory sellers a minimum bonus of Rs 20 a kg. Unfortunately, the political dispensation is not trying to protect the interests of the poor man, the garib, who has been losing all battles. His votes are going waste! Many aver as the governments at all places are trying to protect the cartels, hoarders and all those who fleece him. The politicians, who promise to halve the prevailing dal price, forget that it is the same arhar or tur dal that the farmers have sold for less than Rs 40 a kg.

Similarly, they have not been successful in checking onion prices. It sells at Rs 60 to 80 a kg. All other vegetables are beyond affordable levels. So are rice and wheat. Even other commodities like soap and detergent are selling at prices three to four times their manufacturing cost.

Political players and cartelized traders may have every reason to be gleeful and even ignore the vital issue, which is eating into the core of democracy. They have got nothing to lose. Whether prices rise or fall, their pockets get heavier notwithstanding more stringent black money laws now.

The blame game may suit poll campaigners of all parties but it is eroding credibility of the governments. While Nitish may take a pot shot at Modi's "Na Khaunga, na khane doonga" remark by making a reference to dal, the latter is being accused of not

utilising the special Central fund for price stabilisation to help the consumers. In any case, people have started realizing they are ek hi thali ke chatte batte hai - "birds of the same feather." This is dangerous. It signals frustration and is shaking their faith in the democratic functioning.

Further, it is giving rise to a feeling that the politician is no more the master of governance. So who is it then? A popular refrain is that the bureaucracy is ruling the roost. Some even point out a nexus between the officialdom and fleecing traders. To support their argument, the common man says, that whichever government it may be, nobody has the courage to touch the bureaucracy. Despite change of many governments across the country no dispensation dislodges the officials from their portals. The nexus of officials and business carries on and even grows. And it is the people who continue suffering.

Their argument may have some logic. This country has seen the government body NAFED getting wired in the spiraling of onion and potato prices many times. It has also seen how carefully Amul changed the packing mode of edible oil to only a litre to add to the profits of oil traders by over ten per cent. And, the so-called political bosses, who happen to be chairmen of such organizations, neither tried to prevent these machinations nor even uttered a word in protest.

Strangely enough UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav does not know that he can order raids. Instead, he wants the Prime Minister to suggest a formula. The question to be asked is whether there is any for-

mula to take him out of his apathy - or can we say sheer complicity?

Luckily, all are not like him and it isn't that some States have not realized it and started taking action. At least Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and a few other States have conducted 3000 raids to "unearth" 56000 tonnes of hoarded pulses. Obviously, there is bureaucratic complicity. Every police station knows about such activities. However, they do not act, perhaps for a price. Else a scam of such an all-India magnitude can never take place.

Additionally, there is the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and State local intelligence units, whose job is to monitor such anti-people activities. If they have not reported such hoardings, then they-- from topmost to the lowest employee-- must be severely pulled up. In case, they had reported it and action at other levels was not initiated, all such officials need to be summarily sacked for effective governance as also to restore faith of the people in the system.

Interestingly, in all such cases of rise in prices, some strange alibi is often extended by the concerned government departments. It is said that there is a gap in production and demand. The demand for pulses is at around 21 million tonnes and production at 17.38 million tonnes. The supposed shortage is being met through 5000 million tonne imports. That's good. But why despite such imports prices do not remain in check? Instances of the States which acted are enough to suggest that the traders have cartelized and indulged in hoardings all across the country.

It may be they are also motivated by certain politi-

cal dispensation to embarrass the government.

The other reason is the Indian large businesses consider themselves above the law. Is it so because they can buy whosoever they want? What is the explanation that those at the helm of affairs are unable to check the phenomenon? These are difficult questions but beg an answer.

It so happens that the first NDA government of former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had realized the misdemeanor of the businesses. Vajpayee had set up an agriculture monitoring body. It used to regularly keep a watch on production of different farm commodities and plan accordingly. It had a sanguine effect. Prices during his six years of rule remained stable and inflation almost unknown. The subsequent UPA government dismantled it and the country is in throes of severe price spiral since then.

Maintaining prices and not just the price index, at affordable levels has to be the prime concern of any government. Agriculture has to be in direct focus of governance. Proper production, uninterrupted supply chain - may be a PDS, check on hoarding and other malpractices can make commodities affordable. Farm prices are the key to the people's purchasing power. The growth of the country is looking for can be ensured through this measure.

However, if all this is ignored or left to "market forces", as the UPA did, it would lead to the collapse of the economy and perhaps much more. There is no shortage of any commodity. It is mismanagement that is causing the turmoil. Supporters of capitalism and socialism may choose to interpret their aim as just one to keep the people happy and ensure the country prospers through good governance. India can't claim either. ---INFA

# Meditating on Goddess Durga

By Deepa Majumdar

This article is dedicated to our historical Durga—the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi. It is inspired by Revered Swami Ishatmandaji's article - *Ma Durga: The Symbol of Hinduism* - from which all quotations and citations are drawn.

In my earliest recollections of Durga Puja at the Ramkrishna Mission in the Shillong-of-the-sixties, I missed the great Goddess altogether - because I was mesmerized by the terrifying green Mahisasura - the buffalo-demon, who conquered the gods and ruled them. Small as I was, he was more accessible to my eye-level than was Durga Herself. The ubiquitous Christian devil could not have frightened me more. Here was a creature that possessed the temerity to oppose the Divine, in a theistic tradition that has no real equivalent of the devil. Because God is, in the end, beyond good and evil, even in theistic Hindu texts like the *Bhagavadgita*, nothing really opposes the Divine - neither the devil, nor nothingness, nor matter - the three standard antitheses of the Divine in western thought. Mahisasura was for me more menacing than Durga's lion with his flashing teeth.

As my gaze would then slowly travel upwards, I would stand still, even more mesmerized, at this feast for the eyes - a leonine Goddess astride a lion - every nuance in her image meant to evoke awe - for She stood for *Shakti* strength. Her ten arms remain with me to this day as a grand deca-symbol that is causing the turmoil. Supporters of capitalism and socialism may choose to interpret their aim as just one to keep the people happy and ensure the country prospers through good governance. India can't claim either. ---INFA

some artist's imagination - but through revelation in the depths of meditation. Unicorns and mermaids are the products of human imagination - not the Gods and Goddesses.

Born out of the luminous sphere of divine Incandescence - or the combined energies of the gods, including the trinitarian Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva - Durga incarnated in this phenomenal world in order to redeem it. Described in the Chandī (1-81) as "most beautiful among all beautiful things in the world," Durga is the "Redeemer of Sorrow." As the infusion of the eternal into the temporal, omnipresent-omnipotent Durga comes to unify. While Mahisasura may be literally the buffalo-demon, he stands also for our inner ego-laden cancerous darkness - to be vanquished by the might of Mother Durga who also resides within us as our force of goodness. Their visible asymmetry - that She, ten-armed and astride a lion, towers over him effortlessly, while he cowers at her feet - inspires confidence and hope in human nature. It affirms our inner asymmetry - that the good within us far outweighs our inner evil. When by worshipping Her we overcome the Mahisasura within us, we win heaven and earth... For along with inner purity come the results of the virtues - well-being and wealth (Laxmi), knowledge (Saraswati), success (Ganesh), and valor (Kartik).

Given the grim reality of the plight of young women in India today, we might seek a different interpretation of Mahisasura. Although it is touching in the extreme to see in the ritual of the Kumari Puja, ardent monks worshipping a little girl - perhaps we need more. One result of colonialism and contact with the west is a swing from the inwardness inherent in Indian culture, to the outward eye of the west - from the zeal for inner purification to the zeal for social justice. Anything but clashing, these two stances are, in fact, fundamentally related. The external Mahisasura after all is an expression of our inner Mahisasura. The patriarchal Mahisasura of contemporary India may be interpreted as an ominous combination of pimps, rapists, violent mothers-in-law, and wife-beaters abhorred by virtuous men and women alike. And the awe-inspiring Mother Durga Herself might be understood as the most righteous, virginal, cosmic and acosmic power of justified feminist wrath - a dispassionate wrath full of might because it is non-violent and bereft of hatred. Indeed Mother Durga's face is anything but angry. Of all Her facial expressions, what strikes me most is that palpable regal might - the kind of effortlesspower that can never arise from anger or hatred.

There is little point in worshipping Mother Durga with pomp and glory once a year, if we do not respect her representatives on earth with the same zeal every day of our lives. A society in which little girls do not feel safe and young women live in terror - accosted by wolf whistles and "eve-teasing" - can only incur the wrath of the divine Durga. The same is true of the abuse of boys and young men. Therefore, the best way perhaps is to inculcate the power of Durga in the hearts and minds of our children - so that they may transcend gender altogether and ascend to the all-shining stature of true Self-knowledge - by enkindling and uniting with the inmost Durga.

### TO THE EDITOR

### On promoting ethnic weaves and fashion

Editor,

Apropos the letter by J.S. Kharkongor (ST Oct 22, 2015) we are touched by the words of encouragement and recognition of our sincere efforts to promote and preserve our heritage weaves and crafts by putting Meghalaya and our weaving community on the global fashion map. It has been a long and challenging journey till date but with the constant love and support of family, well wishers and supporters of our vision, we continue to move ahead. It is no easy feat coming from remote North-East and making a name in the national and international fashion industry, especially, all the while ensuring that we carry the mantle of our indigenous weaving community and make our hand-woven fabrics the focal point in all our works and shows. Using our own limited resources-financial, manpower and infrastructure-we have been working towards reviving the use of hand-woven fabrics from Meghalaya into contemporary designer-wear, thereby promoting and preserving traditional handloom fabrics that aid in sustaining and encouraging weavers to preserve their dying craft. With our presence in the prestigious fashion weeks of the country there was a renewed interest in these fabrics. We were being approached and selected for worldwide events. This is when we turned towards the State Government for financial assistance, which we have received on a couple of occasions. Nevertheless, we definitely would welcome more support and assistance from our State Government.

The Department of Sericulture and Weaving and the Arts and Culture Department, Government of Meghalaya have extended their support towards our company. We are sponsored fabric and given financial assistance for a couple of our international shows which has helped us tremendously and also motivated us to go the extra mile. The Chief Minister, Dr. Mukul Sangma, felicitated us at Creative Encounters' 18 Degrees Festival presented by Government of Meghalaya, Department of Arts & Culture in 2014, in recognition of our effort to promote Ryndia. This was a huge milestone for us and we are grateful for this honour and felicitation. We respect Kharkongor's views that the State Government can and should be more supportive towards local entrepreneurs and invest in the pool of local talent available in the State in various fields, with faith and trust. This would definitely support a lot of us-designers, artists and entrepreneurs- to host and participate in worthwhile events and bring laurels to our State. At Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House we have been consistently collaborating with talents in our State, be it for music for our shows, local and traditional jewelry, textile designers etc. We welcome any local artist, individual or organisation whose aim is to promote and preserve our arts, crafts and culture to collaborate with us for taking North East to the world. After all, we believe in Fashion with a Cause!

Yours etc.,  
Daniel Syiem & Janessaline Pyngrope,  
The Department of

Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House, Shillong

### Pathetic condition of road on NH-51

Editor,

The NH-51 runs from Paikan to Dalu via Tura. The widening and repairing of the road, especially Assam portion (from Paikan to Berubari) is very good up to Aguragre (near Asanang). The damage to the road due to flash flood/ landslides etc, during Sept 2014 has also been repaired except for the entire stretch from Aguragre to Asanang, the condition of which is really pathetic. One would experience this while journeying from Tura to Guwahati. I wonder what actually happened to this portion and why it is left unrepaired for so long? Who is the contractor and why are not the so called babus of PWD of NH-Division, Tura taking action against this contractor? I have never seen any JE, SDO, and Executive Engineer busy on the road to inspect and supervise the works except for the Road Mohori (Sectional Assistant) who is busy filling up the potholes on this NH Road. On seeing this, one can guess that work culture of the PWD (Roads) has simply deteriorated. The roads and bridges are actually being constructed, repaired as per the whims and fancies of the contractors and Road Mohori who are non-technical. This is one of the reasons why accidents are taking place especially on the portion of the road from Rari to

Jengjal. Lastly, I appeal to the GSU and various NGOs to raise their voices together for cause of the development of this region in particular and the State in general.

Yours etc.,  
Kearson Sangma,  
Tura.

### Tura's approach road

Editor,

Tura is a beautiful hilly town from where one can enjoy the greenery surrounding the mighty Tura hills and smaller hills surrounding it. The Ganol river which one can see while coming to Tura is boon to the people of this town. But what saddens me is the narrow, unrepaired and bad condition of the approach road to this town. If the approach road from Rongram to Tura-Chandmary, can be widened and repaired beautifully, I think it would add to the beauty of this town. Right now, the said portion of the road is no different from a village road and is not fit at all to be the road to the most important town of Garo Hills Districts. This road cannot be compared with the internal roads at Ampati - the headquarter of the infant South West Garo Hills District. I would therefore request the District Administrators, Officers, Engineers of the department and also the Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma, to do something for the improvement of this approach road at the earliest. That would add to the beauty of this hilly town.

Yours etc.,  
Kearson Sangma,  
Tura.

*“It is far better to grasp the universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring.”*

— Carl Sagan

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 77 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2015

### India-Africa summit

THE India-Africa summit which is on shows India's growing interest in forging new ties with the African nations which are attending the event. The summit is considered to be India's most important and extensive outreach initiative. However, China has a distinct edge over India in the attempt to foray into the African market which has a rich potential. India's commitments need to be supported in the long run with ambitious investments embracing finance, technology and infrastructure. The country is banking on the slowing down of the Chinese economy and is targeting to step into the breach. But how in the present circumstances, can India beat China in the race for a foothold in Africa? Since the first summit in 2008, annual trade between India and Africa has doubled to touch \$72 billion whereas trade between China and Africa is said to have touched the figure of \$200 billion. On a visit to the African Union in 2014, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang declared that his country was aiming to hit a trade volume of \$400 billion. Its direct investment is slated to increase to \$100 billion by 2020. Against this background, India, weighed down with poverty, is unlikely to do wonders in the vast region.

India would do well to invest its limited resources in its immediate neighbourhood to maximize gain. Afghanistan comes as a top priority. Rescue operations in Nepal following the earthquake may also yield reach dividends. For India, Africa is a far cry though the prospects may be extremely inviting.

## LOOKING BACK

March 12, 1988

### Rs 3000 Cr. credit for farmers next year: PM

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi today said that financial institutions in the country providing credit to the agricultural sector have been asked to increase their rural credit by about Rs. 3,000 crores in the next financial year.

Mr. Gandhi who was addressing an adivasi rally at Faizpur in Jalgaon district to the state, said the Government was planning to provide at least one branch to a cluster of 15 to 20 villages.

The proposed “Jaladhara” programme envisaged a provision of agricultural aid at nominal rates to nearly 50,000 villages in the drought prone areas, he added.

The Prime Minister said tribals must be granted rights over forest produce and be fully involved in forest management.

He also suggested that the forest cover in the country be increased to one-third of the total land as against ten percent at present.

Mr. Gandhi said the Government is formulating a national policy for rehabilitating tribals ousted from project areas.

He said the aim of the proposed policy was to ensure that the displaced tribals are able to engage in their traditional practices.

Congratulating the Maharashtra Government, Mr. Gandhi said the state had made immense strides in the agricultural sector over the last forty years.

This was essentially because the State Government had focused on the provision of irrigation, power, fertilizers, pesticides and rural credit to the people, Mr. Gandhi added.

The Indian National Congress held a session in Faizpur in 1936 under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal

Nehru.

### Excise party held on charges of rape

Seven staff of the State Excise including a Deputy Superintendent was recently arrested by police on charges of raping a woman whose shop they had gone to raid in search of illicit liquor.

According to reports, the excise team seized some local brew from her tea stall in Bhoi area and picked up the woman in their vehicle. They drove to a motel on the highway where they left the seized materials and left for Khanapara. They returned to the motel after midnight and occupied a room.

Police acted on the basis of a complaint from the woman. All the arrested persons were released after a night's detention in the lockup.

The woman was sent up for medical examination. According to reports, the medical report had confirmed the charge is not without basis.

### Kerala Governor's plea for cooperative federalism

Kerala Governor Mrs. Ram Dulari Sinha today expressed the hope that the Centre would accept the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations and implement them “in a spirit of cooperative federalism”.

In her maiden address to the state assembly on the opening day of the budget session, she said the Commission, while recommending that the existing constitutional structure should be kept intact, had made several recommendations which would lead to “improved relations” between the Union and State governments.

# Sharif's US visit is bad news for India

By Kanwal Sibal

Mumbai attacks in which six US nationals were killed.

Nawaz Sharif's Washington visit a few days ago revealed once again the soft US approach to Pakistan and its ambivalence on India-Pakistan issues.

The visit was preceded by talk of a US-Pakistan nuclear deal, which Pakistan does not strictly need because of its on-going nuclear cooperation with China. But Pakistan presses for it because it cannot tolerate the idea of the US denying it parity

templating any 123 type agreement with Pakistan or an NSG exemption.

Strategic Obama and Sharif expressed their “shared interest in strategic stability in South Asia” in their joint statement. This ignores the fact that China's continuing nuclear and missile relationship with Pakistan makes this a triangular China-Pakistan-India affair and not merely an India-Pakistan one.

Moreover, India's nuclear programme is under

**Why the US feels that its objectives in South Asia can only be met by establishing some kind of a balanced equation between India and Pakistan is difficult to understand, given the huge disparities between them in geographic, demographic, economic and military size, in human capital, in the functioning of democratic institutions, and so on.**

with India.

Ignoring the unrestrained expansion of its nuclear arsenal, its quest of tactical nuclear weapons which it openly threatens to use against

India, its dismissal, on the eve of Nawaz Sharif's visit to Washington, of any possibility of accepting any restrictions on its nuclear programme, Obama gave approval chits to Pakistan in the joint statement on its nuclear conduct by welcoming its “constructive engagement” with the Nuclear Security Summit process, its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its efforts to improve its strategic trade controls and enhance its engagement with multilateral export control regimes.

It is only after the visit that an un-named US official categorically declared that the US was not con-

some agreed constraints as part of the India-US nuclear deal, while those of China and Pakistan are not. Why is the US disregarding these realities and equating India and Pakistan?

Obama applauded in the joint statement “Pakistan's role as a key counter-terrorism partner”. By reiterating “their common resolve to promote peace and stability throughout the region and to counter all forms of extremism and terrorism”, Pakistan was made to look good.

Worse, Obama made the suppression of extremism and militancy the cooperative responsibility of all South Asian countries, not only that of Pakistan as the source of all these forces.

The defining counter-terrorism partnership of the 21st century between India and the US is absent from all this.

Credence

## TO THE EDITOR

### On Unemployment

Editor,

In these times of high unemployment rate in the state, I feel that an awareness and curiosity about professional or job-oriented courses would be beneficial. Many students, after passing their Class XII exams still opt for a B.A., B.Com or B.Sc degree courses. These, if we compare to the prospects of professional courses, are considered “old fashioned.” They belong to the period of the nineties and the early 2000's. What a professional course does is it directs a student towards getting a specific job, by a kind of rigorous teaching that is specifically meant to educate, shape and mould the student in a specific subject. Recruitment from campuses and internships show that there is a lot of scope with professional courses. If one were to ask most of the youths in the long queues in the MPSC office or those coming out of a Staff Selection exam Centre, what course they studied, the plausible answer would be B.A., B.Sc and B.Com. Being a youth myself and in constant search of a job, I can say for a fact that even if one gets a First Class First in graduation or post-graduation, one is not guaranteed to get a job. The only job that one can get in Shillong, if one passes an “old fashioned” course, is a teaching job but not everyone has the aptitude to be a teacher. As the old saying goes, ‘teaching is more of a gift and talent.’ What the stu-

dents of today have to understand is that once they graduate the tough times begin. They need to be aware and curious about what companies, private and public enterprises and Government offices want as their criteria for employment. Students of today must not perceive a professional course as risk-taking, but something that should reflect their prudence and wisdom.

Yours etc.,  
Willie Gordon Suting,  
Via email

### Liquor stores on the highway

Editor,

Apropos the news item ‘GS ROAD: A 100-km JOURNEY WITHOUT TOILETS’ (ST Oct 21, 2015), one notices that there are many liquor stores all along the highway but not a single toilet.

My question to the all concerned departments is: “Who are these liquor shops meant for in the National Highways?” There is hardly any rural hub or market near these liquor shops. Hence one can only deduce that they are meant for travelers like me. Honestly speaking, when I am traveling or driving along the GS Road these liquor shops do attracts me. In August this year I had traveled by road from Mumbai to Delhi via Ahmadabad & Jaipur which is roughly about 1500 kms. I crossed four states Maharashtra,

Gujarat, Rajasthan and Haryana but did not find a single liquor shop or bar in the vicinity of the highways. I was surprised so at a particular Toll Gate I asked a police officer why there were no liquor stores along the highway. He informed me that as per the rules of NHAI, no liquor shops or bars are permitted near the highways. In case any liquor shop is permitted in a small town that falls near the highway it must be 100 meters away without direct visibility and indication in the highways. If so, are the same rules not applicable in our North Eastern Region?

Yours etc.,  
B K Barman,  
Shillong-4.

### Poor service by MeECL

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily I would like to bring to the notice of the Power Minister, Government of Meghalaya, about the indifferent attitude of the authorities of Meghalaya Electrical Corporation Ltd (MeECL). Jowai to the problems faced by the residents of Muplieng village. Muplieng is a village with 500 - 600 houses and is located between Jowai Town and Nartiang Village under West Jaintia Hills. The residents of the village have not had power supply for the past three months due to breakdown of a very old transformer. The problem was brought to the notice of the MeECL, Jowai im-

mediately but in spite of repeated reminders for the last three months by the village authorities the fault has not been rectified. The irony is that when payment of electricity bills is concerned, the authorities leave no stone unturned to collect their dues. I must mention that the supply of electricity is one of the worst in the State as half of the time the village remains under darkness. In spite of that the residents have never failed to pay the bills regularly, sometimes even paying more than they should because of the absence of meters or because of faulty meters. However, my concern is not about the bills but about the real problems faced by the residents, especially the 1000 odd school going children who have to depend now on other sources of power like candles and kerosene lamps and have to spend hours inhaling smoke under insufficient light to study and to complete their schools activities. This has not only affected their studies but more importantly their health is at stake. Therefore, I appeal to the concerned Minister to look into the matter with sympathy and ensure the problem is rectified at the earliest. This will greatly ease the problems of the residents of Muplieng village, especially the young students.

Yours etc.,  
Watchington Sna  
Muplieng Village, Elaka  
Nartiang,  
West Jaintia Hills  
District

India lagging behind China in nuclear power capacity

## Decision making delay stalls projects

By Nantoo Banerjee

How many years does it take for the government of India to, first, decide on and, then, implement a nuclear power project? The subject is relevant since neighbouring China, India's main rival in global economic standing and growth, has announced its plan to set up 100 nuclear power projects at home and abroad in next 10 years. China is the world's largest energy consumer. It is also the world's No. 1 coal producer. It has a reasonably good proven petroleum reserves. China's latest tie up with the United Kingdom to set up a massive \$24-billion nuclear power plant partnering EDF of France on build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis at an insignificant investment cost of the UK has raised eyebrows of the entire western world. The UK-China deal was signed and sealed last week during the visit of President Xi Jinping. China signed more than \$62 billion deals with the UK. China is expected to design the British nuclear power plant. On record, the anti-nuclear campaigners helplessly slammed the UK-China deal. The campaign was short-lived having no impact on the decision of the UK government.

Consider the contrast. India's atomic power research dates back to 1950s. India's first plant, Apsara, became critical in 1956 and started generation in 1957, only three years after the world's first nuclear power plant, Obnisk Nuclear Power Station, near Moscow became fully operational. India's Tarapur atomic power unit came in the 1960s. Notably, China declared its first nuclear power generation programme as late as in 1970. In 1991, China's first nuclear power plant having 288MWe capacity was first connected to a grid. India hardly have much hydrocarbon reserves. Imports account for 80 per cent of its annual petroleum requirement. Its coal quality, exploitable reserves and production are poor. The country imports well over 100 million tones of coal per year. India and China went for nuclear power almost around the same period. Yet, India's power plant have been able to build a nuclear generation capacity of only a little over 5,700MW as against China's over 19,000 MW. Until now, hydroelectric power projects in India have shown longest gestation period - 10 to 25 years - for implementation since their planning stage. India's new nuclear power projects may soon catch up with the lethargy run of hydro power projects. Nothing seems to be moving, except an Indo-Russian initiative at Kudankulam in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Ten years have passed since the United States and India signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement that almost threatened the very existence of the then seemingly fragile Congress-led UPA government as its major political ally in Lok Sabha, the Left parties, pulled out of the arrangement in 2008. The government managed to survive by quickly manipulating ‘outside support’ until another form of a UPA combination ruled the country for another five years. The BJP-led NDA government is in power since May 2014, but no new nuclear power plant, born out of the Indo-US agreement, is still in sight.

All that is happening is what the Indian democracy has mastered in getting the country's economic development indefinitely

stalled - debating on-and-on on issues such as why India should at all go for nuclear power and why this site or that site to set up such projects. Political parties and so-called intellectuals seem to accord their free movement of tongues much more importance than on-ground development to meet the need of the country's teeming millions. Few recognize the fact that India, the world's second most populous country after China, and it is only a third of China's geographical size. Leave aside the question of economically catching up with China any time soon, India has to step up development at least to feed its population, nearly 30 per cent of which make do with less than \$2 per day and have little access to daily dire necessities, including electricity.

India have little choice but to go for nuclear power generation in a big way to ensure that nuclear power contributes to at least 20 per cent of its total electricity requirement to provide noticeable support to the country's energy security programme. Nuclear power is generated by only a limited number of states. Yet, it contributes to 11 per cent of the global electricity generation as of now. Presently, nuclear power's share of India's energy generation capacity is only a meagre 2.1 per cent. India is still heavily dependent on thermal power, much of which are highly polluting. The country's total generation capacity as on September 30, last, is 2,78,734 MW and 69.7 per cent of it is in the thermal category. The hydro-electric capacity is 42,283MW accounting for 15.2 per cent of the total capacity. Other sources, including non-conventional energy, have a combined capacity of 36,471 MW, making it 13 per cent of the total. The availability of Hydro power is mostly seasonal. Not all of the non-conventional energies are reliable for round-the-year supplies and grid-linked to serve major demands on a regular basis. India has to go for nuclear energy in a big way to meet its development needs whether politicians and anti-nuclear activists like it or not.

Among the world's largest nuclear power producers are the US (99,244 MW), followed by France (63,130MW), Japan (42,368 MW), Russia (24,654 MW), North Korea (20,717 MW), China (19,007 MW), Canada (13,500MW), Ukraine (13,107 MW) and Germany (12,074 MW). France, China and Canada are in the process of building huge amount of nuclear power capacity in the coming years. Some of the arguments produced by the People's Republic of China in favour of its massive nuclear power push are probably more relevant to India than China or any other major atomic power generators. China says it is increasingly concerned about air quality, climate change and fossil fuel shortage. Nuclear power is being looked as an alternative to coal power in China. And, China wants to maximize self-reliance on nuclear reactor technology, designing and manufacturing reactors and encourage international cooperation and technology transfer in this regard. Paradoxically, India, one of the world's earliest proponents of clean nuclear energy, is still wasting time debating on to have or not to have nuclear energy. (IPA Service)

*“Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abyss nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.”*

— Thomas Huxley

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 78 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2015

### India-Australia

PM Narendra Modi's visit to Australia last year seems to be bearing fruit. Australian trade minister Andrew Robb said that his government was taking steps to finalise the civil nuclear deal and the free trade agreement by the end of 2015. However, he indicated that there were still some hurdles to be cleared. Australia had signed a civil nuclear agreement with India in September to supply uranium. Modi had struck a similar deal with uranium-rich Canada. The civil nuclear agreement with the US is also on track though there are some glitches over nuclear liability. The importance of nuclear power to meet India's energy needs has, however, lessened with the falling global price of crude and the awareness that nuclear energy is costly. Greater importance attaches to the comprehensive economic cooperation agreement between the two countries. Andrew Robb emphasised that the focus of the agreement would be on services which account for 75% of Australia's economy. That would include engineering, health, education, the environment, project management, construction, financial services and the like. The lacuna is that it does not put due stress on the farm sector which is the backbone of the Indian economy. Andrew Robb also talked of progress towards finalisation of a free trade agreement with India. Canberra wants increased access for auto components, financial services, pulses, wines, meat and dairy products. New Delhi for its part wants greater access for professionals, textiles, leather, auto parts, pharma, etc. It is inclined to relent on such items as auto components, high-end wine and meat but will not budge on movement of people and agriculture. Robb recognises that economic ties between India and his country have to respect the fact that about 25% of people in India live on less than \$2 a day. Foreign deals are fine but the best means of growth in India come from within and that alone can combat the spectre of poverty.

### LOOKING BACK

March 12, 1988

### Talks with Sikh militants only within Constitution

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi today said dialogue with militants in Punjab can only be started if the latter accept the frame work of the constitution and shun violence.

We have never hesitated in undertaking a dialogue with any party subject to the fulfillment of these two conditions. Mr. Gandhi said while addressing a mammoth gathering after unveiling a statue of former Defence Minister Mr. Y. B. Chavan here this afternoon.

The Prime Minister, who arrived here along with his wife Sonia Gandhi after one hour 45 minute helicopter flight from Aurangabad, said the message of good will and harmony of Guru Govind Singh had been betrayed by the terrorists who killed innocent people and spread communal hatred.

We shall be unflinching in stamping out terrorism, he said.

It was important that both the political process and the democratic process be given equal opportunities to work out solutions, the Prime Minister said while referring to the situation in Punjab.

Mr. Gandhi said tributes to Mr. Chavan and described him as a great leader of the soldiers and of western India.

Referring to Mr. Chavan's role as the Foreign Minister, Mr. Gandhi said he protected the country's sovereignty with high diplomatic skill.

Mr. Gandhi, before unveiling the statue of Chavan, paid him homage to the statue of Chatrapati Shivaji nearby.

Earlier, Mr. Gandhi was received at the helipad by state Chief Minister Mr. S. B. Chavan, former Rajasthan Governor Mr. Vasant Rao Patil and a host of other state Ministers.

### 8 cops held in Assam on charge of rape

Eight policemen suspected to be involved in the gang rape of the some tribal girls at Bhumka village in Kokrajhar district of Assam on January 21 were arrested yesterday.

The Guwahati High Court was apprised of the matter through an affidavit by the State Government today.

The High Court issuing a suo moto notice on March 8 directed the State government to file an affidavit on the alleged rape report.

Meanwhile, the Tribal Women Welfare Federation and All Bodo Students Union who also filed affidavits, demanded adequate compensation to the girl, completion of the judicial inquiry in a specific period of time and an investigation by the CBI.

According to the Bodo Students Union Altogether nine women were raped. Of them two were 12 and 13 years old and another was aged 45.

# Challenges for the new EC in the GHADC

By Albert Thyrnian

Amidst boycott by pressure groups and bandhs called by anti-social elements, election to the thrice extended GHADC is over. Defying the bandh and boycott calls by NGOs and threats and intimidation by militant organizations the voters did well to come out in thousands to exercise their franchise on 12th October. Though recording a low 60.66 per cent turn-out, as compared to 79.48 in 2009, the people of Garo Hills must be complimented for keeping the democratic process alive and vibrant. In four polling stations in militant infested areas, however, there was nil voting because the voters succumbing to fear of the guns.

Prior to the election opposing NGOs (against non-tribal candidates and voters) organized public meetings and rallies throughout Garo Hills educating people of the importance of keeping the GHADC exclusively for tribals/Garos. Having done their work, they should have left it to the wisdom of the electorate rather than imposing a boycott. The blame for inclusion of non-tribals in the election process of GHADC should be solely placed on the previous successive houses rather than on the innocent voters. If KHADC and JHADC have a legislation barring non-tribals from contesting and voting, why has GHADC not made the necessary law? Now it's up to the NGOs to impress upon the present house to resolve the problem once and for all. Protests on the eve of elections will not bring about a permanent solution. In 2009, similar objections were raised and non-tribal voters were deleted from the electoral rolls. This time the government and the administration stuck to the rule book. Why this flip-flop?

With the High Court of Meghalaya banning bandhs one had hoped that bandh culture had come to an end. But not so soon! On August 14-15 this year the proscribed GNLA declared shutdown of the entire of Garo Hills via SMSes. This time, unknown persons, did it through pamphlets and posters. The law and order agencies should have filed suo moto FIRs against miscreants for contempt of court. Similarly the law enforcing agency should have acted against those who forwarded SMSes calling for a bandh on 14-15 August. However, something positive happened this time towards ending the cursed bandh culture in the region.

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The Chief Executive of Tura Municipality Board issued show-cause notices to traders and shop keepers in Tura for downing their shutters on the bandhs days (Aug 14-15). This time, on bandh days the enthusiastic officials personally made sure that business carried on as normal. Hats off sir!

Having emerged as the largest party, the NPP was expected to form the Executive Committee of the autonomous council. The Garo Hills Progressive Alliance (GHPA) was formed soon after the declaration of the results. Surprisingly, however, there were rumours that Conrad Sangma, son of the NPP boss, PA Sangma would be elected as the Chief Executive Member. Thankfully someone pointed out and rightly so that the post of CEM cannot be held by a

concentrated in two families. Family ties to the fore, merit to the back burner!

The Congress lost the election because of the blatant and massive corruption in the previous administration. The former Chairman, the Executive member, and the all sitting Congress MDCs (except one) bit the dust for corruption charges rather than anti-incumbency. RTI findings revealed that lakhs of rupees in Council's schemes were siphoned off for personal gain. There were charges of bribes being taken from bidders for council gates and illegal traders. An inquiry was ordered by the state government to go into the multi-crore scam but the report of the one-man Judicial Inquiry Commission is gathering dust in the District Council Affairs department.

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nominated member. Meghalaya and particularly Garo Hills will be reeling under family politics for a long time to come. Dynastic politics, by design, is common on both sides of the fierce political divide. PA Sangma is an MP. His eldest son, James is an MLA. Conrad himself was also an MLA and now the proposed CEM. His daughter, Agatha won the 2004 election banking on the popularity and status of her father. Equally impressive is the family of Congressman, Dr. Mukul Sangma. He is the Chief Minister of the state. In the last election his wife, Dikkanchi D. Shira was elected to the Legislative Assembly. His brother, Zenith is a legislator and minister. And now the younger brother's better half, Sadhariani M Sangma is an MDC. This does not augur well for a forward looking society. Power is

Financial mismanagement which resulted in the inability of the Council to even pay its own employees for months was also reported. Another factor for the poor performance of State Congress is the unconstitutional extension of the term of GHADC three times over. It was incomprehensible that a constitutional institution was turned into a fiefdom.

The NPP's PA Sangma has promised a clean administration in the much tainted GHADC. He has assured of probing corruption charges against men who ran the previous Council. But the new EC will face an uphill task. Persons like me see only an iceberg in how politics works in our State and can confidently say that clean politics is still a distant dream. Restoring the dignity and image of the House which was badly

tarnished by the last men in charge will be a huge task.

Another promise of the Garo strongman is the introduction and enactment of the "Codification of Garo Customary Law". As to how this will be done, the public will keep an interested eye. Will the controversial "Codification of Garo Customary Law, Bill, 2009" be scrapped or amended? How will the contentious issue of "A person who is born of a non-Garo mother and a Garo father is recognized as member of the Garo tribe provided he follows the Garo customs and traditions," be tackled?

On the controversy of inclusion of non-tribals in the GHADC elections both as candidates and voters, the veteran leader was non-committal merely stating that the issue needs discussion and debate. This is understandable as his party fielded non-tribals and favoured their names to remain in the electoral roll. Bringing about a legislation debaring non-tribal from participating in the GHADC election will be a political risk as non-tribals could shift allegiance to the Congress. Forming the Garo Hills United Alliance (GHUA), the elected independent MDCs have already refused to be part of the NPP led EC as there are non-tribals in it. Whether next Executive Committee prefers 'statesmanship' to vote bank politics or vice versa will be keenly watched. The new EC will walk on a tight rope.

The most intriguing challenge is stability. GHPA has a fragile majority of 16 in the 30 member house. Anyone shift camps and we are in a crisis. In the absence of anti-defection laws in the GHADC (and other ADCs) instability is a surety. Conscience, principles, ethics, values and ideology do not exist in these institutions. The constant change of ECs in KHADC and JHADC prove it. In the last GHADC election, the NPP won an overwhelming majority of 19 seats out of 29 but most of them shamelessly joined the Congress camp post victory. Even before the GHPA assumes office there are already rumours that the independents have left the alliance. Not to down play other challenges, keeping their flock together and happy will be the biggest test for the GHPA. Toppling games will be played and horse trading fairs will be organized.

## Is Meghalaya competitive? An insider perspective

By Phrangngi Pyrtuh

A study by Harvard's Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness in collaboration with the Mint, India's second largest leading business newspaper has branded Meghalaya as the most competitive state amongst the north eastern states. Among many reasons the study highlights Meghalaya's compound average annual growth at 10.8% and its GSDP valued at 27,300 crores rupees in 2014-14. The study also mentioned Meghalaya's rich forest resources, agro based potential, hydro electricity and the education system which is considered as important parameters necessary for staying competitive. These are no doubts Meghalaya's strength the same of which are present in most north eastern states which possessed equally abundant resources. The study however fails to highlight the weakness and the difficulty in creating opportunities in the state which have become the curse of Meghalaya and other north eastern states. For a start the North eastern states including Meghalaya have inherent problems that are geographical, geopolitical and social unrest that have mitigated all measure to impart the requires competitiveness to local entrepreneurs and other forms of skills required for competition.

Michael Porter's seminal work on the Five competitive Forces model is a simple but powerful tool to examine the complexity of power dynamics in business situation. His work gains recognition for pioneering SWOT and PEST analysis. Michael Porter's Five

Planning Commission (PC) the provisional growth rate for Meghalaya in 2013-14 was 12.41% which is one of the highest in the country. Hence the information as far as the study is concerned is not new. However the data extrapolated from the PC was not a big deal but it seems to be something else coming from an international institution.

There seems to be some disconnect between the analysis of the study and the prevailing ground realities. For some strange reason the study mentioned the presence of NIFT and RGIM in the state though how these professional institutions contribute to the competitiveness of Meghalaya is not spelt out. One therefore wonders if competition means having more professional institutions. This correlation needs proper analysis by research scholars and academicians since there are increasing number of institutes in state with little or no credentials to their name. The education system is Meghalaya is one of the most privatized sector but without a regulator to ensure they maintain quality education. The CMJ scam and its denotification by the government which occurred only a few years back where PhD and other degrees were sold like hot cakes have not discouraged more private institution to set up business in the state. Nothing much has changed as far as education is concerned. The absence of an education policy is also responsible for the government's lackadaisical attitude to education in

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Forces model analyzes a). Competitiveness of an industry b) Potential of new entrants into industry c) Bargaining Power of Suppliers d) Bargaining Power of Customers and e) Threat of Substitute products. Porter's five forces model is used to identify an industry's structure in order to determine its corporate strategy. Porters model is also applied for any segment of the economy since it used to identify strength and weakness which could impact the profitability of an industry in an environment where the five forces remains elusive. According to the model, if the five forces are strong they increase competition and if they are weak they decrease competition. Based on this model, the study has branded Meghalaya as one of the most competitive states in the north east. We can assume based on the summary of the study that the five forces are strong in Meghalaya. But is this true?

The idea that competition is necessary for growth rate which contributes to gross domestic product is no longer attractive. The GDP as an indicator of growth is no longer an appropriate measurement of a growth or progress since it is restricted to a nominal value. In fact for public policy to rely on GDP growth rate is a mistake that is now avoided in most countries including India. According to data released by the now defunct

terms of budgetary allocation etc. The quality of education in terms of research and development from government run and private institutes which are crucial factors for raising competition is another cause of concern for the state.

The study also fails to analyze the complete lack of infrastructure and communication which are vital for its progress and development. On these counts the state has nothing much to boast about. We have a negligible railway network, an unreliable airport, transport and communication services for marketing and market accessibility is pathetic to say the least. Cost overruns and extended deadlines have become the norm for all kinds of infrastructural projects in the state. Then there is case of massive corruption in all these mega projects which is partly affected due to red tapism in the system. The construction and mining sector have put the future of the state in question. Important and pressing issues such as environmental degradation and ecological imbalance seems irrelevant to the study.

The real picture is not hunky dory as pronounced. The problem of relying on an outside study is that it fails to connect with ground realities. And to this extent we should not buy the analysis of the study. Period.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Enough of tradition!

Editor,

The present stand-off between the State Government on one side and the Rangbah Shnong on the other does not bode well for the state. The Governor Mr Shanmuganatham has correctly sent the Village Administration Bill authored by the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council to the Union Home Ministry which is better placed to look at the Bill not from a tunnel vision of a small state but from the larger national perspective, taking into account the parameters of good grass-roots governance which includes the interests of every citizen of Meghalaya and not just a section of tribals. It is evident that the State Government is ready to bow down to the demands of the body of traditional heads because of the fear of what the upcoming protest rally slated for October 30th would trigger. It is unprecedented that a group of people who are actually

supposed to be looking after the law and order in their respective localities would themselves become the protestors without having first engaged in talks with the Government. There is no knowing what the aftermath of the incident would be. It could even lead to collapse of law and order because subversive elements would be on the look-out to see how the cookie crumbles for the present State Government.

An elected government has the mandate of the people and should therefore not cover before any insolent might. But governments today are inclined to play politics with every issue including those that are related to providing basic governance to all. The other way to look at this whole issue is that those who are excluded from the purview of the VAB could demand that they too have a right to basic civic governance and if the tribal headmen wish to exclude them then they also have a right to

demand a separate Bill that is no less powerful than the VAB. Is this what we want to see happening in Meghalaya? As a Khasi I wish to ask the Rangbah Shnong what is it that they are so afraid of losing if they agree to a uniform Bill passed by the legislature? Who are the Rangbah Shnong protecting? Are they not protecting their turfs and their powers? Are they so concerned about the people under their jurisdiction? If so, have the Rangbah Shnong had consultative meetings with all their constituents in the Shnong? I have not heard my Rangbah Shnong consulting anyone from our locality. Where is the democracy here?

If governance is about participation then I think that the Rangbah Shnong have taken their constituents for granted and expect us to endorse all the actions they are taking on our behalf? Is this correct? What happens if someone has a different viewpoint? Let's not forget that citizens are today no longer dumb driven cattle. They want to

be consulted on all issues and wish to have their views taken on record. Does the VAB have such a mechanism in place? I ask out of genuine concern because if I can point out the flaws of the elected government then I should also have the right to point out the flaws of the Dorbar Shnong which many a times has not covered itself in glory. It is time that people raise their voices and speak up on this issue. Is tradition the holy cow of Khasi-Jaintia society? If tradition is sacrosanct then why not go back to the days of yore on every issue and social practice? Why single out only the Dorbar Shnong and wish for it to be wedded to tradition?

Yours etc.,  
AG Lyngdoh,  
Via email

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

*"Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another."*

— Napoleon Hill

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 79 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2015

### Political tug of war

THE present political stalemate between the KHADC and the State Government has nothing to do with the people but it has everything to do with personalities in the two political institutions. PM Syiem the CEM, KHADC has used the bandwagon of the Village Administration Bill to champion his own cause. He wants to project himself as yet another saviour of the Jaidbynriew - a much abused word that is used to whip up political ferment. And because the Khasi - Jaintia people have never believed in debating real issues but are happy to be recipients of received wisdom, they are being misled again and again.

Let's look at the purpose of the VAB. It's sole objective is to provide good governance at the locality level. Hence there should no no scope for posturing here. People should themselves decide which of the two Bills - the VAB or the one put together by the Govt constituted Committee, which is best suited to the needs of modern governance.

We are looking here at a service which will address in particular our need to cope with civic problems such as garbage management, sanitation, proper water supply amongst others and in general our need to maintain harmony and resolve conflicts in case such conflicts arise. Hence a basic level of adjudication. And considering that we are today a heterogenous society there is also the need to come up with an inclusive governance model instead of an exclusive ethnocentric Bill. This seems to be the contentious issue. It springs partly from the fact that democracy is still tenuous in these hills and secondly that there is a paranoia that a progressive, inclusive Bill would take away the uniqueness of tribal cultures. Now how culture ties in with governance is difficult to comprehend but this is what the custodians of a rigid tradition want us to believe. It remains to be seen how the Government handles yet another ticklish issue which has now turned into a game of political one upmanship.

## LOOKING BACK

March 13, 1988

### Constitution to be amended for Punjab

The Constitution amendment bill scheduled for introduction in the Rajya Sabha on Monday is aimed at applying emergency provisions to combat terrorism in Punjab.

The Constitution (59th Amendment) Bill, 1988 visions of article 352 of the constitution to declare in the whole of Punjab or in particular districts of that state.

If such situation arises, the expression "armed rebellion," incorporated in the Article as one of the grounds for declaring emergency (which alone could be resorted to in the case of an internal emergency may not be appropriate in the prevailing situation in Punjab).

It was therefore felt that Article 352 may be suitably amended in its application to Punjab to include 'internal disturbance' as one of the grounds to say the integrity of India is threatened by internal disturbance.

The expression "internal disturbance" was one of the grounds included in that article from the commencement of the Constitution (44th Amendment) Act, 1978.

Consequently, Article 358 and 359 are also proposed to be amended to provide for the automatic suspension of Article 19 of the Constitution through Presidential order suspending the operation of any other provisions contained in Part III (except Article 20)

under Article 359. Another salient feature of this Bill is the amendment to Article 356 of the Constitution.

Under clause (5) of the Article, a resolution approving the continuance on force of a presidential proclamation issued under Clause (I) of that Article beyond a period of one year cannot be passed by either house of Parliament unless the two specified in that clause are met.

The one year period in the case of the proclamation made in relation to Punjab is due to expire on May 10 next.

In view of the continued disturbed situation in Punjab, escalation in the activities of terrorists and anti-national forces resulting in the death of innocent men, women and children, the dissolution of the state Assembly, the continuance of proclamation beyond the period of one year may be necessary in Punjab.

Article 356 (5) of the Constitution, is therefore proposed to be amended to facilitate the extension of the proclamation, if necessary up to a period of three years as permissible under clause (4) of the article.

As the proposed amendments are only for the purpose of curbing terrorist activities in Punjab more effectively, the power proposed to be conferred by these amendments would not be restored to for any period beyond what is absolutely necessary for achieving the objective.

# Making it to the world tourism map and how!

By Patricia Mukhim

Every state tries its best to perch itself in the mindscape of global tourists and to be a world class destination. Meghalaya does too. But what the Government has not been able to do, some spirited groups and individuals have done remarkably well. At last count there were at least about 25,000 people who attended the NH 7 Bacardi Weekender musical event. It brought one of the biggest bands - Megadeth to Shillong and also the renowned singers/bands from the country and the region. The venue at Bhoirymbong was just right for that humungous crowd that had gathered to witness one of the biggest musical fests which according to the NH7 promoter, Vijay Nair is the biggest ever to be hosted in the country. In every aspect the event was managed well. Local event managers Springboard Surprises really surprised us all by pulling off this show. Hundreds of music fans from Guwahati had to do day trips because every hotel/guest house/home stay was sold out.

Earlier, the Durga Puja celebrations too went off without a glitch from start to finish. It made every Shillongite feel good and get out of the normal depressive mood that normally we are afflicted with. And that depressive mood I have realised is generated whenever we think of politics and politicians and their double-speak; their one-upmanship and their craze for power at all costs. The ordinary citizen becomes a pawn in these treacherous political games and often does not know that he/she is being co-opted to meet the ambitions of certain politicians.

The other upcoming event would be the International Mei Ramew festival that celebrates the idea of food sovereignty and tries take us all on a journey of rediscovery of our food chain. Truly we have lost so much native wisdom while marching on the road towards progress and civilisation. In our quest to mimic everything western from dress, music, dances, mannerisms, academic philosophies and above all their food habits we have forgotten our own practices which, because they are tied so closely to nature are also the most sustainable practices. One of the significant indicators of our native practices is the absence of greed and the ability to define 'need' with a pragmatic clarity. Hence we used wood only to build houses and saw the utility of trees only to the extent that they provided us with wood for our buildings and furniture but not as a timber to be relentless cut down and exported. Need quickly

transitioned to greed with the advent of a rapacious market. Indeed greed has replaced need in our vocabulary although we have used clever words to camouflage that greed. The coal mine owners who have bled the earth and caused our natural springs to turn toxic argue vehemently that they have the right to continue with this horribly disruptive practice by invoking the uniqueness of our tradition. I often wonder who constructs these unique facets and if they are borne out by history since Khasis have no written records of their past and all we can rely on are romanticised oral traditions.

On our own we would not have been able to stop the looting of our forests. If the Supreme Court directive of 1996 putting a 10-year moratorium on cutting of forests and export of timber had not come when it did, Meghalaya would have been in a far worse situation as far as climate change is concerned. Now the National Green Tribunal has come as our saviour and put a halt to coal mining before a natural calamity of serious proportions overtakes us. Now is the time to think of more sustainable livelihoods for our people. The coal mine owners have anyway made their money. They have bought whatever land and property there is to be bought in the city of Shillong. In fact of coal mining had continued the property prices in Shillong would have shot through the roof; not that they are any better today. But the NGT ban gives time for people most affected by mining, namely the labourers, the small tea shop owners and the transport operators to take stock of things and to reflect on the short term gains that have led to large scale destruction. There is need to make these ancillary units realise that they have been part of this disruptive force of environmental destruction and they need to sit back and think because a desolate, unproductive Meghalaya with rivers that flow but are full of poisons is not what they would want their future generation to inherit. Or would they? For that matter even the coal mine owners would not want that dreary future for their kids. It is true that the moneyed class including some prominent coal mine owners have packed up their children to study

in the UK, USA and Europe. Most probably those kids will make their future there hence their parents are not bothered about what happens to the people here who cannot afford to even send their kids to Shillong to study.

We would have noticed that the so-called defenders of tradition, particularly the Rangbah Shnong, the Syiem, Dolloi and Nokma have been either reticent on the NGT ban or have supported those who invoke tradition to support the on-going war on the environment. They have not actually stood up for anything. Not for the environment; not for conservation; not against the destructive forces that appropriate all our community resources; not against corruption. So the question to ask these claimants of a hoary past is: what are they actually standing for? Is it only for political power, because mind you the idea of running a Shnong is as much political as running a constituency? Many have transitioned from the Rangbah Shnong/Rangbah Dong to the MLA/MDC. So when people speak about of Dorbar Shnong being little islands that are shielded from the vagaries of partisan politics, they are actually betraying an innate ignorance about what constitutes politics. Or they choose to remain naïve about the deep-seated inclinations in each one of us to drive the politics of the day.

To be fair, the present tribal society of Meghalaya is in a state of immense churning. There are stiff battle lines that are drawn between the progressive forces who are seen as traitors to the cause by a set of inward looking, insular thinking patriarchs for whom the last bastion seems to be tradition because tradition ensured that they had a pre-eminent male domain from where they exercised their power. They want that sort of pre-eminence to continue. Hence they would resist having women as co-participants in the running of the Dorbar Shnong. They would resist elections by secret ballot which is the sine-qua-non of democracy. In fact they would resist anything that threatens their ability to manipulate and control. Control is the word and the world is full of control freaks who nurture their ambitions under a cloak of social service. Of course there are grand exceptions but they are too few to be counted.

## TO THE EDITOR

### Harmony and stuff

Editor,

Kudos to you on an excellent editorial (ST Oct 21, 2015) captioned 'Societal Conversations'. While agreeing with your gentle chiding to the majority religious community for not creating a similar platform at Christmas, the fact remains that in Shillong Christmas is enthusiastically and very visibly, celebrated by all communities. So one could condone this lapse, if indeed it is one. Incidentally the Unitarian Church, on their Unitarian Day, make it a point to have representatives of all religious heads and have been doing so , at least in the last 25 years or so that I had the good fortune of attending. Coming to the event at hand , I was fortunate to have attended it. Some of the salient points brought out by the religious leaders who were allowed only a few minutes, need mentioning. The secretary of the Rama Krishna Mis-

sion was on the dot when he suggested that beyond attendance at the Harmony meeting these leaders could perhaps organise visits to the various Puja Mandaps by them and their followers to promote a sense of sharing. This brings me to another very relevant issue. The President of the Central Puja Committee, Naba Bhattacharjee, during his speech , brought out a valid point that the word tolerance which was generally used to define secularism was not quite apt. Tolerance connotes, he said, something not so agreeable that one "tolerates". He would much rather we say acceptance. Good so far! But when the turn of the Honourable Governor came to address the gathering, he said that he would go a step further and use the word "respect" in addition to acceptance. While agreeing with both in their little semantic word play I, as a Shillongite, could not but suppress a chuckle be-

cause when here in Shillong have gone past all that. Here we PARTICIPATE, yes participate in each other's religious festivals- and have been doing so for - well - always

Not quite relevant to the issue but since one of the speakers touched upon the word "Hindutva", I must share a thought with the readers. In the word "Hindutva", the "Hindu" part of it actually had no religious connotation. Its connection is with "Hind", which is the Persian / Urdu word for India. A mischievous Congress Party, since the word was propagated by the RSS, ably assisted by an equally mischievous , elitist section of the English media made it into a dirty word. They were in no small measure assisted by a fringe of the Saffron brigade who exploited it to further their bigotry. "Bharatiyata" would be appropriate - but it is a mouthful. So I suggest some wise person come up with another word- if indeed one is required! And put "

Power is addictive and we see some Rangbah Shnong hanging on to power forever, on the pretext that people continue to elect them.

So here we are, having to brace ourselves for yet another show of strength by the Rangbah Shnong who are opposed to the proposed Grassroots Administration Bill that had been presented by the Lapang Committee to the Government on October 30th. It is billed to be a crowd puller that is much bigger than NH 7 hence those who have to travel across Shillong on that day would have to keep in mind the new traffic rules for the day. So much for democracy! Why should peoples' movements be curtailed simply because some protest is happening somewhere? And if the Government did not have the spine to go through the process of adapting the Bill presented to it by the Lapang Committee after due deliberations in the legislature, why did it form the Committee in the first place and waste people's time and resources?

The ordinary person is confused and we have to blame this spineless Government for cowering under pressure. Tomorrow there could be a bigger protest on something else. Will the Government bow down to that pressure too? Why do we have a Government in the first place if it cannot give us the citizens the right direction at this crucial juncture? Or should we vote out this Government by some kind of referendum? If the Rangbah Shnong can call a meeting of its camp followers, tomorrow some other citizens' groups too can bring equal pressure on the Government. Which pressure will the Government bow to next? We have truly succeeded in turning democracy on its head. The Government is keen to take Meghalaya back to the cradle of oligarchy which is where this whole notion of a few clans ruling over the people originated from. Democracy never had a chance here and never will because we the people don't want to stand up for anything. We are happy to watch the fun from the sidelines and criticise, criticise, criticise.

But perhaps these shenanigans too will become tourism crowd pullers. We never know! Maybe people will pay money to come here and see how tradition unfolds itself into an imagery of the absurd!

Hindutva" in the waste paper basket. The idea would be to coin a word that will define the all inclusive "Indianness" of this ancient land.

This may pose a problem of a different kind because all inclusive in today's milieu will, together with the great things of this country, heritage, tolerance, respect for each other's beliefs etc. , need to encompass the growing intolerance and religion and caste based divisiveness being let loose on our culture by the political class. So what's the good word to be? How about something like "Om-Bharatiyata @#&\*#@^...".?

Yours Etc.  
Lt. Col. AnjanDatta  
(Retd.)  
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.

'Saviourless' Congress to sink again?

## Gandhi scion is no natural politician

By Kalyani Shankar

Senior Congress leader Mahkan Lal Fotedar's forthcoming book Chinar Leaves has brought to the fore once again the discomfort between the old and the new guard in the 130-year-old Congress party. Fotedar is only voicing the desperation among sections of the Congress that Rahul Gandhi is not inspiring and he is not a natural or a 24X7 politician.

The veteran Congress Working Committee member and a long time Gandhi family loyalist, has told an interviewer recently that the Congress is again on the verge of collapse 16 years after Mrs Sonia Gandhi took over. "However, this time there is no saviour." No doubt Fotedar is feeling frustrated, sidelined and dumped but the Congress leadership has to sit up and see why he is emboldened to say these things. It should also see why the Congress is struggling to enforce a generational change while the BJP has successfully managed it with Prime Minister Modi in complete control of the party and the government. While Modi reversed his political untouchability after the Godhra massacre with his well-crafted communication strategy, Rahul seems to have done just the opposite despite his Gandhi surname.

Fotedar is perhaps expressing his frustration when he told an interviewer recently, "History is threatening to repeat itself. It is a matter of time before Soniaji's and Rahul's lead-

Pradesh Congress Presidents in Punjab, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, UP, Bihar or Maharashtra. The known faces of his team at the AICC include people like Madhusudan Mistry, Sanjay Nirpam, Mohan Prakash and other rootless wonders.

The old guard is agast that their supporters are sidelined as it has happened in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Odisha, UP and Bihar. This is not confined to one state as in almost all the states the senior leaders feel like Kamalnath, Digvijaya Singh, Hooda, Ajit Jogi and Captain Amarinder Singh feel that their supporters are cut to size.

Secondly, while they had access to Sonia Gandhi, of late the Congress President directs them to talk to Rahul on every issue and they are unable to approach him. The Rahul coterie feels that the old guard had developed vested interests and has even stalled Rahul Gandhi becoming the Congress President this year.

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For the past year, the Congress president Sonia Gandhi has virtually handed over the baton to her son. Since then there has been a tug of war between the Sonia coterie and Rahul Gandhi's supporters who are working at cross-purposes. The status quo culture of the Gandhis has added to the chaos, as the Congress has not thrown out those who were responsible for the debacle.

While the younger generation is hopeful of finding a place in Rahul's new team the old guard is busy protecting their individual interests. There is a perception Rahul Gandhi is averse to leaders above 60 years of age in his team and this has been strengthened by statements made by senior leaders like Janardhan Dwivedi and Jairam Ramesh. The old guard is also unsure about the direction or lack of it in the party and more so after the 2014 debacle which has not yet been discussed in the AICC.

As it happens this is not the first time this generational change is taking place. Indira Gandhi sidelined the Nehru generation of leaders like Sanjiva Reddy, Morarji Desai and Nijalingappa and built her own coterie. Rajiv Gandhi replaced Indira Gandhi's coterie by Arun Singh, Arun Nehru, Oscar Fernandes and Ahmed Patel. Sonia Gandhi chose her own advisers. So this transition keeps on happening all the time.

While there can be no quarrel about Rahul choosing his own team the anxiety is that he should choose the right people. So far, most of those he had chosen have proved to be not up to the mark as in the case of

ership is challenged from within the party. I will be observing closely how they stand up to this looming challenge, because Sonia is not Indira and Rahul is not Sanjay." But he is only echoing the sentiment, expressed by many Congressmen in private. The effort is also to instill a fear in the Gandhi family. However, the time has not come for open revolt mainly because there is no one to lead the rebels. So they are just confined to talking in terms of 'save the Congress.' "

In such a scenario, the Congress leadership needs to do some surgery in the party. The first thing is to arrest the unease and reassure the old guard. The second is to build up the party.

The third is to strengthen the party in the states, particularly those which are going to polls next year like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam besides building up the organisation in the Hindi heartland where it has no presence.

The fourth is to identify and build up good state level leadership and get rid of the deadwood and have a mix of old and young leaders in Rahul Gandhi's new team. The fifth is to prepare the party at the grassroots level and strengthen the booth-level activities. Above all try to see that those who had left the party and built up their own outfits could be brought back.

If the Grand alliance in which the Congress is a minor partner wins Bihar, then the morale of the party will be boosted. Then perhaps Fotedar's statements may end up as a storm in the teacup but the Gandhis should take it as a wake up call. (IPA Service)

*“Greatness is more than potential. It is the execution of that potential. Beyond the raw talent. You need the appropriate training. You need the discipline. You need the inspiration. You need the drive.”*

—Eric A. Burns,

## The Shillong Times

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### SC and Reservation

THE Supreme Court decisions can no longer be considered unassailable. Yet its request to the NDA government to do away with reservations in higher educational institutions should be welcome. The quota system in the groves of academe reserving seats to cater to SC, ST and OBC communities has raised eyebrows for decades but the system continues. The setting up of more such institutions is not an answer to the basic problem. The objection arises from the fact that the quota system is unrelated to merit and academic proficiency. Not that there are no eligible candidates coming from these depressed communities. But a great many of them get admission despite being less meritorious than students from high caste segments of society. As demand still outstrips supply in the higher reaches of academic studies, the result is that the more qualified are sometimes left out for caste considerations. The system leads to the operation of Gresham's law in the vital sector. Since teaching standards have to be adapted to the receptive ability of the less meritorious, the more meritorious do not receive what they deserve. This is an extension of what Gresham implied in his formulation of bad money driving out good. Though the apex court has made its request to the Centre only with reference to the supply of training by the Medical Council of India, it should be applicable to all higher educational institutions as the system is decidedly against the national interest and is encouraged only by vested political interests. Equality of all communities in academic pursuits cannot be manufactured by official diktat.

It is not to be argued, however, that the abolition of the system of reservations alone will do wonders for our ailing higher education. The HRD ministry is polluting the ambience with a number of fruitless confrontations. The authorities have done little to meet the dire shortage of quality faculty. The UGC emerged victorious after a counterproductive battle with Delhi University's four year undergraduate programme. Following that, it picked a fight with the IITs, claiming jurisdiction over the degrees they conferred. Later, the HRD ministry had a pointless spat with Anil Kakodkar, chairman of the IIT-Bombay board. Subsequently, an altercation looked like erupting with the directors of the oldest IIMs which grew apprehensive about the impairment of their autonomy. What seems to be the deep-seated malady of higher educational institutions is governmental and bureaucratic hamhandedness.

### LOOKING BACK

March 13, 1988

### 80 soccer fans killed in stampede in Nepal

Soccer fans fleeing a violent hailstorm rushed the exits of a stadium today, killing more than 80 people and injuring hundreds who were trampled in the stampede, witnesses and hospital sources said.

The storm pelted about 30,000 fans with hailstones during a match between a Nepalese and Bangladesh team at National Stadium.

Fans rushed to stadium exits but found them locked, witnesses said.

Hospital sources confirmed 60 dead and more than 250 injured many of them in critical condition. Witnesses said more than 20 bodies were left at the stadium and not taken to hospitals. None of the ath-

letes were involved in the stampede, they said.

Strong winds accompanied the storm, uprooting trees in Kathmandu Valley surrounding the capital.

The storm broke just before half-time in the match between Nepal's Janakpur factory and Bangladesh's Mukti Jodha in the Tribhuvan challenge Shield knock-out tournament.

Private cars and taxis helped ambulances ferry the injured to hospitals. The biggest hospital in Nepal, the Bir Hospital, has received the maximum number of dead and injured. Other hospitals in the capital were also treating injured fans, it was reported.

### Modi Government struggling to push growth

# A mixed outlook with some hopeful indicators

By S. Sethuraman

As the economy moved into the third quarter and pre-budget exercises got under way for fiscal 2017, Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley has sighted a few hopeful signs but still tough hurdles are there to cross before growth can begin to edge toward 8 per cent, a target set for the current year, which has proved elusive.

There is, however, no dearth of euphoric noises day to day from the Finance Ministry even though it has now reconciled itself to growth at 7.3 to 7.5 per cent. It is true that there is now a greater thrust on seeing stalled projects take off at least where infrastructural and financing issues are not insurmountable.

The market is wide open for foreign investors but any significant inflow seems linked to further actions on policy reforms, such as GST, and more credibility on fiscal consolidation, and these are again the cited factors of global rating agencies in not revising credit grade up that India has been seeking over months.

At last, there is some cheer on moving up of India's ranking in the World Bank's Index on Doing Business Easier. It is now ranked 130th, from the earlier 142, on a list of 189 countries. This is attributed to significant improvements by India eliminating the minimum capital requirement and a business operations certificate, saving entrepreneurs an unnecessary procedure and a wait time.

But, the Bank says, India has to do more on reforms front to attract investors, such as an early passage of GST, which itself would begin to yield gains only by 2018.

Global uncertainties are adding to an already complex set of issues related to domestic economic management and for revival of private investment with over-leveraged corporates waiting for still better times, perhaps to last till the contours of the next budget emerge in February 2016. The solid rate cut of RBI by 50 basis points recently has had modest impact limited to real estate and auto sectors.

On the other hand, the deposit rates have been driven down further, depriving the community's ability to increase domestic savings or consumption. Inflation nomi-

nally may be at the lowest after some years but prices for the consumer have not lowered. Whereas the fall in oil prices and subsidy cuts have provided maximum comfort to Government, for the consumers it is only a limited pass-through.

As 2015 is on its last legs, global economic recovery and trade volumes are on a low key. Financial markets have remained unsettled over the last three months, especially after the turmoils in the wake of China's stock market bubbles and a hefty depreciation of China's currency to bolster growth of the world's second larg-

mum employment and 2 percent inflation.

A rate hike not visible before the end of the year, capital outflows from emerging market economies had begun to moderate in recent weeks and October saw an estimated 13.9 billion dollar non-resident portfolio inflows (hot money) after the worst third quarter (July-September), according to Washington-based International Institute of Finance (IIF).

Markets were also cheered by prospect of further monetary easing by the European Central Bank (ECB) in December, given the low inflation in eurozone, through its bond-

**The market is wide open for foreign investors but any significant inflow seems linked to further actions on policy reforms, such as GST, and more credibility on fiscal consolidation, and these are again the cited factors of global rating agencies in not revising credit grade up that India has been seeking over months. At last, there is some cheer on moving up of India's ranking in the World Bank's Index on Doing Business Easier. It is now ranked 130th, from the earlier 142, on a list of 189 countries. This is attributed to significant improvements by India eliminating the minimum capital requirement and a business operations certificate, saving entrepreneurs an unnecessary procedure and a wait time.**

est economy, no longer the primary driver of world economy.

India is less vulnerable to any external shocks at present and there is a momentary sense of relief for all emerging economies and developing countries with the US Federal Reserve's decision to put off a rate hike at least until its next meeting mid-December.

In determining whether it would be appropriate to raise the target range at its next meeting, the Committee would assess progress on both of its goals, maxi-

buying programme. The Global Financial Stability Report of IMF had said recently that both the euro area and Japan would need to continue to counter downward price pressures.

The latest FED decision to defer a rate hike also falls in line with IMF advocacy that, amid more uncertainty in the global economy, the United States should wait to raise policy rates until there are further signs of inflation rising steadily and continued strength in the labor market. The Fed said on October 28 that after the

first hike (probably at the December meeting), the pace of subsequent policy rate increases should be "gradual and well communicated".

RBI Governor Dr Raghuram Rajan had been vigorously attacking such 'loose' monetary policies of advanced nations without regard to the growth and development prospects of emerging market and other developing economies. To this extent, the macro-economic balancing in these economies becomes even more difficult, also at a time China on unsteady economic course throws up some new challenges for the world. Its growth waned to 6.9 per cent in the III quarter (July-September).

India, now the fastest growing economy, assumes it could become the primary driver of growth for world economy, but it must first get its economic house in order. China's pain is by no means a gain for India, as BJP Government leaders glibly take for granted. The Modi Government has first to address the stress in the banking system, which also needs more capital for the future, as India moves to a higher growth trajectory.

On the fiscal side, there are still lingering doubts whether Government would be able to peg its deficit to the budgeted 3.9 per cent of GDP target. On the one hand, Government claims to have increased investments in infrastructure, mainly roads and power, without cutbacks on social spending. There are some hopeful starts on road development and a bail-out is planned for power sector. Drought assistance would also impact on the current year's budget.

But on the revenue side, there is considerable uncertainty over disinvestment receipts totalling Rs 69,000 crores assumed in the Budget. Finance Ministry says this is due to unfavourable market conditions with the sharp fall in prices of minerals and metals in particular. It is unlikely these conditions would get reversed before end of current fiscal. In mitigation, Government looks for higher dividends from major public undertakings, which again would depend on their performance. (IPA Service)

### Chinese Dam

# Judicious approach vital

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

A 510 MW Chinese hydroelectric dam became operational on the Brahmaputra, in mid-October, the Xinhua news agency announced. This Zangmu Hydropower Project in Tibet, just 550 km from the Indian border, has been connected to China's national power grid. Apart from reduced flow of water to India, the possible impact on Upper Siang and Lower Subansiri in Arunachal Pradesh will be adversely affected, warn river experts. This apart, China is working on five more dam projects on the Brahmaputra which obviously means that India has to be vigilant as river flows to the intermittently operational turbines creates huge variations on a daily basis in downstream flows.

With water availability already a problem, this obviously could have a devastating impact on aquatic life and displace riparian population. One may mention here that way back an inter-ministerial group had advised the government in 2013 to intensify monitoring of river flows from upper to lower reaches of Brahmaputra in view of the dangers posed by this dam. Apart from the one already announced, there are two other dams – Jiexu and Jiacha – within 25 km of each other which are possibly under construction.

The Chinese announcement has triggered a fresh controversy regarding whether setting up of dams is at all necessary in view of the people's resistance witnessed in the country. Recall, few months back the Water Resources Ministry had instructed the Central Water Commission (CWC) not to give its nod to any new dams in future if these don't ensure uninterrupted flow of water. Apart from cleaning the Ganga, unless water flow is uninterrupted – which may be possible only after the cleaning operations are complete – dam construction would be of no use. The concerned minister, Uma Bharati, has been emphasizing the need for maintaining e-flow (ecological flow) of the river as water storage/withdrawal by dams invariably affects the flow of the river, making it vulnerable.

Bharati's ministry is particularly against the six hydro power projects in Uttarakhand which, it thinks would affect the flow of the Ganges. The same is the case with the Brahmaputra and the dams proposed may affect the river flow which would not be sufficient to feed the dams in the North East.

Experts have warned that the government appears to be making the people of Arunachal Pradesh a pawn in the run on between India and China. It is known that there have been widespread protests and agitations in this State, Uttarakhand and others regarding construction of dams as this would lead to displacement of local communities, submerge valuable forests and the areas would be exposed to the risk of earthquakes.

Some experts believe that dams in the North East, and specially in Arunachal, may benefit cities in the plains. There is, however, no justification in the reported plans to set up around 120 dams in A.P. A group called the Forum for Siang Dialogue opposed dams on the beautiful Siang River. Moreover, work has been stalled on the 2000 MW Lower Subansiri Project due to local opposition to its construction.

The social and environmental costs have always to be kept in mind and both dams and hydroelectric projects, wherever absolutely necessary and vetted by reliable experts, should always be of medium size.

To meet the needs of the corporate sector and the growing user classes, the government has encouraged a scramble for resources in tribal areas of Central India and the North East. However, it needs to adopt a grassroots approach and not fall prey to the

machinations of the corporate world. This would prove dangerous in the coming years as lop-sided development would automatically lead to violence and social unrest.

Take the case of Odisha which had virtually no Naxalite problem around 17 years back but the result of taking away of tribal land, sometimes forcibly, to give to mining companies triggered off the movement. Though there has been some industrial progress, at the grassroots level it is abysmal with the standard of living of tribals not seeing any improvement.

On the other hand, while there is resistance against construction of big dams, both medium and small dams may be necessary for generating electricity and increasing the irrigation network. The latter may help in increasing food output which, in turn, would facilitate the water demands in the lean seasons of the year. Thus, dams may only be constructed after a thorough review of the pros and cons.

While energy demands have to be met, the first priority should be to use modern techniques to reduce transmission losses as well as usage of less energy-intensive technologies. Hydroelectric power has little or no pollution impact but its feasibility with regard to the other issues involved has to be balanced.

The initiatives of the government pertaining to aviral dhara (continuous flow of water) and nirmal dhara (clean water) may become difficult with regard to the Brahmaputra as the water flow would get affected in the coming years when all the three Chinese dams become operational. This would add to the water woes of the entire North East which undoubtedly is a matter of grave concern.

In fact, there is need to seriously consider whether India desperately can shift from a narrow engineering-construction-centric approach to a multi-disciplinary participatory water management perspective. Experts believe that huge benefits are possible in irrigated area without the need to build more dams, adopting participatory irrigation management through water user associations (WUA), pioneered in some irrigation commands in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

Undeniably, once farmers themselves feel a sense of ownership over water, the process of operating and managing irrigation systems undergoes a profound transformation. The WUAs collect irrigation service fees, whose structure is determined in a completely transparent and participatory manner, from their members.

In such a situation, India should refrain from emulating the Chinese example and instead follow a judicious approach. As dams displace people and raise ecological problems, the approach should be to go in for smaller run-of-the-river schemes, or dams, that can take care of irrigation which is of primary necessity at this juncture. What is indeed surprising is that despite the 12th Plan allocation of Rs 6,000 crore for the National Irrigation Management Fund (NIMF), neither the UPA nor the NDA has notified the fund.

At present, the message given by the Water Resource Ministry is that it understands the perils of dam-building in the Himalayas and is committed to uninterrupted water flows in the Ganga. It is to be hoped that it would adopt an approach that could add millions of hectares to irrigated land without building a single new dam, something that becomes economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive and better alternatives to mega projects. ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Garo Hills on the road to perdition

Editor,

The statement by ULFA(I) leader, Paresh Baruah recently that the HNLC and GNLA are also joining the conglomerate of rebel outfits calling the United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia and stationed in the unguarded territory between Myanmar and India is worrying. What is more worrying is that the GNLA and other outfits of Garo Hills seem to be able to kidnap and kill whoever they want to and on whatever pretext they choose to do so. The GNLA's statement that Government should call off its all operations against all militant outfits is outrageous. Does the GNLA believe it can have a free run of the land and that Government will retreat only because of the threat by the GNLA? As it is people of Garo Hills and particularly those residing in the villages are caught between the devil and the deep sea. When the militants come to their homes they have to offer basic hospitality or are roughed up. When the militants have left the home,

the police come after the villagers for offering shelter to them. Then again militants have killed and tortured several people accusing them of being police informers. Is this the way to live? People have lost all hope of deliverance.

Can we say that the State Police have failed to contain militancy? Is there a lacuna somewhere in the counter-insurgency operations which gives the militants an upper hand all the time, allowing them to kidnap anyone they like? If this is so then the Government should take a serious call about reviewing its strategy on how to tackle the Garo Hills militants. The most sensible thing to do is to cut off the militants' source of income. But somehow the Government seems to be pussy-footing on this. The greater regret is that even the Central Government does not really care about what happens in an obscure part of the region. If militants continue to be one-up on the state forces then this is the biggest failure ever since the state has all the resources at its command and can act overtly while militants do everything covertly including

that of extorting money to buy arms.

It is high time that the State Police start delivering because if things continue the way they are now, Garo Hills is on the way to perdition.

Yours etc.,  
AR Marak,  
Tura

#### Complicated and costly scholarship application

Editor,

Last year the Meghalaya online scholarship portal was launched and with much difficulty, after investing much time and money students were able to upload their applications. But till date, many students have not received their stipends. This year we are told that students have to apply for their scholarship via the newly set up national portal. This has created more confusion and hardship. Many institutions are not able to register themselves in the national portal because of complicated procedure. There is a help line but what

the person says can't be understood. In the portal, names and numbers of nodal officers are given but they all plead ignorance of the whole process. Even the National Information Centres (NICs) in different districts cannot help with the registration procedure of the educational institutions. Many institutions are shown as approved in the portal but students are not able to log in and upload their applications. The last date for uploading of application forms has been extended to October 31, but I am sure thousands of students will be left stranded.

One wonders as to what is the benefit of the on line application. It is more complicated, more costly and more time consuming. The earlier simple system wherein a student fills in a hard copy with no cost was much better.

Yours etc.,  
Albert Thyrianiang  
Tura, West Garo Hills

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.